

## Intranets

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### The Confucian Approach to Intranet Development

*A proposal for software version numbering applied to intranets*

For some time now I have been a strong advocate of developing an intranet strategy, but some projects I have been undertaking over the last few months, plus a couple of meetings with James Robertson, the MD of Step Two Designs (<http://www.steptwo.com.au/>) in Sydney, have focused my attention on how to identify and manage short-term developments for an intranet. Although the lack of intranet consultants is good news for my bank manager it also means that there is little opportunity for peer review. I met up with James in Sydney in August and we spent some time talking about how to get strategy implemented, and then when we met up again in London in October, we found that we had independently found two complementary approaches to the problem.

James has worked up a methodology (which is not yet on his website) about defining and implementing manageable steps over a six-month period to show visible enhancements to the intranet to both users and sponsors. With my clients I have started to adopt what I have termed a dot.intranet approach, which comes from the software world. Software versions are usually designated by a number sequence such as 2.7. A minor bug fix may lift that to 2.7.1 but a significant enhancement will be designated 2.8.

This is the approach I am now trying out with some of my clients. The first step is to decide what the current state of the intranet is, and then decide if it is a 1.x, 2.x or 3.x. The Intranet Review Toolkit ([www.intranetreviewtoolkit.com](http://www.intranetreviewtoolkit.com)) can also help here. The second step is to map out what some of the major steps are likely to be over the next year or so, and this is tied in to the intranet strategy. So for an intranet at 2.5 the sequence might be:

- |             |   |
|-------------|---|
| Version 3.0 | Support blogs and wikis through the intranet platform |
| Version 4.0 | Upgrade the intranet search capability                |

Version 5.0      Integrate the intranet into the HR portal to provide employee self-service

The third step is to start to fill in the steps towards these major objectives, but not all the steps might be focused on a particular objective. For example:

Version 2.6      Enhance the content on the HR section of the intranet

Version 2.7      Upgrade the staff directory

Version 2.8      Add in an RSS news feed

Version 2.9.1    Allow a small number of people to start to use blog software

Version 2.9.2    Install and test wiki capability

For each version there should be a short project plan that does all the usual things about setting out the work required, who will undertake it, and how the quality assurance will be managed. The version itself is highlighted on the intranet, so that these incremental steps are visible to users. A list of these, together with the dates they went live, then shows everyone that there is substantial progress being made, even if the features associated with each version are not applicable to all staff. In a large intranet this will often be the case. The journey of a thousand miles starts with a single step.

This approach also enables a sensible discussion to be held about just what the priorities are, and the smaller steps that need to be undertaken successfully for a major release to be achieved. Intranet managers also have a means of discussing with their managers the progress they have made on the intranet, and the plans that they have for the ensuing period.

At the moment I'm still evaluating this approach, and I would be interested in comments from UKeiG members. This approach does not mean that there is no need for an intranet strategy, but I am finding (and so is James) that a shorter mission statement is perhaps equally effective and easier to gain approval for. If you want to read the approach that James is taking to these issues, then do read his paper "Creating an Intranet Concept" at [http://www.steptwo.com.au/papers/kmc\\_intranetconcept/index.html](http://www.steptwo.com.au/papers/kmc_intranetconcept/index.html). We are working on integrating our two approaches so watch this space!