

A week in the digital workplace

A concrete vision of how
we will work in the future

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Step Two DESIGNS
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Making the digital workplace real

While the term 'digital workplace' has been around for some time, it has seen a surge of interest in recent times. Popularised by IBF, Jane McConnell, Stephan Schillerwein, and others, it is proving to be a useful way of exploring how the nature of work will change in the modern digital age.

The digital workplace describes a compelling enterprise environment that is fundamentally social, putting people at the centre of things. It cuts through the complexity of legacy tools and platforms, to provide simple ways of completing common tasks.

It also recognises that staff don't always work sitting at a desk, and that modern work tools should deliver what staff need, wherever they are located.

The digital workplace mirrors changes in thinking about management practice, and the shift towards more nimble and flexible ways of leading and organising companies.

In many ways, the digital workplace shows how the enterprise can catch up with the innovations that have already occurred in the consumer space.

Yet for all the enthusiasm, the digital workplace can be hard to describe in concrete terms. As a concept, it means different things to different people, and it struggles to escape the domain of theoretical and abstract discussions.

What is needed are more explorations of what the digital workplace can, and should, mean in the real world.

In 2010, Step Two toured the globe, talking about the future of intranets. This provided a day-in-the-life view of the working environment in 2015, and while this enthused many, some were overwhelmed by the scope of the vision.

Two years on, this vision is best understood in the context of the digital workplace. It shows how structured, unstructured and social interactions all come together to deliver an intelligent, adaptive and productive working environment.

We now share this vision in this report, with the goal of making the abstract concept of the digital workplace into something concrete.

We have taken a storytelling approach, as this connects with our basic human abilities to learn and explore. Mock **screenshots** show what the digital workplace could look like.

We use **narrative** to describe the rich detail of daily work, when enterprise tools have changed from being a burden to a joy.

Is this a vision of the far distant future, or just around the corner? You decide.

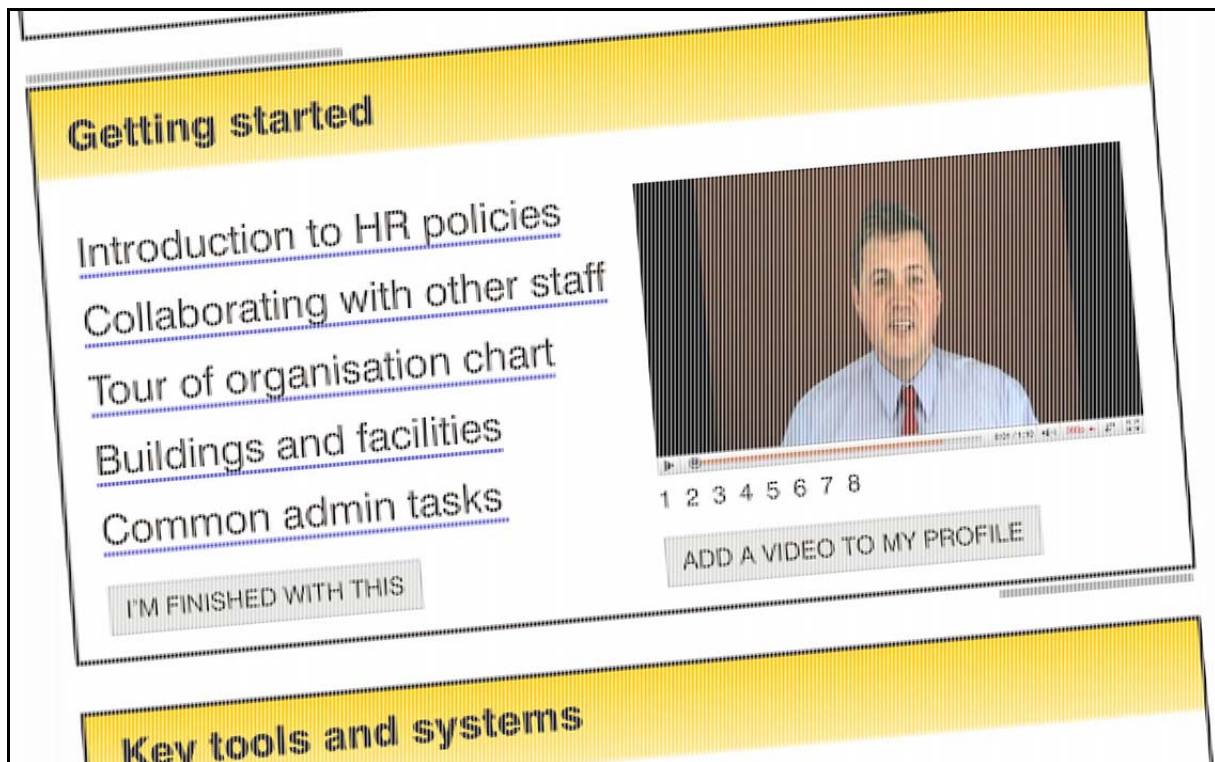
We share this view of the digital workplace to spark further thinking and discussion, and to encourage the creation of other tangible visions of what the future work may look like.

At Step Two, we help organisations deliver great intranets and digital workplaces. Continue these discussions on our blog:

www.steptwo.com.au/columntwo

WRITE YOUR OWN FUTURE!

By necessity what is presented here is a 'generic' view of the digital workplace, designed to be relevant for the widest audience. Your needs and drivers will be different, and we encourage all organisations to use visuals and narrative to explore their own working environments in the distant (and not-so-distant) future.



This will be Sarah's third job in seven years, and while she's become adept at getting up to speed, she's still not looking forward to the months of feeling like the 'new kid on the block'. At least her new employer, a consumer goods company, seems to be doing well, even in these difficult economic circumstances.

The early signs are surprisingly good. She'd been given access to elements of the digital workplace before she'd even started, and had used the systems to provide some key HR details.

Not only is a security pass waiting for her on her first day, she also has a desk, laptop and phone. That makes a first! (Behind the scenes, when Peter – her new boss – flagged that she'd been employed, automated messages spread out through the integrated back end, to make sure everything was lined up for Sarah's first day.)

When she logs in to her laptop, she finds an email waiting for her. "Hi, I'm Morris, the intranet. Welcome to our company!" reads the message.

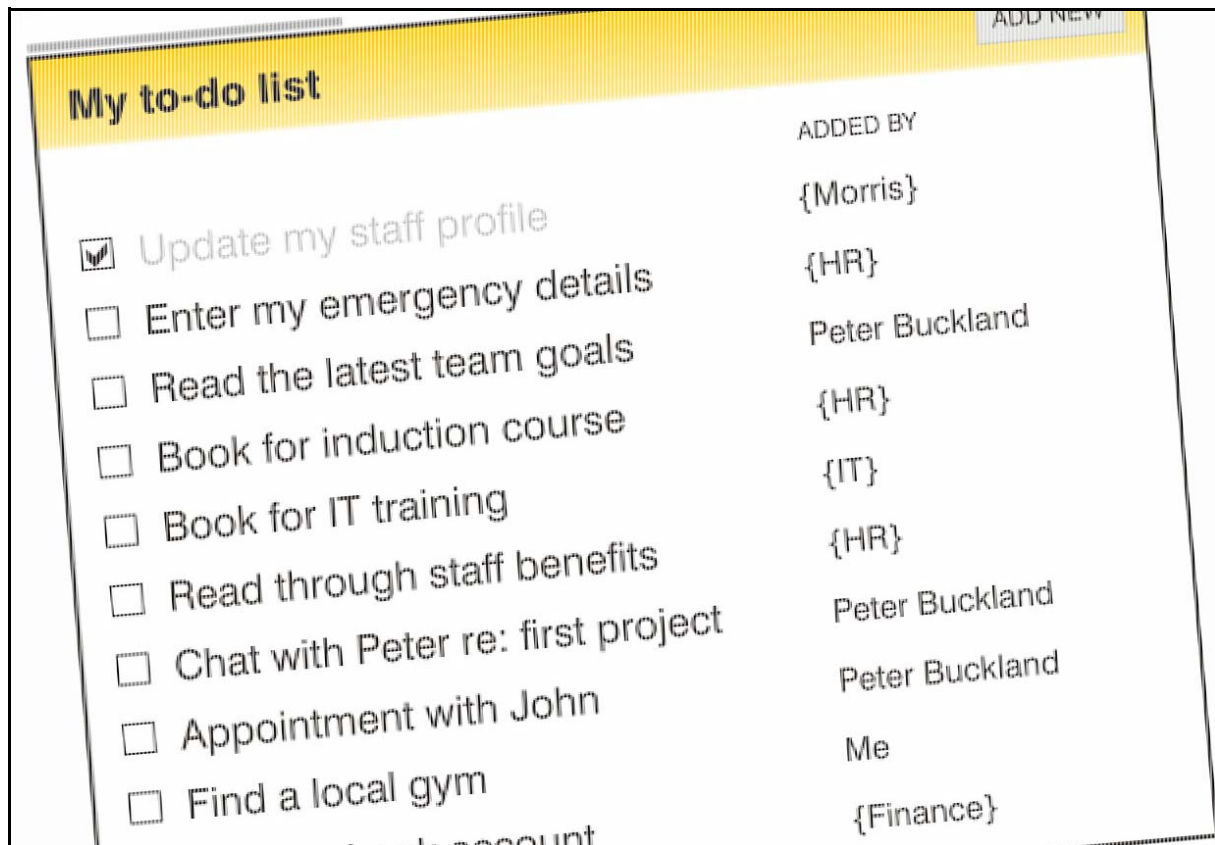
Clicking the included link, she finds herself on the homepage of the corporate intranet.

Alongside typical intranet features, such as corporate news, is a box just for her. It provides key details for new starters, including a welcome message from the CEO, and a video posted by a fellow staff member ("Welcome onboard, what you really need to know is where to find great coffee...").

There is also a guide to collaboration, not just how to use the rich tools provided, but tips on common working practices. "That sends a message", thinks Sarah.

She spends several productive hours that morning browsing through the information provided, noting that when she's up to speed, she can dismiss the new starter's box, freeing up homepage space for new features and information.

INSIGHTS: digital workplace that engages staff before day one // single adaptive intranet providing the gateway to the digital workplace // intelligent support for new staff // rich media integration // mix of corporate and peer support // elements of user experience drawn from consumer sites // streamlined and integrated business systems



Sarah notices another prominent element of the intranet home page: a task list, pre-populated with items.

The first item from HR seems to be the easiest, and Sarah clicks through to her staff profile page. In addition to the standard employment details, already filled in based on her employment application, there are additional fields for her previous roles, her current skills and interests, and a field titled 'ask me about'.

The staff profile also has a button labelled 'connect with LinkedIn', which intrigues Sarah. Having been seeking work for a little while (blame the financial crisis!), Sarah has been diligent in keeping her LinkedIn profile up to date.

Clicking the option, she's quickly able to choose which elements of her profile to import, and voila, half her corporate profile is now filled in. "That was easy", notes Sarah, "and much better than the horrible paper-based forms at my last job".

Returning to her to-do list, she sees other tasks added by HR and finance, many of which seem to be automatically added for all new starter's. None seem to be vital for her first day, so Sarah leaves them for later in the week.

Peter, her boss, has also added a few tasks, and she can see that they match up with bookings in her calendar.

While she's there, Sarah adds a note for herself to find a local gym, since membership is covered by her new employer. (Better keep in shape!) Perhaps someone else in the organisation has a recommendation she can follow?

By lunchtime, Sarah has worked through a few tasks, and has mentally set aside time over the coming few days to get herself fully ready for the work to come.

INSIGHTS: digital workplace provides a 'hub' for daily activity that cuts through complexity of back-end systems // tools that work for the individual as well as for the business // integrating the internal and external identity of staff

Connecting and collaborating

Hi Sarah, based on your role, business unit and connections, you might be interested in these groups; Morris

Your team

Frontline support

Chicago
Production
Customer
Project
Buy & swap board

A space for staff involved in frontline areas to share ideas and solve problems.

Watch this group
 Join this group

the latest deadline

Monday meeting rescheduled

Morris, the intranet, also seems to want to help Sarah make new friends and connections.

At a glance, she can see the team members that she'll be working with, and is able to browse their profiles. This starts to give her a sense of the skills already in the team, and where she can add value.

She's able to browse through the updates and comments made by the team, and quickly becomes aware of a big deadline that everyone is working towards this week.

Clicking through further, she can see the status of the project, what documents are currently being worked on, and how much work is left to do.

It also seems that the team is expecting her, and there are a few "welcome Sarah!" messages in the team space, along with some links to key documents and reading material.

She makes some notes on the project, in preparation for the team meeting later in the week.

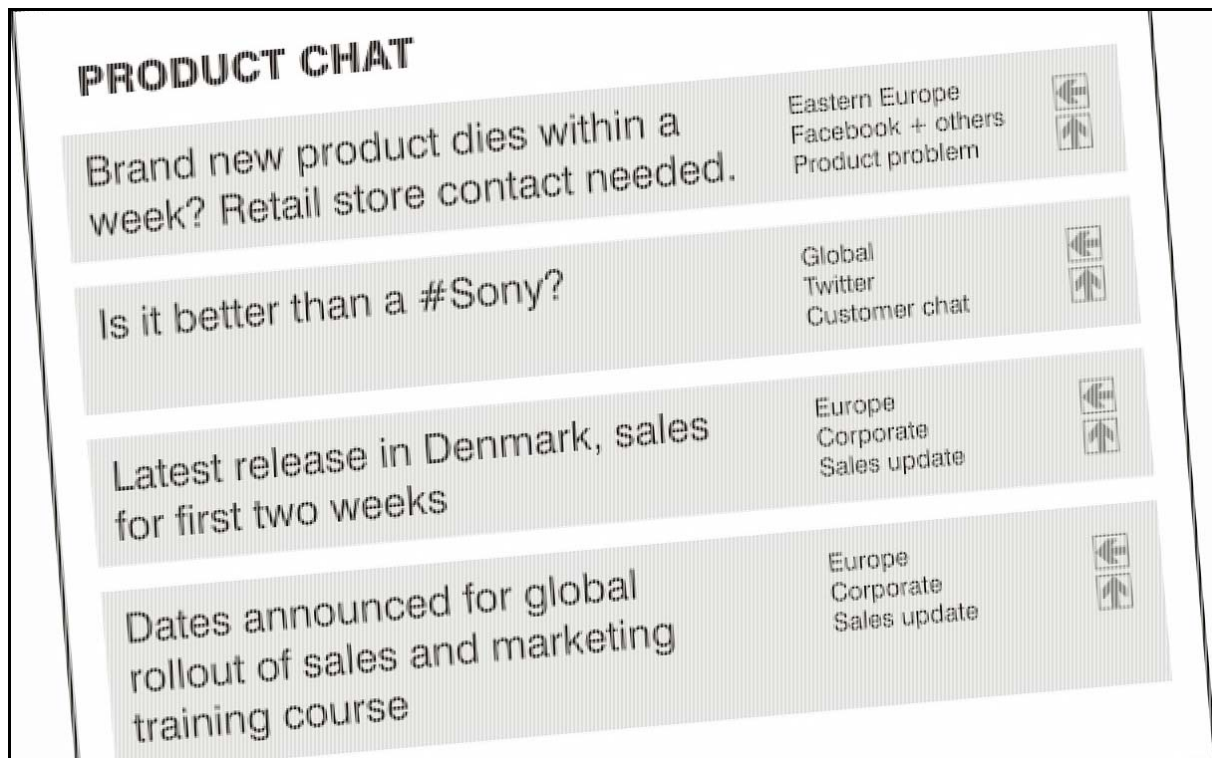
The digital workplace also makes some suggestions on groups that she might be interested in, based on her job role and profile information.

She spends the first afternoon browsing through these, but she's conscious of not flooding her activity stream with too much. So she 'watches' a few spaces, with the intention of picking a few groups to actively participate in at a later date.

Morris also makes some suggestions on people that she could connect with, and she drops them a line, with the intention of organising a coffee catchup in the foyer.

By the end of the day, Sarah is feeling more connected with her team, on top of what's happening on major projects, and in-sync with the organisation as a whole.

INSIGHTS: social tools help to rapidly build connections and awareness // intelligent suggestions based on profile information // tight integration of 'social' into the digital workplace // support for multiple levels of participation



What also pleases Sarah in this new job is that she's able to use her own Android phone, rather than being stuck with some ancient company-supplied device.

Following a helpful email from Morris – who's proving to be her invaluable digital assistant – Sarah is able to quickly establish a secure connection to her office tools on her phone.

This includes a simplified version of the intranet, providing just the tools that she needs while away from her desk (not a 'mobile friendly' version of all 100,000 intranet pages).

A core part of it is the corporate staff directory, with tight integration to her on-phone address book. She adds her boss' details to her phone with a single click, along with the details of her team members.

It seems that there are also other tools that she can add to her phone. Some are produced in-house, while others are open-source tools that have been tailored to connect up with corporate systems, and then added to the internal 'app marketplace'.

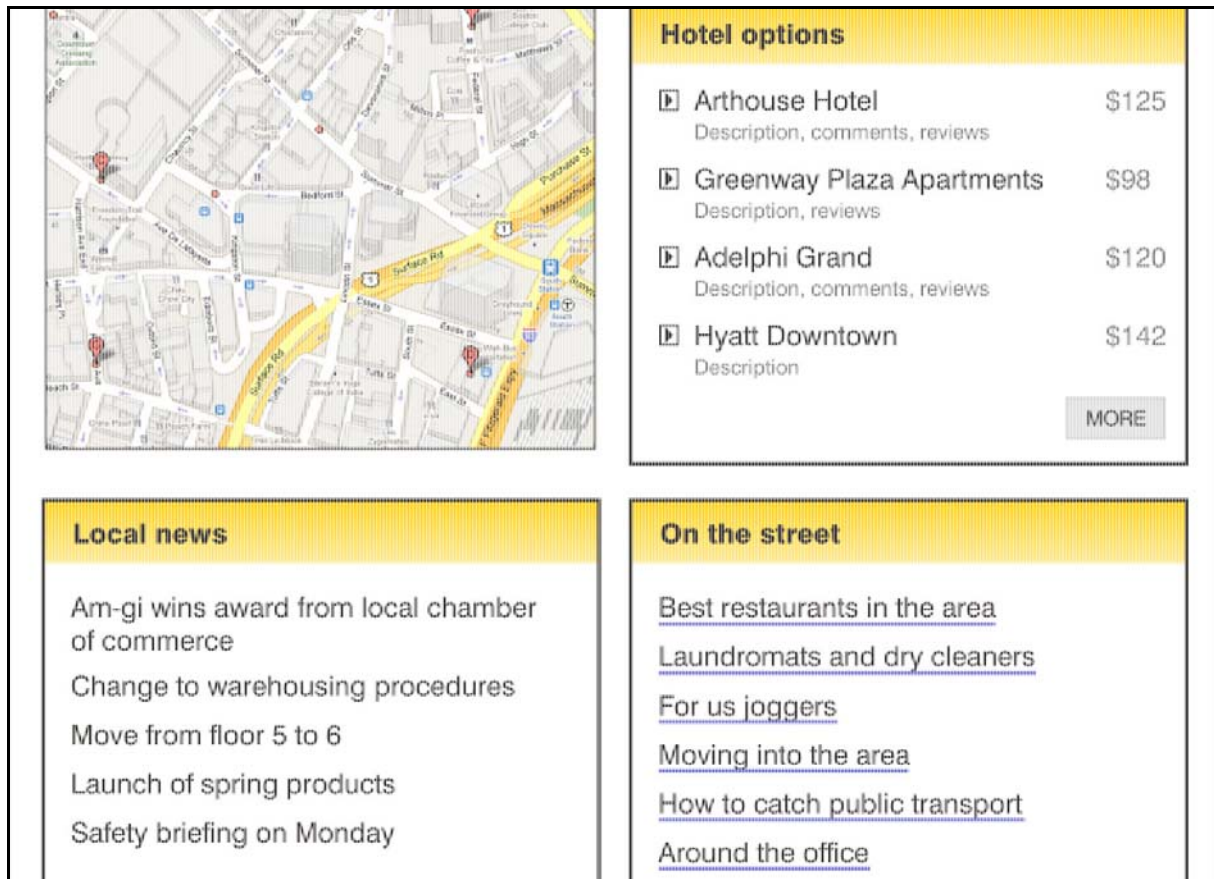
The 'product chat' tool seems to be of particular use to Sarah, and she quickly installs it. Within moments she's able to see a real-time summary of what's happening around the company's consumer products.

This draws on announcements and updates internally, such as product launch details, as well as pulling in discussions on external social tools, such as Facebook and Twitter.

Sarah can see that a peer is looking for help in eastern Europe, and she touches the post to get more details. As it happens, she still has a few contacts from her previous job, and sends the original poster a message.

"Not bad, I seem to be useful even on my first day," thinks Sarah, "perhaps I can even be useful while I'm standing in line for another coffee."

INSIGHTS: access to tools and information where and when it's needed // seamless integration of desktop and mobile // ecosystem of business 'apps' // 'transparent' organisation that combines internal and external activity // social activity helping solve business challenges



The screenshot displays a digital workplace interface with four main sections:

- Map:** A street map of a city area with several red location pins.
- Hotel options:** A list of four hotels with their prices and links for more details.

Hotel Name	Price
Arthouse Hotel	\$125
Greenway Plaza Apartments	\$98
Adelphi Grand	\$120
Hyatt Downtown	\$142
- Local news:** A list of five news items:
 - Am-gi wins award from local chamber of commerce
 - Change to warehousing procedures
 - Move from floor 5 to 6
 - Launch of spring products
 - Safety briefing on Monday
- On the street:** A list of six links for local services and information:
 - [Best restaurants in the area](#)
 - [Laundromats and dry cleaners](#)
 - [For us joggers](#)
 - [Moving into the area](#)
 - [How to catch public transport](#)
 - [Around the office](#)

Later in her first week, Sarah will be meeting up with one of her key product teams. This involves a trip to the east coast, and Sarah goes onto the intranet to make the necessary bookings.

In addition to flights, Sarah is able to browse the hotel choices for the city she's travelling to. She's presented with only those options that she's authorised to stay in, and for each location, there's both corporately provided details, and comments from other staff.

There's also a varied mix of information for the city itself, giving details on where the office is located, nearby restaurants and dry cleaning choices. Much of this content has been added by other staff, often by fellow travellers.

Reading through the 'for us joggers' page, Sarah decides to stay a little bit out from the city centre, next to a jogging track around a lake, confident that she'll be able to use public transport to get into the office.

She also spends some time catching up on what's been happening in the local office, noting recent product launches, and an office relocation. This makes her much more confident turning up at the meeting with her product team.

Morris, the intranet, sends Sarah an email, "I see you're travelling with us for the first time, would you like to arrange travel insurance?". Clicking through to the relevant system, Sarah quickly completes the pre-filled form and clicks submit.

A few days later, her travel details, including the new travel insurance, is added to her 'corporate passport', which brings together everything she'll need in the one place, accessible from her desktop and mobile. Now to catch the flight!

INSIGHTS: blended mix of formal and informal content // true online systems // smart systems that make use of information about staff // proactive and 'just in time' processes // awareness of both global and local activities // go-anywhere access to key information

Am-gi Purifier Station

Key product details

- [Product description](#)
- [Sales regions](#)
- [Latest sales figures](#)
- [Packaging details](#)
- [Product R&D](#)
- [Consumer information](#)

Latest updates

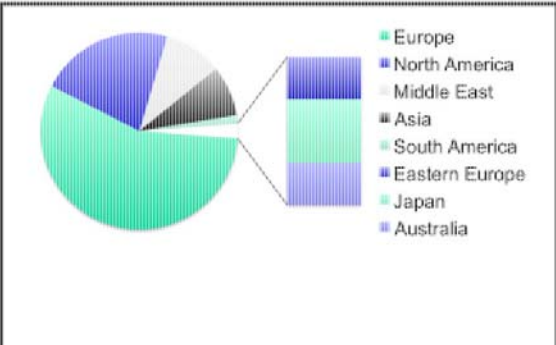
CONSUMER COMMENT: I love this, but can it be made smaller?

QUESTION: Good venue for product launch in South Korea?

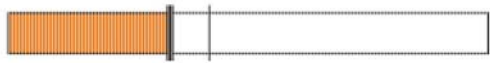
SALES: Product sales missing targets in Brazil

PRODUCT: New packaging being released in Q3

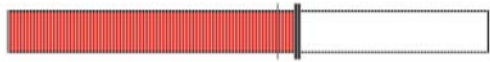
FOLLOW



Customer satisfaction



Call volume



In advance of her big meeting, Sarah browses the full list of products on the intranet, clicking through to the product that's top of the agenda.

On one page, information is drawn together from across the digital workplace. This includes cradle-to-grave details, from R&D to product packaging and marketing. This information is contributed by many areas of the business.

Real-time graphs show current sales against forecasts, broken down in a number of different ways. While Sarah could click through to the full business intelligence system, the at-a-glance reports provide her with the key insights she needs.

As this is one of the more expensive products, market research follow-up calls are made to many customers, and the results are graphed in real time. These sit alongside a live graph of call centre volumes. "Customer satisfaction is falling, and incoming support calls are increasing, hmm, that can't be good" notes Sarah.

Sarah also dips into the discussions about the product. Internal product announcements are just one small element, with the majority of the stream devoted to questions from staff, and comments drawn in from external social media sites.

Sarah discovers that a competitor has launched a cheaper product in Brazil, and this is cutting into sales, and generating confused calls to the call centre.

Sarah adds a few thoughts to the online discussions, and makes notes of topics to raise at the product meetings later in the week. Never a quiet time in the consumer market, but at least she knows to-the-second what's going on!

INSIGHTS: business intelligence is a key element of the digital workplace // social interaction underpins healthy product management // blending of internal and external dialogue // digital workplace provides enterprise experiences that cut across silos and complexity

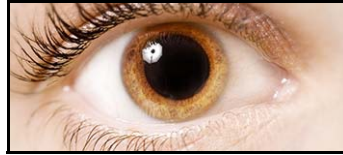
Six keys to the digital workplace



Identity

The digital workplace puts people at the centre, and the foundation for this is a single, cohesive identity for each staff member.

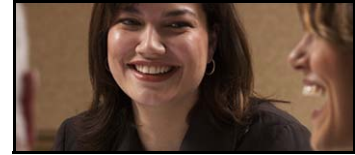
This online identity must incorporate contact details, roles, responsibilities, skills, interests, personality, connections, activities, work and play.



Awareness

One of the goals of the digital workplace is to bridge or break down silos within organisations.

Staff must have visibility of what's happening across the organisation, and an opportunity to discover the unexpected, without being overwhelmed by noise and distractions.



Trust

The digital workplace supports, and is the result of, an open and collaborative culture.

To achieve this, there must be trust in the environment, confidence in other staff, safety in speaking out and participating, and the support of the organisation.



Access

Staff in operational and frontline environments have always worked away from the office environment.

Increasingly, even office staff are often away from their desks.

The digital workplace must provide universal access, across multiple devices, meeting staff needs wherever they are.



Design

Simplicity, efficiency and elegance are the hallmarks of a great digital workplace. Ease of use is also a prerequisite for adoption.

Design thinking, a focus on the user experience, and a foundation of usability principles are all required to deliver solutions that work seamlessly for staff.



Value

The digital workplace is a means to an end, with the primary goal being business and organisational success.

New tools and ways of working must deliver tangible business value, as well as making it clearly easier for staff to do their daily work.

This isn't science fiction

While many of the mock screenshots shown are very simple, some readers may nonetheless feel that this is a 'blue sky' vision, infeasibly difficult to implement in practice.

This would be wrong. For five years, Step Two has run the global **Intranet Innovation Awards**, that uncover extraordinary enterprise solutions and share them with the wider community:

Giving out trophies across four categories, these awards have blurred the lines between the intranet and the rest of the enterprise, showing what real teams have done to deliver the digital workplace.

Many of the ideas shared in this report have already been implemented, just not all in the one organisation. So to demonstrate what's possible, here is a selection of winners, along with the year they won:

Janssen-Cilag (2008) created 'Juice', which turned back-office asset management into a resource that ensures that new staff have the equipment they need on day one.

CRS Australia (2009 & 2011) provide staff with a single 'workflow inbox' that spans multiple applications; they also provide 'just in time' content for staff via their intelligent intranet.

PwC Canada (2009) has an online induction process for new starters.

UK Parliament and **QUT** (2011) provide mobile intranets that answer the question "what key things do staff need while away from their desks?".

IDEO (2010) have created a highly social intranet that puts people, not content, at the centre of the site.

Sabre (2009) uses their social tools to help staff quickly get answers from across the globe.

British Airways (2008) uses their Crew Community Forums to allow cabin staff to connect, and to collectively solve customer service problems.

Nycomed (2007) have brought all the information on their pharmaceutical products into a single location.

Syngenta (2008) provides a 'location finder' with rich details on each of the 210 local offices, including local news.

Bennett Jones (2010) mixes formal and informal content for precedents, the core content for a law firm.

Framestore (2010 & 2011) has streamlined one of their core business processes, seamlessly integrating it into their highly social intranet.

IMF (2010) provides "all about a country", presenting a single entry point for a huge volume of corporate content.

Lundbeck (2011) has connected their staff directory to LinkedIn.

ScottsMiracle-Gro (2011) brings customer discussions and insights into the organisation, and features them on the intranet homepage.

Arup (2010) uses their communities of practice to capture and share knowledge globally.

Scottrade (2008) uses a wiki to allow staff to capture key competitor information, transforming their ability to thrive in a challenging market.

CASE STUDIES AND SCREENSHOTS: Obtain the bundle of Intranet Innovation Award reports to see full case studies, insights and screenshots from all the winners. Use this knowledge to guide design decisions, and to gain management support for the digital workplace.

www.steptwo.com.au/iia

About Step Two Designs

Step Two Designs is recognised as a global thought-leader in intranet strategy and design. A vendor-neutral consulting firm based in Australia, Step Two has presented across the world and has worked with many high-profile organisations.

Our focus is on the enterprise environment, encompassing:

- digital workplace
- intranets
- usability & information architecture
- information management
- knowledge management

Identifying best practices

While great work is being done on digital workplaces and intranets, there is little opportunity for this knowledge to be shared. Organisations are therefore continuously 'reinventing the wheel', or experiencing difficulties already encountered (and solved) elsewhere.

The pace of innovation is also slow, hampered by limited communication and collaboration between organisations.

Our purpose is to find as many opportunities as we can to observe, listen, experiment, explore, discuss and think. We then distill the insights and best practice, and communicate these via our articles, reports, workshops, mentoring, and consulting.

We're always seeking new ways to support teams within organisations, with the overall goal of building internal knowledge and expertise relating to these fields. This recognises that digital workplaces cannot be outsourced, as the challenges confronting teams today will not be the same ones tomorrow, next week, or next year.



Best-selling books

Step Two Designs has published the two best-selling books for intranet teams: "Designing intranets: creating sites that work" and "What every intranet team should know".

Together, these books provide an invaluable resource for teams laying the foundation for a great intranet, and for the digital workplace to come.

Both books can be obtained from the Step Two site, or from Amazon in the US or UK.

Find out more

For more about the knowledge we share, and the services we offer, visit:

www.steptwo.com.au