

JIVE WHITEPAPER

TRANSFORMING TRADITIONAL INTRANETS: THREE PLACES TO FOCUS

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Many of today's intranets are frustrating: Frustrating for employees to use, for content owners to govern, for IT to integrate, maintain and support. It's time to modernize and mobilize. But, what should a modern, mobile intranet do and look like?

It boils down to three fundamental focal areas: 1) delivering information and expertise seamlessly and securely across devices, 2) giving people the tools to work better and faster and 3) offering an open platform that integrates with a variety of systems people use across the company. I break down each specific element of the modern intranet below.

Keep People Informed

Deliver information and expertise to keep people informed, aligned and productive on any device, securely

For starters, you need a communications hub that provides the basics to inform and engage your global, mobile workforce. A modern intranet should include the latest communication and collaboration tools that people are familiar with in their home life—blogs, wikis, videos, polls, ideas, files, status updates, announcements, activity streams and more. And it should all be available in both traditional and nontraditional page layouts and notification methods to satisfy every generation in your workforce.

In addition, consider these points to help deliver timely information across departments to ensure people are properly informed:

- Portals should be managed by the business, not IT. Departments, regions, functions and divisions need to train, align and inform employees. A modern portal should be more engaging—with two-way interaction, intuitive navigation and easy administration. Instead of going through IT every time a divisional communications professional needs to publish an article, or a regional HR professional needs to announce an updated benefit, the modern intranet should be simple for non-technical people to manage. This also helps ensure that content is kept up-to-date and relevant in contrast to the expired, what's-this-moldy-thing-someone-left-in-the-refrigerator content found in today's intranets.
- Social graph search and intelligent recommendations make it easier to find who and what you need. Most knowledge and document repositories are designed for individual searching, and can't put two and two together to recommend content, or even people, based on who you are, or what you're working on. Modern intranets know you. They recommend people and content from across multiple repositories based on your activities and your employee network graph. And, when you find something you mark as valuable—whether by commenting on it, liking it, bookmarking it, sharing it or rating it—your entire network knows.
- A modern employee directory should give employees profiles with personality and peer endorsements to make it easier to find experts. Imagine searching for and finding people by organizational chart or endorsed expertise and quickly inviting them into your workgroup, instant or direct messaging them, or calling them from your smartphone with one touch.
- Impact and alignment metrics should display how your messages and content impact the organization. Think about all that time spent on crafting the perfect email from leadership—making sure it complies with legal and financial regulations; ensuring that global business language is used throughout; and calls to action are clear and concise. And then you hit send. A modern intranet should tell you how far your message has reached, what the collective sentiment is, which individuals have read it, which individuals referred others to it (and how many), which departments have seen in and who has bookmarked/liked/shared it. It should also give you insight into who across your organization routinely stays engaged, informed or uninformed so that you can do something about it.

Let People Work Smarter

Enable people to get work done faster and better on any device, and with any third party, securely

Today's enterprises maintain complex application and system ecosystems, and with many of them adding social features, such as status updates and streams, it's ridiculous to think a knowledge worker would be able to make sense of it all. A modern intranet should make it simple to plug all those streams into a single dashboard, and give the user control over how to view them by creating custom streams from systems, people, workspaces, content repositories, RSS feeds, inboxes and more.

We are seeing this transformation take place as collaboration templates "grow up" into intelligent, purpose-built templates dedicated to specific business activities. Modern intranets should offer these activity-specific templates and enable the end user to power up key integration points, connect to productivity tools of choice, securely invite third-party team members, and create content from tablets and smartphones. Oh, and IT should be able to create custom templates to enable company- and industry-specific use cases.

A couple of other areas where I see modern intranets getting people to work smarter include:

- Intranets that offer actionable tools to drive measurable outcomes. While you wade through your five-foot-long email threads, hoping to find that action item or decision that was reached, imagine a modern intranet that makes it simple to mark email replies, documents, blogs, discussions, comments and more for action, or as a decision. Better yet, imagine marking content as official, final, or outdated to improve or diminish their search rankings, even if that content lives in SharePoint, Box or any other content repository.
- A modern intranet should tell you who is viewing information at the same time you are, so that you can start a real-time chat (or as I like to say a "virtual hallway conversation") about that information, save your transcript and take action on what was discussed in that backchannel. It should make it simple to start a chat with all the members of a group, too.

Provide Context via Integration

Integrate with current and future applications using an open, flexible set of platform APIs that work on any device.

The promise of portal technologies over the last decade has fallen short when it comes to providing context. Enter the modern intranet, where back-end systems are integrated in the context of a specific business activity for specific roles and leverage the social graph to enable greater insight and understanding of information and the people involved in sharing it.

For example, sales reps should be able to easily spin up a deal room for a complex sale to integrate Salesforce.com records, Chatter, email threads, Microsoft Office documents, Evernote items, SharePoint or Box documents, you name it. And when they need to pull legal or finance or product management information, the deal room activity stream displays the latest and greatest from all of these systems to update them in seconds. This can be achieved through a couple of different ways.

- **Create a holistic view** of activities through stream aggregation and federation across multiple internal and external systems. The modern intranet should make it simple to aggregate streams out of the box, but also provide developers simple methods for securely extending those integrations to any system.
- **Create use-case specific applications** that users can easily integrate with systems of record and productivity apps. Templates should evolve to meet the business requirement du jour. A modern intranet should deliver "101" customization requirements out of the box, freeing up developers to create templates focused on an organization's core business processes.

- **Bind multiple storage providers into the intranet**, either globally or at the workgroup or departmental-portal level. There will never be one content storage provider that rules them all. Instead, a modern intranet should make it easy for IT to configure integrations with all of storage providers used across the organization.

So it's time to modernize your intranet—integrate it with applications and systems that make sense to keep, and replace those that don't. Give employees, content owners and IT professionals the intranet they always hoped to have.

About the Author

Gia Lyons has developed, provided consulting services, and sold socio-collaborative solutions since 1996. At Jive Software, Gia is focused on crafting custom-fit Jive social business adoption and implementation strategies for companies' employees, partners, and customers.