

SHAREPOINT GOVERNANCE: OWNING A SHAREPOINT INTRANET



A WHITE PAPER
BY TOBY WARD



PRESCIENT
DIGITAL MEDIA

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INTRODUCTION TO SHAREPOINT

SharePoint is present in 80% of the Fortune 100; and plays a prominent intranet role in about 70% of knowledge worker intranets (either powering the main intranet portal, or delivering associated collaboration sites and/or document repositories). This in spite of its history.

SharePoint 2016 and Office 365 represented considerable improvement in terms of content management, social and search. Office 365, the online, cloud-based version of Microsoft Office, includes SharePoint Online, plus many other solutions and tools, and resembles a true, complex digital workplace solution.

SharePoint 2019 has become a truly mobile friendly solution (when using the “modern UI”), with a number of improvements to collaboration (particularly Teams) and hybrid-cloud computing and hosting.

There are a lot of reasons to buy into or upgrade to SharePoint 2016 or 2019: the latest iteration of Microsoft’s portal-web development platform represents a massive, multi-million -dollar upgrade on the previous versions of SharePoint (which were typically oversold given its underwhelming if not frustrating performance and lack of execution, particularly in SharePoint 2007 and 2010). SharePoint 2019 is a massive upgrade from previous versions: noticeable improvements to social computing (social networking via Delve and Teams), mobile computing (responsive design with "modern" pages and a dedicated mobile app), better Office integration, cloud and hybrid integration, search and more.

THE LATEST IN SHAREPOINT

SharePoint Online in Office 365, which is not only feature and function parity with SharePoint 2019, in some cases, it’s more rich. Though some problems persist, the bugs and challenges are not as persistent as 2010 and 2013. The obvious improvements are particularly helpful to business owners and communicators:

- Content management – enhanced publishing and management interface (employing the ‘ribbon’ from Office)
- Social – enhanced social networking (nearly completely lacking in 2010), the evolution of My Sites into Delve, and the introduction of Microsoft Teams, with integration and upgrades to Skype for Business, and Yammer.
- Search – search is much improved with the full integration with the FAST search engine, but requires some configuration work
- Cloud – applications and software, data, and computing needs are accessed, stored, and occur over the Internet or the cloud, or a hybrid of cloud and on-premises.
- Mobile – enhanced mobile access experience (of course, this was promised for SP2010 and 2013 and it fell embarrassingly short) with a true responsive experience using ‘modern’ pages, and a dedicated mobile app for employees.
- Branding – the new "modern pages" are slick and responsive; it can be more challenging to implement new custom designs the original “classic UI”, and MS has openly cautioned against customizing the home page when using the modern experience.

There are far more pros than cons, but there should be at the price MS charges. These are all very good for corporate communicators, and internal communications who typically own the ‘front-end’ or the intranet user experience (UX). It’s easy to publish news and corporate content, and easy to update.

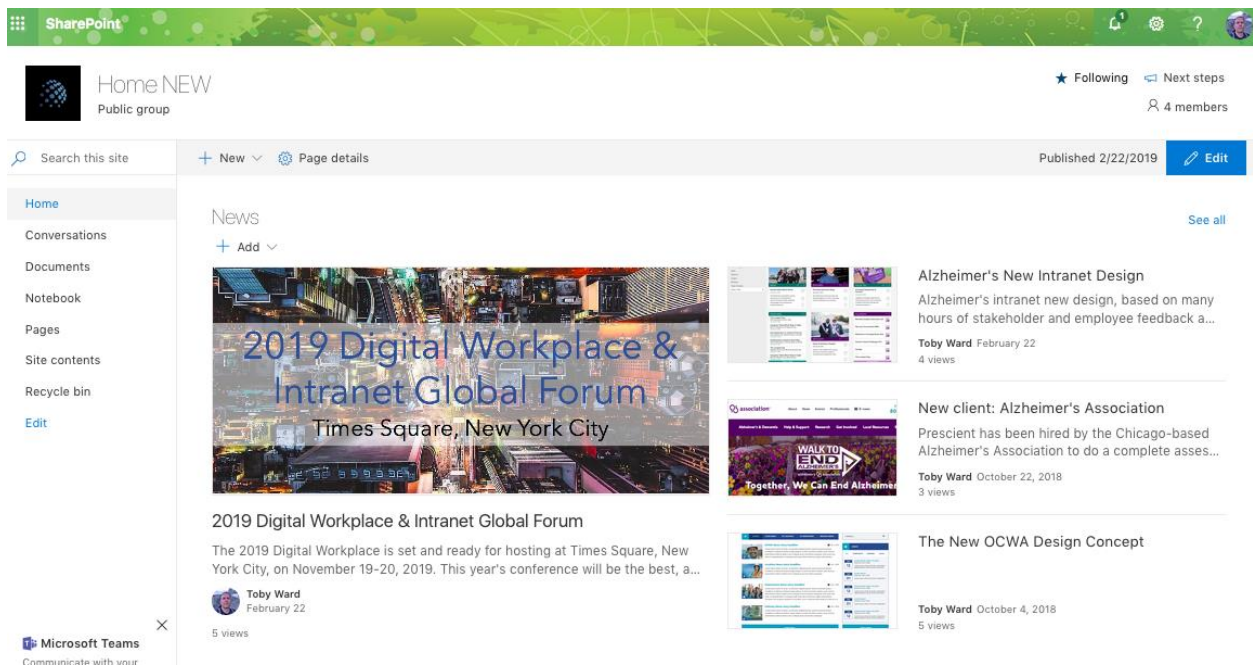
Creating a truly custom user experience is more tricky and expensive, but easily executed with an experienced .NET development team.

MODERN VS CLASSIC

The new 'modern' experience in SharePoint perhaps represents the most visible improvement to SharePoint, for the corporate communicator's perspective.

Most of the SharePoint intranet portals that are available today are based out of the Classic UX The current version of SharePoint offers both classic and Modern UX.

The standard way of deploying a classic SharePoint is by developing the custom master page and the page layouts. The Modern UX is an out-of-the-box where you can choose different templates and color schemes. It deploys fast, and the solution is fully mobile responsive. And it has a dedicated mobile app. Modern cannot be truly, fully customized (without problems). Classic can be customized, but is not fully responsive.



SharePoint Modern Intranet Site Collection at Prescient Digital Media

CONTENT MANAGEMENT

For global organizations, like those featured at this year's Digital Workplace & Intranet Global Forum, the key to a communicator's success is breaking down walls and geographic and cultural silos. Content management and social tools cannot work in isolation; the digital workplace must continually breakdown walls and seek connections between disparate employee groups.

Decentralized content management is a key to content management success. In the decentralized content model, the content management responsibilities are spread across the organization and each content owner publishes and manages their own content, rather than having to rely on a central group

for all publishing. This also provides the added benefit of duplicating and recreating content on different pages, templates and sites by others who may not know or understand the subject matter as much as the content creator.

This approach helps to increase the volume and quality of content by having subject matter experts directly involved in content creation and publishing rather than funneling it through a communications team. This decentralized approach also ensures content-author accountability around creating content that is useful, sticky and consumable.

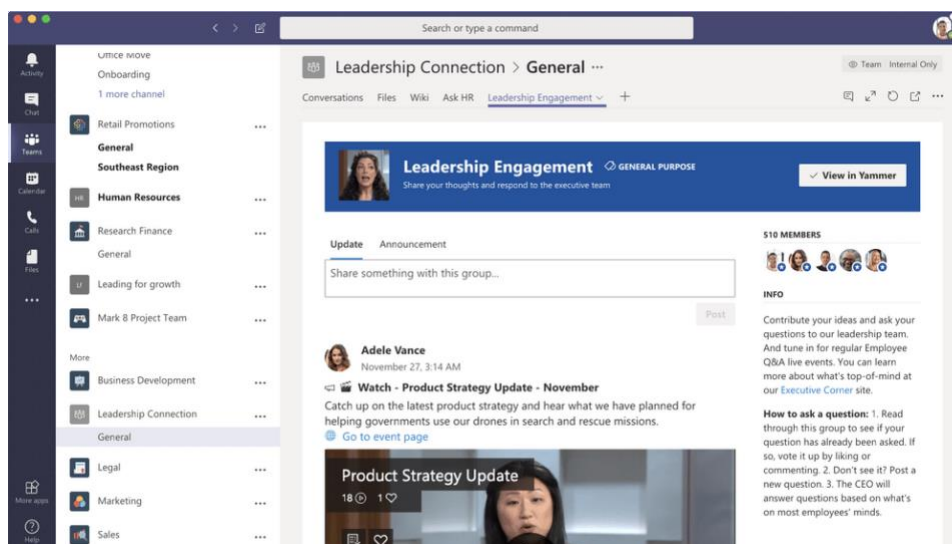
Content management, regardless of the solution (SharePoint or other), works best when it is decentralized, and spread across the organization. When content management is consolidated, with a single team, like corporate or internal communications, then great value is lost in the process. Content needs to be created and shared across the organization, regardless of how they access the digital workplace.

SOCIAL COLLABORATION

Social works best not when the tools work in isolated silos, but are integrated into the home page and other digital tools.

Yammer is still a stand-alone tool that is not easily integrated into other parts of the intranet. There's not even a natural link to it from SharePoint out-of-the-box. Microsoft though is also slowly learning this lesson the hard way: finally, years after purchasing the floundering microblogging platform, Yammer has now been integrated into Microsoft Teams. And Teams, with integration into SharePoint, Outlook, Skype, and other Office tools, is becoming the ultimate social collaboration tool on the intranet because it's breaking down these walls.

Microsoft Teams is an interesting addition to Office 365; many liken Teams as Redmond's answer to Slack. It's a little more involved than Slack, but hardly as cool. It does, however, integrate with SharePoint Online, and Skype, and is definitely worth a look if you're already a Microsoft customer. Despite some pundit reports, those that don't have a clue, Microsoft Teams is not a replacement for Yammer, but a completely different tool.



Yammer integration into Teams

The threaded discussions and file sharing reminds the user of Slack, but it also comes with traditional SharePoint libraries, and wikis. Additionally, within Teams a user can initiate chat or video calls. There are tons of integration points and additions with other third-part tools (we've integrated in Asana for project management) in addition to Yammer.

And now, Microsoft has just announced that the integration of voice mail into Teams. Now you can leave voice mail messages with your Teams connections.

KEY LESSONS

Walls and social tools aside, there are a few more salient, key lessons that should be emphasized when implementing and working with SharePoint, that all communicators need to understand:

- Licensing represents a fraction of the cost
- Planning and governance are mission critical – mission critical
- Social collaboration doesn't just happen, it's earned
- Content management needs to be decentralized with responsibility spread widely
- Change management is the key to success; employees and content creators need a lot of education and marketing

SharePoint is a very good for a small to medium-size intranet in a .NET environment that requires a web development platform focused on enterprise content management. It can work for a large enterprise, but it is not cheap, typically requires a lot of work and customization of the "classic" experience, and doesn't always work as promised. SharePoint cannot be everything to everyone, though Microsoft is working hard to make it happen.

PLANNING

Planning and governance is technology agnostic; whether it's SharePoint or another portal or content management platform, the necessity for and the approach to governance is the same. Given its technology neutral status in the realm of website and intranet evolution planning and governance is largely applicable to any technology platform and as such is generic to start. While generic in nature, there are some components of SharePoint that require specific consideration, and are discussed and addressed by the interviewed subject matter experts and the included case studies.

“Without proper architecture and governance, I can guarantee you that SharePoint will fail,” said Bob Mixon, President of [Mixon Consulting](#).

As is the case with most intranets or websites, it is simply impossible to achieve any long-lasting success without a clearly defined ownership and management structure. Far from being a buzz word or jargon, intranet governance provides clarity and rules: namely the titles, roles and responsibilities of its owners, managers, stakeholders and contributors.

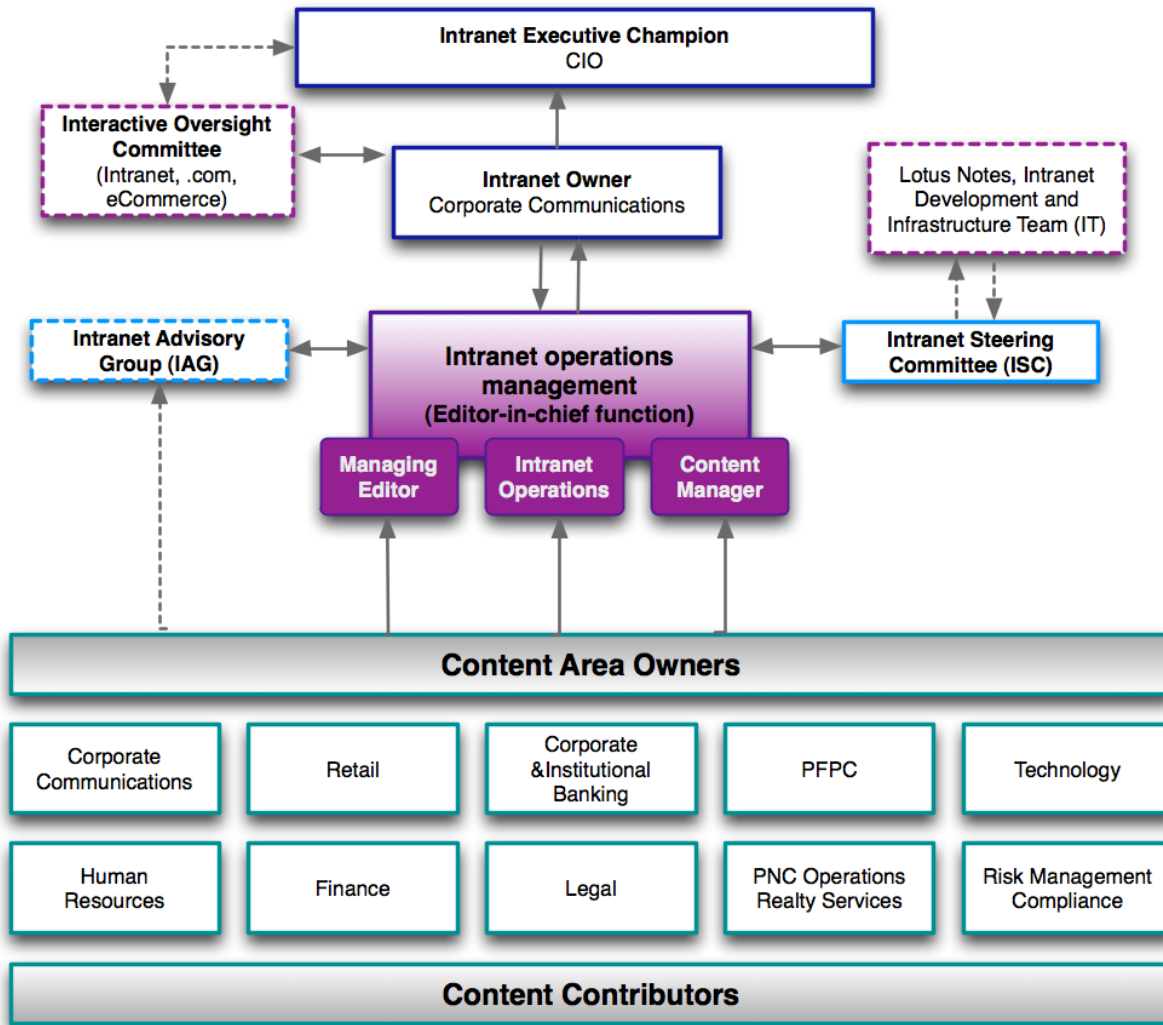
The powerful Team Site features and easy deployment features of SharePoint make it even more demanding of a rigorous plan and detailed governance model.

NO OWNER

“I'm not really sure who owns the intranet.” This is a far too common refrain cited by many clients and conference attendees alike when answering questions about intranet ownership. Shockingly, even the professional, experienced communicators often answer with confusion – even sometimes believing that they are at least a part owner, but not certain of even this.

Imagine your newsletter or annual report without an editor, a platoon without a lieutenant, or your IT Communications department without an executive in charge. You might survive for a few weeks, maybe a year or two, perhaps, but all would die a slow death until someone put it out of its misery.

How can you operate a successful business or website if there is no clear owner? You cannot; it is simply impossible to achieve any long-lasting success without a clearly defined ownership and management structure. Websites and intranets are no exception, and the powerful Team Site features and easy deployment features of SharePoint make it even more demanding of a rigorous plan and detailed governance model.



Sample governance model – large financial services firm (source: Prescient Digital Media & PNC Bank)

Politics and the issues of control, ownership and standards go hand-in-hand with intranet management and perhaps these issues, more than any other, have driven the requirement for planning and defined governance models – whether using SharePoint or another technology solution. Sadly, very few organizations actually have a well-defined governance model, and many of those have spent hundreds-of-thousands to millions of dollars on their website or intranet – amounting to extraordinary investments left to chance and execution on a whim.

STRATEGY & PLANNING

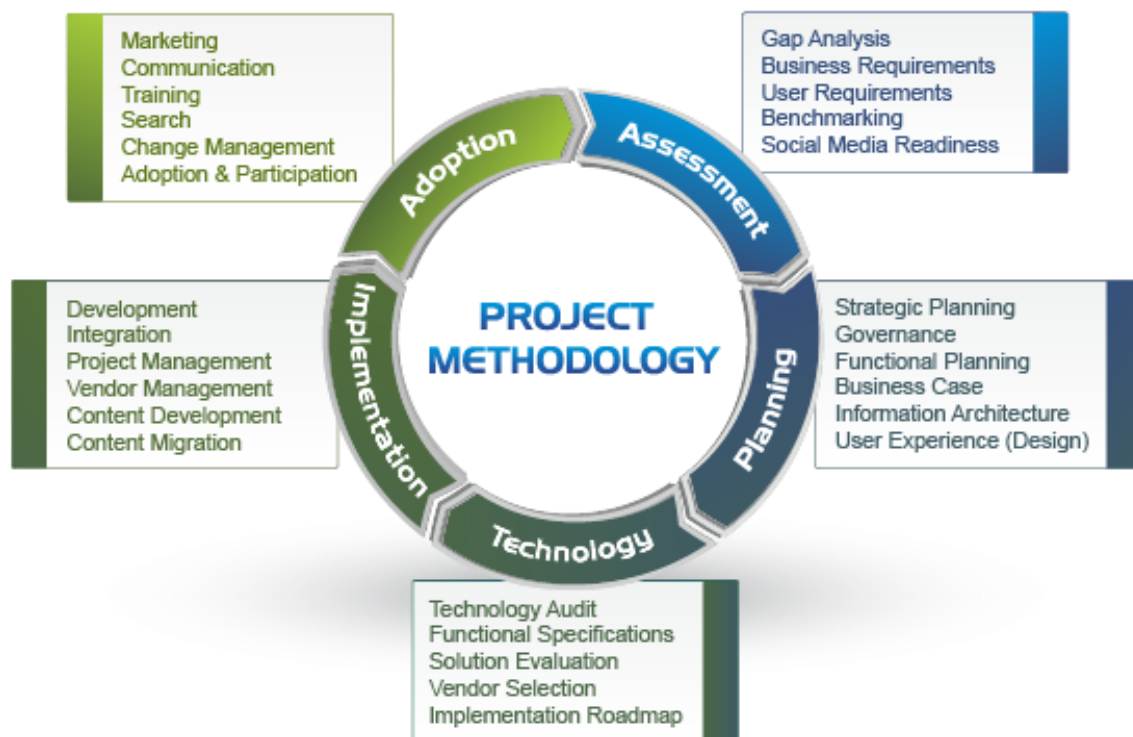
Governance is but one component of a larger plan or strategy. A strategy has definition, is well documented and shared by all stakeholders, and has key performance indicators (KPIs) or metrics. The strategy provides direction for executable actions (in the context of this white paper, we will treat strategy as synonymous with planning, though a strategy in the broader definition might contain many plans). For a website or intranet, a typical strategy would include the following elements:

- Vision
- Mission

- Target audience definition / segmentation
- Governance model
- Goals
- Objectives
- Action plans
- KPIs (or CSIs)

Strategy and planning is independent of technology, and should precede the selection, architecture, and implementation of SharePoint (or any technology). In fact, any choice for or work on technology before the development of plans and governance is synonymous with putting the cart before the horse; except this SharePoint horse is massive and can be very expensive. Regardless of the technology, most websites and intranets risk failure without a well-defined strategy. Even the smallest of intranets requires a strategy and plan.

When looking at strategy as it relates to the process of developing or redesigning an intranet, strategy encompasses the first two phases of our Intranet & Website Project Methodology © 2012, Assessment & Planning.



ASSESSMENT

During Assessment (Phase I), the current state of the intranet is documented and the needs and requirements identified. Assessment serves two important functions: it documents the needs and requirements of the user population, and those of the business and its stakeholders (while aligning project goals with corporate goals and objectives). This phase often includes the following activities:

- Heuristic intranet evaluation (gap analysis)
- Business requirements analysis (and stakeholder interviews)

- User reviews
- User survey
- Focus groups
- Technical infrastructure analysis
- Benchmarking and best practices

PLANNING

Phase II, Planning, addresses the needs documented during the Assessment. Intranet planning incorporates both the strategic vision, governance model and the functional plan and maps out the strategic and tactical steps for designing the site or portal including:

- High-level vision and mission
- Goals and objectives
- Governance model
- Critical success indicators (KPIs)
- Business case and ROI
- Content management plan & policies

As well, detailed tactical plans are drafted, including:

- Functional plan
- Information architecture
- Page wireframes
- Design concepts
- Usability testing

MODEL FOR SUCCESS

It is easier to look at planning from the top-down, beginning with the vision and 'visualizing' the end state or model of success for the intranet. While a successful intranet 'looks' very different from organization to organization, another way to visualize success is as a model or mental construct (the elements of success).

THE NEXUS

It is not enough to merely look at a successful intranet, and duplicate it for your organization; each organization is unique, has unique requirements, and what works well in one organization will not necessarily work well in another. The Nexus of Web Intranet is a successful model that highlights and emphasizes the most important elements of a successful intranet. Nexus ['nEksIs] comes from a Greek word meaning 'meeting place' (a fitting label given the intranet's importance as the only true, universal meeting ground or 'water cooler' in the average organization).



The most critical determinant of intranet success is people. In particular, the crucial participation and support of senior management (the heart or inner ring of the Nexus model: Executive Support) and the end users (the all-encompassing factor represented by the outer ring 'Motivated Users' of the Nexus model). The model therefore visually depicts the significant importance of people: both senior management and end users are critical tasks during the development of intranet plans and governance.

The Nexus model therefore represents the desired end-state, not the process for getting there. However, the intranet is not a technology system or IT project, nor is it a communications vehicle or channel; the intranet is a business system that should represent and support all areas of the business. In fact, a successful website or intranet is really only one-part technology, and many parts people and process (beginning with strategy).

GOVERNANCE

Despite the need, SharePoint is not getting the planning and governance it deserves. According to the [Global Intranet Trends report](#), which reports detailed intranet data and findings from 227 participant organizations, most organizations have SharePoint (in some shape or form), but a pitiful 30% of those SharePoint implementers have an intranet strategy (including governance).

One SharePoint expert, who prefers to remain anonymous when citing this particular client, tells of a major bank in the U.K. that deployed SharePoint. A little more than a year later the bank had 23,000 SharePoint sites – a massive problem for the bank. “The way it was deployed and structured was deplorable... but that’s the bank’s fault, not Microsoft’s.”

Imagine the effectiveness of your intranet and search engine if users had to navigate 23,000 SharePoint sites, and search results from hundreds of thousands of pages?

An intranet cannot work on software and hardware alone. More specifically, Microsoft provides the software, but it is the client's responsibility to build the plan and intranet governance.

When building a governance model, the major components should include:

- The umbrella ownership model – Centralized? Decentralized? Collaborative?
- Defined ownership structure (names and titles)
- Roles and responsibilities (jobs and duties)
- Decision making process (who is responsible for what and when)
- Content and development policies & standards (the rules of establishing pages, sites and content)

Politics and the issues of control, ownership and standards go hand-in-hand with an intranet. Sadly, very few organizations actually have a well-defined governance model, and many of those have spent hundreds-of-thousands or millions of dollars on their intranet – amounting to extraordinary investments left to chance and execution on a whim.

OWNERSHIP

Politics will kill your intranet. Without a well-defined governance model (and should your intranet survive the naturally occurring politics of competing priorities amongst various stakeholders – communications, IT, human resources, various business units, etc.) then the value the intranet or portal delivers will be severely hampered or trampled.

“If you don’t have structure, you’re going to constantly run into politics,” said Terry Lister, Partner and Leader of IBM Canada’s Business Consulting Services. “Without a governance structure with standards, different silos try to do something in parallel (their own thing) and it costs more... and will lessen the user experience.”

Much of the problem lies in the immaturity of this nascent intranet technology, and the lack of foreseen and required planning to accompany it. With the rational consolidation of intranet sites and services under a central site or portal, disparate departments and stakeholders such as corporate communications, human resources, IT and varying business units now must cooperate under a lone umbrella with a single intranet home page. Along with this ‘forced’ cooperation comes the predictable politics and competition for ownership of the intranet (and competition for valued home page real estate). Or worse, they don’t cooperate at all and go off and create their own intranet, investing and paying in separate technology, maintenance and staff.

The problem lies with the traditional growth and evolution of the intranet. Initially, when intranets first came online in the early to mid-1990s, they were nothing more than a web brochure (a.k.a. ‘brochureware’) that sat on a small desktop under the desk of a Web developer who served as designer, writer and Webmaster.

INTRANET SPRAWL

As the technology grew-up alongside its richer and more popular Internet brethren, corporate intranets began to evolve to include human resource and purchasing applications, collaboration tools, business intelligence and real-time reporting tools. Soon every department in the company had an intranet of its own, thus giving birth to ‘intranet sprawl’.

'Intranet sprawl' can be a poisonous side-effect of SharePoint Team Sites, and unchecked site collections without the proper “rules” for deploying and managing these viral sites. However, it’s not merely a SharePoint problem. Before the turn of the millennium, IBM's network was choked with approximately 10,000 intranet sites before they undertook a governance process and federation (consolidation

campaign) that closed more than 6,000 intranet sites, and saved the company untold millions (IBM claims it's saved more than a \$1 billion).

"It's ironic," adds Lister, "we wouldn't have these difficulties in a building where you have different groups existing together in the same space. But partly because of the way the intranet grew up, we didn't create a corporate view and you have to struggle to pull the intranet back and find something better."

Prescient Digital Media categorizes intranet governance by four broad approaches or models:

- Decentralized (no single owner; do-what-you-like)
- Centralized (a single owner or department controls it all; highly bureaucratic; common in small organizations)
- Collaborative (shared ownership via committee)
- Hybrid, centralized (single owner, with collaborative accountability, decentralized content ownership)

DECENTRALIZED GOVERNANCE

The decentralized intranet is typically a free-for-all; do-what-you-like when and how you like. There is no one owner, and everyone has their own intranet or page. Sometimes there are some supporting policies, particularly around look-and-feel and branding, but often they're not enforced.

Decentralized intranets are typically in larger organizations with legacy technology infrastructures that have not been upgraded or centralized; they are characterized by organic growth "intranet sprawl" with a vast array of different designs, technologies and user interfaces.

This form of governance is rarely if ever recommended except in highly decentralized enterprises that are highly regulated and are prohibited from pooling or sharing resources across separate business units.

CENTRALIZED GOVERNANCE

The centralized intranet is usually owned and controlled by a single group, usually IT or communications. It is a highly bureaucratic structure where all projects, tools and content has to flow through a single person or team that has to approve everything that is done. This highly bureaucratic "gatekeeper" approach is characterized by "red tape", delays, and a bottle-neck of requests for intranet tools and content publishing.

In more mature centralized models, the bottle-neck of content and business requests can 'break' the model and frustrate business owners to the point of resorting to establishing their own intranets with their own budget. This can then lead to a decentralized free-for-all as other groups follow an initial rogue and then set out to launch their own intranet too.

Centralized governance is feasible and sensible in small, highly structured organizations. However, the larger the organization, the more dangerous centralized governance becomes.

COLLABORATIVE GOVERNANCE

The most common governance model in recent years, in medium to large-size organizations, has been the collaborative model. The collaborative model is most often centrally controlled by a group of stakeholders or cross-representative steering committee representing the major functional stakeholders often including:

- Communications
- Human Resources
- Information Technology
- Business units / departments

This model is most successful when the committee is championed by one or two key executives, often the CIO, the head of Communications, or HR. Instead of no owner, or one single owner, a collaborative team governs the intranet through the application of policies, standards and templates. This committee is typically responsible for the direction, vision, prioritization of projects, and future evolution.

A Melcrum Research survey of 500+ intranet managers found that the collaborative or steering committee approach is now the most common model, and a shared thread amongst leading, successful intranets:

- 67.5% of companies have a steering committee, intranet council, or similar, responsible for the development of the intranet:
 - Steering committees have on average between 6-10 individuals
 - 79.3% have IT representatives
 - 75.9% have internal communicators
 - 65.2% have corporate communicators
 - 51.7% have HR representatives
 - 43.1% have marketing representatives

The study reveals that these steering committees or councils generally meet monthly and are focused mostly on:

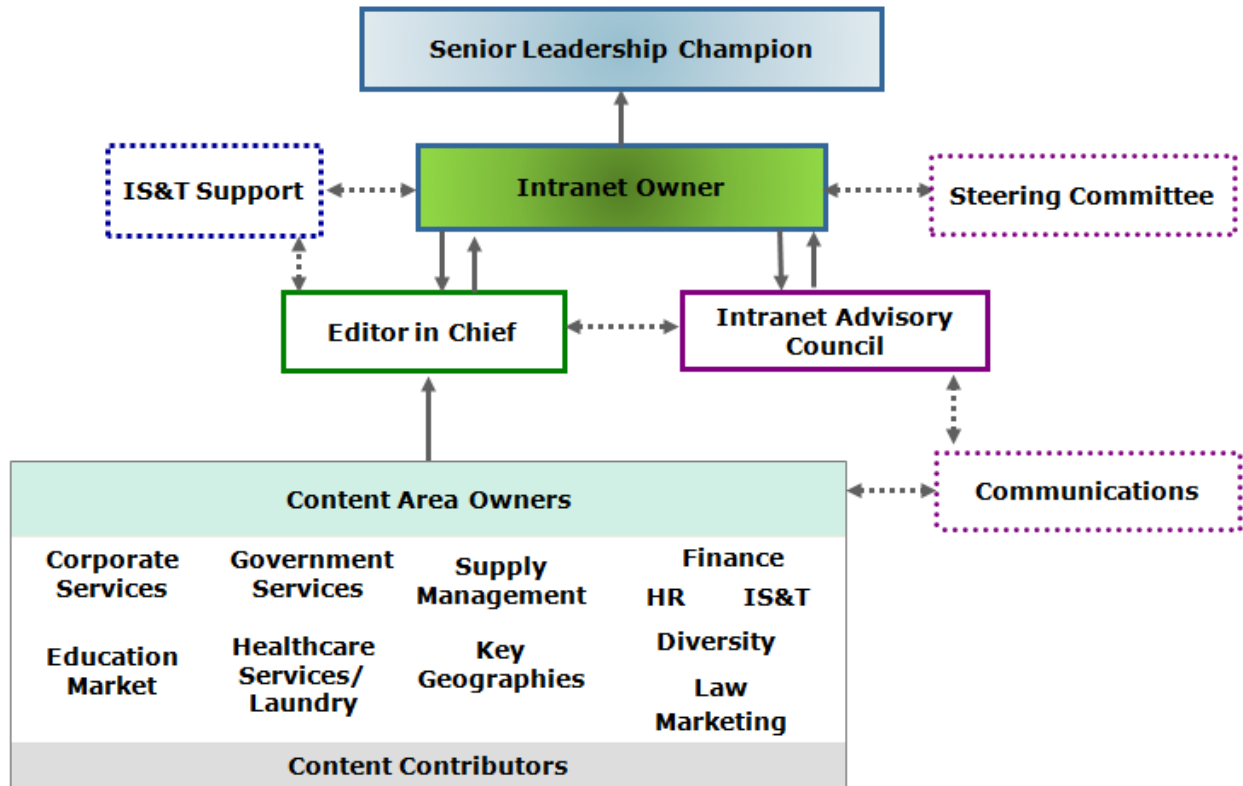
- intranet mandate and vision
- business objectives
- policies and standardization
- project prioritization
- trouble-shooting and conflict resolution

HYBRID, CENTRALIZED GOVERNANCE

The hybrid, centralized governance model is one that combines elements of all three previous models:

- Centralized ownership, supported by a small steering committee
- Centralized policy making and future development decision-making
- Centralized technology and content management platforms
- Decentralized content publishing and ownership
- Decentralized application ownership / management

The hybrid model is very closely aligned to the collaborative model, with two significant exceptions: there is often a supporting steering committee, but it falls under a single intranet owner (or co-owners); and the role of IT is usually reduced from a collaborative owner to a committee member without ownership, but rather a support or enabler role for the business owner (often communications or HR). So while the collaborative model has a committee as the end intranet owner, the hybrid model puts the committee under an owner (though sometimes this business owner is in fact IT).



Hybrid, centralized governance model (Source: client, Prescient Digital Media)

Note the subtle reporting relationship differences in the above hybrid model (actual model, with client confidentiality protected):

- A single owner is responsible for the intranet, and ultimately falls under two co-champions that are, for all intents and purposes, “sponsors” responsible for funding
- A steering committee exists, called the Intranet Council, but they fall under the Intranet Owner and are concerned more with policy and future evolution (big picture issues, not content or design)
- Technology has a spot on the committee, but is not an owner and in fact works for the business owner, Communications (with dotted-line responsibility or equivalent to the Manager)

INTRANET STEERING COMMITTEES

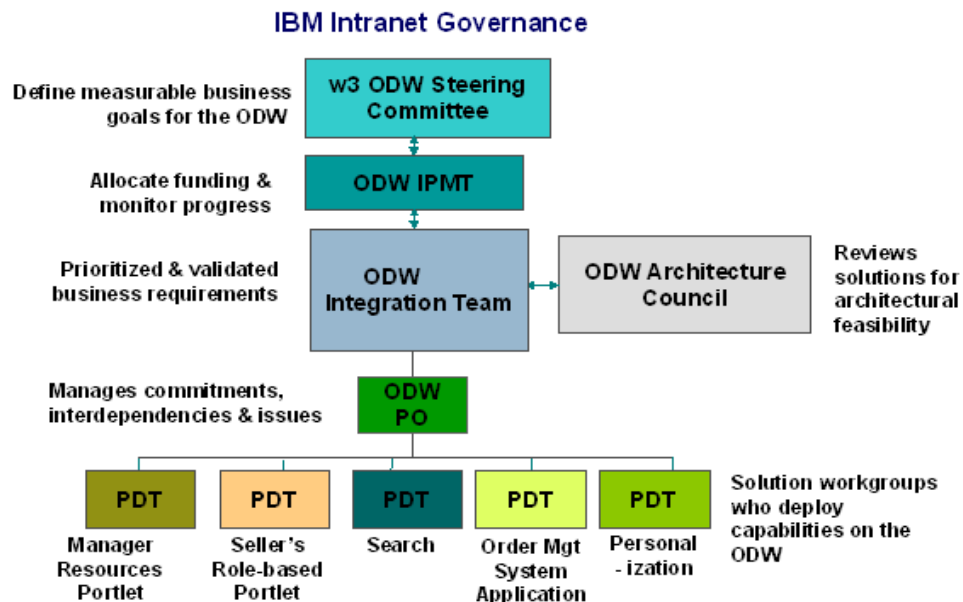
“One of the great successes of an intranet is to make a diverse set of resources — technology, content, and personnel — operate as one seamless and cohesive unit,” writes intranet consultant Paul Chin in his article [Multi-Tier Intranet Ownership](#) (Intranet Journal). “But this result doesn't happen without a certain level of cooperation among all those involved, those who have the foresight to see that the strength of another intranet sub-site can translate to the strength of their own section, and to a larger extent, to the strength of the entire system.”

The intranet steering committee, best represented in the collaborative and hybrid models, represents the needed cooperation of key intranet stakeholders, and is becoming the center of many governance models. As illustrated above, the committee is made-up of intranet stakeholders or owners representing a cross-section of the business. The most successful committees (sometimes called a council) are led or chaired by an executive with clout, and access to funding.

IBM’s intranet governance model is collaborative, with ownership resting with a central steering committee called the On Demand Workplace (ODW) Steering Committee. The ODW Steering Committee includes representation from:

- The CIO
- Corporate Communications
- Learning (very large budget)
- Human Resources

The other positions on the committee are non-permanent and include IBM Global Services (IBM's consulting arm), Software, etc. Those sitting on the Steering Committee are all SVPs and have the clout within the organization to make tough decisions with respect to budget and resources, policies and standards, and the future of the intranet.



Source: Intranet World Tour: IBM Leads the World, Liam Cleaver, IBM

As many intranet managers with battle scars know all too well, tough decisions often need to be made, but the decision-maker requires political currency. Wherever possible, consensus is strongly recommended. “The biggest ownership mistake involving large multi-disciplinary intranets is to appoint a single department such as IT or Communications as the sole governing body of the system,” says Chin. “An intranet has so many facets that it’s next to impossible to run properly with a single owner, whether it be a person or a department.”

While the IBM Steering Committee fosters collaboration and cooperation across the company there is an ultimate sponsor / champion: the CIO. One detractor of the collaborative model is the committee approach to decision-making, which can be far slower and more bureaucratic than under the centralized (one owner) or decentralized (no owners) governance models. Hence the need to have an ultimate chairman who can make tough decisions when there is no consensus and decisions are tied-down in committee.

The steering committee also serves as a vehicle for conflict resolution and provides a forum for minimizing the politics of ownership. Finally, the hybrid and collaborative models ensure different stakeholders think about the greater needs of the organization rather than just their specific functional silo and leads. The necessity of “seeing the forest through the trees” cannot be over emphasized.

DATA GOVERNANCE ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES



*Forrester's generic roles for data governance (which of course includes intranet content)
Source: Forrester “What works and what doesn't”*

SPECIFIC SHAREPOINT CONSIDERATIONS

“SharePoint is a non-linear technology, not a traditional technology, and does not build out in a straight line; it builds out in a tree... or in a cloud,” says Mark Schneider, President Vitals kill, and a SharePoint writer and speaker at www.SharePointPlan.com.

Because Site Collections and Team Sites are so easy to deploy, and it is so easy for even the most neophyte web users to create a site (e.g. Team Sites, Teams, Publishing Sites, etc.), SharePoint sites can easily grow at exponential rates and amount to tens-of-thousands in a short period of time.

“I use the term viral growth,” adds Schneider. “It's very easy for people to create sites and forget that they've done so. And it is also very easy for sites to proliferate... and for people to lose track of where everything is.”

However, as most communicators attached to their intranet can attest to, the number one intranet complaint of most employees is: “I can't find anything!” This issue can be greatly exacerbated and multiplied in a SharePoint environment, without the proper planning and governance.

“If there's no structure to it, the ad-hoc growth winds-up becoming unmanageable,” says Mark. “One client, for example, set-up a SharePoint pilot, and with just a few employees, it spiraled to more than 10,000 sites. But with a few process improvements and governance we were able to prevent that from happening in the future.”

When considering SharePoint, before it's implemented, SharePoint expert and Microsoft consultant Joel Olesen recommends following his “10 Steps To Ensure Success” in deploying SharePoint (see his presentation [From Chaos to Success in 10 Steps](#)):

1. Confront Reality
2. Create a Governance Plan
3. Get an Executive Sponsor
4. Develop the Dream Team
5. Build Services not Stuff
6. Define Clear Policies and Standards
7. Invest in Scalable Information Architecture
8. Don't forget Change Management
9. Adoption is What Counts
10. Keep it Simple Stupid

SharePoint Case Study: BT

BT, once known as British Telecom, has 160,000 intranet users in 170 countries. A key driver in its technology strategy is an overarching corporate goal to be “recognized for innovation and great service...” This innovation has many forms including a combination of technologies that help “pull together” a wide-ranging and disparately located population (at any one time, up to 25% of the population is “in the air.”). A cornerstone of these technologies is the BT intranet, a mission critical business and communications system.

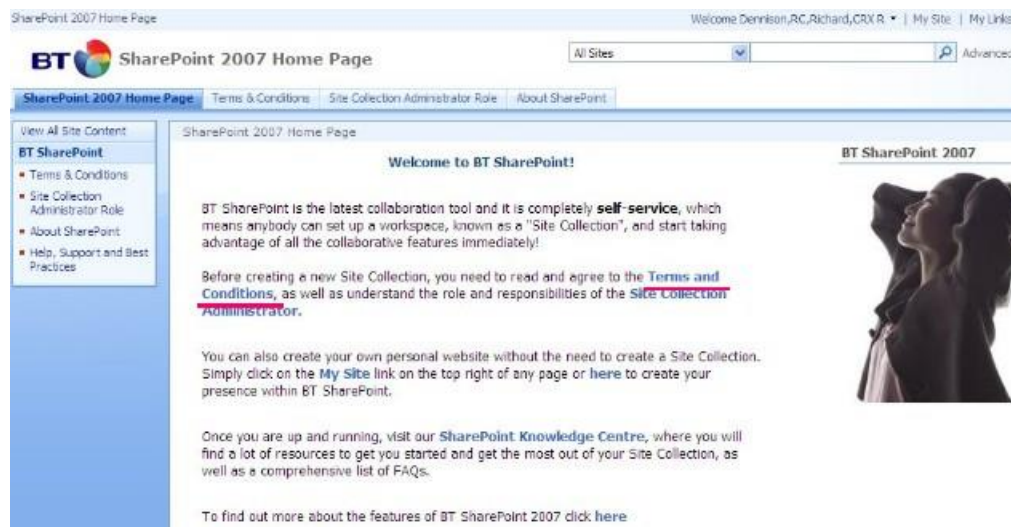
Among the many collaboration tools at BT (which includes blogs, podcasts, social networking and wikis that number more than 750,000) are SharePoint sites (which BT calls “collaboration sites”). In fact, one might argue the collaboration sites have been too effective – the BT intranet now hosts more than 500,000 collaboration sites (and “site collections” – what Microsoft calls a collection of websites, or a portal).

“Using technology to break down traditional boundaries encourages a culture that reaches out rather than locks out, and that is something that the Digital Generation is ideally equipped to do,” says Richard Dennison, Senior Manager for Social Manager, BT.

At BT, anyone can create a SharePoint site, but they have to follow rules and adhere to Terms & Conditions. The SharePoint gateway welcomes employees with an overview:

“Before creating a new Site Collection, you need to read and agree to the Terms and Conditions, as well as understand the role and responsibilities of the Site Collection Administrator.”

You can also create your own personal intranet site without the need to create a Site Collection; employees simply click on the My Site link on the top right of any page or to create a personal site (My Site).



BT intranet “Collaboration Sites” using Team Sites

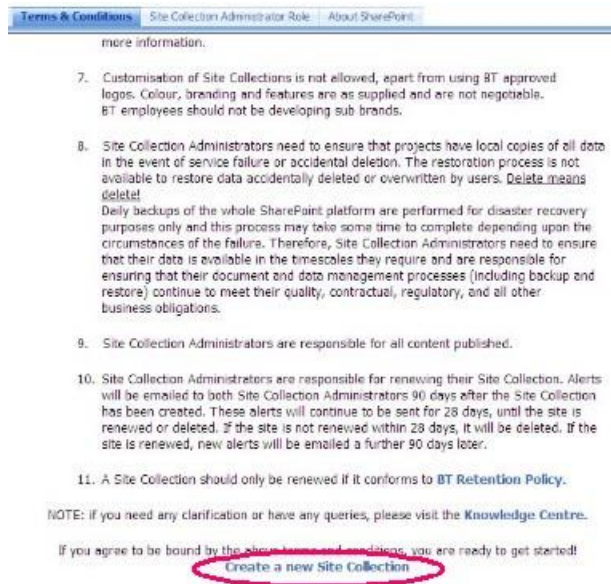
Once a user begins the process of creating a Site Collection they must read and accept the Terms and Conditions policy which among other things states:

“Customization of Site Collections is not allowed...”

And:

“Site Collection Administrators are responsible for renewing their Site Collection (every 3 months) ... alerts will continue to be sent for 28 days, until the site is renewed or deleted. If the site is not renewed or deleted within 28 days, it will be deleted.”

In other words, sites and content are only good for 90 days, then they must be reviewed and either deleted or renewed. This policy promotes a continual focus on content freshness and relevancy. In addition to the user Terms & Conditions, to renew a site, it must conform to a “Retention Policy” which states the criteria for maintaining an ongoing site.



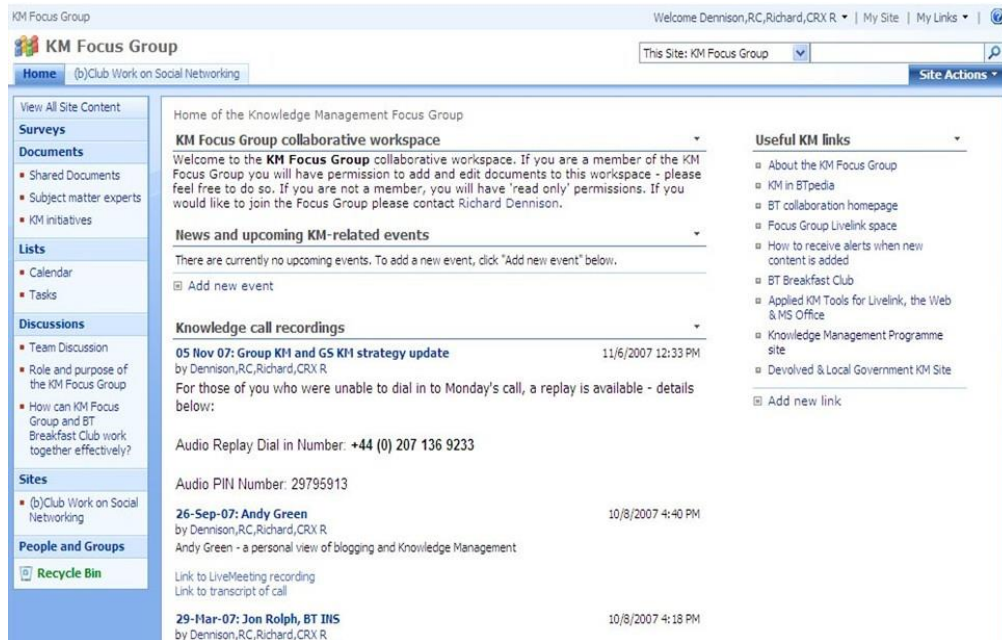
When creating a new site, in addition to the My Site template, employees have a number of site collection templates to choose from including:

- Team Site
- Blank Site
- Wiki
- Blog
- Document workspace
- Publishing site

The KM Focus Group site is an example of one of the 500,000 collaboration sites at BT and features news, announcements, calendar, tasks, shared documents, and even discussion forums under a standardized look and feel (the out-of-the-box default design theme).

With such a large organization, BT's collaboration sites and social media are centrally governed by a single group, but the supporting policies allow individuals and groups to govern their own content. The governance, however, is fairly simple:

- Policy is owned by Group Communications
- Information management standards is owned by Group Communications
- Policy/standards 'enforcement' is owned by Group Communications but embedded into tools - automatic
- Content is owned by the user community
- Content is 'policed' by user community
- Channels are owned by user community
- Channel development is owned by user community



SharePoint Governance Case Study: Transfield Services

Transfield Services, a global services firm headquartered in Australia, is one of the Gold Winners of the [Intranet Innovation Awards](http://www.steptwo.com.au/iaa) (www.steptwo.com.au/iaa). Using SharePoint, the innovative Transfield team created a very simple, but creative approach to deploying Team Sites inside the company of 28,000 employees.ⁱ

Labeled “Team Sites in a Box” the approach opened up the SharePoint collaboration features to Transfield employees with the proper governance and rules that ensured Team Sites were embraced by employees, but not abused. The ‘Team Sites in a Box’ framework comprises:

- System design
- Configuration
- Support
- Processes
- Policies
- Content
- Training
- People (roles and responsibilities)

“Team Sites in a Box” was driven by the development of a Governance Plan that defines the applicable terms of use, policies, roles and responsibilities, security and access permissions, etc. Five key steps comprise the process of developing this reusable, standardize framework:

1. **Anticipate** - anticipating the ‘how, when, who and why’ questions that users will have during their first encounter with the new collaboration system, and preparing the environment accordingly.
2. **Educate** - educating and inspiring users and champions for the online collaboration service and, importantly, emphatically addressing the “What’s in it for me?”

3. **Establish** - establishing new sites efficiently and effectively, including an online request form which captures ownership details, anticipated use, and other key metadata, and feeds into the Site Directory and supports ongoing auditing of the environment.
4. **Enhance** - enhancing the user experience throughout the team site life cycle, including extensive team site FAQs, video tutorials (developed in-house, for customized guidance), and how-to materials on key topics.
5. **Extract** – realizing benefits – extracting the value created along the chain of components in ‘Team Sites in a Box’.

The comprehensive methodology delivers end-to-end support for users including training materials, frequently asked questions, video training and more. The solution has been so successful that in a company of nearly 30,000 employees, Team Sites have been limited to just a few hundred.

Extensive training materials are written in plain language, and all are available on the intranet, accompanied by short training videos. Information is provided in bite-size chunks, with links to more in-depth materials where required, to third-party training materials and books. However, Transfield created custom documentation and training materials to match the specific functionality available only at Transfield (the team only enacted 20% of the Team Site functionality).

The screenshot shows the TransNet intranet interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the TransNet logo and the tagline 'connected | communicate | collaborate'. Below the navigation bar, there is a breadcrumb trail: 'TransNet > Team Sites > When to Use a Team Site'. The main content area is titled 'When to Use a Team Site' and contains the following text:

Sharing information in TransNet - Intranet vs Team Sites
 If you're not sure whether your information should be shared in the Intranet or in a Team Site, take a look at this [Quick Reference Guide](#) to learn more. A series of questions, with example scenarios, will help you clarify the best approach to take to your communication and collaboration needs.

How a Team Site can help your team work more effectively
 Team Sites can be very useful in the right circumstances. But they won't necessarily help all teams, or assist in every situation.

A Team Site is only really effective if its members have common objectives and are prepared to use it on a regular basis as a platform for team communications. It's also important to recognise that a Team Site will not just "take care of itself", but will require some effort to set up and maintain.

The following scenarios will give you an idea of when (and why) establishing a Team Site for your team or work group could be of use – and when it probably won't be.

When a Team Site can help:

- Members of the project team or work group are spread out over two or more locations and you need a single, convenient place to store your common information.
- You're working on a document with several colleagues and, with so many versions and comments being emailed around, it's increasingly difficult to keep track of updates and maintain one master copy. Publishing the document in a Team Site will allow everyone to review and update just one copy ("version control" allows you to keep a record of changes too, if you need to).
- Some members of the project team aren't permanent Transfield Services employees and don't have access to our network, but still need to share common information with us and contribute to items being drafted.
- Members of the team are operating in different time zones, making it difficult to communicate as a group in "real time" by phone or video-conference.
- The team or work group is collaborating quite well by telephone and email, but it can be hard to keep everyone "in the loop" in this way. Members would like to be able to

To establish a Team Site, a business owner / user goes to the Team Sites tab, one of the seven major content tabs in the Transfield intranet global navigation. There a user can:

- Request a Team Site
- Learn “When” and “What” to use a team site for
- Read the Quick Reference Guide
- Review the Team Site user guidelines
- Follow the Team Site checklist for establishing a new site
- Enroll in a Team Site workshop
- Watch a Team Site video tutorial
- Follow a Team Site user tour
- Browse other Team Sites

For more information, visit: www.steptwo.com.au/jia

POLICIES & STANDARDS

Supporting the governance ownership model should be an overarching policy, or a collection of complementary intranet policies, for creating and managing pages (sites), content and applications. This could be a single “Intranet Governance Policy” or several policies for:

- Content and tools
- Design and layout
- Terms of use (terms & conditions or “disclaimers”)
- Taxonomy (labeling or tagging content)

In some instances, the policy may be limited to a simple 10 item “Terms & Conditions” policy, as represented by the BT case study, or the policy (policies) may be more detailed, depending on the cultural demands of the organization and the nature of the SharePoint implementation (e.g. what controls are “baked” into the portal set-up, including security, workflow, and available functionality).

CONTENT POLICY

The website or intranet content policy (sometimes called an “editorial policy”) should dictate the rules or guidelines for writing, formatting and publishing content. Content policy is less of a legal security blanket and more of a definition of roles and responsibilities of those developing and maintaining online content. The content or editorial policy should include details on...

- Content types
- Style acceptability (e.g. writing for the web)
- News determinants (e.g. currency, impact, etc.)
- Formatting (e.g. use of pictures, fonts, etc.)
- Archiving (e.g. when content should be reviewed, archived and/or deleted)
- Photo treatments and bylines
- Content management system rules and directions
- Governance roles and responsibilities
- Taxonomy (classification)
- Site registration and indexing

It should be underscored that the content policy should not only cover static content, but also dynamic content (delivered from a database or another source) and tools / applications.

TERMS OF USE

Terms of use is a standard legal disclaimer(s) that dictates what intranet users can and cannot do. It says who owns it and declares the copyright, disclaims accuracy of content, etc., and should include information on or links to the organization’s privacy and security policies (just about every company has them already), as well as employee code of conduct, and social media guidelines.

Terms of use should also demonstrate “acceptable use” of the intranet and other content and tools that may be used to transmit or convey information from your intranet or website. It should include the typical “thou shall not...”

- E-mail content outside of the company.
- Print and distribute content outside of the company.
- Release content to any media outlet.
- Rewrite or reproduce content for personal purposes or profit without the expressed written consent of the company (legal department).

TAXONOMY

After spending the time understanding what the company needs to achieve with SharePoint, and what business managers and end employees expect, Schneider recommends building a role or policy taxonomy (not a standard taxonomy of nouns, but a grouping of overarching content categories or buckets (often called “parents”) that all sites have to fall under).

“Build a policy taxonomy that groups information into big buckets – no more than seven buckets (e.g. Finance, HR, News, etc.),” recommends Schneider. “Come up with a way of describing different types of information, while forgetting about SharePoint. Take a technology-agnostic approach.”

Once developed the seven key buckets (Prescient recommends five to eight parent categories depending on company size and industry), which become site collections which other sites must reside under, the properties are set for each of those bucket categories which are then transferred to or 'inherited' by all other sites created under the bucket site collections. This process of “inheritance” ensures that all sub-sites under a site collection inherit all of the behaviors (and functions) of the original site collection (and also prevents people from doing things they're not supposed to do).

“You use a combination of policies, inheritance, and templates to prevent people from wandering off (and doing whatever they want),” says Schneider.

Once you've established a taxonomy with the major parent or seven or eight buckets or Site Collections, accountability is tantamount to success: “Establish a governance team, where each bucket has a business owner (not IT, but a business team),” stresses Schneider. “Then create a governance team of these owners to determine over-arching policies. For example, whomever owns the Finance domain or bucket, then applies the rules to all sites under that domain (site collection).”

Additionally, another check and balance is the site quota. The quota is a storage limit (for example 500 GBs) that limits how much information can be stored on the site. With the overarching taxonomy complete, the parent site collections in place, and templates, inheritance, and quotas guiding the management of sites, users are now working in a controlled, structured environment that caps the natural tendency for site sprawl and information chaos. Supported by the other requisite policies for content and terms of use, and a proper governance model defining the roles and responsibilities for all, the intranet has a very sound governance foundation.

Finally, it is possible to put in place workflow approvals, so that if the client organization chooses, all new sites have to be approved by a business owner prior to going live. This is the gatekeeper model which may be necessary if the information demands and site growth is not overwhelming for the available staff.

Meta data (keywords) for content

All news, and any content page for that matter, must have meta data or keywords applied at the time of publishing by each and every content contributor (author). This is done via the taxonomy or Term Store in SharePoint, before the content is published live.

Working with taxonomies is like using tags. If you tag content items with taxonomy terms, you can filter them accordingly in the content section. Taxonomy terms are organized in taxonomy groups.

Before a term store is created and applied to a site, a taxonomy should be created offline. A taxonomy is of course a classification set (term set) that is built into a Term Store prior to enabling publishing. Intranet owners should ensure that the Term Store is completed prior to any publishing and that terms or meta tags are applied to every page whenever content is published (regardless of the publisher).

Taxonomy parent categories, umbrella categories under which all terms fall under, should reflect the types of content found in the intranet information architecture. Parent categories might include:

- Finance
- Research
- Diversity
- Program
- News
- Events
- Offices
- Policies
- Customers

The development team, when creating the publishing templates should ensure that each publishing template forces the mandatory inclusion of “closed terms” (terms or keywords chosen directly from the taxonomy tree) and “open terms” that are freely put into a content page that would not be found in a taxonomy term set (i.e., specific subject matter, expert’s name, form number, etc.).

The screenshot displays the SharePoint Taxonomy Term Store interface. On the left, a navigation pane lists various site functions such as 'term store', 'records management', 'search', 'secure store', 'apps', 'sharing', 'settings', 'configure hybrid', 'access control', and 'data migration'. The main content area is titled 'TAXONOMY TERM STORE' and shows a tree view of terms. The 'Deliverables' term is selected and highlighted in yellow. To the right, the 'GENERAL' tab is active, showing configuration options for the selected term. The 'Available for Tagging' checkbox is checked. The 'Language' dropdown is set to 'English'. The 'Description' field contains the text 'Client deliverables including plans, designs, etc.'. The 'Default Label' field contains 'Deliverables'. The 'Other Labels' field has an 'add new label' button.

The Managed or Taxonomy Term Store in SharePoint

FIGHTING SPRAWL

Some intranet managers would love to be blessed with the problem of the intranet being used too much, or having to host a plethora of content and pages. “If you've got users over-running your SharePoint environment then that's the right problem to have,” says Robert Bogue, Microsoft MVP consultant, [President of Thor Projects](#).

Use = value. Value = funding and recognition.

However, information sprawl isn't the ideal scenario. Should it occur at your organization, Bogue recommends running audit reports to determine which sites are not being used. For example, there are reports for when a site collection is created, how often it has been accessed, and how often it's been modified.

“If you end up with 20,000 sites, one of the things you can do is look at all the sites that haven't been modified. You can then turn-on “auditing” (including “read” auditing) and let it run for a week or a month,” recommends Bogue. “Then examine the auditing after a month and if no one has modified or read the site, you can archive the site (and eventually delete it).”

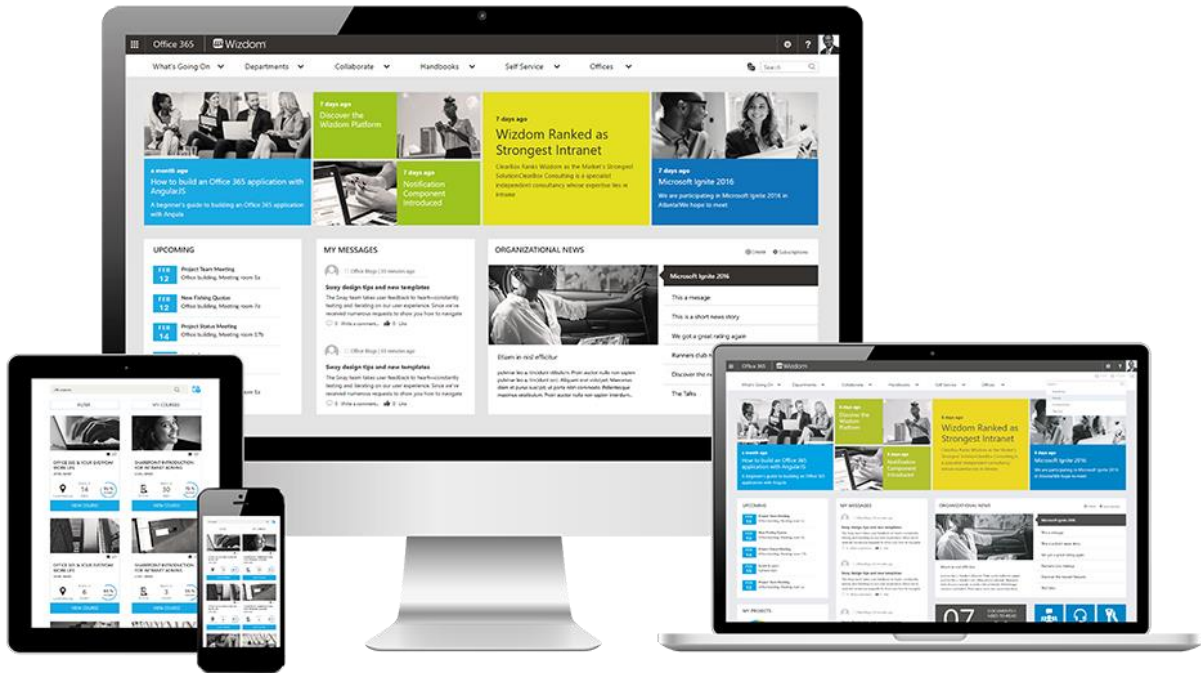
Bogue says that a typical audit will weed-out 30-60% of all sites.

While some organizations, like Transfield Services (profiled earlier in this paper), have decided to limit the features and functionality of sites and site collections, this approach doesn't directly solve the problem of intranet sprawl.

“I encourage people not to turn features off,” says Bogue. “If you give people an appropriate amount of constraint, they will behave accordingly. There are of course a few people that may try to abuse the system, but the number of them are relatively small. As long as they're working under a site collection (and the inherited parameters) and the given quota, then I really don't care what they do.” There are some features like site design themes that corporate communications can lock-down for branding purposes. Other organizations might choose to turn off blogs for cultural or security reasons. However, most organizations enable most of the feature set that comes with SharePoint.

“When you start focusing on turning features off, you start limiting the amount of value you get from the platform,” adds Bogue.

THE SOCIAL INTRANET



One type of intranet, the latest generation of intranet, that requires additional care and governance consideration is: the social intranet. The “social intranet” was first formally defined by Prescient Digital Media, in early 2010, as:

An intranet that features multiple social media tools for most or all employees to use as collaboration vehicles for sharing knowledge with other employees. A social intranet may feature blogs, wikis, discussion forums, social networking, or a combination of these or any other Web 2.0 (intranet 2.0) tool with at least some or limited exposure (optional) from the main intranet or portal home page.

However, a few employee or executive blogs do not make a social intranet. A social intranet requires wide participation, or at minimum, opportunity for participation, by most or all employees that have intranet access. Social intranets require social media: blogs, wikis, and user comments, to name a few. More advanced social intranets may incorporate multimedia, user-tagging, and social networking that are integrated into multiple channels including user profiles (such as the feature set produced by Microsoft SharePoint 2010 or Lotus Connections).

A social intranet however does not have or include:

- All social media tools (three will suffice);
- The participation of all employees (but be open to most employees); and
- A technology platform that is strictly a social media platform (e.g. blog or wiki platform).

Social intranet basics:

- Multiple social media tools
- Open opportunity to use social media tools for most or all employees with intranet access
- Access to social media tools from the intranet home page
- Social options woven into most content consumption (e.g. user comments, rating, links to tools, etc. on most page templates)

Social media on the intranet is a relatively new phenomena having only appeared behind the firewall in the past 4 or 5 years (with the exception of instant messaging and discussion forums which have been around, in some form, since the late 1990s). In the past year or two, social media on the corporate intranet have become mainstream with nearly two-thirds of organizations (if not closer to 80% of large organizations) in the western world having some form of social media on their intranet.

SOCIAL GOVERNANCE

A social intranet requires the same level of governance and care as an intranet with no social media. In fact, there is little difference in the actual governance model. Where extra care and governance consideration should be given is the area of user guidelines: rules and suggestions for employees using and consuming social media. Truth be told, these guidelines need not be a massive undertaking or voluminous document, social media guidelines need only reinforce company policies that already exists, namely the employee code of conduct (or code of business conduct, or ethics policies), and any policies relating to privacy, terms of use, and those other policies outlined above.

The key elements of a Social Media Guidelines policy or document should include:

- How to write and comment in social media (be active, respectful, transparent)
- The type of 'voice' to use in writing or commenting
- Provision that no "anonymous" writing or commenting is allowed (which SharePoint can block)
- Not committing to or representing the company, or anyone other than yourself
- Maintaining privacy and confidentiality of all individuals and confidential information
- Providing or not allowing to provide references to existing staff to outside agencies
- Prohibiting making statements about the company's financial or product performance
- Being compliant with all corporate policies and state and Federal laws
- Avoiding defamatory, profane, harmful or aggressive language
- Being honest

A good example of an effective, corporate Social Media Guidelines document is that of Cisco. To read the Guidelines document, see: <http://www.scribd.com/doc/33461366/Cisco-Social-Media-Policy-Guidelines-and-FAQs>

FINAL ANALYSIS

SharePoint may be the world's most popular intranet platform, loaded with bells and whistles, but without the proper planning and governance, a SharePoint could become your organization's most expensive failure. To avoid the information chaos that can occur, a successful SharePoint implementation requires a proper, detailed plan and governance model that explicitly details the ownership model, roles and responsibilities for all, and the supporting policies.

Implementing proper governance for SharePoint (or any intranet technology) does require some experience and an outside third-party expert or intranet consultant is strongly recommended if there is any hint of internal politics or competing priorities amongst intranet stakeholders. An outside intranet consultant is considered mandatory if HR, Communications, IT and other key departments and business units are not in explicit agreement about who should own the intranet and what the model should look like.

Planning and Governance checklist:

- Current site evaluation
- User research
- Stakeholder input
- Benchmarking (best practices)
- Strategic planning (including goals and objectives)
- Critical success indicators (KPIs)
- Governance model
- Content & design policies
- Business case (ROI)
- Functional plan
- Information architecture
- Page wireframes
- Design concepts
- Technology selection & implementation

Specific SharePoint recommendations:

- Champions – find and secure one or two c-level executives that are internal champions, sponsors, and sources of funding (often the CIO, or chief of marketing or communications or HR).
- Content migration – don't move over all your old content. Undertake an audit of what is needed and what is not, and migrate only the necessary information.
- Taxonomy – create a global information taxonomy of up to seven categories that becomes your global information categories of your information architecture. These seven categories (no more than 10) become the site collections for your portal.
- Business owners – ensure that each major category and site collection has a business owner that is responsible for the properties of all sites under the site collection.
- Governance team – build a governance team of key IT, communications and HR people, and include the business owners of the major site collections.

- Site policy – create an overarching policy (or a series of specific policies) that govern the creation and use of sites, pages and content.
- Workflow – consider baking approvals into the provision (creation) of new sites and site collections. Once a site is created, it must be approved before going live (though not always recommended in very large organizations of more than 10,000 employees).
- Auditing - turn-on “auditing” (including “read” auditing) for those sites that have become stale. After a month, if no one has modified or read the site (or only minimally), you can archive the site or eventually delete it.

MANDATORY

A Strategic Plan determines the long-term mission, vision, and medium to short-term goals of a new social intranet. Like the strategic planning pyramid, the planning process starts at the top with the high-level strategic directives such as vision and mission, before defining specific goals, KPIs and governance structure. Effective governance is a mission-critical necessity: define how the ownership structure, including the executive sponsor, committee structures, staffing model, roles and responsibilities of publishers, site owners, etc., and the reporting and approval structure.

GOVERNANCE SOFTWARE SOLUTIONS

AvePoint

Microsoft SharePoint's distributed architecture and propensity for grass-roots growth make effective governance a daunting challenge. To satisfy constantly evolving compliance obligations, stay prepared for any legal queries and requests, and streamline platform administration, organizations need precise and potent tools.

AvePoint has several governance software solutions such as AvePoint Administrator and Governance Automation.

For more information:

<https://www.avepoint.com/products/hybrid/governance-automation>

Omada

SharePoint is a great asset for many companies, connecting people, information and processes - promoting cross collaboration and allowing employees to share knowledge. However, in large SharePoint environments it's a challenge for the SharePoint Administrator to get the big picture of internal and external users' access rights and sites, users get a poor service experience due to prolonged waiting times, and managers find it difficult to enforce internal controls and compliance policies.

Omada Identity Suite synchronizes with Azure AD and Azure native API. The integration enables all Omada Process Reference Model Workflows on Azure AD and Azure objects; providing full, fine-grained provisioning and lifecycle governance across identities, entitlements, O365 Applications, and Azure cloud resources.

For more information:

<https://www.omada.net/en-us/solutions/solution-overview/hybrid-access-governance>

ABOUT PRESCIENT DIGITAL MEDIA

Listen. Understand. Deliver.

We are the original intranet consultants; The Intranet Experts.

Prescient Digital assesses, plans, designs and builds world-class intranets and enterprise solutions for Fortune 500 and big brand leaders. We are recognized experts in this space for more than 18 years working with over 300 organizations. We are technology agnostic, working with many technology platform, but most of our clients run SharePoint and Office 365, for which we have particular expertise.

Headquartered in Toronto, with US offices in New York City, Prescient works for global corporations in various industries and sectors worldwide. Our core strength lies in understanding and balancing the digital needs of our clients' business models, with the goals and intents of the people who will ultimately use these digital solutions. We see the digital workplace as the primary means to manage your most important relationships with your employees, beginning with the hub or gateway, the intranet.

We treat each client as unique; we listen to their needs, goals and challenges; understand a client's requirements and potential; and deliver highly effective and innovative website and intranet plans, designs and solutions.

Some of our clients:



Having worked on more intranets than any firm of our size, we are simply one of the best at planning, designing and delivering highly effective intranets and digital workplaces. We are the:

- First to develop an intranet specific methodology and service approach
- First to study and define a social intranet
- First to study and define intranet governance
- 15+ awards including a Webby Award

Why Prescient

- Prescient boasts a full roster of world class, Fortune 500 clients.
- We build success measures (key performance indicators) into every project.
- Prescient has an extensive list of global, expert speaking engagements with dozens of conference, seminar and webinar events every year.
- Our work has won more than 15 awards including a prestigious Webby Award.
- Prescient has the most published team of experts of any firm in its class with hundreds of published articles to date.

Expertise

Our leaders have rich, hands-on expertise and 25 years of experience. We know the industry inside out because we've been inside it as it evolved. We have worked alongside hundreds of customers, from Fortune 500 companies to small and medium sized businesses alike. Our leaders have held senior management positions at reputable companies and brought all their expertise and knowledge together in Prescient. We use proven methodologies, to deliver measurable results that are superior relative to other companies.

Focused on Each Client

No two clients are the same. All organizations have different cultures, structures, workflows, communication channels, resources, directions, objectives, and so on. Therefore, your intranet must be customized to your business, to meet all your unique needs. This is the reason why our in-depth consulting methodology (Listen. Understand. Deliver.) is so central to our work and focus on our clients.

We are the original intranet consultants; The Intranet Experts.

For more information, call us at 416.926.8800 or visit www.PrescientDigital.com

ⁱ Intranet Innovation Awards Report, Step Two Designs, 2008 www.steptwo.com.au