

Intranet professionals often ask questions of their peers in the hope that the experience of others can provide a starting point for planning and inspiration.

Common questions

For those new to intranets there is certainly immediate value in exploring the most valuable core intranet tools such as great people directories, easy to find support services like HR, and a search function that returns useful results. However, answers to other common questions can be more challenging to implement.

Many of the common questions encountered include:

- What is the best governance model?
- Who should own the intranet?
- How much will an intranet cost?
- What is the best technology to use?
- Which technology tools should we deploy?

These are all valid and important questions to ask and by all means draw on the experience of those who have walked the walk before. However expecting to transplant other solutions and answers directly into your own organisation can be problematic.

Unique solutions

Intranets are an integral part of the organisation's culture and will heavily reflect systems and practices already in place. Without giving these aspects due consideration, imported solutions can flounder. Factors that will influence the appropriateness of imported solutions include:

- maturity level of your existing intranet
- degree to which silos prevent cross organisation information sharing
- resources and capabilities available to you
- readiness of other business areas to support your vision
- appetite in the organisation for change

Regardless of where you want to get to with your intranet, you must start from where you are now and what is immediately possible.

For example, an organisation that has a well-established authoring community might have:

- a decentralised model where the intranet team facilitates publishing, rather than directly delivering content
- a community where new authors can connect and obtain support
- practices which deliver material that is easy to consume online
- standard publishing processes

These elements all support more advanced improvements. For organisations without these types of frameworks in place, ideas imported from other intranets can struggle to progress.

Leveraging the work of others

When taking advantage of the work that others have done, keep the following perspectives in mind to help make the most use of the available information:

- Ensure you have the right lens through which to view the solution.

The uniqueness of your organisation's business will mean some adjustment of the solutions is necessary, so evaluate any solutions through the lens of 'how will this add value to the business'.

- Ask how and why, rather than what.

Understanding the context of how the solution evolved will provide valuable insight into how it might be adopted locally. The process of developing and deploying the solution is also as valuable as the functionality it delivers.

- Use external solutions to support, not replace internal research.

Start by understanding your organisations before seeking answers elsewhere. This might be in the form of extensive research or informal consultation, since the best intranet solution is often one that everyone agrees on.

Leverage the work of others, but ensure you are leading *your* intranet into the future, not simply following the work of others.