



Intranet makeover checklist

Increasingly organisations are moving away from the static, hand-crafted pages of old to more dynamic, and useful intranets. Increasingly we are being asked to help them figure out how to do this. Here are our five themes for a successful intranet revamp or launch.

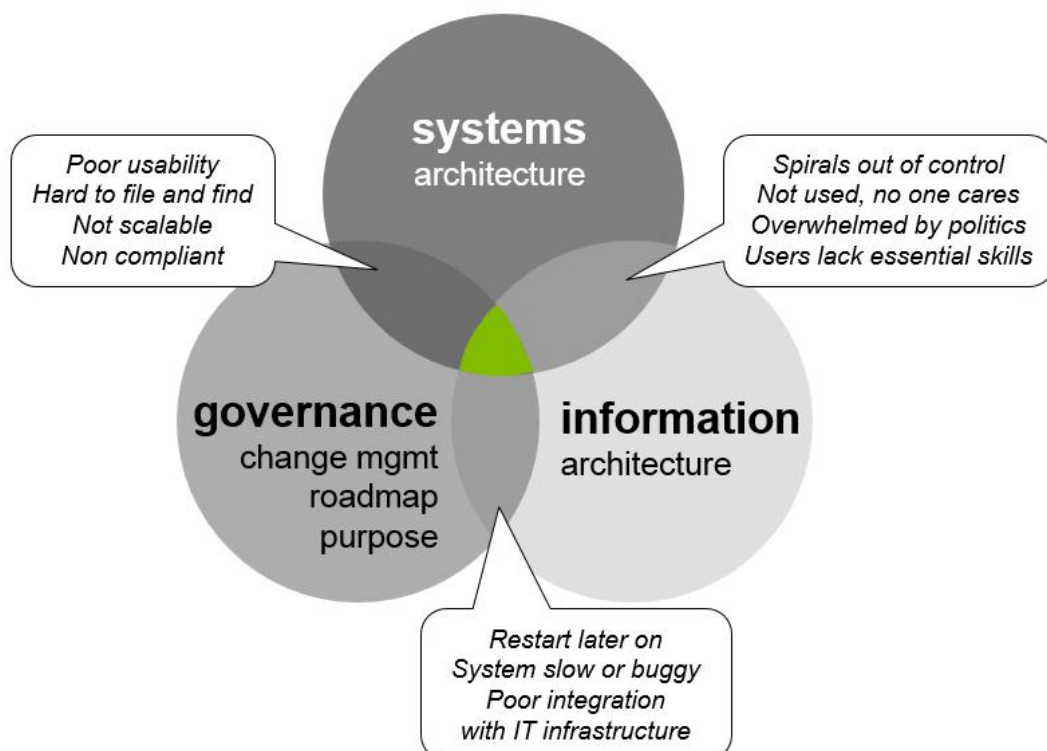
Our checklist for a successful intranet:

- ✓ Multidisciplinary
- ✓ Appropriate budget spread
- ✓ Coalition
- ✓ Growing Footprint
- ✓ Content is king

Theme # 1: Multi-disciplinary

With so many stakeholders in the intranet from HR to Communications to IT, the intranet often gets skewed in favour of one discipline at the expense of the others. This is often reflected in the choice of partner, especially when the organisation has been dazzled by the look and feel and overall 'coolness' of the partner.

We know that look and feel is important. But we also know that there are a number of other factors that will mean an intranet gets used rather than being an expensive white elephant:



This leads us into Theme 2 which is how do you allocate your budget...whether it is time or effort or both.

Theme #2: Make your budget spread count

Imagine that you are planning a family holiday. You book your hotels, rental car, airfares and tickets to any shows. And then you realise....you have no money left over for meals, incidentals and shopping. It's not going to be the holiday you expected anymore.

Unfortunately we often get called in to review an intranet project when the organisation has sensed that something is not quite right and they are running out of time and out of money. Often look and feel and workflow development short-change important (but more boring) themes like system architecture, the information architecture, the governance and change and content.

The chart below shows the difference in budget allocation between a 'presentation-centric' intranet and a 'usefulness-centric' intranet. In the 'presentation-centric' intranet there is a heavy weighting on look and feel and software development. In the 'usefulness-centric' intranet these are present but there is a more balanced spread which includes the areas which are often the Achilles heel of intranets: actually building a robust platform, getting good content in, organising the content in the right way and managing the change.



Theme #3: Coalition – for the project and business as usual

Disagreements will arise during the course of an intranet project – that's the nature of working together. However, organisations that do not surface these early and address them are heading for a disaster. Sometimes, they try to circumvent this by asking experts like Information Leadership: "who should own the intranet?"

This is the wrong question to ask. Instead the right question is who is the person or team who is most likely to be able to form a coalition of needed people (whether from comms, HR, IT, corporate or any other group) and sustain this coalition into business as usual.

The coalition should focus on how useful, usable and used the intranet is and leave questions of personal glory and ownership at the door!

Theme #4: Growing Footprints

We know organisations who have taken 6 weeks from start to finish to get their intranet live. Conversely we know of other organisations for whom the process has dragged on for a year or more.

The main difference has been in the approach taken to designing and delivering the intranet. Rather than attempting to 'boil the ocean' the delivery focused organisations think firstly of 'intranet lite' - what is the minimum viable intranet that they could deliver quickly which would get the organisation excited. They then have a further delivery programme of enhancements and iterative improvement. This approach both sustains the impact of the intranet and allows the organisation to really work with users to figure out what will work best for them.

Theme #5: Content is still king – but only if it is findable and useable

The symptom of an intranet that has not been properly architected is that over time people simply cannot find what they need and outdated content is growing like weeds. One of the approaches that we use is to actively 'garden the content'. In this approach users are encouraged to give feedback on each page. A job is created for every piece of feedback and these jobs are tracked and resolution measured. A timeframe of 2-3 days maximum to address each piece of feedback is established and the users thanked for their contribution. This means that improving the content becomes a regular task and not something done three years down the track when the intranet is groaning under its own weight.