

## The importance of training staff in the use of the intranet

An intranet, like any other business application or information system, is a tool staff need to learn to use. Without assistance or training, staff do not automatically know how to use it any more than they know how to use the finance system.

In many cases, intranets are under-used as staff are simply unaware of ways the intranet can help them or what is actually on the intranet. Training staff in the use of the intranet will increase awareness and as a result, increase use.

An additional benefit of training staff is in learning more about their experiences, needs and expectations. This information can then be used to create a more useful and usable intranet.

### What to train

#### What the intranet includes

On most intranets, it is difficult for staff to know how much information is included and what is available in the depths of the intranet. Staff don't have the time to 'explore' the intranet to find out how it can be useful to them.

Most staff will only use a few parts of the intranet, typically content relating to their own business unit and a few other sections that help them with frequent tasks. When faced with a new task, they may have a quick look at the intranet or instead ask a colleague for assistance.

Training may involve nothing more complicated than showing staff what information and functions are available, so that next time they undertake a task, they know that the information is available.

#### How to do things faster

Staff may know they can find an answer on the intranet, but perhaps not as efficiently as is possible. Also, staff may not have used facilities such as A–Z indexes, staff listings or advanced search.

Find out what tasks staff undertake frequently and show them how to perform them faster. Examples could be finding a quicker route to information or using a simpler way to submit a form. Helping staff tackle frequent tasks more efficiently will be effective and appreciated.

### When to train

Training should always be included in the launch of a new intranet or major section, as an important part of the change management process. Training at this point helps staff become familiar with the new content or design, and feel comfortable using it.

Training can be included as part of a regular promotional activity for the intranet. It can also be incorporated into day-to-day work. For example, when talking to a new author or helping a staff member find information, take the opportunity to show them around the intranet and point out how it can help them.

Don't forget to train management. Often they are unaware of the intranet's full capabilities. Increasing this awareness can greatly benefit the intranet and the intranet team.

### Type of training

Training can take a range of formats, and does not have to involve any formal intranet training.

Training may consist of:

- short information sessions during induction courses or management training
- intranet demonstrations for individual teams or regional offices
- short articles in paper-based staff newsletters
- short sessions during training courses for other business applications that the intranet supports

You can also use the intranet to provide training in the form of short news stories showing new or interesting features. Training information can also be included in the help section.

### Other benefits of training

Training staff how to use the intranet provides a valuable opportunity for informal user research. While training, listen to the questions people ask, look at how they are using the intranet and find out what they would like it to do. Incorporate the issues and ideas you learn during training when making ongoing improvements to the intranet.