



## What makes a good Intranet and why do Intranets fail?

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We are living in a digital age where people want to do more with less. Companies are faced by a growing mountain of data and information they store. More and more companies are finding it harder to manage all their information, how to find the information they want, how to track the information, how to break down the information silo within the company. How do they get their employees working in a more collaborative way?

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# What makes a good Intranet

## Management summary

Companies are starting to look at their intranet as a way of managing, finding and publishing information about their company and to keep up with current activity. From the CEO sending a message out to the workforce, the new starter trying to find the right person to speak to, or the right information whether it be a document or presentation to improving communication within the company and outside the company.

The Company Intranet is great, but according to a survey by Forrester Research from 2009 only 43% of enterprise employees access an intranet every day. Worse, 35% don't even use their intranet on a *monthly* basis.

Why would they? According to surveys, many intranets suffer from:

- Outdated information
- Ineffective tools for collaboration
- Poor organisation and lousy search

## So what has to happen to make the employees use the Intranet?

According to our research the top 7 features every Intranet should have are:

- 1) Easy to use, manageability and control by non-technical users
- 2) Intelligent search
- 3) Usage statistics and user feedback
- 4) Staff directory with networking capabilities
- 5) Security and content control
- 6) Integrated business tools
- 7) Workflow and transactional Messaging

We now have the top 7 features that the Intranet should have so what is next?

## Business benefits of an Intranet.

The most difficult part about trying to justify investment in improving or purchasing a new Intranet is how to get the management to invest money for mostly soft returns.

These soft returns come in the form of

- Improved employee productivity,
- Improved collaboration and communication within the company.
- The ability to find information quickly and to be able to act on the information.

There are many benefits of an intranet, some of the key ones are:

## Reducing Time Spent Searching

Corporate information can be stored centrally and accessed at any time thus reducing the amount of time spent searching.

An example of this is the new starter that has joined the company, and has been shown round and introduced to everyone. The next day they need to find a contact or some information where do they go? With a search facility within the intranet they just type in what they are looking for and they will get the results back with a weighting against them so that they can find the correct information.

Or a sales person is looking for an old proposal but the person they would normally ask is away, again they just type in the title or name of the author and the search will find the information.

These searches save the employee time allowing them to get on with their work.

*Professionals spend 5-15% of their time reading Information, but up to 50% looking for it.*

**PricewaterhouseCoopers**

*80% of data in an enterprise is unstructured Information. This type of information is growing at 200% per year.*

**Yankee Group**

*Workers spend 15 % to 30 % of their work time looking for information.*

**IDC**

*The typical enterprise with 1,000 knowledge workers wastes \$6 million to \$12 million per year searching for non-existent information.*

**IDC**

## Improving collaboration

The intranet can be used to improve collaboration and team working amongst employees. It allows for the creation of virtual teams to work on projects, which when the project is completed it can be archived. Collaboration also allows employees to share documentation but gives control on the versioning, and it also allows for workflows to be used.

An example where collaboration can be used is with a new project. You have been given a project to complete so you need to create your team, create the team site and invite the employees you need. Then start working on the project by sharing documentation, having online meetings, and working from almost any location.

Once the documentation has been completed you can assign a workflow to it so it can go via your approval cycle, then once approved the document can be published.

Other core features of an intranet are:

- Blogs – great for sharing individual experience and knowledge to help with the transfer of information.
- Micro blogging – Think “twitter within a company”
- Forums – also known as “bulletin boards” are among the oldest collaborative tools, and still very useful for sharing and discussing ideas around a particular topic, like “where should we open our next franchise?”

Intranet collaboration can also be used to:

- Build a knowledge base
- Brainstorming and vetting new ideas
- Sharing private documents with customers and partners

## Information silos

When employees leave, they take with them useful information, or overtime employees can create their own information silos holding key information. Intranets can help reduce the information silos and help with collecting knowledge when employees leave and storing it on the Intranet.

An example of this is a company that has two project managers, one leaves before an intranet was introduced to the company. He took all his 20 years of knowledge with him; this left an empty information silo, valuable information had gone for good. The second project manager left after an intranet had been installed and used to share information which enabled that information to be retained by the company once he was gone.

## Improving internal communication

Keeping employees up to date with current news and activity within the company is a good way to increase staff morale. There is nothing worse than finding out information about your company from 3<sup>rd</sup> parties. Intranet can help address these issues by letting employees know the latest news/ messages from the CEO etc.

Work has always been social, but many employees now spend much of their time away from the office. Social collaboration tools can help people stay connected at a personal level, even when they're not meeting around a coffee machine.

The news information is nearly always included on the home page of the intranet site, some of the other key messages that need to be conveyed to improve internal communication and collaboration are:

How to/procedures

- \* Improvements to key procedures or new procedures
- \* A did you know section, highlighting a task that can help people be more productive

Lists

- \* Provide a list of jobs available internally
- \* Staff movements - new starters, people who have left, promotions

Re-usable documents

- \* Highlight new documents that might be useful to other staff - a successful Sales Proposal a Business Case

Collaboration/discussion

- \* List of top discussion questions
- \* A case study about how effective collaboration helped solve a business problem.

## Replacing hardcopies

The Intranet helps reduce the cost of replacing old printed material, as the information is held in a central area; anyone can find the information they need.

It can also be controlled with security access, so you can only access the information that applies to you. An example of this is the business continuation plan, this plan needs to be kept up to date. Time and time again when company's run a test of their plans, they find that different people have different versions of the plans, when new updates come out the key

personnel have not always updated their plans. The central store removes this problem as the master copy is held in one place and only has to be updated in one central area. The key personnel can be emailed to let them know about the update or they can access from almost any mobile device...

Another example is staff handbooks, when new starters join a company they will go through their induction process and be handed a staff handbook, most will never read it, till they need it, then they will ask someone for the information as they do not have their copy to hand.

Again a central store will keep hold of the master copy and HR then only has to update the hand book once. Staff will be able to search for the information they need.



# Why do intranets fail?



Intranet project generally fail or do not get used by companies for a wide range of reasons. Below is a list of the most common reasons intranet projects fail to take off.

## **Unclear Objectives**

There was no clear agreement as to what the purpose of the intranet was.

## **Unrealistic Budget**

The budget was too small and this did not allow enough time and resources to be put into the project to find out what was needed.

**Unrealistic Timescales** – Rome was not built in a day so why would you try and build your intranet with an unrealistic timescale, so essential phases would be missed or skipped

**Ineffective project Management** – If your project does not have an experienced project manager then the project objectives will slip, time frames will be missed and the project will be rushed.

**No executive support** – All intranet projects will fail if there is no buy in and support from the executive team. The executives or stakeholder have to have the power to push the project along and are able to make key decisions at critical times.

**Lack of resource** – If the content owners are not given the time needed to invest in the initial startup and ongoing maintenance, then the intranet will be filled with out of date information and users will stop using the site.

**Long term intranet strategy** – If there is no governance model in place to ensure the intranet can grow and develop over time then it will fail.

Revisiting the earlier survey on why intranets fail

According to surveys, many intranets suffer from:

- [Outdated information](#)
- [Ineffective tools for collaboration](#)
- [Poor organisation and lousy search](#)

# What steps need to be taken to create a good intranet?

The key to creating an intranet is hidden in the strategy: What is it really for? Should the intranet be a shared cultural platform? Is it an electronic phone book or perhaps a platform for collaboration? Regardless, do let the strategy take priority over the figures; use the strategy to identify which key figures you actually need and follow up on how the intranet meets the strategic goals and objectives.

So how do we start? The first place to start is to create an intranet Strategy draft. Below is a simple strategy draft to help you answer the questions and work on your strategy. It will become far more in-depth as the project moves along. If you can answer the following questions you have already started your strategy, if you cannot answer all the questions then this is a good place to start.

This will lead onto the next step which is vital, governance. At the same time if your project is going to get off the ground you need to get the buy in from the stakeholder/executives they are key for driving the project along and approving the budget.

## Our Intranet Strategy

### Scope of Use:

- A. The intranet will be our collaboration platform
- B. The intranet will be used by all, business units
- C. The intranet will be our Enterprise search tool
- D. The intranet will not be used from outside the company network
- E. The intranet will be piloted within our project delivery process

### Link to Corporate objectives:

- A. The intranet will reduce costs by improving process efficiencies in the company
- B. The Intranet will be used to drive innovation by supporting communities and networks
- C. The Intranet will improve collaboration across the company and reduce time spent searching for information

### Success criteria

- A. Staff satisfaction surveys
- B. Number of sites visits
- C. Amount of information uploaded
- D. Reduction in the use of shared network drives for collaboration measured by the number of new folders created.
- E. Reduced number of internal email with attachments
- F. Number of employees access the collaboration features

### Vision

We will continue to upgrade and improve the intranet over the next three years adding in additional applications like a holiday booking system. More social collaboration tools.

## Governance

When you first start your project time has to be spent working on the governance. What do we mean by governance; well in a nutshell governance aligns the intranet with objectives, strategy, and defines accountability for ensuring a return on investment.

The most successful approach to intranet governance address the relationship between governance, management and operations. One way is to create two teams the strategy and tactical. Below is an example of roles the teams will play

### Strategy Team

This team consists of appropriate **business owners** willing to provide strategic insight and direction for the portal, and able to drive strategic initiatives into their respective organisations. Resources represent a good balance between business and IT, and also centralised control vs. decentralised empowerment. This team is a small, living team reconstructed on a quarterly basis with new volunteers to maintain a fresh perspective on the business and exploit the collective wisdom of the company.

### Tactical Team

The tactical team consists of three sub teams all charged with supporting the directives of the strategy team: Operations, Support, and Development.

- **Operations:** **Infrastructure (IT) resources provide** operational support for the system as they help to ensure the enforcement of the governance plan and manage the more routine maintenance of the system by performing nightly backups, usage monitoring and analysis, scheduled task validation, and keeping the system current with security releases and system upgrades.
- **Support:** The **intranet site owners, plant system administrators, help desk personnel,** and other various support resources create an effective support system with proper channels of escalation for end users of the intranet. This team handles application questions, bugs, and other problems requiring issue resolution.
- **Developers:** **Technically talented people** both willing and able to customise, personalise, and use the intranet in a manner that fulfills the business opportunities as identified by the strategy team. This team is a loosely-knit community of developers with varying degrees of proficiency in software development. Members can range from highly skilled programmers to technically savvy end users in charge of personalising departmental team sites. Skilled developers will handle large change requests, new features, and program management while ensuring adherence to standards.

Once the governance is in place we can move to the design of the site. The idea is to create a user friendly site which will encourage employees to keep using the site, making it part of the daily work routine. The idea is when they log in in the morning the first screen they see is the intranet, from this site they then can access their email, applications and workflow from the intranet.

In all the stages of creating the intranet another good idea is to invite the naysayers, the ones who were most vocal about how bad the old site was. Including these people in the planning and testing at an early stage and changing them from naysayer to supports has a great effect on the take up of the intranet.

## Training

Training is key, without training the intranet will fail. One of the best ways to get people using the intranet is on the first page have sections or tabs which cover:

How to/procedures

Lists

Re-usable documents

Collaboration/discussion

Another key to getting the intranet used is getting new starters to create audio/video clips showing how they use the intranet and how it helps them. Encourage staff to play with the intranet and feedback what they think, so changes can be made. The intranet should be treated as living eternity always updated, always on the move, developing over time and should become a key system within your company.



## About Parity

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Parity have been working and advising client on how to build and create good intranets for the last 14 years. The company has been mainly building intranets for public sector organisations but is now moving into the corporate space.

With this in mind Parity have created a new solution built on our 14 years' experience plus being Microsoft Gold partner. Our solution is an *Intranet in a box* built on Microsoft SharePoint 2010. The solution is designed to be up and running including the entire implementation consultancy for a fixed price, with the ability to buy addinal applications to help your intranet grow.

Our *Intranet in a box* covers all the points in this paper. Some of the key features:

Easy to use, manageability and control by non-technical users

Intelligent search

Usage statistics and user feedback

Staff directory with networking capabilities

Security and content control

Integrated business tools

Workflow and transactional Messaging

Once you have the base unit in place our *Intranet in a Box* can grow with your company, you can buy addinal applications as and when you need it.

As part of the service we can advise you on what hardware you need, there is no pressure on you to buy hardware from us, if you want us to then yes we can provide hardware, we can build the solution, include the hardware\* and install the box in your server rack, a turnout of the box solution.

For more information please contact [j.warren@parity.net](mailto:j.warren@parity.net)

Parity Systems  
Wimbledon Bridge House  
1 Hartfield Road  
Wimbledon  
London SW19 2RU

For further information  
Call us on 0845 873 0790  
Email [marketing@parity.net](mailto:marketing@parity.net)  
or visit us at [www.parity.net](http://www.parity.net)