Intranets

Martin White, Intranet Focus Ltd (martin.white@intranetfocus.com)

A month in the life of an intranet consultant

Monday 1 March

I arrive in Copenhagen, the venue for the IntraTeam Event. (www.intrateam.com) Three days of workshops and presentations on intranets, and always some excellent networking opportunities. Late in the evening I find that one of the workshop presenters has not been able to come, and so my workshop on collaboration on Tuesday has grown from 25 to over 60. I spend much of the night revising the slides and indeed the overall approach.

Tuesday 2 March

Lots of police around the hotel. Tragically it turns out that a Norwegian stewardess has been brutally murdered in the hotel overnight. Many delegates are being interviewed. My workshop in the afternoon goes well but is more of a lecture than I would like it to be. One of the outcomes is a list of success factors for collaboration

- Support from T-shaped managers, who have department 'depth' but also a breadth of experience and reputation across the organisation
- The goal must be well defined, and measurable
- The goal must be one that people feel passionately about
- There has to be a common commitment
- Members of the team must trust the others
- Good collaboration starts with good information
- Recognise that collaboration is a skill
- The technology is fit for purpose

The concept of the T-shaped manager comes from *Collaboration* by Morten Hansen (Harvard Business School Press), which is probably one of the best books yet written on the subject. T-shaped managers have a depth of knowledge their own department but are also very aware

of what is going on in other departments and work on establishing good networks that their staff can then capitalise on.

Wednesday/Thursday 3/4 March

The conference opens with a stunning presentation by Jane McConnell (www.netjmc.net) about what makes a good intranet, and what the future holds for intranets. This theme of futurology is taken up by James Robertson (Step Two Designs) looking at 2015 and a paper from me on intranets in 2012. Many other excellent papers, and overall a very good conference. So consider attending next year. The only problem with attending conferences is that business has to go on, and so some late nights are required to respond to clients and prospects.

Saturday 6 March – Monday 8 March

Working over the weekend! I'm on my way to a Royal Society of Chemistry Editorial Board Conference in Brussels. A weekend of workshops, including one on social media. There are many specialised social media applications for chemists. However most of those attending (members of the Editorial Boards of RSC journals) are professors, and it was interesting to see how few used any form of social media. They already have well established networks, and use email to stay in contact.

Tuesday 9 March – Wednesday 10 March

Off to Paris with James Robertson. We are taking part in a NetStrategyJMC Breakfast Meeting, which starts at 9 and ends at 12.30. Some breakfast! Around 40 major French companies are present to hear an excellent keynote from Florence Devouard, President of the Wikipedia Foundation http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Florence_Devouard. Her subject was effective collaboration, and made the point that connections and conversations are just as important as the act of collaboration itself. James Robertson spoke about the Intranet Innovation Awards. Entries are now open for the 2010 awards, and you can find details at http://www.steptwo.com.au/iia.

Thursday 11 March

Back in London, and hosting a lunch for a group of intranet consultants, including James Robertson. A very lively discussion about how to undertake intranet assignments, and also about whether intranet maturity roadmaps have any value. No clear viewpoint emerged on that topic.

Monday 15 March – Thursday 18 March

I am very proud to be a Visiting Professor at the Department of Information Studies at the University of Sheffield, and this is a week in which I work with students in the first two years of undergraduate studies in information management, and also lecture to students on the MSc courses. This is always highly enjoyable, and I get questions that my clients would not ask. That makes me think carefully about some of the views I have on intranets and intranet technology. It is quite a challenge talking to undergraduates about intranets because most of them will only have seen the University intranet, about which my lips are sealed.

Monday 22 March – Friday 26 March

A mixture of writing some more chapters of The Intranet Governance Handbook, which is due to be published by Facet Publishing in the Autumn, and continuing to work on a project developing a 2010-2015 intranet strategy for a major European company in the high-technology business.

Monday 29 March

I tend to think that most companies will by now have some form of intranet. However today I had a meeting with a UK company with offices in around 70 countries which has managed to survive the recession well without an intranet. However various business problems are now arising which could be largely solved by installing an intranet. This is probably going to be my first 'Build an Intranet' project in ten years of consulting.

Tuesday 30 March

Time to write my *Elucidate* column, and to review a paper submitted to the International Journal of Information Management on information governance. The concept of information governance is slowly developing, and I suspect that it will become more visible in the course of this year as companies begin to realise that they have information management problems, but using the term information governance links into compliance and regulatory requirements which could help to put in place some much needed internal policies on how best to manage information. Keep a track of this discussion in the months ahead. It could offer new opportunities to for UKeiG members to make a significant contribution to their organisations.