A World-Class Intranet & Document Solution

ALL THE DO'S & DONT'S TO BUILDING YOUR COMPANY INTRANET

Plus CASE STUDY | Young Living

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"Find someone to help you implement your intranet]. Make sure to manage the project on your side and be prepared. Make sure you are covering your bases. You need a content developer. You don't want to do this on your own. JourneyTEAM cares. They are the people who can help you."

—Gen Miner, Sr. Manager of Employee Experience (HR) at Young Living

You've done your research: looked at hundreds of different templates, read dozens of case studies, and maybe even sat in a few meetings with different vendors, yet you still can't figure out how to build a successful intranet.

You know that an intranet will help streamline communication, improve business processes, and increase efficiency, but you're not sure what it needs to be successful. What features should you include? What should you avoid? What platform should you build it on?

We at JourneyTEAM have worked with numerous clients to create world-class intranets and have come up with a list of do's and don'ts to help you build a successful internal website.

We'll review that list here and give you a first-hand look at an intranet we built for Young Living, one of the top sellers of essential oils in the world.

"Define what you need, and source it. Allocate those resources. JourneyTEAM are the people who can help you."

"You don't want to do this yourself. You need a content developer. Manage the project on your side – be prepared. Make sure you are covering your bases."

The Purpose of an Intranet

Before we dive into what works and what doesn't, it's important to understand what the purpose of an intranet is and why it's so important to your business.

At its most basic level, an intranet is designed to connect your employees to company-information. This includes:

- Colleague contact information.
- Business organization charts.
- Company information, such as documents, support videos, quick links, etc.
- Company culture such as news articles, employee recognition, and updates.

Above all, an intranet should keep your entire organization connected to the information they need while supporting them in their roles. It should be a place that employees can access from anywhere to complete work, find answers to questions, and communicate with colleagues. It's all about helping people share and act on information to improve organizational performance.

How is an Intranet Organized?

There's a lot of stuff that goes into an internal website which can make understanding what is and isn't an intranet confusing. So let's break it down. We've found that these sites can be organized into four different buckets:

1. **Individual content:** This includes content like emails, calendar items, personal notebooks, share files, and lists.

2. **Ad-hoc conversations:** Group emails or chats, meetings, and screen sharing are all examples of ad-hoc conversations.

3. **Collaboration:** Network operations, hosting teams, and development teams are considered collaborative groups. Each of these groups can collaborate with each other using tools like shared mailboxes and calendars, planners, Power BI workspaces, and more.

4. **Organizational content and communication:** This is perhaps one of the most important aspects of how an intranet is organized. It's crucial that this information is clear and concise to employees so they know exactly what's corporate approved content and what isn't. Things like calendars, forms, templates, knowledge bases, and communities are a few examples.

Intranet Do's

At JourneyTEAM, we feel that the biggest telltale sign of a good intranet is that if you added someone new to your team tomorrow, you could send them a link to your intranet and they would have everything they need to do their job.

So how do you make sure your employees have all the resources they need?

The best intranets have the following:

Inclusive Group Identity
Another big purpose of your intranet is to work towards common business objectives, which is why you need to have an inclusive group identity. If there exists an 'us vs. them' mentality among teams, you won't be successful. You want your intranet to be a digital representation of a single, cohesive organization that's working together to achieve a common goal.

Increase Collaboration, Sharing, and Productivity
Like we've already discussed, your intranet should be a place that your employees can log into and have everything they need to get work done. It's where anyone can go to find help or answers to questions, learn about company policies, access important documents, and communicate with other colleagues.

Single Point of Access
Whether your employees are in the office or not, they should be able to have access to your intranet--from both a desktop and mobile device. If your employees have to click on multiple links or can only access the intranet while in the office, they may be less likely to use it.

Creates a More Informed, Collaborative Workplace
Your intranet should be a place where your entire organization can come to work together. Different teams should be able to log on and discuss projects, problems, or objectives and the rest of the organization should be able to see their progress or results through employee recognition or news articles.

Single Point of Access
Whether your employees are in the office or not, they should be able to have access to your intranet--from both a desktop and mobile device. If your employees have to click on multiple links or can only access the intranet while in the office, they may be less likely to use it.

One Platform
This single, all-inclusive platform should be a place where everyone can communicate, collaborate, and manage information across the entire organization. Your employees shouldn't have to use multiple tools or platforms to manage tasks, share information, or collaborate with colleagues--they should be able to do it all from the intranet.

Create a Sense of Community
Remember that your intranet is a digital representation of your company's culture and what's important to you. Your site should create a sense of belonging to a united organization with a common purpose, direction, and mission. If users are logging on to your intranet and can't find your company's core values or it feels very disjointed, it's not a good sign.

Intranet Do's: There are thousands of features you can include in your intranet

Below are a few popular features you should have on your site:

Favorites for Pages and Tools: As you start adding content to your intranet, you'll want to give users a way to quickly access frequently used pages, links, or tools. For example, on SharePoint sites, users can flag content, save items, and follow pages. Each of these pages can be accessed from a menu near the top of the page. This saves time and helps users get work done more easily.

Personalization: Personalization is incredibly important in today's workplace. Users only want to see the information that's relevant to them rather than sorting through content that isn't. However, you'll want to make sure that all information can be accessed in other ways but only show an employee's division news or updates when they log on. Things like management portals can also be used to allow management personnel easy access to secure documents or resources.

Other personalized content includes things like my links, my documents, my frequent sites, my recommendations, and my save for later.

Names: Whatever the name you choose for your intranet, make sure it has meaning to your organization. Really good intranets have really good names that reflect their purpose or goals, so try to avoid names like: "SharePoint Intranet".

Enterprise Search: Enterprise search is a powerful resource for businesses. Essentially, it's a way for users to search for information from multiple databases using a single search query. It's important to note that because search is looking through thousands of documents (emails, white papers, documents, etc.), it's crucial to keep your content clean. If a user searches for something and either gets thousands of results or the wrong ones, it could be because you

have too much low-quality content. Content managers can help you avoid this problem.

Remember that search is like a taxonomy. It's a pivoting environment that should forever be improving, growing, and adjusting based upon the needs of your business.

Scoped Search: Rather than searching for everything in a single search, scoped search limits the search to a single section or a specific piece of content. Typically, these results are presented in a drop-down scope or an autocomplete scope.

Visual Sections: Another thing that the top intranets do is group content together for faster, easier consumption. For example, some intranets will group certain types of content together on the homepage. Personalized content will be grouped on one side with a common background while favorite tools or quick links are grouped together in a different section under a different background. Not only does this help users more quickly find information, but it also sets a tone for what an organization values and what's important to them.

Drawers and Rails: One of the most efficient ways for content discovery is through drawers and rails. Drawers or rails are essentially boxes that slide in and out of the page from either the right or left side. Depending on the intranet, this box will contain quick links, favorite pages, frequently used documents, or data analytics.

Because your intranet is the most trusted source of information in your company, it needs to be a user-friendly, responsive site that allows users to quickly find what they need while keeping everyone connected.

"If HP knew what HP knows, we would be three times more productive."

–Lewis E. Platt,
former HP CEO

Intranet Don'ts

Now that you know what an intranet should have, let's talk about what it shouldn't have--or what it shouldn't be. Avoiding these mistakes will ensure the intranet you design flourishes.

Inaccessible
Because your intranet contains vital company information and documents, it needs to be accessible from everywhere--including mobile devices. Many of today's workers are working from home just as much as they are in the office. Ensuring that your intranet is accessible with a secure internet connection is essential.

Unused by LeadershipOnly a Document Library
While your intranet is a great place to keep all of your important company documents, it shouldn't just be a document library. Intranets that turn into just another shared document drive are rarely used and employees don't have much trust in it. Make sure you have content owners who are watching documents and that you're using analytics to see what content can be retired.

If you want people to use your intranet, executives need to be involved. Ensuring leadership teams are involved will help build up the hype around the new site and get more people using it. However, you'll want to avoid your intranet becoming just a top-down communication site. Your entire organization should be able to comment on posts, ask questions, and send feedback to higher-ups. With everyone talking and sharing ideas, productivity will increase as will employee satisfaction.

Low-Quality Content

Even if you have thousands of pieces of content on your site, if the quality is low, no one is going to read it. Having intranet content managers, editors, and writers can help ensure that the content being published on your site is high-quality. Templates, thorough editing, and frequent training can help decrease the amount of bad content on your site.

Complicated Navigation

With so many great features available for intranets, you may be tempted to stuff as many of them into your site as you can. Doing so is fine so long as you don't sacrifice navigation. If an employee can't find what they're looking for within a few minutes or is frequently getting lost on the site, they're less likely to use it. Implement organized drop-down menus, breadcrumbs, search bars, and an effective top menu to help users navigate more easily.

Bad Search Capabilities

There's a lot of stuff on your intranet which can make it difficult for users to find what they're looking for. Rather than go digging for whatever it is they need, most users will use the search function to locate it. Make sure that the search function is up-to-date and easy to use.

How Young Living Built a World-Class Intranet with JourneyTEAM

When Gen Miner, Sr. Manager of Employee Experience at Young Living, was assigned to improve the company's intranet, she was very excited. Before, no one had really owned or managed the site. She described it as:

"A place in the house where people just go dump their stuff, kind of like the junk room, and nobody cared about any of the content."

To help her tackle the huge task, she contacted JourneyTEAM. Together, we were able to create a well organized, informative internal site using Microsoft SharePoint. Here, employees could get company updates, access important documents, and stay up-to-date on workplace events.

When it came to naming the site, Gen chose something that represented the purpose of the site.

A few names were suggested, but eventually they settled on 'The Source'. "We wanted people to know that if you came to The Source, you're going to find the right stuff,"

"And if you didn't find it in The Source, it's gossip. The name is also tied to our sourcing science and standards that we talk about a lot with our products...So it's really important to us that if people use our products, they know where it came from. Same thing with our information and our content. If they're using it, we want them to know where it came from which is The Source."

As we began discussing the objectives of Young Living's site, Gen stressed the importance of having a clear visual view of everything.

"We had our banner which allowed for people to have a visual view right away of everything," Gen said. In addition to the banner, we created a new section titled "Need to Know".

This section showcased the most important company updates which eliminated the need to file through the entire news archive. They're able to see what they want right away.

We also included the following features on Young Living's intranet:

News and Events: Here - employees can see employee related news and events as well as member updates. Users are able to see both the customer side of things as well as the employee.
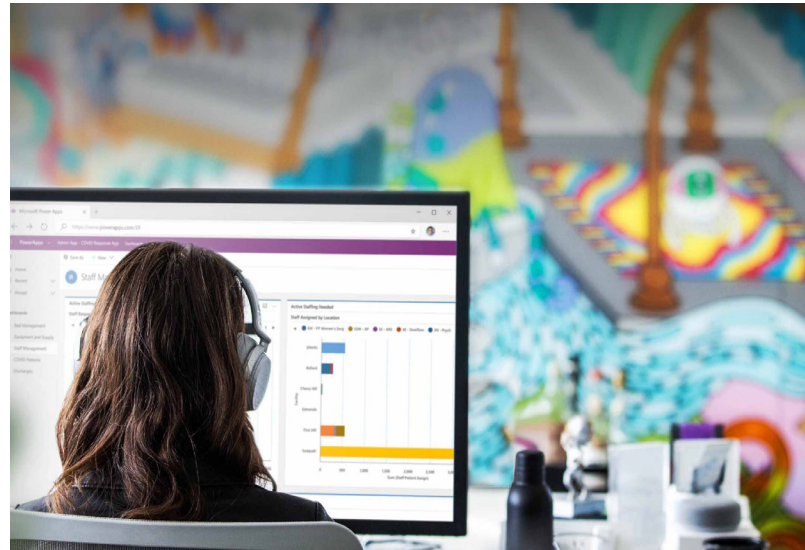
My Hub: This includes anything related to a user's career, benefits, or perks like free products.

FAQ List: If a user has a question about their employment or benefits with Young Living, they can find the answer in the FAQ List. They're able to search for information by keyword and scroll through results. This is perfect for anyone who's new to the company and interested in learning more.

Speakerphone: Anytime an article is posted that is considered urgent or important, users will be alerted with a notification similar to Facebook. Users can then read the information on The Source, eliminating the need to check their email.

Tool Drawer: One thing Gen was passionate about was keeping people in the workflow and eliminating the need to navigate to another page to access a different tool. With the Tool Drawer, users can easily jump to these tools with a single click.

Feedback: Another big priority for Young Living was feedback. They wanted to ensure users were able to alert higher ups to potential problems or features they liked. The feedback option allows a user to leave feedback from anywhere on The Source, and managers are able to see exactly where it was left. This allows issues like typos, outdated information, or concerns to be resolved quickly.

Trending Topics: This feature puts things like popular topics, documents, items, or events in people's newsfeed.

Calendar Information: Not only can users see company events in the calendar, but their own as well. Users can select a day and they'll see company events stacked next to theirs. This feature is also integrated with Outlook which helps to keep everyone connected and organized.

Employee Recognition: A custom feature built by JourneyTEAM, this allows leadership to recognize employees who are emulating Young Living's values. Along with recognition, user's birthdays and work anniversaries are included here. Gen stated that this is a very popular feature as users are able to celebrate their coworkers, which keeps morale high.

Like Button: Another very popular feature among Young Living employees, the like button is another easy, familiar way for employees to send feedback.

Polls and Quizzes: In addition to asking what everyone's favorite holiday drink is, this feature allows managers to check on employee knowledge or to ensure that people are getting information and understanding it. The feature provides feedback right away, which is helping managers to teach people on the fly.

Gallery: To help employees stay connected, Young Living included a gallery where company videos and pictures could be posted. Employees who post pictures using a specific hashtag can also find their pictures here which makes them feel like they're being celebrated.

Twitter Stream: Any news, events, or promotions done by the company that are posted on Twitter are also posted on The Source to help keep everyone up-to`-date and connected.

Employee Directory: If users need a colleague's contact information or want to learn more about them, they can do so within the employee directory. Users can filter by department or location, which saves time and makes learning about fellow colleagues really easy.

Despite there being so many features on the homepage alone, the experience between the Young Living intranet and other connected sites is seamless. Young Living has a specific color scheme that they incorporated into their intranet as well as a similar top navigation menu. This helped employees to know they were still within Young Living's source.

"A successful intranet starts with the right team —JourneyTEAM."

Being tasked with such a huge task was somewhat daunting to Gen. She said:

"Oftentimes, a person in this role doesn't understand the value and need of good knowledge management. You have to be willing to fight and to show your ROI and ask for help if you need. If you're not experienced with SharePoint, find someone who can help you like JourneyTEAM."

"It's a lot of work," Gen stated. "You can't just create a SharePoint site and say: 'ok, you did a good job.' You have to have a team to sustain it and manage it going forward." With the help of JourneyTEAM, Gen got the exact level of support she needed. We helped with some project management aspects and the creation of the site, but Gen and her team were in charge of communication, testing, and more. Essentially, Gen and her team identified their user's needs and came to JourneyTEAM with a number of objectives and features which we then created.

When the site launched (three weeks early due to COVID-19), employees had the chance to enter a giveaway if they explored the new intranet. "You had to complete 10 steps," Gen said. "One step was to find a picture of a zebra, email it to so-and-so, comment on the CEO's blog, find this in search, use this, etc. By the time they walked through the 10 steps, they touched all the features of what the intranet does. We exposed them to what was possible." Users at Young Living have highly enjoyed these new features and Gen stated that user adoption has been high.

Build Your Perfect Intranet with JourneyTEAM

No matter the objective of your intranet, JourneyTEAM can help you create it. Whether you have a customized idea for your site or something totally out-of-the box, we'd love to hear about it. We've worked with dozens of clients in a number of different industries to create the intranet perfectly suited to their needs.

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