

Meeting Report: Intranets Forum: How to sell your intranet

London, Thursday 13th December 2007

On a crisp and icy cold December day, the last 2007 UKeiG Intranets Forum came together in the warm and welcoming media suite of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Facilitator Shaida Dorabjee introduced us to our host Andrew Davidson, Intranet Senior Editor for the FCO, and Susan Hinchliffe, to share their intranet expertise with us.

FCONet

One of the main aims of “FCONet”, as the Foreign and Commonwealth intranet is named, is to reach out to and engage a hugely varied audience of over 16,000 users both in the UK and at embassies, high commissions and consulates around the world. These include diplomatic staff and their partners, as well as locally engaged staff overseas. Andrew Davidson shared with us some of the methods the FCONet team has developed to measure and quantify success of its intranet. The team has used a strategy defined more as “engagement” than marketing, with four main strands: Strategy, Governance, Direction and Content.

The team has created and defined a governance strategy for FCONet and founded a series of stakeholder networks for consultation and outreach. Team members also provide face-to-face training for devolved publishers, as well as learning materials.

The team seeks to actively use other communication channels such as staff magazines, specialist newsletters and e-bulletins, and also to capitalise upon information about upgrades and improvements to raise the user’s awareness of services. They consciously and actively incorporate Web 2.0 features, such as discussion forums, weblogs and other best practice into FCONet, and they use regular surveys to determine if they are meeting their objectives and delivering customer satisfaction.

These techniques help to measure the success of FCONet’s objectives and to fully understand levels of customer satisfaction, and to respond to them, making FCONet a truly user-focussed intranet.

Transnet

Our next speaker, Susan Hinchsliffe, demonstrated aspects of the DFT intranet, which serves 1,700 users, and which is accessible to the government agencies of the Maritime and Coastguard Agency, the Vehicle Certification Agency, the Vehicle and Operator Services Agency, the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency and the Highways Agency.

The emphasis and main purpose of this intranet, "Transnet", is to share factual information. There is a policy of leading people into the intranet using various methods such as a short e-mail pointing to specific items and messages on the intranet, campaign branding and the electronic news service delivered through LCD screens around the HDQ buildings.

This intranet is delivered using Webstructure, which has the ability to custom create short and pertinent URLs, so that a link to a raffle would clearly indicate its purpose, for example <http://transnet/raffle>. The success of Transnet is partially due to realisation by senior staff of the speed and value of this organisation-wide communication channel.

If you would like to find out more Andrew's and Susan's presentations have been mounted on our Intranets Forum discussion list, which you can join at <http://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/lists/UKEIG-INTRANETS-FORUM.html>.

Many thanks to Helen Davies for all her hard work in creating the ongoing success of the Intranets Forum and welcome to Janet Corcoran (Web Content and Resources Officer, Imperial College London) now taking on the coordinator's mantle. The next meeting will be on Tuesday 5th February; further details of subject and venue have already been disseminated. To be added to the mailing list please contact Janet at j.m.corcoran@imperial.ac.uk.

Discussion Topics And Outcomes

1 How have you found out about your audience, and how has this helped you to engage them?

- Visits. Find out how staff work and how they access information.
- Target individuals
- Meetings with key people

- Meetings with new joiners
- Assumptions are sometimes necessary but can be risky. Don't assume you know what staff want.
- Social networking. Find out how people communicate, and what topics are covered, including other methods of online networking they use.
- Communication audits, surveys and consultations.
- Comments: Easier with small organisations or one site.

2 How have you marketed your intranet site?

- Making the intranet business critical. Making it the only place where you can perform certain tasks (e.g. booking catering, visitors, accommodation).
- Opening of intranet page on log in, or when opening Internet Explorer.
- Hold a competition to name the intranet.
- Branding on mouse mats, etc.
- Include in induction information.
- Target new staff.
- Part of induction course.
- Statistics. Publish them to show staff what pages are popular. Good statistics could inform contributors of the success of their pages, but also prompt those whose hits were low to seek advice from the intranet team on how to improve their page and profile.
- Reports informing users on what to do and what not to do.
- E-mails with links to intranet pages, especially for new staff.
- Auto-signature with link to the intranet page.
- Wikis. Focused on the organisation's subjects of expertise.
- Interaction with others, e.g. integrate with other internal communications tools.

3 How have you measured the effectiveness of your marketing?

- Use site usage statistics. Only measures quantitatively and only measures visits to pages, so has limitations but still useful.

- Ad hoc feedback from users (may tend to be negative).
- User surveys. If undertaken annually, these will be able to demonstrate trends through benchmarking. Qualitative comments can be captured, as well as quantitative data. They could also benchmark against other intranet sites.
- Set targets and review, in order to demonstrate value of the intranet, e.g. reduction of e-mail attachments.
- Face-to-face interviews, particularly with new staff (who often have ideas/opinions based on their previous job/intranet).

Ruth Hilbourne, Peter Brett Associates