

Many intranets teams are tasked with 'creating intranet governance' without further guidance on what that means for the organisation or a clear understanding of what it should contain.

Governance is about having a framework in place that enables the decision-making and planning processes for the intranet. It provides support for the intranet team and assists with the smooth running of the intranet.

This article discusses the different elements that can make up your governance guide with brief explanations and suggested topics to include in each one. Best of all, the guide can be written incrementally within the intranet team's time and resources. Stuck with limited time? Start by creating the *Five key intranet policies* referred to in the earlier article of the same name.

There is no one size fits all when it comes to intranet governance. We suggest looking at the various elements and identifying what is necessary for your organisation. Considering the audience and organisational culture will ultimately guide the process.

The earlier article *The basics of governance* outlined elements that are present in any governance model including:

- strategy
- ownership
- roles and responsibilities
- policies and guidelines
- feedback
- support
- training



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Develop governance that is right for your organisation

Heavy handed or light touch

A clear set of policies and guidelines for the intranet will support good practice, avoid confusion and ensure consistency of approach. Some parts of your intranet may need tight control, other parts will need less. Your home page may need to be tightly controlled with a detailed policy, where suggested guidelines may be all that is required for team areas.

Organisational culture and the nature of content will determine how much control is required in your governance documentation. Will you need tight control with strictly enforced policies, or can you get away with a more relaxed approach?

It is also important to think about how rules will be monitored and what steps will be taken to deal with non-compliance. Most of the time people don't set out to break rules just because they exist, but staff need to understand the boundaries so they can get on with their tasks.

Getting it read

Governance isn't the most exciting topic for most people and getting governance documents read and followed can be challenging. It's best to avoid the fat document that sits on the shelf and is never read, but you will need more than just a few bullets points on a single page.

Think about the audience for the various governance documents and how they access the information. An author might like a printed copy of the style guide that they can flick through when publishing content. An executive might respond to a visual representation of the strategy posted on the intranet.

Where do I start?

Sitting down to write governance documents can be somewhat overwhelming. Do you need one document or many? Who is the audience for the document? What topics do you need to include? What have other organisations done? These questions and many more may be going through your mind.

The simplest approach is to break it down into the topics you need to cover, much like a table of contents, and then fill in the gaps.

Some sample tables of contents from real intranet governance documents are shown on following pages, which may provide some guidance.

Look at the suggested topic areas and what they might contain and use them as a checklist. What do you need to include?

Start by listing topics you need

One document or many?

The purpose of a governance guide is to direct decisions relating to the intranet. Understanding the audience for the documentation will help define the structure.

It could take the form of a fully fledged style guide incorporating required functionality and content for all pages and recommended solutions to common style issues or be as simple as a collection of strategy, ownership and roles and responsibilities diagrams, policies and guidelines and training and support material.

Different documentation will suit different audiences and their specific needs.

Executive management

- intranet concept (outlined in the earlier article *Creating an intranet concept*)
- strategy and vision

Intranet authors

- intranet style guide
- CMS training materials
- content writing guidelines
- accessibility checklist
- intranet concept

Intranet team

- system administration guide (including development guidelines)
- service level agreements
- intranet style guide

Staff

- publishing policies
- where to go for help
- intranet concept
- new user guide

Documents, such as the intranet concept, or home page policy, can stand alone, or be bundled together as part of quick reference guides for different audiences.

Having governance documentation online can help with content reuse and make it easy for users to find the topic they need.

Bundle documents together based on audience need

What to include

Use the topic areas and suggestions, and the sample tables of contents on the following pages, to help define the areas that need to be covered.

Suggested topic areas to complete your governance documentation might include:

1. Overview
2. Site setup and structure
3. Publishing content and documents
4. Roles and responsibilities
5. Collaboration
6. System administration
7. Policies and guidelines
8. Support and feedback

The rest of this article looks at each area and examines what might be covered in that section of the governance guide.

1. Overview

The overview sets the scene for the rest of the document. Keep governance documents as lean as possible with the overview taking up no more than a couple of pages.

Think of it as the executive summary, highlighting:

Table of Contents	
ABOUT THIS GUIDE	1
PRESENTING INFORMATION ON [NAME OF INTRANET]	2
PROCEDURES FOR PRESENTING INFORMATION ON [NAME OF INTRANET]	3
HOW WE USE THE WEB	4
WORK OUT WHAT TO DELIVER VIA [NAME OF INTRANET]	5
ORGANISING YOUR CONTENT	6
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Who is the audience for this information?	5
Why do you want to share this information?	5
How will the information be published and maintained?	5
What is the lifespan of the information?	6
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A small sample of tables of contents from real intranet governance guides. These demonstrate the differences in various organisations.

1	Overview	2
1.1	Purpose	2
1.2	Scope	2
1.3	Definitions	2
2	Objectives	2
3	Content	3
3.1	All Sections	3
3.2	Homepage (Activity, Community)	3
3.3	News & Events	4
3.4	Unit Portals (Activity)	4
3.5	Policies & Forms (Content, Activity)	5
3.6	My Employment (Activity)	5
3.7	My Career (Activity)	5
3.8	Resources & Equipment (Content, Activity)	5
3.9	Staff Directory (Community/Activity)	5
3.10	Publishing Content	5
4	Policy Responsibility	6
5	Record Keeping	6
6	Confidentiality and Privacy	6

- the objective of the document
- scope of the document – what is and isn't covered
- intended audience
- goals and direction
- definitions of terms
- the required functionality of all pages
- recommended style solutions to common issues
- high level overview of intranet roles such as intranet team, owner, author, editor and approver

Keep governance documents as lean as possible

2. Site setup and structure

Site setup and structure outlines the components of the intranet. It defines which kinds of content go on which pages, the various page components and their purpose, and the role of applications such as search and staff directory.

This section is particularly relevant for the intranet team and can also be helpful for site owners and authors.

Topics in the site setup and structure section may include:

- homepage components and purpose
- content page layout and components
- logo and toolbar
- search and how it works
- main menu structure and purpose
- sub menu structure, purpose and editing
- footer
- use of colours and fonts
- site security including levels that have been applied to various sections
- applications

3. Publishing content and documents

Unmanaged content on the intranet can lead to the intranet becoming a dumping ground for irrelevant, out-of-date content. This section of the governance document is particularly relevant for intranet authors and to a lesser extent, may be used by approvers and content writers.

Topics within the publishing content and documents section may include information on:

- templates
- related links
- metadata
- publishing documents (including size limits)
- naming documents
- versioning
- promoting content to the intranet (from other information repositories)
- archiving
- images (including format, resizing, use of)
- organising content
- content review process
- removing obsolete content
- writing for the web

Unmanaged content can make the intranet a dumping ground

4. Roles and responsibilities

Running an intranet takes various skills which can be the responsibility of one or more people, often in different areas of the organisation. Finding who is responsible for what can cause frustration, especially for users or authors looking for support.

Topics in the roles and responsibilities section may include:

- roles and responsibilities chart (including authors, intranet team, intranet owner, platform owner, system administrator etc)
- key contacts
- approvals process
- management and support
- governance committee

Hint: Start with a simple diagram mapping the roles and responsibilities and provide further information where required.

5. Collaboration

Collaboration tools are rapidly spreading through organisations and without proper management can lead to hundreds (or thou-

sands) of information ‘silos’, making it harder for staff to find information.

As discussed in the earlier article *Collaboration tools are anti knowledge sharing*, the unmanaged spread of these tools can cause significant problems.

Governance for collaboration tools may include many of the headings contained in your broader governance document and can encompass project and team spaces, discussion boards, blogs and wikis.

Topics in the collaboration section may include:

- definition of tools and when to use them
- roles and responsibilities
- creating a new project site
- closing project sites at the end of projects
- promotion of content to the intranet

Hint: check to see if your organisation has a web usage policy that refers to the use of collaboration and social networking and ensure you are aligned with it.

Collaboration can lead to hundreds of information silos

6. System administration

System administration refers to all of the ‘behind the scenes’ technical work that keeps the intranet running.

Topics in the system administration section may include:

- hardware
- storage quotas
- development guidelines (including business application development)
- disaster recovery

7. Policies and guidelines

Intranet policies and guidelines should be simple, one-page, ‘human-friendly’ guides, outlining how the intranet operates and how it is to be managed. Most importantly they give the intranet team support when dealing

with difficult situations. These policies should be referred to in your broader governance document.

Stand-alone policies and guidelines may include:

- intranet homepage policy
- role of systems
- site and section creation policy
- publishing guide

Policies and guidelines should be ‘human-friendly’

8. Support and feedback

Intranet authoring is often an addition to an author’s day job. To this end, authoring needs to be made as simple as possible with clear support networks in place. In addition, a simple intranet feedback mechanism for all staff is an effective way to keep an intranet up to date and assist with change management.

The support and feedback section may include:

- intranet help (including a list of who to contact for further assistance)
- intranet induction for general staff
- intranet author induction
- authoring community
- feedback facility
- service level agreements

Conclusion

There is no one-size-fits-all solution to governance. Each organisation is different and will approach governance in a different way.

Start small, create a list of topics in your governance documentation and then fill in the gaps.

Governance documents take time and work to create, but it is worth it to produce guides that will shape a successful intranet, and streamline the work of the intranet team.



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