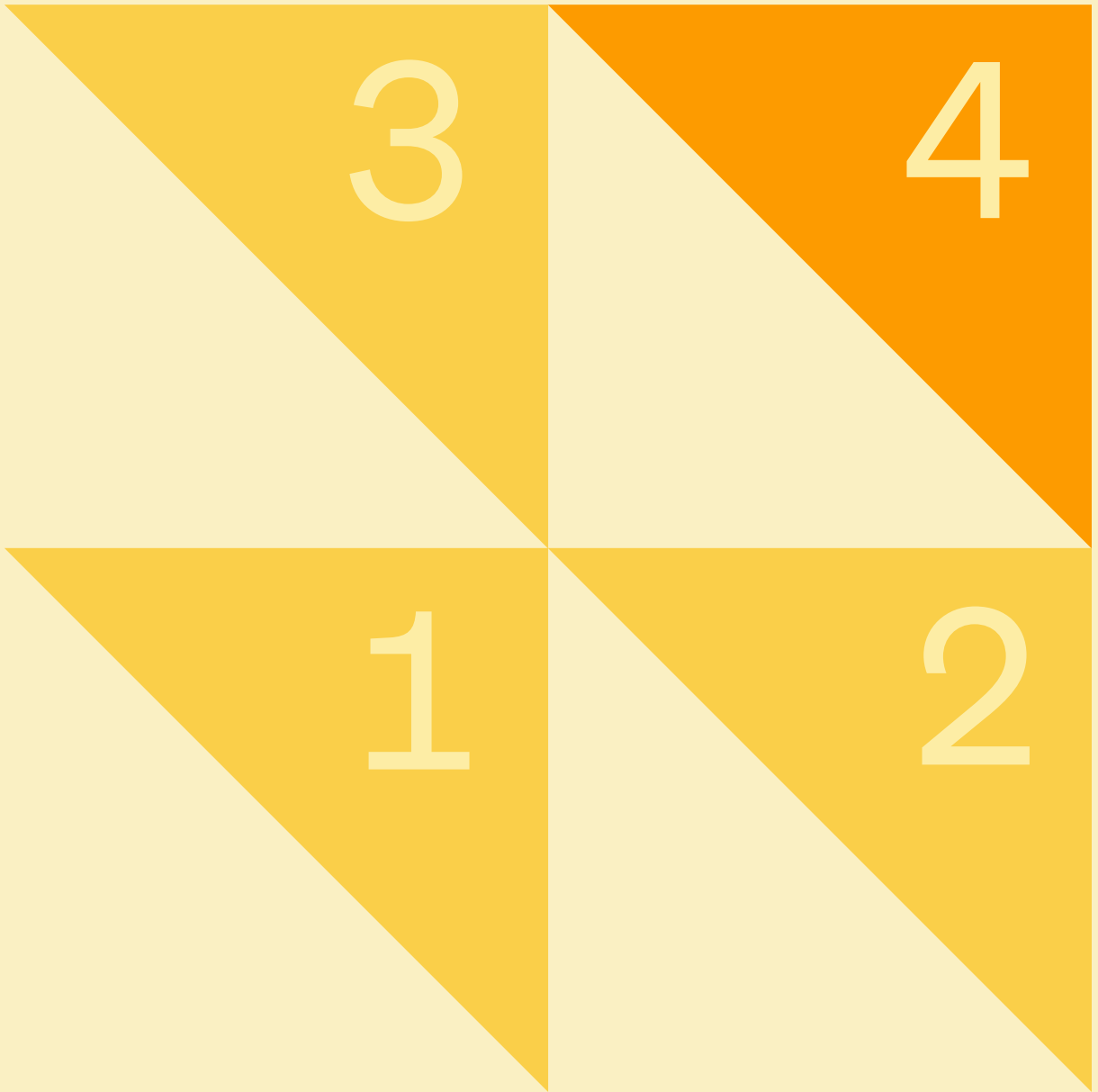


4 steps to launching your modern intranet

A how-to-guide



Contents

Introduction	3
1. Build the foundation	4
2. Create your modern intranet	10
3. Prepare for launch	23
4. Launch your new modern intranet!	29
About Simplr	33

Introduction

You decided to create and launch a modern intranet. Well done, what a great decision! Modern intranets can make a positive difference to employees and organizations.

But how do you launch an intranet? How do you design it so it adds value? Who should be on the project team? Who should be the business sponsor? And how do you get your employees to use it once it's launched?

While there's not necessarily a right or wrong answer to any of these questions, there is now a body of best practices created by intranet teams who have successfully launched their own intranet.

We've seen these practices implemented by our customers, detailed in case studies, and as advice from intranet experts.

This report aims to capture some of that "intranet wisdom" in detail, from developing a vision, to designing the site, to the actual launch.

Follow these practices, and they'll give you a very successful start to your intranet journey.

Build the foundation



Do a little ground work before you start building your intranet. In this section, we'll cover the actions you need to take to prepare the foundations of a highly successful and impactful intranet.

Have a vision for your intranet

Align your intranet with company values to help employees flourish

An intranet can help connect employees across locations. It enables teams to work more closely on projects, deliver effective and authentic internal communications, and positively impact company culture.

An intranet can improve productivity and help employees find the information they need to do their jobs more effectively. Not only that, but intranets help with specific processes, such as responding to new client opportunities.

Knowing the most important thing you want your intranet to achieve, however, is key to success. Describe your vision for your intranet in a document to help you to create a design that will best achieve your goals. It will also help keep the project team focused on what they need to do, as well as help ensure all future changes are relevant.

An intranet is a strategic investment, and the vision for your intranet should align to your organization's wider strategic goals. Your company may be committed to delivering more integrated and efficient customer service, along with a more unified company culture. Your intranet can make a vital contribution in both these areas, and your vision of what you want your intranet to be should reflect that.

Your intranet should have a mission statement. For example, it might be something like:

“Our intranet will be the place where all employees communicate, collaborate, and connect to improve customer service excellence, drive innovation, and become one company worldwide.”



Are there any KPIs that are important? What's the timeline for your vision? How will your intranet change the work day of a typical employee? The more detail you have in your vision, the more you can design your intranet to try and achieve that vision.

Involve key stakeholders

The intranet is for your entire enterprise. It's not just something that belongs to IT or HR alone, nor is it just going to be used by the sales team to discuss leads. That's why you'll need to engage with a broad group of stakeholders to deliver the best possible intranet.

This stakeholder group should include the departments responsible for the intranet after its launch, such as IT, HR, and Internal/Employee Communications. It should also include the different lines of business and other operational parts of your organization.

Getting these stakeholders' input into their vision of the intranet, and their opinion on specific design features, means you'll have a truly enterprise-wide platform.

Include your senior leaders.
It's vital to get their input, endorsement,
and engagement.



Establish ownership and sponsorship

Once you've engaged with stakeholders, make sure you have a clear picture of ownership and sponsorship. This requires establishing the named individuals who'll create the intranet and make it succeed.

Ideally, the owner should be a person at C-suite level who's responsible for the team that'll deliver the project. Perhaps this is the head of HR or the CIO. You can also divide up ownership with IT owning the technical aspects (software, infrastructure) and Internal Communications or HR owning the content and design.

The sponsor or 'champion' is normally a figurehead who is there to promote the intranet, communicate its benefits, and be an advocate for the new platform. They should be senior and respected, believe passionately in the intranet's possibilities, and be able to commit time to communicate its potential.

Sometimes, the champion is the same person as the owner, while at other times it's a person from a core business area rather than a support function. The champion could even be your CEO!

Get senior management comfortable with the intranet

The process of getting a senior sponsor onboard may uncover some nervousness among senior leaders about the social aspects of the intranet.

Your intranet suddenly gives employees a voice and a channel to express views and opinions.

This may be an entirely new situation, and there could be some reticence from management. Doubts can range from fears of potential misuse among staff, to worries about negative sentiment, to questions regarding the overall benefits.

Spend time with senior management to explain how the intranet will work, and address any concerns or worries. The overwhelming response from organizations is that very few issues arise from intranets, particularly if you put sensible usage policies in place and attribute comments to individuals..

Research and case studies have consistently shown that a senior management team visibly participating on the intranet helps drive adoption. Getting them comfortable with your new intranet will make implementation smoother and and can result in long-term success.



Address risks early



Before you start on your intranet implementation, engage with security, risk, legal, and compliance experts in your organization.

Make sure you identify any potential risks well in advance so that there are no unexpected surprises which might delay or even derail your launch. This is particularly important in risk-averse industries such as financial services, which typically have to work within strict compliance rules.

Engage with IT to make sure they're happy with the security aspects of your intranet. They're likely to want to carry out some form of due diligence, which may be a standard process they use for all software or cloud-based applications.

Additionally, speak to your legal and risk teams. They'll cover any compliance issues, and may also want to create a usage policy for intranet participation (we'll be covering this in more detail later).

Create your intranet

2

Now that you've laid the foundations, it's time to create the intranet. Some intranet projects can take months to implement. Others are more straightforward and you can complete those in a matter of weeks.

Don't rush your project or cut corners. Follow the steps below to create the best intranet possible for your employees.

Create a cross-functional core project team



If you were able to get cross-functional support and consensus from senior leaders, it'll be easier to get a cross-functional project team to build and promote the new intranet.

Having a cross-functional team means you get varied perspectives on the project, access to a broader range of skills, and greater buy-in from teams. Having a good mix of diverse people also makes the project more enjoyable.

Beyond the core team, get a wider network of individuals involved in the project, including those contributing content, working on usage policies, marketing, communications, corporate gifting, and launch advocates.

Get to know your users inside-out



Intranets were created for employees. However, if you don't know much about your people, you're not going to be able to design the best possible intranet for them.

It really pays to do some research into the information your users need to support them in their roles. What sources and systems do they use? What are their pain points? What processes are in play? How do they communicate and collaborate?

Getting to know your employees will mean you can design an intranet based around their real needs, rather than what you think they might want.

Get to know your users inside-out

There's an abundance of useful data you can gather and techniques you can use to get to know your employees, including:

- ▶▶ Analyzing metrics to see which parts of your old intranet worked and which didn't
 - ▶▶ Gathering insight from the results of the last employee survey
 - ▶▶ Interviewing key stakeholders
 - ▶▶ Focus groups for different parts of your organization
 - ▶▶ Organizing a general survey to gather information and obtain feedback
 - ▶▶ Undertaking observation of different key roles in the organization
 - ▶▶ Testing employees' reactions to what you've built so far, and then testing their reaction once you've tweaked it
-

The easiest approach is also often the most effective: have a chat with your employees. Instead of asking them about the intranet, ask them about their jobs, and how they do them. While your staff probably won't know much about intranets, they will be able to share a lot of insights into their working practices that'll present you with ideas and opportunities.

Involving as many users as possible during the project phase not only gives you additional input into the design, but also helps to create advocacy and a sense of ownership from employees. Employees who feel that they made some kind of contribution to the intranet are far more likely to use it, and to tell their colleagues about it.

Identify areas of value

In the process of scoping a vision, speaking to senior stakeholders, and researching your employees, certain areas and features of obvious value to your new intranet should emerge.

The focus of this process should be to help employees in their everyday work as well as deliver organization-level benefits. Typical areas or features of value might be:

- ▶▶ CEO communications news items or a blog
- ▶▶ An orientation area for new hires to get up to speed about the company
- ▶▶ A central place for all your brand and marketing collateral
- ▶▶ Business sites delivering relevant information to employees in each section of the organization
- ▶▶ A place for sales teams to share leads and stories
- ▶▶ Places for project teams to interact
- ▶▶ An employee directory to help everyone find subject matter experts quickly
- ▶▶ An area for all HR-related information, including onboarding
- ▶▶ Social and shared interest groups for staff
- ▶▶ Links to key applications used in the company
- ▶▶ A central place for your organization's official policies and procedures

Encourage early adopters



In addition to core value areas, there'll be those within your organization who are eager to experiment and are excited by the possibilities of the intranet.

Encourage these early adopters! Their experiments can produce some of the most valuable ideas, provide essential learnings into what works, and generate success stories you can use to promote your new intranet.

Identify sites and communities (and assign owners)

If you have a good idea of what you want to do with your intranet and, you have some early adopters lined up, you can start to identify some of the sites and communities that can make this happen.

An affinity group will need a place where they can post updates, have discussions, share resources, ask questions, and collaborate on ideas. A site will most likely be content-based. For example, a site might have separate areas for news, documents, events, and other features; it might also include a space for discussions.

Take some of these sites and communities live, and seed them with content and discussions ready for launch day. Assign a business owner for each site or affinity group, and possibly an additional person who'll manage that site on a day-to-day basis.

Put together a good cross-section of sites and communities that have different users—for example, you could include some non-business groups.

Pick more sites and communities to take forward than you need for launch day, because site owners and groups will work at their own pace, and inevitably, some of them won't be ready for launch.



Create a balanced homepage

As part of the project, build all the separate areas of your intranet, define how the interface looks, and add a logo.

Though every aspect of your project is important, allocate extra time to make sure you've got the homepage just right. This is the place each of your employees will see every day when they log in, and it's also likely the area on which your stakeholders will judge you. So spend some time on it!

You'll find lots of options choosing widgets to include on your homepage, and you'll want to get a layout that can fulfil the original vision for your intranet.

The screenshot displays the SIMPLR intranet homepage. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the SIMPLR logo on the left and menu items: Home, Feed, Sites, People, Search, and Apps. On the right side of the navigation bar, there is a notification bell icon with the number 6, a plus sign icon, and a user profile picture. Below the navigation bar, the homepage is divided into several content areas:

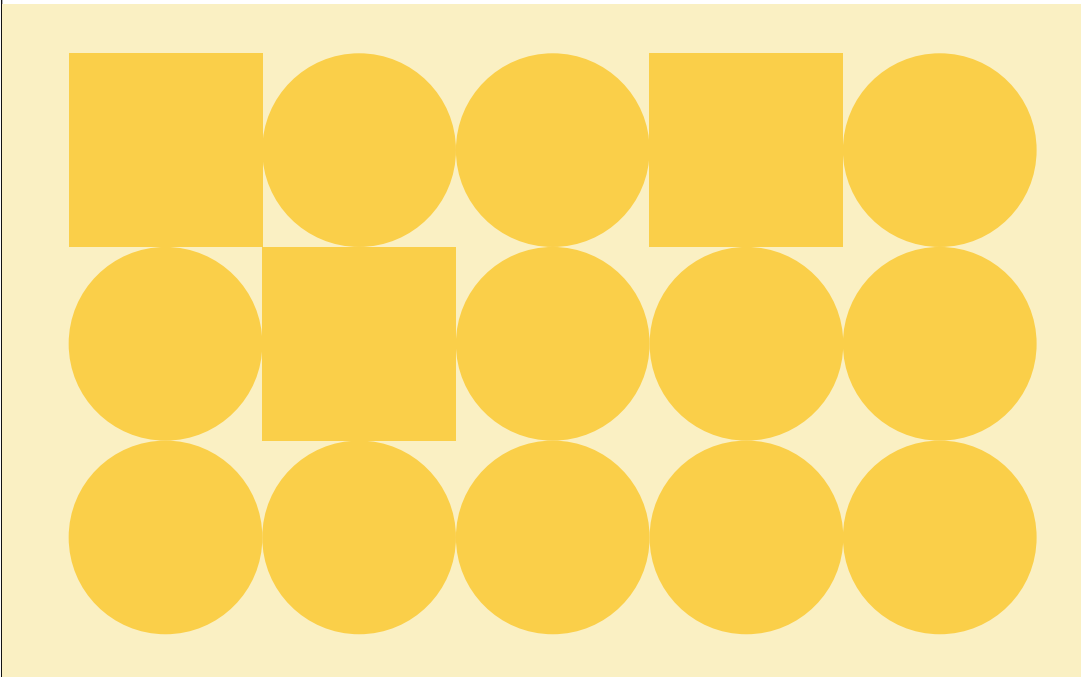
- Large Banner:** A large yellow banner with the letters "EX" in a bold, white, sans-serif font.
- Three News Cards:**
 - New Rollout: Our EX Initiative** (In Corporate Communication)
 - Regional Return to Work Guidelines** (In Toronto)
 - Improving Our Employee Experience** (In San Francisco)
- Personalized Company News:** A section with tabs for "Latest" and "Popular". Below the tabs is a photo of a woman smiling while working on a laptop.
- Human Resources OKR Tracking** (In Human Resources)
- Celebration:** A section featuring a large yellow background with the number "9" and the text "Celebrations in next 30 days". To the right is a circular profile picture of Tanaka Jiro, with the text "Tanaka Jiro WORK ANNIVERSARY" and "3 years Yesterday".

Create a balanced homepage

As a rule, make sure your homepage:

- ▶ Creates a balance between different elements like corporate news, social activities, operational content, and fun
- ▶ Isn't overloaded with too much overwhelming content
- ▶ Is aesthetically pleasing and uses relevant images
- ▶ Is tested for reaction with both users and stakeholders

Populate key areas



Populating key areas of your intranet can be one of the most time-consuming activities you'll face, so start as early as possible.

You'll find yourself migrating content from your old intranet, from documents sitting on a shared drive, or creating new content from scratch.

Ensure that only truly relevant and helpful content goes onto your new intranet. That'll help you send a positive message on launch day that your intranet will be useful and valuable. If time is limited, it may be better to create a smaller number of areas with great content, rather than try to do a little bit of everything.

Work with owners and managers to populate communities and sites



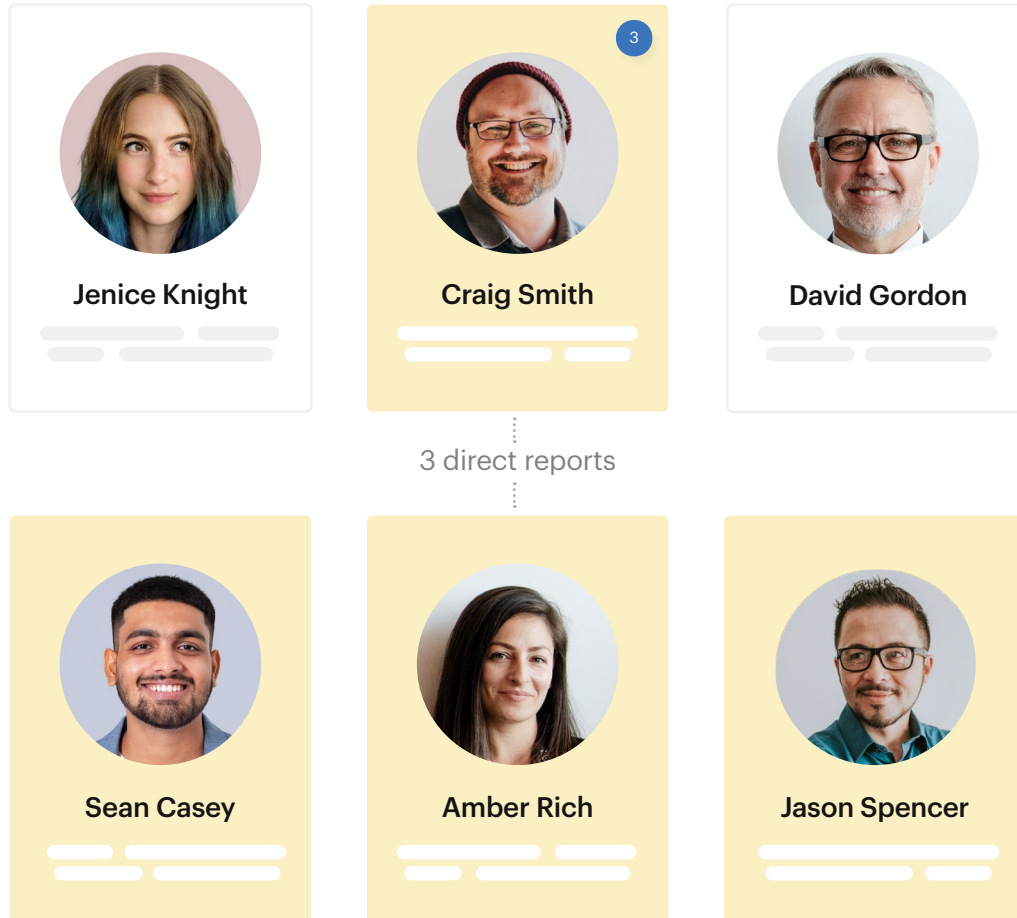
In preparation for launch, train owners and managers, define their responsibilities, let them know what is expected of them, and communicate best practices.

For example, those responsible for the community area should understand the basics of community management, and site managers should tag content and discussions.

Create a dedicated support site on the intranet itself where site and community managers can also swap ideas, tips, and tricks.

One thing that's worth remembering is that sites and communities have to be owned and managed by those responsible. Let them work at their own pace and don't put too much pressure on them, but at the same time don't do all their leg work. Establishing this work pattern from the outset is important for sustainable success.

Populate employee profiles

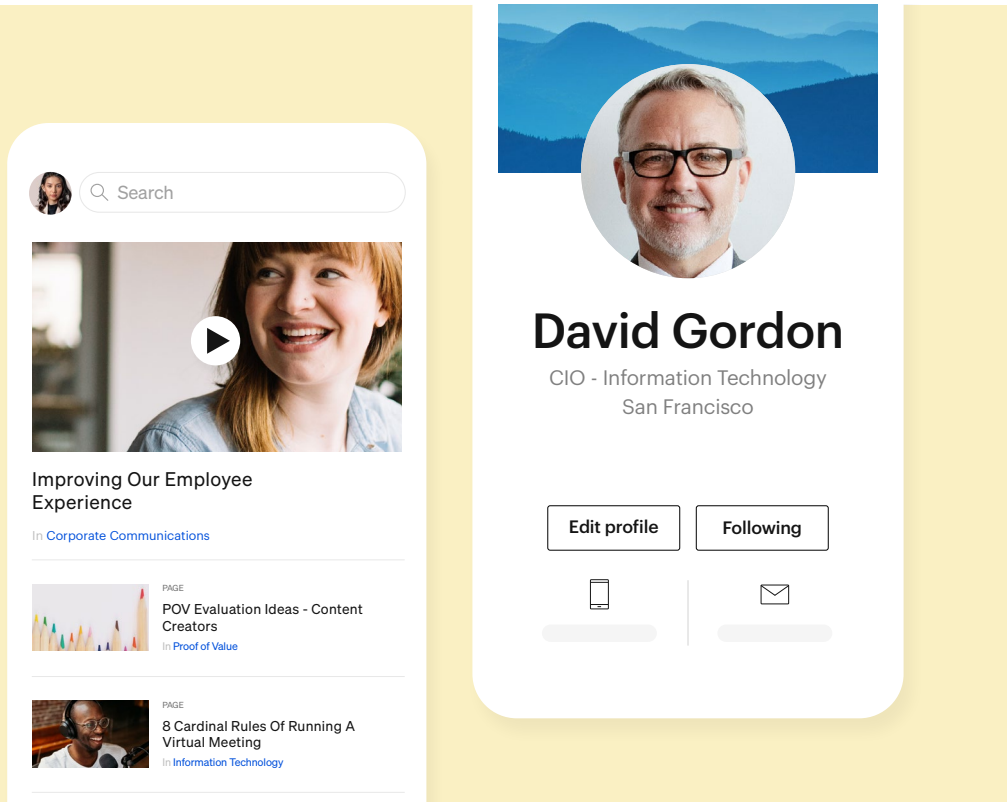


People are at the heart of your intranet.

Ensure that everyone who'll be using the intranet has an individual employee profile. You'll find this to be one of the most popular parts of the intranet, helping employees to meet and to get to know each other a little better.

Give everyone a head start. Organize and pre-populate the employee profiles with each employee's contact and job information, and if possible, individual employee photos. You'll probably find the data you need in your organization's Active Directory, or if you had an existing intranet with employee profiles, you can port the information into the new one. You may need to work with your IT and HR folks to migrate content over. After the intranet launches, ask employees to complete sections of their individual profiles, like asking them to write a brief biography.

Go mobile from day one



Employees want to access the intranet from mobile devices, so make this happen from day one. A mobile-first policy helps to drive adoption and engagement with the new intranet.

Accessing the intranet from mobile devices gives employees the ability to access useful content on the go, and allows them to work from anywhere. Employees also love the powerful user experience of working with a tablet.

Mobile access is essential wherever there are a high number of frontline workers. From factory workers to security personnel, from nurses and doctors to outside sales, keeping all your employees connected, regardless of whether they work primarily at a desk, is critical to an equal employee experience.

Prepare for launch

3

You've nailed down your intranet design and have site owners and groups in place. Now you need to finish populating your intranet with content and get together some of the other essential ingredients for a successful intranet launch.

It's time to add the finishing touches.

Develop policies around usage

One of the outcomes of your earlier engagement with risk and compliance personnel should be policies around internal social media to minimize misuse and to protect both individuals and the company. Consider these new policies an extension of the normal code of conduct.

Two central tenets of any intranet usage policy are:

1 Don't allow anonymous posting

2 Have a mechanism to report questionable content

Having both of these measures in place greatly reduces the chance of any problems around misuse.

The policy you craft should cover processes, “what ifs” and the legal aspects of intranet misuse. That way, you're ready if you ever run into problems. You might think the policy won't be needed, but it's always better to be safe than sorry!

When it's roll-out time, create a simple communication to users. Think about telling employees five or six rules or tips that spell out the guidelines for the intranet. Remind them that the employee code of conduct extends to this new online arena.

Have a communication plan, create targeted materials



As with any enterprise software launch, you'll need a communications plan. How will you reach out across multiple channels? You could use posters, videos, or eye-catching giveaway items.

If internal communications aren't already involved in your intranet, it's worth leveraging their skills for the launch. Make sure the whole organization knows about your modern intranet.

Create an advocate network

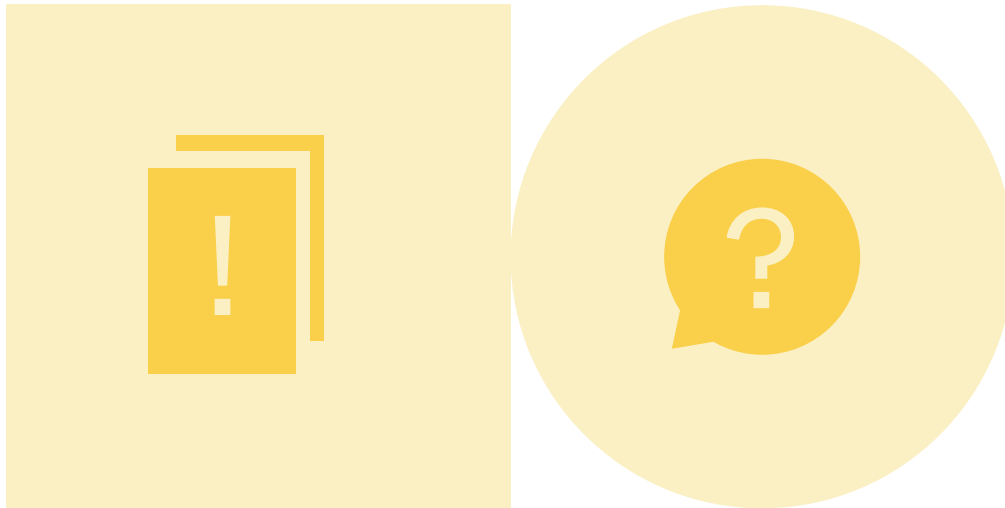
Another key ingredient for launching an intranet is creating a network of advocates. These are enthusiastic and energetic individuals from all over the company who act both as local champions to promote the intranet, and as experts. These advocates work to answer questions as point-people for issues that might arise.

Advocate or champion networks play a key role on the ground in geographically widespread organizations where it is impossible for the small central intranet team to promote the new platform in every location.

While it may sound difficult to create a network of advocates who aren't compensated paid for their efforts, in practice you might be surprised at how open people are to help out. There are many outstanding examples of very passionate employees whose help has been invaluable in launching a company's new project.

Put together advocate network well in advance of launch. Let them provide input into the design and content, which will help you improve your quality at the start, and will make them stakeholders in the intranet's success.

Create a intranet self-help section



Some employees will want to simply explore the intranet, but others will want more information about how to best use it and what it can do.

Create a self-help section where employees can find answers to frequently asked questions, access training resources, and even ask questions.

Coach senior management



Support and participation from senior management is critical. It signals posting an update or a blog is a valued and legitimate activity.

You may have already worked closely with senior management to get their buy-in on the intranet. Now, keep them involved so they're comfortable with actually using the tools.

Prepare materials and carry out one-on-one sessions. It's not only important that they know how to use the intranet, it's crucial that they also feel confident about how they appear to employees. feel confident about appearing online. "What tone should I use? How often should I blog? Should I respond to that comment?" are all typical questions from senior management. Based on your interactions with senior management, you should prepare materials or training for a wider group of managers to help them set the right example for the rest of the workforce.

Launch your new intranet

4

You spent some time designing the intranet and working to populate content on it. You've been creating launch materials, and engaged your advocate network. You've briefed your business champion about what to say to employees about it. You've set the day for the big launch. Now it's finally time to unleash your intranet.

Build momentum and buzz leading up to launch

In the run-up to the intranet's launch, create some excitement. Hopefully, there's already some curiosity from employees about what the intranet can do. Capitalize on it! Launch is a good time to catch their attention and drive early levels of adoption.

Create some excitement among users. Some organizations have created teaser videos with a glimpse of what's happening.

Others have unveiled an early view of the intranet at town hall meetings and management conferences, or created specific viewing events.

A popular method of creating buzz is to run a naming competition for the intranet, allowing employees to suggest a name and win a prize. These competitions often happen in two stages: first, employees suggest names, and then an online voting to determine the final winner.

The naming contest also establishes the intranet as a social channel for employees, not just a one-way for corporate communications to talk to employees.

Launch in phases



Many teams opt to go for a “big bang” launch and release the intranet to the entire workforce on day one, but doing it all at once isn’t always possible for logistical or technical reasons.

Think about whether launching your new intranet would work well for your organization. A slower, more deliberate pace can make the implementation far easier, particularly if you have challenges around resourcing the central intranet group.

You may want to run a pilot, or initially release the intranet to a smaller group, so that you can learn from the feedback you get and make any necessary changes. You may also need to conduct a pilot if you have skeptical stakeholders. Prove the intranet before you roll it out to the entire enterprise.

One approach to adoption is to just allow the intranet to “go viral” word of mouth and peer recommendation. While doing the rollout this way can work well, this method often runs out of steam, and in our experience, doesn’t reach the point of sustainability.

A more managed approach to the launch tends to reap more benefits in the long term.

Make launch day one to remember, mobilize your advocate network

When it comes to the big launch day, make a splash and get some attention for the intranet. Get as many employees as you can to try out your new intranet, to explore and experience it themselves.

Companies have used lots of fun events to launch their intranets. These include running baking contests, scavenger hunts, and competitions to see which location can get the most people using the social aspects of the intranet.

Some organizations have even organized flash mobs! Another great idea we've seen is a photography competition taking place right on the new intranet.

Launch is also the time to mobilize your advocate network. They might coordinate local launch events, encourage others to join in the fun, or answer questions about the new intranet. They may go on a floor-walking mission to see if users are comfortable with the new platform. You'll find their support makes all the difference between a good launch and a great launch.

Most of all, don't be afraid to be passionate and to have fun! This is the start of something great, and your new modern intranet will only get better from here.

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

