

## Intranets

### Supporting collaboration with social networking software

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*An end-of-the-year miscellany*

By the time you read this I will be somewhere on a trip that takes in giving a keynote speech to an intranet conference in Melbourne, working with James Robertson (Step Two Designs) on some intranet workshops he is running in Sydney, and then giving two workshops on search usability for the Nielsen Norman Group in Caesar's Hotel, Las Vegas. So for the first time in around 15 years, I will not be at Online Information.

### Intranet Innovation awards

This year James Robertson has launched his Intranet Innovation awards. These Intranet Innovation Awards celebrate new ideas and innovative approaches to the enhancement and delivery of intranets. Uniquely, these awards recognise individual intranet improvements and not intranets as a whole, as do the Nielsen Norman listing of top intranets. Global in nature, the Intranet Innovation Awards have uncovered many innovative ideas. Fiat, this year's platinum winner, has used their 'Avanti e Veloci' Web portal to help turn around the fortunes of their entire business.

The Gold Award has gone to the UK, in the shape of the Environment Agency, which has developed a rich set of personas to support the delivery of better intranet content and functionality. Other Gold Award winners are the City of Casey (Australia), Perkins Eastman (USA), Nycomed (Switzerland / Denmark), SunGard AvantGard (USA / New Zealand) and QBE (Australia). For full details of the innovations that these and other winners have had the vision to develop and implement, see [http://www.steptwo.com.au/papers/kmc\\_iaa2007/index.html](http://www.steptwo.com.au/papers/kmc_iaa2007/index.html) .

### Global Intranet Practices and Trends Report

In 2006, Jane McConnell (JMC/NetStrategies [www.netjmc.com](http://www.netjmc.com)) launched the Global Intranet Practices and Trends Report, based on a survey of over 100 organisations, mostly operating internationally. This year, Jane has repeated the survey with a revised questionnaire, and the 2007 report is based on over 170 organisations. There will be two reports available by the end of 2007, a top-level trends report and a very detailed analysis report. The synopsis of the report can be accessed at <http://www.netjmc.com/eng/doc001.html>. The value of this survey is already evident in the changes that have taken place since the 2006 survey, and with each year the survey will gain immeasurably in value. Of particular interest this year are the analyses of the already marked extent to which Web 2.0 applications are being integrated into intranets. Contents pages for the report and prices can be found at <http://www.netjmc.com/eng/survey01.html>.

### Making collaboration work

Many organisations, or rather the senior executives in these organisations, remain sceptical of the value of encouraging collaboration between employees. I have already referred in

these columns to an excellent background report by Deloitte entitled Connecting People to What Matters [http://www.deloitte.com/dtt/section\\_node/0,1042,sid%253D90058,00.html](http://www.deloitte.com/dtt/section_node/0,1042,sid%253D90058,00.html). In the November 2007 issue of the *Harvard Business Review* there is a very readable and practical article by Lynda Gratton and Tamara J. Erickson, entitled "8 Ways to Build Collaborative Teams", which is based on a substantial amount of research carried out by the authors. The way that the BBC encourages collaboration is singled out for praise in this paper, which you could usefully circulate around your organisation, subject as always to the requirements of copyright legislation.

### **The search industry in 2007/2008**

I was asked by *Library and Information Update* to comment on the search industry for the December 2007 issue and this is an edited/revised version of my contribution.

Overall 2008 has not been a good year for the search industry. The global industry is less than \$1bn by value, and once you exclude Google, Autonomy, FASTSearch and Endeca, there are over 50 companies generating less than half the total market revenue. To put this in perspective, the revenues of Cognos, the leader in business intelligence applications, is around \$1.2bn.

The search functionality in the relaunched Microsoft SharePoint Server 2007 product has led to Coveo leaving the SharePoint search enhancement business, and Mondosoft being acquired by Surfray, another Danish company. Although the search functionality is much improved, making it work well requires substantial commitment, as a glance at <http://sharepointsearch.com/default.aspx> will reveal. Keep a look out for *Inside the Index and Search Engines of Microsoft Office SharePoint Server* by Patrick Tisseghem and Lars Fastrup, which is due out in early 2008 from Microsoft Press. <http://www.microsoft.com/mspress/books/12195.aspx>

FASTSearch has had to restate its earnings, and this has led to some downsizing, at a time when Autonomy has been acquiring a number of companies to reduce its dependence on 'pure' search. Google remains on the prowl, and the latest release of its Enterprise Search Appliance indicates that the company is still heavily committed to the enterprise sector.

However, looking forward to 2008 and beyond, the prospects for the industry (and thus the range of options for users) remain good. The commitment of Microsoft and Google will raise the importance of search for intranets and other enterprise applications, and there are many innovative search products emerging, for example Groxis ([www.groxis.com](http://www.groxis.com)) and Quam ([www.quam.info](http://www.quam.info)) are starting to make headway in the federated search business. As well as federated search, expect developments in entity extraction, text/data mining, guided navigation, visualization and natural language query management in 2008, and closer links between the search and business intelligence companies.

### **UKeiG intranet forums**

With great regret I have only been to one of these, and that was because I was speaking. However, can I end by congratulating Helen Davis for her work in getting these started. I have heard very good reports about them, and any intranet manager will gain much from coming along and networking. Thanks to this UKeiG initiative, intranet managers need no longer be the loneliest of positions. My New Year Resolution is to attend all of them in 2008! See you there?