

Governance planning checklist



Since intranets are purposefully built to connect employees across locations and functions, governance helps these disparate functions align on the ongoing strategies that intranets execute against.

According to Simplr Research, the number one reason intranets fail is unclear ownership and governance, because they lack a systemic approach. It's important to recognize that governance is not solely a technology issue. Intranet governance refers to a set of policies or an administrative structure that enables decision-making and planning processes. To avoid the top reason for intranet failure, follow this step-by-step guide to successfully set up your governance structure.

To learn more about the top 10 reasons intranets fail, download the [Why Intranets Fail eBook](#).

Non-technical requirements

This checklist covers the fundamentals for intranet success, including the scope, process, responsibilities, and implementation.



Instill the proper governance mindset

Intranets naturally lose momentum. Proper governance requires resources and ongoing commitment. In that vein, organizations need to understand that governance is about aligning on internal communications, strategy, and culture. It's not simply ensuring that people log into a portal.



Appoint an owner

A surprising number of intranets don't have owners. It's best practice to have a core group (typically a cross-functional team) who curates company-wide content, oversees site managers, reviews analytics and metrics, and monitors the intranet for inappropriate activities. While it's good to have multiple individuals with administrator access, one individual should ultimately be responsible. To cover all bases, assign a backup intranet administrator.

- Have you determined a single individual who will own the intranet administration from day to day?



Intranet governance refers to a set of policies or an administrative structure that enables decision-making and planning processes.

**Set a clear purpose**

A recent Simpplr Research survey on the state of the intranet revealed some startling statistics: among respondents working with active intranet programs, 57% of surveyed practitioners said they don't have clearly articulated goals. Another 23% said they have a charter, but not everyone follows it. Many intranets have failed simply because organizations haven't been clear on the intent. First, organizations need to be painstakingly clear on what their intranet is and what it isn't.

- Have you aligned on your intranet's stated purpose and desired outcomes?
- Have you gained a collective agreement on the problem your team is looking to solve?
- Have you thought about the metrics to evaluate success?

**Orchestrate meaningful executive engagement**

Whether we like it or not, executives need to give more than their blessing. They need to actively contribute or provide resources to communicate on their behalf. Employees are more likely to follow the example of leaders.

- Do you have executives (or their ghostwriters) who will actively and consistently post to the intranet and lead by example?
- Are there any strategic initiatives you can tie to your intranet?
- Does your executive voice have a strong content calendar that helps you beat the drum?

**Create a governance team (and choose wisely)**

Cross-functional business units and locations need to commit to ongoing representation to ensure the intranet's and communication strategy's ongoing success. The group should meet regularly, have executive sponsorship, and oversee accountability. This team typically meets monthly or quarterly to review what's working, assess which sites and pages are underserved, and review the high-level company-wide content calendar.

- Have you set up a cross-functional governance committee to periodically assess the intranet's success?
- Is your governance team meeting and engaged?



Many intranets have failed simply because organizations haven't been clear on the intent.

**Secure proper cross-functional representation**

The purpose of an intranet is to connect employees across the enterprise. You can't connect an organization by excluding employees. Include: IT, marketing, internal communications, human resources, the office of the CEO, as well as legal and compliance teams in your governance committee.

- Have you met with the key stakeholders listed and aligned across these roles?

**Define clear roles, responsibilities, and ownership**

The steering team, intranet administrators, technical resources, domain owners, and content contributors all need to know what's expected of them and more importantly, need to be held accountable on an ongoing basis. Many intranets lose steam as momentum stalls from various stakeholders. Technical support is required during the implementation, during upgrades, and occasionally for configuration support.

- Have you allocated ongoing technical support for the initiative?
- Have you identified which functions and individuals will initially set up and manage intranet sites?

**Distribute federated ownership and accountability**

In the old days, intranets could only run with help from technical teams. Because the intranet can't be a top priority for IT, intranets could easily get stale, clunky, and ugly. Now, technology advances make configuration easy, and updates can happen at the speed of business. Now, you can decentralize intranet ownership and share responsibility among content owners and publishers. But this decentralization also increases the responsibility and accountability of various site owners.

- Have you identified individuals who will help set up, administer, and update the intranet across your organization?
- Do you have analytics and a means to monitor how frequently owners are making updates?



New technology advances have made configuration easy and updates can happen at the speed of business.

**Prepare for succession plans and a bench**

As a technology vendor, Simpplr sees a lot of initiatives stall when a company has employee turnover. This isn't only applicable to intranet administrators, either. Even federated ownership can be challenging when you have staff turnover. Organizations need to preempt this risk by proactively establishing intranet ownership succession plans, and by having staff redundancy in all critical areas.

**Commit to a regular, ongoing content plan**

Your newly-formed committee should meet and agree on the content calendar and development roadmap. To ensure that your intranet stays current, establish a regular cadence that your committee collectively agrees to. An editorial content calendar should be a key piece of your organizational strategy so that you have content well-organized in advance to keep the momentum going.

- Have you gotten collective agreement on the content calendar cadence?
- Is your content calendar built out far enough in advance to keep momentum?
- Does your content align with your internal communications strategy?

**Create a governance team (and choose wisely!)**

In addition to defining who owns what, establish criteria to drive consistency across a federated intranet. Intranets should have design criteria (examples include user experience and navigation design, branding guidelines), rules on who can post which content, and clear examples of what belongs and doesn't belong in the intranet.

- Have you provided clear examples of what good content looks like?
- Establish the following:
 - Design criteria
 - Branding guidelines
 - Rules
 - Tone/Voice
 - What should and shouldn't be on the intranet



To ensure that your intranet is stays current, make sure you establish a regular cadence on which your committee collectively agrees.

**Provide support and training**

Don't underestimate the importance of support and training. Provide Tier-1 training on how to use the system, and train site managers and content contributors on the system, including publishing guidelines. Intranet contributors, site owners, and content creators will all need adequate support and training to ensure technology doesn't add friction to the governance process. Similarly, users will also need to be supported but ideally, the user experience is so intuitive that these issues are rare.

- Have you thought about a process and people to support users and publishers when working on the intranet or when things go wrong?

**Conduct a recurring analytics review with content owners and site administrators**

Find out which content is in demand and which is not. Ideally, your intranet should have built-in analytics to help you understand how employees interact and engage with your content. Be sure to archive content that is stale—or better yet, make sure your intranet has an auto-archiving feature—to keep your intranet from becoming a content dumping ground.

- Do you already have an existing benchmark to measure the progress of your intranet?
If not, establish a baseline first.
- Do you have specific content that is used to improve engagement and usage?
- Have you set protocols on when to archive stale content?



Provide Tier-1 support on how to use the system and train site stakeholders.

Technical requirements

Technology is only part of the problem. There's no software that can help you create a governance framework. But software has certain technological capabilities to keep your intranet content fresh, organized, and relevant.

Based on our research, these are the crucial capabilities your intranet software needs to ensure intranet success:



Analytics

Traditionally, intranets lacked meaningful analytics beyond basic usage metrics. Intranet analytics should not only show adoption data, but should also highlight which departments and locations are using the intranet effectively, which types of content is being consumed, whether people understand the content, how they feel about it, and what's missing. Understanding employee behavior through analytics is the first key to maintaining and monitoring effective intranet governance.



AI-based smart search

Your employees are conditioned to start with search despite the effort you spend carefully structuring click-paths. Intranet search capabilities have come a long way over the past few years, and it now has better natural language parsing, Boolean combinations of text and metadata search, auto-completion, auto-correction, and stemming based on a variety of factors (including user behavior, relevance, recency, predictability, and popularity). Data science experts on your team can help you to better harness all these new capabilities.



User experience

More than half of intranets today are built on a configurable content management platform (SharePoint, Confluence, Salesforce Communities, and Google Sites). In addition to creating technical or IT dependencies, what you gain in configuration you often lose in user experience. Purpose-built intranet software will consistently outperform usability reviews and will encourage recurring usage.



Purpose-built intranet software will consistently outperform usability reviews and recurring usage.



Integrations

The Simpplr Research report, *State of the Intranet 2022*, highlights various technologies that organizations are looking to integrate with their intranets. At the top of our list is deep integrations with cloud-based content management systems (Box, Microsoft®, Office 365®, Google Docs, Dropbox) because this approach effectively prevents your intranet from becoming a content dumping ground. When you update a document, the intranet is automatically updated. If someone adds a document to a synced folder, the intranet's search will automatically find the same document when someone searches for it.



Content management and auto-archiving

Integration with cloud-based content management systems is a crucial step to avoid having outdated and stale content. Additionally, your intranet should have the ability to auto-archive content once the content is outdated, provide analytics on content that isn't being consumed, and provide version control for the documents that you decide to host in your intranet.



Point-and-click administration

Intranets historically required technical gatekeepers to administer the system. Today, intranets can be easy to administer without any coding. By eliminating the technical bottleneck, intranet maintenance can be federated across the organization and shared among departments and across locations. Ultimately, this means your intranet technology will be able to flow at the speed of business. Without this capability, your technical administrative resources inevitably develop a backlog and are forced to make untimely tradeoffs.



Both mobile and desktop capabilities

Widespread mobile adoption has eluded the intranet industry despite being a wonderful way to drive engagement on users' terms. From a technology point of view, there are many desktop-oriented intranets and mobile app-based communication apps. But only a few vendors do both well. Mobile-only internal communications apps are notorious for poor usage and adoption. You want both.



Today, intranets can be easy to administer without any coding.



Personalization

Content needs to be relevant to your employees if you want them to continually return to the intranet. It can be distracting to see a benefits deadline that doesn't apply to you. Today, intranets can understand a user's role, department, tenure, and location so they can tailor and prescribe content for each user.

**Security and scalability**

This topic is critical for any application accessible to all employees. Data privacy breaches are widespread, laws are more complicated, and your communications must be protected. Ask your IT counterparts to provide you with a framework for your intranet or visit the [Simplr security page](#) for more detailed requirements.



Today, intranets can understand a user's role, department, tenure, and location so content can be tailored and prescribed.

About Simpplr

Who we are

Simpplr is the modern intranet that transforms the work experience for all employees — wherever and however they work. Simpplr is the only platform that unifies employee engagement, enablement and services, leveraging state-of-the-art AI models to deliver a seamless, cohesive and personalized employee experience.

Trusted by over 700 global brands, including Moderna, Snowflake, Splunk, Penske, Eurostar and AAA, Simpplr customers achieve significant improvement in their employees' productivity, retention and overall satisfaction. Headquartered in Silicon Valley, CA, Simpplr is backed by Norwest Venture Partners, Sapphire Ventures, Salesforce Ventures, Tola Capital and Still Venture Capital. Learn more at simpplr.com

Benefits

- ↘ Designed for the way you work
- ↘ Ready to use in weeks, not months
- ↘ Built for business users
- ↘ Unified, engaging experience across mobile and the web
- ↘ Powerful integration
- ↘ Secure and scalable platform

Trusted By



okta

DocuSign

TriNet 

simpplr.com

+1.877.750.8330