

The earlier article *Three fundamental purposes of an intranet* identified that there are three main aspects that must be addressed for an intranet to be successful:

- content
- communication
- activity

Content refers to the traditional role of the intranet as a repository of corporate information, while the intranet can also be an effective communications channel, and a mechanism to provide task-oriented tools and systems.

The challenge for organisations is ensuring that all three purposes are addressed, for any one in isolation is not enough to build a sustainable and effective intranet.

This briefing builds on the earlier article, to explore what this means for intranet teams on a strategic and day-to-day basis.

Many possible owners

Intranet teams may be located within a number of possible areas of the organisation, including:

- IT
- communications or marketing
- KM or IM
- business area (such as HR)

As discussed in the earlier article *Who should own the intranet?*, it doesn't matter where the intranet team sits as long as they have the right skills and focus. The challenge is that the intranet team will naturally be influenced by the area of the business that they sit within.

For example, if the intranet is run by the communications team, there will typically be a strong focus on using the intranet as a communications platform. Similarly, intranet teams located within KM or library sections tend to emphasise the role of the intranet as a corporate repository of information, or as a knowledge sharing platform.

IT focuses on application development and the management of the technical platform, and often devolves ownership of content and communication, along with broader intranet strategy, 'out to the business'.

Need for a coherent vision

While it is human nature for intranet teams to focus on the areas that they have the strongest background in, the site as a whole will not succeed if the other aspects are neglected.

In all too many situations the intranet team will state that applications are 'outside their scope' or that 'news the responsibility of the communications team'.

While the intranet team will always need to work closely with other business areas to deliver the intranet, there is still a need to have a clear and coherent vision for the site as a whole.

Without this single direction, commonly seen problems invariably arise, such as applications being managed completely separately from the policies they support.

Only when there is one group coordinating and guiding all three aspects of the intranet (content, communication and activity) does it become possible to deliver a site that meets the needs of the whole organisation.

Who wants to really own the intranet?

This leaves intranet teams with two choices: take on responsibility for all three intranet purposes, or hand over intranet management to someone else.

There is no middle ground. Intranet teams who focus just on communications and not content or technology are part of the *problem*, not part of the *solution*. Similarly for IT teams or narrow content coordinators.

In practice, this means setting up a true intranet team, if one doesn't exist already, and not relying on part-time contributions from existing teams.

Of course, this is not to say that this single intranet team is responsible for implementing every aspect of the site. IT will always conduct application development, and communications will always have uniquely strong skills in their area.

What it does mean, however, is that the intranet team must guide, coordinate and integrate activities across all three purposes.