June 2017

smileguide 18

Best of 'Frenemies':

how to build an intranet that IC and IT will love

Best of 'Frenemies':
how to build an intranet that IC and IT will love

The word intranet conjures up a mix of emotions for most people; good and bad...ok, mostly bad! But intranets play a fundamental role in the modern workplace in bringing together what's become a tangled web of disconnected systems. In a cloud based world there are more opportunities than ever to reshape the traditional intranet into a single, easy-to-use employee platform; one that employees will be sure to engage with. But in order to achieve this, it is vital that IC and IT colleagues work together. Sometimes that is easier said than done.

In this smileguide, which is sponsored by Fresh, we look at the relationship between Internal Communications (IC) and IT. For some, it is a match made in hell; for others it is a burgeoning love affair spiced up by the prevalence of cloud software and easy access to apps that do everything. For few is it a natural match made in heaven. With expert insight, together with case study examples, this guide is packed with helpful advice and practical suggestions on how to bridge the gap between two functions whose priorities are so often seen to be poles apart.

Report author:

Alison Boothby is a freelance business writer specialising in change, engagement and topical workplace issues.
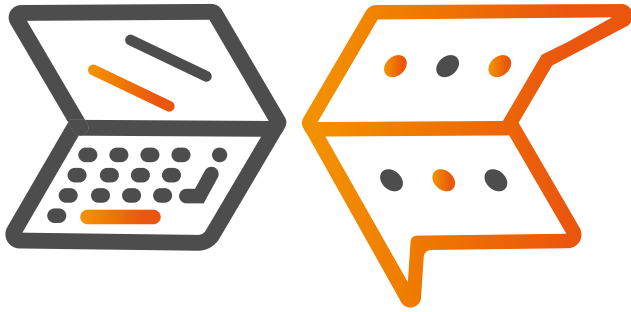
What's the problem?

Put simply, a traditional IT department was used to having control over the technology used across an organisation.

They liked to build things that would scale and last. With a service provider model, their resources were primarily focused on scoping, building, customising, testing, maintaining and supporting systems, databases and infrastructure – essentially keeping the core systems up and running. All was well until things went wrong and everyone blamed IT!

IC, on the other hand, likes to move quickly, adopting the latest trends to engage with employees. They have relished the development of consumer-led social media and a new generation of cloud based software that has opened the door to a host of simple to use tools with a familiar user experience. *"Where IT want to hold on to information and keep it safe, their IC colleagues are busy finding ways to give employees even greater functionality and access to as much information as possible. It's a different mindset."* explains David Bowman of <u>Fresh</u>.

a customisable communication platform where users can collaborate across the business has the potential to be business changing: improving working lives, improving productivity and reducing costs too.

Effective internal communicators need:

1. Identified networks and active communities with which to communicate and collaborate

2. A technological infrastructure enabling easy feedback and open discussion

3. Collaborative leadership with whom to influence and refine strategy. (scarlettabbott)

What has changed?

Certainly the consumerisation of technology has changed the workplace landscape. Technologies such as social, mobile and cloud place new demands on an IT function and present enormous opportunities for IC. Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) and the rapid pace of new apps to market add to the challenge. Where once IT had total control over technology decisions, a tech-savvy workforce with easy access to (often free) software has gone ahead and sought out their own solutions to their particular business problems and IT may know nothing about it.

Awareness and knowledge of how to use these newer technologies has never been higher and the expectations about what can be achieved in next to no time is also higher than ever before. If IT colleagues do not step up to support the business in the use of these tools and applications, you can rest assured that the business will get on and use them anyway. Somewhat ironically,

easy access to technologies that do not require IT support perpetuates poor communication and serves to reinforce the stereotype of a dysfunctional IT/IC relationship.

Christine Brown, a communications consultant and occupational psychologist, tells us we need to be careful not to label IT as the blockers of open communication and innovation, often under the guise of security and compliance: "IT provision and delivery has evolved and organisations are increasingly turning to agile, commodity-based approaches which focus on usability, data intelligence, collaboration and data security." Projects such as intranets require IC to have a foot in the comms, IT and information governance camps, and it is this very topic that could see IC and IT collaborating in a new and vitally important way.

One organisation that has recently moved to an agile, commodity-based approach is NEC Group, as Joe Kamara,

Lead Business Change Manager explains: "We had an existing SharePoint 2007 environment that was creaking at the seams. It was running out of support and struggling to operate effectively. This carried a risk that it could fall over at any time and potentially lead us to losing loads of key business information. It was a trigger for change: we needed to modernise our digital platforms, and implemented O365. We then needed to follow that up with an effective intranet and document storage solution."

Previous SharePoint projects had historically struggled and fallen by the wayside, largely because they were too complicated and typically over-engineered, so NEC Group made the decision to buy a product that ticked 80% of their wish list and was fully supported by a third party. "Our energies could then be channelled into ensuring our working practices adapted to make best use of it. That product was Fresh." he said.

Democratisation of IT

A Cisco report in 2016 concluded that: "the shadow IT challenge is rampant, pervasive, and growing explosively." Shadow IT is also indiscriminate and found in every industry, in every organisation (even those who block internet traffic), and in organisations of all sizes. And although most IT departments recognise that such cloud services are in use, the Cisco report revealed that they underestimate the sheer scale of the challenge: it is not unusual for organisations to be using 25 times more cloud services than they were aware of!

Sam Marshall, director of ClearBox Consulting, explains: "A rise in the use of consumer apps – where users bypass the IT department – is a clear expression of employee needs. It's clear that people

working on their feet need mobile tools and things like Facebook Groups and Whatsapp work well for them and everyone knows how to use them."

While this can be regarded as a threat, a more constructive viewpoint is to see the use of consumer apps as like a free test phase, a pilot. Consumer tools can be risky, from an access and information management stance, but their use can help clarify requirements as you look for the enterprise-grade equivalent to include in your modern intranet.

David Bowman of Fresh agrees: "We're certainly witnessing the democratisation of IT. We know from our clients that IC teams enjoy the flexibility and innovation that cloud services can deliver so it is not a question of stopping them,

but a question of understanding and controlling the use of these technologies. Organisations need to have a cloud strategy that takes into account the day to day working habits and desires of the business, together with the governance and security risks that an IT department would be expected to have on their radar."

Sam Marshall again: "People's behaviour isn't wrong; we just want to switch them from using consumer apps and on to using company approved apps. When your staff use consumer software (shadow IT), it proves the need so there's no need for a long business case; just swap out the unapproved app for an enterprise solution."

In order to minimise the use of shadow IT, it is essential to

identify the technology failings or shortcomings that caused the need for it in the first place. Then, focus on building better relationships with the individuals and departments that regard IT as a block to their jobs and work together to re-establish the governance principals around technology. At the end of the day, your entire team needs to work together. With the right collaborative suite of tools, you enable your employees to use the tools that work best for them without compromising security, productivity or budget. Your IT team will have peace of mind, your comms team will be able to produce engaging and targeted content, and your employees will be happy.
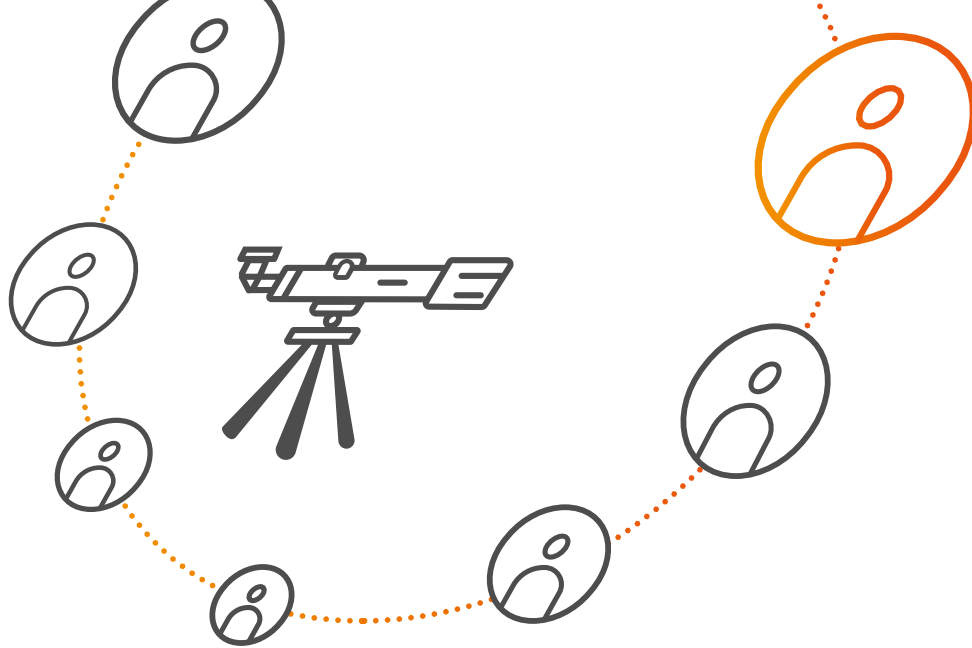
A shared outlook

Bridging the gap between IT and IC may not be easy, but it starts with understanding what drives their respective agendas.

Although in practice we are seeing technology budgets shared more equitably across the business, on a project like the introduction of a new intranet, it's not uncommon to witness tension between the competing stakeholders. There's probably something of a personality bias in the two functions: communicators often thrive on a sense of urgency, enjoying deadlines and immediacy in what they do; IT professionals are often more analytical, wanting time to explore the detail and put a plan in place secure in the knowledge that all risks have been mitigated.

David Bowman suggests: "*Appealing to both parties' problem solving natures can pave the way for constructive discussion about which technology solutions best suit their circumstances. In this way you can work together to find the best balance between IC's desire for functionality and reach and IT's insistence on governance and security.*"

Who wants what from an intranet?

Intranet Managers Sitting between IC and IT, they want something that looks great, is intuitive to use and makes the most of current technologies.
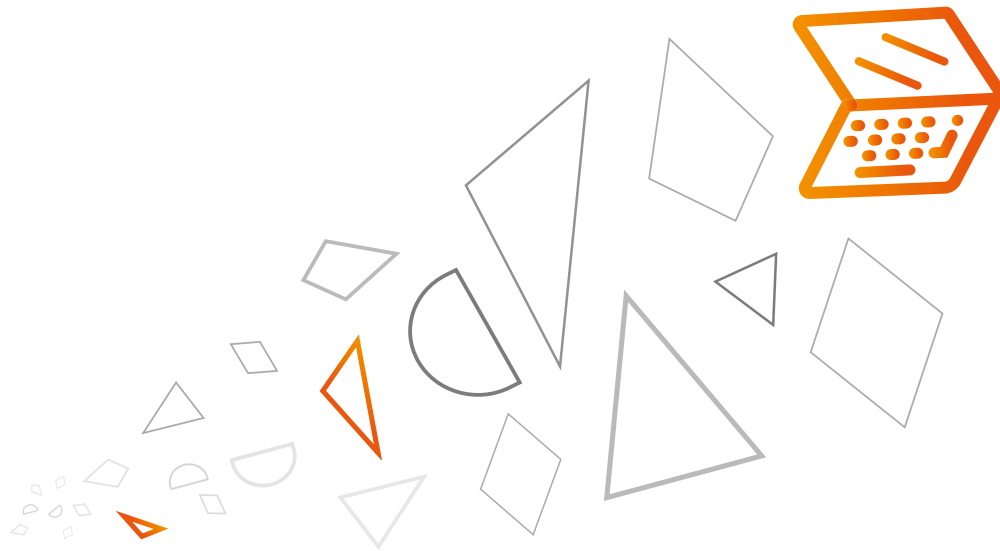
Finance Directors want value for money.

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

Communications Directors want to be able to engage with their staff on any device, anywhere.

The secret to a successful digital workplace is to stop thinking that the end-goal of digital has anything to do with a device; it's about people

Charlotte Lord-Sallenave,
Crowdoscope

Driving digital transformation

There is much current debate focusing on the suitability of Internal Communications to take the helm in driving digital transformation projects. Charlotte Lord-Sallenave, a Research Consultant at Crowdoscope told us: *"Given that most organisations are very much at the beginning of their journey of adopting collaborative technologies such as social intranets, some question whether the typical internal communicator is equipped with the technical knowledge required* to successfully integrate and manage these channels.

"IT seem to be the other natural contender for the role, given there is no doubting their technological understanding. Yet while being technologically capable may allow IT to advise on what new tools can be realistically integrated given the existing digital infrastructure, it doesn't necessarily yield a capacity to choose which channels would be most appropriate."

This consideration brings us back full circle to IC. The secret to a successful digital workplace is to stop thinking that the end-goal of digital has anything to do with a device; it's about people. Understanding people is an internal communicator's bread and butter, and so understanding which tools would go down well with employees is a task arguably best suited to them, and a key assurance against a workplace defined by a host of non-complimentary tools and disjointed digital experiences.

Following this understanding, it is easy to agree with the view that an effective digital workplace transformation cannot be driven by one area of the business alone. Departmental collaboration between IC and IT in planning, integration and management of digital tools seems a necessity, and is a fitting notion given the collaborative nature that digital technology fundamentally inspires and enables.

Finding the common language, valuing the expertise of each other and learning how to asses risk vs opportunity in a more holistic way are all essential to success in building your digital business

A more holistic view

Certainly for some, the persistent reinforcement of the differences between IC and IT colleagues is not at all helpful. Interestingly, this year's hotly anticipated Mary Meeker's report on global internet trends (helpfully summarised in Rachel Miller's excellent blog on allthingsic) highlighted a couple of points that indicate that the shape of IT teams in the enterprise is changing to meet the expectations of the cloud era. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the report noted expectations of enterprise software has shifted as users expect products to be well designed, easy-to-use and as reliable as consumer apps.

And in response to this, the ratio of designers to developers is increasing in enterprises as people expect better experiences, to match consumer-quality products – a trend we would expect to see continuing in years to come.

The unstoppable consumerisation of technology certainly provides both IC and IT departments with a golden opportunity to win friends and influence people, but even more important is their ability to seek out a shared agenda.

Christine Brown is all for seeking out the common ground, rather than dwelling on our differences:

"Both IC and IT require creative and logical approaches to managing resources and change; both require making decisions which consider cost, behaviours, organisational strategy and compliance. While IC and IT are professions in their own right, organisational change is nearly always underpinned by technology that requires effective communication in order to be successful. Finding the common language, valuing the expertise of each other and learning how to asses risk vs opportunity in a more holistic way are all essential to success in building your digital business."

Fresh Ideas:
Communicate

Chat with colleagues via yammer and comment on news/company updates
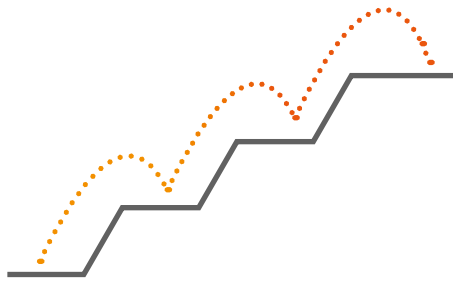
The future for IC

Once these barriers to communication have been broken down, it is easy to be more business-focused, thinking about the user experience and identifying how technology can be used to create value for your organisation through shared goals and metrics, a common business language, and deep collaboration.

As internal communicators, we need to be one step ahead of the curve. We need to manage both the fears and expectations of the people around us, and encourage teams to exploit the opportunities and potential ahead of us. Working together, and embracing new technologies as they emerge, we 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.

Fresh tips for intranet success

* **Researching and developing a plan** is the first necessary step to ensure that your platform is a success. This involves understanding the needs of the business by using user research and gathering requirements from key stakeholders. Many businesses will devise a business case before the start of each project.

* **Identify your main audience** and get **cross-functional representatives** (IT, IC, Finance and HR) together at the start for a frank discussion on objectives, aspirations and challenges. A knowledgeable third party can support and facilitate the right discussions.

* Utilise all the **tools and resources** that will help you overcome business challenges. Download eBooks, attend webinars, host interactive workshops as they are a great way of developing your knowledge and understanding of all the tools that are available to you.

* Conduct an **organisational survey.** A digital value report can provide businesses with the insight into how technologies are being used by employees and how new technologies can transform the way their business collaborates, shares information and communicates.

* Ensuring long term support is an often missed factor in comms-led engagements. Make sure your vendors are mature enough to provide SLA based support. You need more than just delivery credentials if your intranet solution is to scale over time.

* **Don't overwhelm employees**. That's why demos and roadshows are a great way of getting employees on board with technology and help deepen their understanding.

* **Surprises are not good**! Make sure you have clear intranet governance in place.

* **Manage expectations** by having a **clear roadmap for the evolution of your intranet** so that it is clear when additional features and functionality will be available.

Case study:

Towergate insurance: Simplifying communication and collaboration

We needed a complete rethink to create an intranet that was accessible by everyone, from anywhere, on any device

Towergate Insurance is one of the largest corporate and SME insurance brokers in the UK. Working right at the heart of local communities, they arrange insurance for the most diverse and comprehensive range of risks in the UK through a workforce of some 4000 staff in over 80 locations. Being in the process of investing in O365, they required a new intranet that would:

* Integrate with their 'Cloud-First' Strategy

* Maximise existing internal SharePoint knowledge

* Remove the current overly-customised inflexible SharePoint on-premises platform

* Refresh the style and usability of the Intranet

Giulia Fares, Group Intranet Manager, picks up the story: "*It was clear that our current intranet was not fulfilling its scope as the core internal digital communications channel as it was not available to everybody, anywhere and anytime; it was technically and architecturally not fit for purpose and was built on an unsupported legacy application that was hitting full capacity.*

"*We needed a complete rethink to create an intranet that was accessible by everyone, from anywhere, on any device. 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. Ultimately we needed an intranet that would be valuable for our employees, helping them get their work done more easily and building a collective sense of pride in our business. From a technical stance, the new intranet had to be flexible, scalable, maintainable and changeable. It had to be supported by a strong search function and would have agreed KPIs which were clearly measurable.*"

The project was led by Giulia Fares who ensured that there was cross-functional involvement from the outset, and particularly from the comms team. "*It was important to establish what the must-have capabilities of the new intranet were to be, taking into account the different comms and IT perspectives. By asking the right questions we could ensure that both agendas were heard and agree together where the compromises would be in the first phase. Other nice-to-have objectives then helped us to produce a shared roadmap for the intranet.*"

Implementing collaboration and communication tools can seem like an overwhelming challenge with so many competing user, team and business unit demands adding complication to an already bamboozling range of options, features and requirements. The team behind Fresh have used their considerable experience of building intranets to put together 'a kit' of the most popular and most successful ingredients for a modern intranet. This allows clients to take advantage of all the best thinking and saves an enormous amount of time. "We chose Fresh because they were able to provide a simplified communication and collaboration solution that enabled us to get up and running pretty quickly. One other thing that made the Fresh proposition stand out is the fact that they offered a continuous improvement programme which means our new Intranet will stay relevant in time. With their vast experience Content & Code have been able to package up all the best bits that make an intranet successful, so we can use the power of SharePoint and the core tools available in O365. There is no doubt that as a result of our new intranet we are a more connected, more efficient and happier workplace."

Fresh Ideas:
Captivate

Wow your clients with a presentation straight from Fresh on your laptop or tablet.

*Murphy needed an intranet
that could keep pace
with the rapid digitisation
of the workplace*

Case study:
Murphy: Improving working lives

J. Murphy & Sons Limited (Murphy) is a leading multi-disciplined engineering and construction company with a rich heritage of safe, innovative and sustainable solutions to the most complex infrastructure challenges. With its headquarters in London, Murphy operates globally, providing a wide range of construction services to the main infrastructure sectors of water, power, rail and natural resources. The company is supported through a self-delivery business model, industry-leading innovation and a large directly employed team of over 5,000 engineers, professional managers and skilled operatives in United Kingdom, Ireland, Canada, USA, Australia, Middle East and Africa.

Murphy needed an intranet that could keep pace with the rapid digitisation of the workplace. As part of a ten-year plan, led by IT, they challenge was to figure out what the priorities were and where to start in order to improve system availability, provide better resilience and to reduce costs. Alongside the technical and financial implications of the plan, communication was identified at the outset as an underlying issue for the business, made more challenging with a dispersed workforce of site engineers. Document management needed improving in line with the strict regulations of BIM Level 2 compliance and content tailored for particular parts of the business would improve efficiency.

In short, a customisable communication platform where users can collaborate across the business has the potential to be business changing: improving working lives, improving productivity and reducing costs too.

By using Fresh, Murphy benefited from a rapid deployment, launching *One Murphy* in six months. Employees now have easy access to tools, resources and company information on a mobile-responsive solution that provides an easy way to update and maintain content, and contains flexible templates for multi-use. "*Ultimately, by using the One Murphy intranet we are able to collaborate, communicate, and connect, bringing us closer together.*" says Nick Gorman, Group IT Director.
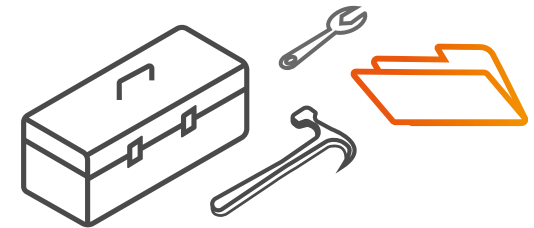
Fresh Ideas:
Concise
Waste no time finding documents. Fresh uses Microsoft Delve to bring documents you're interested in straight to you.

the nec group
birmingham

Case study:

NEC Group:
A joined up story

The NEC Group has been at the forefront of the live events industry since the Queen opened the National Exhibition Centre in 1976 and is now one of the leading venue management companies in the world. They also have a national ticketing agency, a hospitality brand and an award-winning caterer. Alongside a permanent workforce of c1000, they have 700+ casual workers.

NEC Group's vision for their new intranet, *Livewire*, is to create a single document store that also facilitates easy access to information/news and provides an efficient means of searching and identifying knowledge. Building on the O365 functions, it further enables collaborative ways of working across teams and is accessible anywhere and on any device.

Although IT-led, the project has been enthusiastically supported by the wider business with the comms team and business units actively involved from the start.

Triggers for change

The existing SharePoint on-premises site was running out of support and was struggling to operate effectively, presenting some risk for the business. It could fall over at any time and potentially lead to losing key business information. There was a clear need to modernise their digital platforms, and they implemented O365 with the accompanying requirement to follow that up with an effective intranet and document storage solution.

Developing the business case

The old site was challenging from a comms and staff engagement perspective. Not all parts of the business had access to the platform, comms found it hard to manage and the business never engaged with it in an effective way.

Must-have objectives

* To move off-premises – to maximise the benefits for security and storage

* To modernise the workplace through providing the business with more effective collaborative tools

* Provide better access and retrieval for all staff and business representatives.

Why Fresh?

Joe Kamara, Lead Business Change Manager explained the appeal of buying Fresh: "*We learned our lessons that in-house development and meeting business requirements is a challenge for a diverse business like ours. By working with Fresh, we take a product which answers our three key objectives and that has most of the functionality we could ever need. We will benefit from ongoing support and development – in a controlled manner - enabling us to use SharePoint properly and make the most of what O365 has to offer.*"

Integration with the business

NEC Group have not implemented the new intranet in a hurry! All the ground work has been done to ensure that the infrastructure is right, and the business is in good shape to adapt to using the new tools. The Fresh intranet has been demoed at recent Talking Heads management conferences before the new homepage goes live in July. This will be followed by a staggered roll-out over a 4-5 month transition period. Champions and content owners have been recruited across the business and will play a vital part in revolutionising the workplace at NEC Group.
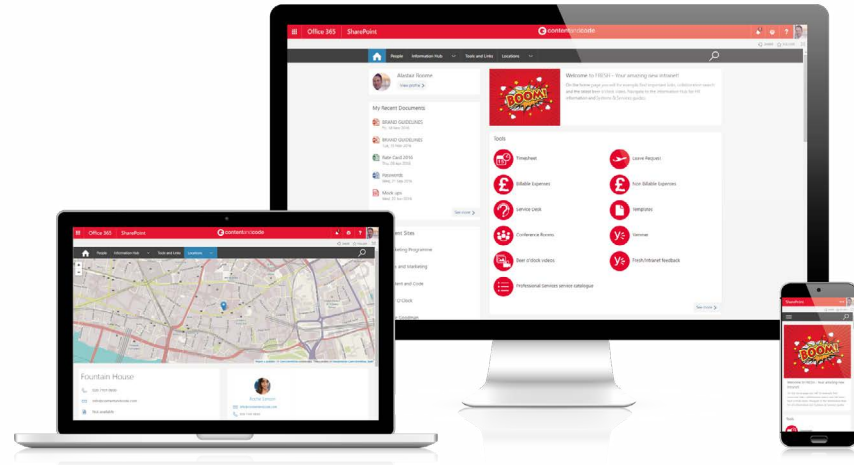
Why Fresh?

Fresh Intranet is the culmination of years of proven innovation, knowledge and experience from multi-award winning Content and Code. After 16 years building hundreds of cutting-edge intranets, Content and Code has great insight into what works and have built this knowledge into Fresh. Fresh Intranet is designed to get teams working together, faster.

Content and Code believe that intranets have a vital role in the modern workplace and should provide employees with relevant segmented communications, support engagement initiatives, help new employees find their feet and generally live up to the hype promised by Microsoft cloud technologies. As well as unleashing Office 365 in your business, Fresh is a digital communications solution, it is accessible in the office or on the move. Their experts have packaged up the functionality your users want and need – based on hearing their requests in thousands of workshops and looking at real intranet analytics to see what features actually get used. You benefit as you can be confident of successfully launching an intranet that will be a sure fire hit and really get the best out of your IT investments.

Their Fresh methodology supports you through the process of Office 365 intranet success; providing communications plans, workshops, training, executive coaching, launch events and other resources to ensure success.

To find out more about a Fresh new way of working:

✉ fresh@contentandcode.com

🌐 www.freshintranet.com

📞 +44 020 7101 0930