



## Developing an Intranet that works for your organization

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### Key Learning Points

- ❑ Most Intranets start out as informal, “grassroots” projects, but an Intranet that is truly useful for your organization must have the same kind of careful planning and design as your publicly available Web site.
- ❑ People often have a hard time visualizing what an Intranet can do and how it can benefit your organization. Expect to spend some time educating people about these issues.
- ❑ The focus of your Intranet should always be on improving communication and the exchange of information within your organization. The technology you use to accomplish this is secondary.
- ❑ “Relationship building” is far more important than web design or development in the early stages of your Intranet project.
- ❑ Costs can be highly variable, depending on what hardware/software you already have. Staff time is often the greatest expense, and sometimes the hardest to get.
- ❑ Return on investment can be very hard to measure, and might not even be a relevant metric.
- ❑ Assemble a team of people from every area of your organization to publish to your Intranet. A smaller steering committee can make design and policy decisions. A relationship specialist is a big help to spread your message. A sponsor – at the highest management level possible – can help get the resources you need.
- ❑ Prepare a “high level” project plan to explain what you plan to do and bring it into focus. Get this out to as many people as possible.
- ❑ Ask users from throughout your organization to contribute ideas. Ask them what will help them do their jobs. Ask “the three questions:”
  - What information do you need to share *with* other departments?
  - What information do you want *from* other departments?
  - What information do you need to share among yourselves?
- ❑ The leadership of your organization will also have information they want to convey via the Intranet.
- ❑ Prepare a “site map” using good information design practices. Prioritize your development based on the most requested items. Do this before you get too involved in the graphic design or application development.
- ❑ Focus your information design and navigation on tasks and functions, rather than the organizational structure. Ban the Org Chart!
- ❑ Test your navigation and information design. Only after testing and refining your plan are you ready to figure out what the site will look like.

- ❑ As you design the site, do everything you can to minimize the maintenance you'll need to do in the future.
- ❑ Prepare several different designs, to help stimulate discussion of what people like and don't like.
- ❑ "Design big, build small." Build your top-priority items, evaluate what you are doing, and move on, but know what you'll be doing a year from now.
- ❑ You will need to promote your site to get people to come there. Get department managers on your side and use whatever marketing tools are available.
- ❑ Write standards about what can be published, who can publish, and who reviews content.
- ❑ Remember that as a government entity, everything is potentially public information.

## **Resources**

Resources available for every aspect of Web design and development can also be applied to Intranet development, with very few exceptions. Here are a few Web sites geared to Intranet issues:

### **Intranet Journal**

( <http://www.intranetjournal.com/> )

### **Intranet Road Map**

(<http://www.intranetroadmap.com/default.cfm> )

### **CIO Magazine Intranet Research Center**

( <http://www.cio.com/research/intranet/> )

### **Complete Intranet Resource Site**

( <http://www.intrack.com/intranet/index.cfm> )