

## Intranets

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A couple of reviews to start off this column. They are both of reasonably expensive reports, so I hope that my reviews help you make up your mind about whether to write up the business case to purchase them in these zero-budget days.

First up is a report from the Nielsen Norman Group entitled “Enterprise 2.0: Social software on intranets” (<http://www.nngroup.com/reports/intranet/social>). The cost for the download is \$298. The authors are Patty Aya and Jakob Nielsen himself. Here at last is a sensible, practical report on the ways in which Enterprise 2.0 tools can be used within intranets to provide a significant amount of added value for users. I have seen so many reports on Enterprise 2.0 that are based on either the statistical analysis of an unrepresentative survey or consist of bland platitudes about Enterprise 2.0. The Nielsen Norman Group are renowned for reports on usability, but this report is rather different. It is based on fourteen case studies from six countries, including BT and IBM. However these case studies do not appear as individual profiles but provide the basis for 172 pages of analysis, synthesis and wisdom.

A main finding from the research is that most companies are not very far along in a wholesale adoption of Web 2.0 technologies—unless “thinking about social software” is considered progress. Many potential interviewees wanted to be called back next year! But for organizations that have taken the plunge, a few things are already clear. Social software is not a trend that can be ignored. It’s making a fundamental change in how people expect to communicate, both with each other and the companies they do business with.

The report covers the entire gamut of applications, under the main chapter headings of Practical Considerations, Users and Use, Technology and Tools, and Lessons Learned. That underrates the Introduction, which is probably the best I have read yet on the value of Enterprise 2.0 for intranets and intranet managers. There are a number of screen shots, perhaps not as many as I might have liked. It would have been good to have had a summary of how each of the companies have adopted Enterprise 2.0, even though there are quotable quotes throughout the report. I also feel that a report that runs to around 80,000 words needs more sections and an index.

I started reading this report on a train in London and finished it just as I got to Paris. It was an ideal travel companion, full of ideas, opinions and collated wisdom. Without doubt the best report yet on Enterprise 2.0, and probably for some time to come. Very good value for money.

I wish I could be as enthusiastic about Intranet Strategy and Governance by Audrey Scarff <http://www.ikmagazine.com/bookshop.asp>. Judging from the number of requests I receive for my intranet strategy framework document there is a growing realization that intranets cannot drift along in a sea of apathy but need to be the subject of a business strategy, something that would be seen as essential for most other applications in an organisation. The report has two sections. The first section comprises five chapters, entitled Getting Started, The Main Components of an Intranet Strategy, The Living Strategy, The Intranet – a Critical Business Tool and finally Governance and Metrics. The second section has case studies from BT, McDonald's, JetStar, British-American Tobacco, Churchill Capital, the Cancer Council of New South Wales and IBM, as well as some short Expert Opinions.

The author clearly has a good understanding of the complexities of intranet strategy and management. The advice is sound, and there are some very good diagrams to illustrate the points that are being made. I especially liked the section about the twelve steps to getting started on a strategy. There is a selection of references at the end of each chapter, but how the author can write about benchmarking and not refer to the Intranet Review Toolkit developed by James Robertson I find surprising, and that makes me wonder how much effort went into what could be a very good resource.

It is a great pity that the Ark Group have taken so little care over the production of the report, which is in two-column report style with lots of bullet points. The report desperately needs the skills of a good sub-editor and the lack of linkage between the two sections significantly reduces the value of the case studies. The index is truly and deeply a total disaster for a report that retails at £245. And the price is the problem. The people who really need this report are unlikely to persuade their company to pay this much.

There has been a very interesting thread on the Linked-In Intranet Professionals site recently about out-of-the-box "instant intranet" products. The list that has been contributed by members of the forum is quite extensive, and I've summarised it here, since looking through all the comments on Linked-In is not easy. Some of these are more out-of-the-box than others!

Activedition	<a href="http://www.activedition.com">http://www.activedition.com</a>
Adenin	<a href="http://www.adenin.com/">http://www.adenin.com/</a>
Easysite	<a href="http://www.eibs.co.uk">http://www.eibs.co.uk</a>
Interact	<a href="http://www.interact-intranet.co.uk/">http://www.interact-intranet.co.uk/</a>
Intranet Dashboard	<a href="http://www.intranetdashboard.com">http://www.intranetdashboard.com</a>
Introupe	<a href="http://introupe.anbsoftware.co.uk/">http://introupe.anbsoftware.co.uk/</a>

Neborhood	<a href="http://www.neborhood.com/">http://www.neborhood.com/</a>
OrchidSoft	<a href="http://www.orchidsoft.com">http://www.orchidsoft.com</a>
Prismacube	<a href="http://www.prismacube.com/">http://www.prismacube.com/</a>
Socialtext	<a href="http://www.socialtext.com/">http://www.socialtext.com/</a>
Sorce	<a href="http://www.sorce.biz/">http://www.sorce.biz/</a>
Vialet	<a href="http://www.vialect.com/">http://www.vialect.com/</a>

It's also important not to forget about using SharePoint! If I've missed any that you are using do please let me know at [martin.white@intranetfocus.com](mailto:martin.white@intranetfocus.com).