

GREAT INTRANETS: FROM DESIGN TO SOCIAL



A WHITE PAPER
BY TOBY WARD



PRESCIENT
DIGITAL MEDIA

Table of Contents

A GREAT INTRANET	4
EXECUTIVE SUPPORT	5
MOTIVATED USERS.....	6
UNISYS	8
DESIGN.....	9
SOCIAL CHANGE MANAGEMENT.....	9
CISCO	14
DESIGN.....	14
SOCIAL	16
INTRANET METRICS	17
VIDEO.....	18
RESULTS	18
PLANNING	20
PLANNING (STRATEGY).....	21
GOVERNANCE	22
IBM	24
USER ASSESSMENT	24
DESIGN.....	26
SOCIAL	28
RESULTS	29
INTRANET METRICS	29
DIRECTV	30
SOCIAL	30
TOP DOWN, BOTTOM UP	31
CHANGE MANAGEMENT	32
EXECUTIVE SUPPORT	33
RESULTS	34
FINAL ANALYSIS	32
LESSONS LEARNED	33
GOOD TO GREAT INTRANET MATRIX	34
ABOUT PRESCIENT DIGITAL MEDIA	38

A GREAT INTRANET

Great intranets begin with people – in fact, great intranets are obsessed with the people they serve. Technology is just an enabler. The real key to a successful intranet is people, and the process required to support not only managers, and executives, but the end user.

The dedication, rigor and resources required to build and maintain a great intranet or portal are significant. And while a successful intranet does not necessarily require a lot of money per se, there are many, many facets that require attention, especially successful planning and governance. People make great intranets.

I refer to the collective intranet facets or requirements as the Nexus of Intranet Success. Nexus ['nEksIs] comes from a Greek word meaning 'meeting place' – an appropriate moniker given the intranet's position in the average organization.



Depicting the Nexus as an illustration, the main components required for a successful intranet can be presented as a set of three concentric levels:

- Level 1, Executive Support
- Level 2, The Foundation (Planning, Resources, Content and Technology)
- Level 3, Motivated Users

Optimal intranet success requires success on all levels; each level working in conjunction with one another (thus the relevance of the 'Nexus').

While it can be argued that motivated employees are far more important than executives, it can also be argued that if an intranet has the necessary support, funding and resources from senior management, the intranet is often well supported and successful, which naturally draws in employees (or 'pulls' users to use the intranet).

In fact, the great intranets of the world, despite having different designs, technologies, content, and tools, have one thing in common: direct and active support from the CEO and the executive suite – and for an intranet, there's nothing more important.

EXECUTIVE SUPPORT

At the center of the Nexus or the heart of an intranet's potential for greatness, is executive support – both moral and financial support. Many organizations have intranets that are mid-management or grass-root initiatives, and some enjoy a certain level of success. However, the potential of these intranets will never be fully realized without real executive support and a senior management champion (ideally either the CEO or CIO or Chief Communications Officer or equivalent).

The number one challenge facing corporate intranets today is not technology, nor tight budgets, but rather internal politics, specifically, the politics of competing priorities and management agendas. The second biggest hurdle is a financial one. To win these challenges you need senior executives in your corner.

"Without the support, the site is more of an organizational afterthought and your work is almost an underground effort," says Shel Holtz, ABC, Principal of Holtz Communications + Technology. "So if you want your site to be taken seriously, you need executive support."

Before the intranet (build or re-design) can gain executive support, it must be presented and marketed as a beneficial business system, one that will aid the organization in achieving its goals and objectives. The intranet, insofar as it relates to company profits, earnings and revenue, can generate a sense of need and urgency to launch the project.

"Speak executive's language, appeal not to technology but results," says Holtz. "No executive loses sleep because the intranet doesn't get enough hits or isn't cool enough. Executives lose sleep over revenues, earnings and competition. You need to demonstrate how your efforts will help executives sleep better."

One way of pitching this idea to executives, as Holtz suggests, is to bring the executive team's attention to articles from business publications that explain how other companies have achieved bottom-line success through the application of online technology.

Too many intranets and portals fail or don't live up to their potential because they lack direction and often become a political football torn between rival groups and competing priorities.

Without thorough planning, your intranet may fail (often the failure takes years as the absence of proper governance and decision-making ensures the intranet is not fixed, but rather sits in purgatory). In fact, executive support is defined and secured during the planning phase. Also critical to the planning phase, is the

incorporation of both the organization's business requirements, and those of the end user employees. Without solid research and a detailed business requirements analysis, your intranet could significantly miss the mark.

An intranet manager at a major communications company once lamented about the phenomenal amount of wasted time, money and effort exhausted in evolving their enterprise intranet portal (serving tens of thousands of employees). In one year, the intranet was redesigned three times – exhausting significant funds and patience from an organization that should be using the intranet to support rather than drain the bottom-line. Of an extended team of more than a dozen people working on the intranet, only one person remained after a year.

Another client spent millions on a SharePoint deployment, over three years. When the new intranet launched, it crashed, and crashed the network. It was live for a few seconds, and would never go live again; millions of dollars and years were wasted because the corporation did not spend a few weeks assessing their environment, and putting a proper plan in place.

When choosing a content management system, portal, or any software product, an organization must work from a plan. Functional user and stakeholder requirements – the needs from senior management down through frontline employees – must be clearly defined. A structured methodology needs to be invoked to not only ensure that the proper vendor is chosen, but that the product has a productive lifespan.

Stanford-based Gartner estimates that one-third of IT projects in small to mid-sized companies exceed budgets and schedules by almost 100%; a lot of time and money is wasted due to 'scope creep' in most IT projects.

Scope creep happens when the scope or deliverables of a project change during the project implementation, mainly because of weak planning that doesn't fully account for the business requirements of the organization.

Scope creep is not an 'if', it's a 'when'. Unfortunately, none of us has a crystal ball so there is little chance that all future needs can be foreseen. It's the way scope creep is managed that makes for a successful project.

To avoid scope creep, and disastrous intranet failures such as those cited above, every organization must undertake the necessary assessment, to identify and document both senior executive and frontline employee needs, prior to developing the requisite plans.

MOTIVATED USERS

Great intranets are well-used. If they do not use it, the intranet is worthless. Intranets must be built with both the end user, and senior management in mind.

Employees need to be heard and understood, and have their needs incorporated into the end design and structure of the intranet. If not, the intranet serves of very little value to employees. But when you understand employee needs and deliver content and tools that make their lives easier and more productive, employees will be motivated to use the intranet.

"Forget the online "field of dreams" epigram – if you build it, they will come," advises Holtz. "Find out the 'who', 'what' and 'why' of the intranet. Then determine how you can meet your specific, measurable objectives with the audience and its needs."

Moreover, if you build it, they will not come... necessarily. If an organization does understand the requisite needs of its employees, and spends the necessary time on change management and communications, employees will come to use the intranet.

True intranet success is rare. A great intranet requires, first and foremost, executive support, and the necessary planning that will draw-in and engage employees to become motivated users.

GREAT INTRANET TIP

Intranets must be accompanied by a healthy dose of change management. Effective change management flows from effective governance (explicit, documented governance model detailing ownership, management and decision-making), social media policy (who can do what, when, how, and the rules for doing so), and active communications and training.

An effective intranet change management plan requires:

- *Intranet governance*
- *Content management policy*
- *Social media policy*
- *Executive sponsorship*
- *Communications plans*
- *Training plans*

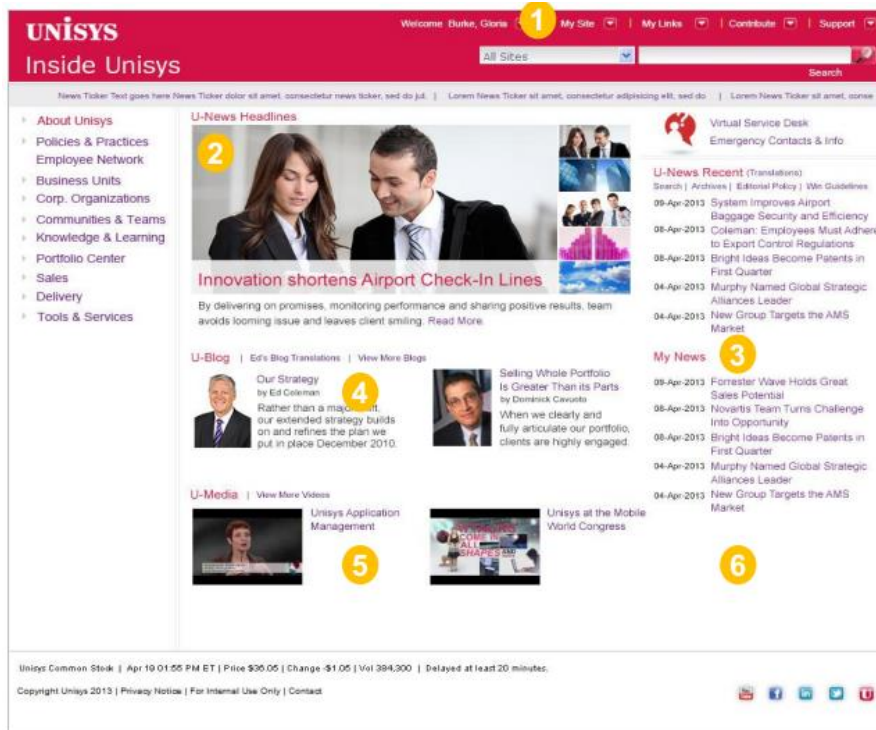
“Technology is just the enabler; people and process drive social business,” says Gloria Burke, Chief Knowledge Officer, Unisys.

Unisys is a worldwide information technology company that provides a portfolio of IT services, software, and technology and more than 23,000 employees in more than 100 countries.

The Unisys social intranet is an integrated intranet (built on Microsoft SharePoint 2013) that has evolved over time with the Unisys population. And although the intranet has been supplemented with additional technology – including FAST, Sitrion (formerly Newsgator), Microsoft Lync, and Salesforce.com Chatter newsfeeds to provide added functionality to support sales and account management activities – to bring alive the native functionality found in SharePoint, Unisys has put the principal focus and effort into people and process, not technology.

“Focus on culture; people drive success, technology is the enabler,” says Burke. “Bring in the champions within each organization of the company to be active change agents.”

Reporting to the CIO, as Chief Knowledge Officer, Gloria Burke owns the intranet and chairs the Intranet Steering Committee, and a Stakeholders Council with senior leaders from across the company — business units, HR, IT, legal, finance, marketing, and more.



- 1 **My Site Elements and Enterprise Search** are part of an action bar that is persistent across the company's intranet.
- 2 **Global Company News** is featured in main display screen and allows for social commenting.
- 3 **Audienced "Regional" and "Organization" news and language translation** improves end user relevancy.
- 4 **Leadership use of social tools** is evident through featured blogs.
- 5 **Video pod casts** showcase the latest news and activities
- 6 **My Newsfeed** roll-up will be added in next release providing tabs to toggle from "My Country/Office", "My Organization" and "My Network" views of Newsfeed activities.

Unisys intranet, Inside Unisys home page, 2014

The Unisys home page is not the sexiest, by any means, but its approach and integration with social collaboration tools is *par excellence*, representing a level of expertise and best practices rarely seen since its launch five years ago. The home page features the standard elements including global navigation, search, news, and features, and links to executive blogs. Employees can in fact choose the language of choice for navigating the Unisys intranet, Inside Unisys. My News is targeted specifically to the individual based on region and organization, and language preferences.

DESIGN

The design of the Unisys home page is extremely minimal, and simple – the emphasis is on information and navigation, not design.

Aside from the red in the global banner (top of the page encompassing the intranet brand, company logo, global navigation (IA) and search box), there is no colour on the page. Images and iconography are kept to a minimal, and text is also minimized. Aside from the footer, the entire home page is but one page – the user need not scroll as there is nothing ‘below the fold’ (or no second screen required).

Unisys has learned what most great intranet managers understand: employees spend very little time on the home page, and want to absorb most of what is featured in a glance – they don’t want to scroll.

SOCIAL CHANGE MANAGEMENT

Prior to becoming social, Unisys employees began creating their own, unsecure social networks, outside the firewall, which compromised Unisys privacy and security in more ways than one. In fact, 1800 Unisys employees were contributing to their own, unsecure Yammer account.

“If you don’t invest in these platforms, you will lose young talent to the competition,” says Burke, addressing the 2014 Intranet Global Forum at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles, CA.

And so the move towards social began many years ago, but began with emphasis in 2010 with the introduction of SharePoint My Sites – personalized, individual profile sites that enable employee social networking. Leading the charge, as the above statistics reveal, are senior management who are very active users, and active champions.

In fact, senior management uses an internal social community, a closed community “to run Unisys,” adds Burke.

Ed Coleman, the CEO, blogs to employees in his own words (not a PR handler’s words) and uses the blog to engage employees in dialogue. And he truly leads the social charge at Unisys: a video promoting the new intranet spends the opening minute featuring the Coleman using and evangelizing the value of the intranet and enterprise social media.

Employees are automatically alerted to blog postings and microblog postings on the newsfeeds on Inside Unisys. Over time, Unisys sales people began using Inside Unisys to share information about recent wins as well as share lessons in losses.

CEO Coleman led the intranet change management by encouraging employees to create profile pages that included skills and experience. Employees were encouraged to author blogs, share updates through micro blogs, and join communities of interest to share and develop expertise.

Unisys executives reinforced the value of social collaboration at town hall meetings with employees around the world, and the knowledge solutions team followed up with education and training. The team created role-based scenarios for the adoption and use of the various social computing capabilities and socialized them through targeted communications, explaining how employees could leverage social collaboration to do their jobs better.

But social media technology in itself will not change anything, as Unisys knows all too-well. A greater change management effort to increase intranet use and adoption includes:

- Scavenger hunts
- My Site contests for best profiles
- Learning modules
- Print communications
- On-demand learning, video vignettes (for example, on how to enable a blog, and set up a wiki)

MY SITES

My Sites is the engine of employee networking of those organizations deploying SharePoint for their social intranet. My Site is a personal intranet site for each employee that gives them a central location to manage and store documents, content, links, contacts, and track social contributions. My Site serves as a point of contact for other users in your organization to find information about the user and their skills and interests. It's also the place for an employee to target or gather content based on the information in the user profile, such as your title, department, and interests.

At Unisys, My Sites functionality has been enhanced by other technologies including Sitrion and Lync.

"My Profile" makes it easy for employees to build an individual company presence and to "follow" colleagues to quickly develop a valuable social network.

- 1 About Me**
This section provides a description of "who I am and what I do" in my role at Unisys
- 2 Ask Me About**
This section showcases my areas of expertise and is linked to search. When colleagues ask question and uses a #hashtag the topic, I am notified.
- 3 Kudos**
This section allows employees to recognize the valuable contributions of others
- 4 Recent Activity Feed**
- 5 My Organization**
This section provides a view of my peer colleagues, those to whom I report and employees who report up to me.

My Sites functionality and features include:

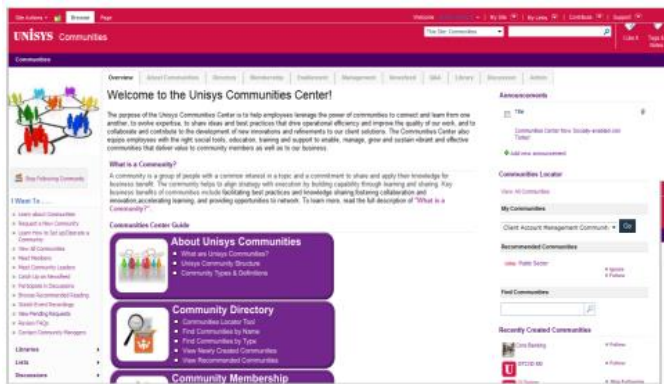
- **Detailed profiles** – personal information, colleagues, reporting, libraries, communities, hashtags, content (e.g. blogs), etc.
- **Kudos** - This section allows employees to recognize the valuable contributions of others.
- **Recent Activity Feed** – what I and others are doing.
- **My Organization** - This section provides a view of my peer colleagues, those to whom I report and employees who report up to me (PeopleSoft streams into the My Site Profile).
- **Expertise** - This section showcases my area of expertise and is linked to search. When colleagues ask question and uses a #hashtag the topic, I am notified. Employees can also seek out others for help:
 - **Post Questions & Answers** - Employees can pose and answer questions within the newsfeed with greater transparency and reach. The use of hashtags directs questions to experts who can then respond with the right answer in a real time environment.
 - **Filtered Newsfeed Viewing** - This allows employees to view global posts, or post made by colleagues whom they are following or by communities to which they are subscribed.
 - **Add/Follow Colleagues** - Enables employees to quickly build a valuable network by following colleagues and the information they share in the newsfeed.

In addition to social profiles, the Unisys intranet has 470 designated subject matter experts, or 'Stars' that curate knowledge; a search by Star produces the most relevant, curated information.

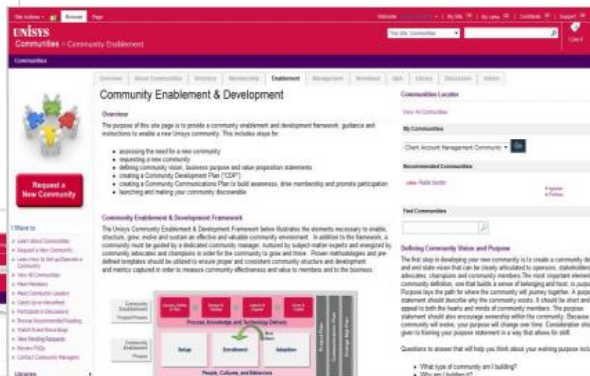
COMMUNITIES

Employees can search by topic to find communities of interest or view a list of recommended communities to join. There are 80 strategic communities; 200+ open communities in all.

Potential community leaders fill out an online community form to request a community; additional information and guidance on starting and leading a community is provided.

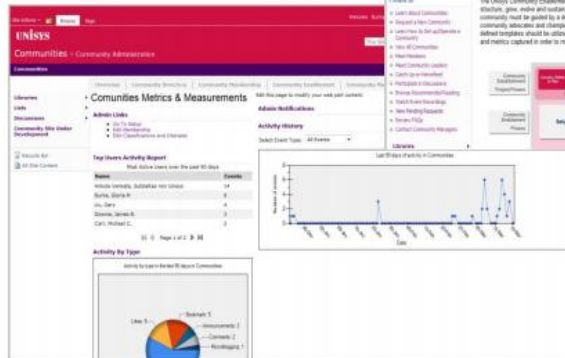


Unisys Communities are the place where employees go to find subject matter expertise, share and leverage best practices to grow and contribute to their profession



Community Center Features

- Search Existing Communities/Topics
- Join a Community
- Create a New Community



Community Evolution & Management

- Community Manager Kit Training
- Member Activity Metrics
- Activity Type
- Share & Learn from other Community Managers

Clearly, if it takes a village to raise a child, it takes an enterprise to raise a social intranet.

RESULTS

The collaborative approach to a social intranet at Unisys has been impressive:

- 91% adoption rate of social media amongst target knowledge workers
- 100% of Senior Management have and are active users of My Sites
- \$5.2 million saved in telephony costs
- 5% reduction in travel costs

GREAT INTRANET TIP

The intranet home page should be a single page. Employees generally do not like scrolling on a home page; they don't mind scrolling through the content that they're seeking (e.g. a news story, a document, or policy). But the home page should be digested in a glance – in 10 seconds or less.

Note how leading great intranets like Unisys and IBM have one-screen home pages (with no scrolling); others like DIRECTV and Cisco have a very minimally scrolling home page.

The Cisco intranet, called Cisco Employee Connection (CEC), is now 20 years old, and supports a workforce of more than 100,000 (75,000 full-time employees plus contractors).

“The intranet connects everyone to everything, from employee services tools such as HR benefits, IT support and workplace resources to corporate news, market intelligence, product information, and small team collaboration,” says Heather Gallegos, Senior Manager, Internal Communication Channels.

“Employees can access the intranet on their desktops and mobile devices when on campus or via VPN. We’ve recently added several mobile applications that provide direct access to the most frequently used tools like expense reporting and recording paid time off.”

Cisco’s User Capability Framework provides the strategy for the corporate intranet and contains eight “epic focuses” (all with action plans):

- Act
- Connect
- Find
- Organize
- Communicate
- Consume
- Interact
- Share

Specifically, the Cisco intranet has five main pillars (or strategic thrusts):

- 1- **Video** – High-quality interaction from anywhere, real time and offline (over 80 internal live broadcasts every month via Cisco TV; 300 videos uploaded every month via “Cisco Show and Share”)
- 2- **Mobile** – Secure access to information and people from any device, anywhere
- 3- **Social** – Expertise and information location, proactive interaction
- 4- **Apps** – Easy and intuitive access to transactional systems
- 5- **Content** – millions of pages of rich content

DESIGN

The Cisco intranet employs a very simple design, with one primary colour (a muted, blue-grey), supported by a very simple icon palette, with real photos that are related strictly to the associated content. The global banner or masthead is minimal, but supported by a tabbed approach to secondary navigation in the left-hand column, with a column for My Links (links populated and chosen by the individual user).



The Cisco Employee Connection, intranet home page, 2014

The home page features:

- Top news feature
- Featured video or webcast
- “We Are Cisco” in-depth feature on an employee or team
- A “New Products & Solutions” carousel
- Top news stories
- Submit News form for employees to submit their own home page news
- Cisco TV Guide (a guide to all the intranet TV programs and webcasts)
- Calendar of key events
- Billboard of top content destinations including job opportunities, Cisco Glossary, and key online communities

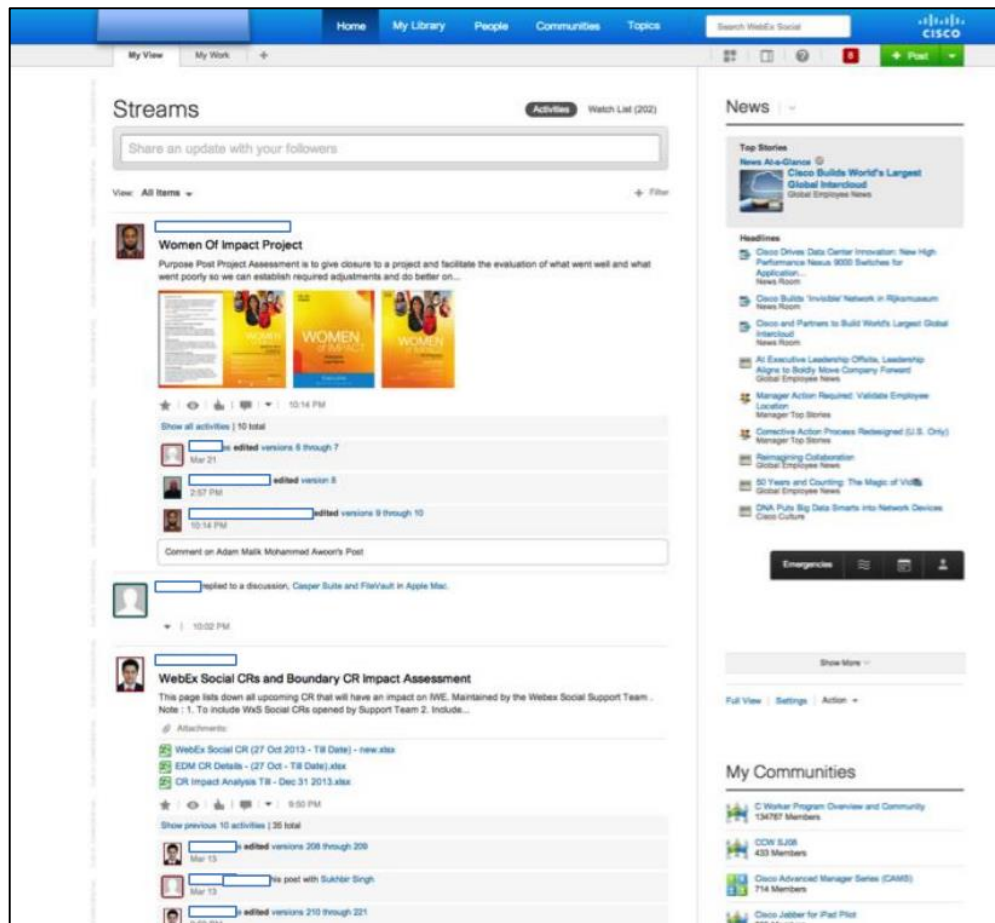
Although Cisco deploys and provides a number of options and pull down options and navigation structures for users to navigate through content (e.g. Organizations, Theatres & Locations, Job Roles, Navigation Tools) the main information architecture is built under eight principal or parent categories:

- About Cisco
- Employee Services
- Career & Learning

- Support & Tools
- Products, Solutions & Industries
- Security Information
- News
- Office of the Chairman and CEO

SOCIAL

Where once the focus of the intranet was on applications and news, the focus is now social. Similarly, Cisco intranet resources and strategy shifted to the “social intranet” powered by their own social intranet technology, WebEx Social. While funding for the main intranet has declined in recent years (like most corporate intranets since 2008) more budget and resources have been directed towards social applications, namely the WebEx Social platform.



Cisco WebEx Social home – home of employee networking at Cisco

“We’re not feeling the love with the budgets,” jokes Gallegos, speaking at the Intranet Global Forum 2014 at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles. In other words, funding for the main Cisco intranet has slowed since 2008 (but she admits, not unlike the economy, the funding is slowly coming back).

The social component of the intranet, highlighted as a primary link called WebEx Social, in the main, global navigation, the employee user accesses the full social platform which features:

- **Unified Post** – a simplified way to share content and create and post any type of content (including blogs, wikis, text, documents, images, hyperlinks, and videos), and attach large files
- **Bi-Directional Email** – social collaboration while in email: create a post or start a discussion forum directly from email; reply to a post or discussion thread using email; receive an email notification when somebody sends or replies to a post
- **Unified Communications** – one-click access to real-time collaboration tools including chat, email, and the ability for users to initiate and participate in browser-based high definition phone and video calls
- **Enterprise Social Networking** – expert finder, expert Q&A, tagging, social graphing, activity streams, search, and “Suggestions” which analyzes social activities to make personalized recommendations on people, posts, and communities

Gallegos says virtually all Cisco employees are using the social components, but only about 20% contribute to social media (creating or commenting; not counting “Liking”) and 80% are pure social consumers.

The CEC intranet also features:

- Hundreds of workplace applications
- 20,000 online communities
- 57 internal mobile apps delivered through a consolidated internal e-Store
- Mobile access via responsive design
- An eStore as a catalog of all apps and services
- Cisco Maps (buildings, meeting rooms, etc.)
- My Approvals (Managers approving leave applications, benefits, etc.)

INTRANET METRICS

- 7-8 million page views per month on traditional intranet, CEC (5.3 million visits)
- 1.5-2 million page views per month on WebEx Social
- 15,000 active communities (one-third are active)

The most used part of the intranet? Employee Directory, followed by Search, and the top, main global navigation categories, including WebEx Social.

“For Cisco, a successful intranet must create value for the business, such as increased employee productivity, business process transformation, and cost reduction,” says Gallegos. “However, the push today toward social business, global collaboration, and mobility require that the corporate intranet strategy broaden its focus to include user-capability-driven design, governance, and enterprise content management.”

In other words, Cisco will be investing and improving up governance and enterprise content management.

VIDEO

Not surprisingly, video and multimedia play a big part on the Cisco intranet. Cisco has its own intranet TV channel, Cisco TV, with multiple daily broadcasts supported by 12 full broadcast studios across the planet.

Internal “YouTube-like” capabilities via Cisco Show and Share

- The majority of employees attend major events via video
- Over 300 videos uploaded every month
- 12 broadcast quality studios around the world and over 1,000 TelePresence units
- Video conferencing is pervasive throughout the organization



Cisco has over 80 internal live broadcasts per month!

Cisco TV

Leading the video charge is Cisco CEO John Chambers, who does video blogs, and hosts monthly internal broadcasts for employees.

RESULTS

The Cisco intranet has garnered great success in many areas, but namely via a specific business units or departments:

- Accelerated time-to-market by 12–18 months through global collaboration (in Engineering)
- US\$120,000 saved per major event through shared information and collaboration (in Marketing)
- Increased customer satisfaction (in Services)
- 80% decrease in internal emails (within the IT operation; variable results in other areas)
- 50% less time spent on requests for quotations (in Supply Chain)

“Measuring and tracking ROI for our entire intranet investment is a future goal,” add Gallegos. “A strategy that incorporates these aspects to achieve measured business value goals will find success. Is it easy? Nope. Are we fully there yet? Nope. But this is the path we are on.”

GREAT INTRANET TIP

Encourage employees to write and submit news for the intranet home page. Create a simple “Submit News” form with a home page link that encourages news submissions from employee and details the parameters and rules for submitting news.

PLANNING

Planning is a mission-critical component of any intranet. All great intranets begin with planning. Failure to develop an integrated plan that accounts for an organization's structure, stakeholder and user requirements will certainly ensure failure and, with it, a loss of significant time, money and often jobs.

Like the content of your intranet, planning and governance is technology agnostic; whether it's SharePoint or another portal or content management platform, the necessity for and the approach to planning is the same. Given its technology neutral status, planning is largely applicable to any technology platform and as such is generic to start.

The process of planning an intranet, and the role of executive management and end users in developing the plan, determines the potential success of an intranet. True intranet success is not often achieved (or held for long), and most intranet managers and champions at those companies often rate their own intranet as satisfactory at best – less than truly successful – and requiring a lot of work.

Achieving “great intranet” status usually takes years of careful planning, commitment, hard work, executive support and funding. While a successful intranet does not necessarily require a lot of money per se, there are many, many ingredients to successful planning and executing a great intranet, including:

- Executive sponsorship
- Strategic planning
- Governance
- Functional planning
- Content
- Design
- Policies and processes
- Search
- Applications
- Etc.

The most critical determinant of an intranet's success – and it cannot be stressed enough – is people. This includes executive sponsorship, ownership and management (more on governance to follow), user engagement, and ongoing operations including content development. All great intranets have great teams, and enjoy superb executive management.

And all great intranets follow a process or methodology. Prescient Digital Media's dedicated Intranet Project Methodology, built over many years and on the strength of 200+ intranet projects, has five distinct phases:

- 1- **Assessment** – understand the requirements of the business, the user, and best practices
- 2- **Planning** – establish high-level strategic, governance, and specific functional plans and policies
- 3- **Technology** – evaluate and select the appropriate technology, and specific technology requirements
- 4- **Implementation** – develop, customize, test, and launch the desired technology platform
- 5- **Adoption** – market, communicate, educate, and train the end employee users and managers



Ironically then, it is the Planning activities (and those Assessment activities depicted in the Intranet Project Methodology illustration), that builds and secures the necessary support from both the organization's executives and end user employees.

PLANNING (STRATEGY)

Planning addresses the needs documented during the Assessment. Intranet planning incorporates both the strategic vision, governance model and the functional plan, and maps out the strategic and tactical steps for designing the intranet or portal including:

- High-level vision and mission
- Goals and objectives
- Governance
- Critical success indicators (KPIs)
- Business case and ROI
- Content management & policies

A strategy has definition, is well documented and shared by all stakeholders, and has key performance indicators (KPIs) or metrics. The strategy provides direction for executable actions (in the context of this white paper, we treat strategy as synonymous with planning, though a strategy in the broader definition might contain many plans). For an intranet, a typical strategy includes the following elements:

- Vision
- Mission
- Target audience definition / segmentation
- Governance model
- Goals
- Objectives
- Action plans
- KPIs (or CSIs)

Strategy and planning is independent of technology, and should precede the selection, architecture, and implementation of any intranet. In fact, any choice for or work on technology before the development of plans and governance is synonymous with putting the cart before the horse (although it is understood that many companies have already invested in technology platforms such as SharePoint or WebSphere, and therefore must turn their attention to making these platforms work accordingly). Regardless of the technology, intranets risk failure without a well-defined strategy. Even the smallest of intranets requires a strategy and plan.

Additionally, detailed tactical plans should include:

- Functional plan
- Information architecture
- Page wireframes
- Design concepts
- Usability testing

GOVERNANCE

As is the case with most intranets it is simply impossible to achieve any long-lasting success without a clearly defined ownership and management structure. Far from being a buzz word, intranet governance provides clarity and rules namely the titles, roles and responsibilities of its owners, managers, stakeholders and contributors.

Simply put, governance defines an intranet's ownership and management model and structure including the:

- Management team
- Roles & responsibilities of contributors
- Decision making process
- Policies & standards

Like the content of your website or intranet, planning and governance is technology agnostic; whether it's SharePoint, IBM or another portal or content management system, the necessity for and the approach to governance is the same. Given its technology neutral status, governance is largely applicable to any technology platform.

The major components of an Intranet Governance Model should include:

- The umbrella ownership model (Centralized? Decentralized? Collaborative?)
- Defined ownership structure (names and titles)
- Roles and responsibilities (jobs and duties)
- Decision making process (who is responsible for what and when)
- Content and development policies & standards (the rules of establishing pages, sites and content)

Politics and the issues of control, ownership and standards go hand-in-hand with an intranet. Sadly, very few organizations actually have a well-defined governance model, and many of those have spent hundreds-of-thousands or millions of dollars on their intranet – amounting to extraordinary investments left to chance and execution on a whim.

GREAT INTRANET TIP

Intranet social media tools should never be isolated tools in far flung corners of the intranet portal. Social media tools should be grouped together, available from the home page, and integrated into most aspects of content consumption (e.g. user commenting on news, sharing and bookmarking from all content, and linking to relevant tools from specific content such as relevant discussion forums or wikis).

Intranet design is pretty stale; and most intranets tend to look alike. Intranet design isn't the most imaginative business, but occasionally an innovator steps forth....

Enter IBM.

IBM is no stranger to intranet redesigns, they've undertaken a half-dozen redesigns in the past 15 years. Each time they learn something new...

One of the biggest redesigns was undertaken in 2011. A team of more than 40 IBM consultants led a massive redesign of IBM's web properties: a galactic redesign that included both the external website and internal intranet.

The core objective: a single design system that converges the intranet (W3) and Internet standards, incorporates reusable design patterns and evolves the design system through collaboration.

Among the key design goals:

- Redesign w3 and ibm.com so that they clearly communicate IBM and IBMers at their best
- Design a new digital experience for IBM.com that looks, sounds, thinks and performs like IBM
- Introduce IBM experts, innovators and collaborators across the web, both internally and externally (.com and external web)
- Encourage behaviors that support the workforce enablement strategy

The massive redesign project is design version 17 (v17; v9 of the intranet, w3). Among the new design undertakings:

- One design system: converging www & w3 design systems
- User interface design: templates, elements, guidelines, standards
- Technical: HTML, CSS, JavaScript
- Process: Community, iteration, design patterns, compliance
- High level information architecture: masthead categories, footer
- Only have four persistent links in the w3 masthead (w3 Home, BluePages, Help Central and Feedback) and no page Footer
- The new masthead includes over 100 links to w3 sites and applications employees use most
- Over time, new features like your ODW Essential Links, Alerts & Notifications, and collaboration features will be added
- New visual design: masthead, content space, etc.
- Browser "layout", page width, column grids, templates
- Local navigation
- Right column

Among the audacious design changes is the elimination of the old, corporate “big blue” colors and a more progressive white and black look and feel. Left-hand site navigation was eliminated and instead replaced with large, drop down menus – or “mega menus” – that fall under the main, global navigation buttons.

“The new design uses darker and more subdued colors in the masthead and footer but brighter colors and more readable fonts in the content space making it easier for you to focus on where the real action is happening on the page: the content space!!,” says Peter Ceplenski, Manager User Experience, IBM, and one of big blue’s redesign’s commanding officers.

“The w3 portal, also known as the OnDemand Workplace (ODW) has been the corner of the intranet you can make your own. However, customization hasn’t always been easy or intuitive,” says Ceplenski. “The new design makes it incredibly easy for you to add and remove widgets from the page, to change the layout of the page, and even allows you to easily add and remove your own pages customizing each for the way YOU work.”

“Don’t like where we’ve placed a widget? Drag that widget to a different part of the page or remove it all together replacing it with something that will make you better informed or more productive!”

Among the many benefits of such a massive redesign revolution:

- Reduced time and effort needed for maintenance and design improvements via:
 - Common, universal design elements via common CSS and services. (This will simplify design updates in the future, leading to some design updates where adopters won’t even need to touch their pages.)
 - Converging w3 and www design standards. (One set of standards to know, and greatly simplified development for sites in both spaces.)
- Allows adopters to easily leverage strategic widgets and features through an agile digital design framework
- Dynamic delivery of merchandising and Expertise Locator services through our services framework (higher conversion through personalization and contextual positioning)
- Improves the user experience
 - Easier navigation through use of mega-menu’s (higher conversion through ease-of- use)
- Showcases IBM at its best through a more modern look and feel and innovative user interactions
- Synchronizes Smarter Planet and Centennial design strategy, look and feel

Address: http://w3.ibm.com/home.jsp

w3 Welcome to the IBM Intranet

BluePages Search Help/Info Feedback

4 Jan 2002, Hello Kristine Lawas [Edit Homepage Layout](#) | [Profile Settings](#) | [Sign Out](#) | [Help](#)

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Symbol	Current	4/1
IBM	124.48	-0.82
CSO	20.74	-0.02
EMC	16.87	-0.28
ENTC	35.90	-0.46

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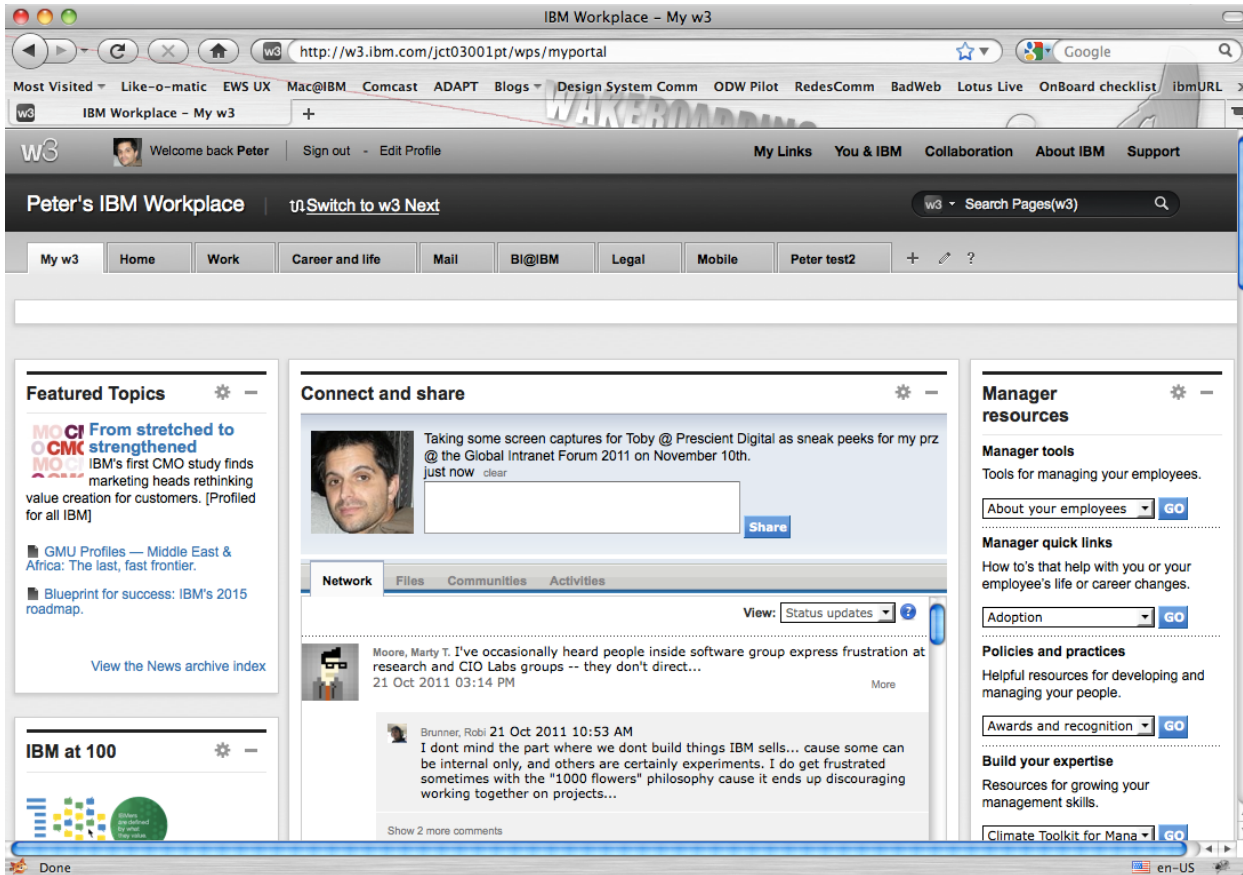
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The old IBM intranet; one of the lowest scoring intranet designs, tested with hundreds of intranet users over five years, features far too many text blocks and links (circa 2006)



The IBM intranet home page, W3, in 2013 (version 17)

THE INTRANET IS DEAD

The redesigning process was not over. The new 'Apple' approach to design didn't resonate with user in the long run.

In 2015, IBM developed a new mission for their intranet, a Jerry Maguire-esque mission statement manifesto on how the intranet should evolve... beginning with its death. In IBM's own words:

No longer is there a single information workplace. No longer are we bound by the strict confines of a firewalled digital destination. The way we work transcends the binary notions of 'internal' and 'external'. The body of knowledge we access and to which we contribute is now globally distributed across individuals, communities and disciplines. And our communication is constant, immediate and ubiquitous.

The vehicle through which we interact with our colleagues, customers and communities of practice needs to reflect this shift. As an organization, we must reconceive how to serve and

empower a global workforce – professionally and culturally – in a way that enables everyone to achieve his or her full potential.

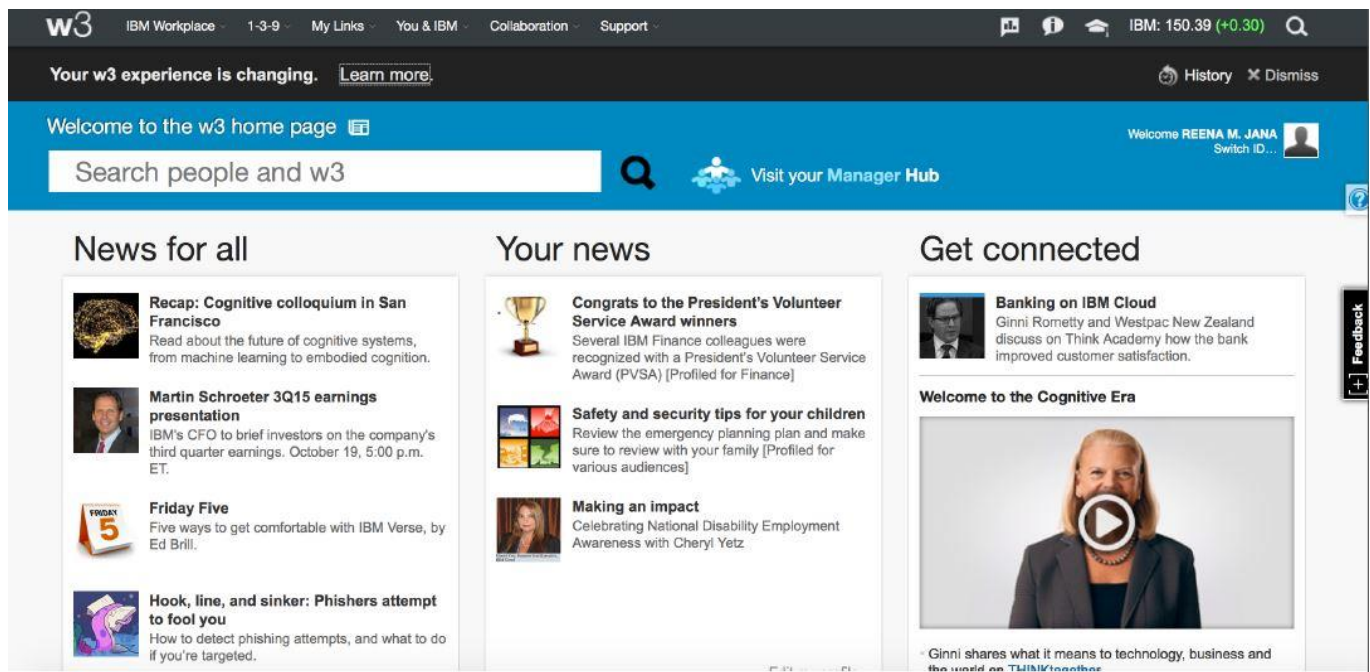
W3 must change to serve the expanding needs of IBMers by seamlessly integrating with IBM.com – evolving from distinct toolkit to integrated service; from a walled garden to a mode of engagement. W3 can become the service through which digital citizens (users/employees) engage to make the world work better.

In the future, w3 will cease to be a separate destination for IBMers. Instead, it will seamlessly integrate into IBM.com and the Web, serving as the frame through which they relate to their colleagues, the enterprise, their clients and partners. It will inspire and enable each of them to be a steward and standard-bearer of the IBM brand.

In the future, the intranet was to service will exist as a series of permissioned information modes, customized to perform a variety of functions:

- As a private space (Individual) for IBMers to be served, supported and advised by IBM
- As a forum for dialogue (Enterprise), collaboration and learning with IBM
- As an inviting workspace (Partner) for the communities of practice both inside and outside of the company
- As a clearinghouse (Global) for essential information, news and content

The new intranet was redesigned quickly, with a focus on search and news for all, and better integration of social media on the home page. Much cleaner, and less crowded the intranet was taking a step in the right direction.



The new IBM intranet home page, W3, in 2015

However, the intranet team still failed to hit a home-run. Although the 2015 redesign was a step in the right direction, users were still only lukewarm to the latest redesign. No one ever said intranet design was easy, nor is it easy to satisfy all employees all of the time.

Employee surveys found that satisfaction levels were dropping far too low for the intranet team's liking: overall satisfaction had dipped to 67%, which meant in some geographies outside of the U.S. it was below 50%. Slow load times were also a frequent complaint of the 400,000 approximate users.

At the heart of the redesign though were a number of problems uncovered in the user research:

- Unavailable – the home page crashed too often (though available for more than 99% of the time, when it went down it was a big deal)
- Slow – slow download times
- Crowded – the home page was too busy
- Search – on an intranet with tens-of-millions of pages and documents, search results were underwhelming if not poor
- Mobile – more and more employees were logging onto the intranet via a mobile device, and finding the interface cumbersome

In other words, IBM took employee feedback to heart and really dove deep into the research to find out what employees really wanted.

INTRANET REDESIGN, 2017

IBM took notice, undertook scads of additional user research, and undertook yet another redesign. The intranet redesign goal was simple: make employees happier and more productive.

Denoted as Project Butterfly – a broader initiative of which the intranet home page was one component, but also extended to a manager’s intranet hub and mobile apps for employees.

“How it looks DOES matter,” says Jason Blackwell, Cognitive Psychologist & Human Factors Engineer, IBM Enterprise Web Solutions. “Waiting is not engaging. “Temporarily unavailable” is not engaging.” The research also uncovered a finding that most take for granted – employees were mostly using the intranet to search (either the search engine, or the employee directory).

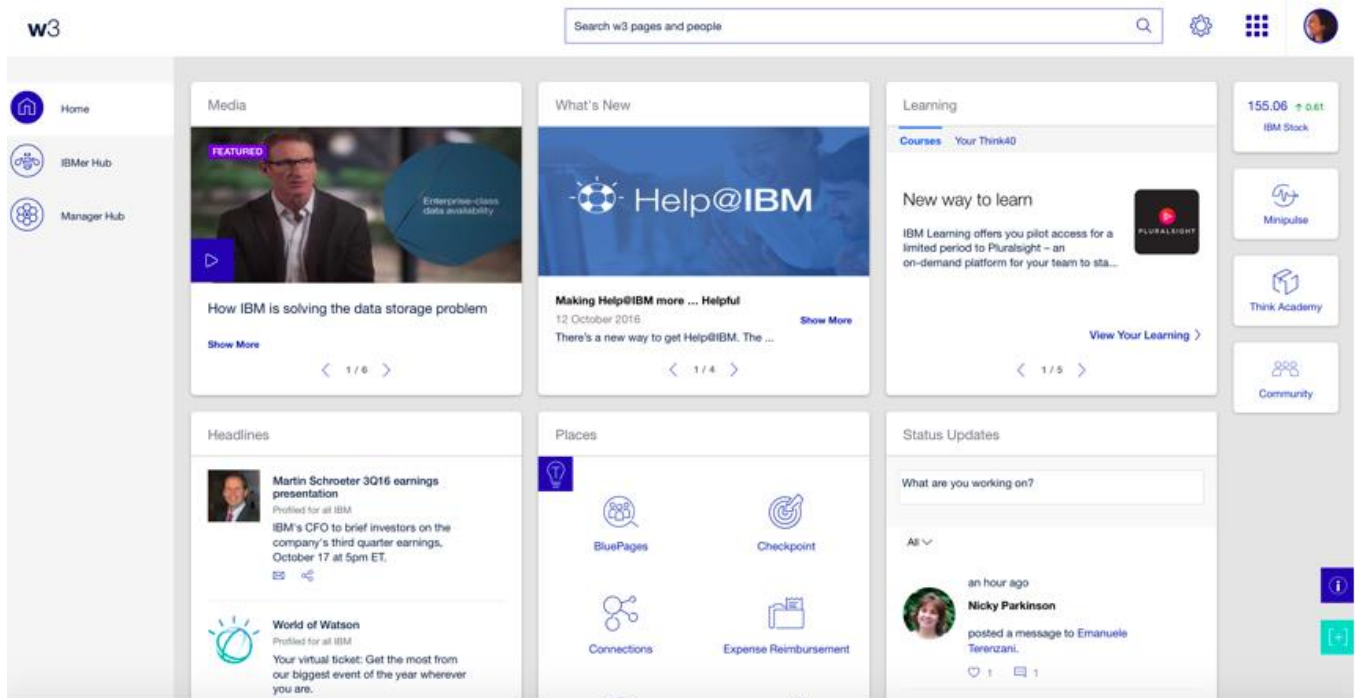
“A lot of what was inspiring the redesign was something really fast and stable, and improves all the spaces that most IBMers use,” says Blackwell. “Click data found 70% of home page activity was just searching. So we set out to learn their interests, work habits (and) predict their navigation / search needs.”

The IBM team turned their focus to a number of key priorities:

- Design – engaging design: build systems to audience, their needs, and tasks
- Cross-platform – mobile access and scalability for future mobile interactivity
- Social engagement – collaboration (social media) should not be a destination – engage with whom you need, when you need them.
- Speed – fast, resilient
- Personalization – intelligent, adaptive systems – build the workplace around the user
- Search – adapt and improve search

DESIGN

The new design is a dramatic departure from the typical portal design chalked full of content boxes and webparts. Instead, the new design deconstructs the portal box look, emphasizes the search engine front and center, and limits the remainder of the page to three columns of ‘cards’ which individually slide with the click of a button. Employees can choose what portlets (webparts) appear on their home page, and the information architecture was dramatically simplified.



The new IBM intranet home page, W3, in 2018

FINAL ANALYSIS

Great intranets begin at the executive suite, and become great by motivated employee users; people and process beget great intranets.

Specific recommendations for intranet managers and owners:

- **Champions** – find and secure one or two c-level executives that are internal champions, sponsors, and sources of funding (often the CIO, or chief of communications or HR).
- **Governance team** – build a governance team of key IT, communications and HR people, and include the business owners of the major site collections.
- **Business owners** – ensure that each major category and site collection has a business owner that is responsible for the properties of all sites under the site collection.
- **Site policy** – create an overarching policy (or a series of specific policies) that govern the creation and use of sites, pages and content.
- **Taxonomy** – create a global information taxonomy of up to ten categories that becomes your global information categories of your information architecture. These six-to-ten categories (no more than 10) become the site collections for your portal.
- **Auditing** - turn-on “auditing” (including “read” auditing) for those sites that have become stale. After a few months, if no one has modified or read the site (or only minimally), you can archive the site or eventually delete it.
- **Implementation** – not all implementation partners and IT teams are created equal; many deployments have failed because it was not deployed properly. Ensure that careful evaluation, selection and management is applied to any implementation partner or IT resources to ensure optimal success.
- **Content migration** – don't move over all your old content. Undertake an audit of what is needed and what is not, and migrate only the necessary information.
- **Home page** – make the intranet home the unalterable, default home page in all user browsers.

GOVERNANCE

A Strategic Plan determines the long-term mission, vision, and medium to short-term goals of a new social intranet. Like the strategic planning pyramid, the planning process starts at the top with the high-level strategic directives such as vision and mission, before defining specific goals, KPIs and governance structure. Effective governance is a mission-critical necessity: define how the ownership structure, including the executive sponsor, committee structures, staffing model, roles and responsibilities.

Planning and Governance checklist:

- Current site evaluation
- User research
- Stakeholder input
- Benchmarking (best practices)
- Strategic planning (including goals and objectives)
- Critical success indicators (KPIs)

- Governance model
- Content & design policies
- Business case (ROI)
- Functional plan
- Information architecture
- Page wireframes
- Design concepts
- Technology selection & implementation

LESSONS LEARNED

Technology is not a silver bullet to any intranet problem. Most intranet platforms are just platforms – solutions that needed to be customized and implemented according to the needs of the organization, and driven by people, and very thoroughly defined process. In other words, you get what you put into it (especially measured in time and dollars).

The biggest mistake any intranet manager can make when rolling out a new intranet is not properly planning, scheduling and budgeting the redesign (or new intranet build). Licensing is only a fraction of the cost, and most technology solutions require a lot of customization (e.g. SharePoint). Most organizations need / want extensive customization – especially to information architecture, and the brand / design – which is expensive, and time-consuming, and not easily executed. Therefore, create detailed plans, and then budget and schedule accordingly.

KEY LESSONS

- Licensing represents a fraction of the cost
- Planning and governance are mission critical – absolutely critical
- Custom or third-party web parts and applications are almost always required
- Social collaboration doesn't just happen, it's earned by people and supported by process
- Change management is the key to sustainable use
- One step at a time: don't roll out all desired features in Phase I (rollout features over time)

GOOD TO GREAT INTRANET MATRIX

The following is a success factor comparison matrix on good and great intranets based on real experience with more than 200 intranets of organizations with an average of 5000 employees. The table below represents a summary matrix of the evaluation methodology used by Prescient Digital Media.

Success Factors	Good intranets	Great intranets
Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Design reinforces corporate brand – Site has limited employee presence – Utilizes simple colors and images 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Bold and progressive design, but without too much color – Site incorporates employee presence, including real employee photos – Design employs shading behind priority content
Layout	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Two to four columns – Large banner or masthead – An over emphasis on images and design – Global navigation is largely contained to banner – Search engine may be in banner or on home page column 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Three columns – Minimal banner or masthead – Emphasis on information retrieval – Text to white space ratio of 70/30 – Global navigation is strictly in banner – Search engine is always in banner and is always an input box rather than a link
Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Centralized content supported by some standards – Content is sometimes formatted for the web – Mostly up to date – Ownership is not always known and there is significant quantities of ‘abandoned content’ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Distributed authorship (everyone owns their own content) – Well-defined standards and policies – One central content management platform and standardized templates – Content created by web-trained writers – Content is always stamped with the owners’ name and email
Usability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – A working search engine – Some use of meta tagging – Has working links and global navigation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Taxonomy-supported meta tagging – Has multiple information paths (e.g. dynamic site map, site index, how tos, etc.) – Search supports meta tagging – Breadcrumb navigation

Success Factors	Good intranets	Great intranets
Information Architecture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Organizational structure with some catch-all sections for forms, policies, etc. – Can resemble company organization chart but has some function-specific categories not tied to a specific department/group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Business intuitive architecture with 6 to 8 parent categories that reflect business needs, and not the organizational chart – Many redundant links that cross-promote content; multiple navigation paths to the same content
Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Plan exists with some defined goals, log analysis, user research – Performance measures are minimal and often lack a baseline for comparison 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Plan is understood by key stakeholders and supported with tracking of critical success factors and measures (KPIs), including return on investment and formal, detailed directives that align with enterprise's key objectives – Performance measures are actively monitored and tracked versus the baseline
Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Shared ownership between communications and IT – Some standards (largely ambiguous) – Informal engagement of other stakeholder groups including HR and other departments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Formally defined committee structure driven by one or two executive champions – Well-defined and enforced standards, including those for intranet standardization and editorial (content)
Publishing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Simple, easy-to-use publishing using one or several tools (often a commercial or home grown CMS) – Limited or no templates – Limited database capabilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Centralized database-driven content management as the single publishing tool, preferably an Enterprise Content Management (ECM) system – Entrenched templates and standards – Advanced content management system (CMS) functionality and user management
Tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Search – HR tools – Some multimedia features – One or two social media tools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Advanced employee self-service – Portal personalization – Integrated social media – Next generation search that is also supported by 'hard-coded' results to popular searches

Executive Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Passive supporters	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Involved champions– Active users and proponents
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Success Factors	Good intranets	Great intranets
Employee Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Occasional user research – Use of quick polls on the home page 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Regular employee surveys, focus groups, and usability testing – Use of advisory panels – Active use of feedback
Staffing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The equivalent of one and a half full time employees (e.g., one full-time and several part-time employees) – Some occasional contributors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Two to four full-time employees with an informal or formal committee of up to a couple of dozen stakeholders – Dozens of part-time content contributors
Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Funding as needed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Detailed budget based on cost-benefit analysis – Measurable return on investment

To learn more about the complete Prescient Digital Media intranet evaluation methodology of over 400 intranet variables, please contact us directly at 416-926-8800 or www.prescientdigital.com.

ABOUT PRESCIENT DIGITAL MEDIA

Listen. Understand. Deliver.

We are the original intranet consultants; The Intranet Experts.

Prescient Digital assesses, plans, designs and builds world-class intranets and enterprise solutions for Fortune 500 and big brand leaders. We are recognized experts in this space for more than 18 years working with over 300 organizations. We are technology agnostic, working with many technology platform, but most of our clients run SharePoint and Office 365, for which we have particular expertise.

Headquartered in Toronto, with US offices in New York City, Prescient works for global corporations in various industries and sectors worldwide. Our core strength lies in understanding and balancing the digital needs of our clients' business models, with the goals and intents of the people who will ultimately use these digital solutions. We see the digital workplace as the primary means to manage your most important relationships with your employees, beginning with the hub or gateway, the intranet.

We treat each client as unique; we listen to their needs, goals and challenges; understand a client's requirements and potential; and deliver highly effective and innovative website and intranet plans, designs and solutions.

Some of our clients

Having worked on more intranets than any firm of our size, we are simply one of the best at planning, designing and delivering highly effective intranets and digital workplaces. We are the:

- First to develop an intranet specific methodology and service approach
- First to study and define a social intranet
- First to study and define intranet governance
- 15+ awards including a Webby Award

Why Prescient

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- We build success measures (key performance indicators) into every project.
- Prescient has an extensive list of global, expert speaking engagements with dozens of conference, seminar and webinar events every year.
- Our work has won more than 15 awards including a prestigious Webby Award.
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Our leaders have rich, hands-on expertise and 25 years of experience. We know the industry inside out because we've been inside it as it evolved. We have worked alongside hundreds of customers, from Fortune 500 companies to small and medium sized businesses alike. Our leaders have held senior management positions at reputable companies and brought all their expertise and knowledge together in Prescient. We use proven methodologies, to deliver measurable results that are superior relative to other companies.

Focused on Each Client

No two clients are the same. All organizations have different cultures, structures, workflows, communication channels, resources, directions, objectives, and so on. Therefore, your intranet must be customized to your business, to meet all your unique needs. This is the reason why our in-depth consulting methodology (Listen. Understand. Deliver.) is so central to our work and focus on our clients.

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