

Intranet redesigns are not small projects. There is a significant amount of design, usability and information architecture work, not to mention the laborious content migration process.

What is launched is almost certainly an improvement on the old intranet, but the question must be asked: how much of an improvement?

In too many cases, the vast majority of effort is devoted to the intranet home page, the overall information architecture and the page layout.

Lower pages in the site are often migrated more-or-less unchanged, with much of the internal structure within sections only slightly updated from the old intranet.

This concentrated focus on just the global elements of the site, however, may not be enough to deliver real benefits to staff. Instead, the design process must be continued all the way to the bottom of the intranet.

This briefing will explore this idea, giving examples of where efforts in the design process could be focused.

### Global intranet elements

The design of the intranet home page is undoubtedly very important, as outlined in the earlier briefing *Full site redesign? Start by addressing the home page*.

It is also important to create an effective and consistent page layout that can be used throughout the site, underpinned by a vastly improved information architecture (site structure).

These are the areas that typically receive the greatest attention during an intranet redesign. Once finalised, the existing intranet content is then migrated into this new structure.

There are a few weak points in this approach:

- If the intranet home page is well-designed, staff will quickly click through to lower-level pages. The home page is therefore only *briefly* important to staff.
- Consistency in page layout is very important, but it may mask the reality that specific pages need to be carefully designed to ensure they work well for staff.

- Developing an overall information architecture is important, but this rarely extends below the top 3 levels of the site.

More work needs to be done to the lower levels of the site if the intranet is truly to deliver the hoped-for productivity benefits.

### Section home pages

Treating section home pages as standard content pages is not good enough. These pages (such as the top-level page within the HR section) are the main gateway through to what is often a considerable amount of content.

Instead, these pages should be designed as 'mini home pages'. They should be laid out to provide effective navigation and key at-a-glance details, rather than irrelevant 'about us' or 'overview' details.

After all, there is no point in having a great intranet home page if the first click drops staff straight into a page that gives them little help in finding what they are looking for.

### Pulling up content

Within each section, there will be a handful of key items that most staff will be looking for. For example, within HR the most important pages may be the leave form and related policies.

Instead of simply migrating across the existing content in roughly the same structure, research should be conducted to identify these key content items.

The key content should then be 'bubbled up' to higher levels of the structure, or linked to from the section home page. This restructuring can do much to increase the effectiveness of the site.

### How do I?

Work can also be done to provide new mechanisms for finding information. For example, instead of providing an A-Z list of policies and procedures, consider restructuring content into a list of 'How do I...' items.

This type of redesign lies at the heart of a user-centred intranet project, and opportunities should be found right to the bottom of the intranet for this reworking.