



Launch an Intranet

By Kevin Bushey

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***Knowledge Concepts
& Solutions LLC***

Launch an Intranet



A Quick Start Kit for Small & Medium Intranet Launches with Windows SharePoint Server 3.0

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About the Publisher

Kevin Bushey is a successful leader currently serving as President and CEO of Knowledge Concepts & Solutions LLC, a registered LLC in the states of Virginia and Montana. He has worked in several sectors including non-profit, military and for profit settings. He is a former Senior Analyst with ALIS, Inc, a management consulting and technology company in Arlington, VA.

As a Colonel in the Air Force Reserve, he led Department of Defense efforts in improving our nation's military readiness as a Deputy Director of Training and Programs Management in the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Reserve Affairs). He also served as a senior Reserve Advisor to the Acting Secretary of the Air Force.

Kevin has held successful positions as a Medical Practice Executive Director, Administrator, a commercial and residential real estate broker, and a restaurant/club system manager managing multiple facilities.

Throughout his 30+ years of balancing three pillars, civilian employment, military reserve duty, and family, Kevin completed two master's degree programs and received the designation as a Certified Emergency Manager.

Kevin has also been an adjunct instructor, teaching college business courses including General Business Management, Business Law, Marketing, Economics, How to Write a Business Plan, Emergency Preparedness and Customer Service.

Kevin, and his wife Mary, are proud parents of two girls. They live in Lakeside, Montana.



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Chapter 1

So, You Want an Intranet

Implementing an Intranet solution with a COTS vendor

When my company decided it needed an intranet, it had barely been on the internet with a public website. As a small but growing company, they knew the importance of a web presence to attract more clients and provide a business presence in their industry. What they didn't realize at first, was the need for an intranet portal for internal operations. They came to that conclusion as they assisted their own clients in implementing intranet solutions for their operations.

If you Google the word intranet, wikipedia pops up with the following definition:

“An intranet is a private computer network that uses Internet protocols, network connectivity to securely share part of an organization's information or operations with its employees. Sometimes the term refers only to the most visible service, the internal website. The same concepts and technologies of the Internet such as clients and servers running on the Internet protocol suite are used to build an intranet. HTTP and other Internet protocols are commonly used as well, such as FTP. There is often an attempt to use Internet technologies to provide new interfaces with corporate "legacy" data and information systems. Briefly, an intranet can be understood as "a private version of the Internet," or as a version of the Internet confined to an organization. The term first appeared in print on April 19, 1995, in *Digital News & Review* in an article authored by technical editor Stephen Lawton ¹”

What became quite clear regarding operations, without being a computer geek to understand it, is an intranet gives your organization a powerful capability that improves knowledge sharing, management reporting, business continuity, and a host of other valuable features. Many experts refer to the Intranet under lots of titles: community of practice site, knowledge management site, corporate portal, and others. The most important factor on whether you need an intranet capability really boils down to how you conduct and integrate your business processes on a daily basis.

In this example, the company provides consultant services, and it requires its consultants to be able to manage documents, access forms, share information, communicate with each other, plan meetings, and access reference material from multiple locations. An internal company shared drive and email program cannot provide that access outside the local area network computers. But with an intranet portal accessible through an internet address, viola, they can work from anywhere as long as they have the internet.

With the explosion of new technology and IT products in the marketplace, what used to be an expensive venture (customized intranet solution) has now become a very affordable product.

¹ Stephen Lawton's *Digital News & Review* article "Intranets Fuel Growth of Internet Access Tools."



There are several companies that will provide you a “hosted service” that gives you an intranet software solution. By “renting” the software, you are in effect, gaining the use of the software that resides on the company’s server that you’re renting from. They take care of all the backend stuff, things you would normally need an IT geek to do for you. Its safe, effective, and downright powerful stuff. And the pricing is affordable for even a one person operation. Best of all, you can find plenty of books at www.amazon.com or www.half.com on this technology so there’s no excuse in procrastinating.

Obviously you need to shop around and determine what’s best for your needs and how much you can afford, but for a small company with 1 to 50 users, you can find an intranet solution for under \$150 month. In the big scheme of things, that’s less than the cost of a few magazine ads or a few weeks in the paper. And the great thing about these rentable sites is you can have a site up and running in days as opposed to months waiting for a customize site being built.

A word on vendors. Look for a vendor who has the background and depth to keep you “up and running”. Take time to review their websites, and pick up the phone and talk to them if you need more convincing. One site, www.Hyperoffice.com, is worth checking out. If your company already has an investment in Microsoft software, you may want to consider adding “SharePoint” as your intranet portal. Check out Hosted SharePoint at www.apptix.com. Many of the sites you will find offer a 30 day free trial to check out their product. My caution to you here is if you want to do that, try and select the top two sites to explore and not get too involved with how much you “customize” the site, or load lots of documents. Obviously, the more time and data you have loaded to the site, the more you become “wedded” to it and that may force you to select a site because of your commitments in the 30 day trial. Select your top two sites and compare functions, ease of use (how quickly can non-computer geeks catch on), and pricing.

Let’s Make a Deal. Now that you’re convinced that an intranet is an affordable proposition, let’s discuss what you need to do to successfully create this capability. From everything I have studied and read about knowledge management and managing communities of practice sites, which is what an Intranet is, organizations that implement the capability based on a strategic plan seem to have the best success in changing the corporate culture and getting employee buy-in. So with that in mind, here’s what I propose to your leadership team:

A. Build a strategic plan for intranet utilization with eight major parts:

1. Define the company’s business objectives for an Intranet
2. Select and prioritize functions to rollout over time
3. Develop a metrics program (beyond just usage rate) that might include things like:
 - Surveying users, real life stories, how the Intranet is “adding value” to the company, usage rate improvements, improving efficiency, etc.
4. Governance- an company leadership group should periodically meet to discuss the program and provide oversight and leadership to the users
 - A leadership team should provide:
 - Vision (example: Intranet is the primary means of communication and data

storage for Company XYZ)

- Guiding Principles
 - Policies
 - Procedures
 - Roles and Responsibilities (sites must be managed)
 - Suggestions for governance board makeup:
 - VP-HR, CFO, VP-Ops, IT rep. Business Owner, Project lead rep, etc
 - There should be an executive sponsor (recommend VP-Ops)
 - Business Owner is defined as the person managing the overall design and site functions.
5. Content Management- Determine steps to keep the sites current and not stale to encourage employee usage and viewing.
 6. Rollout: (once it's rolled out, start communicating to employees about it):
 - Communications- newsletters, town hall meeting, CEO memo, etc
 - Training (providing train the trainer classes)
 - Launch and content conversion (moving from the company shared drive to exclusively using the intranet site, or whatever percentage usage you want to use)
 7. User support. Clear articulation of who provides support from the IT department and the business owner
 8. Incentive and Rewards- content management becomes part of an individual's performance goals and is managed by supervisors through the performance appraisal system.

Taking small steps. Most employees will be accustomed to utilizing your existing systems and not real thrilled on moving outside their comfort zone to learn this “new software”. The key to changing this culture is to take small steps and implement your new intranet site capabilities slowly so employees can learn while experimenting and using the portal.

Here are some thoughts on Function rollouts that can be used to improve user involvement:

1. Personal data of each employee (loaded by each user to describe their associated expertise—most products have an “about me” capability)
2. Team calendar
3. Draft documents preparation
4. Reference library
5. Company announcements
6. HR Dept communications, employee benefits documents, plans
7. Training- Must be tailored toward how each team will now do their job using the Intranet

Objectives. The governance team should craft company objectives that also become part of the individual's annual objectives Intranet usage.

Here's some examples:

1. Reduce hiring process time through effective workflow management (many products offer a workflow function) – HR Dept objective
2. Reduce HR Dept inquiries through effective posting on HR dept site- HR Dept objective



3. Improve time to market for proposals and contracts (VP- Operations)
 - Identify shared docs like rates to be available on the site
 - Place resumes on site (HR Dept)
 - Place company templates and background materials on site (employees)
4. Conduct focus groups and usability tests (Business Development teams)
5. Effective tracking of accounts receivables (Finance dept)
6. Eliminate paper based and email distribution of regular reports and internal communications (Weekly activity reports, CEO updates, newsletters, contract docs, etc) (Project team leads, supervisors)
7. Provide active communications with staff over time to improve and encourage usage.

Learning to walk before you run. It may seem overwhelming at first, but once your site is up and running, it won't take long for users to learn and use the site. As I stated before, having a plan to implement various functions over time will help keep your staff on track with being intranet savvy. Below are few sample objectives for your first six months to get to the running phase.

Sample 1st year tasks:

1. Calendar function- All team to be utilizing team calendars by Date_____
 - Champion: All users, project leads
2. Weekly activity reports- 100% posting by project leads on Intranet by Date_____
 - Champion: Project leads, and VP-Ops
3. Shared: Drive- Shutdown of shared drive usage for new documents by Date_____
 - Champion: All users
4. Personal data of each employee-posted to site by Date_____
5. Team leads to provide computer serial #s, phone#, blackberry #, to HR Dept by Date_____. (business continuity database)
 - Champion: Project leads
6. 100% utilization of document storage, by Date_____
 - Champion: Leadership Team
7. Reduce hiring process through utilization of Intranet Hiring/Interviewing template and workflow functions.
 - Champion: HR Dept and VP-Ops
8. Training- provide brown bag lunch training sessions for 100% participation by Date_____
 - Champion: Business Owner and IT
9. Usage rate goals for each sector site:
 - 50% usage rate Date_____
 - 100% usage rate Date_____)
 - Champion: Project leads, leadership team
10. Load general contract related docs and forms
 - 100% saved on Intranet site (Price catalog, resumes, RFP templates, Security forms, etc) (by Date_____)



Final thoughts. Keep it simple, brainstorm your needs, get some computer savvy users as part of your team and go for it. Here are some additional things a company may face:

- Buy-in by all employees will be met when we can answer, “What’s in it for me”?
- Senior leadership is critical, if the boss uses it, then everyone else will
- Getting participation from project leads and holding them accountable for utilization by team members is also needed (consider performance appraisal goals for usage)
- Sharing the company’s commitment to making the intranet the primary tool will shape the culture. If employees sense the site is secondary to other processes, i.e., email, shared drive, other applications, etc, then, most likely, the culture will be to not use it. Many employees have encountered negative experiences with an intranet in previous jobs, so you may have an uphill battle to overcome that preconceived negativity.

Lastly, as you continue to move important data to your intranet portal, you will be improving your capacity to recover quickly in the event of a disaster because your data is intact at a site away from your location and still accessible 24/7. Good luck, and have fun with a new way to succeed, grow, and manage your company through an intranet portal solution!

The balance of the quick start guide is using Windows SharePoint Server (WSS 3.0) application for all examples and narrative.



Chapter 2

Build your charter

DRAFT

DRAFT

Note This document can be used to run a beta test in one part of the organization before you go full tilt with an intranet launch.

Knowledge Management Initiative

CHARTER

1. BACKGROUND

In May 2007, the *your company* team obtained user privileges to utilize SharePoint for CoPs. A key feature is a Knowledge Management capability. “KM refers to the critical issues of organizational adaptation, survival and competence against discontinuous environmental change. Essentially it embodies organizational processes that seek synergistic combination of data and information processing capacity of information technologies, and the creative and innovative capacity of human beings.”

As part of the implementation plan to become more effective and efficient, xxxxxxx will begin using the KM capabilities by conducting a beta test with the xxxxxxxxx. xxxxxxxx will develop a Community of Practice (CoP) site to communicate, coordinate and store best practices.

The purpose of the CoP is to provide a single repository where members of the team can aggregate information, communicate with each other, and provide an efficient means of managing the intellectual capital of its members.

The CoP will be led by xxxxxx team leader who is responsible for the successful completion of their respective objectives. xxxxxx will include members of other directorates and may include Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) from organizations external to xxxxxxxx. For example, the xxxxxxxx possesses SMEs concerning xxxxx, and the xxxx and xxxxx. At least one member of the Team will be given Administrator privileges to assist in maintaining the CoP user base and CoP administration.

2. MEMBERSHIP

User: All members of xxxxxx_____



Administrator: _____

Other: xxxxxx personnel interested in participating in the work of the xxxx.

3. RESPONSIBILITIES

The xxx ___ CoP is currently set up with a basic home page with functions.

The following responsibilities are attributed to members:

Administrator(s):

- Grant/deny CoP membership
- Provide CoP Administration
- Represent the xxx in any KM meetings
- Coordinate with Team Leader any COP function changes
- Provide metric data to Team leader as requested
- Monitor the CoP for purposes of continuous improvement

Members:

- Become a member of the COP by creating an xxxxxx account and logging in to become a member
- Provide relevant documents to the site
- Utilize the functions of the CoP that include discussion forums, online events, calendar events, provide informative materials, scheduling and others
- Recommend changes to the administrative procedures and instructions as necessary to improve the CoP quality

4. DURATION OF THE xxxx ___ CoP

This CoP will remain active as long as the xxxxx remains in place.

5. SUMMARY

Our direction is clear - transform into a ready, reliable and relevant organization capable of supporting xxxx while increasing our capacity and capability of responding to a broad range of xxxxx. The xxxx JAT ___ COP will advance our transformational efforts and enable the success of the xxxxx as fulfill the vision of our organization and take care of our customers.



(Signature)

Date

XXXXX

Position

XXXXXXXX