

One of the first challenges when establishing an intranet is to determine who should have overall ownership of the site, and where the intranet team should be located.

While the responsibility for driving the intranet must be given to a single business area, this group must be located within the right area of the organisation if the intranet is to succeed.

This briefing explores a number of common intranet owners, and discusses the pros and cons of each group. It then presents some general guidelines and approaches for selecting where to place the intranet team.

Option 1: IT

Historically, most intranets were owned and managed by IT teams. While IT must always be responsible for maintaining the technical infrastructure and development aspects of the intranet, this is only a small component of the intranet as a whole.

With intranet teams needing strong content and communication skills, they are increasingly moving out of IT areas and into the rest of the organisation.

Option 2: Communications

Internal communications or public affairs teams are obviously equipped with the comms and content skills needed to drive an intranet, and therefore make obvious intranet owners.

The intranet must, however, be more than just a communications platform (although this is an important element), and communications groups may not be ideally positioned to further develop the intranet as a 'business tool'.

Option 3: Human resources

Human resources (HR) are often the publishers of the greatest volume of intranet content, and are therefore a key intranet stakeholder.

It therefore makes some sense to place the overall responsibility for the intranet within HR. That being said, HR information is only one aspect of an intranet, and it is typically not the content that drives intranet usage.

Option 4: IM or KM

With the establishment of 'information management' (IM) or 'knowledge management' (KM) sections within many businesses, it makes sense to bring together teams responsible for the intranet, records and document management.

KM and IM groups must, however, go beyond the intranet as an 'information repository', and deliver internal communications and business functionality.

Obtaining the right focus

Only a few possible business areas have been explored, but at the end of the day, it doesn't matter who is appointed as the owner of the intranet, as long as they have the right focus. Experience has shown that successful intranet teams have:

- a genuine interest in meeting staff (and business) needs
- strong people and communications skills
- the right mix of technical, business, usability and information architecture knowledge
- sufficient time and resources to devote to continuously driving the intranet forward

Depending on the organisational structure and culture, this focus could be found within any of the groups listed earlier in this briefing. Each organisation must therefore select an appropriate intranet owner on a case-by-case basis.

Sharing the load

While a single owner should be identified for the intranet, any one group will not have the required skills and resources to fully deliver the intranet, regardless of who is selected.

In practice, effort will be required from IT, communications, HR and other stakeholder groups. For this reason, a broader *governance model* must be established that allows all of these groups to participate in the maintenance and development of the intranet.

Even if a formal governance model is not possible (or appropriate), informal relations between these groups can go a long way towards ensuring an effective and sustainable intranet.