

## Beyond “efficient dissemination of timely information”

In our experience, most organisations don't have a documented set of intranet goals. Of those that do, most have a single goal, worded something like:

**“To efficiently disseminate timely information to all staff”**

This article will show why this is a very weak intranet goal, and will suggest ways of determining more effective goals.

### Weaknesses

Outlined below are a number of key problems with the goal of “efficient dissemination of timely information”:

#### Activity, not outcomes

What does this goal actually mean? To look at it another way: what do you want staff to do with this information once you've delivered it to them?

It is all very well to build an efficient mechanism to get information out to staff. If staff don't read it, or more significantly, if they don't follow it, then you have obtained no benefits.

This goal therefore focuses on an activity (delivering information), not an outcome (such as improving customer service).

#### Difficult to measure

It is very difficult to determine measures (metrics) for this goal. Information accuracy is essentially impossible to quantify, as is the timeliness of the information.

Again, this is because the goal focuses on activities, instead of outcomes, which are much easier to measure and track.

#### Promotes intranet as ‘publishing platform’

The more information that is put onto the intranet, the better this goal is met. Yet, intranets that have followed this course have typically become huge, sprawling, out-of-date and unstructured.

This is caused by the sole focus on the intranet as a publishing platform, not as a way of meeting business goals.

The intranet must be seen as more than a dumping ground for Word files. Instead, to be truly effective, it must become a ‘place to do things’.

#### Not aligned with corporate strategy

“To effectively disseminate information” is a very abstract goal, more tied to the activities of the publishing (or intranet) team, than to the broader corporate strategic direction.

The intranet should be positioned as a key strategic asset that can be used to meet both short- and long-term needs within the organisation.

The intranet must therefore have goals that reflect this role within the organisation.

#### Does not generate enthusiasm

If you went to your executive and asked for \$100,000 to “efficiently disseminate accurate information to all staff”, what would the likely response be?

Instead, if you went to the executive and asked for the money to “increase sales”, or “reduce the risk of lawsuits”, you would likely get greater interest.

This is a very pragmatic reason for having better intranet goals: they generate greater enthusiasm from all staff (including the executive), and help you to get further funding.

#### Other problematic goals

There are a number of other intranet goals that suffer from similar problems, including:

- provide a central repository for information
- support staff in finding information
- improve speed of information access
- improve information consistency, accuracy and currency

(These are all activities that can be undertaken to meet a goal, not goals in themselves.)

#### A better approach

Determine business-driven goals that focus on specific outcomes. These should be drawn from the overall corporate strategy, as well as an understanding of the issues and problems needing to be tackled.