SharePoint in Action

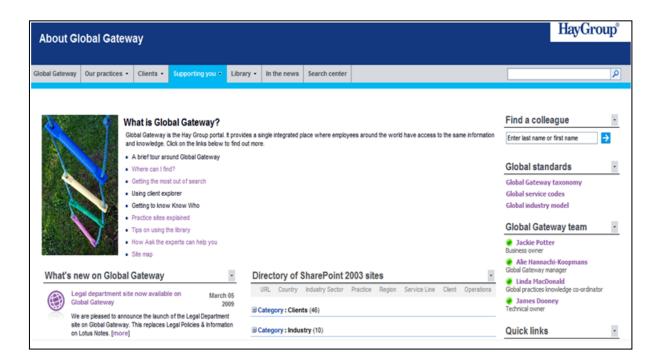## A Report from the UKeiG Intranets Forum (21 July 2009)

The Intranets Forum's latest event took place at the City Business Library. We were able to use a lovely room and the staff had laid it out in such a way that the meeting was informal and not too crowded. They also kindly provided us with some refreshments, which were very welcome. The theme was SharePoint, and we were treated to two very interesting and informative presentations.

Our first speaker, Linda MacDonald, demonstrated Hay Group's portal, Global Gateway, using a series of slides. Global Gateway is a SharePoint (MOSS) 2007 portal accessed by over 2,000 staff in 86 offices across 49 countries. It provides a single integrated location where employees around the world have access to the same information and knowledge, sometimes in their own language.

It has a number of elements including:

- A directory of employees, called KnowWho
- Tools, methodologies, proposals, case studies, news, etc.
- Client information
- Legal information, Knowledge Center, information exchange (Ask the experts)
- Marketing and brand information
- Reference library

The portal was created instead of an intranet. It is a managed portal with conventions on style that must be followed. All content goes through gatekeepers, who assign metadata from a taxonomy. This taxonomy took nine months to develop, and is key to the search functionality. There are over 3,000 documents so search is extremely important. The interface has been heavily customised, which has resulted in the clean, crisp and cheerful look you can see in this screenshot.

The most popular section of Global Gateway is the 'Ask the experts' facility. Here, queries are channelled to the correct "Expert" and all replies are collected in a knowledge base.

In the future, Hay Group plan to move to greater collaboration. This means that features like 'My site' and 'Alerts' need to be developed. Again, the taxonomy will be key.

Finally Linda discussed the challenges faced. Primarily, there has been a lack of support from higher management caused by the fact that there is no high level sponsor. Privacy and data protection are other issues.

Our second speaker, Janet White, shared her experiences of a 'mini-project' to move the Metropolitan Police Service's on-line discussion forums (Special Interest Groups) to SharePoint. This project presented some challenges with respect to the permissions needed for 'members-only' groups. The aim of the project was to move away from the use of Outlook folders to a better and more manageable platform for information sharing and best practice advice. This should also improve the management of electronic information and encourage discussions.

In contrast to Hay Group's portal, the Met's SharePoint system runs alongside its intranet. The Met's Special Interest Groups (SIGs) cover a wide range of topics. There are about 80 SIGs, all of which have a SIG Manager. Janet, who is in the Met's e-Communications Team

(which manages the Intranet), has been receiving technical support from the SharePoint Team.

The migration process was a matter of trial and error, especially where permissions were concerned. There were particular problems in that the default permissions setting in SharePoint allows all users access to the Discussion Boards. Janet demonstrated the creation of a Sharepoint Discussion Board and explained how the permissions could be changed to restrict access, where necessary.

Sharepoint offers many different options for meeting your business requirements and the best approach is to try these out and select those that work for you.

Janet summed up by discussing some lessons learned i.e. the need to:

- communicate a clear business/user requirement to the technical support team
- understand how these requirements can be met by Sharepoint
- manage management expectations
- identify risks, especially financial commitment to the project

Both presentations were well received and are available on the files area of the Intranets Forum mailing list https://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/cgi-bin/webadmin?A0=ukeig-intranets-forum.

My thanks go to the staff of the City of London Business Library, Linda MacDonald and Janet White, our speakers, and Marja Kingma for taking notes.

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