

Intranet governance can be a daunting subject, so daunting that it is rarely addressed comprehensively, and often even the core aspects shied away from. This can leave intranets and their teams dangerously adrift.

To be sure, complete governance is far from trivial, embracing design, architecture, visual aesthetics, function, roles, responsibilities, content types, training, resources, stakeholder engagement, senior sponsorship, policies and procedures, and more. Trying to corral all of these aspects can seem like an impossible undertaking, and will be if you approach it as a ‘herding cats’ exercise.

A better approach is to get the basics in place, and let these be the framework that guides more peripheral aspects. All you need start with is a three-page document. (If ready for more pages, refer to *Creating an intranet governance guide*)

Page 1 – Intranet definition

Without agreement and clarity on what your intranet is, where it is going and the principles that will take you there, the intranet and team are rudderless. Not only is it essential to get the definition right, it needs to be agreed across the business and captured in a way that can be easily communicated. This means it must be concise, and clear. Anything more than a page is a clue that you are including too much, but when composing it, ensure that:

- the overall purpose is driven by staff needs
- you have consulted widely with stakeholders
- guiding principles to help with decisions in times of change have been included

The article *Creating an intranet concept* takes you through a more complete process.

Page 2 – Home page policy

While the intranet concept is the core guiding document, the home page is where it is put into practice. The home page is particularly vulnerable to weak governance practices and is often where intranet battles are fought. Alternatively it may become the casualty of incremental unguided changes in structure, content or purpose.

The home page policy should be supported by good design principles and include:

- page layout and content placement guide
- clear and agreed purposes of the home page, which align with the intranet definition
- ownership of content and structural elements
- what is not allowed (to prevent meddling or inadvertent undoing of well planned design)

The article *The intranet homepage, protect it with a policy* guides you through the details.

Page 3 – Roles and responsibilities

Clarifying intranet roles and responsibilities can be particularly challenging if you approach them from a ‘who does what now’ angle. For example ‘what’s the role of the communications manager?’ is not the most helpful question.

Instead, take an intranet perspective by:

- naming roles such as intranet manager, author, publisher, sponsor, stakeholder
- making it clear what tasks, content and intranet areas they have responsibility for
- only then attaching the roles to organisational positions or individuals

The right question, then, is ‘what intranet roles might the communications manager be responsible for?’.

This means that the point of focus is the intranet and what needs to be done, rather than individuals and what their priorities are. This minimises the emotion involved when defining intranet roles. It also allows those carrying multiple intranet roles to more easily delegate portions of their responsibility.

Supporting articles include: *Position descriptions for intranet managers* and *Hiring the best intranet people*.

Simple, but not so easy

Ask any skilled intranet author and they will tell you that it takes much longer to create a short document than a long one. So be inspired by knowing you only need to create three pages, but do not underestimate the care (and work) that will be needed to craft them.