

## “Simplicity must be the Mantra of the Digital Workplace”

The organisers of Intranet Now held a “Simplify your Intranet” workshop on May 12<sup>th</sup>, led by Gerry McGovern which was well attended and well tweeted at #IntranetNow.

Here’s a blog item by Gerry which he posted shortly before the workshop, and which he has given us permission to reproduce:

*Employees are reaching a breaking point. They are exhausted and overwhelmed, alienated and disengaged. They are cynical and distrustful.*

*“The elephant in offices all around the world is that people are running on empty,” Tony Schwartz wrote for The New York Times in March 2014. “If you are expected to work 60 or 70 hours a week, or to stay connected in the evenings and on the weekends, or you can’t take at least four weeks of vacation a year, or you don’t have reasonable flexibility about when and where you work, then your company can’t be a great place to work.”*

*The intranet / digital workplace could contribute in some small way to reducing employee workload. It could save time by making things easier to find and do. And yet most intranets are still an appalling mess, a time-wasting black hole. They are so far away from their potential.*

*I’ve just had a chat with Martin Edenström, who writes for a popular Swedish blog on intranets. He spoke about how he felt that a lot of employees had simply given up on the intranet.*

*Why are so many employee systems so awful? Why is enterprise search a joke in most organizations? Why is it so hard to sign up for a training course, book a meeting room, or get the most up-to-date product details?*

*Because management doesn’t care about employee time. If they can’t get their work done in 40 hours, then let them stay 50, 60, 70 hours is the thinking. We must change that thinking because it is ruinous to everyone’s long term success.*

*“The majority of corporate infrastructures, tools, budgeting, resourcing and reporting relationships are still corporate-centered -- designed to make it simpler for the company to succeed, but usually more complex for each individual,” Bill Jensen wrote for Huffington Post in March 2015.*

*“The future of simplicity is far more workforce-centered,” he continues. “In a knowledge and service economy, this approach to simplicity is the ultimate competitive advantage. We have the tools. We have the knowhow. What’s missing is the leadership will and commitment that simplicity for each individual is crucial to organizational success.”*

*The public Web, according to Jensen, is shining a big, glaring torchlight on internal systems. “The standard against which the workforce will evaluate all corporate IT and work process experiences is each individual’s phone,” he states. “And the standard against which the workforce will evaluate company culture, managers and leadership is each individual’s tribe, community.”*

*If you work with an intranet you must make simplicity your number one priority. Without simplicity the digital workplace is a digital quagmire, a digital dump, a digital propaganda rag.*

*Over the years I have asked many employees what their definition of a perfect intranet was. By far the best definition was this: “A perfect intranet is a survivor’s guide to a shitty week.”*

*Employees are not looking for miracles. They just want to find stuff quickly. They want to be able to trust that what they find is accurate and up-to-date. They want to be able to do stuff as quickly and easily as possible.*