

There are often situations where there is a difference of opinion between the central intranet team, and the decentralised authors, owners or stakeholders.

Depending on the team, there may be situations where they aren't confident of tackling the issues, or winning over the decentralised groups.

To help build team confidence, and to win more of these arguments, there are three things all intranet teams should try to do:

1. understand staff needs and issues
2. put yourself in their shoes
3. build the team's professional skills

Each of these is explored in the sections below.

### Understand staff needs and issues

Discussions relating to intranet decisions should always be brought back to the real-world needs and issues of staff.

The intranet team should be one of the groups in the organisation best informed about staff practices. This understanding is built through ongoing time spent with actual staff, in operational environments, over time.

The earlier article *Conducting intranet needs analysis* outlines a range of techniques which can be used to conduct this research.

Information, examples and stories should be used throughout the discussions with the decentralised groups. These examples can help to demonstrate the importance of taking an action, or to illustrate how best to deliver a solution.

This allows the intranet team to say things like "when we spent time in the call centre, we saw that users were relying on emails for this information, so perhaps there's more work to be done before an intranet-only solution will be effective".

These stories are powerful, and will be much more persuasive than facts, figures or theories.

### Put yourself in their shoes

Intranet teams can find themselves stuck in an adversarial role: "I'm right and you're wrong, and I'm going to convince you of that". This is unproductive and ineffective.

Business areas, authors and owners almost always have genuine needs to deliver information, with clear intentions to do this in a way that is useful and valuable.

What they may be lacking is knowledge about the best way to do this, compounded by the natural tendency to jump straight into 'solutions mode'.

Take the time to understand what they are trying to achieve, and their underlying (positive) motivations.

Work with them to find the best solution for their need, which may be different to their initial suggestions.

The better intranet teams listen and understand, the more effective they are at defusing difficult situations, and getting to mutually satisfactory solutions.

(Note that these are general problem solving and negotiation skills, and intranet teams should look to the many books and resources on this topic.)

### Build the team's professional skills

There is a steadily growing body of knowledge that intranet teams can draw upon, relating to all aspects of intranet design, development and management.

Intranet teams should make use of the latest thinking, research and findings, as well as building on the experiences of other organisations.

This will boost the team's confidence when working with business areas and stakeholders, and will allow them to introduce this information into discussions.

All intranet teams should devote ongoing effort to building and maintaining these professional skills and knowledge.

This may include attending workshops and conferences, joining intranet communities or visiting other organisations.

Articles and blogs are also a valuable source of the latest information. A wide range of topics should be tracked, not just directly relating to intranets but also to broader topics such as web 2.0, collaboration and knowledge management.