

Intranet Strategy

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Executive Summary

RAPID ADVANCES in information and communications technology, combined with globalisation and market convergence, have produced a 21st century workforce that is typically dispersed yet connected. Corporate intranets and enterprise portals support core business objectives by giving employees a personalised gateway to the online corporate environment – a self-service, one-stop shop, providing access to all the knowledge resources and collaborative tools they need to fulfil their day-to-day roles and add value to the business.

As the organisation's main internal communications channel, intranets and portals are key to enterprise-wide connectivity, enabling employees to share information and expertise and facilitating communication and collaboration at every level. Accessible at any time and, via mobile and remote access, from almost any location, the corporate intranet helps to maximise individual and collective performance and produces efficiency gains throughout the business, maximising the value of knowledge resources and providing a single platform for key business processes and administrative functions. Nor should the intranet's social function be overlooked. The development of formal and informal workplace communities and other seemingly frivolous interactive features bring together people from every part of an organisation, overcoming the boundaries of geography and function to create an inclusive, high-performance corporate culture that underpins the successful delivery of core business objectives.

Part 1 of this report takes a macro view of intranet and portal development, concentrating on the top priorities and

winning features of successful intranet strategy. It identifies six key considerations:

- Establishing business and user requirements as the basis for intranet and portal development and implementation;
- Intranet design;
- Content management;
- Personalisation;
- Developing an intranet culture;
- Extending security beyond the firewall.

Each chapter draws on the latest thinking from experts in the field, including contributors to Ark Group's *Ei* Workshop Series, design guru Dr. Jakob Nielsen's 'Ten Best Intranets of 2006' and content specialist Gerry McGovern, as well as guidance from successful intranet developers at leading organisations who have contributed case studies to *Ei* and *Inside Knowledge* over the past 18 months.

There is general consensus that the key to a successful intranet strategy is to ensure that its content and presentation are aligned with organisational strategy, business objectives and user needs. Chapter 1 presents some of the latest research and guidance from Dr. Richard Miller and Paul Chin - among others - on determining the key requirements that guide intranet and portal development, and devising an effective methodology for successful implementation and consolidation.

A successful intranet or portal also depends on good design. Chapter 2 identifies the key criteria underpinning successful intranet and portal design as consistency and usability, and explores some of the latest trends from Dr. Jakob Nielsen's 'Ten Best Intranets of 2006'. It then focuses

on the design elements of intranet redesign and consolidation.

A successful intranet or enterprise portal is the platform for relevant, easily-accessible content. It follows, therefore, that content management is at the heart of this report. Chapter 3 divides the main content management considerations affecting intranet and portal strategy into three categories:

- Content generation and migration;
- Ownership and responsibility;
- Categorisation, navigation and search.

Experts agree that the optimal content management system is aligned with the profile of the organisation and the different information requirements within it, so this chapter then explores the considerations – and some of the applications – that underpin effective content management.

Personalisation, which is covered in chapter 4, is an increasingly popular feature of intranet and portal strategy. Tailoring each individual's interface to the system gives users speedy and straightforward access to the applications and information that they routinely use, and prevents them from being overwhelmed with irrelevant messages and information. It also gives individuals a sense of ownership of their online interface with the enterprise.

Chapter 5 moves from individual ownership to collective ownership of the corporate online environment, exploring how organisations are increasingly establishing online communities and networks, which promote enterprise-wide dialogue and collaboration and enhance employee engagements. It uses examples from leading organisations on how to develop an authentic intranet culture.

Finally, chapter 6 looks outside the enterprise, considering the benefits and

challenges presented by the shift to remote and mobile working, which has freed many workers from the conventional office environment. Enterprise portals overcome the limitations of time and distance, enabling employees to access online resources whenever they require them and remain part of the workplace community. However, this raises important security issues that intranet developers and managers have to address.

The case studies in part 2 were written for Ark Group's *Ei* and *Inside Knowledge* magazines. They represent practical examples of successful intranet and portal development, implementation and consolidation, and include lessons learned and hints and tips on developing a cohesive information infrastructure, that maximises an organisation's performance while enhancing the working lives of its employee population.

1. What do you need for your business?

Establishing user requirements, development and implementation

IT IS generally recognised that an effective corporate intranet needs to be aligned to the profile of the organisation, its strategic goals and the specific day-to-day requirements of everyone working within it.

Ideally, a company's intranet represents a virtual one-stop shop that gives users ready access to all the information and knowledge resources that they need to fulfil their roles effectively and add value to the business.

Achieving this requires an intranet strategy that is tailored to the company's business objectives and operational priorities, with the goal of maximising its performance, enhancing its competitive position and improving the working lives of its employees. Many of the companies featured in part 2 of this report have engaged in intranet consolidation: merging multiple internal websites into a corporate intranet or enterprise portal, which also gives users access to the external business environment via the internet. Although consolidation involves many more factors than building a corporate intranet from scratch, the top priority remains the same: to create an information infrastructure that supports the business and its employee population in delivering its key strategic objectives.

Establishing user requirements

The starting point for creating a corporate intranet or enterprise portal that supports all parts of the business is to establish an accurate and comprehensive picture of user requirements. All too often intranet developers focus on the technology itself

rather than the people who will be using it, and who will ultimately determine its success or failure.

Many of the large companies featured in the case studies in part 2 of this report favour employee surveys to identify the various information needs across the organisation, and common user-related issues with the existing system. At Johnson & Johnson (see p79) the information-related items revealed by the results of a 'Voice of Employee' survey were then ranked against business needs. However, although desk research, ethnographic research and process mapping provide useful information, experts agree that the best way to find out what users really need is to talk to them.

Dr Richard Miller¹ of Vigorac advocates face-to-face research methods to uncover the 'hot topics' that are critical to intranet design, development and implementation. Before embarking on any major intranet project, he gathers information from two key groups: senior executives, who are responsible for delivering the overall strategic objectives of the organisation and control the budget; and front-line users, whose goals and targets are more likely to relate to operational and practical achievements.

Like BDO Stoy Hayward (see p33), Miller conducts semi-structured interviews. However, whereas BDO Stoy Hayward interview a representative sample of staff, Miller follows one-to-one interviews with senior managers with group discussions involving a cross-section of key users,