Fresh

The role of the intranet in 2018

What would a modern intranet
look like at your company?

> **With an increasingly mobile world - runaway technological advances and huge shifts in the way companies are working, the traditional approach to intranet design and deployment feels increasingly irrelevant to the needs and requirements of modern work.**

TIM WALLIS
CEO, CONTENT AND CODE

Executive summary

What role should the intranet play in modern business today? This is a key question we have been asking at Content and Code for many years.

In this eBook, which accompanies and consolidates our five post blog series on the modern intranet, we compare the way traditional intranets work with today's alternatives. We look at how most traditional intranets are used, and demonstrate how a modern intranet is the compelling alternative your company deserves.

Contents

For example, research from the Nielsen Norman Group[1] - a design and user experience consultancy – shows that carrying out tasks on many of today's intranets takes up to 30 seconds longer than the intranets of the early 2000s.

Finding information

How do people actually use your intranet?

When intranets first became popular, they were fairly simple affairs. Typically, they provided a company home page with access to some news, procedures and HR forms. Over time, this evolved to include a growing number of features. Since 2001 and the emerging market dominance of Microsoft's SharePoint, intranets have come to be seen as places to store and share documents and have also incorporated a range of more sophisticated communications and collaboration tools.

However, while intranets have advanced in terms of complexity and functionality, this has not necessarily resulted in a
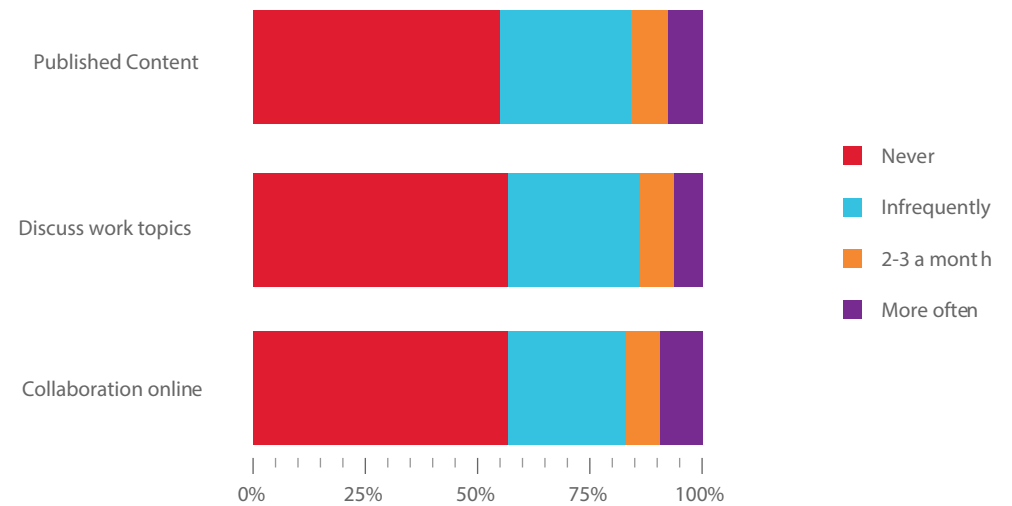
transition to greater user adoption and value added benefits. When this kind of delay accumulates across thousands of employees, the scale of lost potential productivity is immense.

Similarly, while more companies have intranets than ever before, this has not translated into high user adoption. A study by the Worldwide Intranet Challenge[2], a research consultancy, shows that many end users continue to have a rather disengaged relationship with their company platform. For instance, in benchmark questions about how often participants used the intranet to publish content, around 80% reported that they never or infrequently use the intranet for this kind activity (see chart on page 5).

[1] Nielsen, Jakob. 2012. Intranet Users Stuck at Low Productivity. Available online: http://bit.ly/2ua6hji

[2] Wright, Andrew. 2014. Intranet user adoption: why it's confusing. Available online: http://bit.ly/2taguli

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Chart 1: How often do you use the intranet to complete the following activities:

- Never
- Infrequently
- 2-3 a month
- More often

Publishing content, discussing work topics, collaboration – these should all be areas that users perform regularly and easily on the intranet. However, the research clearly demonstrates that this just does not happen. Intranets seem to be struggling – both in terms of usability, but also in terms of actually completing their key functions –

doing what you expect them to do. Is this the fate of all intranets, or is there an alternative?

In the next part of this eBook, we look at how users find completing a range of key tasks in the traditional intranet in comparison with how easily they can be done within modern intranets.

Finding information on traditional intranets is highly problematic. According to research from Coopers & Lybrand[3], an accountancy, employees spend between 20% and 40% of their time at work searching for documents manually. To compound this problem, Gartner, an analyst, reports that professionals spend 50% of their time searching for information, and take an average of 18 minutes to locate individual documents[4].

Five key employee intranet activities

No intranet is the same, and the ways different colleagues actually use the platform means their experience of the tool can also be entirely different. Nonetheless, there are a number of key activities which almost all employees carry out on their intranets. We summarise the major differences between modern and traditional intranets below.

Finding information

Perhaps the most fundamental purpose of an intranet, finding the right information when it is needed is absolutely essential in organisations of any size – whether that 'information' is people, how-to guides, policy procedures or documents.

Typically, information is sought out via one of three routes. Each of these has its limits, as the following table demonstrates.

It's clear that finding information on traditional intranets is time consuming and inefficient and is a major cause for employees dreading the corporate portal.

Method	Problem
Search for documents using key terms	If the individual does not actually know the right term for the document they are searching for, they won't find it.
Search via drilling through metadata of folder structures	If the individual selects the wrong metadata or folder they will not find what they are looking for. At the same time, metadata can be so broad, they can spend hours parsing through results.
Ask a colleague who knows	This depends on someone knowing the answer – which is far from guaranteed.

3 M-Files. The Business Case for Enterprise Content Management. Available online: http://bit.ly/2v8ygNL

4 Ibid

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Fresh also facilitates real time working. It is possible to create and contribute to a document with a colleague while also having an instant message or video conversation via Skype for Business. This reduces the chances of duplication and confusion to almost zero.

Finding information on modern intranets
Modern intranets draw on decades of improving search technology to make keyword searches more effective. However, they have gone much further than this. Fresh from Content and Code is built on Office 365 and brings documents and conversations which affect your employees, directly to them. By using the power of Delve, a machine learning tool, Fresh surfaces content and conversations which those users will likely find relevant.

Furthermore, Fresh makes it much easier to find colleagues with certain skills and experiences. Fresh provides access to Yammer, a social platform which makes it far easier to locate and communicate with colleagues.

Collaboration

Collaboration has always been a key purpose of the intranet. By allowing colleagues to share documents and work on them, the intranet should provide a kind of 'mirror' to the physical workplace.

Collaboration in traditional intranets
Typically, traditional intranets have encouraged collaboration through the usage of versioning in document libraries. This allows individuals to create major and minor versions and 'check out' documents that they want to work on exclusively. While this is innovative, it fails to truly facilitate collaboration – and can sometimes make things worse.

Documents can easily become duplicated and confusion reigns unless information governance policies are strictly enforced.

Collaboration in modern intranets
The modern intranet has collaboration built into its core. For instance, Fresh from Content and Code incorporates the latest 'sync and share' tools from Microsoft – SharePoint Online and OneDrive for Business – meaning documents are stored and collaborated on in a far more sophisticated manner. But it goes beyond simple document storage.

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> **First and foremost, we wanted to improve internal communications across the business by creating compelling content that was targeted based on either location or job role, and therefore relevant based on the user's profile.**

GIULIA FARES
INTRANET MANAGER, TOWERGATE INSURANCE

Internal communications

The corporate intranet can provide a powerful means of sharing company news and information, and also curating culture.

Communications in traditional intranets

Typically, traditional intranets encourage communications through homepage news updates and blog posts. These can be effective, yet in today's mobile first and high pressure working environment, few people have time to sit in front of a desktop and consume this kind of staid content.

Communications in modern intranets

Fresh is a communications and collaboration portal that helps you engage with colleagues regularly – and easily.

In Fresh the needs of modern business users are much more effectively catered to. Fresh provides powerful video tools which allow compelling clips to be shared and viewed easily – whatever device employees are using. Fresh also incorporates Yammer, a social environment, which allows for much easier (and more familiar, for the Facebook generation) sharing of company news and updates. Its social features lets staff like, share and reply to your latest posts. It lets you track how popular your posts are in real time, connecting employees from across the business. Colleagues can create compelling content that is targeted based on either location or job role and therefore relevant based on the user's profile.

The future of internal communications

For internal communicators, it's now time to be one step ahead of the curve. Manage both the fears and expectations, and encourage teams to exploit the opportunities and potential ahead. Working together, and embracing new technologies as they emerge, comms teams can create the workforce of the future, find new ways to communicate to our human and robotic audiences, and change forever the way we do things. And a modern intranet is an essential part of the toolkit.

Mobile working

In a few short years, mobile devices have changed the world. Smartphones and tablets can now access company portals and allow users to work anywhere, on any device with an internet connection.

Mobile working in traditional intranets

By and large, this is only possible via a VPN. Once logged in, users usually get a browser version of the intranet, which is usually hard to read, navigate and interact with using fingers and thumbs.

Mobile working in modern intranets

We talk about innovative technology that can empower your employees. Using Fresh, workers can easily and securely access their portal via the cloud, negating the need for a clunky VPN. Fresh is responsively designed, meaning pages' load fast, look good and are easy to interact with regardless of screen size or device. Today, businesses are turning their focus on how to increase employee engagement and productivity. With the innovative technology and the shift in attitude towards how businesses communicate and collaborate with their workforce, businesses are now focussing on the other 60% of the workforce, the deskless worker.

A deskless worker similar to desk-bound colleagues require access to critical information, they need to find company procedures, staff schedules, holiday and absence forms. Training for these employees is highly important however, they can't afford to sit in a classroom or at a computer for hours at a time. Businesses need to look at new ways of being able to deliver consistent training and materials. One solution an employee portal built on Office 365 whereby they have the option to search for relevant information- a self service HR (FAQs, forms, policies, procedures & guidelines). Deskless workers require a tool that can foster employee empowerment by allowing them to become self-sufficient, independent, with a sense of ownership and pride. And that translates to a business that thrives.

Finally, IT departments can sleep more soundly – Fresh can be set up with RMS (Rights Management Services) to encrypt and protect content.

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Social capital

Traditional intranets are generally weak when it comes to social capital. Some have basic social features such as personal profiles, yet these are fairly ineffective and consequentially are almost always ignored.

The key to business success, yet hard to quantify, 'social capital' refers to all the interpersonal connections and networks within an organisation that facilitate work and help 'get things one'. It's the kind of organisational knowledge that says, "if you really want to complete activity X, speak to Helen in finance". It's these 'fuzzy' human links which are just as – if not more – important than official processes and procedures for completing tasks.

Social capital in traditional intranets
Most employees see the intranet as a place where you do those traditional, formal activities – filling in forms to apply for holiday leave, for instance – before going and talking in person to your friend in HR to make sure it actually gets approved.

Social capital in modern intranets
At Content and Code, we recognise that there is the 'official way' that people are supposed to work, and the 'real way' that they actually 'get stuff done'. For this reason, we incorporated Yammer into Fresh. It mirrors all those real world social capital interactions – the natural conversations, town hall discussions, people profiles and the possibility of asking a question and getting the answer fast.

Finally, IT departments can sleep more soundly – Fresh can be set up with RMS (Rights Management Services) to encrypt and protect content.

Who wants what from an intranet?

Intranet Managers sitting between Communications and IT. They want something that looks great and is intuitive to use.

Finance Directors want value for money. Fresh will save over £150,000 of upfront development.

CIOs and IT Directors want to get value from Office 365 with swift deployment and rapid adoption.

Comms Directors want to engage with their staff on any device, anywhere; delivering creative content that boosts employee engagement.

HR want a one-stop portal where employees can find information easily, collaborate, and work in a way which suits them.

What could Fresh do for your organisation?

For too long, businesses have put up with intranets which are perfectly functional in theory, yet fail to actually fit around how people work. Fresh trumps these traditional intranets. With modern, mobile and interactive features, Fresh provides an intranet that employees will love, not loath, and that fits around the way they work in real life.

To learn more about Fresh Intranet, visit **www.freshintranet.com**, or to organise a demonstration get in touch via email or telephone.

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