

# Think Like a Marketer: 5 Steps for Branding and Promoting your Intranet



The screenshot displays the SIMPPLR intranet interface. At the top, there is a search bar labeled 'Search Intranet Hub...' and navigation links for 'Home', 'Feed', 'Sites', and 'People'. The main content area features a large blue banner with the letters 'EX' and a navigation arrow. Below the banner, there are several article cards:

- New Rollout: Our EX Initiative**  
In Corporate Communication
- Updated Workplace Policies and Procedures**  
In San Francisco
- Improving Experience**  
In CEO Corner

Below the main feed, there are three sidebars:

- Personalized Company News**: Includes a card for 'Human Resources OKR Tracking' in Human Resources.
- Personalized Company Calendar**: Shows upcoming events like 'Webinar: Retirement Planning in 3 Easy Steps' on Sep 28 and 'Global Rollout: Our EX Initiative' on Nov 7.
- Links**: Includes a 'Discount Program' link to perkspot.com.

At the bottom, there is a 'Celebration' section featuring a large number '9' and a profile for 'Tanaka Jiro' with a 'WORK ANNIVERSARY' badge.

# Introduction

---

It's common knowledge that a successful intranet project requires expertise in IT, HR and internal communications (IC).

But marketing is one of the most vital skill sets needed for launching or improving a vibrant intranet. From market research to establishing your brand — which goes far beyond your color scheme and typography — to enticing users to the site itself, a truly successful intranet requires you to think like a marketer at every stage.

From the intranet experts at Simpplr to clients who have launched successful sites and beyond, here are tips for building a long-term, sustainable intranet that furthers your company's goals (and brand recognition!).

Like all marketing, it all starts with knowing your audience.



# 5 Steps

## Planning

Before you choose a tool, color scheme or launch date, you need to learn more about your audience — in this case, your employees. You need to get inside their heads and truly understand what they want from an intranet.

Not only does this help encourage use — we'll get to that later — it also helps market your intranet from the get-go.

Arlene Barrow, a content developer specialist with the brand & communications team at Fearless, held discovery sessions early on with the company's 200-some employees. That kind of collaboration is baked into Fearless' DNA, where employees are considered "co-designers" of their experience.

These discovery sessions allowed the team to lay out the project, their goals and to really listen to feedback.

"It allowed us to rally people around the 'why' behind the project and to gather key information to inform our strategy," Barrow said. "The feedback we gathered was invaluable; it enabled us to frame our communications around our people's pain points and how we were working to address them."

This discovery session lasted an entire month, but it also became the north star for the entire project — and how it was communicated.

"At the end of the day, your Intranet is for your people, so it's important to take the time to really understand their pain points and bring them along for the journey," Barrow said.

This planning phase is also the time to set your goals. Does that feel way too early? It really isn't.

"Success and KPIs need to be connected with your strategy — work out what actionable and answerable big questions you're trying to answer," Suzie Robinson and Wedge Black of ClearBox Consulting said. "Sub-questions will

come from these, providing you with actions and outputs you can track. These could include a reduction in calls to a helpdesk or an increase in Net Promoter score in the next all-company survey. The data provided by the intranet itself, such as hit rate and dwell time, is important too, but the real success of an intranet comes with the improvement of someone's day-to-day."

Finally, planning should also involve gathering your allies together. Who those are will vary from organization to organization, based on your structure, Robinson and Wedge said, but there are some generalities. "IC, HR, and IT can be a powerful trifecta when it comes to intranet design and management, especially if IC and HR focus on the employee experience and work to offer a consistent and useful intranet environment."

In any organization, you want to ensure you engage your leadership team. According to Janis Weiss, VP of corporate marketing for Simpplr, having these powerful advocates vocally promoting the intranet can smooth the entire process, especially when you're working with busy teams who all have their own priorities.

"Having an executive sponsor can help clear hurdles and help those other teams clear the runway so that they have time to help the IC folks," Weiss said.

And of course, you can't forget one of your most important advocates: your content team, however that's defined in your organization.

"By treating your publishing community well you'll have ready-made advocates for the new intranet," the ClearBox team said. "By involving them during the research and build phases, then providing them with training and ongoing support, and developing a sense of community among them, your intranet will benefit from excellent content and advocates who understand the intranet's purpose."



## Branding

---

When we think through a marketing lens, we must remember that branding goes far beyond your logo, colors and fonts. It goes to the core of your organizational identity and culture.

For Fearless, its brand encompasses vision, mission, core beliefs, culture code, personality, voice, visual identity and more. All of that showed up on its intranet, but above all, culture code shined through.

“Our culture code drives how we work together internally at Fearless, and it includes four tenets: take initiative, create belonging, open dialogue, and make an impact,” Barrow said. “As we were developing the intranet, we would ask ourselves: Does this create belonging for our people? Does it create space for open dialogue? And that helped us make our intranet into a space that reflects and reinforces our culture.”

Fearless also carried its brand voice through in the content on the intranet, but in a way that was flexible and adaptable.

“We kept these guidelines intentionally high level, because it was important that authors were able to write in their own voices,” Barrow said. “For one thing, if we all wrote in the same way, it’d feel pretty inauthentic! But we also wanted to make content writing as easy as possible to support adoption.”

Rounding out the branding was, as expected, the visuals. For Fearless, that meant purple everywhere and a cow motif on their intranet dubbed ... The Beef.

But engineering design firm Rettew took a different tactic when it came to its visual brand. Rather than using its client-facing gray-and-blue branding, designers developed an entirely new look for the intranet that was more casual for internal audiences.

“I think at first, that some of our employees were like, ‘Wait, where’s this orange and gray coming from? It’s not the blue and red,’” recalled Rettew Director of IT Joshua Nugent. “But I think everyone’s kind of tired of seeing the blue and red that we use for our logo and our branding all the time. So over a while, over time, I think people embraced it.”

One bit of branding Rettew did keep consistent was the site layout. It was designed to mirror the way the company itself is organized.

“If you understand the company structure, the site should be very intuitive for you to navigate around,” Nugent said. “So we wanted that to be the brand experience. We didn’t want to create something where people were going to be like, ‘Now wait a minute, like, in in real world, this is how things live.’”

And remember, imagery needs to be consistent with your overall branding. For your photography, illustrations and other imagery on your intranet, draw from a brand repository to ensure consistency.



## Launching

---

Launch day for your intranet can feel like the most important day in its life span.

It's up there for sure. Keeping momentum going after launch can be harder than getting it live in the first place.

Instead of wasting all that time and energy on a big launch the ClearBox team advises being a bit more deliberate with time, money and energy.

"A big-bang launch might not be appropriate for everyone either. Sometimes the culture doesn't suit this approach or previous big bangs (for other initiatives or solutions) may not have worked effectively, creating an aura of cynicism around them," Robinson and Black said. "Choose the approach that you feel is best for your business, not what you feel you 'should' do. For example, another approach could be to slowly release features, functionality, or content areas over weeks and months."

That's exactly how Fearless approached the launch, making it clear that the initial launch would be a minimum viable product (MVP) and that more features would be added later.

"We ended up getting some excellent immediate feedback the day we launched, so we actually announced some changes just a

day later," Barrow said. "Don't expect to get everything 100% right on day one. Instead, I'd recommend doing your best to get the best possible solution in front of your people as fast as you can, asking for their feedback, and then refining it as you go."

Part of the Fearless strategy for iteration was creating a Slack channel for feedback. Slack was an integral part of the launch all along the way, since it was already a tool deeply embedded into the company's workflows. Slack also helped bridge the gap between the familiar Slack and the unfamiliar intranet by creating a "feed" channel in Slack for the most important updates from the intranet. Not everything was posted there, but it helped get people comfortable with the intranet while also cutting down on the company's "Slack fatigue."

Another clever idea for bridging the divide between a new intranet and an existing tool is setting your intranet as the homepage on your company's default browser.

"You may not even have intended to go to access (the intranet) initially. But then when it pops up, you see something and then you kind of jump into it," Rettew's Nugent said.



## Content

---

The content that populates your site is what will keep people coming back, whether they're looking for the employee handbook or the latest profile on their coworkers. Whether you're starting an intranet from scratch or retooling an existing site, you need to keep a focus on the content.

"Your intranet editors/publishers should be engaged long before your intranet launch," the ClearBox team said. "... It's about confidence and competence, not just enthusiasm — there's an element of digital upskilling."

It's important to have that content in line — but be careful about overwhelming audiences with all the new reads you have for them. Fearless ran into this issue and, after listening to audience feedback, introduced three content buckets, or labels, based on each type of content: Must-Read, Important Info and FYI. Each receives a different level of promotion on the company Slack and via intranet alerts and helps users find what's most relevant to them based on their needs, interest and time.

Similarly, the Rettew team uses Simpplr's carousel feature as a news ticker to highlight what's most important to casual browsers.

"If it's in the carousel, it must be important," Nugent said. "So that content typically drives a little more engagement, because people sometimes don't take the time to really dig deeply into the intranet, but if they see that homepage when they go into Microsoft Edge, and that carousels going by, they might pause for a minute and just wait until the carousel goes through a full loop just to make sure that they're not missing out on some news that they should know about."

Both Rettew and Fearless cited threads of pets as fan-favorites on the platform. But the ClearBox team reminds us that everything — even fun — needs to have a purpose on your intranet.

"Everything has a purpose; everything should support people and the org goals. Publishing 'people stories' -- things colleagues do for their customers and communities — is a good way to bring culture into the intranet," Black and Robinson said.



## Upkeep

---

Once you've launched and your content is running, celebrate.

But then get ready for the marathon.

"There's no point launching a new intranet only to have the same stories stay on the home page for a few weeks," the ClearBox team pointed out. "You need a publishing schedule of engaging and/or helpful articles to show that this is the new place to be."

And that excitement and content needs to last — for years.

Rettew launched its intranet two years ago. But team members still meet on a regular basis to develop new ideas, create new training and generally make sure it's still working for employees.

It's that important.

"Maybe some people do kind of fix it and forget it. They just put their internet out there and just hope that it resonates with our employees and kind of leave it alone. But we have not done that," Nugent said.

Don't fix it and forget it. Stay curious and keep actively soliciting feedback and acting on it. Weiss with Simpplr shared a simple way to keep your finger on the pulse with short polls at the ends of posts.

"Did you understand this information? How well did you understand this information? How does this information make you feel? So, you can kind of take a pulse of how people are doing, whether they're understanding what's going on and how they feel about it."

Over time, you'll find that it takes on a life of its own as your users truly build community and find utility in the platform. For instance, at Fearless, regular users will often beat the back-office staff in sharing a Simpplr link to answer another user's question, even though it isn't their jobs.

"I've found this really delightful, and I think it speaks to the helpful, collaborative spirit of our people and the way the intranet is being incorporated into our everyday work," Barrow said.



## Wrapping it up

---

Don't think of an intranet as something you build. Think of it as something you are constantly creating, together with your entire staff, both those whose jobs it is to work on the intranet and those who simply use it. By

viewing it as an evolving, iterative process, you can keep your keen marketing eye focused on the benefits of returning to the intranet repeatedly and strengthening it with great content and stronger community.

## About Simpplr

---

Simpplr is the leading AI-powered employee experience platform. Organizations use our forward-looking, adaptable products to deliver personalized experiences that inspire and engage their employees. Wherever people work, Simpplr enables them to flourish.

Trusted by more than 500+ leading brands, including Zoom, Snowflake, Moderna, Eurostar, and AAA, our customers are achieving measurable productivity gains, increased employee engagement, and accelerated business performance.

Simpplr is headquartered in Silicon Valley, CA with offices in the UK, Canada, and India, and is backed by Norwest Venture Partners, Salesforce Ventures, and Tola Capital. Learn more at [simpplr.com](http://simpplr.com)

## About Ragan

---

Ragan Communications has been delivering trusted news, training and intelligence for more than 50 years to internal and external communicators, HR professionals and business executives via its conferences, webinars, training, awards, subscriptions and membership divisions. Its daily news sites—PRDaily.com and Ragan.com—are read by more than 600,000 internal and external communicators monthly. Its Communications Leadership Council is one of the fastest-growing membership groups for communications executives and its PR Leadership Network is the go-to membership group for PR, marketing and social media professionals. Ragan's Workplace Wellness Insider serves HR, wellness and communications professionals. Ragan is also the producer of Communications Week. Ragan is headquartered in Chicago, with team members spanning the country and loyal customers worldwide. Visit us [www.ragan.com](http://www.ragan.com).

## Trusted By

---

