



# Redefining the Intranet:

## Which Intranet is Right for My Organization?





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deserves a great intranet that is  
well adopted and adds value.





## Introduction

We believe every organization deserves a great intranet that is well adopted and adds value.

Unfortunately, that's not always the case. A lot of intranets suck. They don't add the value they should do and aren't popular with employees. Content is uninspiring, items are hard to find, and interfaces are outdated. These underperforming, "traditional" intranets tend to have received little investment and attention over the years. Organizations that have chosen to invest in a well-thought-through, "modern" intranet find it can add value, is popular with staff and can drive effective digital communications.

Successful modern intranets are not the static and dry content repositories that many more traditional, unloved intranets still represent. Instead, the intranet channel is vibrant, dynamic, social, mobile, and integrated with other technologies.

## Fundamentally, it ticks two major boxes:

- It is useful
- It is engaging

If you've given up on your intranet completely or know it needs a rethink, then this book is for you. We want to reopen the debate and start a conversation about what intranets are and the value they deliver.

We believe with the right thinking and approach it is possible to get a great intranet that is the right fit for your workforce and its needs, works with the other technologies in your digital communications landscape, and redefines the intranet for the future, not the past.

We hope this book helps you to start that conversation that leads to the right intranet for you.



# Four Steps To Redefining The Intranet



# 1

What makes a modern intranet?

# 2

What ‘flavor’ of an intranet is right for you?

# 3

Where does the intranet fit into the wider digital communications landscape?

# 4

How do I start to define the intranet that we actually need?



# 1.

## WHAT MAKES A MODERN INTRANET?

### What is an intranet?

If you ask most employees what an intranet is they will tell you that it is a website or portal or platform accessed by employees that provides information about an organization. However, asking for more detail will elicit a range of answers.

Some may tell you is where they get news. For others, it's where they get their payslip. Some may say it's where they lookup telephone numbers. Others will mention collaboration or apps.

The reason for this variation is because:

1. There is no set definition of what an intranet is, even among industry experts and vendors
2. The intranet and its capabilities can differ from organization to organization, and even from division to division
3. Sometimes different technologies and tools are integrated into the intranet, and it's hard to ascertain where the intranet "starts" and "stops"

If there is a consensus on defining the intranet it relates to its role as a publishing platform, a place to view internal communications and informational content about the company and its activities. But beyond this, an intranet can incorporate many different features.

The important question is less about what the intranet is and more about whether you have the intranet that is right for your organization.

### Traditional intranets vs Modern intranets

Intranets do get a bad press, but actually they are one of the great workplace technology survivors. Intranets have been around since the mid-nineties and, in technology terms, that makes them almost ancient!

Intranets have survived as a format because they have evolved and improved, adding a wider and more sophisticated range of capabilities such as personalization, social media tools, integrations, advanced analytics, mobile solutions, and better design.

Let us consider those intranets that have evolved as modern intranets and those that have not as traditional intranets. We find that the vast majority of intranets that are adding value today are modern intranets, while those that fail tend to lean towards the traditional model.

### Why do traditional intranets fail?

Traditional intranets tend to eschew extra functionality and consist mainly of a repository of static content and corporate communications. Although some of this content may be useful, often the content is not engaging or useful enough to drive adoption. When this happens, a traditional intranet can rapidly fall into decline:

- Employees stop visiting
- Internal communicators and others see the intranet as ineffective and start using alternative communication channels, such as email
- With lesser visits, content owners stop keeping content up to date and content quality declines
- As content fails, employee trust in the intranet erodes further
- The intranet is regarded as failing and is not a target for investment
- Over time, the intranet fails

# What functionality is in a modern intranet?

Modern intranets are different, incorporating elements and capabilities that make them far more useful and engaging than their traditional counterparts. They do include some of the features of a traditional intranet but are capable of much more:

- **Internal communications:**  
Support for companywide and local updates such as news, announcements, and video.
- **Reference:**  
Formal information about the company and its departments covering strategy, operations, policies, and procedures
- **Personalization:**  
Personalized and targeted content and experiences relating to role, location, division and more
- **Social platform:**  
Social tools such as profiles, activity feeds, blogs and polls to drive dialogue, engagement and culture amplification
- **Collaboration and communication:**  
Groups and spaces for teams and communities to collaborate on work projects.
- **Digital workplace integration:**  
Integrations with other digital workplace tools that allow employees to use the intranet as a launchpad to other systems and to complete tasks.
- **Digitalization:**  
Forms and workflows to digitize manual processes and approvals.
- **Search:**  
A search facility that ideally searches across multiple systems.
- **Mobile-app:**  
The ability to access the intranet from a mobile device, ideally both corporate and employee-owned phones.
- **Intuitive design:**  
Intuitive and attractive interfaces including a homepage that aggregates some of the above all into one view.
- **Administration tools:**  
Features to help intranet teams, administrators and site owners manage the intranet.

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Intranets with some or all of the features tend to be useful and engaging, and therefore get good adoption and in turn attract investment because they continue to add value. They also cover a much wider range of processes and capabilities. Turn a traditional intranet off and nobody may notice for a while. Turn a modern intranet off and the IT support desk phone will not stop ringing.



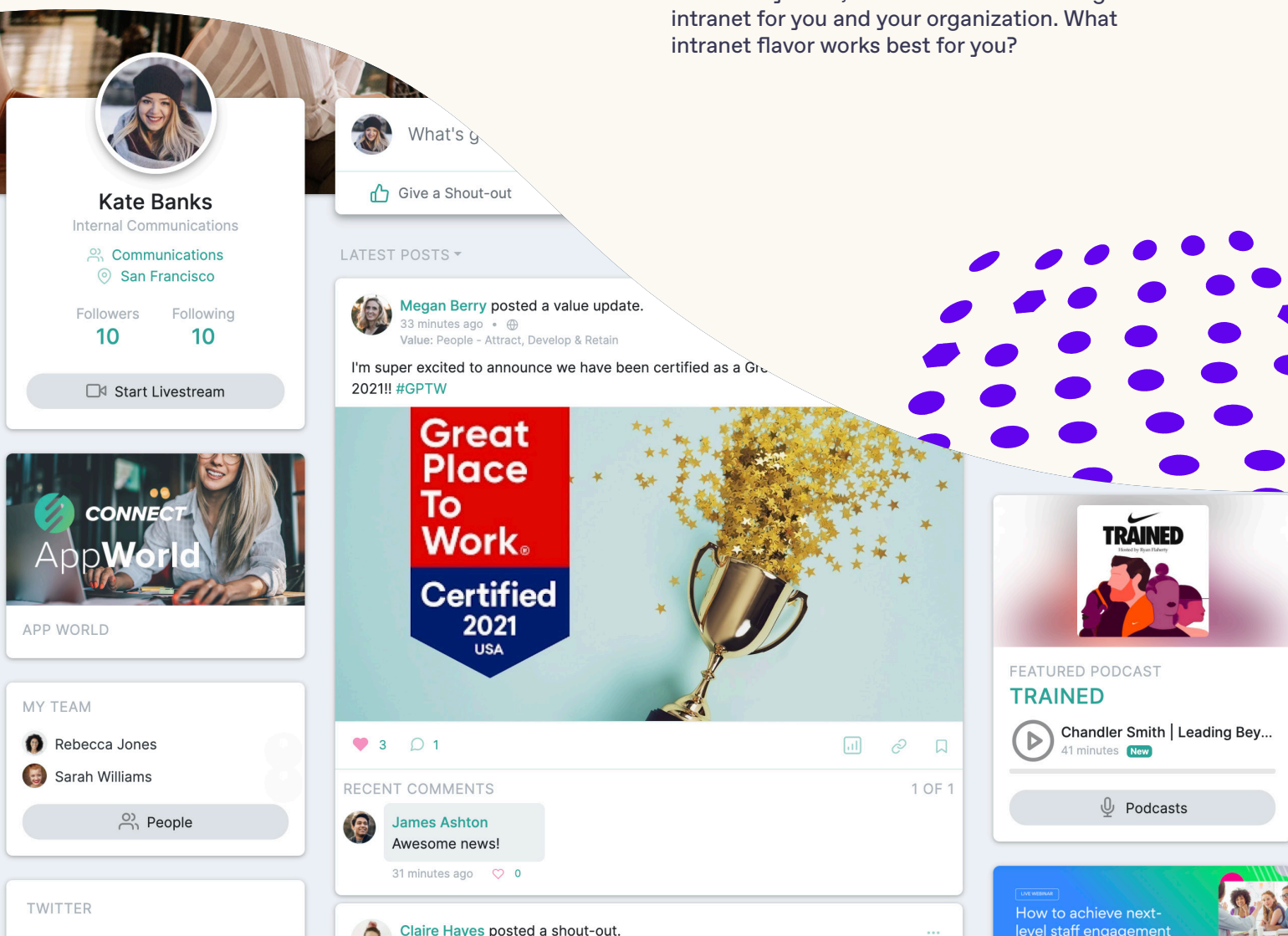
## 2. WHAT FLAVOR OF INTRANET IS RIGHT FOR YOU?

### Different flavors of a modern intranet

What do ice creams and modern intranets have in common? Well, at first glance not much, but actually both can come in different flavors.

The flavor of your intranet is dictated by what you use the intranet for and what capabilities it has. It is influenced by your culture, the sector you are in, your brand, and the tone of the voice of your content and communications.

Whatever you do, it is critical to find the right intranet for you and your organization. What intranet flavor works best for you?



**Kate Banks**  
Internal Communications  
Communications  
San Francisco  
Followers 10 Following 10  
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33 minutes ago •   
Value: People - Attract, Develop & Retain  
I'm super excited to announce we have been certified as a Great Place To Work 2021!! #GPTW

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**RECENT COMMENTS** 1 OF 1  
**James Ashton**  
Awesome news!  
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**FEATURED PODCAST**  
**TRAINED**  
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Podcasts

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## Consider the following five flavors of intranet:

### Social:

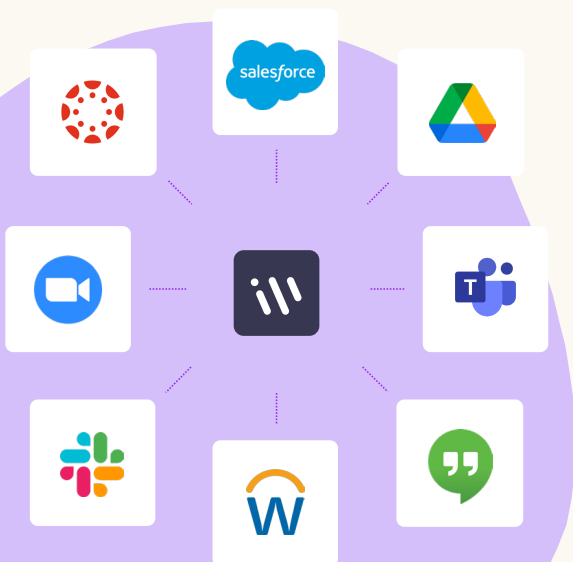
A dynamic and lively intranet that is full of user-generated content, activity feeds, status updates, and communications that reflect the people of the organization. The social intranet is the beating heart of your organization and a reflection of the best of your culture. Social tools and capabilities are at their core.

### Encyclopedia:

A repository of useful reference information and knowledge that employees need to refer to, to carry out their roles. This might not sound very engaging, but actually it's important, authoritative, trusted, up-to-date, and heavily used. A powerful search also helps employees find what they need.

### Digital workplace:

The intranet is the front door and the launchpad for the wider digital workplace, the portfolio of applications that get used every day. Integrations with different systems also allow employees to complete simple transactions without leaving the intranet itself. The intranet is the go-to place to get things done.



### Newspaper or magazine:

The intranet is focused on delivering more formal, corporate communications. It is more formal than a social intranet, but it's professional, has real impact, and is great at keeping employees up to date with the latest happenings. Leaders are also highly visible.

### Mobile:

Your intranet is designed to be accessed on mobile devices because that is how your workforce consumes information. Many of them are on the go and do not sit at desks. An intranet is an essential tool that both helps employees when on-site but also makes them feel connected to their company and to their co-workers.

**In truth, an effective modern intranet may actually need to be more than one or even all of these flavors.**

For example, most of our clients use the Workvivo platform as a social intranet and as a mobile intranet. Social tools are the heart of Workvivo and the Workvivo employee app provides employees on the go with all they need. But Workvivo can also be an 'encyclopedia' with useful reference material, a 'newspaper' with more formal communications, and also a 'digital workplace' through our launchpad for apps and our powerful integrations.



## The power of social

One element we find when we speak to organizations is that the “social intranet” flavor tends to be regarded as particularly important. Whether social tools are actually part of the core intranet functionality or through an integration, employees now expect an intranet to be social at its core.

In terms of capability this means:

1. Everyone in your organization has a voice and can use different tools to express themselves and give opinions on a range of topics
2. Everyone can comment, like and share on news and internal communications
3. Employees can create blogs to keep their colleagues updated about different subjects and activities
4. Social networking allows employees to follow others and groups to get updates through an activity feed
5. Polls and surveys are used on the intranet to gather opinions
6. Senior leaders use the intranet to deliver updates where employees can get to know them as a person, not just as the CEO
7. People can create communities and groups both on professional topics and on non-work interests
8. The intranet breaks down hierarchy with direct interactions between the most senior and junior people in your organization



### 3.

## WHERE DOES THE INTRANET FIT INTO THE WIDER DIGITAL COMMUNICATIONS LANDSCAPE?



For it to be truly effective, an intranet and its role have to be viewed in the context of the wider digital communications landscape that is in place at an organization. In our whitepaper “The digital communications landscape: getting it right” we wrote:

**“digital communications are inherently complex and usually the accompanying landscape of tools is equally complex too; in any one organization at any one time there are a plethora of intranets, employee apps, collaboration tools, conferencing solutions, messaging apps and more in use.”**

Those organizations that spend time on planning, organizing, consolidating, and improving their landscape will reap the benefits. This means having:

**“tools that work well, fewer duplicated apps, less confusion for employees, a reduction in fragmented processes, and more impactful communication.”**

When you have an intranet that is planned with the context of the other digital communication channels in your organization you can start to deliver an intranet that has real value.

### What does a good digital communications landscape look like?

In the whitepaper we suggest organizations with the best digital communication landscapes achieve characteristics such as high efficiency and healthy adoption.

Let’s look at these attributes and how a modern intranet might support these elements:





It is perfectly possible to build an intranet that can help contribute to a fantastic comms landscape that delivers all the above. You just need to have the right intranet for your organization and your employees.

## Landscape Characteristic

## How typical modern intranets support this

<b>High efficiency:</b> Streamlined to help employees get things done	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Supporting information about how to carry out tasks</li><li>• Easy access to relevant applications with Single Sign-On</li><li>• Integrations to support common transactions</li><li>• Easy access to collaborative spaces</li></ul>
<b>Good findability:</b> Employees can find who and what they need	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A good search that returns results from beyond the intranet</li><li>• Intuitive navigation focused on employee needs</li><li>• A good employee directory</li></ul>
<b>Lower costs:</b> Presents a good ROI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• High adoption to drive efficiency</li><li>• The intranet supports self-service for task completion</li><li>• Digitalization of manual or email-based processes</li></ul>
<b>Healthy adoption:</b> Great levels of usage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• All employees including disconnected employees can access the intranet at any time and from anywhere</li><li>• The intranet is available on mobile devices</li><li>• Critical news and updates keep employees informed</li><li>• The intranet is essential for completing tasks and getting things done</li><li>• Social tools and content keep employees engaged</li></ul>
<b>Effective Processes:</b> Key business processes are supported effectively	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Use measurement to drive continuous improvement</li><li>• Prioritize key business processes and make sure these continue to work well</li><li>• Establish feedback loops and even a user group to leverage employee input to improve the digital communications landscape</li></ul>
<b>Good employee experience:</b> drives engagement and is built around the way people actually work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Well-designed and attractive interfaces</li><li>• The lively and dynamic flow of content and information</li><li>• Relevant and personalized to individual roles, locations, and interests</li><li>• Any time access from anywhere on any device</li></ul>
<b>Low risk:</b> does not expose the organization to risks such as data breaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The intranet is fully secure and GDPR compliant</li><li>• It integrates with Active Directory (AD) and has robust authentication processes for employees not covered by AD</li></ul>
<b>High trust:</b> employees trust the information and communications they need	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Content is up to date, relevant and regularly reviewed</li><li>• Communications are open, authentic, transparent and well-written</li><li>• Senior leaders and managers make visible and regular contributions</li></ul>
<b>Effective processes:</b> key business processes are successfully enabled by the tools on hand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Key use cases are covered by the intranet</li><li>• Simple manual or email-based processes are replaced by forms, simple integrations or self-service approaches on the intranet</li></ul>

# The intranet in context

Even though we've outlined some of the ways modern intranets can support a great digital communication landscape, it's possible that other tools in your digital communications landscape will already be doing some of these functions well. Therefore, the scope and capabilities of your modern intranet always need to be considered in relation to the other tools and channels being used.

An area where typically there is some overlap happens is social and collaborative tools. Consider a scenario where you may have an existing social network or employee app like Workvivo that is used for your communities and team collaboration, as well as more engaging internal communications. You may have an existing intranet that tends to be used for more formal internal communications and as a repository for company information. Actually, both tools work pretty well and although there is a little overlap, it's fine as you can push more formal internal communications through the social networks too.

In this case, it doesn't necessarily mean you have to change your intranet and in reality, you're effectively operating two intranets here. Let's look at another scenario. You may have a well-established social intranet, but the mobile experience is poor and only your connected workers with corporate emails can access it. If half of your employees are frontline or deskless employees who are "disconnected" and need mobile access but don't need access to all the

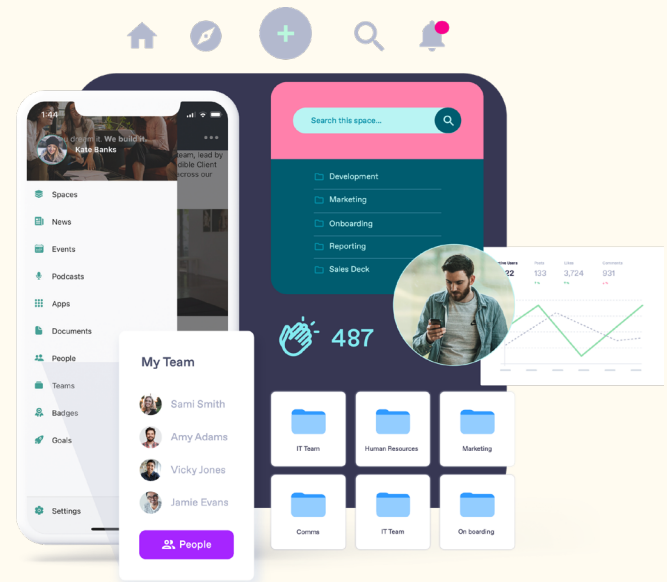
information on the intranet, then getting a separate employee app that your deskless employees can use may be the best way forward.

This may sound obvious, but actually what you are doing here is co-ordinating your digital communications landscape and taking a "**best of breed**" approach to ensure that your tools and channels play to their strengths and are effective for all your workforce and the processes that matter.





## 4. HOW DO I START TO DEFINE THE INTRANET WE ACTUALLY NEED?



### Seven steps to start to define the intranet you actually need.

#### 1. Start the conversation

Get the idea of a new intranet on the agenda to get your stakeholders thinking about the kind of benefits a new intranet could bring. What do they think? Use some of the ideas and suggestions in this book as a reference point.

#### 2. Understand your users and what you need

Undertake research with your users to understand how they use your current intranet and other digital communication tools. Get a feel for needs, pain points, use cases, what works, and what they would like to see. Use interviews, workshops, surveys, observation, and usage metrics.

Even if you then carry out something more detailed and formal later on to finalize requirements, always start with how your users feel. Getting data can also support your business case.

#### 3. Look at your current capabilities

Consider the current capabilities of your intranet. What does it do well? Where are the gaps? Take a look at the capabilities of intranet software such as Workvivo to get a sense of what platforms can deliver. Consider organizing some product demos. Speak to your peers at other organizations to see how their intranets stack up.

#### 4. Map your digital communications landscape

Map out your wider digital communications landscape of apps and tools and what they are used for to understand the context of how your intranet is used and could be used. Do employees already use a different application to do what an intranet could do better? Is there already an employee app in use that you are not exploiting to its full capability? Download our whitepaper “The digital communications landscape: getting it right” for more information.

#### 5. Work out the gaps and opportunities

Analyze all your research and find common themes. Work out the potential gaps and opportunities for your new intranet in the context of organizational needs, user needs, your digital communications landscape, and what is possible.

#### 6. Articulate a vision and strategy with your stakeholders

Work with your stakeholders to articulate a vision and strategy for the new intranet based on your findings. Validate this with a group of users, perhaps the ones who featured in your initial research.

#### 7. Make the business case

Make the business case for the new intranet, carrying out more research if necessary, to get any supporting data to help make the argument.



workvivo

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We believe employees deserve great digital communication channels. That's why we're on a mission to produce more effective, modern intranets that are social at their core.

If you'd like a demo of the Workvivo platform and to discuss how it could help you deliver the intranet your workforce needs then get in touch.



# About Workvivo

Workvivo is the communication platform employees love to use. We took the digital social experience people are familiar with in their personal lives, and applied this to business. Employees can read and post content, like, share and comment in exactly the same way they do outside of the working environment, but they can also recognize others through shout-outs, link posts to company goals and values, create community spaces and publish company articles and events.

The way employees interact is changing, and companies must adapt if we're to maintain high levels of employee engagement. We founded Workvivo to connect employees in new and interesting ways. To increase engagement, to amplify culture and to create a real sense of community.



Give Back  
Organizational Goal

Shout-out to:



Joe Deane



Mia Cambridge



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Workvivo's mission is to elevate everyone's workplace experience by helping employees stay informed, engaged, and connected wherever they work from.



Simple Communications. Happier Teams.



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