

It can often be hard to assess where your own intranet is up to. By definition, other organisations' intranets cannot be seen, and there are few absolute measures to assess intranets against.

A strong desire remains, however, to clearly assess the intranet's strengths and weaknesses, and to gain some insight into how the site is progressing against general 'best practice'.

To help meet these needs, this briefing will explore the *Intranet Review Toolkit*, a free way of benchmarking intranets against commonly accepted standards.

Intranet Review Toolkit

The Intranet Review Toolkit provides intranet managers and designers with an easy-to-use method of assessing the strengths and weaknesses of their intranet. It contains a substantial set of heuristics (guidelines or criteria), allowing a detailed intranet review to be conducted that focuses on a wide range of functionality, design and strategy.

While there are a number of published heuristics for reviewing public websites, up to now there has been no equivalent set for corporate intranets. Initially supported by an IA Institute Progress Grant (www.iainstitute.org), the Intranet Review Toolkit was drawn from experiences of running expert reviews in many different organisations.

The Toolkit was then developed and published as a comprehensive set of intranet heuristics. It has been published under a Creative Commons license, allowing it to be freely downloaded and used (as long as certain conditions are met).

The Toolkit can be downloaded from:
www.IntranetReviewToolkit.org

The Toolkit is provided in both Word and Excel formats. The Word document contains the full heuristics plus supporting descriptions, while the Excel file is designed to be used as a quick summary.

In both documents, space is provided for comments against each of the heuristics, and a total score is calculated for each of the sections.

The site also contains supporting commentary on many of the heuristics.

Coverage of the Toolkit

The Intranet Review Toolkit covers eight intranet aspects:

- intranet home page
- site structure and navigation
- search
- page layout and visual design
- intranet content
- news
- staff directory
- intranet-based applications
- intranet strategy and management

Within these sections there are individual heuristics, with supporting rationale for each. Some of the heuristics are obvious ('The intranet has a single page that staff can easily identify as the home page'), while others will be harder to meet ('Staff are provided with a single user experience across all internal systems').

Using the Toolkit

The results of the intranet review can be used in a number of ways, depending on the current situation:

- identifying opportunities for incremental improvement
- targeting redesign efforts
- building a business case
- benchmarking against other intranets
- ensuring balance in intranet efforts
- validating a new design

Fundamentally, the Toolkit is designed to help intranet teams internally assess their own intranet, as part of ongoing efforts to improve the site.

The Toolkit also serves the secondary purpose of creating a clearly documented assessment of the intranet as it currently stands, as part of a strategic review, or to support a business case.

By sharing the results of the reviews between organisations, intranet teams can then benchmark where their intranet is at in comparison to their peers.