# Intranets

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## When did intranets begin?

At an intranet conference in Zurich in November there was a discussion about who invented the word 'intranet', and when. In a presentation I was giving I had suggested that 2009 marked 20 years of intranets, as 1989 was the year that Lotus Notes was launched. The word 'intranet' was certainly in common use in mid-1994 when Netscape was set up by Jim Clark (Sun Microsystems) and Marc Andriessen, who was on the team that had developed the Mosaic browser at the National Center for Supercomputing Applications (NCSA). This was developed into the Netscape browser, and launched as a software package (which was later named SuiteSpot) for what were termed intranet applications. Netscape also commercialised the LDAP protocol, which had been developed at the University of Michigan, the home of NCSA. Netscape revenues in 1995 were around $300m from intranet licences alone, and this started to worry Microsoft, who then rushed out Internet Explorer 1.0, which ironically was also based on the work that NCSA had done on the original Mosaic browser.

Although Internet Explorer 1.0 integrated with Windows 95, few customers used it, preferring instead to use Netscape. IE 2.0 was Microsoft's first cross-platform browser, available to both Macintosh and 32-bit Windows users, and then in the summer of 1996, Microsoft released version 3.0, which triggered a mass exodus from Netscape's browser to Internet Explorer, primarily because Netscape charged around $50 for its Web browser, while Microsoft gave Internet Explorer away for free. And the rest, as they say, is history.

## Where will intranets go?

Time for some crystal ball gazing. This is the year that Smartbook PCs are going to arrive, and Google have just launched their challenge to the Apple iPhone. Add in 4G mobile technology giving enhanced mobile cellular access, and without doubt 2010 is going to be the year that users expect to have high-speed wireless access to their intranet. Several search vendors, notably Autonomy and ISYS-Search, are providing search applications that cope with some of the challenges of mobile handset access, and of course cloud computing (exemplified by Google Apps) is shaping up to be a major new technology. All of this says to me that if you do not have a mobile access strategy for your intranet, and your competitors do, then their staff are going to have a significant advantage.

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2010 is also going to be the year when Microsoft release, and heavily promote, SharePoint 2010. If you think your IT department was aggressive in deploying SharePoint 2007 then you have seen nothing yet! There are some good reasons to move to SharePoint 2010 in 2011, and they all need a lot of preparation work in 2010. There are also some bad reasons to move, like hoping that the mess you are in with 2007 will be sorted by moving to 2010. It will just get worse. Remember that SP2010 is more a new product than a seamless upgrade, and plan for things to get worse before they get better.

Next up I see a lot of effort going in to expertise connectivity, as organisations continue to keep staff numbers to a minimum. Note that I did not say that there would be a lot of expertise directory effort. There are many other ways to support knowledge exchange, for example if you take a look at https://www.research.ibm.com/journal/abstracts/rd/536/chenthamarakshan.html, a very interesting paper entitled "Leveraging social networks for corporate staffing and expert recommendation". It will cost you $10 to download, but is well worth the investment.

And finally there will be a high level of interest in providing better search for intranets, as the rate of addition of content and changes in business requirements outstrip the redevelopment of the information architecture. Now you may think that I am biased, given my professional interest in enterprise search, so have a look at http://www.cmswatch.com/About/Press/201001-Search-Specialized/ and also http://www.cmswatch.com/Trends/1764-Searching-Terrorists, both from CMS Watch, which has a good reputation for being right. So also have a look at http://www.cmswatch.com/Trends/1760-2010-Technology-Predictions for more predictions to start your year.

## Where will you go to see intranets?

There is always the UKeiG Intranet Forum, which is free to members, and Janet Cochrane is always looking for speakers and venues. Arguably the best intranet conference of the year is the IntraTeam conference in Copenhagen on 2-4 March (http://www.intrateam.com/Default.aspx?ID=3905). There are many cheap flights to Copenhagen and the conference is well worth coming to. All the sessions are in English. For a list of all the intranet conferences in 2010 go to http://www.intranetfocus.com/blog/entry.php?entry=74.

Enough twittering, which is an excuse to say that I have joined the Twitter crowd at #intranetfocus.