

publishing

Quality

news

user-generated

strategy

lifecycle

Managing Intranet Content: A Good Practice Guide

A report for IBF members only

Confidential



ibf Intranet
Benchmarking
Forum

Other recent IBF research

Reports

Measuring Intranets



This 45 page report considers what should be measured across the intranet estate, and which metrics are useful and important for intranet managers. It describes strategies for justifying and managing intranet measurement. And it looks at how metrics can be turned into actionable insight, by understanding the goals and benefits of services within the intranet, making decisions and setting targets.

Intranet Love Affairs



It may seem obvious that being passionate about intranets is a good thing. However, analysis shows that passion can have both a positive and a negative effect on the intranet programme, so it needs careful nurturing and use. This report is based on in-depth interviews with intranet practitioners from American Electric Power (AEP), IKEA, Pacific Gas & Electric (PG&E), SCANA Corp., and Verizon, about the role of passion in their intranet achievements.

Strategy and Governance: a good practice guide



This report identifies some of the current trends in intranet strategy, governance and senior sponsorship, particularly among organizations which are currently under-performing. Drawing on IBF's "Strategy & Governance" benchmarking model and a specially-commissioned survey of intranet managers, it then highlights relevant examples of good practice which may give you some ideas to apply to your organization. Finally, it documents the experience of three case study organizations: Shell, Duke Energy and BSI Group.

Briefing paper

Now playing on an intranet near you



This research briefing discusses why and how to use intranet video. It looks at what some sp – organizations are currently doing, and explores a couple of vendor solutions that were uncovered during the research.

Managing Enterprise Search



In this briefing paper, IBF considers the current state of search management and the trends that are making search more critical than ever, and sets out the key roles and responsibilities of the search team. The research also includes findings from the recent survey IBF conducted to discover how organizations are managing their enterprise search.

Good practice for HR intranets



This paper identifies key good practices in trying to construct a great HR intranet. It explores areas such as definition, ownership, defining navigation, linking to other systems, and content presentation. It includes examples from Citi and British American Tobacco.

Our research reports and briefing papers are available on the IBF secure extranet.

Contents

- 1. Executive summary4
- 2. The importance of content strategy.....5
- 3. Publishing models9
- 4. Engaging and managing the publishing community12
- 5. Focus on quality content.....15
- 6. Managing types of content19
- 7. Content lifecycle.....23
- 8. Case studies.....26
 - IKEA26
 - Ernst & Young.....31
 - IBM34
- Appendix A: Managing Content survey data39
- Results summary40
- Appendix B: Managing content checklist.....44
- Appendix C: Acknowledgements46

Confidentiality

This report is the property of the Intranet Benchmarking Forum (IBF), which is wholly owned by The Digital Workplace Forum Group Limited. It is protected by international copyright law and conventions. Users of the report have the right to use the report solely for their own internal information purposes. They may not disclose, copy, disseminate, redistribute, or publish the report, or any portion of or excerpts from it, to any other party. Reproduction of the report in any form or by any means is forbidden without IBF's written permission.

1

Executive summary

Managing content is at the heart of an intranet's effectiveness, and is a core responsibility of the intranet manager. Yet, more than 15 years after intranets first appeared, managing content is still one of the most challenging aspects of the overall intranet management task. Part of the issue is that intranet content sits at the intersection between what senior management wants employees to know and do; and what employees are interested in and engaged by.

Our research uncovered that more than half of organizations do not have an intranet content strategy in place. Furthermore, intranet managers reported challenges including aligning intranet content with business strategy, managing decentralized publishers, maintaining the quality of content, and establishing appropriate governance for user-generated content.

Some hoped that content management systems (CMSs) would be the panacea. However, while tools are important in enabling good content, they do not drive good content strategy, governance or decision making. This report looks not at the tools and platforms, but at the practices involved in effectively managing intranet content.

About this research

This paper addresses the key aspects of managing intranet content:

- Content strategy
- Publishing models
- Managing the publishing community
- Content quality
- Managing the different types of content
- Content lifecycle.

It draws on IBF's benchmarking model and a specially-commissioned survey of intranet managers, it then highlights relevant examples of good practice which may give you some ideas to apply to your organization and (in Appendix B) provides a checklist to assess your own organization. Finally, it documents the experience of three case study organizations: Ernst & Young, IBM and IKEA.

About the author

Kay Golan is an IBF benchmarker, research associate and independent consultant in strategic communication, intranet strategies, internal communications and media and crisis communication training. Formerly, as Director of Employee Communications and Director of Media Relations at the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the globally recognized public health leader, she developed and managed the award winning intranet portal CDC Connects and managed crisis communications teams responsible for media rollouts of major health news.

2

The importance of content strategy

Whether you are launching a major re-design or new platform or working to incrementally improve the quality of your intranet content, having a good strategy is a critical first step. In fact, the results of a recent survey of intranet managers published in IBF's "Strategy and Governance: A Good Practice Guide" research report¹ show that it is extremely important "to develop a formal strategy that shows the strategic value of the intranet [and its content] to the business." However, more than half (56%) of the organizations surveyed for the "Managing Content" paper (see Appendix B) indicated that they do not have an intranet content strategy or equivalent in place.

Developing and maintaining an intranet content strategy that addresses and governs all types of content, and drives content decisions about news articles, features, collaboration tools, applications or new content areas, is core to good intranet practice. Without it, content proliferates beyond control, overwhelms the reader and creates a fragmented, unsatisfactory user experience.

In this section we look at the essential elements of intranet content strategy:

- clear, documented goals
- alignment with business strategy
- measuring success
- aligning internal and external content.

Clear, documented goals

Goals are most useful when they are:

- concrete, clear and concise
- memorable and relevant
- documented in an easy to follow plan posted on the intranet
- used constantly
- used to frame discussions in corporate communications, IT and lines of business
- reflective of organizational culture (or drivers of change).

For example, the US Centers for Disease Control (CDC) had three simple goals for its intranet²:

- To provide employees with the information and news they need to be good brand ambassadors
- To make tools to do their jobs easily accessible and easy to use
- To build community and collaboration to further the organization's mission.

Priority strategies and tactics were updated annually under each goal and used to evaluate proposed news articles, content areas and collaboration tools.

¹ Download the 'Strategy and Governance: A Good Practice Guide' research paper from the IBF extranet: <http://members.ibforum.com/blogpost/445048/153253/New-IBF-research-report-Strategy-and-Governance-a-good-practice-guide>.

² The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) presentation on strategic plan for CDC Connects can be found at: http://members.ibforum.com/resource/resmgr/research_2013/CDC_ConnectsVgoals.ppt.

More than half of organizations do not have an intranet content strategy in place

2

In another example, **Shell** has made its intranet strategy clear and easy to understand³:

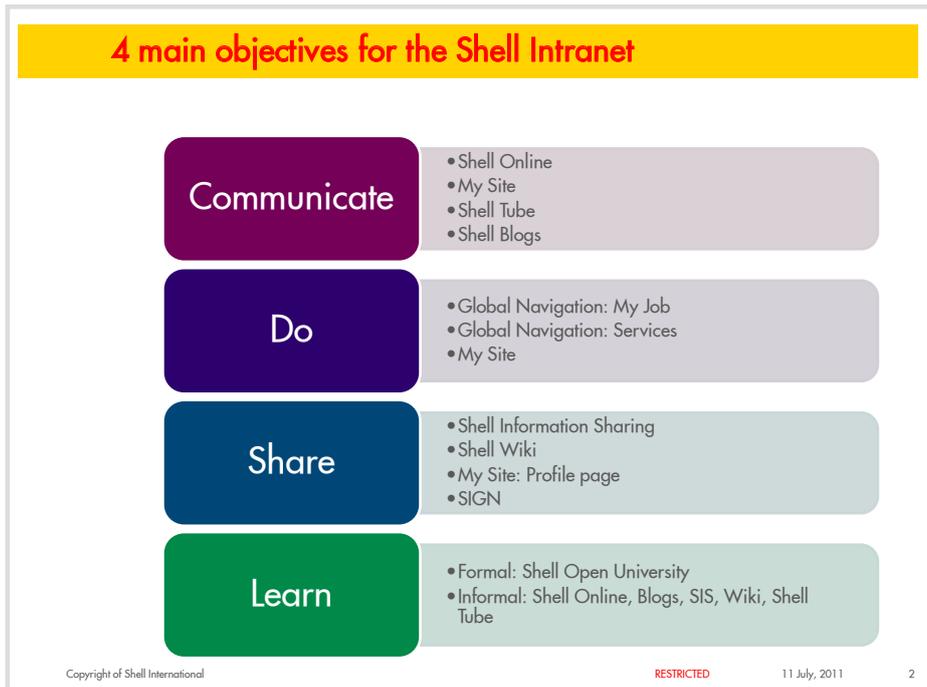


Figure 1: Shell has four main objectives for the organization's intranet.

IKEA's intranet goals, laid out in its Digital Workplace (DWP) Wanted Position⁴ and the Corporate Communication Strategy (see [IKEA case study](#)) are:

- co-workers are the first to know
- co-workers have easy access to relevant information and communication tools in order to manage their daily job
- we nurture dialogue, contribution and involvement within IKEA.

The exact nature of the intranet's mission statement and goals varies depending on the organization, its strategic objectives and cultural context. All organizations should use these goals to guide content creation, communication themes, segmentation of content and new channels and content areas.

3 The Shell Intranet objectives and model are available on the IBF extranet: http://members.ibforum.com/resource/collection/7738dca2-9069-469f-a085-5fdc482f6460/Shell_Intranet_Objectives_and_Model.pdf.

4 The Wanted Position for IKEA Digital Workplace aims to give insight into the scope, objectives and goals of the Digital Workplace.

2

Aligning with business strategy

Aligning the intranet content strategy with the business strategy is the best way to ensure that the intranet is relevant and supports the organization to achieve its goals.

In fact, effective internal communication drives business performance. According to a Watson Wyatt Communication ROI Study⁵, communication effectiveness is a leading indicator of financial performance. It found that high employee engagement equals high financial performance.

At **Ernst & Young**, the development of intranet content strategy for the various lines of business is based on and integrated into the group's annual business strategy development. The intranet is viewed as a tool for helping carry out these annual business strategies.

[More details of this case study in section 8.](#)

Capital One developed a new roadmap with clear goals for its intranet, One Place. This aligned the intranet with business strategy, and clarified IT and HR owners' roles as lines began to blur with the advent of social media. The aim was to create an "intuitive, user-defined portal which will support and drive a new flow of information centred around the individual's information and work needs."⁶



Figure 2: Capital One's strategic goals for the portal, "One Place".

5 2009/2010 Communication ROI Study Report: Capitalizing on Effective Communication: <http://www.towerswatson.com/research/670>.

6 The One Place Intranet Portal Roadmap and Demo (PDF) is available on the IBF extranet: <http://members.ibforum.com/resource/collection/18AFAC96-1CC1-4A4F-956D-F9E8D82150D5/IBFCapitalOneIntranetUpdateIntranetLiveEpisode8.pdf>.

2

Measuring success

A clear and regularly updated intranet content strategy should be validated by relevant measures of success. Reviewing metrics data⁷ at editorial or governance meetings can help ensure that the strategy is delivering value, or indicate the need to adjust it.

At **Ernst & Young**, where lines of business's intranet strategies are interwoven with annual business strategies, the scorecard for each unit includes a look at content success and appropriateness for continuation.

[More details of this case study in section 8.](#)

Important KPIs for evaluating the effectiveness of intranet news content can include readership, readability, engagement, satisfaction, relevancy and bouncing⁸. In addition to standard content metrics, such as page or article views, many companies use real time metrics from social features to get feedback on content.

And increasingly, employees can get an instant view of news or content popularity via user ratings or comments. An example from the internet is the New York Times' "Most Emailed Articles" section.

Aligning internal and external content

Coordinating content strategies across internal and external channels ensures that content, while not the same, is complementary and consistent. In an article on CMS Wire⁹, Jed Cawthorne points out that your method of doing this may differ depending on how your organization likes to nest its strategies, but there should be an over-arching strategy that "covers your external facing web presence (including social media use etc.) and also your internal content". This is true regardless of how many content management and publishing platforms are involved.

Ensuring that communication strategies, themes and content are consistent internally and externally, is important to **IBM** communication staff. Team leads responsible for intranet and internet content, advertising initiatives, social programs, event promotion and business unit communications meet weekly to coordinate issues.

[More details in section 8.](#)

Ernst & Young makes a conscious effort to tie internally developed thought leadership content into externally facing thought leadership, helpful in marketing its expertise. Specifically, material developed and published internally on the intranet might be reviewed and deemed "worthy" by peers and re-purposed and used on the market facing web site.

[More details in section 8.](#)

Coordinating content strategies

across internal and external channels ensures that content, while not the same, is complementary and consistent.

7 Measuring Intranets: A guide to intranet metrics and measurement; <http://members.ibforum.com/blogpost/445048/142276/Measuring-intranets-A-guide-to-intranet-metrics-and-measurement>.

8 6 Ways To Measure Effectiveness Of News On Your Intranet: <http://www.ibforum.com/2010/05/11/6-ways-to-measure-effectiveness-of-news-on-your-intranet>.

9 Content Strategy and Enterprise Content: How they fit together: <http://www.cmswire.com/cms/enterprise-cms/content-strategy-and-enterprise-content-management-how-they-fit-together-009770.php>.

3

Publishing models

With a clear content strategy in place, another key step in managing intranet content is establishing a publishing model that works for the organization. Publishing models range from a highly centralized team managing content to a decentralized set up, or somewhere in between. The model may be specifically selected or simply evolve with the organization and its intranet. For example, as an organization grows, and budgets and authority are delegated, it may move away from a highly centralized approach. Conversely, where mergers and acquisitions bring a decentralized organizational structure, at least initially, a more centralized intranet publishing model may be introduced via governance, standards, templates, branding and content management tools, in order to support consistency of message and brand¹⁰.

Results from the recent IBF survey on managing intranet content, revealed the following insights about publishing models:

- Publishing on the home page tends to be centralized, with the vast majority having decentralized publishing for sub-sites
- Fewer than 10% of respondents have a truly centralized publishing model
- There is a variety of challenges in decentralized publishing, such as maintaining the quality of content or getting publishers to archive it
- Some challenges can be attributed to low central resourcing to support a publishing community, or the difficulty of running a decentralized publishing model when there is high staff turnover among content owners.

Intranet publishing model type	Percentage of respondents
Largely centralized	9%
Largely decentralized, with very little central control	22%
Home page(s) and corporate sections centralized, no controls on sub-sites	17%
Home page(s) centralized, sub-sites controlled by templates and standards, but publishing decentralized	30%
Strong oversight by governance body that includes local site owners and sets policy and standards; publishers decentralized	17%
Other	5%

Figure 3: 2012 IBF survey results on the level of centralization/decentralization of intranet publishers.

10 The "One Company Intranet" research report is available on the IBF extranet: <http://members.ibforum.com/blogpost/445048/119221/One-Company-Intranet-moving-from-many-intranets-to-one>.

3

Comparing publishing models

Most organizations' publishing models are tied to their intranet governance model. Assessing yours allows you to take steps to capitalize on the advantages and minimize or address the disadvantages.

Type of Publishing Model	Advantages	Disadvantages
Centralized (intranet strategy and content is developed and controlled centrally)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Control over: content and strategy, themes, content tone, messages, and design and consistency Content can be shared quickly Economy of scale Simpler technologically 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of responsiveness to local or line of business needs Lack of flexibility Needs/volume may overwhelm a central team Sends the message that this is a top-down organization Lack of buy-in to strategies at the local or functional level
Decentralized (minimal centrally controlled pages, sub-sites controlled by organizational sub-units, divisions)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responsiveness to local or functional needs Flexibility and creativity More staff to develop content Buy-in to strategies at local or functional level Sends message of local operational control 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uncontrolled proliferation of content Redundancy and duplication Lack of control over strategy, themes, and format Inconsistent user experience Lack of clear ownership
Combination (central control of governance, design, standards, decentralized publishing, numerous sub-sites)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Control of design Control of content at a high level Local owners and publishers Reduces central resource requirements Sends a message of collaborative organization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires clear roles and governance to work well Enforcement of standards and guidelines may cause local resentment, especially if perceived as overly restrictive Redundancy and duplication is a challenge

Figure 4: Comparison of intranet publishing models.

3

James Robertson, who describes combination publishing models as¹¹ “publishing with review, federated publishing, and end-user content contribution”, says: “The key challenge is to establish the right mix of publishing models, flexible in many cases, rigid in others. The intranet team needs to manage the overall process, including adjusting approaches when circumstances change.”

In practice, hybrid models are increasingly popular due to their adaptability to an organization’s particular characteristics.

Ernst & Young’s publishing model is a combination, with centralized publishing to the home page and corporate news, and decentralized geographic and line of business sites governed by templates, publishing controls, review and feedback.

[More details in section 8.](#)

IKEA’s intranet publishing model is decentralized but strongly regulated through central standards and controls. It has a common information structure globally and publishes local and global content based on the topic, not the corporate/geographic location or function. There are 3500 publishers, and the way they tag the content by country, company and store location determines for which employees it shows up. This process is used for all content including news, static content, applications and user-generated content.

[More details in section 8.](#)

IBM’s publishing model is a combination of centralized and decentralized, even for the home page, including a large publishing community of more than 3,000. According to Kannistra, “we publish content, and anyone can see it and share it (the resulting URL isn’t restricted). The headlines that we promote on the home page, though, are profiled for audience type (location, job role, business unit, business interest etc.). We have editors who basically “man the gates” for these profiles. I and a colleague, for example, own the profile for all of IBM; another owns the profile for Software Group. The editors meet regularly to discuss publishing plans and to talk about cross-promoting certain articles across profiles. In addition, most editors have internal Connections communities, and some have subsites, subsites on ibm.com etc.” IBM’s intranet, which originally grew out of its people directory, has a people-centric approach and content is seen as shifting from professionally developed to user-generated by employees. As a result, it has added the concept of content curator, a changing role for the professional communicator, to its publishing model.

[More details in section 8.](#)

Hybrid models are increasingly popular due to their adaptability to an organization’s particular characteristics.

11 Five intranet publishing models, Step Two Designs: http://www.steptwo.com.au/papers/kmc_publishing/index.html.

4

Engaging and managing the publishing community

Given the trend towards more decentralized publishing with oversight by a central team, effectively engaging and managing the intranet publishing community is essential to producing quality content and a positive employee experience. Whether there are four or 4,000 people writing and publishing, it is important to:

- be clear about roles and governance of types of content
- have clear standards for branding, templates, writing, design and applications
- foster and engage the publishing community
- provide appropriate support.

Clear governance and roles

Most organizations work to assure quality and consistency of content through standards and guidelines organized according to type of content (news, static, applications and tools, and user-generated.) The organizations that score the highest in IBF's "Communication and Collaboration" benchmarking evaluations have:

- clear standards for the design, usability and accessibility of content (logos, colours, fonts, layout etc.)
- guidelines for writing for the web, including tone of voice, structure and user-generated content
- a framework for determining where content should be published
- relevant publishing standards.

They also have an application and evaluation process for new content areas or applications, which helps avoid duplication and ensures that applications meet branding, technical and usability standards (e.g. can be accessed from mobile devices). Content areas should also be reviewed periodically against their stated purpose and value.

Ernst & Young has strong standards for design and writing for the web including voice and structure, usability, ownership, keeping content up to date, user-generated content, and collaboration tools. While older legacy applications may not meet current standards, all new applications do.

[More details of this case study in section 8.](#)

Clear roles and responsibilities related to the intranet, for managers and staff throughout the organization, are essential to ensuring accountability. Some organizations are large enough to have full-time intranet, IT and internal communications staff at all levels, while others may have intranet responsibilities added to other roles. Regardless, clarity in job descriptions, performance expectations and KPIs increases efficiency and streamlines communication and governance. Keeping an up to date matrix of names, positions, roles, responsibilities and organizational functions is an important role of the central manager.

IKEA has documented clear roles and procedures for managing content. With a large number of authorized publishers (3500) and a decentralized publishing model, they manage content using templates and strong standards, including how to write, publish and make sure that content is easy to find and to read. Procedures for managing content are described in the content manual, which covers the publishing lifecycle, and applications.¹² In addition, the central team has frequent interaction with the publishing community.

¹² More details on content and application management at IKEA are available on the IBF extranet: <http://members.ibforum.com/blogpost/553709/125259/Content-Application-Management-at-IKEA>.

4

Engaging the publishing community.

In IBF's recent survey on managing content, intranet managers indicated that their publishing communities range in size from five to many thousands. They use a variety of techniques to engage and manage these publishers and indicated that this is often a challenge due to low central resourcing.

Method of engaging and managing the publishing community	Percentage of respondents
In-person conferences/meetings/seminars	75%
Distribution of standards/templates/updates	70%
In-person training	65%
Feedback (based on data on readership, comments etc)	60%
Online training	55%
Webcasts and videos (in person/online/webcast)	35%
Highlighting/rewarding/featuring successes	30%
Editorial meeting (daily/weekly)	25%
Other	5%

Figure 3: IBF Managing Content 2012 survey data on methods of engaging and managing a publishing community.

In addition to standards and templates, **IBM's** intranet team manages the large publishing community via weekly editorial meetings with business leads and global editorial staff. These meetings are an opportunity to encourage publishers to use the wide array of channels available (rather than the mistaken belief that the home page is always best), fine tune content strategy, hear pitches for new content and promote successes. They also feature five-minute masterclasses on topics such as creating captions, accessibility standards or writing a good headline.

[More details of this in section 8.](#)

IKEA's central team manages a similarly large publishing community via a variety of methods including e-Learning material that covers getting started publishing, advanced publishing, how to publish news specifically versus posting content, and how to write well so that content is readable and findable. The central team encourages all publishers to sign up for training, which happens once or several times a month.

[More details of this in section 8.](#)

Whatever tools and techniques you choose to foster community and manage your publishers, it is time well spent. Publishers need support, especially when they are embedded in business groups located away from the central team. They may be the lone voices for the value of using the intranet and digital tools to inform and engage employees as well as championing high quality, relevant content that aligns with central strategy.



In-person meetings and training, providing standards, employee feedback and online training **are the most popular ways** of engaging the publishing community.

5

Focus on quality content

No matter how well you manage the publication of content, if no one reads it or uses it, why make the effort? Quality is key to gaining readership. Kristina Halvorson, President, Brain Traffic, makes this point when she says: “We, the people who make websites, have been talking for 15 years about user experience, information architecture, content management systems, coding, metadata, visual design, user research, and all the other disciplines that facilitate our users’ abilities to find and consume content. Weirdly, though, we haven’t been talking about the meat of the matter. We haven’t been talking about the content itself. Yeah, yeah. We know how to write for online readers. But who among us is asking the scary, important questions about content, such as ‘what’s the point?’ or ‘who cares?’ Who’s talking about the time-intensive, complicated, messy content development process?”¹³

In this section, we consider ways to address these questions by:

- making news interesting and two-way
- ensuring news is timely
- training publishers
- providing writing standards
- making content authentic
- monitoring content quality
- using photos that tell a story
- considering using trained journalists

Make news interesting and two-way

News or features intended to build community must be interesting to the average reader. If items are better suited to an announcement, a photo caption, static content or other channel, insist on it. Strive to reverse the typical thinking of “what do we want them to know?” to “what do they really need or want to know and how do they want to receive it?”.

IBM was led to refocus on quality, readability and usefulness of content after observing declining viewership on the home page and analysing its content tone. The intranet team strives for consumable, attractive, delightful and professional content – and urges writers to think about what action their messages lead employees to take. [More details in section 8.](#)

A key element of making news interesting is enabling two-way dialogue. Features such as commenting, rating, readership statistics and visibility of most popular content enable such a dialogue and give real-time feedback on how interesting the content really is.

We’re in competition with Netflix, YouTube, Facebook for employees’ attention. We can’t resort to that level of entertainment but we have to keep in mind that employees’ time is valuable and they have other options.” *Kieran Cannistra, IBM.*

Strive to reverse the typical thinking of “what do we want them to know?” to “what do they really need or want to know and how do they want to receive it?”.

13 The Discipline of Content Strategy: <http://www.alistapart.com/articles/thedisciplineofcontentstrategy>.

5

Ensure news is timely

Give employees company news first, especially in a crisis. Nothing destroys employee trust like discovering something – good or bad – about the company from external sources. At a minimum, posting real time external news (newspaper and TV) expands the definition of news, keeps employees up to date quickly with little effort and increases trust. Many organizations have subscriptions, the cost of which can be shared with external communications, to services that feed company-specific news to their sites and include reprint/ reuse rights.

Should you have bad news or a crisis, drop the corporate speak and tell it like it is on your intranet. Rule number one for effective crisis management, internally and externally, is be the first to break bad news if possible. At least respond quickly and provide frequent updates coordinated with external communications as the situation evolves. Many organizations have a designated location that will grab attention for an “alert” or “heads up” that can be updated as a situation progresses.

Train publishers

Standards and guidelines need to be supported by training – both in person and virtual – for publishers across the organization. Rebecca Rogers, Step Two Designs, notes: “More organizations are now recognising the importance of good quality content and are using professional trainers to conduct in-house workshops for intranet authors.”¹⁴ She recommends that training include:

- understanding the audience
- writing for the online medium
- making text easy to scan
- writing in plain language
- writing great headings, summaries and links
- creating strong information scent
- plenty of examples
- practical exercises getting authors to rewrite existing content.

Provide writing standards

As already mentioned, intranet standards and guidelines are essential for quality content. These should be written with the intranet in mind and may include: writing for the web, layering content, plain and concise writing, headline writing, pulling readers in, photos, using examples and branding themes, and emphasizing corporate values.

¹⁴ Helping intranet authors write quality content, Step Two Designs: http://www.steptwo.com.au/papers/cmb_writingquality/index.html.

Ernst & Young posts such guidance on its intranet.

EYHP intranet content standards – Landing pages (copy text)

Ground rules:

- ▶ **Get to the point quickly:** Engage the user's interest and get to the main point as quickly as possible
- ▶ **Be brief:** Users don't have time to read long tracts of text
- ▶ **Make your copy easy to read:** Reading on-screen is harder than print, so make the copy text easy to digest
- ▶ **Write for the skim reader:** readers usually avoid long blocks of text
- ▶ **Use straightforward language:** Don't use jargon that may confuse the audience

Objectives:

- ▶ To initiate the navigation experience
- ▶ To introduce unfamiliar users to the key aspects of the firm, service delivery, business development and support functions

Page 14 Governance training **ERNST & YOUNG**
Quality In Everything We Do

Figure 4: Ernst & Young provides specific intranet content standards for publishers.

Make content authentic

Professional jargon and buzzwords are a hindrance to good communication in organizations. A Google search revealed more than 59.4m hits for “buzzwords” and some 168m for “corporate speak”, including dictionaries, translators and articles, from serious to hysterical.

While the use of some technical language for a profession is unavoidable, using fuzzy, ambiguous words and management jargon is a bad habit that has become commonplace and if used on intranets can decrease readership and trust. Jargon can obscure real meaning¹⁵ and even undermine the authenticity of the brand¹⁶. At worst, corporate “spin” turns people off and draws the organization’s intentions into question – as highlighted by the Financial Times’ columnist, Lucy Kellaway, who compiles an annual list of the best (or worst!) corporate “mumbo jumbo”¹⁷.

One organization published a tongue-in-cheek blog post titled “buzz word bingo” to surface the issue. It generated more comments and genuine conversation than usual and some employees printed the buzz word bingo graphic and took it to meetings to “score” them. Being able to laugh at yourself may be the first step.

15 The Most Annoying, Pretentious And Useless Business Jargon, Forbes: <http://www.forbes.com/sites/grouphink/2012/01/26/the-most-annoying-pretentious-and-useless-business-jargon>.

16 Cut the Corporatespeak, Michelle Bureson: <http://workawesome.com/author/michelle-bureson>.

17 The best corporate spin of the year, Marketplace: <http://www.marketplace.org/topics/business/best-corporate-spin-year>.

5

At **IBM**, corporate speak has been reduced by changing the tone to be more “delightful”, running cartoons tied to tips and culture, and addressing “vocabulary rehabilitation” directly (for example, employees were challenged not to use the words “synergize”, “leverage”, or “actionable” for a month).

[More details in section 8.](#)

Monitoring content quality

Monitoring quality is a key role of intranet managers, good writers, editors and corporate communications staff. Some helpful tools and techniques are:

- training authors and publishers
- aggressive editing
- highlighting the “most read articles” (headlines and links) prominently on the home page.
- providing managers and executives with business articles that raise the issue of the damage done by corporate speak and the value of straight talk. They may become desensitized to buzz words and uncomfortable with clear writing or speaking.

Vattenfall’s intranet team uses a combination of templates and extensive training to support content quality. This is backed up by regular compliance reviews of internal content as part of its centralized publishing model.

Use photos that tell a story

Text, particularly on screens, must be broken up to be readable, and a photo can be worth a thousand words. However, important space on intranets and external websites is often wasted on meaningless clip art or graphics that add nothing to the message. You need to set standards and pay attention to photographs and graphics as well as written content. While some organizations have a goal of “no clip art”, photographs of real employees doing real work at actual locations draws readers in and subtly sends the message that employees are important. You could consider creating an internal photo library from such images.

Consider using trained journalists

Professional journalists, employees or freelancers, can “punch up” your news articles or even train internal publishers.

Microsoft hires professional journalists to write news for its intranet¹⁸. Organizations that have hired or use freelance journalist as writers, like the fact that they are trained to make the main point in the first paragraph, tell the real story, use plain language, show both sides of an issue and edit out jargon.

PHOTO TIPS

- Keep “grip and grin” photos of executives or award winners to a minimum.
- Seek out photos that are more informal or “action”.
- Encourage employees to self-load photos on profile pages.
- Encourage employees to submit photos for features such as “in a snapshot”.
- Have an annual photo contest of people carrying out the mission.
- Enlargeable thumbnail photos are an efficient use of intranet real estate.
- Remember, that captions, like headlines, may be all someone reads, so they should make the main point.

18 The presentation by Microsoft at an IBF member meeting is available on the IBF extranet: http://members.ibforum.com/resource/collection/7738DCA2-9069-469F-A085-5FDC482F6460/MicrosoftPortalMSW-IBFSept_21p1&2-26slides.ppt.

6

Managing types of content

While all content should be dealt with similarly in terms of governance, strategy, publishing and quality concerns, this section addresses some unique aspects of content categories:

- news
- static content (organizational information, policies etc)
- User-generated content.

News

Managing the internal news function for a large organization is like running a community newspaper or news site, with corporate or broad appeal news front and centre on the home page, followed by local or departmental specific sub sections. IBF's survey indicated particular challenges in managing propagation of news to the right people and guarding against silos.

Targeting and global-local balance

IBF members that score highly in benchmarking show particular strengths around effectively targeting content to users, and ensuring a good balance of global and local news content.

At **Unilever**, targeted content is successfully driven through user profiles, bringing in a mixture of global, regional, functional and local content to the home page¹⁹. And its award-winning²⁰ intranet News Centre has been acknowledged for its success in aggregating and delivering news in an engaging and easy-to-digest manner. It provides daily news articles and feature stories, including content on topics specifically requested by employees such as leadership activities, lifestyle, health and wellbeing and tips on how to perform better in the workplace.

Planning, scheduling and monitoring news

Constant vigilance is needed in planning, scheduling and location of news to ensure a flow of relevant and interesting information for employees. In some organizations, such as **IKEA**, this flow is driven by tagging, which can surface incorrect content to a high level on the intranet but has the benefit of ensuring that such content is addressed. In other organizations, tools are built in to the CMS to help manage news.

Ernst & Young has customized its current CMS to help plan and schedule content or articles, including audience and assigned author. This module gives managers and editors a view of what is in the pipeline in each line of business or local office, and avoids duplication. It helps keep track of content published on the intranet that was previously duplicated in a variety of "newsletters". [More details in section 8.](#)

At the **CDC**, a custom developed database of potential articles and other content helps with scheduling. It includes key information such as: title, author, publication dates, category of article by functional area and goal, progress/status, photos and signoffs. The database converts into a projected publication calendar, colour coded by type of article. The calendar is used for editorial meetings, following progress, deadlines and assuring balance.

19 More details on targeting content on the home page at Unilever is available on the IBF intranet: <http://members.ibforum.com/blogpost/553709/143856/Targeting-content-on-the-homepage-at-Unilever>.

20 More details on the award winning Unilever case study are available at: <http://www.ioic.org.uk/content/latest-news/2221-best-intranet12.html>.

The screenshot displays the 'CDC Connects Story Tracking' interface. It features a search bar at the top with filters for Type, Status, Category, CIO, Reporter, Text in Title, and Year. Below the search bar is a table of articles with columns for Title, Category, CIO, Type, Due Date, Run Date, Rep, Status, Sign off, SIT Date, Key, In House, To, Copy, and Edit. A 'Story Calendar' view is also visible, showing a weekly grid of articles with color-coded cells representing different categories or statuses. A legend at the bottom explains the color coding.

Figure 5: At the CDC, a custom developed tool called CDC Connects Story Tracking helps with scheduling.

Syndicate to avoid duplication

For maximum consistency of messaging and economy of resources, content written for one “channel” should be syndicated as appropriate on other channels, with minor adaptation. Popular columnists have long been syndicated in numerous outlets. Today syndication is easily enabled by technology – when people read something they like, they post, re-post, tweet, re-tweet, blog about, and link to it. It can also be picked up by video producers. Use this to your advantage. As your digital workplace evolves, consider all of your digital tools, collaboration spaces, mobile devices as channels for content.

Ernst & Young encourages the “syndication” of material developed internally for use externally with clients. IBM is designating communication professionals as content “curators” to function like columnists with deep subject matter expertise. [For more details see case studies below.](#)

Static content

As with news, static content should have clear and up to date information about ownership and the ability for users to provide direct feedback to the author. New content areas should be governed by a request process that establishes this information and puts forward a business case for their creation.

At Maersk, all content has clear owner and contact information. Furthermore, every page has a score based on how it has been rated by users, the number of page views, and how recently the page has been updated. Relative weighting of the score can be changed to influence publisher behaviour.

Lloyds Banking Group uses a requisition form for all new content areas²¹, which includes information on the business case for the site, levels of approval, contact details, content lifecycle information and an acknowledgement of the central team's expectations around content management. Internal Communications assesses the business case and checks that there is not an overlap with existing sites.

User-generated content

On social intranets, the balance of content is tipped dramatically towards the user-generated. Corporate news and official announcements are still an important feature of internal communications, but inevitably things are a little different from the traditional intranet²².

The challenges and opportunities are mainly around how you present the balance between the two, what happens to existing corporate communications, and how to govern social content appropriately without creating a barrier to participation. IBF's survey found that it is very important to extend intranet governance to cover user-generated content and to focus on where social content adds specific business value to increase adoption. [The full survey results can be found in Appendix A.](#)

Impact on internal communications

A successful social intranet enhances corporate news with discussions and dialogue, which gets more engagement and has more impact.

In general, if the discussion is real, mature and un-sanitized, it will be inherently more valuable to senior management and more interesting to users. Therefore some internal communicators will write to provoke or attract comments, sometimes in advance of more standard announcements which can then be curated and referred to.

IBM sees the role of the communicator as changing to that of a content curator who points out what employees should be paying attention to via corporate news. He or she also chooses – like a curator at a museum selecting artefacts for an exhibit – from a wide range of sources, including user-generated content.

User-generated content as a potential rich source is recognized at **Ernst & Young**, where it sometimes indicates the need for the development of new static policy or service content. Internal communities may push to have a user-generated content piece reviewed and turned into an official authoritative piece.

It is very important
to extend intranet governance
to cover user-generated content
and to focus on
where **social**
content
adds specific business
value to increase
adoption

²¹ More details on how Lloyds Banking Group uses an online form for new content area requests is available on the IBF extranet: <http://members.ibforum.com/blogpost/553709/143850/Using-an-online-form-to-request-new-content-areas-at-Lloyds-Banking-Group>.

²² Social Intranets Part 2 – Leadership support and presenting content, Steve Bynghall: <http://members.ibforum.com/blogpost/439672/146261/Social-intranets-part-2-leadership-support-and-presenting-content>.

Zoning user-generated content and official content

Some corporate risk departments worry that mixing officially sanctioned content and user-generated personal views can cause conflict, or that content can be submitted without being checked for any potential issues. In some highly regulated areas of content – such as HR, finance or technical advice – these concerns are more acute. In general, social intranets deal with this by zoning the user-generated content and the corporate news so that it is easier to tell which is which. There are ways to do this – for example, having banners, branded news centres or even colour coding.

BT uses colour coding on its global navigation bar to help users understand whether they are viewing formal or user-generated content.²³

Occasionally there can be confusion distinguishing between corporate and individual opinion. For example, if individuals have functional responsibility or are recognized expert authorities on a particular subject, they can feel a conflict between what they can say as “opinion” and what might be “policy.” The wording on user-generated content is usually able to mitigate this, by making it clear that this is a personal view.

Governance for user-generated content

Usually, senior managers have more concern about possible inappropriate content than is warranted. However, worries can be eased by having a written strategy for managing user-generated content that includes the purpose, goals for use, and standards that are usually tied to existing policy on IT use and employee ethics and behaviour. Caution: don’t over do it. In most organizations, encouraging use is more of a challenge than inappropriate use. It can be good to take an experimental approach towards new social media tools and see governance as a way to encourage engagement as well as mitigate risk. Governance may include guidance on how to use social channels vis-à-vis the more formal content channels, which can be invaluable for employees who may be overwhelmed by an array of choices.

At **IBM**, a clear set of Social Computing Guidelines²⁴ is available for internal and external use of social tools. These guidelines – first developed in 2005, and expanded in 2008 and 2010 – aim to provide helpful, practical advice to protect IBM and bloggers. Plainly written, they emphasize key points such as compliance with business conduct guidelines, responsibility, transparency, respect and confidentiality.

Amgen’s intranet MyAmgen contains good advice for users on where to publish content²⁵. The Portal Design Standards area has guidance for when to use MyTeams (collaboration sites based on SharePoint Team Sites) versus MyAmgen, which is a formal published channel. Content providers are guided to the appropriate channel depending on whether content is private or public, long term or short term, for a wide audience or not, and whether information fits into the formal hierarchy of the published channels.

23 Context is everything with intranet content, Richard Dennison: <http://richarddennison.wordpress.com/2008/10/24/context>.

24 IBM Social Computing Guidelines: <http://www.ibm.com/blogs/zz/en/guidelines.html>.

25 More details on how Amgen guide users on where to post content is available on the IBF extranet: <http://members.ibforum.com/blogpost/553709/143665/Guidance-on-where-to-post-content-and-user-segmentation-from-Amgen>.

7

Content lifecycle

A cornerstone of the reputation of any intranet is reliability of information. Regardless of how well news, and static and user-generated content is managed, when users find that a policy document or description of an organizational unit is out of date on the intranet, their confidence in all the content is diminished. The tedious and sometimes unpopular efforts to “clean up content” or keep it up to date are an important use of even scarce resources. Yet, in the recent IBF survey, intranet managers cited two of their biggest challenges as: getting content owners to update content, and effective archiving of content.

Organizations have various ways of keeping content up to date and archiving it, but most do this via a combination of policy, standards, technology, roles and assignment of responsibility, feedback, categorizing information and clean-up projects:

Policy/standards

The first step is clarifying expectations and integrating life cycle and archiving policy and standards into the governance process. Some organizations set a rule requiring review of all content by content owners every six months or year, or the system automatically removes it.

IKEA gives content a clear “owner” who is required to review all content every 12 months and re-publish, make corrections or remove it. Content that is not re-published at the appropriate time is removed automatically by the system.

Ernst & Young attempts to keep core content up to date through a combination of central updates, metrics, local responsibility and categorization. Each year, publishers are asked to review their content and update it based on policy. Certain content including regulatory policy is kept up to date centrally.

[More details of this case study in section 8.](#)

System-generated reports

Many organizations’ CMSs can be set up to generate reports on the age of content, flagging that approaching or past the set standard. At **Ernst & Young**, each line of business gets feedback from centrally produced reports that includes the number of views/level of access of viewers, the date of last update, and how their content ranks against other lines of business.

Categorizing content and optimizing search

Even with such efforts in place, getting rid of old content is a challenge. Many organizations have a natural reluctance to dispose of documents. **Ernst & Young** has instituted a procedure to put content repositories into categories based on usage, date of last review and date of origination. The repository category, or tier, is fed into the search function affecting results and is used to help determine whether the content or document is located on prime land or not. It is considering taking this procedure down to the document level.

7

Automatic takedowns

For static content such as organizational strategy, you might consider a policy/practice similar to **Ernst & Young's**, where it evaluates the content usage rate and attempts to pull down anything scoring less than 20%.

User Feedback

Users can be extremely helpful in pointing out when content is out of date if you have a feedback system. The key is encouraging this feedback, taking action and letting people know that the time they took to give the feedback was worthwhile.

Clean-up projects

It is a good idea to clean up all content when migrating to a new platform or making significant changes to the intranet to avoid moving “junk into the new house” and to increase confidence in the new product. This can be tedious and time consuming so it is best to have an ongoing enforced lifecycle policy. Tips for an effective clean-up project include reviewing usage data and the document retention policy plus setting clear objectives for content owners and instructions on what to do²⁶.

26 Instant intranet improvement: by cleaning up, Ellen Van Aken:
<http://www.ibforum.com/2012/09/04/instant-intranet-improvement>.



In the recent IBF survey, intranet managers cited two of their

biggest challenges

as: getting content owners to update content, and effective archiving of content.

8

Case studies

IKEA

IKEA focuses on users' needs by moving to participatory publishing by topic not organizational unit, and manages a large, decentralized publishing community.

Susanne Rolf, Process leader for Knowledge and Information sharing in the Digital Workplace area, has been in Corporate Communications at IKEA for 10 years, evolving with internal communications and the intranet from an editor to her current position. Privately held IKEA, headquartered in Sweden, is the world's largest furniture retailer and has 139,000 employees and operates in 40 countries.

We chose IKEA as a case study to highlight some of its successes in managing content on its intranet, including:

- publishing content by topic globally (not organizational or country unit)
- content strategy is part of DWP (Digital Workplace) and communication strategy
- managing a publishing community of 3,500
- managing the lifecycle of content.

Structuring all content by topics

IKEA's intranet publishing model is decentralized but controlled centrally. It has a common information structure globally, and publishes local and global content in a common structure based on topics, not the corporate/geographic location or function.

This process is used for all content, including news, static content, applications and user-generated content. According to Rolf: "We mean everything from training, travel, business strategies, products, what's for lunch – anything. This means that the way the 3,500 publishers tag the content by country, company and store location determines for which employees it shows up. Employees can see all content if desired or they look for it. The intranet is a very open and transparent".

Rolf considers moving to this publishing model and topic-based architecture as a great success, but a big challenge is that it "brings bad information to the surface and you cannot hide it". The good news is that by surfacing operationally out of date, conflicting or wrong information or policy it can be corrected quickly. She feels it has been an evolution toward better quality content.

This topic driven method is a challenge because the company is organized not topically but by stores and functional divisions. However, it forces local employees to look at important global information, and global headquarters employees to explore some local information. This sharing of content by topic eventually helps with the natural local versus global (or headquarters) tension, or what some companies call "silos". Rolf says: "Even though it is an ongoing process to get people to publish information in the right location, it is worth it. People have a tendency to want to publish all their information in one area where they themselves can easily overview it, but this is not convenient for the end user."

This means that all 3,500 publishers across the intranet can publish **tag the content** by country, company and store location determines for which employees it shows up

Content Strategy

IKEA's DWP Wanted Position²⁷ and the Corporate Communication Strategy, both cover intranet strategy. There is an intranet action plan, which fits under these goals and strategies. Action items and projected due or completion dates are laid out for the year. The DWP mission is:

- co-workers are the first to know
- co-workers have easy access to relevant information and communication tools in order to manage their daily job
- we nurture dialogue, contribution and involvement within IKEA.

According to Rolf: "We define our goals for the DWP, of which the intranet is one channel, as ways to improve capabilities such as accessing and managing information, networking or making it easy to find people (e.g. improve people search). The strategies for corporate communication and DWP clearly cover the intranet, which is appropriate."

Managing a decentralized publishing community

IKEA's publishing model is decentralized but with strong standards built into the system and relatively strong standards on how to write, publish and make sure that content it is easy to read and easy to find. Rolf says: "We [the central team] 'own' the channel. We don't own any content. We manage the platform. We do sometimes publish corporate news, but the issues and topics always come through the business areas that own the information."

IKEA has 3,500 publishers or employees with publishing access. It is a diverse community with some publishing frequently and some very little. The central team communicates, trains and manages this group via:

- email list and topic driven newsletter
- e-Learning including: beginning publishing, advanced publishing, how to publish news specifically versus posting content, and how to write so people will read it AND can find it
- community intranet pages
- group mail box for discussion, which is being redirected to Yammer
- in-person meetings/conferences.²⁸

According to Rolf: "Some people just want to know which buttons to press, others want to know the big picture and use the intranet significantly in their communication role. We encourage them to sign up for training, which happens once, or several times, a month. We show people the basics and where to go for more, we try to incorporate the managing of content."

27 The Wanted Position for IKEA Digital Workplace aims to give insight into the scope, objectives and goals of the Digital Workplace.

28 IKEA's presentation at an IBF member meeting is available on the IBF extranet (PDF): http://members.ibforum.com/members/resource_collection_list.asp?uid=6831760&hSearchTerms=IKEA.

The central team maintains contact with key publishers and highlights successes, such as good examples of managing news, inviting them to share and present at meetings and conferences. The central team works through the well-established matrix of internal communicators including one person in each country responsible for the intranet, and that group meets in person twice a year to share and review strategies. Lines of businesses (e.g. supply chain, trading, finance and administrative functions) also have internal communications staff, who work on the intranet. The central team attends and presents at their annual meeting. Rolf says: “These are very important face-to-face meetings. Even though we have dialogue daily, it is another thing when we meet in person, many more things come up.”

Managing News

News is published on one news site, with local news at the top, country news in the middle, and global news at the bottom. Local news is store- or location-based and is seen by all in that building, country news by all in the country and global news by all employees worldwide. People may choose to see more than their default settings. Whether or not a store or country has an active publisher determines how much local news gets published. One person at corporate headquarters is responsible for managing the news channel and can move or remove published material that should not be there. There is little centrally developed corporate news, and the popular feature “People on the Move”, which highlights people’s job and location changes, is published at both a global and local level.

IKEA Inside – the basics

- One **common startpage** with global, national, local and personal information.
- Possibility to target/push information to a country, site, company & job title.
- One **common information structure** (taxonomy), but different content under each section depending on where you work.
- Content reviewed after 1 year (life cycle management), content not re-published is deleted.
- One common platform – Sharepoint 2007



Figure 6: Key facts about content on IKEA's global intranet, IKEA Inside.

Content quality

Rolf admits that content quality may vary worldwide based on the level of commitment and resources assigned to the intranet. Some contributors have editorial calendars, review and follow-up on comments, and adjust their plans based on metrics. Others may not be so organized in publishing news or monitoring quality. IKEA's most popular intranet content is:

1. "people on the move"(regular feature on people changing jobs)
2. vacancy postings
3. new products
4. sales figures.

Search quality is also important to IKEA. It uses a search cloud, so routinely it can see the top 10 searches from the main search page. Rolf says: "We try to check this all the time to make sure they get good results and we know the true picture. This is updated weekly."

User-generated content

IKEA recently introduced micro blogging using Yammer. It has introduced this with a "soft launch" as a tool that is integrated into the intranet, rather than making a "big bang" as something new and different. "We intentionally wanted to focus on adding a micro blogging functionality tool on our intranet, so people do not see it as a replacement or in competition", says Rolf. "We encourage people to use the right tool for the right purpose. We are allowing it to grow organically without much promotion or managing."

Content migration

Though Rolf considers IKEA's move to a topical content structure a great success, when asked what advice she would have for anyone entering a big migration to a new platform, she not jokingly says: "We'd never do it again. We learned so much when we changed platforms, design and content structure all at the same time and it was too much. We still have not recovered and people still refer to the 'new intranet' four years later. We now believe in evolution were we will make changes but release them incrementally. We now think that is a much better way to do it."

Rolf adds that making incremental changes is a better way to respond to individual and business requirements: "It's just a better way of working". She goes on: "We hugely underestimated the change management aspect of a complete intranet overhaul and how much we would lose in productivity. Even though we have made very significant changes since then, we now call them enhancements and we make smaller releases four times a year so people don't experience such a big change."

We intentionally wanted to focus on adding a micro blogging functionality tool on our intranet, so people do not see it as a replacement or in competition

Content lifecycle policy

IKEA considers its locked in, strictly enforced content lifecycle policy as another content success. Specifically, any content that is not consciously re-published every 12 months is deleted. IKEA admits that this policy puts a lot of pressure on the publishers to constantly review content, update and re-publish it, but Rolf says: “We have seen it work and we came to this policy from experience of having so much old information out there and seeing how it detracts.”

2012-11-15

**How to work with content & design
on IKEA Inside**

1. Purpose of IKEA Inside and this document

The purpose of IKEA Inside is to:

- Be one of the main channels in the internal communication landscape. Second to managers, IKEA Inside is the most important channel for leading and steering IKEA into the future.
- Combine communication and collaboration tools, applications and information in one place to increase efficiency and speed in the internal communication flow.
- Enable information sharing between co-workers, across geographical and functional borders.
- Tell and inform co-workers about strategies, facts and news.
- Help co-workers do office related tasks, for example book rooms, fill out timesheets, and access online learning.

The purpose of this document is to:

- Secure responsible behavior for publishing information on IKEA Inside.
- Develop a content presentation on IKEA Inside that everyone knows and recognises.
- Help maintain a receiver-oriented information structure.
- Help maintain freshness and relevance of the content on IKEA Inside

For further instructions on how to publish information on IKEA Inside, and how to administrate content, structure and user access, please refer to the E-learnings available in the IKEA Learning Platform <http://www.learning.ikea.com> and to the [IKEA Inside information page](#)

2. IKEA Inside Basics

2.1 Information structure principles

The main principle of the IKEA Inside information structure is that it is based on tasks/topics.

Users want to get to the information in the fewest possible steps. Therefore, the information structure of IKEA Inside should reflect feedback from users, so that the most relevant information

Figure 6: Excerpt from IKEA's content manual.

Ernst & Young

Ernst & Young places priority on strategy and metrics.

Greg Nemeth is the Technology Enablement Product Manager at Ernst & Young, a global leader in assurance, tax, transaction and advisory services, with 152,000 employees globally. Pertinent to its intranet structure, Ernst & Young is made up member firms with a fair amount of autonomy.

Ernst & Young was chosen as a case study for this managing content paper to highlight:

- aligning content strategy with business strategy, including line of business levels
- governance of content, new applications and tools via clear standards
- adapting the CMS to serve the news development and editorial process
- using search optimization reports to point to the need for new or adjusted content.

Nemeth says that he considers one of Ernst & Young's biggest intranet successes: "The rigour that goes into ensuring that, at the end of the day, we have the tools in place to support all of the business activities. Our intranet is not artificial or separate from the lines of business, whether it is taxonomy, meta data, or planning, scheduling and measuring the content and adapting to make sure it supports the business. I think this is true for all types of content."

Ernst & Young's content strategy matches business strategy and is measured via scorecards

Given that Ernst & Young is organizationally more federated than corporate, the business strategy development of the lines of business is especially critical to the enterprise wide business strategy. The lines of business's intranet content strategy development is based on and integrated into that group's annual business strategy development. The intranet is viewed as a tool for helping carry out the annual business strategies. It is also coordinated with the central content strategy. For example, one year the audit line of business set two overarching goals – maintaining and developing clients – which drove the content strategy in that group for the year.

In another example, according to Nemeth, the assurance line of business set "quality" as a focus for the year, following wide media coverage of a competitor's quality problem. The focus on quality included news articles, client tools, discussions and online training modules. In another example, the advisory line of business made "improving business proposals for new business" a priority strategy. The corresponding intranet strategy was to set up an intranet accessible database of good examples, qualifications and recommendations useful in improving a variety of proposals. So again, the business strategy drove decisions about changes to the line of business's intranet site by adding a best practice sharing capacity.

Each year, Ernst & Young's lines of business look back at their scorecards, which include a look at intranet content success and appropriateness for continuation. There are ratings and comments for some of the content but results may be inflated, says Nemeth.

Managing content to avoid duplication and move away from newsletters

Ernst & Young's current CMS has a module, that it has customized, which helps planning and scheduling a piece of content or article, including audience and assigned author. Managers and editors gain a view of what is in the pipeline in each line of business or local office, and avoid duplication. This helps keep track of content published on the intranet that was formally duplicated in a variety of "newsletters". According to Nemeth, in the past people might have received eight or nine newsletters from functional and geographic groups that might include some version of the same article or announcement, for example: "Ernst & Young will be auditor for Fiat".

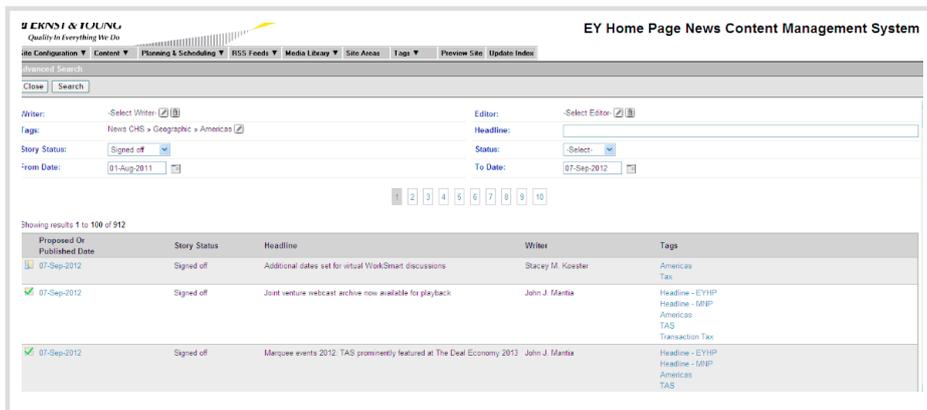


Figure 7: Ernst & Young's current CMS has a customized module that helps plan and schedule a piece of content or article.

The ability to track articles in development in multiple lines of business has helped Ernst & Young move away from email distributed newsletters, and minimize overlap and duplication. This is currently a custom application, which it plans to incorporate into its migration modifications to the proposed SharePoint platform.

User-generated content points to need for authoritativeness

In addition to Ernst & Young's traditional process for identifying a need to develop new static, policy or service content, it reviews user-generated content to point to the need for new or revised authoritative content. Also, communities might push to have a user-generated content piece reviewed and turned into an official authoritative piece. Examples include risk and financial assessment tools or IT security policy, for use with clients.

Ernst & Young capitalizes externally on content developed internally

Ernst & Young makes a conscious effort to turn internally developed content into externally facing thought leadership helpful in establishing it as a thought leader and marketing its expertise. For example, a piece explaining country specific tax legislation, developed internally and published on the intranet to share among technical experts, might be reviewed and deemed "worthy" by peers and re-purposed and used on the market facing website for clients. Internal and external content strategies increasingly include thought pieces and social media discussions.

Content lifecycle management

Ernst & Young makes a conscious attempt to keep core content up to date through central updates, metrics, local responsibility and content repository categories. Publishers are asked to review their content annually and update it based on policy. Each group gets feedback from centrally produced reports that include: number of views/level of access of viewers; date of last update; and how line of business or community's data ranks against other groups. Certain content including regulatory policy is updated centrally.

Even with these efforts, Nemeth admits that getting rid of old content is a challenge, given the natural reluctance of auditors to destroy documents. Ernst & Young has instituted another procedure of establishing "filter categories" for each of its content repositories based on usage, date of last review and date of origination. The "filter" category, or tier, is fed into the search function, affecting results, and is also used to help determine whether the content or document is located on prime real estate. The company is considering taking this procedure down to the document level.

Managing popular, frequently-used content via global navigation and search

Ernst & Young recognizes the importance of global navigation and search optimization in managing content for good user experience. In addition to using content's filter category in search, and determining location via navigation, it reviews global navigation twice a year and updates it based on the last review and usage data. The rule is that content must hit 20% of the target audience to stay in prime navigation locations. This is applied to the three primary user tool groups on the home page, including:

- **"EY Essentials"** – links to 12 frequently used, non-role based resources that can be targeted by geography. For example, travel, time and attendance, expense claims, room booking, revenue generating tools for customer relations, management tools and some regulatory tools.
- **My Business Resources** – targeted, job specific tools based on function or role (more client related).
- **Navigation Landing Pages** – profiled to the country including the option to layer in other locally relevant content. (For example, landing page for Audit lists the top global to country resources and news).

Optimizing Search

Ernst & Young's knowledge management team looks at the top 150 searches monthly and gives feedback to content owners. If it finds search attempts for a particular type of content that does not exist or does not show up in search, the team works with content area owners to create new content, edit old content or tag differently. For example, when "paternity leave policy" did not produce results because it was found in the "maternity leave" policy, the team worked with HR to make the necessary adjustments to optimize this content for search.

IBM

IBM emphasizes the importance of people at the core of the intranet strategy and repositions corporate communicators as “curators” of content.

Kieran Cannistra is the Senior Digital Content Strategist at IBM, responsible for managing news on the intranet portlet, W3. IBM is a 100-year-old multinational corporation, headquartered in New York, which manufactures and sells computer hardware and software, and offers infrastructure, hosting and consulting services in areas ranging from mainframe computers to nanotechnology. IBM has more than 433,300 employees worldwide and revenues of \$106.9bn.

IBM was chosen for this research to highlight:

- a people centric approach to its intranet and content
- managing a large publishing community
- the shift in content from professionally developed to employee/user-generated
- the changing role of the professional communicator – from content developer to content curator.

IBM’s intranet has a people centric strategy

IBM’s intranet, called W3, was developed from the employee directory by adding services and functions. “This approach was set up originally to connect employees rather than starting with the intranet as a repository of lots of shared files or ‘a place you go to hide something’,” says Ben Edwards, IBM’s VP for Digital Strategy and Development²⁹. “Viewing your intranet as a place of collaboration and connectivity as opposed to a library, is a core decision of philosophy and strategy.” Even today, Edwards’ favourite part of W3 is called “faces” where you begin typing in a name and possible matching photos pop up. He says: “Enabling our people to be great communicators drives business value”.

Content must be “delightful”

Cannistra, who manages W3 news, says that IBM was led to refocus on quality, readability and usefulness of content after observing declining viewership of the home page, and analysing its content tone. “People were not finding the content on the home page as delightful as we would like.”

Cannistra believes that it is important to align the news and content with the business strategy but insists that it must be subtle. She indicates that in order to achieve the goal of helping IBM-ers understand the IBM strategy, the company must make sure people come back to the portal. She says: “IBM makes sure employees return to their intranet ‘by making interaction with W3 an enjoyable experience and the content consumable, attractive and delightful – rather than dry corporate content’.” Cannistra uses the term “delightful” to emphasize the need to “lighten-up” the usual corporate tone of writing.

IBM makes sure employees return to their intranet ‘by making interaction with W3 an enjoyable experience and the content consumable, attractive and delightful – rather than dry corporate content

²⁹ Social Media Leadership Series – Mark Ragan interview with Ben Edwards: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ndZRSk-Sklw>.

She continues: “There are ways to be professional and formal without resorting to 1,000-word jargon filled articles, which don’t necessarily support employees. One of the things that I hammer into the people I work with and into myself as I prepare material, is that IBM cares less about what we know than about results. Making employees aware of something is not good enough; we need to always ask ‘what do you want employees to do once they are aware and why?’ If that is hard to answer, then perhaps it should be a smaller article, a shorter clip of info, or presented some other way. We must remember that we are in competition with Netflix, YouTube, and Facebook for employees’ attention. We cannot resort to that level of entertainment but we have to keep in mind that employees’ time is valuable and they have other options.”

Here are some things IBM has done to make news more engaging and “appealing:

- changing the content tone to be more digestible, attractive, and delightful
- bookending the week (Monday and Friday) with particularly appealing articles or features
- looking for especially inspiring or exciting news about employees, such as staff caught in floods in China
- running a Monday comic strip tied to tips and culture (for example, the recent “anatomy of a meeting” cartoon with a side bar of tips for running a conference call)
- running a popular “best of IBM” feature, once a month
- addressing “vocabulary rehabilitation” directly (employees were recently challenged not to use the words synergize, leverage or actionable for a month).

Managing the home page

IBM recently reorganized from a central team covering “news beats” or assigned organizational areas to a two-person central team managing the home page and providing oversight of publishing staff embedded in the line of businesses or former “beats”. Oversight is provided primarily through editorial meetings (described below).

Home pages provide:

- lines of business and corporate internal news (four or five new articles a week)
- targeted local, functional or subscribed-to news based on a specific intranet profile (geographic location, job role, organizational location, e.g. sales people in Guam; developers in a particular organization); news is created by embedded writers.
- the ability to subscribe and follow other roles, business topics of interest
- external news feed (viewed as very important in keeping employees informed)
- important links to tools.

Coordinating content across the company and channels

Ensuring that communication strategies, themes and content are consistent internally and externally is important to IBM communication staff and they invest significant effort to that end. Team leads responsible for the intranet, internet, advertising content, HR services, sales, and research meet weekly to:

- coordinate cost cutting issues, themes and interests (e.g. what new ads will look like/would be featured on the internet and intranet?)
- discuss the big stories and channels that will be used
- review articles for collaboration
- provide each other with feedback on the quality of products.

Managing the publishing community through editorial meetings

In addition to standards and templates, Cannistra leads two editorial meetings each week with the line of business leads and global editorial staff.

The lines of business editorial leads meet weekly for 60 minutes to focus on how to obtain what their unit wants to accomplish. Cannistra urges using the full array of channels and strategies, emphasizing that a news article on the home page may not be appropriate. For example, introducing a new tool for employees might make a very dull lead article but there may be other ways to accomplish this purpose. This meeting is used to redirect and fine tune strategies.

At IBM, there are 2,390 people with access to publish news stories and headlines which includes editorial line of business leads, backup, those who format and publish but do not write. Some are contractors, some are fill-ins with other jobs, and sometimes content is created by hired agencies. On average, about 1,000 people write articles for the news portlet. The second weekly editorial meeting includes all these people who can officially post to W3 (although all those invited do not attend). It is used to:

- push out information from corporate headquarters, such as upcoming big themes or events
- cover calendaring and scheduling
- encourage attendees to make pitches for articles, features, changes, etc
- provide updates on the publishing tool
- feature a five-minute master class on specific topics such as creating captions, accessibility standards or writing a good headline
- promote successes, pointing out good articles or products as models.

This active community also uses IBM's connecting tools (started as a wiki) to ask questions, have discussions and solve problems. The team has a monitor to make sure that questions get answered and problems are addressed. It has also hosted W3 team days and conferences at the New York headquarters.

User-generated content

IBM has numerous tools that allow user-generated content, from replies to articles, thumbs up/down, chat, directory profiles, blogs, connections, widgets, wikis and so on. It entered the world of social media, web 2.0, early with a set of standards for content, but has since loosened up because it wants to encourage people to use the tools to collaborate and innovate. The current standards³⁰ give examples and rationale as well as the short do's and don'ts.

Professional communicator as content “curator”

In a video interview and article in Forbes³¹, Edwards comments: “We had 260,000 registered users to that product [W3] internally in 2009 and between them they created 600,000 webpages [on wiki central].” To put that in perspective, IBM.com has 4.2m pages, created over 15 years, making it one of the largest corporate websites in the world. In one year alone, IBM employees created 600,000 webpages.”

With the trend across companies of increased user-generated content, some are asking what is the role of the official professional communicator? IBM, like most companies, believes that corporate news (internal and external) is still vitally important, and that perspectives need to be published and pushed out for employees. It does see, however, an emerging roll for the corporate communicator as “curator”.

Edwards notes that there is still a need to point out what employees should be paying attention to via corporate news, but urges communicators to consider this new role as like a museum curator who chooses what to exhibit, a collection from a large number of artefacts. He notes that we are all overwhelmed with information and need trusted sources of information that identify important content.

Cannistra explains it this way: “Let’s say you want to follow a certain group in depth. For a while, employees have been able to create their own unique home pages, which are really managed or “curated content headlines”, abstracts, images, links to articles or Connections posts. You can follow people on “Connections” who are involved in the topics of interest and it dovetails with the home page. It is a lot to sort out especially if there are in-depth professional papers and research involved. We see the professional communicator’s new role as curating all this material – reading it, sorting it out, summarizing, and highlighting what is most important. The curator manages specialized/vertical/in-depth material with expertise in that speciality, the community and the people involved.”

Content curators are more like columnists who are expert in an area and become the trusted source of information for a growing following which depends on them to explain what is happening in the area. For example, a content curator might become expert in an area of research, reading all of the numerous technical articles, media coverage and internal chatter and provide ongoing summaries of what is most important to pay attention to. Access to the in-depth material would be provided by grouping links.

Curators
become a service
to help employees
manage the vast
amount
of content that comes
at them from a variety
of sources.

30 IBM Social Computing Guidelines: <http://www.ibm.com/blogs/zz/en/guidelines.html>.

31 IBM: Communication and Curation go hand in hand: www.forbes.com/sites/stevenrosenbaum/2012/04/10/ibm-communication-and-curation-go-hand-in-hand.

8

Cannistra says this does not replace news stories but focuses more on profiling people and events, leaving columnists/curators to tease out what is important in more technical areas. She foresees potential for external use as well. “Curator/columnists are somewhere between writers/reporters of an old style in-depth, fact checked official article and a writer/blogger who is more casual, full of personal opinion and does not necessarily check facts. While writing in a more personally engaging style, this curator/columnist role speaks on behalf of IBM not personally.”

For example, a communications curator is assigned to the subject matter experts who understand how Watson works but struggle to explain it in lay terms. This curator is responsible for creating the top line, veneer interpretation used in press releases. He or she also takes responsibility for organizing and simplifying complex or technical information for ease of location, and embedding consistent information externally and internally, linking to home pages, blogs, wiki posts, and collaboration spaces. Anyone interested in following Watson might subscribe to the curator’s service. Curators become a service to help employees manage the vast amount of content that comes at them from a variety of official and user-generated sources.

A

Appendix A: Managing Content survey data

We received 24 responses from organizations covering different sizes (from fewer than 100 people to more than 100,000) and sectors. This provided a useful snapshot of how organizations and intranet teams manage content.

Main conclusions

- More than half of the organizations surveyed do not have an intranet content strategy or equivalent in place.
- Organizations use a variety of ways to ensure their intranet content strategy is aligned with business strategy, including editorial meetings and training the publishing community. However there is a surprising lack of involvement from senior management.
- Publishing on the home page tends to be centralized, with the vast majority of respondents having decentralized publishing for sub-sites.
- Fewer than 10% of respondents have a truly centralized CMS.
- There are various challenges in decentralized publishing, many of which are operational – e.g. maintaining the quality of content or getting publishers to archive content.
- Some challenges can be attributed to low central resourcing to support a publishing community, or the difficulty of running a decentralized publishing model when there is high staff turnover among content owners.
- Engaging and training the publishing community mainly revolves around formal training and meetings, both in person and online.
- There is a strong reliance on standards and templates to help govern the decentralized content management process. A formalized or semi-formal system of feedback and metrics helps underpin content management activity.
- When establishing user-generated content or social tools, issues respondents feel are important include establishing governance and focusing on where social adds business value to increase adoption.

A

Results summary

Do you have a documented intranet content strategy or equivalent?

All 24 people answered the question; 46% of respondents said they did have a documented intranet content strategy or equivalent, with 54% saying no.

Please describe your three main methods for ensuring your intranet content strategy and publishing is aligned with the business strategy? (Examples could include reviewing and publishing the calendar against plans annually or quarterly; training of publisher community; and regular editorial meetings)

Respondents were able to give up to three answers in free text. 79% listed at least one way in which they ensured intranet content strategy was aligned with business strategy. These answers were analysed and grouped in categories. Each separate method described was treated as one answer. When a respondent gave two very similar answers, only one answer was counted. When a respondent gave one answer which spanned two different areas, it was treated as two separate answers.

Methods	Number of answers
Editorial meetings or planning	7
Training or interaction with publishing community	7
Support or input from senior management/senior-level steering group	6
Centralized approach or process for approving content	4
Content reviews, audits or monitoring	4
Templates, workflow and/or archiving function within CMS	4
Content strategy planning or review of plans	3
Close contact with or awareness of business	3
Editorial calendar	3
Central advisory role to help content owners	2
We have no strategy	2
Easy access to intranet for all employees	1
News published as it happens	1
VP level sponsor required for all new content areas	1
Business areas owns the content	1

A

- Intranet teams are using diverse ways to ensure their intranet content strategy is aligned with business strategy, although many answers concern governance of publishing standards.
- Surprisingly few responses involved interaction with senior management.
- The majority of responses appeared to be central actions driven and managed by the intranet team.

Please indicate which ONE of the following descriptions most closely describes your publishing model for your intranet.

Respondents could pick one of the choices below. Only one respondent chose not to answer this question. The figures below refer to the percentages of respondents who answered the question and made that particular selection.

Selection	Percentage of respondents
Largely centralized	9%
Largely decentralized, with very little central control	22%
Home page(s) and corporate sections centralized, no controls on sub-sites	17%
Home page(s) centralized, sub-sites controlled by templates and standards, but publishing decentralized	30%
Strong oversight by governance body that includes local site owners and sets policy and standards; publishers decentralized	17%
Other	4%

The responses clearly show that publishing on the home page tends to be centralized (56%) in total, but with the vast majority having decentralized publishing for sub-sites (87%).

Very few respondents have a truly centralized system (9%).

Please describe what you regard as your greatest successes and challenges relating to content management.

Respondents were able to give their answers to this question in free text; 79% answered this question. Most of the answers concentrated on the challenges rather than the successes.

A

There was a broad range of answers with common challenges being:

- Fragmentation of approach due to decentralized processes
- Difficulties of cascading global content through local markets
- Difficulties in maintaining decentralized publishing with high staff turnover
- Getting content owners to update content
- Effective archiving of content
- Training a large publishing community with a small central resource
- Quality of content.

Most of the successes were around getting elements of the decentralized system able to work, or having the necessary governance in place.

Responses include:

- The biggest challenge is not having personalization features on our intranet. Another is that our intranet is decentralized, all regions have their own news, and corporate controls global news only. Often global news is not cascaded and put into hands of local markets on their intranets.
- Individual groups have their strategy, which makes them strong, but there can be overlaps in content, gaps, etc as there is no appetite for a more centralized oversight.
- Maintaining tone of voice and writing standards for publishers (removing/altering jargon and management-speak) is a constant challenge. One success is having the correct training material, training and support readily available for publishers.
- Successes include: delivering tools that make content more accessible at the time it is needed and add value to otherwise static information. Challenges include: getting users to review and remove old content when no longer needed.

How many employees are in your publishing community?

Respondents were able to answer free text. Numbers quoted varied from five to “thousands”, and were most frequently between 200 and 700. It was very difficult to draw any firm conclusions on the size of the publishing community because of different definitions, and lack of data on company and sample size.

If any conclusion can be drawn it would appear there is a diverse variety of models around numbers in publishing communities.

Which of the following do you use to engage and manage your publishing community?

Respondents could pick one or more of the choices below; 83% of respondents answered the question.

The percentages below refer to the number of respondents who made that particular selection out of all who answered this question. In addition, a choice to enter a free text for “other” was also given.

A

Selection	Percentage of respondents
In-person conferences/meetings/seminars	75%
Distribution of standards/templates/updates	70%
In-person training	65%
Feedback (based on data on readership, comments etc)	60%
Online training	55%
Webcasts and videos (in person/online/webcast)	35%
Highlighting/rewarding/featuring successes	30%
Editorial meeting (daily/weekly)	25%
Other	5%

The only free text response to “other” referred to distributing news of changes and training by email.

The responses confirm that engaging and training the publishing community mainly revolves around formal training and meetings, both delivered in person and online. Furthermore there is a strong reliance on standards and templates in order to help govern the decentralized content management process. A formalized or semi-formal system of feedback and metrics also helps to underpin content management activity.

Do you have any advice for others on introducing user-generated content or social media tools?

Respondents were allowed to respond with free text. There were 14 replies. Common themes were:

- It was important to establish governance
- It needs to focus on business value to get adoption
- Distinguish between user-generated and corporate content
- It takes time to bed in.

Specific replies include:

- Governance and policies have to be very clear
- You need to get governance in place ahead of implementing the system
- Don't get caught up in the hype, be able to demonstrate that tangible business benefit will be achieved
- Determine how social media tools can solve specific business problems versus simply deploying them and waiting for users to adopt them
- Work through strategies and integration processes before rolling out social media applications
- Clearly define what content should be user-generated and what should be top-down instead
- Do it thoughtfully. Just because you build it, does not necessarily mean that they will come. Scrap what doesn't work and try again.
- I think it's a slow burn process.

B

Appendix B: Managing content checklist

Intranet content assessment			
	Current state	Future vision	Next year we will...
1. Intranet content strategy			
There is a documented intranet strategy that clearly defines both long- and short-term goals.			
There is an intranet content strategy that flows from intranet strategy and is used routinely in decision making by publishers.			
The intranet strategy is used by the intranet team and a cross-departmental governance group to influence decisions about new content areas.			
The content strategy guides the creation of content, communication themes, and segmentation of content.			
The intranet content strategy aligns with and supports business strategy.			
The success of content/content strategy is measured and drives decisions.			
Internal and external content strategies are aligned.			
2. Publishing model			
The publishing model aligns well with the intranet governance structure and wider organizational structure.			
Elements of the publishing model that are centralized.			
Elements of the publishing model that are decentralized.			
Roles and responsibilities for publishing are clearly defined.			
3. Managing the publishing community			
There are regular online and/or face-to-face meetings for publishers.			
Standards and templates for intranet content are easily available and provide clear guidelines.			
Online and/or face-to-face training and support are available for all publishers.			
There are regular communication updates for publishers from the intranet team.			
Good publishing and content practices are highlighted and rewarded.			

B

4. Content quality

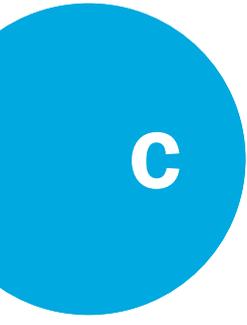
All intranet content is covered by governance standards – including writing standards – that address quality.			
Content quality is monitored, and publishers are provided with direct feedback where appropriate.			
There is a request and evaluation process for new content areas.			
Content areas are reviewed periodically against their stated purpose and value.			
A range of measurements is used to assess content effectiveness.			
News content is engaging (e.g. use of photos or video to help tell the story).			
Corporate content is written in an authentic, jargon-free style.			

5. Managing types of content

There is a balance of global and local content on the intranet home page.			
A process is in place for planning, scheduling and monitoring news content.			
Content is syndicated across channels and devices.			
The content owner, and his/her contact details, are clearly marked for all news and general content.			
There is a process for updating content owner information when people leave the organization.			
There is clear governance for user-generated content and it is not off-putting for users.			
User-generated and corporate content are clearly zoned.			

Content lifecycle

Content lifecycle is proactively managed via lifecycle policies.			
Lifecycle policies are enforced.			
There are tools to assist lifecycle policy enforcement (for example, automatic takedowns and system generated reports).			

C

Appendix C: Acknowledgements

- Kieran Cannistra, Senior Digital Strategist at IBM responsible for managing news on IBM's W3 intranet.
- Greg Nemeth, Technology Enablement Product Manager, Ernst & Young.
- Susanne Rolf, Process Leader for Knowledge and Information Sharing, IKEA.
- Kathy Nellis Chastney, Team Lead Employee Communications & CDC Connects and Theresa Roebuck, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).
- Elizabeth Marsh, Director of Research at DWG.
- Steve Bynghall, Research and Knowledge Lead at DWG.

publishing

Quality

content

news

user-generated

strategy

lifecycle

Registered offices:

United Kingdom:

Intranet Benchmarking Forum
30 City Road
London EC1Y 2AB
Tel: +44 20 7722 8726

North America:

Intranet Benchmarking Forum
230 West 41st Street 15th Floor
New York, NY 10036
Tel: +1 (866) 903 0232

info@ibforum.com www.ibforum.com



ibf Intranet
Benchmarking
Forum