

Many intranet teams see themselves as battling resistance to change when attempting to grow the intranet or deliver new functionality. The challenge is perceived as overcoming these barriers to a successful intranet.

In practice, though, the real enemy of intranets is *apathy*. While at some level the organisation (and staff) recognise the need for an intranet, it is never an immediate enough issue to warrant significant resources.

Without a sense of urgency or a real mandate, intranet teams often limp along, targeting individual needs but never capturing the interest of the organisation as a whole.

This briefing identifies the impact of apathy on intranet teams, and proposes some practical approaches for overcoming it.

No call to action

Most organisations have an intranet, yet the purpose of the site is often far from clear. While there may be an individual (or preferably a team) responsible for managing the intranet, it may still be difficult to get visibility throughout the organisation for the role and importance of the site.

When talking to senior management, the response is often:

“The intranet is certainly important, but there are other more immediate priorities at present, so it will be difficult to get funding in this budget period.”

When talking with managers and staff across the organisation about the intranet, the response may be:

“The intranet is good to have, but I tend to ask my manager first, or search through the emails I’ve received.”

In both cases, there is no active resistance to growing and improving the intranet, but instead simply *apathy*.

This is not helped by the intranet team talking about “implementing a new taxonomy to create consistent metadata across systems”, or “deploying a new CMS to streamline authoring processes”. These behind-the-scenes activities have little meaning for staff or senior managers.

Identifying needs

The first step to overcoming apathy is to build a strong understanding of the real needs of staff, particularly within operational areas. By using a range of practical *needs analysis* techniques, intranet teams can quickly identify many opportunities for delivering tangible and visible benefits.

Communicating these front-line needs into the boardroom can be a very effective way of creating the sense of urgency needed to drive intranet enhancements. (See the earlier article *Conducting intranet needs analysis* for more on this.)

Communicating well

Intranet teams also need to become more effective at raising the profile of the intranet, focusing on the *what* (is being delivered) rather than the *how* (it is being done behind-the-scenes).

A good starting point is to create a one-page communications message, as outlined in the article *Creating an “intranet concept”*.

Build trust and confidence

In practice, however, one of the major barriers to gaining sufficient resources is the low level of trust and confidence that the organisation has in the intranet team. While intranet teams are usually very skilled, the continued lack of visible progress undermines the credibility of the team.

Intranet teams should therefore focus on activities that will not just improve the intranet, but will also demonstrate that the team can “walk the walk” rather than just “talk the talk”.

Build momentum

At the end of the day, the goal must be to build momentum for the intranet. It is not enough just to improve the intranet, steps must always be taken to overcome the inherent level of apathy that exists within the organisation.

This involves progressively building resources and support for the intranet (and the intranet team), as outlined the earlier briefing *Creating an upwards spiral for your intranet*.