The Ultimate Guide to Managing a Successful Modern Intranet

Contents

Introduction

Congratulations on launching your modern intranet! Now it's time to work to make it a sustainable success that connects employees and adds value to your organization.

Making your intranet a success will involve driving user adoption, ensuring there is an uptick in the number of visitors, and growth in the number of employees using social features.

Success will also be about ensuring there is a great pipeline of content, continuous improvement, and additional features that your users will love.

Moving your intranet forward takes time, effort, and resources. The good news is there is now a plethora of best practices that has emerged through the experiences of successful intranet teams.

We've seen some of these practices carried out by our customers, as well as other organizations around the globe.

This e-book aims to bring you knowledge of critical steps, approaches, tactics, tips, and tricks that intranet teams use to make their intranets better and simpler.

Here's to intranet success!

The Simpplr Team

Establish a Management Framework

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Successful modern intranets don't just happen. They need a well-established management framework that clearly defines the roles and responsibilities required to allow the intranet to operate efficiently and sustainably.

This section covers the key components of a practical management framework that will ensure your intranet continues to grow and improve over time.

Establish a Management Framework

Establish sponsorship and ownership

Like any important system or platform in a company, you need to have a business sponsor or owner of your modern intranet.

This person should be at the C-level, have recognizable influence in the organization and believe passionately in the power of the platform. They are likely to be the one who makes the business case for investment, clears roadblocks, promotes new initiatives and generally fights your corner.

The owner and sponsor may not necessarily be the same person. The owner will have direct responsibility for the performance and success of the platform and may be the ultimate leader of the intranet team. The sponsor might be a more removed, senior figure.

In addition to an owner or sponsor you may also need to involve senior stakeholders from other functions and areas of your organization in your modern intranet.

Many larger organizations choose to have a steering group that meets regularly and is made up of senior people from HR, IT, Communications and other lines of business. Depending on the size of your organization or the scope of your intranet, a steering group might not be necessary.

Underneath this level, there is also likely to be a cross-functional team that meets regularly to discuss operational issues such as new content areas and features.

Appoint a dedicated intranet manager and put the team in place

An important ingredient for your successful modern intranet involves having someone responsible for executing the intranet strategy, and ensuring the smooth day-to-day management of the channel.

Depending on the size of your organization and how you are using the intranet, this may not be a full-time role. Modern intranets tend to be driven more by the users themselves, compared to traditional content-heavy intranets that are usually more labor-intensive to run.

It is sensible to have an 'intranet manager' - a person responsible for coordination and who can act as a central contact point.

Supporting any intranet manager is likely to be an extended, 'outer-ring', intranet team that takes on a number of different activities. These include IT development, search, training, content management, community management, internal communications, image production and so forth.

The responsibility for many aspects of the intranet ends up being decentralized, with the intranet manager playing a coordinating role across a network of individuals.

A key part of the extended intranet team will be the individual owners of the sites and communities within your modern intranet. In addition to an owner, each site or community group will have an administrator or manager who coordinates most of the day-to-day activity. In some organizations there may be a further tier of 'super-users', who coordinate a set of sites within one part of your company.

Make sure that all the activities associated with the intranet, and all the different areas, have named individuals who understand their responsibilities.

Define processes, standards and policies

Once you've got the right people in place, you need to define the rules, policies and guidelines so that your modern intranet operates to its full potential.

These rules don't need to be heavy-handed or bureacratic—this is more about establishing clarity than enforcing lockdown. Ultimately, rules and guidelines are there to help and support the employees who use the social tools and the site owners who manage their own areas.

Depending on the capability of your intranet, aspects you will need to cover include:

- Usage policy for social media
- Branding guidelines for content look and feel
- Roles and responsibilities
- Processes for requesting new sites and groups
- Processes for requesting new features on the intranet
- Archiving and reviewing content
- Decision paths for disagreements

What We Learned

✔ Establish sponsorship and ownership

✔ Appoint a dedicated intranet manager and put the team in place

✔ Define processes, standards and policies

Focus On Areas Of Business Value

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Modern intranets have obvious areas of business value. Focusing on getting these areas right as a priority and your intranet will be appreciated and adopted by both employees and stakeholders. And of course, it's never too late to make improvements.

This section will give you a few tips on which areas to prioritize.

Use your intranet for leadership communications

Leadership communications is one area where modern intranets can add real value. Not only can you use your intranet to deliver messages from your CEO about important matters within the company, but you can also get feedback from employees.

Getting your senior leaders to communicate through social tools such as blogs, status updates and commenting turns communication into dialogue. This creates engagement with employees and provides valuable insight for senior management about employee sentiment.

Typical leadership communications that intranet teams have found successful include CEO blogs, sessions, and video broadcasts.

Make HR a key area

Intranets love HR processes and information!

An HR- or people-themed section of your intranet will be one of the key areas employees will regularly refer to, and it's a great way of making the intranet essential and driving adoption. For example, having your intranet as the place that employees go to view their electronic pay slip will increase your adoption.

HR intranets also drive efficiency. Most HR functions will want to encourage "employee self-service" by posting intranet content that helps employees find the information they need or encourages them to use HR systems. This saves the HR function countless hours usually spent answering questions or carrying out basic transactions.

Work with your HR function to create a simple yet compelling HR area that will save time for both employees and HR professionals, and will drive traffic towards the intranet.

Look after the employee directory

One of the central components of your modern intranet is the employee directory. This not only encourages networking and helps employees find experts, it also includes important information about each individual on their profile.

SIMPPLR	Search Intranet Hub... 🔍				Home Feed Sites ⌄ People Apps ⌄ 8 + 👤

People

Name... 🔍					☰ Filters

☑ Limit results to US

42 People

👤 **Amber Rich** ⚇ Benefits Manager - Human Resources BU1 US		📞 📱 ✉ 🎥	Following
👤 **Anu Patel** ⚇ CHRO - Human Resources BU1 US		📞 📱 ✉	Following
👤 **April Cramer** ⚇ Public Relations Manager - Sales & Marketing BU1 US		📞 📱 ✉ 🎥	Following
👤 **Cade Nixon** ⚇ Help Desk Support - Information Technology BU2 US		📞 📱 ✉	Following
👤 **Carol Galloway** ⚇ Support Engineer - Information Technology BU2 US		📞 📱 ✉	Following

Profile information generally falls into three categories:		
Contact and role information, usually sourced from the HR system via active directory	Rich biographical details completed by the individual	Interactions and contributions on the intranet itself that are automatically generated

Use the modern intranet for process improvement

Modern intranets are more than just about increasing employee engagement or creating a more unified culture. These systems can make a major contribution to improving processes and result in many tangible benefits.

By allowing employees to collaborate and connect using social tools, there are often efficiency gains to be made, especially when email was the previous primary method of communication.

Typical processes that can be made more efficient using social tools include:

- Locating experts around the business and getting quick answers

- Coordinating answering customer queries among frontline staff

- Collaborating on bids and tenders

- Learning and training, especially when blended with more structured approaches

- Encouraging ideation initiatives from employees can generate millions of dollars in savings

- Providing peer-to-peer support for it systems to complement standard help desk support

- Onboarding new hires and getting to know new colleagues

Broadcast company metrics

Modern intranets are a great place to broadcast critical information about your company performance. Placing the very latest company metrics relating to your overall sales or growth on your homepage, or sharing more operational numbers such as attendance levels and your company safety record, can both inform and inspire your workforce and help you celebrate success.

Sharing these metrics can also send a powerful message of transparency, help drive engagement, stimulate dialogue and promote a healthy "open" culture.

Of course, judgement and care need to be exercised regarding which metrics you should choose to broadcast. These can be sensitive and may also highlight less successful areas of your business. Moreover, in public companies there may be some financial data you are simply not allowed to share. In our experience, the rewards from being open about your company are well worth the effort!

What We Learned

✓ Use your intranet for leadership communications

✓ Make HR a key area

✓ Look after the employee directory

✓ Use the modern intranet for process improvement

✓ Broadcast company metrics

Continuously Improve

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Intranet projects are never truly completed—there's always more to do!

Make sure you work on a basis of continuous improvement. Build on what you have already delivered, incrementally add new content and features, and respond to user feedback, metrics and changes in your organization.

Most intranet teams and experts agree that continually improving the intranet in small, manageable steps is often the best way to drive adoption and deliver your vision. Such an approach impresses stakeholders and employees, who can see a platform getting better and better; it also gives the team a sense of progress.

In this section we cover the approaches you will need to pursue continuous improvement.

Continuously Improve

Create a schedule of regular improvements

Creating a regular schedule of improvements such as extra features, bug fixes and new content areas helps to keep the intranet on track and moving forward. It also provides some structure and deadlines for your IT department and content owners to work around.

Some organizations have found that having regular quarterly or even monthly releases works well for them. These can be detailed to show senior stakeholders that the intranet keeps on getting better.

If you do have a schedule of regular improvements, make sure that you build enough flexibility into it so that you can slot in unexpected changes and seize opportunities to increase the value of your intranet.

Allow for experimentation and learn from it

Because your modern intranet has so many potential uses, there is always room for experimentation. Actively encourage different groups and individuals to try out new things. View your intranet as a laboratory and carry out experiments yourself!

Whether you are trying to work out which type of content is the most engaging, testing out a new intranet feature, using a little gamification or creating a non-business group for the first time, you'll never know what works and what doesn't until you try it.

Some of these experiments might succeed, and others might not. Whatever the outcome, you can learn from it. By following proven avenues and avoiding known pitfalls, you will ensure your intranet continually improves.

Gather data and feedback

One of the secrets of continuous improvement is knowing exactly what to improve! Inevitably, there will be a range of opinions of what to implement and prioritize.

While gut reactions undoubtedly have value, taking a data-driven and evidence-based approach to continuous improvement allows you to more accurately pinpoint what is going to have impact. Moreover, it's important to actively gather data and spend time analyzing it to see what's working and what isn't.

Use metrics relating to visits to the intranet, searches carried out and use of modern tools. Seek out the opinions of users by running regular intranet satisfaction surveys and workshops. Gather ad-hoc comments that you might receive about the intranet through a feedback mechanism, via the IT help desk, or in your daily interactions with stakeholders and employees.

You could regularly carry out usability testing to see the time it takes to successfully complete major tasks. There may also be other relevant data such as levels of email usage.

Use KPIs to track progress

Linked to taking a data-driven view of the intranet is using KPIs to measure your progress and report to senior stakeholders. Reporting against KPIs demonstrates value and shows you are moving forward (or not)!

Your KPIs need to not only reflect your intranet strategy but also the key priorities of your business. There may be some standard KPIs and reporting already within your organization.

Don't simply base your KPIs on the things that are easiest to measure. For example, although one of your KPIs will likely reflect adoption levels, that is not the always the most important statistic.

User satisfaction, greater productivity (reflected in the time spent to complete certain tasks), and other results such as reducing the volume of email or contributing to faster project timelines may also be viable KPIs.

The greater the relevance of your KPIs, the greater potential you have to illustrate the relevance and success of your modern intranet.

Get inspiration from other organizations

It used to be difficult to find information about intranets in other organizations because it was considered "behind the firewall" and too sensitive to share. Thankfully, there is now a wealth of information about the approaches other organizations have taken, and what they have implemented on their intranets.

Seeing other examples of other intranets can be highly informative and guide you on the right path. It can be inspiring, spark new ideas and show just how much is possible.

There are many routes for finding out what other organizations are up to. Networking groups, online communities, case studies, competitions, publications, conferences and collections of screenshots are all readily available. You can even arrange a visit to other companies. Most other intranet managers are very happy to help as long as you respect confidentiality.

What We Learned

✓ Create a schedule of regular improvements

✓ Allow for experimentation (and learn from it)

✓ Gather data and feedback

✓ Use KPIs to track progress

✓ Get inspiration from other organizations

Make the Intranet Essential for Everyday Users

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Intranets have many different functions and capabilities to help employees at an individual level, and companies at an organizational level.

If you make the intranet truly essential for your end users, the benefits will be firmly felt at an organizational level too.

This section shows some ways you can ensure your intranet will be loved by employees!

Focus on everyday tasks

Internal communications are an important function of the intranet, but most employees primarily want to use the intranet to be able to get their work done.

Making the intranet a place where the majority of employees can complete common tasks means that your intranet will become an essential destination for your workforce.

There are various ways to achieve a more task-focused intranet, depending on the capability of your intranet package.

Some examples include:

- Creating a navigation or information architecture that guides employees towards tasks

- Adding content with clearly written explanations of how tasks can be completed. Adding task-related widgets to the homepage

- Adding links to different applications so the intranet is a gateway to the wider set of digital tools across the company

- Creating navigational aids such as landing pages, indexes or special "how to" areas that aid task management

Seek out business opportunities

While inevitably, the focus of central intranet teams is managing key areas and internal communications-led content such as news, don't neglect other parts of your organization! Some of the most important activities actually happen in local business areas and within different groups.

Seek out opportunities for the intranet to make a real difference to the way people work. Search for different groups, and spend time with them to understand their needs and pain points. Inevitably some problems that can be easily solved through the intranet will emerge.

Make it mobile

Employees use their mobile devices inside and outside work. In fact most people feel completely lost without their smartphone!

Make it a priority to optimize your modern intranet for mobile devices. There may well be technical and security constraints to negotiate, but having a truly mobile intranet is well worth the effort. It is extremely popular with users and tends to produce a more streamlined experience that is firmly focused on their needs.

Mobile intranets also truly open the intranet to the entire workforce, especially when it is available on employees' personal devices. This is critical in organizations which have a high proportion of deskless workers in locations such as factories and retail units or who are constantly on the move and do not have access to a computer during the day.

Use personalization to drive relevancy

When employees log into the intranet they want to see content that is relevant to them. If they can't, they'll stop visiting!

An intranet allows personalization and delivers content that is relevant based on an individual's profile. A person is far more likely to read content that is targeted to them based on their role, location, country, region, function, or even line of business.

If they can also see a personalized social feed based on the membership of groups or communities and who they follow, this makes the whole intranet experience even better!

Delivering targeted content does have its challenges, including managing the data to make it happen, but such personalized content leads to a far better intranet experience, and ultimately higher adoption.

Organize content for ease of access and findability

Studies have shown that employees waste hours each week trying to find resources they need. Poor findability represents a huge drain on productivity, in addition to being profoundly frustrating. An intranet that contributes to these concerns is not a good intranet.

Make sure your employees can find the content they need. Structure the intranet navigation or areas of the site around the way employees think about and do things, rather than to reflect how your organization is structured.

Use sensible labels so items are easier to find. Create navigational aids like indexes or highly structured landing pages. If your intranet search has features that can improve it, enable them. Encourage site owners and authors to tag content and everybody to tag conversations so they are easier to find. To encourage discovery, use special widgets to promote suggested or popular content on the homepage.

By making a number of changes you can ramp up findability. Every minute of time you save your employees makes your intranet more essential!

What We Learned

✓ Focus on everyday tasks

✓ Seek out business opportunities

✓ Make it mobile

✓ Use personalization to drive relevancy

✓ Organize content for ease of access and findability

Increase Confidence
in Social Features

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In many organizations the widespread use of social tools is something new and not all users will be comfortable using blogs, contributing to discussions, sharing content, or posting status updates.

We've already suggested some of the areas of value where social tools can help improve processes. This in itself will help to drive use. But realistically, you may need to make a few extra adjustments to encourage adoption of your modern intranet.

Allow honest dialogue on the intranet

Intranets have traditionally been static environments, regarded by employees as top-down channels dominated by drab corporate communications.

Thank goodness the era of modern intranets is now changing intranets for the better so they are much more dynamic and vibrant environments!

Make sure you enable your intranet to facilitate an honest and open dialogue. Allow people to comment and rate news items. Encourage open discussions where people feel comfortable giving their opinion.

The more your intranet becomes an open two-way channel, the greater value it delivers. It makes content more engaging, helps to encourage an open and transparent culture, facilitates connections and allows senior management to derive valuable insights about how the employees are feeling.

Design community group sites around different needs

Different teams and communities can have very different needs. Project teams, departments, communities of practice, and even non-business groups might have differently-designed areas. Some groups might need to be constantly sharing content and posting updates, while others might just need a place to store documents and have the occasional discussion.

You should design community sites to meet the specific needs of different groups, and to improve the way each site works. If there are features of a site which work well in one area, try and replicate them for another group. Turn off any functions that teams may not need.

Optimize spaces for individual teams and communities by designing sites around the way they work, rather than the technology on offer or a "one size fits all" approach.

Manage a community of community managers

One of the challenges of modern intranets is to make sure that high quality interactions within community areas keep on flowing. To enable this, each community group will need a community manager.

Actively work with your community managers to keep them engaged and to encourage best practices. By having regular web conference meetings, creating a dedicated site for resources and discussions, and even running social events, you can help to influence the quality of conversations within each group.

Having regular check-ins with the group allows you to promote community management techniques, run training, communicate any changes, and encourage community managers to share knowledge and tips.

Get management to lead by example

Sometimes there is a reluctance from individuals to use social features because they are worried it is not seen as a "legitimate" business activity.

Having managers using your modern intranet encourages use within teams, demonstrates endorsement and effectively gives "permission to play."

Ideally, "leading by example" on the modern intranet should start at the very top with senior managers, or even the CEO. However, there will be some senior leaders and managers who will be uncomfortable using the modern intranet or will not have enough time to contribute.

Focus on managers who are supportive, or coach the ones who are curious so you have some inspiring examples to refer to.

Encourage non-business groups

Although workplaces need to be business-focused, they should also be fun!

A modern intranet is a great place for employees who share common interests to socialize and interact. Typical non-business groups who use modern intranets include those in hobby-based groups, such as photography clubs, or those looking for specific areas to swap recipes or travel tips.

Actively encouraging non-business groups to use your intranet has many advantages, including:

- Driving a sense of community in the company

- Making the modern intranet more engaging and less "corporate," thereby driving adoption

- Getting people accustomed to using social tools who may not necessarily have used them before

- Facilitating connections and networking that may have business value

You can also encourage user-generated content in other ways, including running photo-of-the-day competitions or simply featuring news about employees and their life outside work.

What We Learned

✓ Allow honest dialogue on the intranet

✓ Design community group sites around different needs

✓ Manage a group of community managers

✓ Get management to lead by example

✓ Encourage non-business groups

Drive Adoption and Engage Users

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Many intranet teams consider the real mark of their success to be levels of adoption. Naturally, they want to get more visitors to the intranet who are reading more content and making more contributions using social tools.

User satisfaction is also important. You want employees to be happy and engaged with their modern intranet.

Of course adoption and engagement are linked; more engaged users typically means more visits. This section includes a number of tactics that can be deployed to drive both adoption and satisfaction.

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Design community group sites around different needs

In larger organizations with thousands of employees spread over many locations, it can be very challenging to promote use of the intranet to the entire workforce with only a small central intranet team.

Some intranet teams choose to use a community of advocates from around the organization who act as local champions and experts, helping to promote use, answer questions, and even carry out training. Some of these advocates might also be site managers, super-users or communications coordinators.

Often created at the time of launch to help spread the word, advocates are volunteers who are passionate and enthusiastic about the intranet. Leverage this enthusiasm by keeping them engaged as a community and making sure their efforts are recognized. They can make a massive difference, helping you promote new intranet features and drive up adoption levels.

Use a little gamification

Gamification is usually defined as the application of game design techniques and thinking to a non-gaming context.

In the intranet space, gamification is used as a design or implementation tactic to help drive adoption and engagement.

A common approach is to award points and badges for specific achievements, such as sharing knowledge or making a contribution to the intranet. Leaderboards can be created to show how people and teams are performing.

You can use a little gamification to help drive participation. In general, keep it light, use a little humor, and ensure it is appropriate for your company's culture.

Accentuate positive behaviors rather than using gamification to point out negative aspects. If your intranet has gamified elements baked in, you may want to turn those features on. If not, you can always apply gamification in different ways (e.g., create a league table to show which locations have completed most employee profiles). You might be surprised how this can galvanize site owners to take action to move higher up the table!

Celebrate success

Inevitably, you will experience some successes and some road bumps on your intranet journey.

Make sure you celebrate the successes! Tell others about your successes to encourage use and to make those involved in the intranet feel that their roles have value. Let your stakeholders know! Create credentials and sta- tistics to show the value of your intranet.

One tactic that modern intranet teams often employ is to encourage advocates, site owners and groups to make sure they describe successes within their community. They might use the hashtag #intranetsuccess for example, so you are alerted to the good news. You can use these examples to continue to drive adoption and keep the success stories rolling in!

Focus on change management

In order to drive adoption, you will need to focus some of your efforts on change management.

A mixture of tactics is required, such as traditional communications, roadshows, workshops, one-on-one sessions, and training. Target your efforts to the needs of groups so it is relevant to them, including when working with senior management. If necessary, leverage the knowledge and enthusiasm of your network of advocates to help you.

When considering training, take into account a varied range of needs and abilities. You can design self-help areas which use "how to" videos, some of which could be already produced by your intranet software vendor. And don't forget to make sure you familiarize new hires with the intranet as part of the standard onboarding process!

Use the intranet for campaigns and events

Your intranet should be your number one communications channel—so make sure you use it! When there are major events and initiatives (both internal and external), make sure that they are covered on the intranet. This can help increase the number of visits.
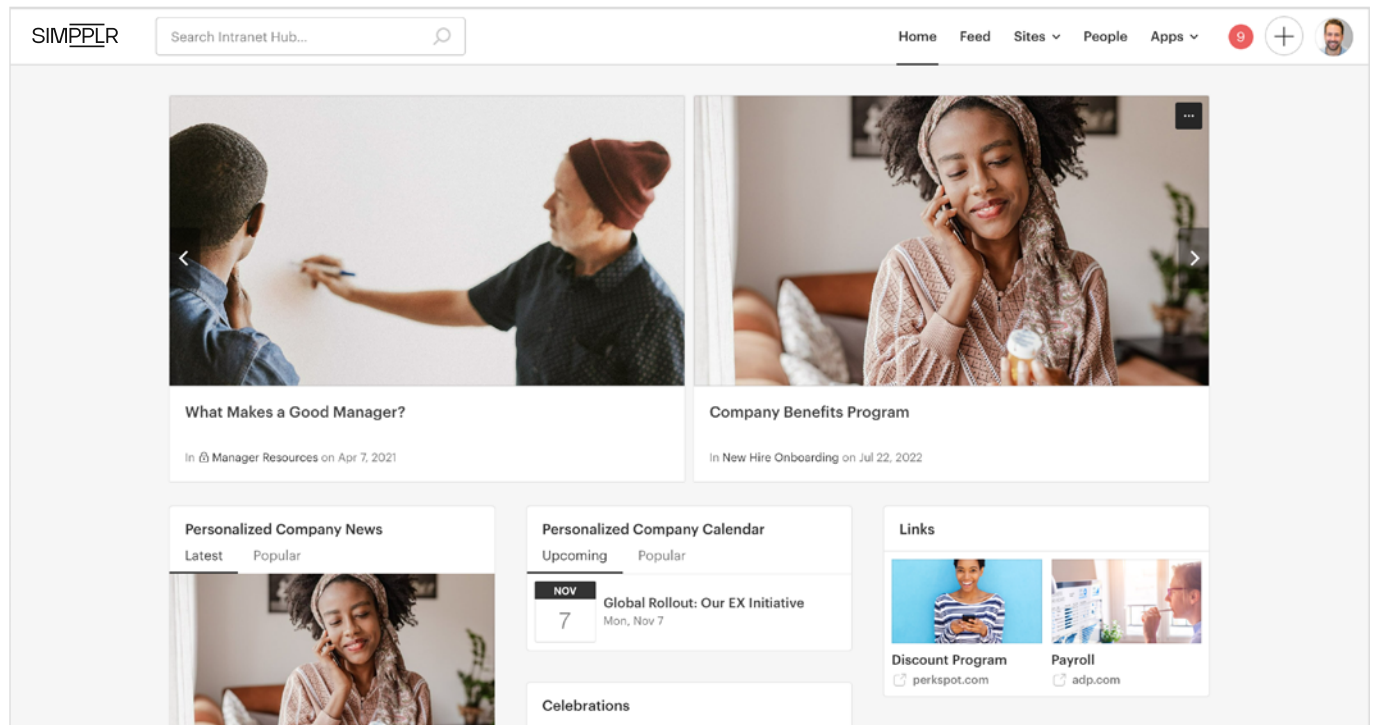
Quarterly results, major conferences, launches of new strategy or new CSR campaigns should all be covered on the intranet. You could run a live Q&A with a new member of your leadership team.

You can also run major events which are specifically designed to encourage contributions to the intranet. For example, you might have a week dedicated to new ideas or debating values, which could focus on using social features within the intranet.

What We Learned

✔ Manage a community of advocates

✔ Use a little gamification

✔ Celebrate success

✔ Focus on change management

✔ Use the intranet for campaigns and events

These Six Steps Are Your Roadmap to Sustainable Success

An effective modern intranet requires careful planning, as well an investment of time and resources. Fortunately, Simpplr has already laid the groundwork you need to get started. Using proven best practices and tips from the experts, you can create an intranet that brings employees together, opening new channels of communication throughout your organization. Once your intranet is in place, you will begin to see a return on investment right away in the form of increased employee engagement, a stronger, more unified culture, and greater efficiency in day-to-day business operations. Your site's value will continue to grow as you work to continuously update and improve features and content. The six steps detailed in this e-book are your roadmap to success:

1   Establish a management framework

2   Focus on areas of business value

3   Improve continuously

4   Make the intranet essential for everyday users

5   Increase confidence in social features

6   Drive adoption and engage users

About Simpplr

Who We Are

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

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 integrations

→ Secure and scalable platform

Trusted By