

Most intranets have some form of policies and procedures, typically focusing on authoring guidelines and standards.

The question is: are these the right policies to have? In many cases, intranet teams have established policies that they find difficult to enforce, while missing the opportunity to develop policies that will be much more beneficial for both the intranet team and the site itself.

This briefing takes a different look at the role of intranet policies, and outlines five policies that all intranet teams should develop.

The role of intranet policies

Policies and procedures are all too often written as administrative or bureaucratic documents outlining how to operate within an organisation. A classic example of this is the “email usage policy”, commonly written, but almost never read.

When it comes to the intranet, many organisations have policies that cover intranet authoring standards, such as writing style, linking policies, and the like.

While these are certainly useful, there are policies that can have a much greater (and more direct) impact on the success of the intranet.

Intranet policies can be written as simple guides outlining how the intranet operates, and how it is to be managed.

These ‘human-friendly’ policies should ideally be no more than a single page in length, designed to be given to intranet stakeholders and authors.

They should also be written by the intranet team, rather than some other group. The primary purpose of these policies is to answer common questions, or to resolve common issues.

More importantly, they give the intranet team support when dealing with difficult situations. Even when the policies have been written by the intranet team themselves, they still provide greater weight than just the verbal recommendations of the team.

Written in this way, intranet policies become often used ‘brochures’ or ‘guides’ that help shape the success of the intranet, as well as making the lives of the intranet authors easier.

Policy #1: intranet homepage

The intranet homepage is the most hotly-contested real estate on the site, with every business area hoping to have a direct link to their information.

Every intranet team should have a simple policy outlining what does (and more importantly, doesn’t) get published to the home page.

Policy #2: first source publishing

To avoid having the intranet act as a “dumping ground for second-hand documents”, the earlier article *Intranets as the first source of information* introduced the idea that content would not be published to the intranet if it has already been communicated to staff via some other mechanism (such as email).

Policy #3: information management policy

There are many corporate information systems within most organisations, often competing for survival and attention (eg intranet, collaboration tools, document management system, etc).

Every organisation needs a simple one page policy outlining the role of each system, when they should be used, what information should be published to them, and what their future role is likely to be.

Policy #4: induction for intranet authors

More than a comprehensive guide on writing standards, new intranet authors need a simple ‘induction pack’ that tells them how to actually publish content, where to get help, and how to use the publishing tools.

In many cases, the creation of separate intranet ‘sub-sites’ occurs simply because business units don’t know how to publish to the main intranet.

Policy #5: intranet ownership

There needs to be a clear statement of who ‘owns’ the intranet as a whole. That is, who is responsible for driving the intranet forward, developing intranet strategies, and managing key site elements (such as the homepage, search, etc). Without clear ownership, many intranets struggle to be consistent, coherent and effective.