
Intranet Planning Playbook





Intranets: unifying the digital workplace

Today's intranets now sit at the very center of the modern digital workplace.

The intranet has evolved and changed dramatically since its inception, shifting from a simple document management platform to a comprehensive business collaboration and communication solution.

The ability of the intranet to combine process-specific applications, communication functionality, collaboration tools, and to unify the corporate technology stack has seen it secure globally recognized importance and growing popularity in recent years. Now, intranets form an indispensable part of digital workplace strategy.

Deployed successfully, these user-centric digital platforms are proven to bring real bottom-line benefits to business; whether by improving efficiency, increasing productivity, driving employee engagement, or shaping an outstanding employee experience in an age of digital noise and continuous innovation.

However, creating an intranet that will meet your business requirements and successfully achieve your objectives can be a challenge.

Managing differing requirements and expectations, obtaining buy-in and resource, or simply getting your users excited and onboard can all impact the long-term success of your intranet project. Get it right, and an intranet could transform how your business collaborates or works. Get it wrong, and you risk the costly repercussions of project failure.

Effective planning and the smooth deployment of your intranet project are essential. Our simple, step-by-step guide to planning and deploying a successful intranet will help you get started.

Contents

<hr/>		06
Part 1: Building a business case	Getting stakeholder buy-in	08
	– Why do I need my management onboard?	08
	– Mapping out your stakeholders	08
	– Identifying priorities and objectives	09
	Defining opportunity for your business	10
	Intranet objectives: projecting value and return for your project	12
	– Generic objectives	12
	– Specific objectives	12
	– Determining the value of specific objectives	12
	– A word about benchmarking	16
	Crafting an opportunity statement	17
<hr/>		18
Part 2: Planning your Intranet	WHO will use your intranet?	19
	– Step 1: Map your user communities	20
	– Step 2: Define your audience and create personas	22
	– Step 3: Consider any challenges for your users	24
	WHAT must your intranet do?	25
	– Defining purpose	25
	– Getting the right mix	27
	– What features and functionality do you need?	28
	– Beyond the feature list	29
	What your intranet provider must do	30
	WHERE your intranet fits in your digital workplace	31
	– Hosting your intranet	31
	– Custom building an intranet	33
	– Your intranet as part of the business technology stack	34
	HOW you will deliver your intranet project	36
	– Your intranet project team	38
	– Defining roles and responsibilities	40

– Timescales and deliverables	40
– Professional services and support for your intranet project	42
– Planning for risk	44

<hr/>		46
Part 3: Building and deploying your intranet	Content and Information Architecture	46
	– Conducting a content audit	47
	– What content do I need?	48
	– Creating an information architecture and structure	49
	– Personalization and tailoring content	52
	Building an intranet brand	54
	– Alignment with external brand	55
	– Naming your intranet	56
	– Creating an intranet identity, persona, or character	58
	– Tone of voice	59
	Technical consultancy and intranet build services	60

<hr/>		62
Part 4: Launching your intranet	The ‘WIIFM’ factor	63
	– Big bang, or secret squirrel?	64
	– Soft and staggered, or company-wide roll-out?	66
	– Launch ideas	67
	– Launch events	67
	– Virtual tours	68
	– Branded goodies	68
	– Treasure hunts and competitions	69

<hr/>		70
Part 5: Ongoing success	– Measure and act upon feedback	70
	– Use analytics and telemetry	72
	– Evaluate success and revisit targets	73
	– Strategic review	73
	– Train and up-skill	75
	– Keep learning	76
	– Revisit your brand – but not too often	77
	– Relaunch or re-engagement campaigns	78
	– Your intranet: the future of your digital workplace	78

Part 1: Building a business case

Given the investment associated with any software project, your greatest chance of securing buy-in and delivering those all-important returns is a strong business case.

This can not only be used to justify cost and resource requirements but to set out, in clear terms, the business problem you are looking to solve. It presents a logical argument for why

stakeholders should support your project, and the concrete benefits it will deliver: a case for business change.

A powerful business case will:

- Secure senior level buy-in, budget, and commitment
- Ensure you gather the support necessary to deliver on the project
- Define the opportunity, relating to sources of data to justify the business need
- Outline the expected value and return to the business, its sponsors, employees, stakeholders, and customers
- Set out scope, including required resource, timings, and investment
- Identify and manage any risk associated with the project
- Evaluate options and alternatives, before setting out a recommendation

A compelling business case will also guide you in the planning and deployment process: ensuring you select the right solution to meet your

unique needs, ultimately creating an intranet that will deliver tangible results for your business.



Looking for some additional support in creating your intranet business case?

Our handy [3-in-1 Business Case Toolkit](#) is designed to get you motivated and prepared.

The kit includes our free *Intranet Business Case Guide*, offering clear step-by-step guidance and practical tips for a truly winning pitch for your project.

A handy *Business Case Template* gives you a free structure to work with, ensuring you present your case clearly and comprehensively. Finally, if you need support compiling that all-important projected ROI, the *free calculator* will help you determine quantifiable returns for your project. Just pop in a few basic details about your business, and you're away.

Getting stakeholder buy-in

Securing buy-in from senior management can be one of the most significant challenges for anyone looking to roll out new technology in the workplace. New software often calls for major cultural adjustment and careful change management: it's not a case of merely buying off the shelf and pressing the 'on'

switch. Your stakeholders have to be committed.

When it comes to pitching for an intranet, you also face the added difficulty of appealing for significant investment – whether financially or in terms of time and resource – for often hard-to-measure returns.

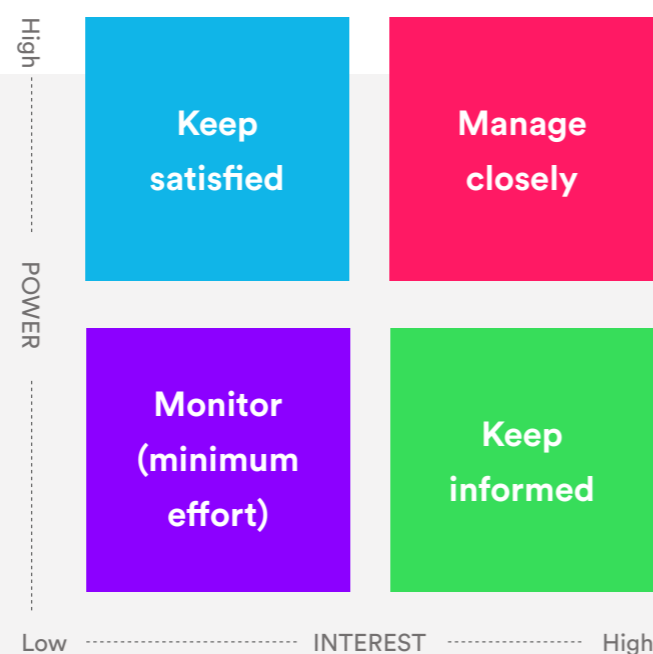
Why do I need my management onboard?

Getting a 'yes' from those controlling the company budgets isn't the only reason to invest time in winning over your stakeholders. Management also has a significant role to play in safeguarding against common project risks, such as overrun on time or budget, low user adoption, or resistance from senior representatives in the business.

Given the potential impact an intranet can have on your business and its employees, your leaders are also those who can champion the change in a top-down cascade: motivating, exciting, and engaging would-be users to ensure you get the most important outcome of all – people actually *using* your new intranet.

Mapping out your stakeholders

Simple as it sounds, the first step is to identify and map out who your major stakeholders are. This covers anyone with a stake in the project – from sign-off and budgetary approval to roll out, implementation, and adoption. Consider their level of interest in your intranet project and their power to influence it. This will help you define where to focus efforts during your planning and deployment process.



Identifying priorities and objectives

While stakeholders do, by definition, have a vested interest in the overall goals of the business, they are far more likely to engage if you address issues that affect that directly. Take the time to understand what they care about.

Identifying each stakeholder's business priorities and what makes them tick can be used to your advantage when trying to pitch your project, and help focus your efforts during planning.

Below, we map out the main priorities and objectives for some major stakeholders of an intranet project.

Stakeholder	Interest/Power	Cares about	Business objectives
CFO	Keep satisfied	Cost/return	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Budget management Return on investment Financial reporting integrity and transparency
CEO	Manage closely	Growth Business outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determining and delivering on business strategic direction Provision of necessary resources Oversee and deliver on company performance
CHRO	Manage closely	Employee engagement Talent management Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recruitment and retention of talent Build employee engagement Establish and communicate the business culture Develop strong employer brand
CIO	Manage closely	Security Cost/return Strategy and policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Future proofing and development of internal systems and processes Quality and performance of all IT and internal systems Data protection and usage policy Cost management and investment

Defining opportunity for your business

Intranets, as complex digital platforms, have the power to deliver gains across a multitude of departments, objectives, or business priorities. From improved efficiency to knowledge management, or employee self-sufficiency through to increased retention; the list is, in theory, limitless.

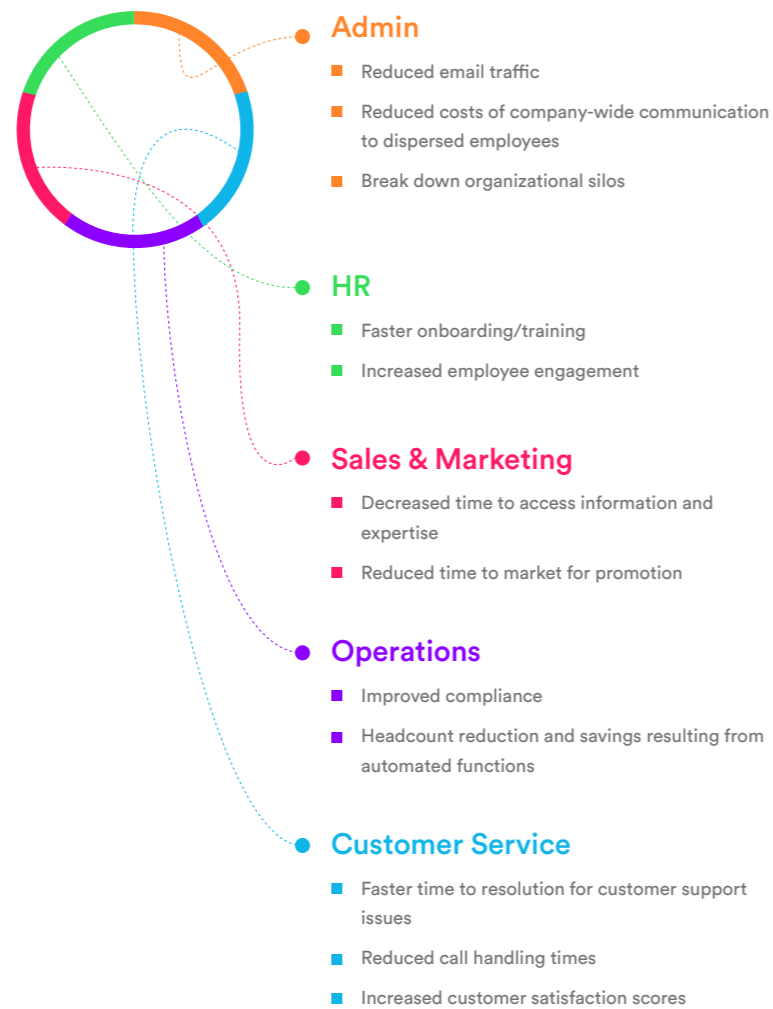
One of the first questions any stakeholder or member of senior management is likely to ask is, 'what's the value? When will I see a return on investment?'. Identifying opportunity and projecting ROI is a crucial part of your project planning process.

However, listing every potential positive outcome an intranet might have in your business won't create a compelling business case. Use this stage to outline the specific 'unmet need' or problem within your business that your intranet project will satisfy or support your organization in achieving.

Take the time to explore pain points and opportunities across departmental lines. Then, funnel these down to the top, key priorities that you can use to demonstrate potential value and return. Align those potential gains to the priorities you already identified for your stakeholders.

For example, perhaps your organization is undergoing international expansion and facing challenges due to a dispersed workforce. Highlighting gains from improved communication, cloud-based accessibility, a centralized repository for business information, or digital processes for onboarding and supporting remote workers may be your benefit areas of focus.

These then become the foundation of your intranet objectives.



“ It wasn't a case of simply rolling out a new tool.

The new intranet was introduced as part of a larger change management initiative, designed to encourage knowledge sharing within an organization that faced challenges with collaboration and communication between business units. This meant we had to demonstrate its value at all levels to achieve widespread adoption.

Josh deBerge - Director of National Communications and PR at Make-A-Wish



Intranet objectives: projecting value and return for your project

Objectives typically fall into one of two categories: generic, or specific. When defining opportunity for an intranet within your business, strive to include both generic and specific objectives.

Generic objectives

Generic objectives are typically high-level and may be difficult to quantify. They won't necessarily be defined in business strategy, but they represent considerable potential for an intranet project and shouldn't be overlooked

in a rush to present 'bottom line accounting' benefits. These tend to have 'soft' measures or be broad in nature, like the examples given below.

Generic objectives	Specific objectives
Improve internal communication	Improve revenue by \$X
Increase cross-departmental collaboration	Reduce costs by X%
Enhance knowledge sharing	Increase business growth by X%

Specific objectives

Specific objectives are more precise, and often quantifiable in terms of a numerical value, timeframe or aligned to a particular department,

process, or function. They may start as a generic objective, but go further by assigning a specific measurable. For example:

'Reduce email traffic' >>>> 'Reduce internal email traffic by 40% through the introduction of intranet social tools, reducing burden and cost overheads of internal servers.'

Determining the value of specific objectives

One of the greatest challenges when planning and delivering an intranet project is the perception by those in the C-suite that an internal tool won't deliver bottom-line benefits to the

business. Demonstrating the financial value of an intranet and the return on investment is a powerful tool for obtaining sign-off and support.

Try to use established performance metrics within your organization to communicate value and establish credibility with your stakeholders. Or put simply, try to speak their language. Do they measure success using return on investment, or using a cost-benefit analysis? Is employee turnover measured as a %

of overall staff numbers, or simply as a numerical value?

Here, we show the potential financial benefits an intranet can deliver on five key objectives for an organization. These are approximate and based on the following assumptions:

- 1,000 staff in the organization
- Average salary of \$39,500
- 37.5 working hours per week (7.5 hours a day)
- Equating to \$28.85 an hour salary
- Not all time/money saved will be recaptured by the organization

Objective: Reduce the IT burden

How? An easy-to-use intranet will result in decentralization of content ownership, enabling intranet users with varying IT abilities to upload and update content. This will reduce the burden on the IT team.

Total saving per year (approx.):

5 hours of IT resource time saved per week	48 working weeks in a year	240 hours saved per year	40% of hours saved captured by business = 96 hours	\$20.25 average hourly salary	\$2K
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Objective: Decrease staff turnover by 1%

How? Research shows that for every 2% increase in staff satisfaction levels, there is a 1% increase in retention. An intranet can increase satisfaction by improving engagement, keeping employees informed, communicating mission and purpose, and supporting a common culture.

Total saving per year (approx.):

2% increase in staff satisfaction levels	1% increase in retention	10 fewer leavers per annum (1% of 1000)	15% of annual salary average cost to replace an employee	\$5,925 savings per employee	\$59K
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Objective: Enable staff to self-serve, reducing dependency on HR

How? Centralized storage of critical policies, procedures, and company information on the intranet will allow staff to find information themselves, rather than going directly to HR. **Total saving per year (approx.):**

HR Manager asked a common question about a policy once daily	30mins average time to respond to query and provide information = 150mins/week	Intranet reduces enquiries by 40%	60mins saved/ week x 48 weeks = 2,880mins, or 48hours/year	48 x \$20.25	\$1k
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Objective: Reduce time employees spend searching for information by 1%

How? Research suggests workers spend on average 19% of their working week searching and gathering information. An intranet, as part of an integrated and centralized digital workplace, provides a single, searchable version of truth, reducing time spent searching. **Total saving per year (approx.):**

19% of work week spent searching = 7hrs/employee	7hrs x 1000 employees = 7000 hours/week	Reduce by 1% = 70hours saved/ week X 48weeks = 3,360 hours	40% of time saved captured by business = 1,344 hours	1,344 x \$20.25	\$27k
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Objective: Reduce time taken to process common staff forms or workflows, such as booking a leave of absence

How? Using digital workflows and forms on your intranet will allow staff to self-serve, reducing the burden on HR to process paper-based forms. **Total saving per year (approx.):**

Manually processing an employee request for leave of absence = 30 mins	Each employee books on average 5 absences/year = 30 x 5 x 1000 = 2500 hours	Self-serve digital intranet forms reduce processing time to 5 mins = 5 x 5 x 1000 = 417 hours	Hours saved = 2,500 - 417 = 2,083 hrs 40% of which is captured by the business = 833 hrs	833 x 20.25	\$17k
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Based on these five key intranet objectives alone, this organization could potentially save **\$106K** in the first year of deploying an intranet.



Royal Mail Properties and Facilities Management Services achieved estimated savings of **£2 million** per year with the support of their intranet.

Utilizing workflow and forms, they could centralize and drive the most time consuming and widely used processes via their intranet. In one example, they used the intranet to manage their review process, with all 4,500 employees conducting their preparation via tailored digital forms. While the performance review itself is face-to-face, quarterly follow-ups and any training needs are processed on their intranet.

Typically, there is a two-month drain on HR admin when processing performance reviews. By automating the process, this disappears. Users can't submit forms without all relevant information, reminders are automatic, and reporting is simple.

In addition, an estimated **£80,000** a year was saved by setting up a preferred supplier database on their intranet. This meant they could benefit from economies of scale through the integration of one process when departments bought new supplies.





Crafting an opportunity statement

Once you have identified opportunity in your business, determined your stakeholders and their priorities, and set clear objectives for your project, you can create an opportunity statement.

This is effectively your 'executive summary,' and the reference point throughout the planning and deployment of your intranet project. It sets out, in a clear and concise

manner, the main aspects of your business case.

Use your opportunity statement to highlight the problems your intranet will solve and the expected returns. You may also want to set out resources required, any significant considerations, or guideline timescales for your project. Look to your stakeholder mapping to determine what is important to highlight for your organization.

“ The key objectives of the project are to replace the existing intranet with a new one which:

- Promotes organizational culture and reflects 'one' NSPCC
- Enables staff to share stories, inspires and engages staff, celebrates success and demonstrates impact
- Encourages & facilitates learning, communication & collaboration
- Builds organizational knowledge
- Helps staff to do their jobs
- Improves business efficiency.

NSPCC

A word about benchmarking

It sounds obvious, but it's a step that can be easily missed in a rush to get an intranet project up and running.

To show the value and return your intranet has brought to the business, and to give a realistic estimate

of ROI, you need to have a clear understanding of where you are now. Taking time to evaluate and measure current performance against those all-important objectives will give you a starting point, and ensure you can track success going forward.

Part 2: Planning your intranet

With your business case completed and hopefully signed off, you can move onto the planning phase.

The process of planning a new intranet includes identifying your users and their requirements, selecting the correct features and functionality to meet their needs, and ensuring you have the internal structures, resource, and processes in place to get your intranet launched successfully.

It also considers long-term implications such as where your

intranet will fit in your existing technology stack, how it will evolve and grow with your business, and what is required to deliver on your business objectives.

A well-executed plan not only sets out what you want to achieve; it also identifies any risk factors for your project and sets in place contingency plans to mitigate or minimize these.

We split the planning phase into four key elements:

- **WHO:** planning for users and their needs
- **WHAT:** mapping out features, functionality, and requirements for your intranet
- **WHERE:** considering your intranet project in relation to the digital workplace as a whole
- **HOW:** factoring in resource, roles, support, and risk factors for the delivery of your project

We explore each of these now in turn.

WHO will use your intranet?

Adoption and engagement with your intranet are the biggest and most important indicators of success. Ultimately, this comes down to your users.

Identifying who will use your intranet, and what they will use it for, should form the foundation of your intranet project plan. There can be a tendency to listen first to those at

the top, who control the purse strings or hold responsibility for agreeing and signing off on crucial decisions: however if your intranet is not user-focused, it will quickly fall into disuse.



Step 1: Map your user communities

While it's easy to look to the organizational chart and segment users by department, level of seniority, or job role, it's important to remember that a well-designed intranet can

serve a multitude of communities outside of these silos. We define the four most common as communities of purpose, practice, interest, or event:

Definition

- A group who connect to work towards a shared objective

Examples

- Project team, committee, tender/bid team

Tools needed

- Document collaboration
- Calendars
- Tasks

Definition

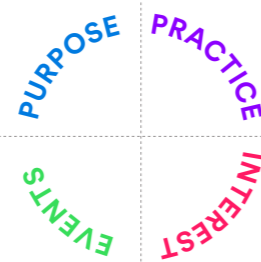
- A group who connect due to shared profession or expertise

Examples

- LinkedIn groups, geographically dispersed experts

Tools needed

- Forums
- Ideation
- Questions and Answers



Definition

- A group who connect due to a physical or virtual event

Examples

- Facebook groups, conferences, training courses

Tools needed

- Calendars
- Timeline
- Forms

Definition

- A group who connect over a common interest

Examples

- Corporate Social Responsibility, charity work, sports, social

Tools needed

- Blogs
- Conversations
- Galleries

Each can appeal to individuals across the traditional boundaries

of department or role and requires different tools to achieve their goals.

To determine their needs, you can use a variety of techniques including:

- Stakeholder interviews
- Surveys
- Focus groups
- Workplace observation
- Usability testing
- Usage statistics, analytics, or search logs of existing platforms

Map out the different existing and prospective communities within your business, their challenges, their priorities, and the individual 'wish list' of tools or features that will support

them. When designing your intranet, use this to ensure your intranet is relevant, useful, and serves a defined purpose.



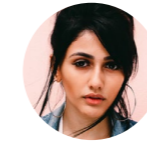
Step 2: Define your audience and create personas

One way to map out user requirements and create a checklist for your planning process is through the use of intranet personas.

These archetypal users stand in as a fictitious representation for real users, created from real knowledge and research to demonstrate goals and personal characteristics of employees.

Often brought to life with a name, personality, and photo, these are easy to keep front-of-mind during an intranet project and can help inform design decisions.

An example persona may look like the following:



Emily Roberts

A call center representative for 6 months. She works on the frontline, taking calls from customers on a wide range of topics.

Key content accessed

- Shared drives
- Bookmarks
- News
- Events
- Team directory
- Service updates
- Product FAQ forum

Emily is relatively new to the business, coming to us from a background in customer service. Her role is to engage directly with existing customers, processing enquiries and answering common questions. Answering a large volume of calls a day, she needs to be able to find the right information quickly. She has to know what she's accessing is the latest information, is accurate, and that it is approved to be customer-facing.

Emily might take a call from a customer asking to update their contact details, or enquiry about

the latest product updates. They may be facing a service issue with the product or looking to make a complaint. Emily works closely with a medium-sized team and knows her peers well, but her job often requires her to speak with people in different departments who she doesn't know. She spends a lot of time flicking between different sources/systems, which she feels is a waste of time.

Emily enjoys getting involved in company activities, volunteering for charity initiatives and regularly attending social events.

“ I never know if I'm accessing the most up-to-date information. If there's a ticket open on service desk for a problem with the product, it doesn't show on the intranet. I need to know I'm giving customers the right information.

Challenges & barriers

- Knowing information is correct/accurate
- Knowing when things change
- Not knowing is the information she finds on the intranet is OK to give to an external caller
- Low level of influence, resulting in frustration when the information she needs isn't accessible and she can't challenge or change processes or outdated information
- Accessing multiple systems to gain information, resulting in delays getting information to the customer

Technology usage & environment at work

- Desk-based and relies entirely on the information in front of her
- Owns the latest gadgets and apps and uses them regularly in her home life
- Thinks the current intranet is old fashioned

Work-arounds

- Builds her own systems and uses third-party apps not endorsed by the business to support her work
- Saves or creates her own information, saved locally, when she identifies information gaps or struggles to navigate to and find what she needs
- Creates bookmarks to key intranet content, but is frustrated when it moves or is deleted

User journeys

- Respond to enquiry about the launch date of the next product update. Look up the relevant developer on org chart, find contact details, request information and update the customer.
- Change customer contact details on the CRM and the company mailing software
- Look in company news for upcoming social events or charity initiatives
- Log a customer complaint and raise a support desk ticket with the product development team

Wish lists

- ☑ Accurate, reliable, and up-to-date information to share with customers
- ☑ Access to latest product updates and projected launch dates
- ☑ Improved findability and centralization of information
- ☑ Fewer systems and login details to use/remember

Key resources outside the intranet

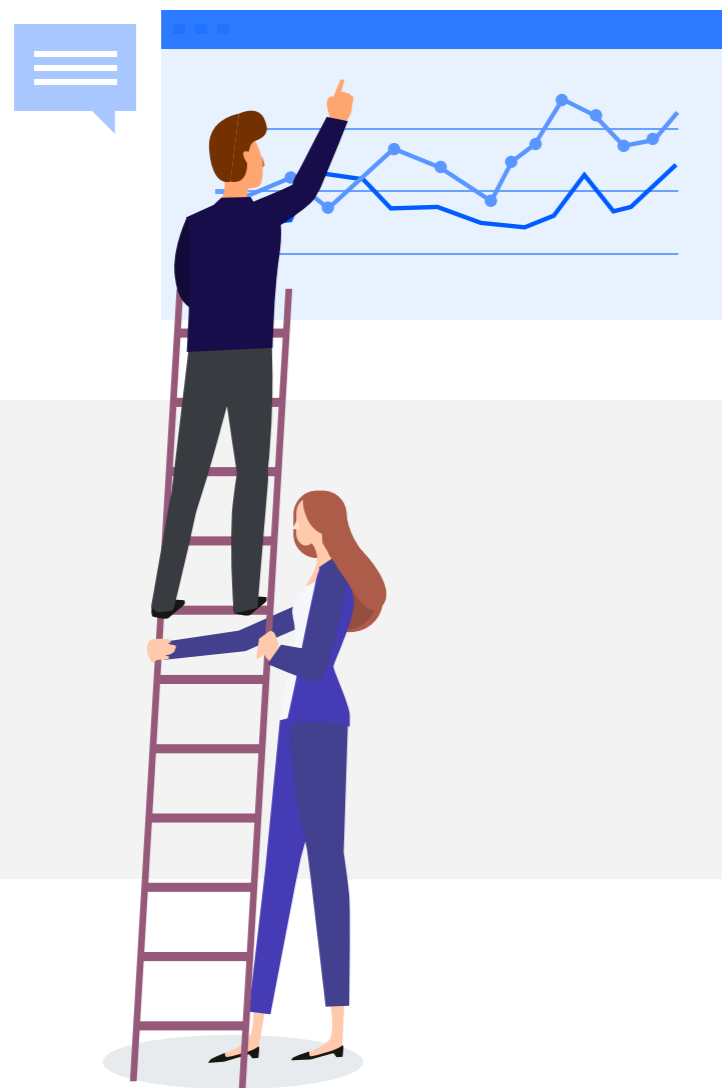
- Customer Service platform (ZenDesk)
- Company CRM
- Organizational charts
- Developers project information, updates and GANTT charts on project management platform

Step 3: Consider any challenges for your users

Your business is made up of individuals. Ensure you consider their unique needs and challenges as part of your plan.

Your intranet should be accessible to all, supporting employees with different levels of technical skill and understanding, differing accessibility requirements, and even different languages.

Consider where your staff are based, how and when they will access the intranet, and any unique challenges they face. For example, do you have remote workers accessing your intranet almost exclusively from mobile devices? Employees who aren't comfortable using technology? Map out any specific needs and requirements for your staff, appealing to your HR department for support if needed.



WHAT must your intranet do?

Having established who your users are, and what they will use the intranet for, you are ready to define what your intranet must do to satisfy those needs: the features, functionality, and overall goals of your intranet.

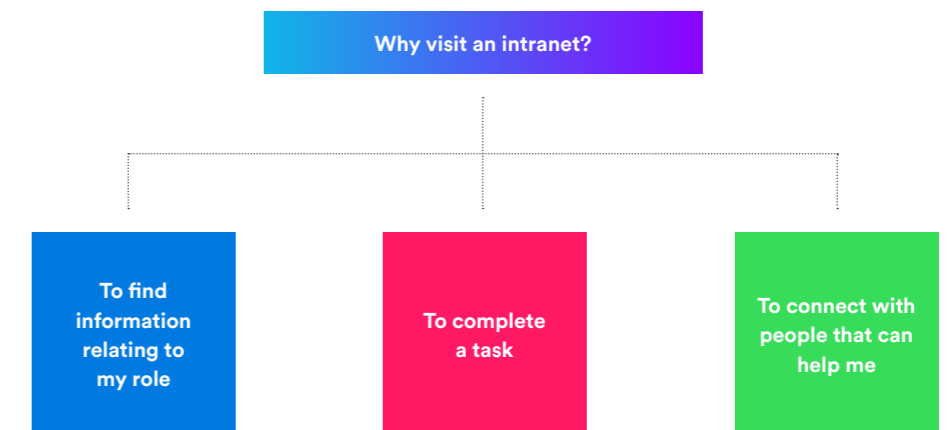
You've already explored the opportunity and set out objectives

in the business case phase of your intranet project. When creating your plan, define what you're looking to get from your project by placing these objectives alongside the needs of your users. Then, map these to the different features and functionality on offer, to determine what you need your intranet to do.

Defining purpose

Refer back to your opportunity statement to help define the overall purpose of your intranet. Set clear goals for both the short-term and long-term performance of your intranet, and use these as a benchmark to help guide your planning and selection process.

Remember: an intranet may be able to deliver on, or support, many business processes and objectives. It's easy to get buried in a long list of needs or wants and forget about the core reasons why users visit an intranet. According to our customer survey, these are:



If your intranet can automate office supply deliveries, display in-depth usage analytics and deliver your in-house training and development program, but a user can't find the HR policy or connect with a colleague,

it isn't serving its most fundamental purpose. Keep referring back to these goals throughout your project to ensure you don't lose track of what it is you need to achieve.

TaxAudit.com took care to align business priorities with user needs when it came to determining the fundamental purpose of their new intranet: creating a single, centralized version of the truth.

“Our success depends on staying current, so we needed a centralized way to store and update critical documents for our teams. When you send out information by email, there are always some people who don’t get it – like new employees for example.

Now, with Interact, everyone has the information they need to work effectively.

Matthew Estes - Director of Strategy,
TaxAudit.com



Getting the right mix

Constant innovation and new developments mean today’s intranet platforms can offer a vast range of features and functionality. However,

as the business case section shows, an intranet ultimately exists to solve problems. These ‘problems’ typically fall into one of 4 categories:



- Business processes: for example, booking a leave of absence or submitting expenses
- Information: for users seeking out an HR policy, company documentation, or perhaps policies and procedures required to fulfill their roles
- Collaboration: such as finding a colleague who can support on a particular task, or to team up with others on a project
- Communication: to both receive top-down communications about their organization, team, or perhaps particular projects, and to communicate with others

To serve its core purpose, therefore, an intranet needs a blend of tools that answer each of these categories and will ultimately help intranet

users, content authors, and intranet administrators to solve problems as efficiently as possible.

What features and functionality do you need?

Guided by your purpose, user needs, objectives, and an understanding of the different categories of business problems an intranet can solve, you can begin mapping out the features you need from your intranet, and then prioritize and use it as a matrix to compare prospective vendors or solutions.

Many standard features are expected and now come out-the-box. Others

may be more niche, unique USPs of particular vendors, or require custom-building to match your vision. Some features or functionality will be of higher relevance and importance to your business; others, surplus to requirements.

There is no 'one size fits all' offering, but some essential features now seen in the majority of successful intranets include:

- A built-in document management system (DMS) or content management system (CMS), or the ability to connect/integrate with a cloud-based storage system such as SharePoint, Dropbox, or OneDrive
- A people directory, or user profiles, for all employees
- Search functionality
- Communication tools, such as forums and discussion boards or instant messaging (IM)
- Social tools, such as timelines, commenting, liking, sharing, polls, the ability to @mention individuals, teams and content, or #hashtags to create themes, trends, or grouping of content
- Project management tools such as calendars, events, task management, file sharing or dedicated project/team groups and spaces
- Galleries or use of rich media, such as videos
- Analytics and usage data
- Gamification elements, such as the ability to give recognition and rewards

As you research options, you'll soon discover this list just barely scrapes the surface of what's available.

However, features alone don't guarantee a successful intranet.

Beyond the feature list

In the planning phase, it is important to balance out what your intranet does – in terms of its features – with how it does them, regarding its functionality and the overall user experience. A complex system with all bells and

whistles may look good on paper; but if it's difficult to use, it won't deliver results.

During your planning, consider the following:

Will it cater for mobile workforces?

Remote working and telecommuting are on the rise, alongside globalized and dispersed workforces. Employees increasingly need to be able to access and utilize business tools on-the-go.

Is it easy to use?

Use of your intranet is the underlying core goal. If your users struggle with the technology, low adoption rates and drop-off in interest will jeopardize its success. Place ease-of-use high on the design requirement list. Look to popular consumer technologies and the features or functionality that make those platforms accessible across different technical abilities.

How easy is it to deploy and maintain?

Depending on your chosen solution and approach (e.g., custom-build vs. out-of-the-box), your intranet could take anything from a few months to a few years to launch. Consider timescales and the amount of resource required to get your project off the ground, as well as what will be needed to maintain and update it.

Will it deliver a great UX for our employees?

User experience, or UX, is rising in importance for consumer software and website developers. Internal platforms are following suit. Your intranet planning needs to consider the satisfaction, usability, accessibility, and overall experience of users to not only serve employees but directly impact the experience they can deliver to your customers.

What your intranet provider must do

Great software alone is not enough to guarantee success. In a crowded marketplace, you may also find that many out-the-box solutions are pretty similar in terms of their core features and functionality. To deliver value, you need to go beyond flicking the 'on' switch: you need a strategic approach, and the right support to deliver on your vision.

If you're electing for an intranet solution through a dedicated provider, they play a vital role in ensuring the success of your project, not only during delivery and launch but for the lifetime of your platform. Alongside the features and functionality in your plan, place a checklist of expectations or considerations for your provider, including:

- Experience
- Thought leadership
- Reputation
- Stable product
- Stable company
- Similar customers
- Cultural match
- Innovation, updates, or future roadmap of the product
- Strategy services and technical consulting
- Project management support
- Product training
- Branding and design services
- Build and launch support
- Account management and ongoing support
- Peer support or events with other customers, to share and promote best practice

We explore the role and value of your intranet provider and their professional services offering in more detail in Part 4: Launching your intranet & Part 5: Ongoing success.



WHERE your intranet fits in your digital workplace

Introducing any new piece of technology or software to your organization carries implications and potential risk. Taking the time to consult and plan for how your intranet will fit into your business, its culture, and your existing technology stack will help ensure a smooth launch.

in your IT department - to discuss any challenges, considerations, or concerns surrounding the introduction of your intranet. This may include where your intranet will be hosted and accessed; whether you'll be custom-building, buying off-the-shelf, or a combination; and how your intranet will work alongside existing tools and technologies already within your organization.

Before undertaking your project, enlist the support and input of any relevant stakeholders – and particularly those

Hosting your intranet

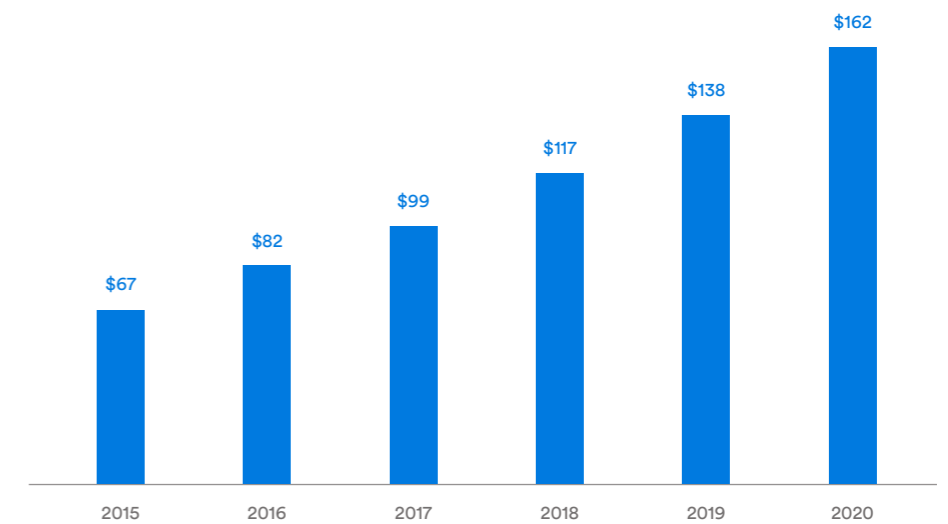
The global growth of cloud computing and increasing redundancy of in-house servers show a projection

for the future of software hosting. Intranets are no different.

The Rapid Growth of Cloud Computing, 2015-2020

Worldwide spending on public cloud computing, 2015-2020 (\$B)

Average compound growth rate, YE2015-YE2020, 19%
IT spending average compound growth rate, YE2015-YE2020, 3%



Source: IDC, 2016

Considering the associated costs and risk of in-house hosting including IT resource, server purchase and maintenance, monitoring, anti-virus protection, licensing, and hardware, on-premise intranet solutions threaten your return on investment. What's more, they aren't as scalable, accessible or futureproof as their cloud-based alternatives, requiring manual updates and restricting how or when users can access the intranet. All of these factors undermine engagement and may threaten long-term success.

free alternative. For these reasons and more, many leading providers are ceasing to provide their solutions as an on-premise product.

When considering hosting for your intranet, the question should no longer be whether to opt for an in-house or public cloud-hosted solution. Instead, center your planning around identifying an intranet or hosting partner who can meet stringent security standards and demonstrate excellence in reliability and support.

By contrast, a cloud-based intranet shares risk and offers a fully maintained, accessible, and stress-

At a bare minimum, the system you're considering should meet ISO 27001 standards. We also recommend asking vendors for their documentation on:

- Penetration testing
- Vulnerability scanning and intrusion detection
- Data encryption
- Safe Harbour
- Mobile Device Management (MDM)

Depending on your industry sector and organizational attitude to security and risk, there may be additional considerations – for example, US healthcare organizations must elect for HIPAA compliant solutions

to protect customer data. During this process, bring in IT and legal stakeholders who can ensure your hosting solution is compliant with business standards and expectations.

Custom building an intranet

In the context of an intranet, 'building' usually means creating a custom-made system from scratch, often on top of SharePoint or another DMS. This may be an option for organizations with large in-house IT teams, or access to specialist developer skills and resource to design a purpose-built system.

Custom-built intranet solutions have the benefit of being tailored to an exact fit for your business requirements and can be a viable option if you already utilize a DMS internally that offers a degree of customization. However, there are a few key risks associated with building an intranet that are worth considering:

What internal expertise can you access?

Do you have the necessary skillset internally to work with the technology on which the intranet is to be built, or will you need to account for the cost of third-party resource?

What resources can you commit to a custom build?

How will the scheduling of this project interfere with already established priorities within the business? Even if the internal expertise is available, the chances are you won't be able to obtain exclusive use for your project, and will need to take this into account.

Do you have any experience developing this type of technology?

Does your internal resource have experience developing this type of technology? An intranet may have some similarities regarding its features and functionality to an external website, but in reality, both serve very different audiences and purposes. A specialist with experience in the design and delivery of internal collaborative software is better equipped to help you realize your objectives, and maximize value and return.

What are the required timescales for the build's completion?

Does your intranet need to be up-and-running in 6 months, or 1-2 years? Custom builds typically come with longer timescales for completion, and a higher risk of project overrun.

It is important to recognize that custom building an intranet on top of SharePoint or another DMS provider presents considerable limitations when it comes to delivering on your internal communications strategy: because, quite simply, these systems are document management systems

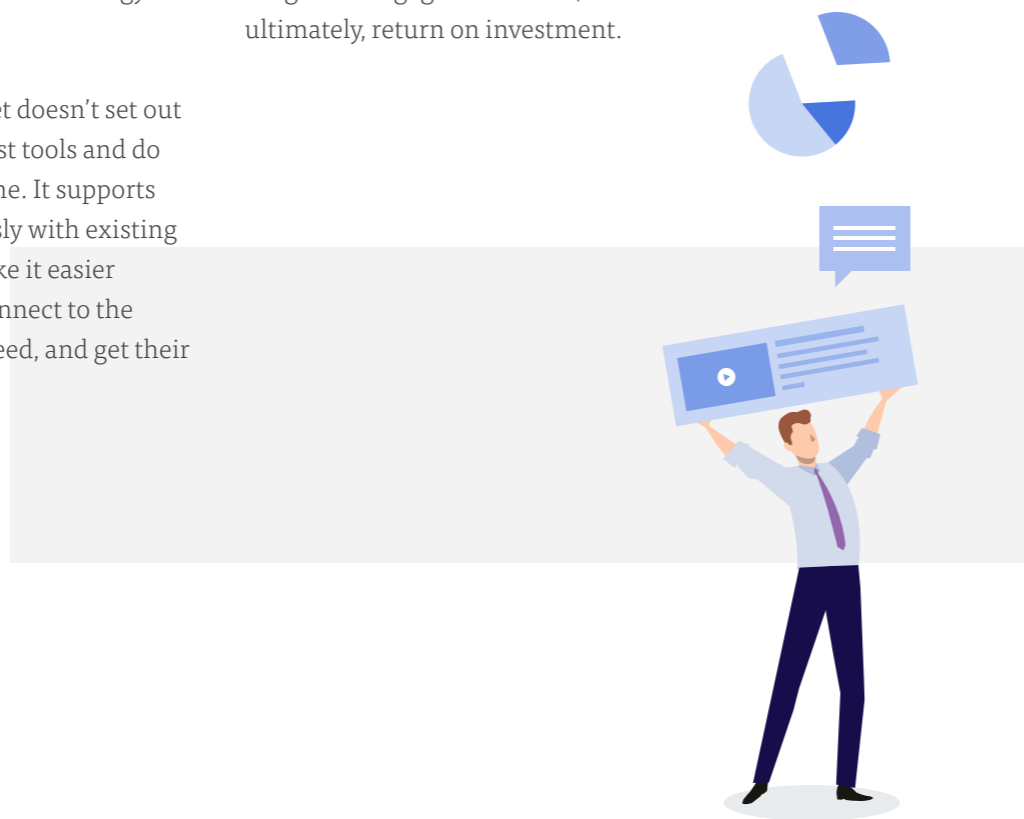
at their core. An alternative solution increasingly favored is to select an off-the-shelf solution that offers integration functionality with SharePoint as part of Office 365.

Your intranet as part of the business technology stack

Today's digital workplaces are increasingly fragmented and complex, with a single organization utilizing hundreds, or potentially thousands of different tools and applications as part of its technology stack. Digitally savvy employees enjoy the luxury of choice when it comes to workplace technology; however, this also presents challenges such as information silos, duplication of effort, and the risk of technology fatigue.

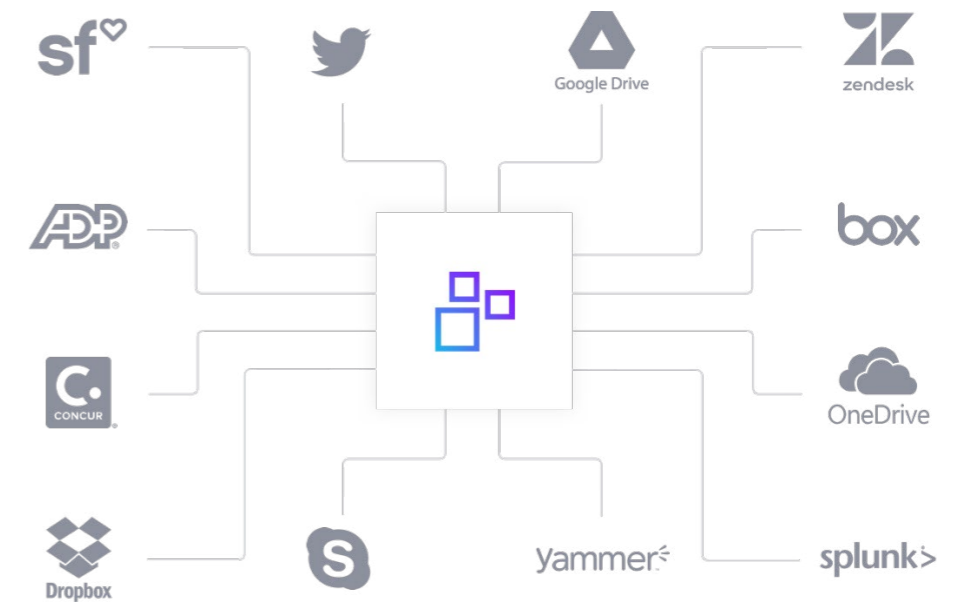
Designing your intranet as a centralized facilitator of your digital workplace by integrating with existing tools and platforms or using outbound single sign-on (SSO) functionality will break down information silos, streamline everyday processes, and ultimately bring your digital workplace together. By simplifying the digital experience in this way, an intranet can dramatically increase usage and engagement – and, ultimately, return on investment.

An effective intranet doesn't set out to replicate specialist tools and do 'everything' all in one. It supports and works seamlessly with existing technologies to make it easier for employees to connect to the information they need, and get their work done.



During the planning stage, consider:

- Integrating with existing cloud storage or third-party internal platforms, such as your HR or payroll systems
- Bringing in role-specific applications to your intranet, such as customer service or support desk tools like ZenDesk, which will speed up the resolution of customer queries through access to a centralized knowledge repository and ultimately provide superior service
- Integrating with SharePoint as part of Office 365, or your chosen cloud storage provider, to create a single, centralized version of truth for all business documents, policies, and information
- Connecting your intranet with communication tools such as Yammer or Skype, bringing all your business conversations into a single location and reducing dependency on email
- Configuring your intranet as an identity provider with Single Sign-On (SSO) functionality, reducing the number of accounts, passwords, and logins your employees are required to enter and remember – saving staff time and IT resource



These decisions will factor into your intranet design and the solution that you elect for. You may benefit from technical consultancy services delivered by your selected

intranet provider to determine how to configure and manage these integrations or connections simply, yet securely.

HOW you will deliver your intranet project

Even if you are utilizing a specialized provider to deliver your intranet project, there will be resource requirements and business impact on your organization during the process.

By identifying how – and who – will be involved up front, you can plan for any additional resource requirements, create realistic timescales, and reduce frequent project risks.

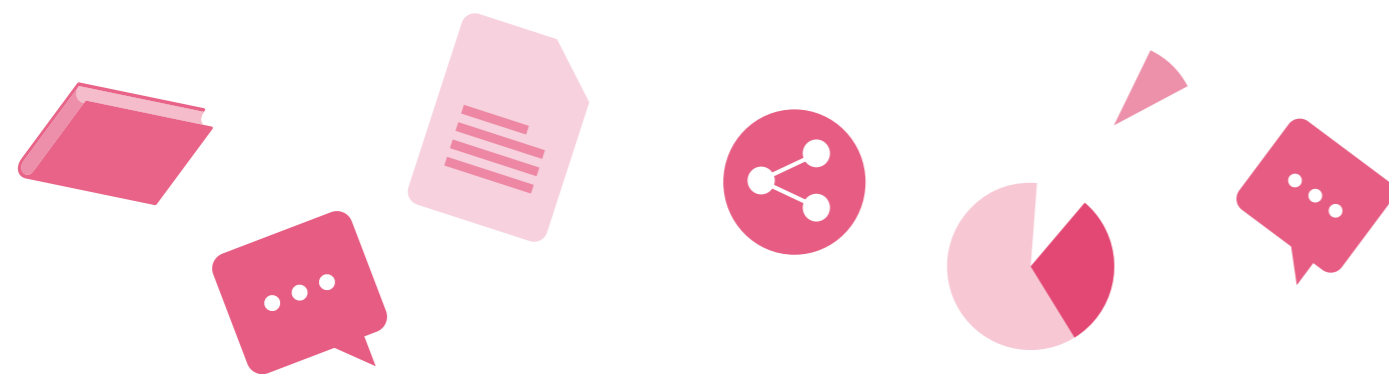
Your intranet project team

Getting the right people behind your intranet project, both during the implementation and to manage your intranet after launch, is critical to its success.

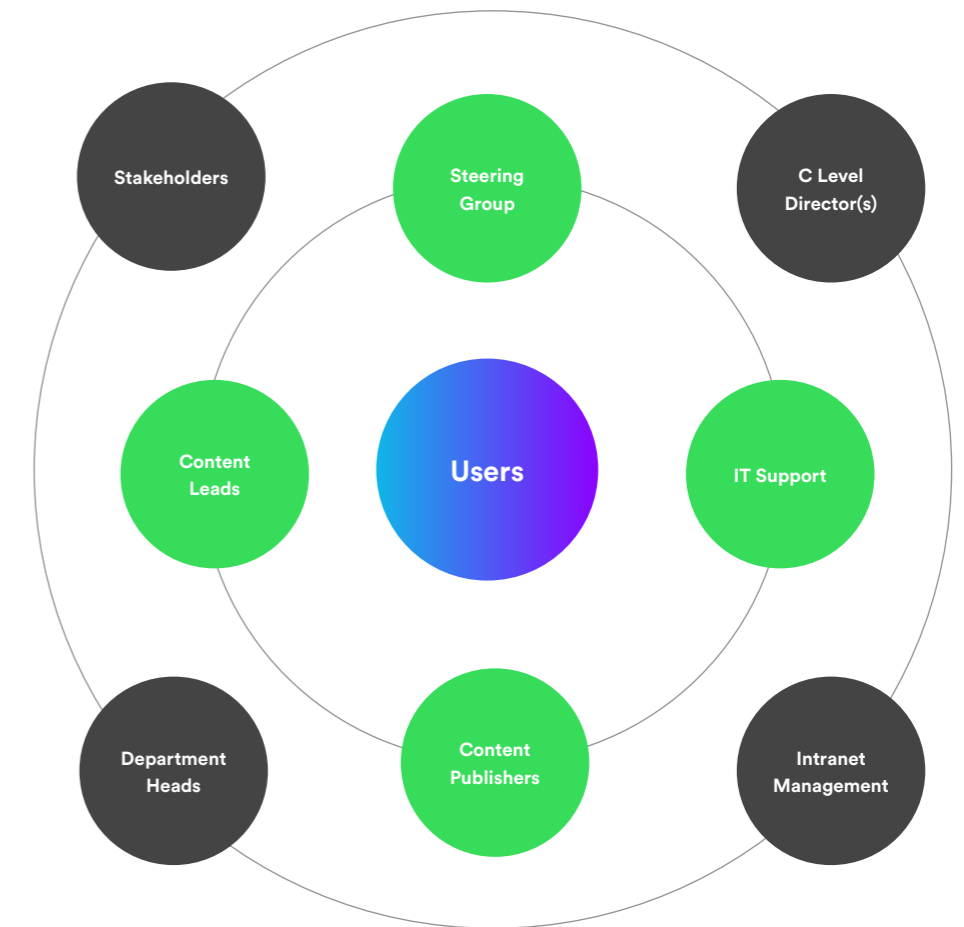
accountability or ownership, or poor governance and direction for your intranet.

Planning your team is not only important for determining your project resource requirements. Defined roles and responsibilities will also reduce many common risks such as project overrun, lack of

While every organization should plan their unique governance and team structure to match their culture and objectives, there are some basics to consider when identifying who needs to be involved, and what their role may include.



Example intranet governance and project team model:



The most fundamental thing to remember is that a successful intranet is centered on its users. No matter what governance model you choose, keep them front-of-mind as the driving force for all major decisions around your intranet.

project and ongoing management. This will differ from one business to another; some of the roles may overlap, others may be redundant for your organization. If you are a small business with limited resource availability, several of the roles may be conducted by one person.

Next, we set out the example roles and responsibilities for an intranet



Who?	Why do you need them?	What they should do
C Level Director(s)	This group has power and influence to create real change in your organization – not just procedurally, but culturally, as we explored in Part 1.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Sign off and support the intranet purpose and objectives ■ Enhance and develop the intranet in line with organizational objectives ■ Lead change and help break down barriers preventing the intranet from reaching its potential ■ Escalation point for stakeholder and intranet management for unsolved issues
Stakeholder(s)	Stakeholders have overall responsibility for delivering intranet success. They are sufficiently senior to have a broad view of company objectives and are well connected to the needs of the organization and the other senior leaders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Work with intranet management, C-Level and the organization as a whole to plan and execute the intranet strategy ■ Enhance and develop the intranet in line with organizational objectives ■ Chair governance meetings ■ Report to C-Level on the progress of intranet strategy, escalating issues where required
Intranet management: typically Internal Comms Managers or equivalent	For centralized management of the intranet day-to-day. Without even just light-touch management, your intranet risks becoming out of date, sprawling, unfocused or unused.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Work with stakeholders to develop and execute intranet strategy ■ Day-to-day management of intranet including creating and managing structure, or setting and maintaining homepages ■ Work with content owners and publishers to check and review content, enhance search optimization, and adhere to content strategy and management principles ■ Ongoing training of publishers and familiarization for users

Who?	Why do you need them?	What they should do
Content Leads: for example, Directors or Heads of Department	To be accountable overall for the content published to the intranet by their department, ensuring the validity, accuracy, and usefulness of content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Provide content publisher resource and support the publisher in keeping content up-to-date ■ Work with stakeholders and intranet management to adhere to content strategy and management principles ■ Respond to requests from intranet management and work to resolve issues
IT Support – senior representative, as well as day-to-day support	To consult on the strategic role and any technical concerns of the intranet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Consult and assist with technical aspects regarding hosting, security, and user management ■ Support for integration and digital workplace management ■ Ensure validity of user management source ■ Help troubleshoot technical problems
Content Publishers	To ensure content is created and published on the intranet for users to consume, keeping your intranet relevant and engaging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Work with content lead and intranet management to create, publish, and manage content in accordance with content strategy and management principles ■ Respond to requests for content
Steering group – mixture of roles and seniority	To consult on ideas, plans, strategy, and any proposals you want input or opinions on – a ‘check and test’ group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Work with the intranet management team to provide user feedback on current and future plans ■ Input ideas into strategic planning

Defining roles and responsibilities

If your resource is internal, you face the challenge of employees juggling their project responsibilities alongside their day-to-day roles. They may have conflicting priorities, or be called away to alternative projects within the organization.

Ensure that intranet team roles and responsibilities are agreed, documented, and clarified upfront: individuals should know what is expected of them, both during the project and in the long-term. If roles or responsibilities change, the handover needs to be documented and agreed by all major stakeholders.

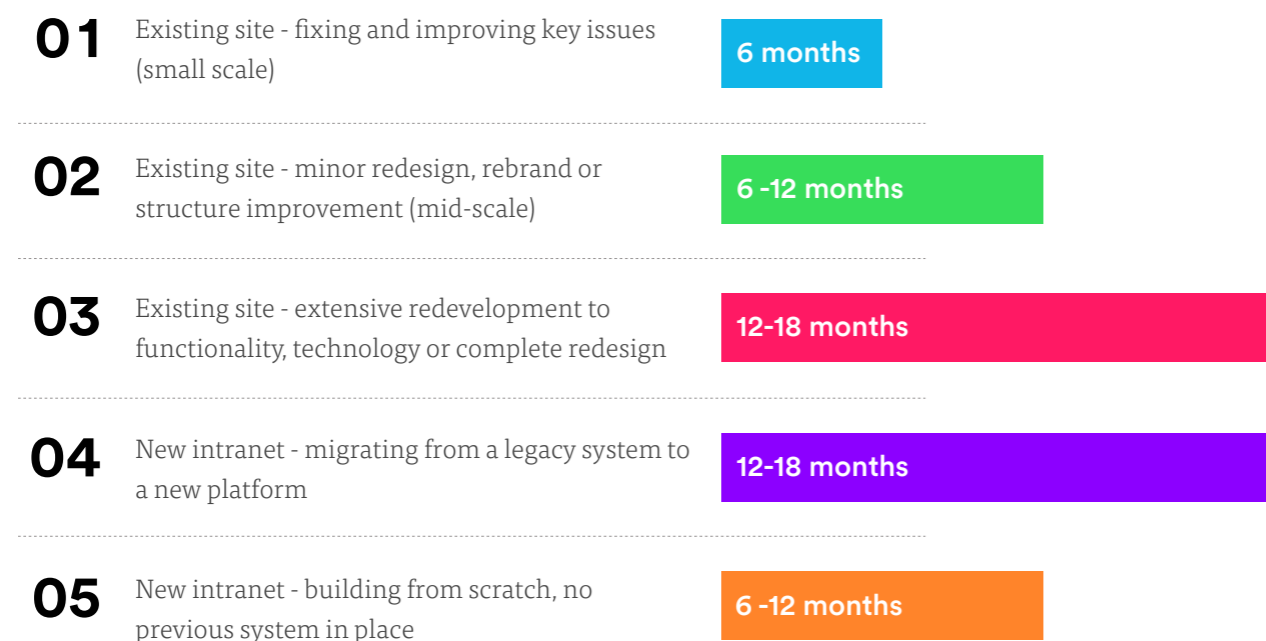
Timescales and deliverables

The question of how long an intranet will take is always high on the priority list for senior stakeholders, but as any project manager will testify, there is no clear-cut answer. Timescales will vary according to scope, solution selected, customization requirements, size and complexity of the organization, hosting/hardware

requirements, the volume of content, internal processes and more.

As a rough guide, the chart below shows how differences in scope – whether this is a new project or redevelopment of an existing site – could impact on timescales.

How long could my intranet project take?



*Timescales here are intended to give a rough estimate. Actual timescales will vary according to the size and scope of your individual project.

Working through your plan, many of the timescales will become evident. Be realistic, and allow for contingency events and margin for error or delay. Break down your project into crucial stages, and establish any deliverables

required for each step: for example, when your senior stakeholders need to sign off on the final design, or when the first wave of content needs to be migrated or built.

Need support projecting timescales for the delivery of your intranet project?

Our free [Content build calculator](#) is designed to help.

Simply enter a few basic bits of information about your business and its knowledge assets, and the calculator will figure out how much resource – whether in terms of time or people – you will need during this crucial phase of deployment.



Professional services and support for your intranet project

Planning and deploying an intranet is a company-wide business change that has the potential to transform the way you communicate, collaborate, and innovate.

and resource to get your intranet up and running, which can be a challenge for small in-house teams.

Successfully rolling out that degree of change often calls for strategic thinking, specialist knowledge, and previous experience. As the planning section of the guide shows, it also takes a considerable amount of time

Support during the planning and implementation phases, as well as ongoing input after you launch, can make a significant, measurable impact on the overall success of your intranet. When planning your project, consider a budget for the following:

- Intranet strategy: support for planning and governance, structure, content, awareness, launch, and engagement to provide you with a roadmap for your intranet
- Training: upskilling administrators, content authors, intranet champions, and your users to instil confidence, drive adoption, and ensure everyone can get the most out of their new platform
- Branding and design services: help to define and deliver the right look and feel for your intranet and internal brand
- Technical consultancy: support answering questions or considerations around technical elements such as security, integration, authentication, or setting up users. Specialist support will ensure everything comes together, reduce risk, and ensure your intranet performs the way it should
- Build support: the process of populating and building your intranet homepages, content, and people directory, can be resource-intensive. If you have limited internal resource available, you may want to consider some outside help for this crucial stage
- Project management: a dedicated project manager will coordinate and drive all the individual elements required to get your intranet off the ground, and mitigate many of the common risks associated with delivering a large-scale project

Looking to understand a bit more about the role and value of professional services for your intranet project?

At Interact, we understand what it takes to deliver a successful intranet project. Our team of in-house specialists have over 15 years' experience delivering intranets for over 1 million users globally and offer a complete suite of professional services to support our customers at every stage of their intranet journey.

Visit interact-intranet.com/services to learn more, or [call us](#) to speak to a member of the team today.



Planning for project risk

Risk is a fact of any project. Even the best-planned and executed software implementations aren't immune to risk: no matter how diligent we are, there will be external factors that threaten the success or even the launch of our projects.

Software development and implementation in particular often

require complex technologies and specialist skills or knowledge to get right, creating additional risk factors. Even if you're opting for an out-the-box intranet solution that requires, at least on paper, minimal input or configuration from your business, risk management should still form a central part of your project plan.

What is 'risk'?

Risk factors are possible events or conditions that, should they happen, could cause a direct impact on at least one project objective or a deviation from what has been forecast.

Risks are also called 'threats,' as they threaten an organization's success – and in extreme circumstances, even its survival.

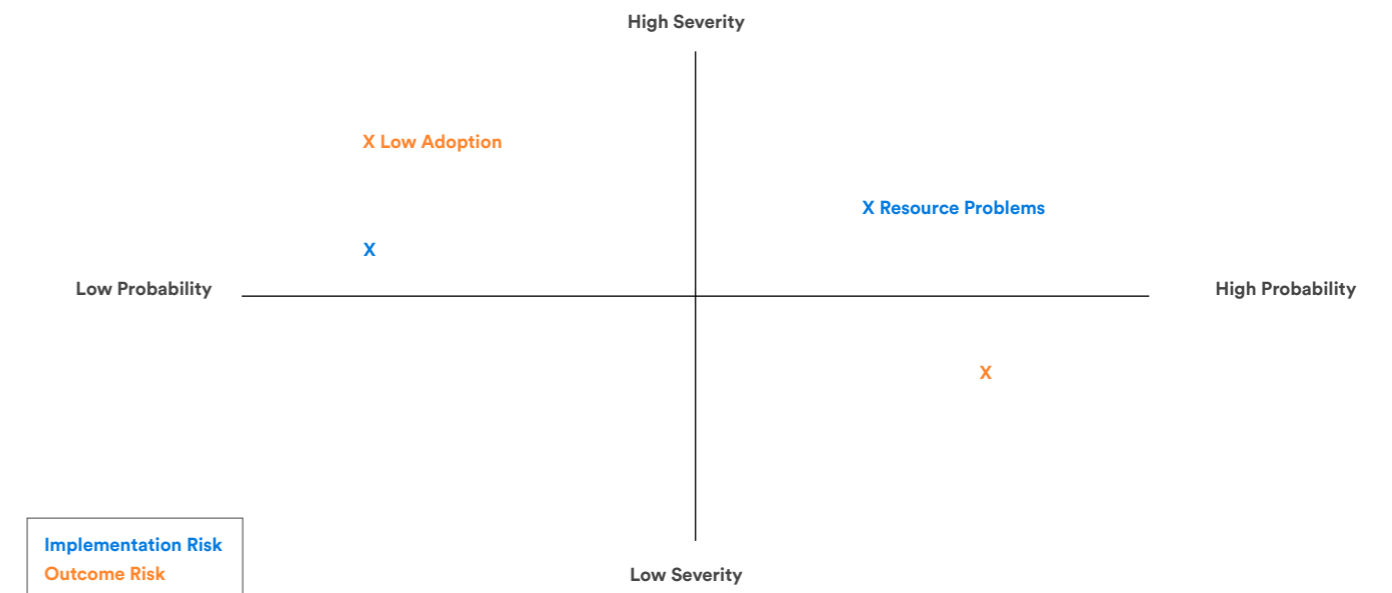
When delivering an intranet project, there are commonly two distinct types of risk:

- **Implementation risk:** the risk that a proposed investment may deviate from the original or expected requirements, resulting in higher costs than anticipated
- **Outcome risk:** the risk that the business or technology needs of the organization may not be met by the investment, resulting in lower overall total benefits

Risk factors will differ from one business to the next, taking into consideration your company size, sector, structure, and priorities. What may be considered a massive threat for one business may only be an inconvenience for another, so it's worth taking the time to evaluate your unique position and any potential challenges to your intranet project.

How you map out and present risk will differ according to your organization and its attitude towards risk. For most, a simple brainstorm and impact vs. probability graph is a good start, like the below. Once you've determined those that are high severity or probability, you can draft mitigation responses.

Example:



For example:

- **Risk:** Resource problems during build phase – high impact/high probability
- **Solution:** As part of the project plan, contingency budget has been allocated for a temporary third-party resource to assist with the content audit, migration, and build.

Top Tip: Don't shy away from stating risk; be frank. Transparency and a mindset of preparing for the worst is the most effective way to reduce the likelihood and severity of risk.

Part 3: Building and deploying your intranet

With a clear plan and the right team behind you, you're ready to move onto the build phase of your new intranet.

As part of this stage, you'll begin to populate your intranet with the necessary information and content identified during your planning stage as a 'must have' for users. You'll create and fill user profiles, establish a brand for your intranet, and craft those all-important homepages that will act as the window to the intranet for your users.

Content and Information Architecture

An intranet should be structured and designed in such a way that employees are confident in how to find what they're looking for. It should be logical, intuitive, easy.

However, most organizations have substantial knowledge assets. Managing the large volumes of content, users, information, and differing user requirements can be an overwhelming task – but it's also essential to your intranet success.

For this reason, creating a clear information architecture and building to a defined structure is essential. Without this, many intranets can become a dumping ground for information: users will be forced to navigate multiple versions of documents, unintuitive or illogical structures, or battle poor search functions. Your intranet will quickly become unfit for purpose.

Conducting a content audit

One of the riskiest approaches taken to building an intranet is to just 'mass migrate' existing content onto a new platform. It may reduce the build time and get your project live more quickly, but it is also one of the quickest routes to project failure.

Organizations acquire more and more information every year they're in existence. Without careful management, much of that information quickly becomes irrelevant, incorrect, and duplicated.

Deploying an intranet is a valuable opportunity to take stock and perform a much-needed spring clean. Take a brutal approach to collating information from across your business before identifying what you need and use.

Consider not only what content you have, but its quality and relevance, who owns it, and where it resides. Determine content that is redundant or no longer serves a purpose, and any potential gaps.

For example:

Name	Versions	Stored	Owner	Updated	Comments	Recommendation
HR Policy	2003, 2005, 2007, 2012	Shared drive Individual PCs HR shared folder	HR Manager	2012	Spelling and grammatical errors throughout. Outdated content – doesn't include newest pension information.	Revised updated policy to be created by HR. Remove all previous versions from shared drives.

What content do I need?

What goes onto an intranet is **unique to every individual business** – there is no prescribed checklist of essential documents that ‘must’ form part of your content strategy. The process of identifying the needs of your users

and business will form part of your business case and the planning phase of your project. Through your content audit and the process of defining your intranet objectives, you will have an understanding of:

- **Your intranet purpose**
- **Your audience**
- **What they need**
- **How they’re accessing information**

While your intranet content plan will be unique to your organization, there

are some common content types you may want to consider including:

- HR, IT, or business policies and documentation
- Orientation and onboarding support
- How to: user guides or support for everyday tasks and use of the intranet
- Team-specific content
- Administrative tasks or automated processes
- User-friendly or user-generated content
- Access to external content (for example, content residing in third-party storage systems such as your DMS, or your payroll or HR platforms)
- Brand and culture materials – such as your mission and values
- Top-down news and communications

Creating an information architecture and structure

You have your list of content, the essentials that need to go onto your intranet. So, how do you sort it to ensure findability and discoverability, as well as a positive user experience? The answer is logical information architecture and clear navigation throughout your intranet.

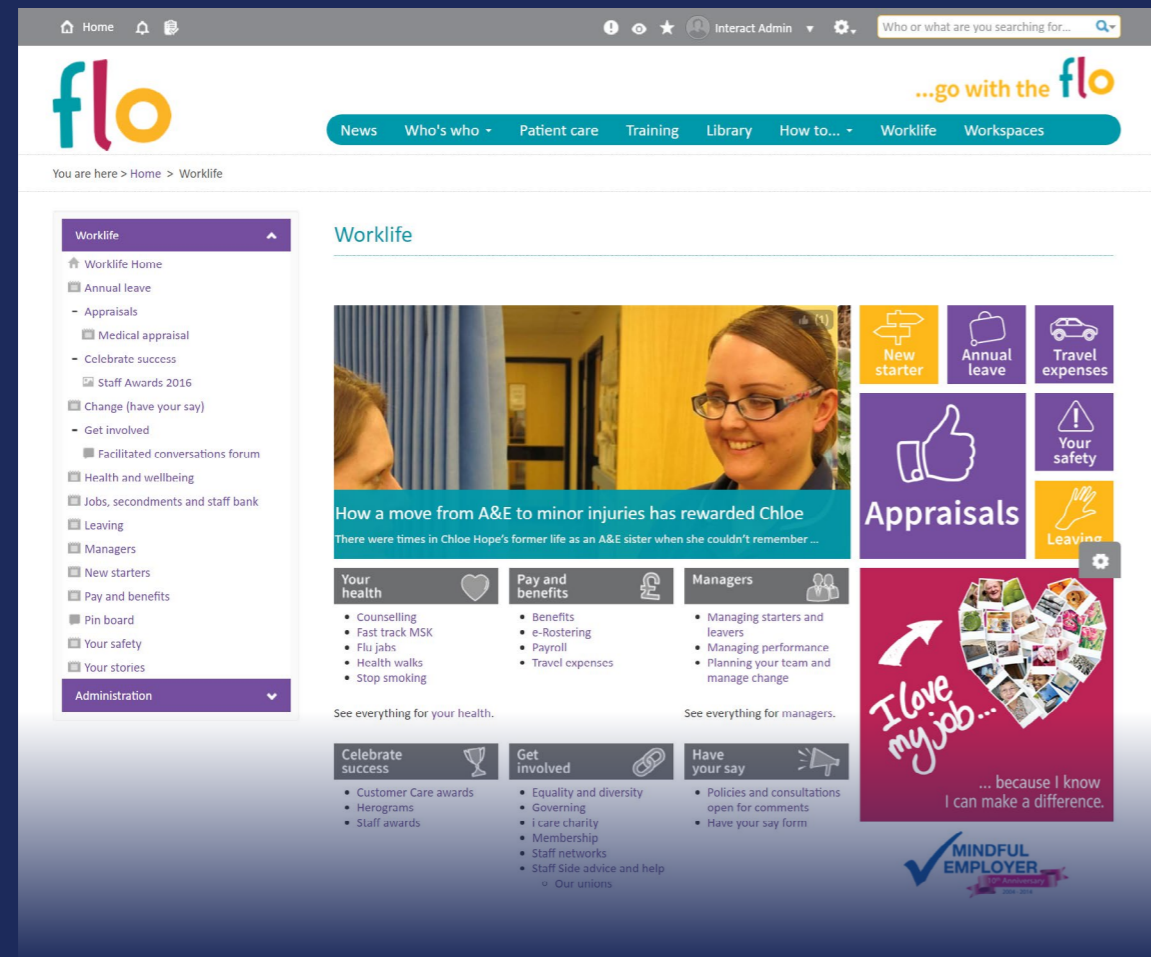
The two are often used interchangeably and have a significant role to play in driving usability and findability on your site, but there is a distinct difference:

- Information architecture refers to **how your content is organized and labeled**
- Navigation is **the process of moving from one place to another.**

One of the best practices here is to involve those who will be undertaking those content journeys every day: your users. Standard techniques include card sorting or categorization, where end users will brainstorm how content should be logically grouped and termed. Evaluate responses and use

these as a basis for your plan. Where do users expect to find content? Are there any common themes or trends? Anything that doesn’t seem to fit neatly in a particular area? What about the terminology, acronyms, or different phrases users adopt?

Content name	Also known as	Suggested mapping/navigation
IT policy	IT security, security policy, information technology, IT handbook	IT > Policies and Procedures Organization > Policies > IT HR > Onboarding > Policies and Procedures



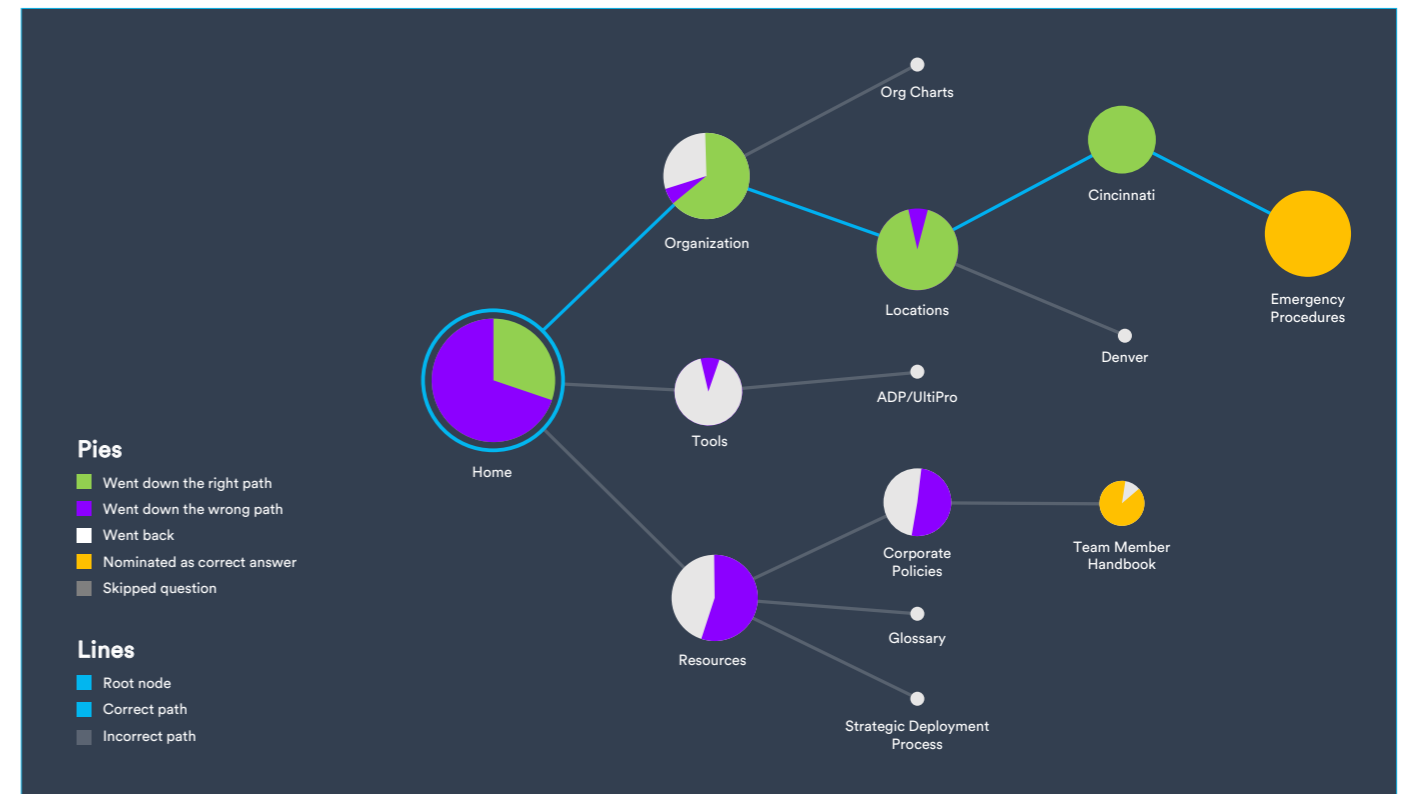
UK healthcare provider, Kent Community Health NHS Foundation Trust, use their intranet 'Flo,' named after Florence Nightingale, to centralize important business and HR processes.

In the 'Worklife' section, all HR information is grouped and categorized for intuitive navigation. Icons provide a simple and accessible way to pick out what users need. Employees can access benefit and payroll information, read important company policies, submit travel expenses, complete appraisals, and much more.



Storyboard common workflows and tasks that users will perform on your intranet, such as submitting expenses or booking a leave of absence. What journey would users logically take to complete their task? Submit it to feedback and testing from users themselves, to identify if it is intuitive and easy for them.

Below is an example of 'storyboarding' and structure testing. An example user journey is tested to see where users expect to find content, and whether the proposed structure meets those expectations. It can help identify the different routes or pathways through an intranet.



Top Tip: You don't need to link to every page and resource on your intranet, just because you can. Interact software pushes tailored and relevant content to users based on multiple elements including persona, role, location, and previous behavior on the intranet. Focus instead on making your intranet a searchable hub of organizational resources and information.

Not every piece of content is relevant to every individual in your business. As part of your information architecture, consider how to target information to the right people, at the right time. Personalization is proven to deliver higher levels of engagement, supporting your long-term intranet objectives.

Traditionally, communication has been targeted using the organizational hierarchy – distributing information to defined teams or departments, often using manually updated email lists or the equivalent.

In the modern-day business, this is no longer sufficient for successful internal communication. Individuals typically fall into many other, more dynamic categories outside of these rigid structures. For example, you may want to target all employees who manage more than two people who haven't undertaken people management training, or group mobile workers who haven't used the intranet for more than three weeks.

Intelligence or persona functionality in leading intranet platforms enables you to create and target dynamic employee groups. Once you have a defined internal audience, you can:

- Broadcast vital or timely information
- Create tailored and relevant homepages
- Suggest or push relevant content
- Automatically target the right individuals, with groups updating anytime users are added or their status changes – without manual maintenance

Ultimately, considering what content is relevant and making even minor adjustments to tailor or customize for specific audiences will enable

you to engage with them on a more personal level, improving the relevance, adoption, and success of your intranet.

“With our intranet, we can find people and information quickly and respond to customer queries faster.

There are also tools such as online HR forms that save on admin time so we can focus on what really matters: delivering a consistently excellent experience for every one of our customers and supporting them through their journey with us.

Laura Talbot - Internal Communications Manager, AO.com



Building an intranet brand

Building a brand for your intranet is key to creating something your users will love – and ultimately use.

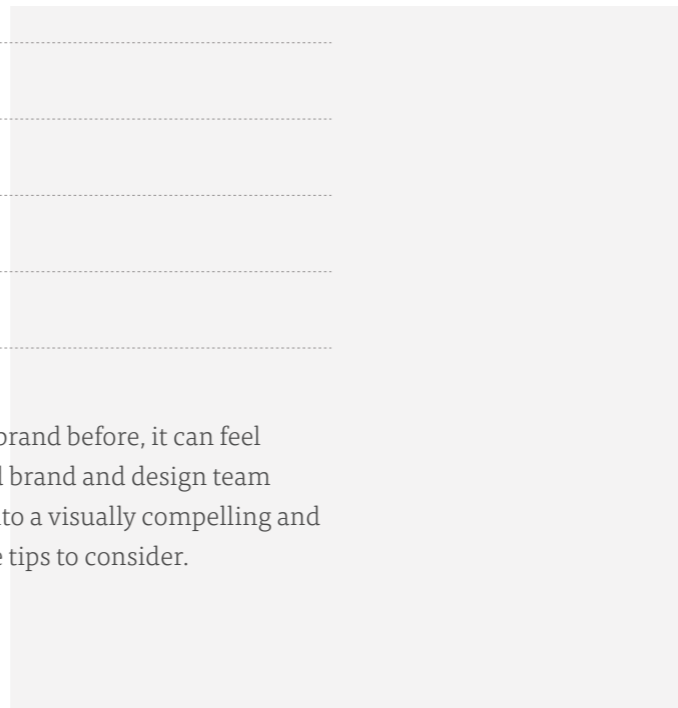
Brand identity is about more than design. It's that certain 'something' that identifies or differentiates you, communicates who you are, and what you stand for. It encompasses the personality of your intranet, the values you project, and the perception or experience that creates.

Designed effectively, your intranet brand is a powerful tool to shape how your employees feel about your organization and its purpose, unifying them behind a common mission and bringing to life your vision when they interact with your customers or consumers.

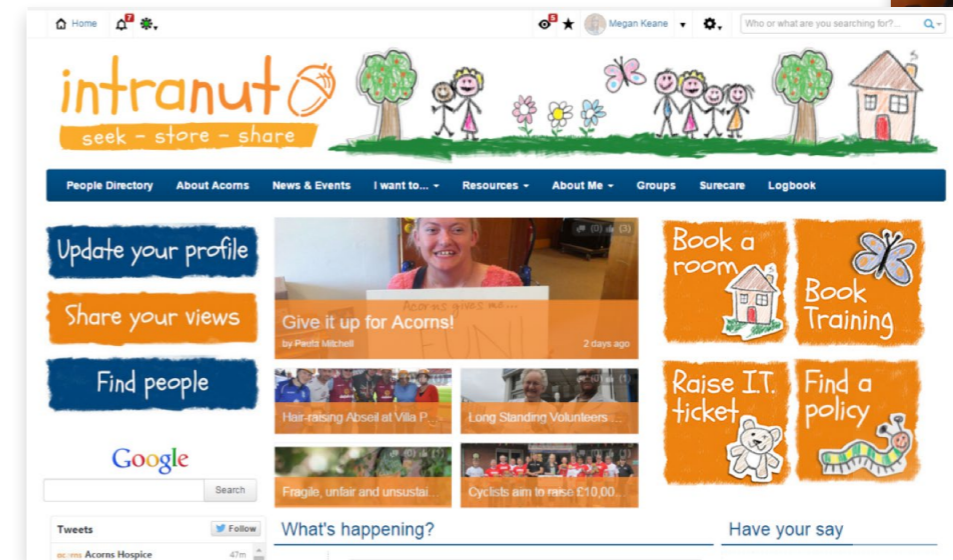
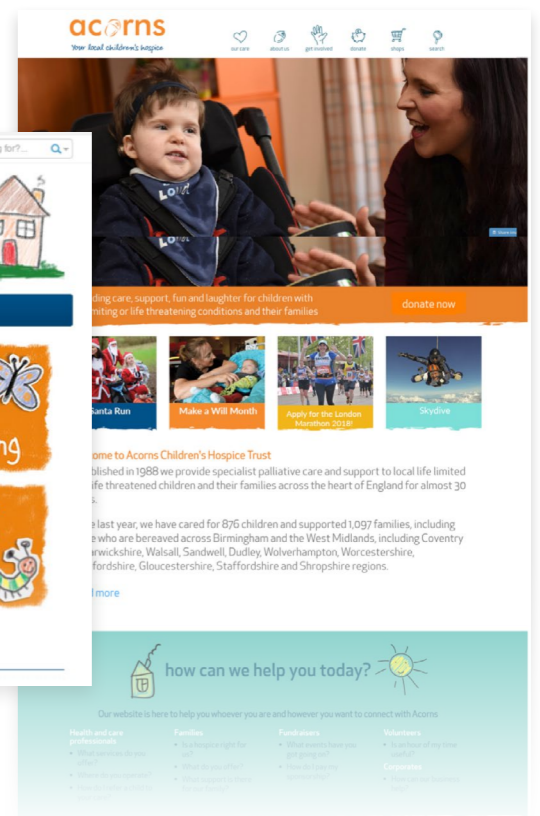
A brand can be created and communicated using a variety of elements, including:

- Your intranet name and logo
- Brand color palette
- Fonts and typography
- Page designs and style sheets
- Icons, calls-to-action, and buttons
- Language or tone of voice
- Structure, IA, and navigation
- Content or information you choose to host

If you haven't had experience creating an internal brand before, it can feel overwhelming. Specialist support from a dedicated brand and design team may help to define your brand and translate that into a visually compelling and engaging intranet design. However, there are some tips to consider.



Acorns website



Acorns's intranet

Alignment with external brand

When it comes to creating an internal brand, you should look to align with your external brand - but not replicate it.

Remember, you're looking to create a common identity both internally and externally, so that your employees believe in and translate those values to your consumers. However, these are brands for different audiences. Keep some familiar elements, but make them distinguishable.

This may be by replicating your brand colors, for example, but giving your intranet a distinct name. We see this demonstrated by the children's hospice not-for-profit organization, Acorns, above.

The external website and the organization's intranet share some common elements, such as brand colors, the use of the 'brush effect' around buttons or modules, and the acorn within the logo. However, the intranet typeface and styling differs in favor of a more fun, informal, and child-like choice. The intranet name also makes a play on the company name combined with 'intranet', and the use of children's drawing is more prominent, including as button icons on the main calls to action on the upper right of the homepage. The result is a focus on the purpose and mission of the organization: the children it helps.

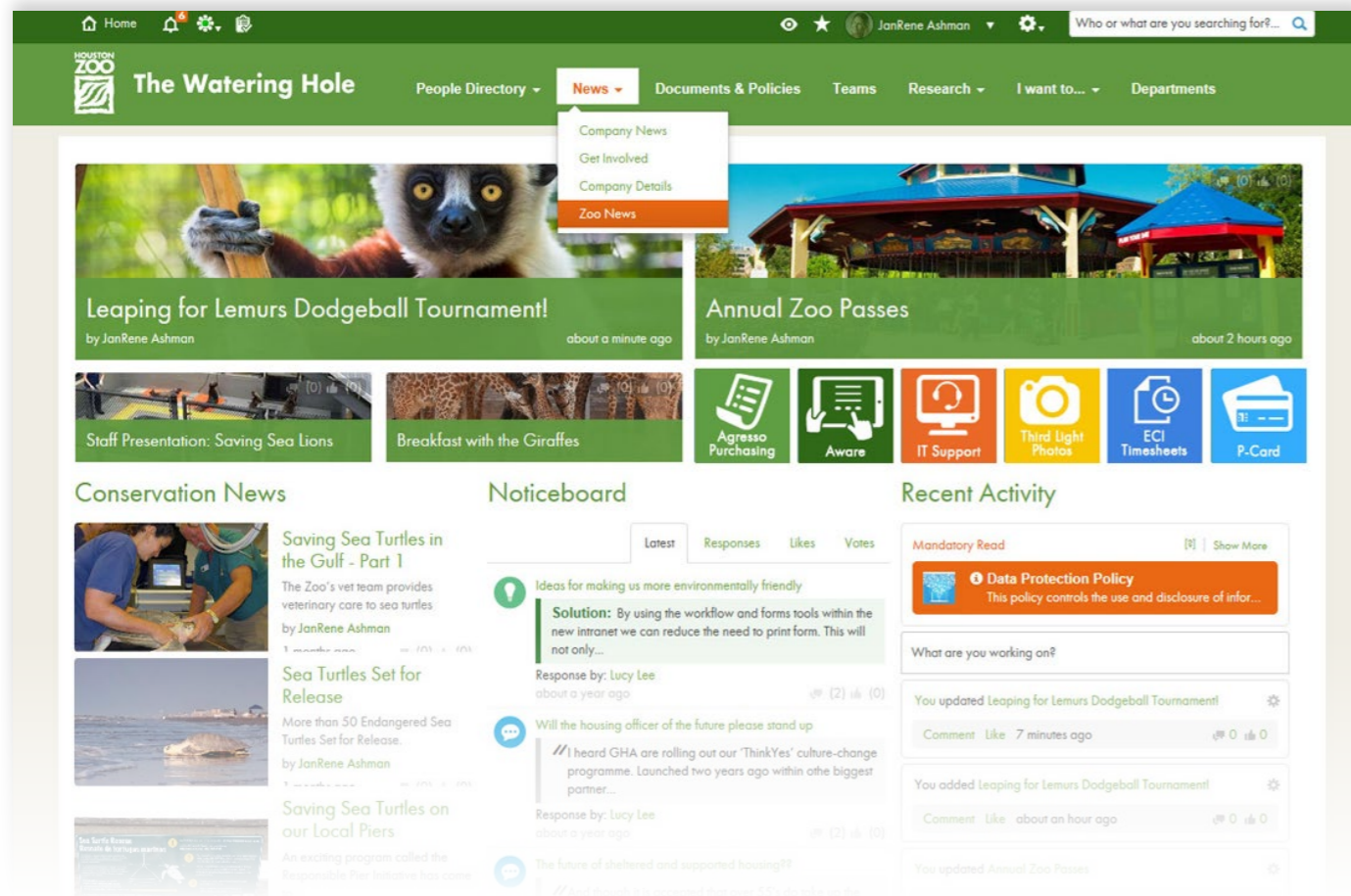
Naming your intranet

One of the most defining brand elements of your intranet is what you decide to call it. A name brings an inanimate object to life, and in the case of your intranet, it can be used to add personality and purpose.

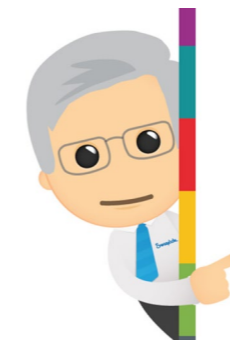
A name also makes it easier for users to identify with and engage with the platform, improving overall engagement. It's more personal and creates a sense of 'ownership': telling users they can look 'on Bob'

(the intranet name of our customer Sheetz) or perhaps, 'the Fridge' (AO.com) or BEDpost (Mattress Firm) is far more informal and engaging than simply, "check the intranet".

Many organizations choose to get employees involved in the naming process, running competitions or potentially setting up an employee board to brainstorm and vote on suggested names.



Houston Zoo named their intranet 'The Watering Hole' playing on their industry to position their intranet as a place where everyone meets.



'Knowsley' the intranet name and persona for Swagelok Scotland

Selecting something individual, memorable, and representative can be a tall order. You could consider naming your intranet:

- After an employee:** Perhaps there's a significant individual in your organization who deserves recognition or represents what you're trying to communicate with your brand.

Swagelok Scotland called their intranet Knowsley, after Ian Knowles: an employee of over 30 years at the organization who was seen as the 'go to' guy for information during that time. As he represented the 'intranet' in human form, naming the intranet after him was a tribute to his legacy when he retired and left the organization.
- After a character:** a fictitious character can be a way to humanize your brand, without going for a real person. For example, healthcare organization Kent Community Health NHS Foundation Trust elected for the name Flo, after the iconic nursing figure, Florence Nightingale.
- A pun on your industry:** UK utility company, South East Water, named their site Gurgle. When users need something, they simply need to Gurgle it.

Houston Zoo chose to focus on somewhere where everybody meets. Naturally, for a zoo full of animals, this would be The Watering Hole.
- Using your brand:** UK children's charity the NSPCC named their intranet The Green, playing on their corporate color and the brand they built for their intranet.
- Play on your company name:** Watson was the winning choice resulting from a competition for UK book retailer Waterstones. As well as being an abridged version of the company name, it represented the infamous Sherlock Holmes character: Watson would not only represent what Waterstones staff were most passionate about – books – but be a virtual assistant for every employee. Meanwhile, Mattress Firm went for a play on their name and product with 'BEDPost.'
- Abbreviations, soundbites, or acronyms:** Staffordshire Housing decided to play on their primary objectives for their company intranet with the name, 'Cake': shorthand for 'Connect and Keep Engaging.'

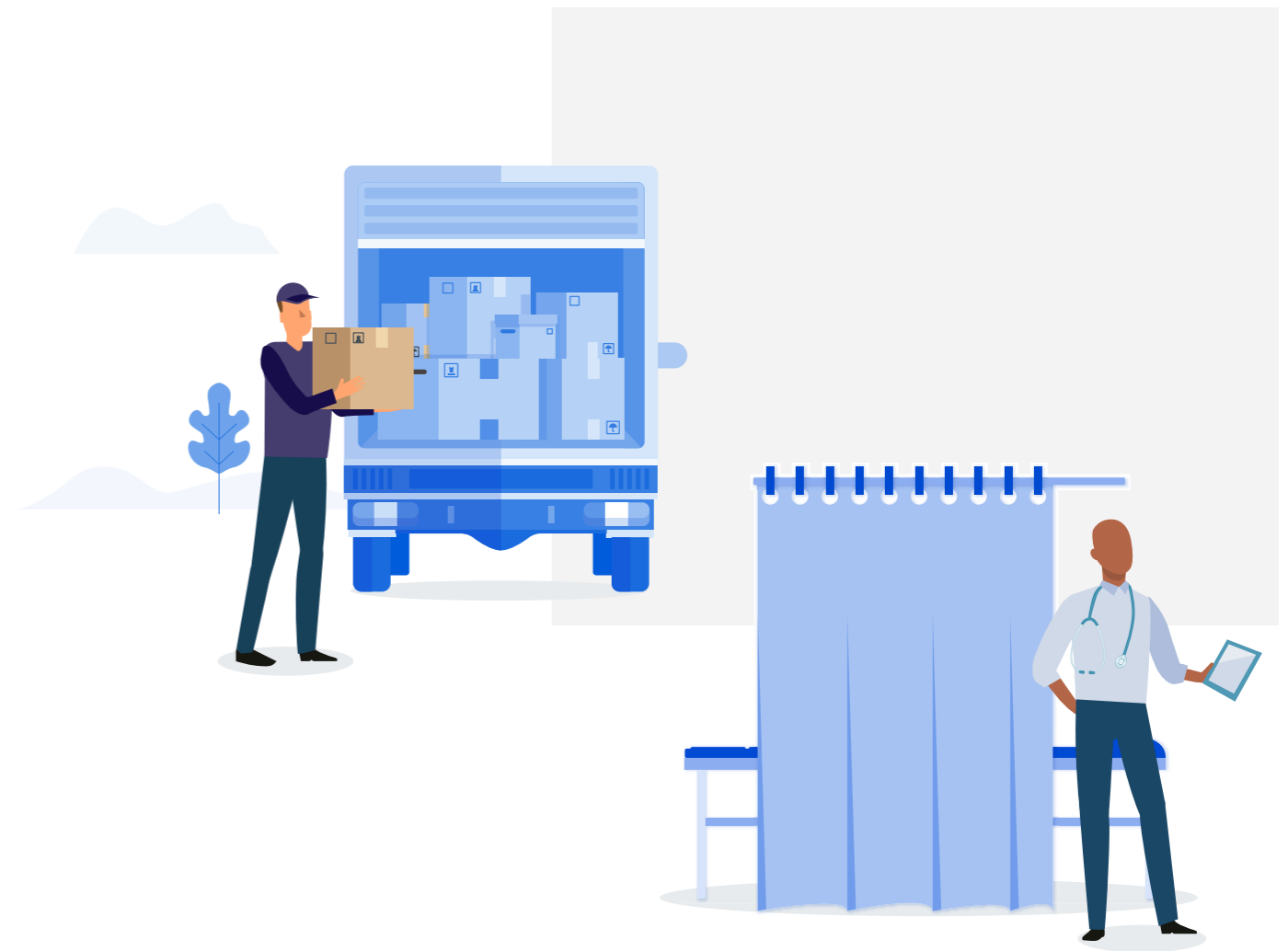
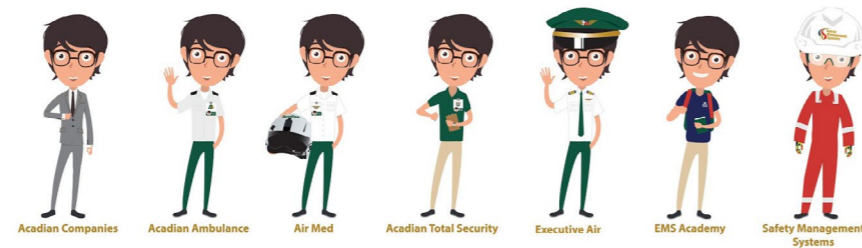
Creating an intranet identity, persona or character

Why not go one step further than a name alone, and build a tangible identity and persona for your intranet? By creating a personality and character to respond, signpost,

or engage with users in the same way that an individual would, you can make the intranet more approachable and accessible to users.

Interact customer Acadian Companies is comprised of six divisions, with more than 4,300 employees scattered across the United States. Creating an identity and persona that would resonate with all the different areas of the business but still unify the organization presented a challenge.

Acadian Companies responded by creating a mascot for their intranet, 'Acadian Central.' The character, called "A.C., the Acadian Central Expert", was adapted for each division— dressing the part to make sure he resonated and spoke to each type of employee in the organization.



Tone of voice

Brands are more than just visual. The language you use on your intranet will shape the personality and feel of your brand, so take time to consider the tone of your core content pieces, labeling, and top-down communications.

appealing to your audience, or one that is more corporate, formal, and matter-of-fact. This will vary according to your business industry and culture, your intranet objectives, the personas you've created, and your overall mission.

Consider how you want to come across to your employees, and whether a tone that injects humor and is more casual might be more

Technical consultancy and intranet build services

The hands-on process of building an intranet represents perhaps the most significant chunk of development time for your project.

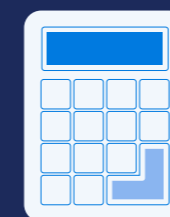
All your content needs reviewing, updating, formatting, approving, and building. User profiles need creating or synchronizing from your existing directories, with permissions set, and teams, departments, or personas allocating. Homepages need building and configuring, and your structure testing.

There are also technical configurations to be completed with your existing tools and platforms, ensuring any chosen integrations

work as they should. You may have questions or concerns about security or the protection of your data.

This resource-intensive stage of building your intranet is often the point at which projects fall behind schedule, or potential mistakes occur that present a risk to your project. Ensuring you have a realistic idea of the timescales involved to migrate your content and the necessary resource in place is vital.

You may need to enlist support from your intranet provider, or use technical consultancy services to help safeguard the technical elements of your build.



Need help planning out the time and resource you'll need to build your intranet? Why not download our [FREE intranet build calculator?](#)

Simply enter a few basic details, and this calculator will provide a realistic estimate of:

- How long it will take you to review, migrate, and build your content
- How much resource you need

Use this calculator during your project planning to minimize risk of overrun or lack of sufficient resource, and ensure you're prepared for this vital stage of your intranet project.

Part 4: Launching your intranet

The launch process for your intranet begins long before you flick the ‘on’ switch. Your plan will vary according to your business needs and culture, but the concept of getting your users informed, excited, and engaged with your new intranet is universal.

A well-planned and executed launch will ensure your users:

- Are excited and engaged
- Are informed about what is happening, and when
- Understand the value of your intranet
- Know what the intranet is used for, and how it will impact and improve their day-to-day roles
- Adopt and continue to engage with the intranet from day one, and beyond

The launch phase is often the most ‘fun’ part of the intranet deployment process, and a chance to be creative or think outside the box. However, no two organizations are alike. Before

creating your plan, take time to evaluate your business culture and intranet objectives, to ensure your launch achieves the right results.

“The launch of your intranet is just the beginning of an engaging and very beneficial journey.

Jo Warburton, Intranet Manager, Affinity Sutton

The ‘WIIFM’ factor

Similar to when you were producing your business case, your launch should focus on the ‘what’s in it for me?’ factor. This inclusive approach gets your users or employees interested and excited about your project by communicating its value to them.

Pick a few key ways that the intranet is going to make their lives easier

or impact their day-to-day jobs, and then shout about it. Think about your messaging and try to select those benefits that aren’t only significant, but exciting – realistically, choosing to highlight that housing your expenses claims form on the intranet will save an average of 5 minutes per employee isn’t going to deliver great results.

Maxxam, the Canadian market leader in analytical services and solutions to the energy, environmental, food, and DNA industries, focused on the key benefits for employees as the foundation for their launch process. The key benefits they identified were:

1. Connect with your co-workers quickly and easily
2. Collaborate with your departments or on specific projects
3. Find everything you need with a smart and simple search
4. Access a comprehensive resource center for managers and supervisors

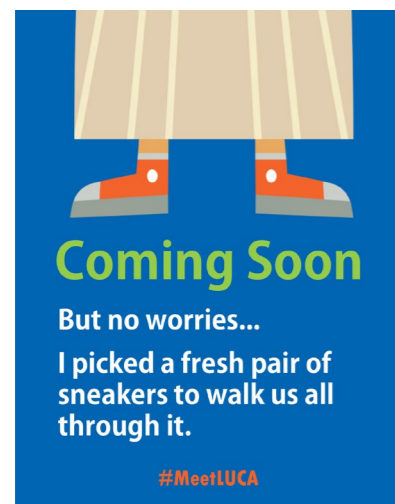
These benefits were summarized and then promoted in a variety of creative ways to their employees, including on branded bags and t-shirts, posters, teaser emails, and more.



Big bang, or secret squirrel?

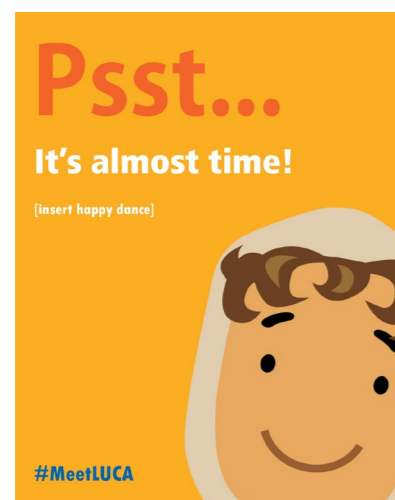
Teaser marketing campaigns have grown in popularity over recent years, and we're seeing the same trend stepping into internal comms. Giving small hints over an extended

period to generate intrigue and excitement is shown to boost interest, as the 'unknown' gets people talking, speculating, and anticipating.



The International Federation of Accountants used a teaser campaign to hint at the imminent launch and arrival of their intranet, LUCA.

Named after an Italian 15th century Friar and Mathematician commonly referred to as the "Father of Accounting," Luca Pacioli, the intranet also embodied a full persona and character. Ahead of the launch, the IFAC project team decided to tell staff nothing – secretly gathering content and using an internal focus group for employee input.



Two weeks prior, posters appeared with minimal details, and no hint of an 'intranet.' Staff immediately showed intrigue and responded with a sea of guesses, requests, and inquiries, wanting to know – 'who or what is LUCA?'

On Launch Day, all was revealed as the staff were greeted by a 72 inch, motion-activated, talking cardboard standee of LUCA. A luncheon with all staff attending was used to introduce the new intranet and provide an overview and training for users.



However, it may be a challenge keeping your intranet project, design, name or persona secret, particularly if you've worked collaboratively with your users during the planning and build stages.

interest and momentum as staff tire of waiting for the go-live.

A big bang launch, by contrast, goes all out with communications, events, promotions and more to build awareness and educate users in the days, weeks, or even months before going live. Multi-channel approaches create brand awareness and increase the visibility of your intranet platform, helping to embed it into your business culture and keep your project front-of-mind.

Other organizations may elect to inform staff as soon as the business case is signed off, keeping employees informed of developments over the course of the project. This may not be appropriate for long-scale projects, however, where you risk losing the



UK not-for-profit children's charity, the NSPCC, took a transparent and inclusive approach to ensure staff were informed about the progress of their new intranet, The Green, in the weeks and months before launch.

competition with a gift for the winner got everyone engaged, while staff were asked to test and feedback on the proposed navigation.

Updates and stories about the project process were placed on the organization's old platform to keep employees informed. Employees were asked to contribute photos about what the NSPCC meant to them, ready for the new intranet. A naming

Closer to launch day, a story showing the stages of the intranet build was published, with staff able to leave comments. A poster campaign highlighted the key benefits for staff, with information changed on a fortnightly basis to keep it fresh and engaging.



Soft and staggered, or company-wide roll-out?

Depending on the scale of your project and the number of users you'll be onboarding, you may want to consider a staggered or 'soft' roll-out approach to road-test your new intranet on smaller groups of employees before granting access to all.

Approaching it this way can help gather support in an accumulative fashion, identify all kinks or issues that need addressing, and may serve as a beta-testing operation to gain feedback and insights. Alternatively, the soft roll-out may be in the form of your intranet features: launching a basic or skeletal version of your

intranet initially, and then introducing additional features further down the line as your users become more confident.

Company-wide roll-outs, when planned and managed effectively, are more of an event that can generate excitement and a buzz amongst employees. By getting everyone involved and making a 'big deal' out of your intranet across your business on a particular launch day, you can trigger a surge in adoption and engagement. If everyone is talking about it, no-one wants to miss out.

Launch ideas

Here are just a few ideas you may want to consider as part of your intranet launch, taken from award entries for

interact's annual intranet excellence awards.

01. Launch events

Allow employees to ask questions, watch a live demonstration, take a tour, and learn about their intranet with a hands-on approach. A physical event, led by a senior stakeholder or sponsor, also creates top-down

motivation and buy-in for your employees. If you have multiple offices or locations, consider a 'tour' to ensure your launch is as inclusive as possible.



Free, branded giveaways and prizes at events included one iPad or Samsung tablet grand prize per location.

Winner of Interact's 'Best intranet launch' award, non-profit healthcare provider Piedmont held 12 launch events across their 6 hospitals and 3 corporate locations.

Events were staffed by 75 members of the organization's employee volunteer group, known as the 'Piedmont Connectors', who served as intranet tour guides and ambassadors. Employees could have their profile

pictures taken with the event display as a background and were shown how to create and populate their intranet profile.

Each event also saw free, branded giveaways and prizes, including an iPad or Samsung tablet grand prize at each location. More than 1,400 employees attended the events.

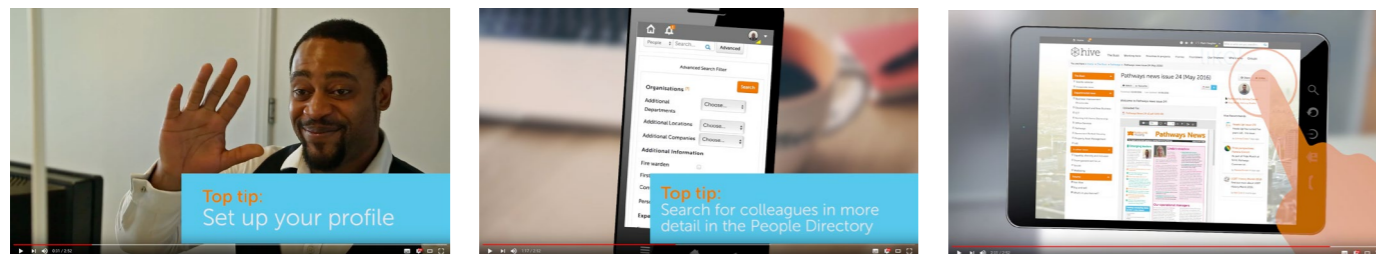


02. Virtual tours

Don't neglect your remote workers or those who can't physically attend a launch event. Creating an online tour of your intranet in the form of a video, which explores the core features, functionality, and benefits, can help users get orientated. Use this as an opportunity to signpost employees to where they can find further information. It can also be recycled as an onboarding video for new starters, to help them get orientated with the intranet.

Best Intranet Launch award runners-up, Notting Hill Housing, created a simple, engaging video to introduce their intranet 'Hive' to employees.

The video uses a combination of employees talking and intranet screenshots to take viewers through all the basics: from completing their profile to finding colleagues, searching for information, joining groups, and using the forums to ask any questions.



03. Branded goodies

Everyone loves to get something for nothing, and employees are no different. Shout about your new intranet and internal brand by getting it in front of your employees with some free goodies. We've seen everything from mouse mats and coffee cups to earphones, cupcakes, teabags, and phone holders.

Online fashion and beauty retailer ASOS decided to tie free goodies in with launch day activities.



ASOSers coming into each of the global offices were welcomed by branded goodies ready on their desks. A pair of 'ASOShome' (the name of their new intranet platform) headphones, a bag of branded toffee

popcorn and a bottle of water were supplied as accompaniments to a welcome video about the company's new intranet, delivered by the company CEO Nick Beighton.

04. Treasure hunts and competitions

People learn best by doing, rather than being told. To get users orientated and building their understanding of their intranet in a hands-on way, treasure hunts and competitions are a great tool. Consider setting users a series of tasks or searches to complete, or potentially 'hiding' an image or icon in various places on your intranet to encourage users to browse and look around.

On launch day, they released a scavenger hunt. Questions pointed staff to different areas of the site, for example: 'How many Daniels work at the RCN?'. Answers could only be found by searching the site or navigating content.

As an added twist, the first letter of each answer made up a word ('Forum') which was submitted via an intranet form to enter competition to win a prize. The RCN received over 120 entries within the two-week launch period.

When the Royal College of Nursing launched their new intranet, 'Space,' they were looking for ways to get staff confident and familiar with their new tool.



Part 5: Ongoing success

You've gone through the entire project lifecycle: from pitching your business case to planning, building, and successfully launching your intranet. Now, you can relax – right?

Not exactly. Your intranet isn't a one-off purchase that can merely be launched and left; it's a continually evolving and dynamic part of your business, requiring constant investment and care to ensure it remains relevant and valuable.

Don't let your intranet get static. Ongoing success is dependent on you continually reviewing and developing your intranet. In close collaboration with your intranet partner, consider the following tips and revisit them periodically throughout the lifecycle of your intranet.

Measure and act upon feedback

The best-placed critics and drivers for change when it comes to your intranet are those using it on a day-to-day basis. Tap into their thoughts and feedback regularly.

Use pulse surveys, focus groups, forums, or perhaps create an 'ideas and suggestions' discussion on your intranet to drive improvements. Consider using your 'intranet champions' – those who are engaged and regularly use the intranet – as a way to tap into your users.

Obtaining insights alone is not enough – you have to act. Failure to listen to your users or respond will

quickly lead to discontent and a lack of engagement. While it may not be practical or feasible to action every piece of feedback you receive, perhaps consider putting suggestions out to vote to gauge what is worth pushing through.

If you aren't able to do something, don't push it under the carpet: let your users know, explain why, and see if you can work out a workable alternative solution.



“ Using Interact Forums has helped us to foster collaboration between teams and managers. People are happy to comment and share their views, and senior managers frequently answer points raised there. If a post gets 20 votes, we forward it to the senior management team for review, which means employees at all levels of the organization can contribute to our success.

Oraine Godfrey, Director of Digital Marketing and Operations, Cable & Wireless

Use analytics and telemetry

Most successful intranet platforms now come complete with detailed usage analytics that can provide valuable insights into what is working well on your intranet – and what isn't.

users and departments, the value of particular pieces or areas of content, and identify any 'red flags' that present a risk to the long-term success of your intranet.

This goes beyond visitor numbers alone. When you drill down a bit further, you can understand the social and business impact of individual

Amongst some of the warnings or risk factors, analytics can help you identify:

- Expired, outdated, or unvisited pages
- Content due for review, or lacking essential information such as tags, keywords, or an assigned author
- Visitor numbers and interactions, and if desired, broken down by department, team, persona, or individual to identify your advocates and reluctant adopters, who may need additional support
- Content creation and publisher volumes, alongside content type and how users are engaging with it
- High performing and low performing content or forums, by looking at visit and engagement levels
- Devices – where and how your users are accessing your intranet
- Searches, including number of searches performed, most searched, and any searches not returning results

Analytics can occasionally get a bad name. Reviewing stats and figures may not be the most compelling part of intranet management, but it can help you evaluate whether

content is being found, guide your content roadmap, identify areas for improvement, and ultimately ensure your intranet remains fit for purpose.

Evaluate success and revisit targets

During the business case and planning phases for your intranet, you set clear objectives and goals for your intranet. Measuring performance against these and reporting success to senior management is more than a way to demonstrate return on investment; it also ensures you are continuing to drive your intranet forward, and avoid becoming complacent.

If you aren't hitting the targets you set, evaluate why and set action plans to address performance. If you have successfully achieved your objectives, raise the bar. Re-evaluating your intranet goals on a regular basis will ensure it doesn't get static.

Strategic review

As your organization grows and evolves, you'll often find that your objectives, culture, and overall purpose may shift or develop. New priorities will arise, and you'll face different challenges and employee expectations.

Enlisting the support of an experienced digital workplace strategist can help you identify any risk factors or areas of your intranet management, governance, brand, or features to bring in line with a changed strategic direction. You may require additional training or support, a review of your brand or homepages, or perhaps a general 'spring clean' of content and pages.

Evaluating whether your intranet objectives are still in line with business goals and the overall direction is essential. As the initial peak of interest for your intranet dies down, you may also be faced with a decline in stakeholder engagement, or a lack of buy-in from major representatives in your business – such as HR, or IT.

For example, you may have unused intranet features, or others not being fully utilized to their potential; new features to introduce to your platform; or examples on your intranet where users, administrators, or content authors are failing to act in accordance with best practice.



Lifetime services from Interact

At Interact, we understand that your investment with us is a long-term commitment. As part of our Customer Success program, we offer a suite of dedicated services to provide continued support, at every

stage of your intranet lifecycle. [Visit our website](#) to learn more about how we build relationships with our customers through:

- Dedicated account management
- Customer meet-ups and events
- The Interact Global Community
- Customer suggestion and improvement forums
- Guides and best practice information and support
- Strategy and training services, delivered by our in-house digital workplace specialists
- The Interact Service Desk

Alternatively, why not [speak to a member of our team](#) today to find out more?

Train and up-skill

Even if you invested in training for your administrators, content authors, and users during the onboarding process, your business changes and evolves. Staff turnover, new employees, structural changes, and the potential loss of your existing authors or administrators all create demand to up-skill your staff and ensure your intranet continues to be used and understood.

Regular training, whether delivered by your intranet partner or via

your internal intranet champions, is essential. It will ensure understanding, instill confidence, and help retain those all-important skills required to keep your intranet evolving with you.

As innovations or updates come into play, it will also ensure your administrators know how to get the most out of their intranet and support them in creatively solving business challenges that arise.

“The success of our intranet project ultimately depended on our staff adopting and using the site. Interact’s trainers took the time to understand what we were looking to accomplish and gave hands-on support to ensure our users were confident and excited about their new intranet, right from the start.

Joel Turner,
Internal Communications and Engagement Manager
Sky Betting & Gaming

sky BET



Keep learning

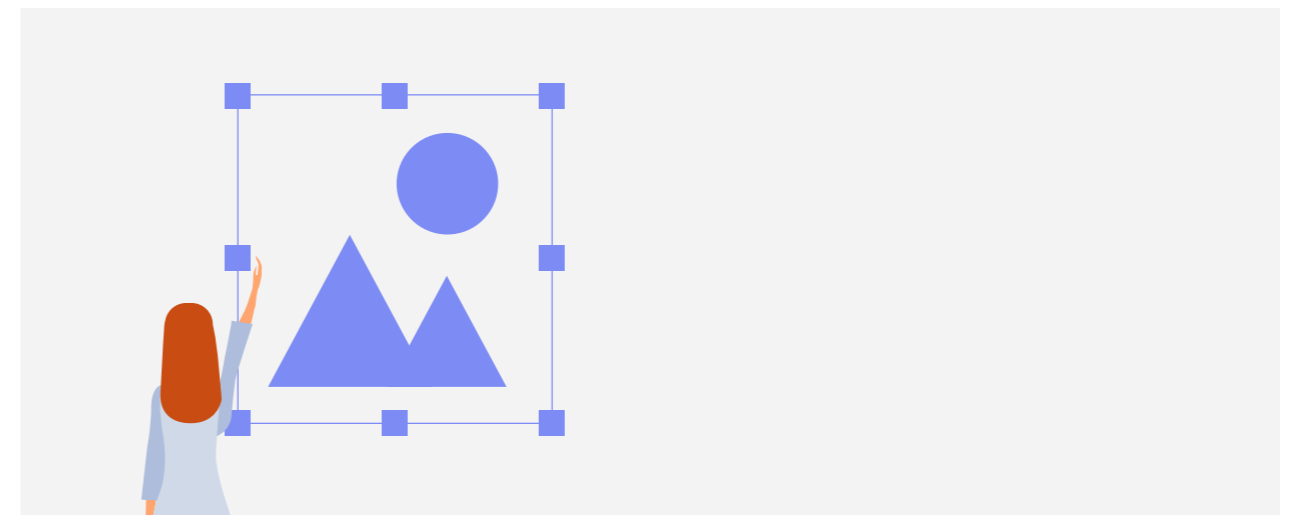
Structured training isn't the only way to keep learning and developing. As technology continues to change at an incredible rate, new trends will have considerable implications for how our employees engage with the digital workplace. Failure to keep pace with developments risks your intranet becoming redundant, outdated, and ultimately, unfit for purpose.

Don't risk losing your users. Tap into industry knowledge and insights to keep abreast of new trends. Seminars, webinars, and conferences are a great way to keep a finger on the pulse and hear from industry leaders, as well as an opportunity to network with peers from across a broad range of industries and backgrounds.

Looking to stay ahead of the game and ensure you deliver a winning intranet for your organization? [The Interact Resources area](#) has a huge variety of experience, thought leadership, and innovative thinking for you to tap into. Visit now to benefit from:

- Free guides and whitepapers
- eBooks and industry insights
- Free on-demand webinars on a broad range of digital workplace topics
- Upcoming events, seminars, and webinars around the US and UK
- Insightful videos and customer case studies

...and much more!



The best ideas and insights often come from those on the shop floor: intranet managers, communications professionals, and intranet champions working to keep their intranets engaging and relevant. Peer communities, such as the Interact Customer Community, are an

invaluable tool for long-term success. Using discussion forums, blogs, meet-ups and more, you can learn from the successes – and failures! – of others, obtain support, and unearth new and creative ways to utilize your intranet to solve everyday business challenges.

Revisit your brand – but not too often

One of the most compelling aspects of your intranet is the look and feel: the brand, visual elements, and those all-important homepages your users see as soon as they log in.

Giving your intranet a brand refresh and updating the layout and presentation of your homepages can provide a boost to engagement. It's also important to help keep your intranet current, relevant, and in line with your external brand. This is particularly poignant if your organization has undergone a significant change, such as an acquisition or merger, an external

rebrand, or perhaps an office move or management restructure.

However, a word of warning: users build an affinity and connection to a brand over time. They identify with it, grow familiar with it. By nature, many of us are also adverse to change. A brand overhaul should be considered and carefully managed, and undertaken when there is an identified need – resorting to a new name, logo, color palette, and homepage layout anytime engagement numbers drop will likely have an adverse effect.

Relaunch or re-engagement campaigns

Intranet platforms, like many tools or applications, have a natural lifecycle. An initial peak in engagement and steady growth in the early months or years will likely reach a plateau, and without careful management, may then enter a decline.

Relaunch programs are a great way to bring your intranet back to the forefront of employees' minds and particularly useful if you've opted for a rebrand or other significant change. This can include many of the same ideas as the initial launch, but most importantly, it should communicate

the value of your intranet in supporting employees to perform their jobs.

This may not even need to be a business-wide operation; if, for example, a performance review of your intranet has identified a particular user group that is showing low levels of engagement, a focused effort to get them back onboard may be the answer.

Your intranet: the future of your digital workplace

Planning and deploying a successful intranet can deliver remarkable returns for your business and its employees.

Executed and managed correctly, an intranet can transform how your business connects, communicates, and collaborates. It will encourage higher levels of employee engagement, and create bottom-line benefits that span everything from increased retention to higher profitability.

Like any major business project, it's also a process that can present challenges or hurdles along the way. Creating and following a structured plan and enlisting the support of dedicated specialists can help to manage that journey, ensuring you see

the results you're looking for.

This guide covers the basic framework of deploying an intranet, but the journey is unique to each business.

If you are considering a new intranet project for your organization, why not [speak to a member of our team](#) to understand how Interact can partner you to deliver a tailored intranet project that will meet your needs?

Visit our website, www.interactsoftware.com or contact using the following details:

About Interact

Interact is a global enterprise software company that serves intranet software to over one million users across more than 800 organizations. We specialize in solving internal communication and collaboration challenges by combining our sophisticated intranet software with outstanding professional services, focusing on developing long-term strategic partnerships with our customers.

Interact has offices in **Manchester** and **New York**, and operates across the whole of the **US and Canada, EMEA, and Australia**.

Starting your own intranet journey? We have a wealth of resources designed to support you at every stage of the process. Visit our [Resources Page](#) for free eBooks, guides, whitepapers, webinars, and events to help make your intranet project a success.

If you're looking for more tailored information and support, why not speak to a member of the Interact team? Our in-house digital workplace specialists have experience delivering intranet projects across a broad range of industry sectors. No matter what your challenges or requirements, we can help.

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