MyHub

The Ultimate Guide

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Introduction

It's Hard To Get Started

Designing an intranet can be a confusing process. There are many decisions to be made around the type of intranet, hosting options, organization and structure as well as content and design. With so much to think about, it can be very hard to get started. That's where this intranet design guide comes into play.

Step By Step

We will take you through every step of the process, offering support and guidance along the way. What's more, this guide is written with the non-technical person in mind. We have deliberately minimized the use of jargon and technical language and where it's unavoidable, we clearly define our terms. This guide will show you that it is possible to set up an intranet without any internal IT backup. And you won't need a PhD in computers either!

Let Us Guide You

Use this guide to make your intranet deployment a smoother and quicker process. As well as being essential reading for those of you that are starting to look at deploying an intranet, it will also be useful for any business that is looking to revamp and relaunch an existing intranet. Either way, we understand the challenges that are involved and will give you the benefit of our experience by guiding you through the process from start to finish.

Things To Consider Before You Start

Before we can get into the detail of how to design a successful intranet, let's first look at the different types that are available. This will help you in deciding the right option for your business.

Different Types Of Intranet

Portal, extranet, intranet? The terminology is often used interchangeably and can be confusing to the uninitiated. Here we provide some clear definitions of what the terms mean to help guide your choice of the best option for your business.

Intranet

The pure definition of an intranet is that it is an online internal communications network that is accessible to staff members. It contains a variety of tools and services that are designed to help employees complete their jobs more efficiently and effectively.

Extranet

In a similar vein, an extranet is a closed private network, but the fundamental difference is that it is also accessible to selected external parties such as customers, clients or suppliers. It enables these external parties to communicate, collaborate and share information directly with your staff in a secure, online setup.

Portal

A portal is in effect a gateway that allows your intranet or extranet to connect with a range of external enterprise systems or apps. These commonly include customer relationship management software or human resources applications. The portal will, therefore, bring together all these tools in one platform and requires just a single sign-on.

And so an extranet or portal are really variations of the standard intranet. When it comes to developing and hosting your intranet, there are three options that are open to you. The options are as follows:

On-Premise Intranets Or Off-The-Shelf

With this option, you download software such as Sharepoint, WordPress or Drupal and create your own intranet which is then hosted on the company server.

An advantage of this type of intranet is that the software is often free to download and if you already have a company server then it's an easy enough task to host the intranet.

Among the disadvantages is that a reasonable amount of technical know-how is required to navigate your way through the software. In addition, often the software has not been developed with the specific purpose of creating an intranet – WordPress for instance is more of a blogging or website creation platform. Some companies have quickly discovered that the core free offering is limited in its functionality and requires the purchase of add-ons or plug-ins so that the 'free' software quickly becomes an entirely different beast. What's more, a company server requires a great deal of valuable physical space as well as ongoing maintenance.

Cloud Intranets

With this type of intranet you customize pre-built intranet templates to create your own unique intranet which is then hosted in the cloud by a dedicated intranet provider.

The great advantage of this type of intranet is that it is very easy to set up and manage and doesn't require any technical knowledge. And the advantages of the cloud are many including that it can be accessed 24/7 through an internet connection, providing great flexibility for businesses, particularly those with staff members that work remotely or who are out in the field a great deal. Another significant advantage is that the cloud intranet provider retains responsibility for ongoing security, backups and updates.

The disadvantage of a cloud intranet is that the solution has already been created and so it may not be a perfect match to your business requirements. In addition, companies are not in complete control of the software.

Custom Build

Some larger companies, especially those with dedicated internal IT resources have gone down the route of developing an entirely bespoke intranet from scratch. The main advantage is that the intranet has been developed in response to the specific needs of the business and the company retains complete control over functionality, updates and revisions. The disadvantage is the time and resources involved in developing a custom-built intranet – from drawing up the initial brief to development, piloting and finally the launch, you are easily looking at several months and many thousands of dollars.

Will I Need Help?

The simple answer is that it depends on which intranet option you select. As we've already seen, some types of intranet require more technical know-how than others. In addition, a lot depends on the time and resources you have available and the priorities you have set for your intranet. If having an entirely bespoke intranet is a high priority for you and you have the support of an IT department and a company server, then a custom-built or do-it-yourself option may well be your preference. If, however, time and resources are finite and you want your intranet to be up and running sooner rather than later, then a cloud option is probably the way to go.

And if time really is a big factor then here at MyHub we also offer a design service to support you in getting your intranet off the ground.

The Real Cost Of Launching An Intranet

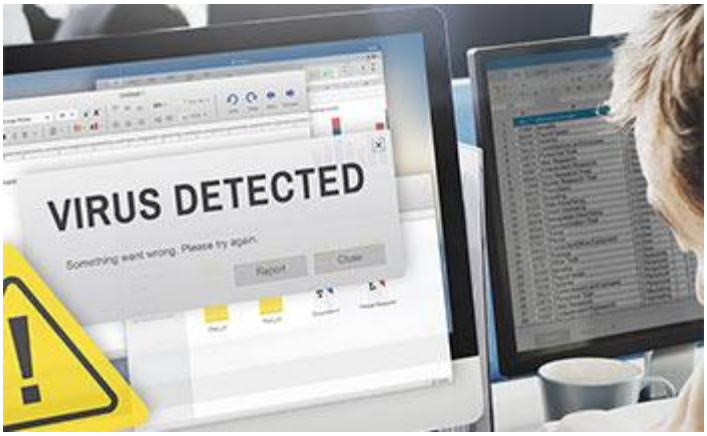
We can't tell you exactly how much it will cost to implement an intranet in your business, but what we can do is highlight the costs you need to factor into your budget – some of which you may not have even thought of:

Staff Training

Make sure you include a training budget within your calculations as all employees will need training to get up to speed with the intranet and all the tools that it offers. The training doesn't have to be the traditional classroom-style either, webinars, demonstrations, how-to videos or podcasts are other media that you could utilize.

Security

If you are going down the do-it-yourself route then assuring the security of the information on the intranet will be a big cost to factor in. Purchasing and installing anti-virus software, malware and firewalls, as well as network layer security, can quickly add up to a significant investment. What's more, you'll also be responsible for updating all these security measures and for keeping on top of the latest security developments. With a cloud option, however, the provider retains responsibility for maintaining a secure hosting environment.



Maintenance

Again this is a factor in the do-it-yourself options. Maintaining the company server and updating the software is entirely your responsibility. Downtime, backups and updates are additional costs that you will need to factor into the budget. Cloud intranets, on the other hand, offer high availability and uptime as well as automatic updates and backups.

Cloud Subscription Model

Most cloud intranet providers offer a subscription model and so for a fixed monthly fee you get unlimited numbers of users and unlimited amounts of data storage. With a cloud provider, therefore, there is cost certainty.

Costs Associated With Other Intranet Options

There is not the same degree of cost certainty with the do-it-yourself options and much depends on the scope and extent of your intranet offering. Be sure though to include sufficient provision in the budget for piloting and testing your intranet. Companies often overlook this important final stage of the process.

Planning Your Intranet

Now that we're clear about what an intranet is and the different types available, let's turn our attention to getting started. So what is it you want your intranet to achieve? What organizational goals or pain points are you seeking to address with your intranet?

Typically companies introduce intranets in response to a range of potential problems. Your organization may well face similar issues. Hopefully, the ideas below will get you thinking about what the aims and objectives are for your intranet.

What Problems Will It Solve?

Companies that have introduced an intranet report positive spinoffs in a number of business areas and these include:

Internal Communications

Intranet news feeds, blogs and company calendars are the perfect mechanisms for promoting two-way conversations with staff members. Internal communications is a perennial issue, but the intranet will make it a smoother, more engaging process for your employees. With an intranet, all news and updates are kept in one central location, so there is only one source of truth in the organization. And it will reduce your dependency on email as the primary means of communication.

Reduced Organizational Costs

As well as staff spending less time sourcing information and documents, an intranet will also see savings in your printing and distribution costs. Paper files will be a thing of the past as the intranet becomes the repository for all company-wide knowledge.

Removal Of Information Silos

To a lesser or greater extent information silos are a problem in most businesses. We all know the scenario well where colleagues in another team are unable or unwilling to share information or data that would be of benefit to other parts of the business. Duplication of effort, missed opportunities and an inability to react quickly are just some of the consequences of this mind set. An intranet, however, with its content and document management systems has the potential to break down these silos and increase the organization's capacity for collaborative working and innovation.

Decreasing The Reliance On Technical Staff

A cloud intranet, in particular, is easy to use and easy to manage on an ongoing basis. This means that you won't need to rely on technical staff (whether internal or external contractors) to manage and update the intranet, making it both a time and cost-saving option.

Remote Working

Nowadays more and more employees are telecommuting or are based in different geographical locations or even time zones. This trend is set to continue as workers strive to achieve a better work-life balance. Employers that fail to keep up with this trend are missing a trick. The open-all-hours nature of the cloud intranet means that your employees are still productive and connected even if they are working from home, attending a conference in Europe or are visiting clients in the field.

Intranet Security Matters

Before we get started, no guide to designing and setting up an intranet would be complete without some reference to intranet security. Ensuring the security and integrity of all the information and data on your intranet will be a top concern regardless of which option you choose to deploy. And security isn't just about external threats to your network. It's also about ensuring that the right staff are accessing the right information.

Now intranet security is a complicated topic that almost warrants its own manual and so here we only scratch the surface. If you are interested in finding our more detail then please check out the following intranet security posts.

External Threats

Even internal, closed networks are susceptible to hackers or malicious software including worms, viruses, and malware and so at the very least you will need to install a firewall. This acts as a protective barrier between your intranet and the wider world wide web and although it is not foolproof, when it comes to cyber safety, it's an essential first line of defense. Similarly, you will need to install an effective email filter to guard against phishing, spyware and malware.

Another minimum requirement is anti-virus software, but as the threat from viruses is constantly changing, make sure you update your software on a regular basis.

Internal Threats

Staff members choosing weak passwords that are easily compromised is an issue. Counteract this threat by forcing employees to change their passwords on a regular basis and encourage the use of symbols and numbers as well as letters.

Restrict access to sensitive information by using role-based file and page permissions so that staff can only view data that is pertinent to their work. And make sure that you quickly delete the accounts of employees that no longer work for you.

Encryption

This is the process of converting data into an unrecognizable or encrypted form. The standard way to achieve this is through Secure Socket Layer (SSL) technology. Utilizing SSL will protect sensitive business documents and information on your intranet. Some cloud intranet providers use the latest Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPPA) compliant applications via Amazon Web Services (AWS). As well as being used to encrypt data in transit, AWS also has features that can be used to meet HIPAA requirements for auditing, backups, and disaster recovery.

With the do-it-yourself intranet options, it's your responsibility to install and update these security features. With a cloud option, however, the intranet provider retains responsibility for all security matters and so if you think phishing is something you do from a boat, then this could be an important advantage to take into consideration.

How To Get Your Intranet Project Started

You've by now settled on an appropriate intranet platform for your organization having considered the different types of solutions available, the costs, the problems it will solve and various security considerations. The next step is to further engage with relevant stakeholders within your organization in order to get the intranet project formally started with the support of the business and make sure that your the project is a success.

Intranet Steering Group

Setting up a cross-departmental intranet steering group is a good starting point. Membership should include representation from all levels and departments within the business as well as a senior manager or board member to ensure the group has sufficient authority to get the job done. The group will have a number of responsibilities including the following:

- agreeing the aims and objectives for the intranet bearing in mind the pain points that the intranet is being set up to resolve
- identifying the company culture
- devising the brand requirements
- setting the overall tone for the intranet – whether your brand and style is more formal or informal in tone
- consulting and involving staff in the key functions that need to be included
- developing an initial sitemap for the intranet.

Initial Things To Consider

It's very hard to start off with a blank piece of paper and so to guide the workings of the group we've developed a checklist to help focus your attention. These are the key principles that you need to be aware of from the outset and which will guide your planning:

Keep It Simple

The best intranets are the ones that a follow a simple, uncluttered look.

Engaging Content

Straightforward, everyday language is a must as is the use of images, diagrams and video to give your intranet visual appeal and variety.

Easy To Use

An overly complicated intranet will simply not get used by staff members. When designing your intranet think like the typical site user and make it as simple and intuitive as possible.

Branding, Colors & Fonts

You will want your intranet to reflect your existing company image and to be in keeping with your public-facing internet site.

Mobile Responsiveness

Having an intranet site that is mobile responsive is an absolute must in today's digital workplace and especially if you have a large number of remote workers or your staff are often out of the office and on the road.

Check out further topics on getting started on your intranet project.

Armed with a clear understanding of the key principles, let's go on now to examine in detail intranet design best practices.

Intranet Design Best Practices

Intranets have now been around since the 1990s and so there is a large body of best practice evidence that this guide draws upon. What's more, also reflected in this guide are some of the latest internet design best practices and guidelines, which often cover similar ground. You'll find lots more detail on different aspects of intranet design within our blog, but here we provide an overview of the key issues.

Navigating The Site – Navigation Menu

Site navigation is fundamental to a successful intranet as your site will be useless if users cannot easily and quickly find the information and tools that they are after.

Sitemap

We've touched on this briefly already, but the first step is to develop a sitemap. A sitemap sets the structure and organization of your site. Often it reflects the organizational structure of your business with each department or team having their own specific area on the site. Quite often, each department will want to have their own navigation home page followed by a series of sub-pages.

To get started on your sitemap, gather together a small group of key stakeholders and a whiteboard. The stakeholders could be your intranet steering group or they may choose to delegate the task to the departmental level. The stakeholders are tasked with identifying the department's key parent or main pages along with the child or sub-pages.

To illustrate this let's use the example of the human resources (HR) department. HR will have their own parent page which will be the gateway to all the HR information and data and so child pages could include leave requests, performance management, employee wellness and employee benefits and so on. A similar process needs to be followed by the other departments as well as any centralized data that all personnel need to access.

The sitemap should make sense in the context of the organization. The key test is that it should be easy to navigate the most important information without the need to search. And remember that each parent and child page should be solving a business problem or need. Be careful though not to go overboard with the number of child pages. We've all had experience of those annoying automated phone systems where you have to select from a series of menus before eventually getting to speak to someone about your issue. You don't want to be replicating this kind of experience for users of your intranet.

Page Access

And while you're drawing up your sitemap, it's a good idea to begin considering whether any page viewing permission restrictions need to be put in place. Given the sensitive nature of the data that's likely to be on at least some of these intranet pages, it's likely that some pages will need to be secure in terms of who can create and edit content. In addition, you may want to restrict access to certain pages so that only appropriate staff as determined by job role, team or geographic location can view the data. Being mindful of these issues at the initial planning stages will save valuable time later on in the process.

Mobile Devices

It's also important to bear in mind that up to 60 percent of users will want to navigate around your site using a mobile device. You will, therefore, need to ensure that when viewing your site on a mobile or tablet that the navigation area fits the screen for both landscape and portrait viewing.

Intranet Pages On-page Navigation

It's a fact that when viewing information online, we tend to read from left to right and so it pays to put all the important information on the left-hand side. With this in mind, columns are a great way to present information but make sure you use the appropriate column width for the information you would like to present. For example, always place your main content in a full-width or 2/3rds column while things like links or social media feeds work well in narrower columns on the right-hand side. Also, keep in mind how the columns flow one on top of each other on mobile devices including what will display first, always test it on an actual mobile device if you can.

Home Pages Should Pack A Punch

First impressions really do count and the home page will set the standard for your whole intranet so make sure yours packs a punch. Why not use a striking visual or image to really grab the user's attention? And make sure the content of the home page is refreshed on a regular basis as static content is disengaging. It's also a good idea to set up links on the home page to the most commonly used or requested information on other pages. You could also consider directly downloading or displaying the most frequently accessed policies or files to make it even easier for the user.

Images

Too much writing and big blocks of text make for a dull and boring intranet. Diagrams, photos, infographics are all useful ways to add visual appeal to your site. But rather than using stock photos sourced from the web, why not include real photos of team members or situations and settings that will be relevant to your employees. This will increase their sense of engagement and will help to make the intranet more relevant. Images also help to ensure the intranet reflects your brand personality.

The Six, Six Rule

Be mindful of limiting the number of pages as too many will make the site overly complex, cumbersome to use and difficult to navigate. And so try to design your intranet with the six, six rule in mind: a maximum of six pages with six items of content on each page. This exercise will also help you to focus on what's really important. And when you're reviewing the setup, it should be obvious what the problems or pain points are that each page is resolving.

White Space

Wherever possible use lots of white space to break up the text. Think of it as being the blank canvas on which all the other design elements are placed. White space, far from being wasted space, helps to create a clean and uncluttered overall look for your site.

Hyperlinks

It's best to be economical with hyperlinks to documents – too many on one page can be overwhelming and distracting for the user. Instead, break the links out into logical sections using expanding and

collapsing content areas with intuitive and relevant sub-headings. Here's an example, sub-heading Travel Policies > Hotel Expenses (hyperlink). And instead of always using text hyperlinks of the click here kind, think about using images that act as links. In terms of the end user's experience, this is much more obvious and visually engaging.

Use Relevant Headings To Assist With Searches

Make sure your page and content headings provide enough detail to return meaningful search results as well as guiding users to the information they are looking for as they scan the content on the page. In our experience, younger demographics tend to use the search site tool more than an older demographic who tend to just navigate through the pages to find the information they are looking for. And that's why descriptive headings are so important.

Consistency

Take the time to ensure all of your content is consistent in style, especially font and font sizes. Don't fall into the trap of copying from another document and pasting directly into your intranet without adjusting the font and font size or you will end up with an inconsistent look and feel that will not only confuse your users, it will also, more importantly, look unprofessional. The true test is whether you would take the same approach with your customer-facing website. It is well worth the investment in time.

Banners

Use banners or page header images at the top of each page. This acts as a welcome to the page and can highlight what the user will find on the page. It's also visually engaging.

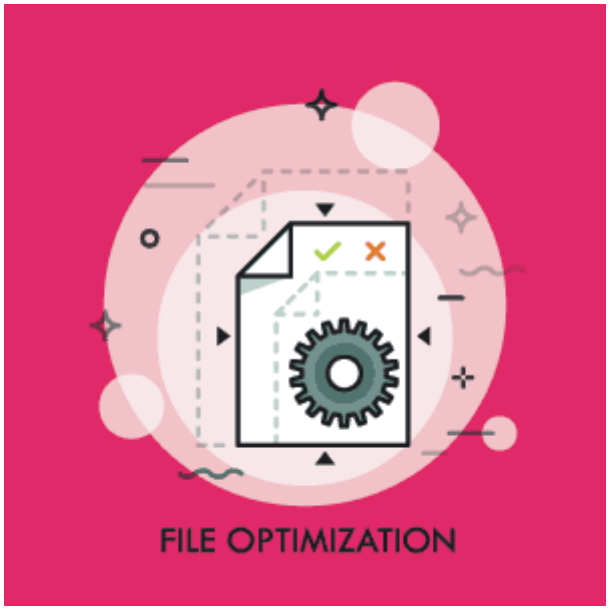
File Sizes For Web And Mobile

Large files will take a long time to download and this is especially relevant with a mobile connection. There's nothing more annoying than having the browser whizzing around for ages while it struggles to download a graphic or video. So that high-res, glossy sales brochure that downloaded so quickly in the office may not really be a viable option for your sales reps out in the field. Pick a format that works well on both the web and mobiles: JPEGs or PNGs are the best choices. And if you are planning to use lots of videos on your site then upload them first to YouTube and then embed the video in an iframe or

widget on your intranet. That way you can be certain that users will be able to access the video regardless of the type of device that they're using.

Content Contributors

It's likely that you will have a number of intranet content contributors identified in your company. These contributors may be on a team, department or geographic basis. To ensure that all-important consistency and uniformity to the look and feel of your intranet, it's important to have clear guidelines in place about fonts and font sizes, colors and branding.

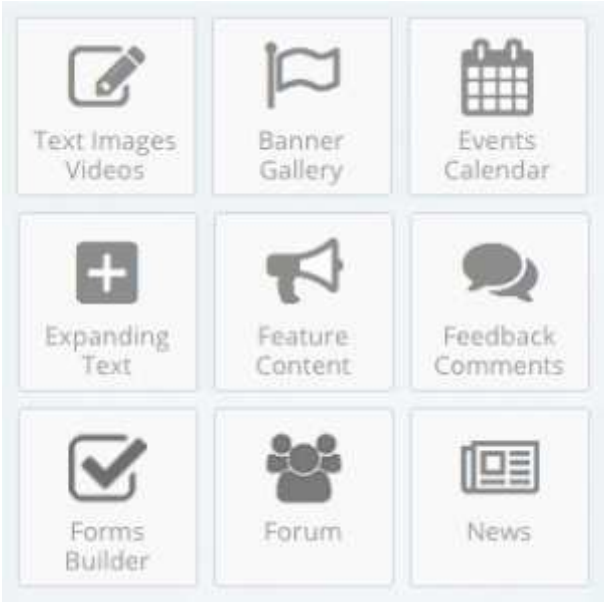


Intranet Design Templates

If you're finding that there's just too much to think about or you simply don't have the time to spend on designing your intranet, then utilizing intranet design templates could be the perfect solution.

Intranet templates are commonly developed by intranet providers as a part of their overall intranet solutions drawing on their expert experience. This allows you to straight away implement layouts and functionality that are based on best practices.

Intranet templates usually include pre-built modules and tools that you then customize to fit your own requirements. Far from being a one-size-fits-all solution, the intranet template allows you to upload logos and images, and develop a color scheme that is reflective of your unique company brand. And if your organization has no use for say the company calendar feature, then you can dispense with that module.



The great advantage of an intranet template is that the functionality has been tried and tested. There's no need for extensive piloting as there are many companies out there just like yours, which are already using the intranet template. You can, therefore, be confident in the intranet's functionality and that it does what it says it will.

In addition, because the intranet template is already pre-built it means your intranet can be up and running very quickly. For example, using MyHub's five-step site builder

process, both content and functionality is easily setup with a drag and drop page builder. It's so intuitive that even a techno novice can produce a professional intranet in a matter of hours. What's more, cloud providers such as MyHub offer access to a dedicated setup and design expert at no additional cost, making it an even easier choice.

The intranet template also comes with page permissions and site access rules already built into it. All you have to do is customize them to meet your own organizational requirements. The same applies to the ongoing management of the site. It's a simple process to add, manage or delete single or multiple users as well as creating and editing content or assigning site administration rights to multiple users.

The bottom line is that if time and internal resources are an issue in your business then utilizing an intranet template will take all the hard work out of deploying an intranet.

Customizing The Overall Look And Feel

Whether you are designing your own intranet from scratch or you are using an intranet template and a cloud option, before you get into the nitty gritty of setting the site up it's important to think about the overall look and feel you want to achieve for your site. Do you want it to be a straight extension of your corporate public-facing brand, perhaps with a formal tone? Or it may be that you want the intranet to have a less formal, more open and collegial feel to it? Whatever option you choose, it's important to follow it through to all aspects of your intranet and not just the home page.

Be mindful of any brand elements or guidelines that need to be adhered to and so it's worthwhile checking that guidance on the use of the company logo before you go ahead. Be sure to add custom logos, colors and fonts so that the intranet reflects your existing image and is easily identifiable as being part of the corporate family.

Some intranet providers will issue a client with a default intranet web address (for example, https://yourcompanyname.myhubintranet.com). Consider early on whether you would like to set up a custom domain which is a website address of your choice usually using your own domain. Furthermore, ensure that you have the ability to customize the sending email address for notification emails being sent from your intranet to reduce confusion for your users.

Finally, it's worthwhile considering whether you want to give your intranet a name. Some businesses have found that naming the intranet gives it a sense of its own identity and helps to boost adoption rates amongst staff. And getting employees involved in choosing a name is a good way to generate a sense of excitement and anticipation around the intranet's launch.

Things To Consider Around Design And Functionality

With many years' experience in the business, we know a thing or two about intranets. And over the years we've seen many businesses trip up along the way and so we've come up with this checklist so that you can avoid some of the pitfalls that others have made before you.

Keep It Simple

Don't introduce features just for the sake of it. Simplicity really is the best policy certainly to start off with. There should be a specific purpose and organizational need behind every page, module and function and that should be your guiding principle. What's more, you don't need to have the complete intranet set up from day one. And so if for example, your intranet comes with a social networking tool, you could look to introduce this slowly to a select group of users to measure any positive or negative impact, rather than pushing ahead with a wholescale implementation. Simple also means having a minimalist page layout – keep it clean and uncluttered for maximum impact and use lots of imagery for visual appeal.

One Page At A Time

Build your intranet one step at a time. Try not to fall into the trap of having lots of pages with only limited information on them. The ideal approach is to build a page, share it with the intranet steering group or key stakeholders, sign it off and ensure any constructive feedback is reflected in the subsequent pages. The last thing you want to do is build an entire site only to discover that it doesn't meet your key objectives.

Set Up A Test Group

Another approach is to set up a test group to work alongside the steering group but whose task is to test functionality and the logical construction of the site. These will be representatives from the end users who will be using the site every day. Ask them to provide feedback on the intranet's usability, effectiveness and whether its functionality is set at the right level.

Allow Room For Growth

Hopefully, growth is inevitable in your business and so you will want to ensure your intranet is capable of developing alongside your company. You may not need to utilize all the available functionality just yet, but ideally, you will have a solution that will cater for the future as well.

Agree Your Must-Haves

There will be some features that are non-negotiable. These will form the core of your intranet. You may also have a list of desirable but non-essential features that you can add in over time.

Standard Intranet Features

In our experience, most businesses find the following features to be essential to their intranet setup:

- News: team and company news feeds, blogs and newsletters
- Cloud storage: a central cloud-based file storage area for all data, information and file sharing
- Staff directory: an easily searchable database with profiles, biographies and photos
- Company calendars: the central repository for all corporate deadlines, events, product launches or industry conferences and seminars.
- Embedded Google Apps or Microsoft Office 360: leverage the investment you've already made by embedding these apps directly into your site for more convenient access
- Automated forms: use the intranet's straightforward forms builder to develop online automated business processes thereby reducing the need for paper- or email-based ones
- Social intranet: facilitate collaboration and connections amongst staff with social intranet features such as activity walls and follow-me functionality
- Forums and chat rooms: give staff members a voice with forums and chat rooms and watch your levels of employee engagement increase
- Powerful search tools: this really is an essential tool as without it staff will struggle to maximize the intranet's full capabilities. An intuitive search function that delivers relevant results by subject, tags, titles or authors in a fraction of a second is a prerequisite for any successful intranet.

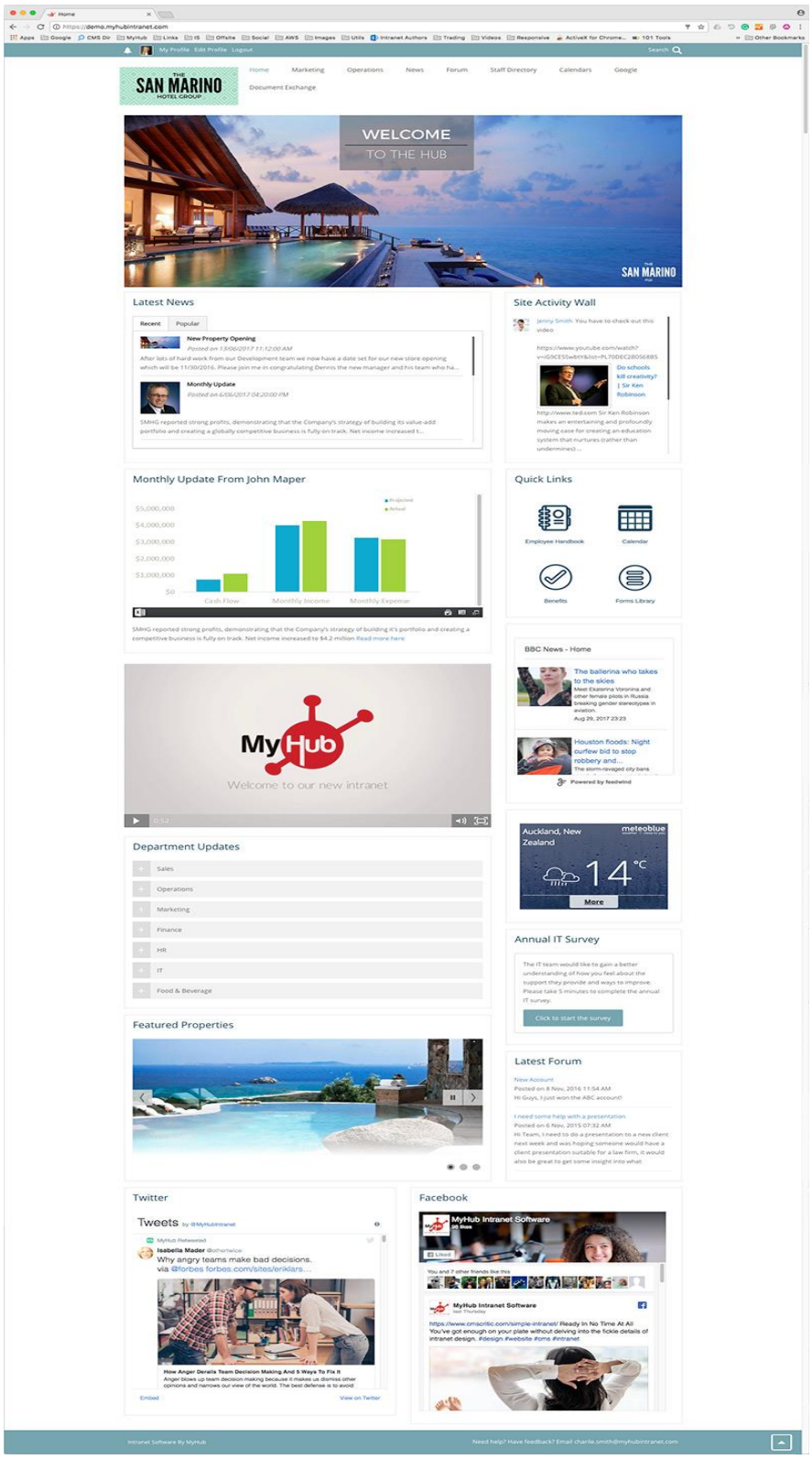
For a more in-depth list of features and details broken down by their different areas along with supporting videos check out MyHub's comprehensive intranet features page.

Intranet Design Examples

So what does a well-designed intranet look like? What lessons can we learn from the most successful intranets? Here are some best practice intranet examples together with a short commentary as to what makes them stand out.

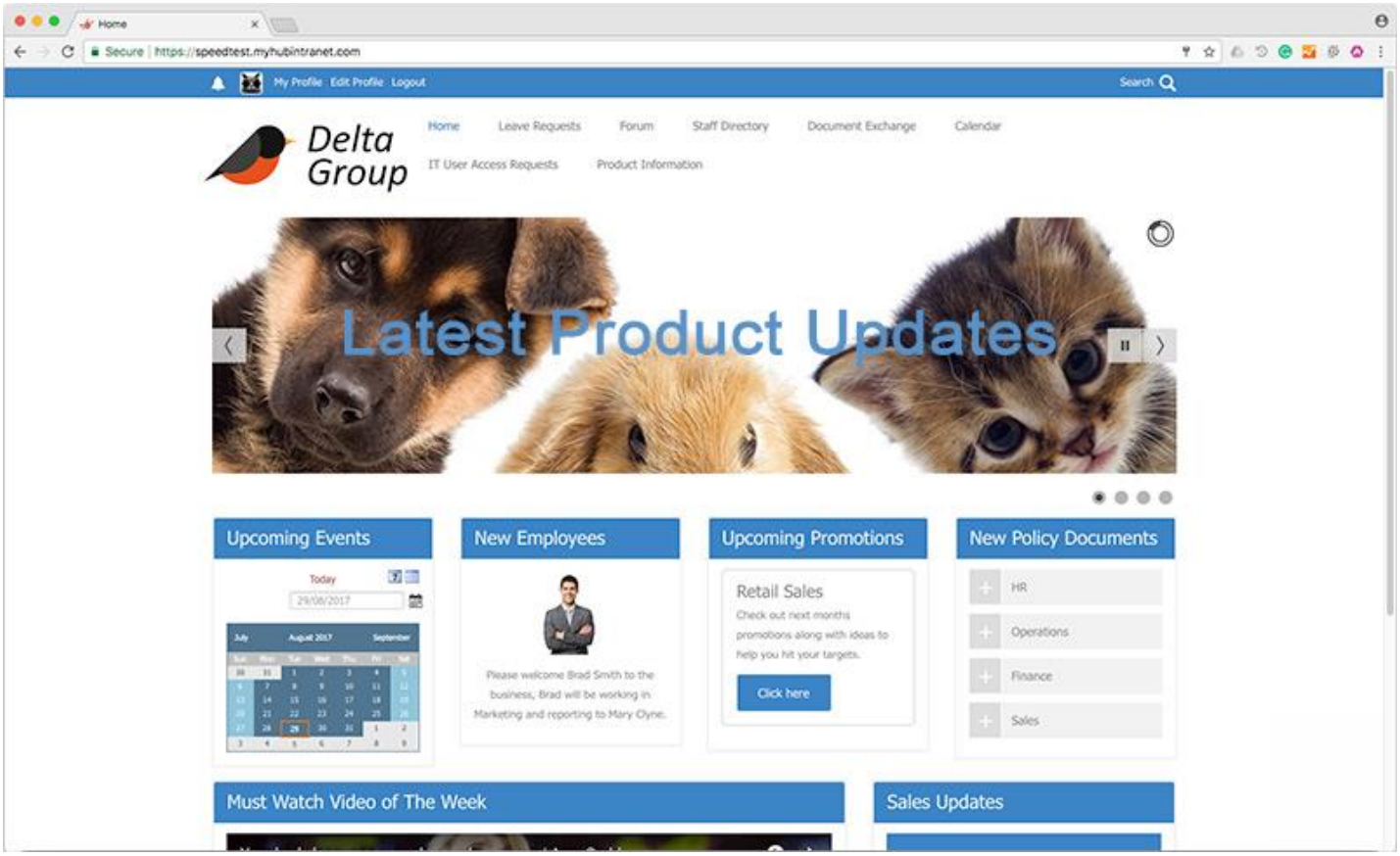
Home Page Example One

Engaging staff with vibrant images helps get them engaged in the content. With this example, you can see that they have opted to give the site a name “The Hub.” This helps with the identity of the intranet site and positions what the site is all about. Clear navigation links drill down into key departments and areas of information allowing staff to find what they’re looking for quickly and easily. In this example, they have the latest company news clearly positioned below the main intranet banner, which then leads on to other key announcements, links and information.



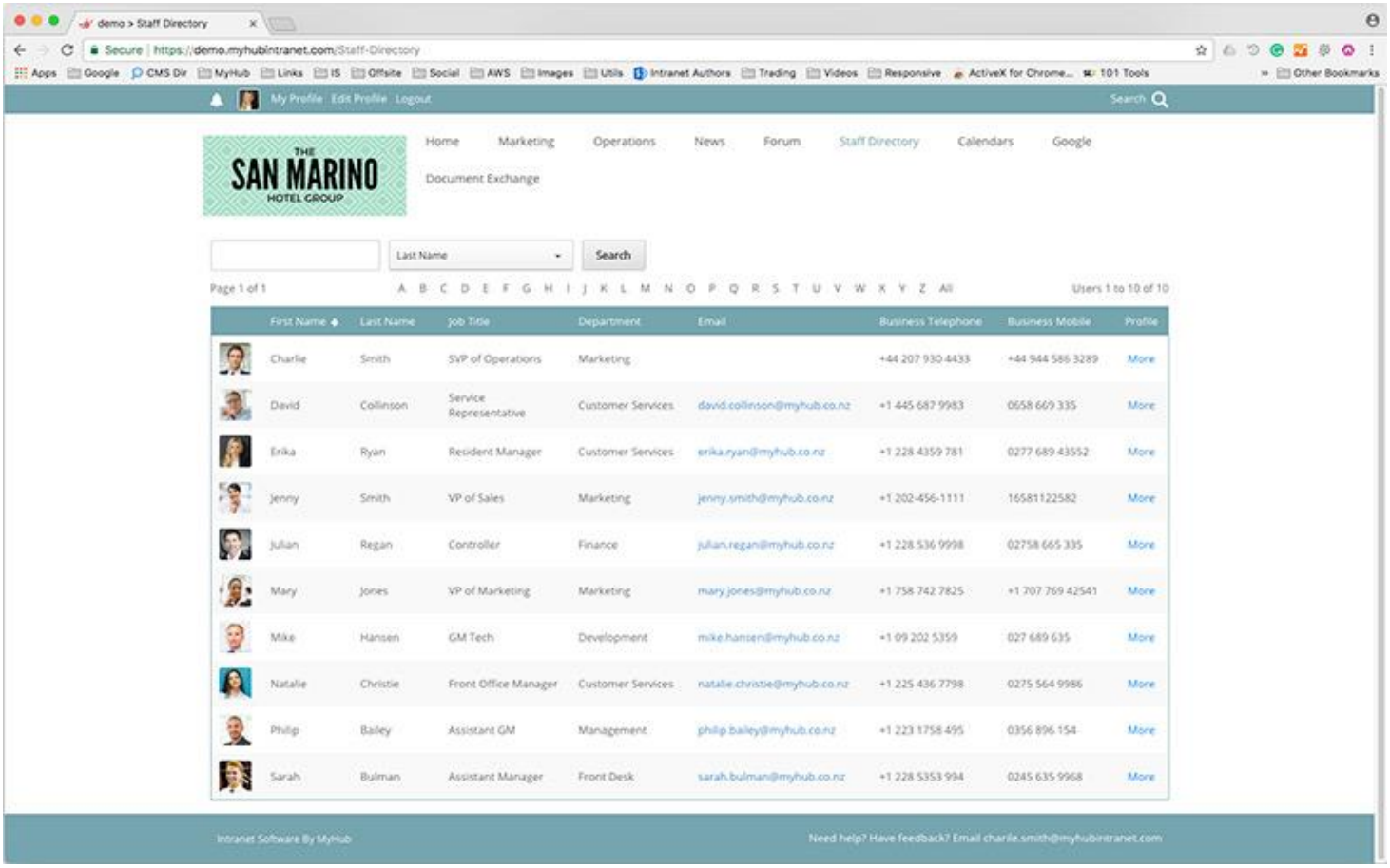
Home Page Example Two

Banners are a great way of linking to pages and help to put content into context. The home page example below shows how you can create a dashboard-style home page that provides easy access to the important areas of information your employees need.



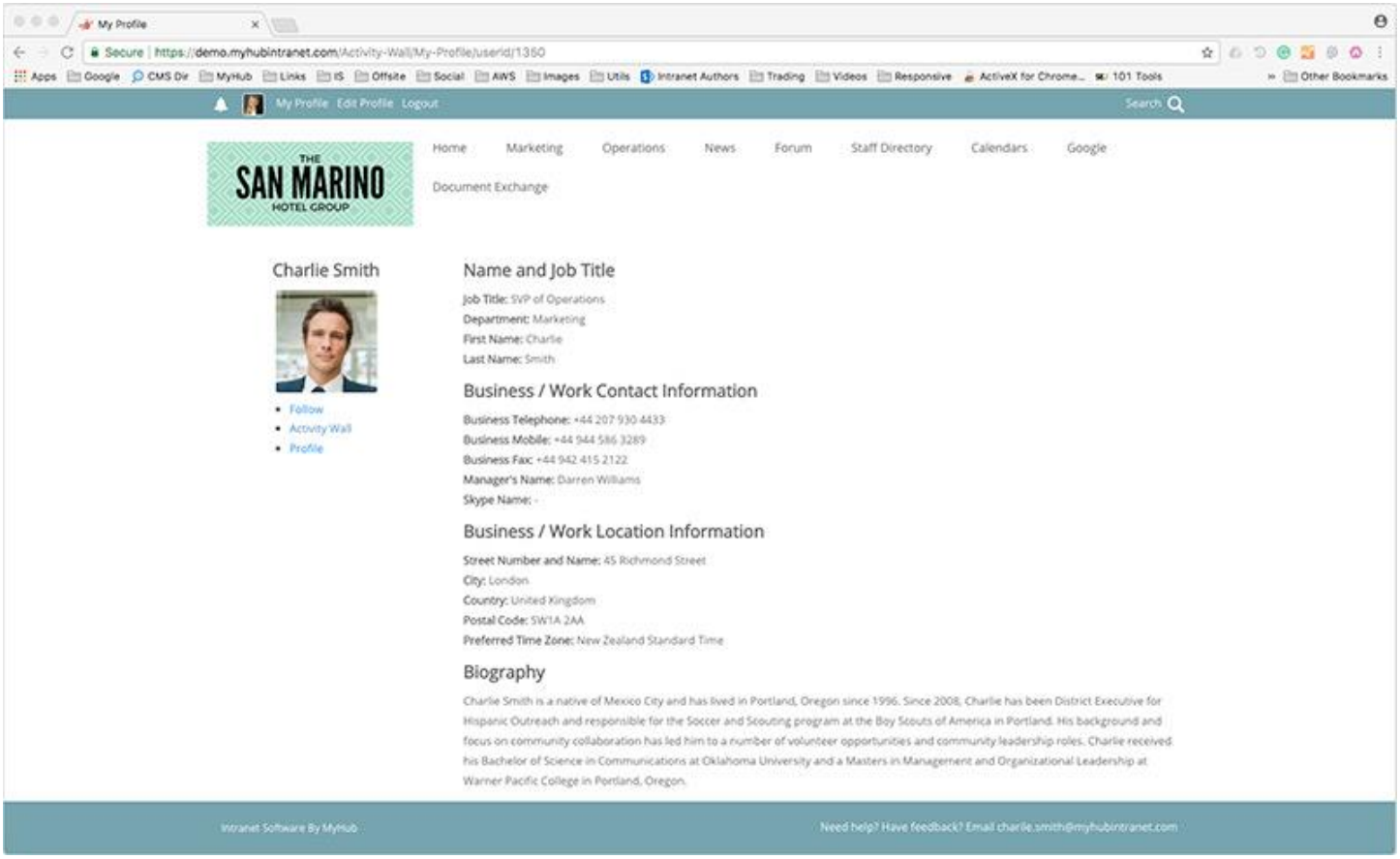
Staff Directory Example

Using a staff directory allows employees to easily connect right across your organization. Another benefit is rather than needing to remember everyone's name and job role, employees can access the staff directory whenever they like.



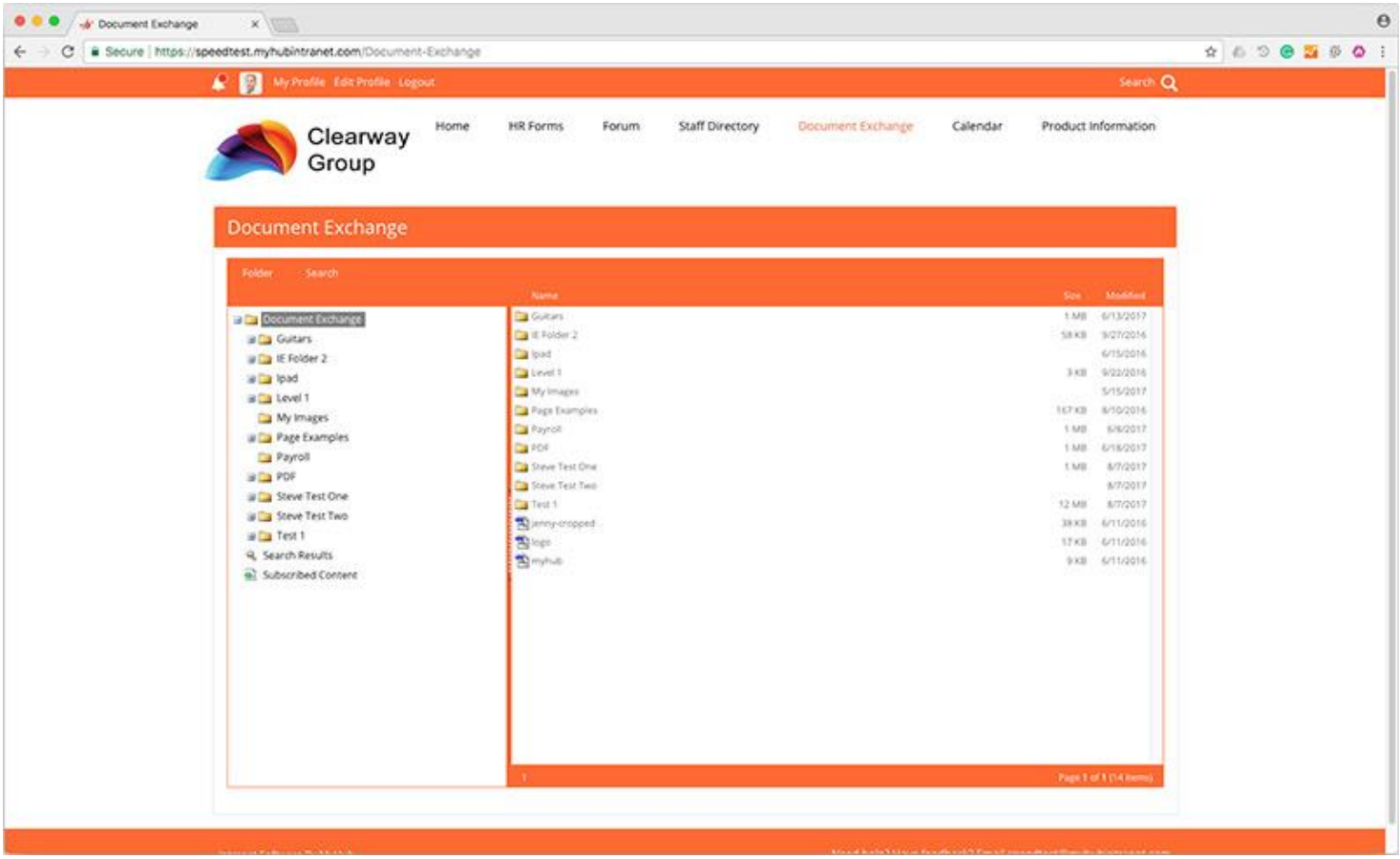
User Profiles Example

After using the staff directory to find a member of staff, user profile pages are an invaluable way of introducing employees to each other. This is great for new starters as well as being able to match an employee up to a skillset that you are looking for. Some intranet solutions like MyHub allow you to create and use custom profile fields within the profile pages, further expanding the options open to organizations for creating an intranet that will meet your needs.



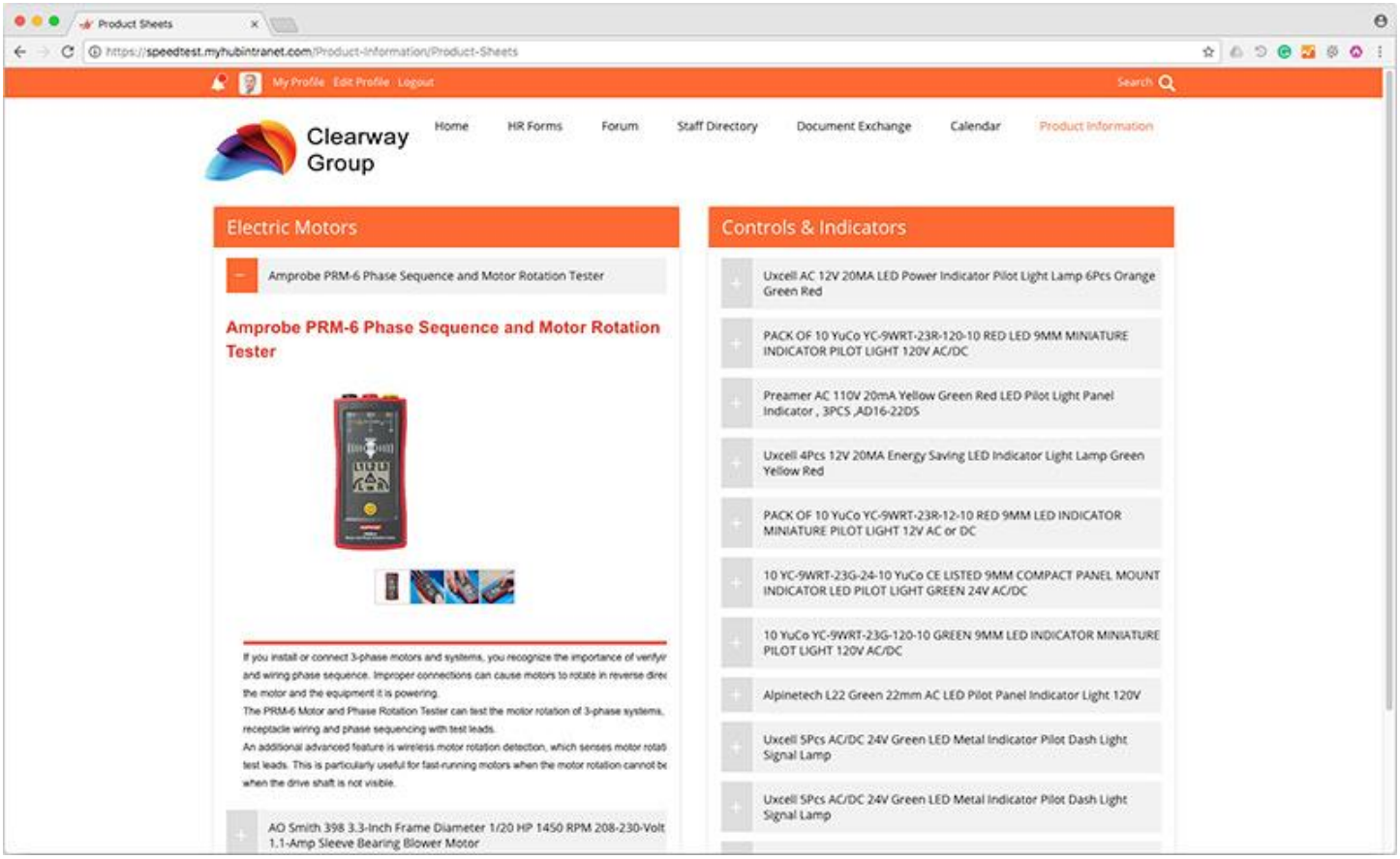
File Sharing Example

Storing files centrally within your intranet can solve a number of problems. How often have you been asked by a colleague, “Where is the project file for this customer?” For most employees remembering folder structures is a pain. Having everything stored on your intranet allows you to provide context around files by linking directly to them from pages.



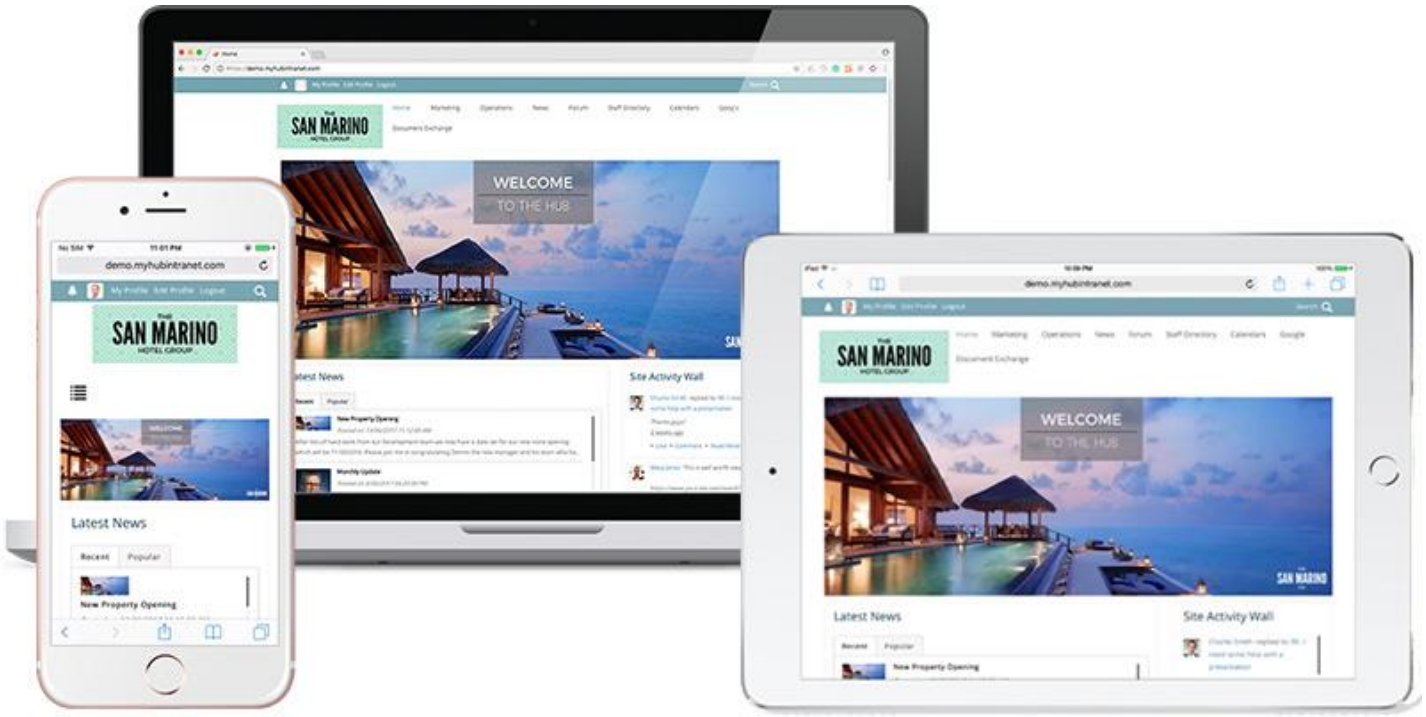
Accordions / Expanding Text Examples

Using accordions or expanding text modules can be a great way of putting a lot of information on a single page. Be careful though as some solutions load all of the content in one go and this can make page load times take forever, frustrating your users. A great example is shown below and has two columns with different sections for each product area. The information in each expanding text area doesn't load until the user clicks the chosen product and it's all mobile responsive.



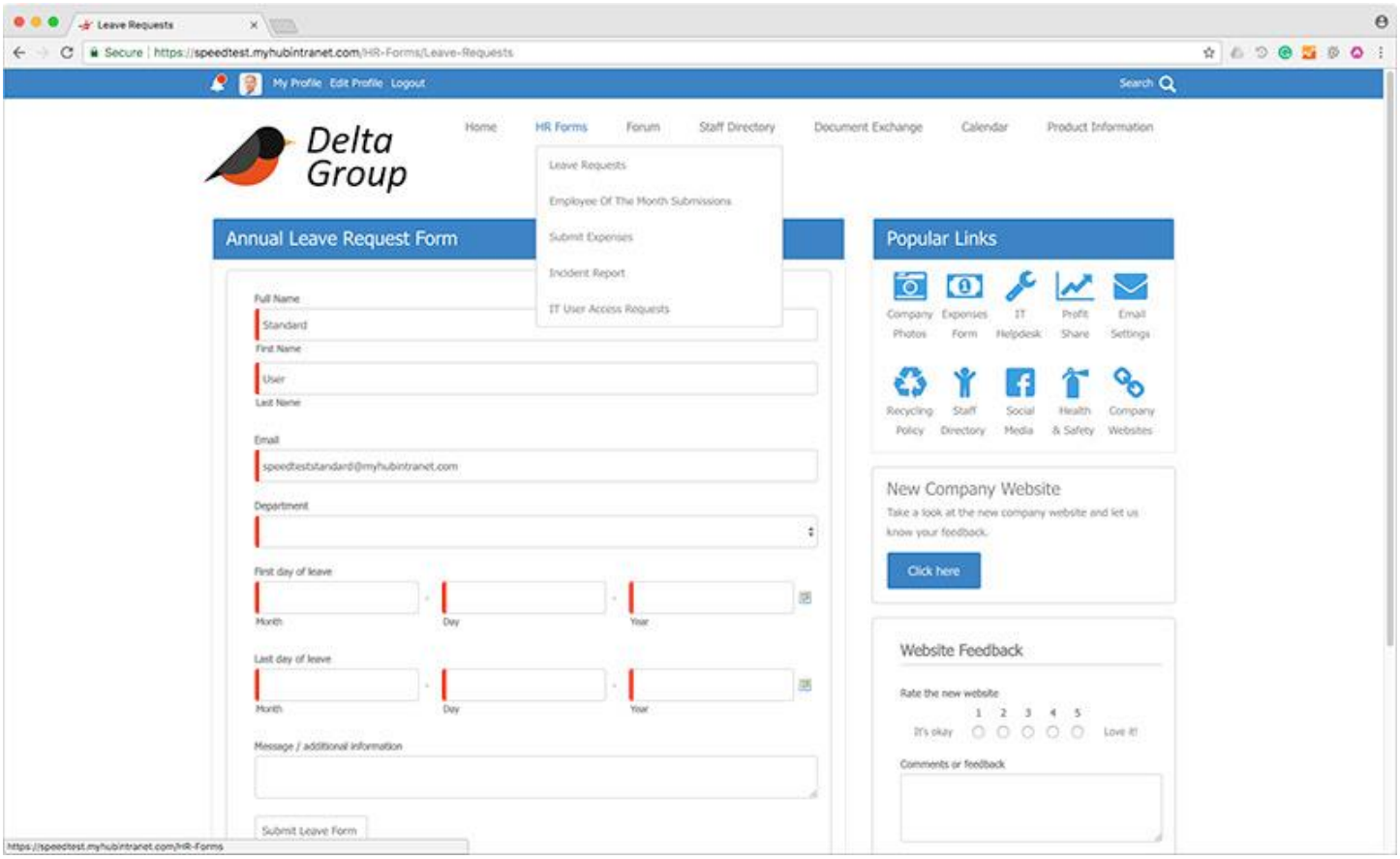
Mobile Responsive Example

The example below shows the home page from example one and how it responds to different device types and orientations. It's really important that your intranet is mobile responsive so that employees on the move and remote workers can benefit from the improved processes and communications that your intranet will bring.



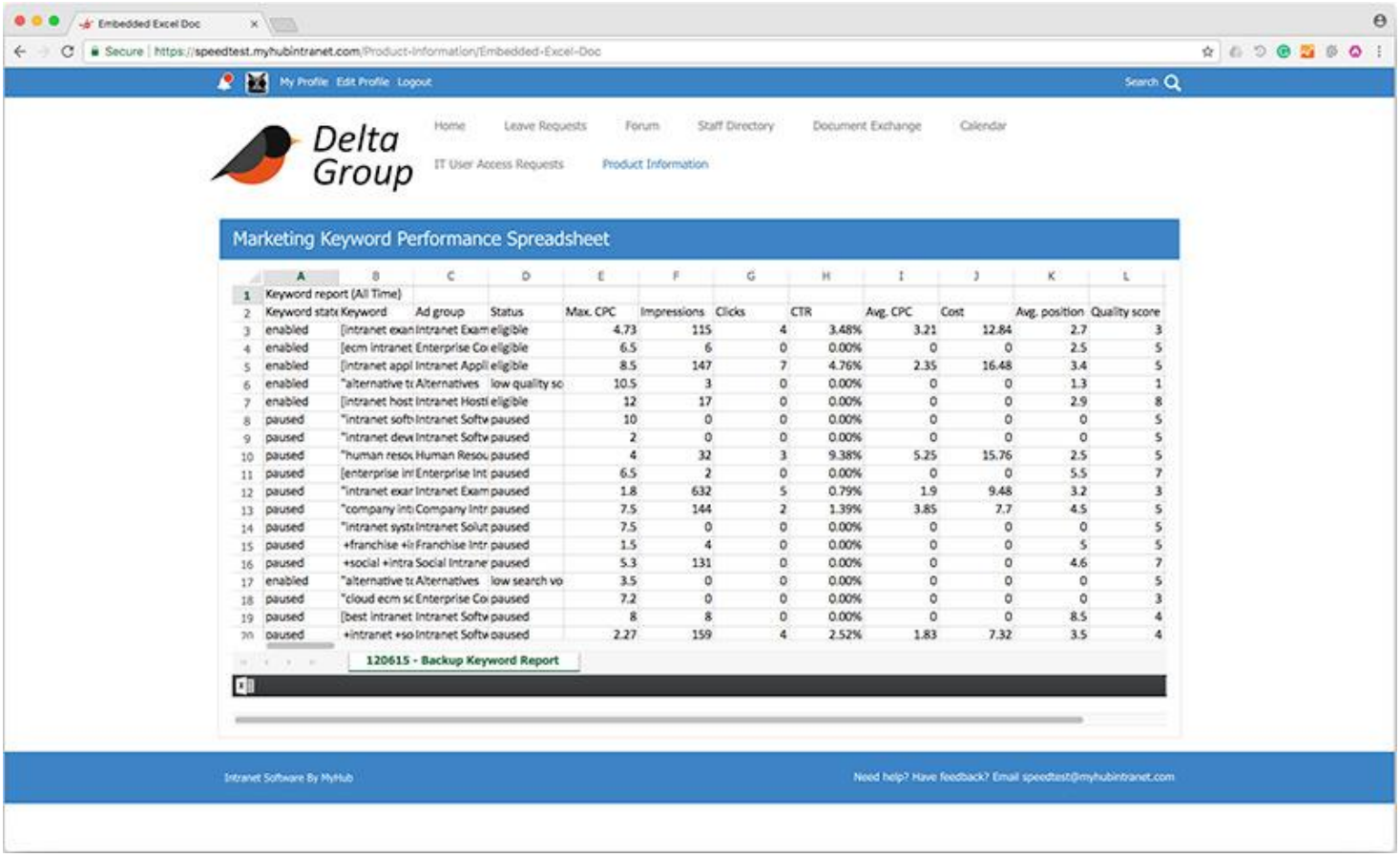
Forms / Workflow Example

We all know that paper-based forms can be a bit of a headache and multiple emails can easily get lost and contain errors that end up just going backwards and forwards. The example below shows how you can group say all of your HR forms in a single area on your intranet providing easy access for staff. You'll notice in the example that this particular user has a notification on the top bar showing the logged in user that someone has started following them.



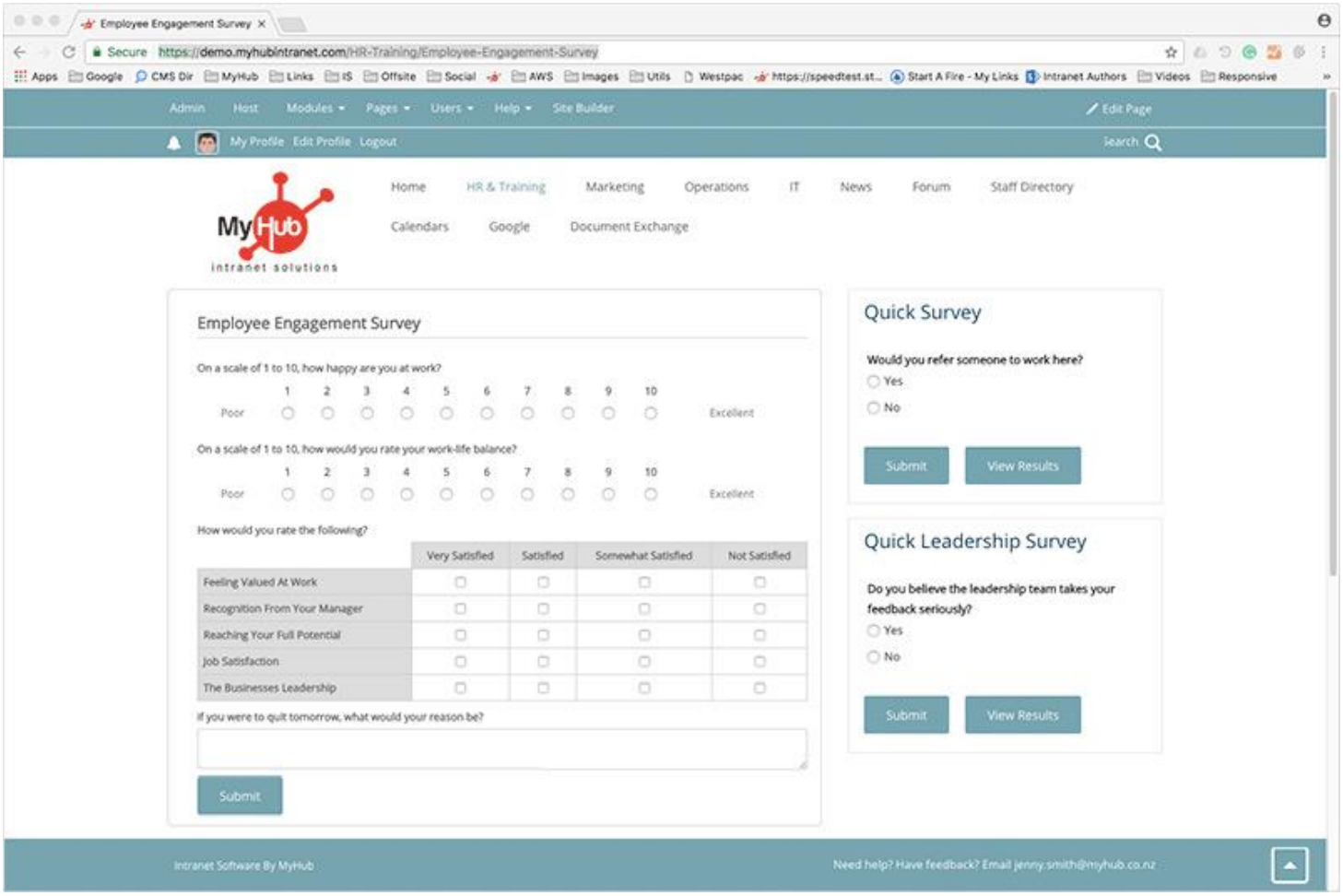
Embedding Documents

Embedding cloud files such as Google docs or Microsoft Office 365 files directly within your intranet pages can provide a powerful solution to a number of business problems. By using page permissions, you can easily restrict access in conjunction with your existing cloud solution permissions. The example below shows an embedded Office 365 Excel spreadsheet. Not all of your users will require access to directly edit the spreadsheet data. Therefore, by embedding it within your intranet you can provide a live view of any of the data entered without the need for the user to find the file. This also opens up a number of options in terms of being able to provide context and training information on the page if you want to.



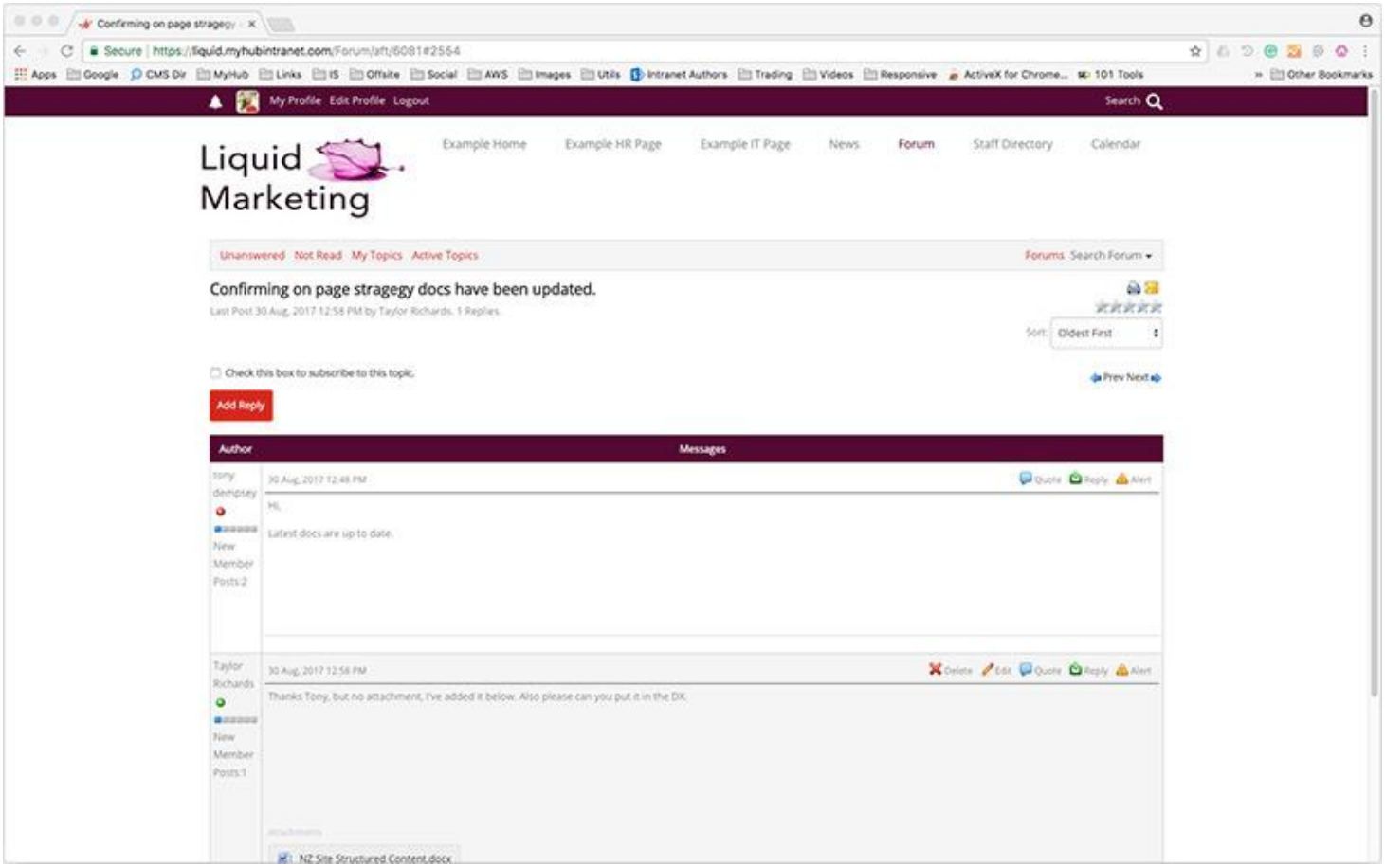
Employee Engagement Form Example

Looking to improve employee engagement? One great way to achieve this is to use your intranet's built-in forms builder to create employee engagement surveys that will help you identify areas of improvement. Employee disengagement is a major cause of increased rates of absenteeism and low productivity so this is a good way of reducing costs in this area.



Intranet Forum Example

Forums are a great place for employees to collaborate. Whether it's to share updates or discuss issues surrounding different projects, having the conversations stored within your intranet that can be accessed from anywhere is a great asset for an organization to utilize.



Intranet Design Summary

The bottom line is that designing your company intranet doesn't have to be the major undertaking that perhaps you first thought it was. The key messages that hopefully you've got out of this free guide are summarised as follows:

Don't overthink or over complicate your site. Keeping it simple and straightforward for end users is more likely to result in an intranet that is popular with staff and gets used on a daily basis.

Keep focused on solving your organization's problems – that is after all the fundamental purpose of your intranet so try not to get distracted by all the amazing things that your intranet could do. Limit yourself to what your intranet needs to do to relieve those organizational pain points.

Get staff members involved from the get go. Involving your employees as much as possible at every step of the process will not only help to ensure your intranet really does address those organizational pain points, it will also increase the levels of employee engagement and will ensure your intranet is widely accepted and adopted from the very start. To maintain this sense of ownership and involvement post-launch get staff members involved in generating and editing content.

Keep it fresh. Make sure that you regularly review the content and remove any out of date or obsolete information. Keeping it fresh with new content, features and up to date news will give your employees a reason to return. Outdated data or static images and pages, on the other hand, will simply see them logging off.

Make it fun. Yes, it is possible to make the intranet fun and interactive. Quizzes, surveys, blogs, chat rooms and social intranet features are all ways to make the intranet more fun for end users. What's more, it doesn't have to be all about work, all of the time.

Make it engaging. Writing content for the intranet that is engaging is an art form in itself, but the secret is to keep things short and concise – bite-sized pieces of information with an option for to click for more detail is the way to go. Most people prefer images and diagrams over big blocks of text. And use your imagination in considering other media to get your message across. How about mixing things up and using videos, webinars or wikis from time to time. It doesn't always have to be about words.

Intranets offer a range of solutions to businesses of all sizes and in all sectors. Whatever the particular pain point is in your organization – whether it is communications, employee engagement or managing information – like a great many other companies before you, you'll find that the intranet quickly becomes an essential part of your business operations.

Further Reading

Easy Intranet: Successful Business Intranets Keep It Simple

Intranet Providers: 20 Reasons Why You Should Choose MyHub Intranet

Simple Intranet Deployment: Why It Doesn't Have To Be Difficult

Intranet Service: Utilize An Intranet Expert For Stress-Free Deployment

Intranet Deployment: Common Pitfalls To Avoid

Intranet Design Made Simple For The Time Poor Executive

5 Top Tips To Keep Employees Engaged Post Intranet Launch

Intranet Services: Do It Yourself Or Hire An Intranet Developer

Intranet Design: How To Have A Great Looking Intranet That Engages Staff

Intranet Design Services: How To Easily Create A Customized Intranet

Intranet Design: Deal With Difficulty – Top Tips For An Effective Intranet

One To File Away – The Importance Of Thoughtful Online File Usage

Designing Your Intranet: Working Towards Perfection

Intranet Design: 8 Ways Your To Destroy Its Effectiveness

Intranet Design: What Are The Essential Ingredients?

Intranet Templates Offer Solutions For Intranet Designers

Mobile Intranet: How To Create A Mobile Friendly Intranet Portal

How To Conduct An Intranet Needs Analysis In 5 Steps

How To Ensure Your Employees Use The Company Intranet

Intranet Development: Making Life Easier For Intranet Developers

Remove Information Silos With A Creative Intranet Design

5 Top Tips On How To Produce Engaging Intranet Content

Intranet Templates: Create An Office Intranet & Enhance Your Career!

6 Ways Intranet Templates Make Designing Your Intranet Easier

Intranet Design: 3 Secrets for Streamlining the Work Day

My Intranet Solution Isn't Working! 3 Potential Problems and How to Correct Them

The Best Intranet Solution for Your Company in 4 Easy Steps

11 Features Your Employees Look For in a CMS Intranet

5 Secrets to Customizing Your Intranet Templates

Intranet Templates: Customizing For The Needs Of Your Business

10 Steps to Effective Intranet Design

Could Intranet Templates Be the Solution Your Business Needs?

Intranet Design: Do You Need A Flawless Design?

Two Pitfalls to Avoid When Creating an Intranet