Ticker tapes were developed in the late 1880s for transmitting stock price information over telegraph lines. Nowadays we see electronic ticker tapes on the sides of large buildings or TV screens displaying current news headlines.

On intranets, ticker tapes can be used for:

- emergency information when major disruptions occur such as storms or branch shutdowns
- notification of IT system outages both planned and unexpected
- hooks or teases for news stories or content
- frequently changing organisational information such as share prices or call volumes

The most common way ticker tapes are implemented on intranet home pages is for emergency information or IT alerts.

Ticker tapes are used by some of the biggest news organisations in the world. For example the BBC news site includes a ticker of the latest news.

Advantages and disadvantages

Ticker tapes have an obvious advantage of being able to emphasise real time information. By design they draw attention to the information. In some organisations they can also reduce emails.

A disadvantage is that, like any other home page element, ticker tapes may inspire some stakeholders to try and monopolise the information stream for their own publicity.

An example

At a large property management group, they successfully redesigned the intranet and included a ticket tape area on the home page. During the research phase of the redesign it became very obvious that staff were sick of IT system alerts and no one paid attention to them. The solution was to use the ticker tape to deliver IT alerts. Nowadays, if a system is not available, the first place anyone looks is the intranet ticker.

Design considerations

When designing a ticker tape solution, consider the following:

- **Positioning** - generally ticker tapes on intranets are positioned near the top of the home page, above or below top navigation.
- **Size of ticker** - many are one line wide, some are two also consider how far across the page the ticker will reach
- **Empty** - when there is no ticker information decide to display an empty ticker or remove the ticker completely
- **Visual impact** - to be seen the ticker tape needs to be visually different from the rest of the page however still readable. We have seen some challenging examples of red text on white backgrounds.
- **Text movement** - will the text be static or scroll, if scrolling at what speed? One elegant solution we have seen is where the text pulses onto the home page in an unobtrusive but identifiable way.
- **Links** - will you include the ability to click on links for more information? Is this possible without being a black belt in mouse clicking?
- **Graphics** - each item can have a leading or trailing graphical element to denote what type of information e.g. a computer for IT alerts.
- **Targeting** - in organisations that reach across large geographical areas ticker tape information may need to be targeted appropriately.
- **Time** - News sites often include the time the information was posted.

Summary

Like all home page elements there are key drivers for success. Be clear about:

- the purpose of the ticker tape
- effective governance to ensure stakeholders know what kind of information can be published, by whom and for how long
- balance and effectiveness of visual design