When creating or relaunching an intranet, the question of whether to give the site a name often comes up. This briefing explores when to name an intranet, and how best to do it.

Why name your intranet?

Having a catchy and memorable intranet name is a great way of promoting the intranet.

A name can help build an identity, even give the intranet a personality, removing that 'techy' edge. This is useful when trying to build staff awareness and engagement with a new or relaunched intranet.

It is an opportunity to leverage off the organisation's brand or simply to differentiate the intranet from the organisation's internet site.

What to consider in a name

Some names will work in a particular organisation while others may not. A culturally formal financial services organisation may opt for a name such as The Vault or Max, whereas Capsicum or The Lily Pad may sit more comfortably in a less formal environment.

For some, the benefit of the name comes from being synonymous with the aim and purpose of the intranet, such as The Hub or The Heart Beat for a health care organisation. Other organisations can leverage the profile that a fun and light-hearted image may provide.

Consider what type of name will best suit your organisation.

Keep the name short and catchy. A name that is a mouthful is unlikely to have a great adoption rate. It also needs to be meaningful to most of the staff, not just the IT department or Star Trek aficionados!

Make sure the name is not confusing. If 'People-Connect' makes staff think only of the staff directory, then perhaps it is not the correct name for an intranet with a much broader purpose.

When looking at a word or phrase, remember to consider all connotations and ensure no offence can be taken.

When not to name an intranet

Only use a name when promoting a new or redeveloped intranet. Don't think that naming an existing poor intranet will convince anyone it is any better.

And don't confuse staff with a new name if the intranet already is well used and highly trusted.

Selecting a name

In some cases, a single person such as the intranet manager may bestow the intranet name. Another approach is to run an intranet naming competition, complete with prizes. This generates involvement from the entire organisation, builds a greater sense of ownership and is invaluable in promoting the new intranet.

Consider running a short list of names past key stakeholders such as a senior manager and the internal comms team for their input. The marketing department will be especially useful as they can help build the marketing potential of the name.

Finally, consider doing some basic user research. Run some suggestions past a few staff members and get their feedback.

Promoting the name

The key to adoption of a new name is consistent usage. Reinforce the name throughout the launch campaign and afterwards in documents and conversation.

Leverage the marketing potential of the name. The image of Boris (a local government intranet name), a rotund and balding man, made it to mug coasters and other promotional materials prior to the launch. Boris is now seen changing his intranet image to reflect the seasons and special events.

In the case of Max, the marketing was less overt, consisting of the name and a simple logo; the strength came from a short, strong name and has gone on to become part of the corporate lexicon for that organisation.

A catchy name, consistent use and good marketing may be just the thing to give a new intranet a vital boost.