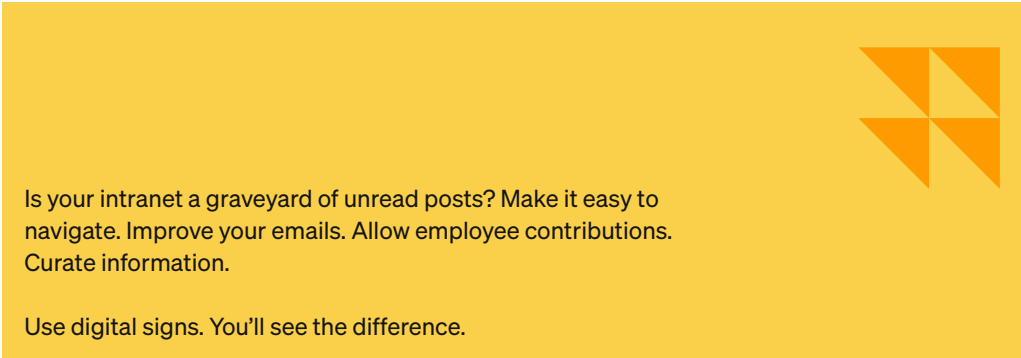


10 Ways to Drive Employees to Your Intranet



Introduction



Is your intranet a graveyard of unread posts? Make it easy to navigate. Improve your emails. Allow employee contributions. Curate information.

Use digital signs. You'll see the difference.

You begged and pleaded. You offered rewards. Yet you still can't get your staff to read the essential information you're posting on the intranet.

If this is your problem, you're not alone. Many communicators complain that employees buzz right past intranet content to get started on what they consider the real work of their day.

No wonder employees are confused about your CEO's priorities, benefits signups, 401(k) deadlines or any number of important messages you've tried to push. Yet you can hardly blame them if your site is clogged with stale content and hard to navigate.

"People in the workplace tend to gravitate toward what's easiest, and intranets are notorious for being the opposite," says Jonathan Rick of The Jonathan Rick Group. "Ask anyone about SharePoint, and they'll no doubt complain that it's sluggish and cumbersome."

Luckily, there are ways to fix that and make the intranet a useful platform to get work done—and even a fun place that employees want to check in on. From rethinking your email strategy to making better use of images, here are some tips for doing it right.

1

Make your intranet as easy to navigate as a website

Employers tend to use two broad options to drive staffers to the intranet, Rick says. The first is necessity. Want to push employees to your intranet? Make it the only place where they can schedule paid time off, submit expense reports and time sheets, or do other essential tasks.

Alternatively, designers should put themselves in their users' shoes, or, "Eat your own dog food," in tech parlance, Rick says. Intranets should be created with attention to the user experience, or UX, rather than employing an overly technical aesthetic.

Compare awkward-to-use intranets to the sleek websites at many companies, Rick says. Just as you wouldn't build your public website without considering UX, take the same approach for the intranet.

2

Rethink your email push philosophy

Email is one of the key channels for driving employees to intranets. Yet at Splunk, an internal survey revealed that employees felt overloaded with unnecessary emails and wanted to receive less of them, says Veronica Ruano Gruen, head of employee communications. Even so, email is their preferred means of communication, so the company couldn't just jettison the channel.

So the company reconsidered email. Splunk is pickier and more targeted with its emails to employees, Ruano Gruen says. There's more emphasis on click-through rates to drive employees to the intranet for more details, resources, templates, documents, and other information.

"That has been our No. 1 strategy in getting employees in," she says. "Whenever we send a companywide email, no matter what that email says, there's always a link to our intranet portal, because we're telling you to go there for more information," she says.

For example, when Splunk shares a customer story, in the past it would have posted a press release and sent an email encouraging employees to read and share it with their peers. Now, it will tease the story with key details, adding, "Get the inside scoop about how this salesperson got this great sales win," Ruano Gruen says.

Every weekday, eVestment, a Simpplr client, blasts an email to all employees that says, Here's what you need to know today, says Michele Shauf, director of strategic alignment.

It includes up to five topics with short teasers. For example, Shauf says, it might offer: "Our research team has just put out the fourth-quarter hedge fund report. This is a great thing to share with clients. If you need a reason to call clients to restart a sales conversation, this is a nice gift."

The link takes them through to the report, along with talking points to share with clients and suggestions of the types of clients who might be interested.

3

Use newsletter templates

Speaking of newsletters, many companies struggle with that channel, Ruano Gruen says. Many teams ask to send out their own separate newsletters. This creates a challenge at the corporate level for communicators trying to keep a consistent brand message.

Now, Splunk uses Simplr to build a newsletter with already-published and approved content from across the organization.

Templatizing and formatting can turn into a nightmare. Creating common templates enables teams companywide to build a team-specific newsletter and select articles from across the intranet using a simple drop-down menu.

If HR is putting together its own newsletter, that team can snag the recent all-company message from the CEO and other information to fill it out. HR doesn't have to worry about the headaches or a stringent review of the content.

"You're sending a short, pithy newsletter with headlines that are clickable, there's an image, and there's just a short summary in the newsletter," Ruano Gruen says. "They can click in for more information that goes back to the intranet."

4

Encourage employee contributions

Users can contribute in all kinds of ways to The Hub, the social intranet at SAS, says Becky Graebe, director of communications. The Cary, North Carolina, business analytics firm encourages social collaboration, and employees can form groups around interests that include work-related matters and hobbies.

SAS also encourages staffers to upload holiday photos and pictures from community service days. They may upload images for Veterans Day and other holidays, or post a picture of a parent, child or relative who is in the armed forces.

"This is one way to get a few more stories out," Graebe says.

Finally, allowing employee "likes," comments, and shares increases the spread of messages and other needed information.

5

Create sub-sites for individual teams and events

Splunk hosts not only a main intranet for the whole company, but also departmental subsites containing important information for employees, says Ruano Gruen. Among these are legal, HR, payroll, and a few other core departments.

These sites can be open to the everyone or limited to team members. They can include a chat feature or be configured so staffers can post photos and albums. Splunk even sets them up for specific events.

Splunk hosts an annual conference event each fall for its users, known as *.conf*. It set up an entire internal site laying out event activities. The site brings highlights and video of speeches to employees who don't attend.

6

Use images with every post

Whenever you post content to the intranet—or push the intranet from an email—try to include an image. This can mean not only photos, but also graphics. Splunk creates “click here” banners to lead people to more information, Ruano Gruen says.

Even if you are more restrictive about employee posts, the communications team can interest users by posting vintage company pictures with the hashtag #TBT (Throwback Thursday).

7

Optimize for mobile

If you want employees on the intranet, make it easy to access from their smartphones (where they spend much of their time anyway). Many organizations—among them Land O'Lakes and SAS—are offering apps or otherwise making the intranet mobile-friendly.

This is especially important if your organization has a large employee population that doesn't work behind desks, whether they be nurses in a hospital, workers on the factory floor, or salespeople on the road.

8

Curate and update

Many companies set their intranet based on their organizational chart, so that each department has a subsite, says Michele Shauf, director of strategic alignment at eVestment. Such sites often end up being just a file-sharing platform, clogged with outdated information.

By contrast, eVestment's intranet is a highly curated environment with select content, so employees know everything there is essential, Shauf says. A full-time staffer monitors the space to make sure it remains accurate and fresh.

"It's a curated environment, so there's not a lot of junk on it," Shauf says.

9

Use digital signs to drive traffic

Every floor in eVestment's offices has several flat-screen monitors, Shauf says. Communicators work with a graphic designer in marketing to create looped PowerPoint displays that are as eye-catching as billboards.

Only short words and brief sentences are used. "All we're doing is getting something in your sphere of awareness, and we drive people to the intranet for details," Shauf says.

At the bottom, the screen displays a message instructing employees to search the relevant keyword on the intranet for details, making it easy for people to find information. One recent message touted an opening for a client training coordinator.

eVestment also uses the screens to offer "Did you know?" tips on advanced features of the intranet, such as how to search the employee directory by expertise, rather than name, job title, or department. Though the staff numbers only 375, eVestment has offices in New York, London, Atlanta, and Hong Kong, making the expertise directory a useful feature.



Push the intranet in live meetings

In its biweekly, all-company briefings, which employees attend in person or virtually, eVestment leaders will let people know they can get more information on topics they discuss.

The meetings cover business topics such as how many new clients were won and whether the number has reached company goals.

“All of these satellite channels, we use to raise awareness, and then push people to the intra- net for details,” Shauf says.

In conclusion...

Design for UX. Tease must-know intranet information in your emails. Encourage employee contributions, and increase your use of images. Digital signs can be a part of your intranet strategy. And don't forget to plug the channel in meetings.

Try these strategies, and you'll be far more successful in messaging on the intranet. The bonus is that it will be a better experience for your employees as well.

About Simpplr

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