

## Intranets

Martin White, Intranet Focus Ltd ([martin.white@intranetfocus.com](mailto:martin.white@intranetfocus.com))

### Things to read in 2009

I thought I'd start the year with three publications you should consider reading.

#### Global intranet trends survey 2009

Jane McConnell, NetStrategy/JMC (<http://netjmc.com>) £570

Over the last three years Jane McConnell has transformed our understanding of how intranets are developed and managed. It is an indication of the value placed in the survey that the number of respondents has increased each year; it now stands at nearly 230 organisations from around the world. This year the 113-page report is much easier to use, with generally very clear diagrams and an even more insightful commentary on the results. With any survey that is repeated each year, the analysis of the current year becomes even more interesting when contrasted with the outcomes of previous years.

The data from her surveys have become the benchmark against which any intranet manager can and should assess where they stand on the path to the maturity of Stage 3 intranets (in the terminology of the report) in which the intranet is 'the way of working'. This terminology has changed from the 'Class' approach used in previous reports, and works well.

The report strikes a very useful balance between maintaining questions that have been asked in the previous two reports, expanding on some sections (notably search and social media) and also adding on a special report on SharePoint deployment and adoption. The overall result is a further significant increase in value to the stage where the reader finds it difficult to believe it is the work of a single consultant who is engaged on other projects. Any intranet manager will find this report of benefit, whether to build a business case, to support the development of an intranet strategy or to gain ideas about approached to intranet management. Inevitably, the report is biased towards companies with more than 5000 employees, but someone managing an intranet for 100 people will also be inspired by what is possible to achieve, even with the picture of horrendously limited resources that comes across from the analysis. Only 14% said that their management saw the intranet as business-critical. By the end of 2009 I expect that to increase significantly!

This report is essential reading for any intranet manager with a reasonably large intranet, especially when asked to write a business plan for, or just to justify the existence of, the intranet.

#### Intranet design annual 2009

Nielsen Norman Group ([www.nngroup.com](http://www.nngroup.com)) \$224

Jane provides the trends and Jakob Nielsen provides the detail. He and his colleagues, notable Kara Pernice, have published the Intranet Design Annual every year since 2001. Again as with the report from Jane McConnell, the interest lies in both the current volume

and the trends over the last few years. The report does not set out to present The Ten Best Intranets, even though this is how many refer to it. Organisations are invited to present their intranets for evaluation, and from these the team select the ten best.

This year the intranets on display come from:

- Altran, a large engineering and innovation consultancy (France)
- Advanced Micro Devices (AMD), a developer of computer and graphics processors (USA)
- BASF SE, the world's leading chemical manufacturing company (Germany)
- COWI Group A/S, a consulting group focusing on engineering, environmental science, and economics (Denmark)
- Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu (DTT), a global professional services network providing audit, tax, consulting, and financial advisory services (Global)
- Environmental Resource Management (ERM), one of the world's leading providers of environmental consulting services (Global)
- HSBC Bank Brazil (Brazil)
- Kaupthing Bank (Iceland)
- L.L. Bean, a vendor of apparel and outdoor equipment (USA)
- McKesson Corporation, a large provider of pharmaceuticals, medical supplies, and health care information technologies (USA)

This year saw substantial increases in the use among top intranets of social networking and collaboration support features. The most prevalent among the social networking elements added to this year's intranets were the Facebook-like features offered in the employee directories to enrich employee profiles. One intranet offered an "In Common With You" section, to highlight common interests when a user views a colleague's profile. Another organization allows employees to add personal videos to the corporate TV network as something of an enterprise YouTube. The number and type of blogs also increased this year over previous years, and now include not only CEO and leadership blogs, but also employee blogs.

Collaboration spaces also increased. As well as wikis and document and task handling, several of the winning intranets added spaces in which employees can broadcast requests for help or input from colleagues, marking them as "urgent" when necessary and "solved" once the issue has been addressed.

The level of detail in each case study is excellent, and there are good summaries of the main lessons that emerge both from the winners and from the intranet runners-up. At \$224, this report works out at around 50 cents per page, which is good value for money. Like the Intranet Innovation Awards report from Step Two Design (<http://www.steptwo.com.au/products/iia2008>), reading about how other intranet managers address the challenges of supporting highly-dynamic information-rich businesses can be of value no matter what size or shape your own intranet is.

## Seamless teamwork

Michael Sampson, Microsoft Press

(<http://www.microsoft.com/learning/en/us/books/12460.aspx>) \$24.99

Michael Sampson is an independent consultant, based in Christchurch, New Zealand, who specialises in developing ways in which employees can work together more effectively. Do have a look at his Website at [www.michaelsampson.net](http://www.michaelsampson.net). Michael is a very effective communicator, and on the evidence of this book also a very good writer. Although I have a number of books from Microsoft Press on my bookshelf I find many of them very difficult to read, having been authored by people with outstanding skills in the products they are writing about but with little understanding of how to engage an audience.

Michael's book is subtitled "Using Microsoft SharePoint Technologies to Collaborate, Innovate and Drive Business in New Ways". One of the key drivers for using SharePoint Office Server 2007 (unofficially referred to as MOSS07) is the need to support team working. MOSS07 excels at being able to provide team-based solutions for document management, and the business case is made well by this book, in which Michael takes a narrative approach to teaching. The book is really one large invented case study, and the approach works very well indeed, especially as the focus is on how smaller organisations can benefit from MOSS07 for collaboration applications.

There are some significant technical challenges to implementing MOSS07, and Michael has written about these in other reports

(<http://resources.michaelsampson.net/2008/02/sp7p.html>). Obviously the problems are not going to be presented in a book on MOSS07 published by Microsoft Press, but that is not an issue. If you set up MOSS07 correctly and understand what it can do, then the positive impact on your organisation will be substantial. The book assumes very little prior knowledge of the product, and is written for readers who are comfortable exploring new Web technologies but who have only a limited interest in actually what is going on underneath the bonnet.

If you are planning to implement MOSS07 this year (or even have already done so) then this book will give you invaluable insights into how to make effective use of the collaboration functionality of the application.