

How to Select a CMS FOR YOUR INTRANET



INTRODUCTION

Modern intranets deliver strategic benefits for organizations and help employees get their work done. Intranets deliver the right information, encourage networking and facilitate collaboration.

An intranet is also the key digital platform for an organization to communicate with its workforce.

Internal communications professionals are frequently the business owner of the intranet.

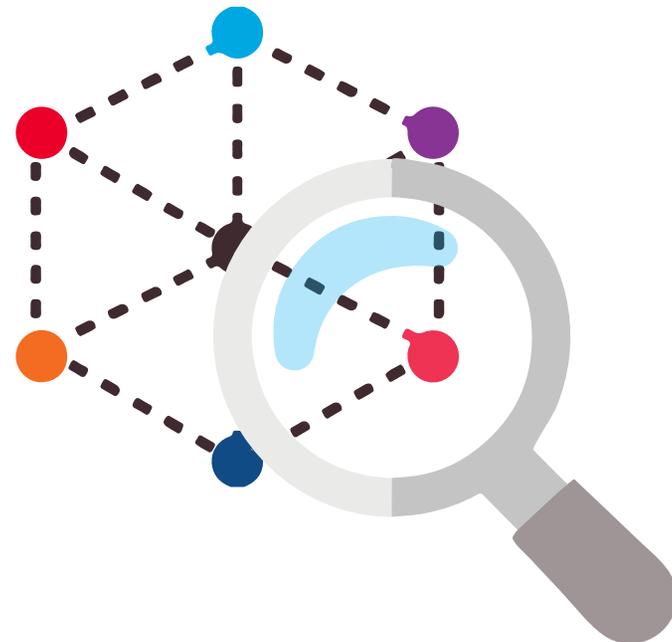
Internal communicators and the organizations they represent commonly want their intranet to deliver on four core objectives:

1. Drive a “one company culture”
2. Contribute to a happier and more engaged workforce
3. Deliver relevant and impactful messages
4. Be flexible and sustainable

But intranet success depends on the details. The ability for an intranet Content Management System (CMS) to successfully achieve these four core objectives can rest on the specific features of the software.

When evaluating an intranet CMS, you need to ensure it has the features that are right for your organization. The purpose of this eBook is to help you prioritize the intranet-related features of a CMS.

This guide is based on the many conversations we (DNN) had with internal communicators and wider intranet project teams. You can use the guide to spark your own thinking, enable conversations and articulate your own needs. You can even use it as the basis for an intranet CMS evaluation checklist.



WHAT DO INTERNAL COMMUNICATORS NEED FROM AN INTRANET?

There are four high-level objectives internal communicators want from an intranet.

Drive a “One Company Culture”

Complex organizations with multiple locations and lines of business, or companies built by acquisition, can struggle to build a truly united organization. Even smaller companies can feel like a group of disparate teams.

Using digital communication, intranets can build a common sense of identity and purpose among employees. This can help remove silos, improve processes and drive a cohesive customer experience. A “one company culture” also facilitates employee engagement and advocacy.

Contribute to a Happier and More Engaged Workforce

A happier and more engaged workforce has a direct impact on the bottom line with increased productivity and reduced employee turnover. There are multiple factors that contribute to an engaged workforce, but open and honest communication has a significant impact.

A good intranet transforms communication in an organization. From personal CEO messages to creating dialog through social tools to giving all employees a voice, intranets build trust and create mutual respect.

Intranets can build a common sense of identity and purpose among employees.



Deliver Relevant and Impactful Messages

Employees simply do not have the time to read messages that are not relevant. It can be challenging to create content that is always relevant, especially when there is a diverse workforce.

For effective communications that have impact, intranets must be able to send targeted communications to the right group of employees in the right format at the right time.

Be Flexible and Sustainable

Every organization is unique. It will have different needs and circumstances. It will have a distinct culture. It may have a complex structure. Organizations can also change rapidly, through mergers and acquisitions, or through periods of explosive growth.

When it comes to communication and information flow, one size does not fit all. Internal communications teams need an intranet that is flexible, configurable and scalable to the individual needs of their organization.

Intranets must be able to send targeted communications to the right group of employees.



THE 7 KEY FEATURES OF AN INTRANET CMS

We've identified seven key features of an intranet CMS that can ensure an intranet achieves what internal communicators need it to do. This guide goes into each feature in more detail.

Feature	Description	Drive a one company culture	More engaged workforce	Relevant and impactful messages	Flexible and scalable
Ability to apply corporate branding and enforce brand standards	The intranet CMS must be flexible enough to follow the corporate brand and allow measures to be taken that ensure site managers also stay on brand.	✓	✓		✓
Easy-to-use tools for creating and editing site content	Making sure that the internal communications team throughout the enterprise have all they need to create content, accessed through an intuitive interface.			✓	✓
Social features to encourage employee engagement and interaction	The intranet has social tools such as commenting, rating and blogs so that all employees have a voice, helping to support increased employee engagement.	✓	✓	✓	✓

Feature	Description	Drive a one company culture	More engaged workforce	Relevant and impactful messages	Flexible and scalable
Pre-built page templates for powerful communications	A convenient library of tried and tested templates for different types of content, with the ability to create or purchase additional custom templates to meet organizational needs.			✓	✓
Workflow to support content review and approval	Workflow capability to support content management processes including central approval for items about to be published and review of older content for potential archiving.			✓	✓
Personalization for audience targeting	The ability to target content to different audiences based on their location, division, role and other attributes.	✓	✓	✓	✓
An analytics dashboard to measure employee engagement	Capturing and presenting data on user behavior to deliver actionable insights into the impact of content in order to improve communications.		✓	✓	✓

Ability to Apply Corporate Branding and Enforce Brand Standards

Intranets play a critical role in fostering an organization's identity. Internal communicators want to know that they can apply corporate branding to the intranet to help drive that sense of identity and reinforce the focus of messages.

Adhering to brand guidelines goes beyond putting up a company logo. It's about the right color palette, fonts, layouts, images and other styling. The intranet "look and feel" should closely align to the brand experience of customers.

In some complex organizations, intranet managers may need to be able to deploy variations of the brand. Some large organizations operate with lines of business that have a stronger brand identity than the parent company.

It's important that the right branding is not just restricted to the homepage, but appears throughout the intranet. Most intranets rely on a community of local site managers and content owners. Internal communicators need to be confident they can enforce brand standards to all parts of the intranet, usually by applying templates and locking down options.

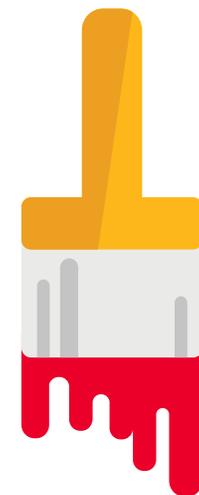
Of course, brand guidelines change, so it's also important that changes can be made centrally and then automatically applied throughout the intranet.

The intranet itself can be a hub for brand standards. For example a "brand center" can contain all essential details around brand identity.



INTRANET CMS CHECKLIST:

- ✓ Apply corporate branding
- ✓ Deal with variations in brand
- ✓ Lock down options through templates
- ✓ Apply changes centrally



Easy-to-use Tools for Creating and Editing Site Content

A critical question for internal communicators is, “Is my intranet CMS going to be easy to use?”

This is important for the central team who may publish content every day, as well as the network of authors and content owners creating and managing their own pages.

A hard-to-use CMS is a barrier to intranet success. It’s neither sustainable nor scalable. Your central internal communications team won’t be happy if it’s hard to create content. It will also be difficult to get authors to create content in the first place. When they do, they may have to ask questions or get your IT to help them.

An intranet CMS must be easy to use with an intuitive user interface. There should be no requirement for having any technical skills, such as knowledge of HTML.

Page templates should help internal communicators stay on-brand, add text in the different parts of the page, choose images or other rich media, and add any other metadata or tagging. The author should also be able to easily preview a page to see what it is going to look like.

Pages should also be easy to edit. A WYSIWYG (“What You See Is What You Get”) editor should be included, which can handle more complex operations like adding tables. Being able to edit in-line through the browser can also encourage authors to update content, because it is so easy to do.



INTRANET CMS CHECKLIST:

- ✓ Easy to use
- ✓ No technical skills required
- ✓ Templates that help content creators
- ✓ Page editing capabilities, including in-line editing
- ✓ Preview of content



Social Features to Encourage Employee Engagement and Interaction

Traditional intranets used to be a one-way broadcast medium. The result was a stuffy and static channel that employees weren't interested in.

Modern intranets are vibrant, dynamic and engaging. They are inherently social, with tools that give the ability for all employees to contribute, giving many groups a voice for the first time.

Internal communicators want to know that an intranet CMS has a full range of social tools available. This includes the ability for all employees to comment, share and rate content. This drives dialog, shines a light on how employees feel and demonstrates that your organization values their opinion.

There should also be blogs that can be used by both leaders and employees for a more personal and powerful way to communicate.

Communities with discussion forums allow groups with a common interest to communicate more easily, helping to break down silos within the organization.

A good "social intranet CMS" helps employees stay current through activity feeds that show targeted updates from across the intranet. This is a particularly useful feature that internal communicators can use to amplify news and other key content.



INTRANET CMS CHECKLIST:

- ✓ Commenting, rating and sharing
- ✓ Blogs
- ✓ Communities and groups
- ✓ Activity feeds



Pre-Built Page Templates

Internal communicators need content to be presented in an attractive and engaging way. An intranet CMS that comes with a tried and tested library of pre-built page templates really helps.

Teams can leverage great designs and page layouts with the confidence that they will combine impactful messaging with good levels of usability. It can help organizations launch their intranet more quickly by giving them a head start on the design.

Templates should cover the most important areas of the intranet including the homepage, a news center and individual articles. Other key templates should cover employee profiles, departmental pages, a document library and events.

Page templates need to be formatted to be attractive for employees. They also need to suit the needs of those involved in the content management process. Authors and site managers should find a template intuitive to use.

Some flexibility is important to suit the needs of your organization. An intranet CMS should allow some choices for authors within templates or allow master templates to be tweaked. Even better, if your intranet CMS allows you to purchase additional templates from other vendors or easily commission third parties to create new ones, then you can get some truly fantastic designs.



INTRANET CMS CHECKLIST:

- ✓ Pre-built template library
- ✓ Intranet homepage and news
- ✓ Other key intranet areas
- ✓ Configurable and customizable
- ✓ Ability to find, purchase and integrate third party templates

Workflow to Support Content Review and Approval

The content management process on an intranet is often a balancing act. Should there be central control or should you empower local communicators and content providers to manage their own content?

While the trend is definitely to decentralize publishing, internal communication professionals want to be confident that important content can be reviewed to ensure it meets standards. That important update from the CEO can't be full of typos!

Internal communicators will need their intranet CMS to include workflow to allow any review of content needed. Workflow may be required for any additional steps in the publishing process, such as adding images.

Content management workflows can become complex with multiple steps. Some organizations will also need to have different workflows with different approvers for different types of content. Your intranet CMS should be flexible and scalable to cope with many different scenarios.

A common problem with intranets is that they can quickly become bloated with out-of-date content. This not only makes it much harder to find valuable content but also rapidly erodes employee confidence in the intranet as a source of trusted information.

Make sure your intranet CMS has an automated process by which content owners are notified of pending updates that require their review and approval. This simple governance process can have a massive impact on the quality of your intranet.



INTRANET CMS CHECKLIST:

- ✓ Workflow for content review
- ✓ Complex workflow
- ✓ Multiple workflows with different approvers
- ✓ Notifications for content updates that require approval



Personalization for Audience Targeting

With employees increasingly time-pressured and overloaded with a pile-high inbox, it can be challenging for internal communicators to get the attention of employees. Messages must be relevant to stand a chance of being read.

With an incredibly diverse workforce, ensuring that content delivered is relevant is dependent on your ability to target every communication to the particular needs of your audience.

For successful audience targeting, your intranet CMS should enable personalization. Content can be directed to employees based on their profile (e.g. where they work or if they are a manager). This way, employees see content relevant to them.

News or events can be targeted to audiences based on their country, location, line of business, function or role. They can also see global content intended for everybody.

To leverage the power of personalization, your intranet CMS should be compatible with your identity management system, such as Active Directory. You'll also want to know that content can be easily tagged with the different audience groups it is intended for.

Personalization does require some work: you need to have accurate data about which audience groups employees belong to. When it is up and running, your audience will be far more engaged!



INTRANET CMS CHECKLIST:

- ✓ Enables personalization
- ✓ Is compatible with your identity management system
- ✓ Content can be targeted to relevant groups



An Analytics Dashboard to Measure Employee Engagement

Having accurate data and analytics is a cornerstone of effective digital communications. By tracking and measuring, internal communications teams can gain insight into what resonates with their audience and judge the success of campaigns. A data-driven team is a more successful team.

Internal communicators will want their intranet CMS to have a built-in analytics dashboard that is attractive and easy to use. It should show headline statistics such as unique visitors, page visits and time spent on pages.

While this data has value, it does not deliver insight into whether employees are truly engaged with the content. An analytics dashboard should also track the number of comments, shares, likes and ratings from employees. When combined with other statistics, this can give a powerful indicator of the impact of your content.

Some analytics dashboards can also deliver extra insights such as trending topics, or aggregate different metrics into an overall score to more easily compare the success of pages.

To empower content owners, internal communicators will also be attracted by the granularity of reporting. Can local communicators see the numbers relevant to their content or section of the site? Can they drill down into more detail if they wish? Can trends over a given period of time be identified?



INTRANET CMS CHECKLIST:

- ✓ User behavior metrics
- ✓ Engagement metrics
- ✓ Compatibility with other analytics systems (e.g. Google Analytics)
- ✓ Additional insights
- ✓ Attractive dashboard
- ✓ Flexible and granular reporting

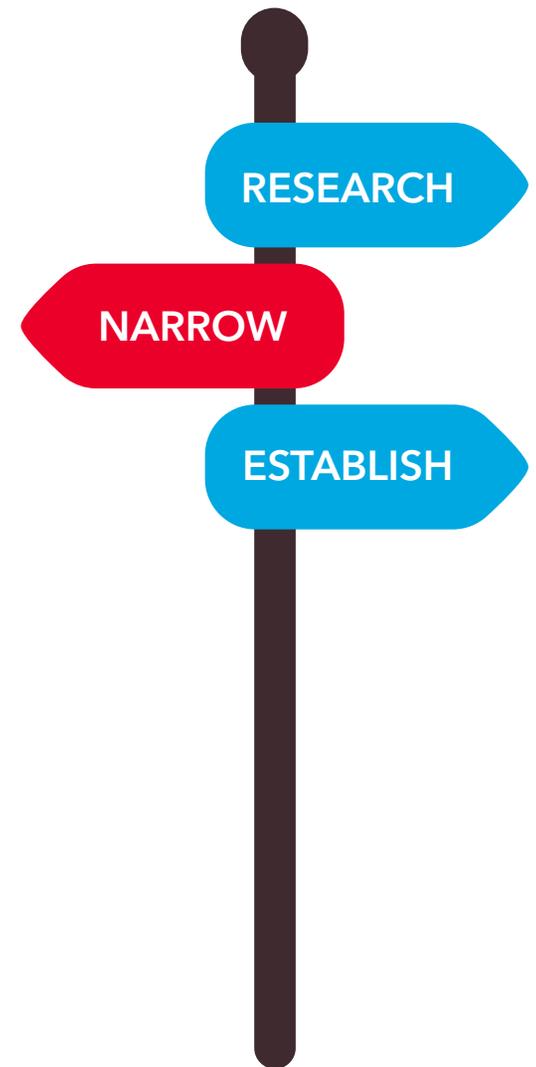
NEXT STEPS

Your intranet is a strategic investment and an essential channel for internal communication. By making sure your CMS has the right features, you'll have an intranet that increases employee engagement and remains flexible for your organization's needs.

If you're nearing the time when your internal communications team may be wanting to kick off a project and are thinking about a new intranet CMS, here are some suggested next steps:

- Identify the essential features you need from your intranet CMS based on your wider strategic objectives and internal communications strategy
- Research products by looking at vendor offerings and speaking to peers
- Narrow down the number of vendors to evaluate
- Establish a criteria list, including your essential features to evaluate the software
- Narrow down providers to a shortlist
- Road test products and see vendor demos to really understand what an intranet CMS can do
- Review pricing details from each vendor

Good luck on choosing a new intranet CMS!



About DNN

DNN provides a suite of solutions for creating rich, rewarding online experiences for customers, partners and employees. DNN products and technology are the foundation for 750,000+ websites worldwide. In addition to our commercial CMS and social community solutions, DNN is the steward of the DNN Platform Open Source Project.

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