

## Does your intranet support core business?

On many intranets, a large proportion of the site is dedicated to allowing staff complete administrative tasks easily. Few intranets have the same focus on assisting staff with core business.

This is a natural by-product in the evolution of intranets, with many starting as sites to distribute HR information and later extending to provide other administrative support.

In addition, the background of staff in intranet teams is often in communications, web design or writing. Less frequently do intranet team staff come from core business areas and therefore lack a comprehensive understanding of how the intranet can offer benefits to the business.

Although it is important to allow staff to undertake administrative tasks efficiently, the intranet will provide much better value to the organisation if it allows staff to do their day-to-day business more efficiently.

### Learning about the organisation

Understanding the organisation and its overall strategic direction and goals can allow you to identify ways that the intranet can support organisational goals. There are a number of ways to learn more about your organisation, including:

- attending seminars and demonstrations related to the business
- spending time with frontline staff, in a call centre or out in the field
- reading media reports about your organisation
- attending or reading speeches from senior management
- reading your strategic plan and other high-level documents
- participating in a mentoring program
- participating in other activities attended by business staff.

### Learning about staff needs

It is also important to understand what staff need and how the intranet can help in their day-to-day work. You can learn about the typical work of staff by undertaking stakeholder interviews. These also provide you with information

about relevant cultural issues. During stakeholder interviews, ensure that you interview staff from many areas of the business and look for patterns in activities or needs that occur consistently throughout the business.

For more info see our article *Stakeholder interviews as simple knowledge mapping*.

### Promoting the intranet

Core business staff may not know what the intranet can help them to do. With a better understanding, they are more likely to consider it when planning business activities. When talking to staff about how the intranet may help them with their work provide examples and suggestions based on their own situation.

### Identify opportunities

Be proactive and keep your eye out for opportunities for the intranet to offer value to the business. For example, during times of significant organisational change or high profile events, the intranet can offer ways for management to communicate with staff (or for staff to interact with each other).

### Represent it on the intranet

Finally, ensure that the core business is well represented in the intranet design and it is clear to staff that the intranet is not only an administrative tool. This may involve:

- a number of business-related entries in the intranet's primary navigation
- links to core business systems from the intranet home page
- a visual design that represents business values
- news articles about business issues
- links to the external website
- links to media coverage of business issues.