

Intranet redesigns can be seen as the cure-all for an intranet's ills, and many intranets will certainly benefit from a significant overhaul. But if the redesign has come about due to a lack of focus, general neglect and poor content management, then a redesign alone will not be sufficient to revitalise the intranet offering.

Designing in the right direction

Intranets can lose their direction for any number of reasons. Some principal ones include:

- the organisational landscape changes significantly due to growth, mergers or change in overall direction
- the intranet becomes a casualty of its own success with expectations exceeding original scope
- there are multiple owners without a single focus to align disparate stakeholder needs

Getting back on track has been discussed in other strategy and design papers including *Three elements of every intranet strategy* and *Intranet (re)design wrap-up*, but to summarise:

- know what the business outcomes are
- determine what staff information needs are to deliver on these business outcomes
- develop an intranet strategy that delivers what staff need
- use a best practice design methodology that involves end users to ensure you design something that delivers on its promises

Managing for ongoing usefulness

Governing the intranet is an evolving process, and starts during the strategy and design phase. It centres on ensuring that the intranet remains relevant to its intended audience.

Overall the intranet manager

- takes a holistic view by aligning business, audience and stakeholder needs
- manages a continuous improvement program in line with overall site objectives
- supports and guides in relation to all content, design and navigation

Generally the intranet manager has very little direct authority over those individuals who make the intranet a success, so taking a collaborative win-win approach is critical.

Nonetheless there are areas of the intranet where the manager must take a harder line. In particular intranet managers should tightly control:

- home page structure and content, ensuring they continue to meet key audience needs
- top level navigation structures, to avoid dilution of well planned sign-posting
- structure of key landing areas off the home page to ensure consistent and relevant experiences for key audience groups

Nurturing the content community

Perhaps one of the more challenging areas of intranet upkeep is ensuring content remains current and relevant. Supporting and maintaining an engaged and capable authoring community is essential.

Though the content community will be much larger than the intranet team, perhaps by a factor of 100, the intranet team plays a crucial role in ensuring these individuals are capable and remain engaged. This can be facilitated by

- informing the community about overall intranet objectives and the role content plays
- getting content owners involved in the design phase, particularly with content audits and migration to the new site
- emphasising the need to take an end-user perspective, helping them balance requests from their colleagues and managers
- developing a suite of tools and supporting materials such as 'online writing' guides
- organising regular authoring workshops
- listening to the community needs and making it easy for them to provide good material

Keeping these three perspectives in balance, will help intranet teams ensure their intranets remain relevant. It also directs ongoing maintenance and improvement activities in a way that reduces the likelihood of repeated redesigns.