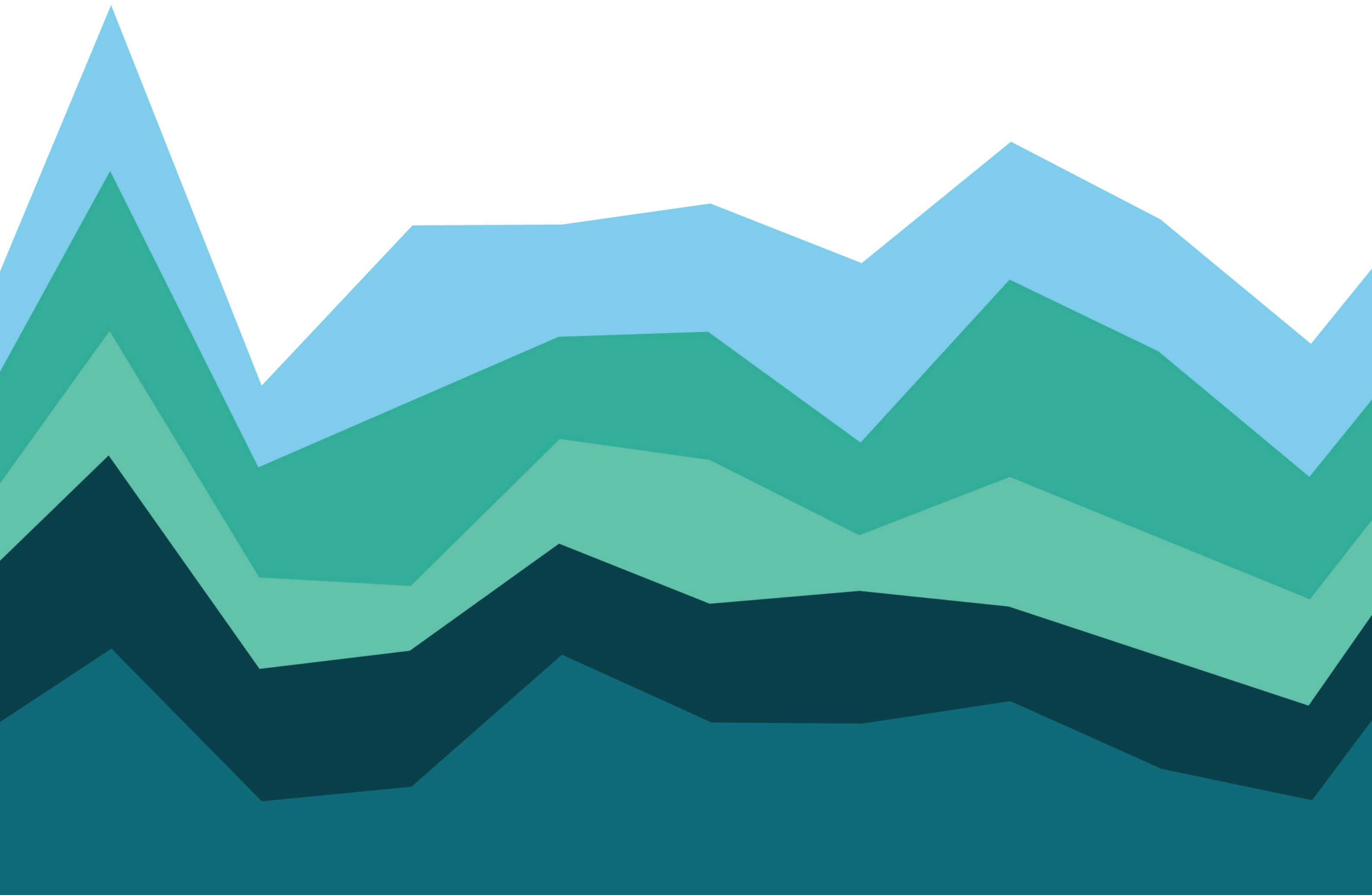
SmallWorlders

BRIDGING THE INTRANET ADOPTION CHASM



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PART 1:

AN INTRODUCTION TO INTRANET ENGAGEMENT THEORY

SYNOPSIS

In 1991, Geoffrey A Moore famously wrote about the so-called Adoption Chasm in Everett M Rogers' 1962 Technology Adoption Lifecycle. This chasm represents the leap in adoption that new technologies must make in order to progress from a small minority of keen early adopters to a much more mainstream acceptance (the early majority).

Like any other technology, intranets in the modern workplace also face this adoption chasm. In order to approach this problem, it has been suggested (Aaron Kim, 2013) that we map Maslow's 1943 Hierarchy of Needs onto the technology adoption lifecycle.

This leads to some very interesting insights into how basic, instinctive human behaviour can be leveraged in order to maximise the adoption of a new intranet venture.

In this, the first of a 7-part series on bridging the intranet adoption chasm, we present the SmallWorlders Intranet Engagement Theory – a 360° approach to creating and sustaining a successful, engaged intranet.

WHY SO MANY INTRANETS FAIL

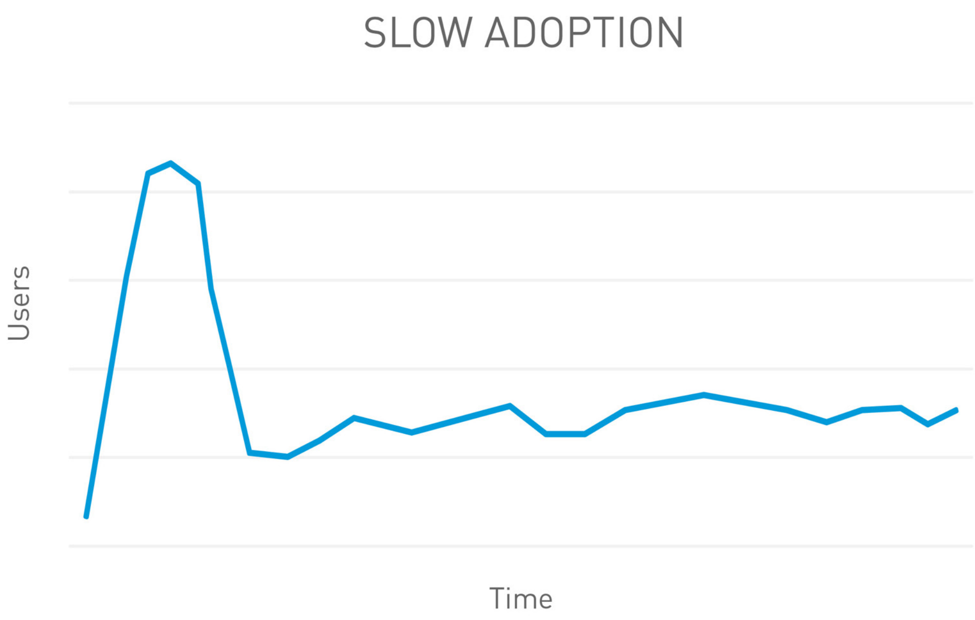
So you have just launched a brand new site. All the bells and whistles are there. Every feature that you could possibly implement. Everything that your research said that anybody could possibly want to do.
Plus a few extra cool things that you once saw at a conference.

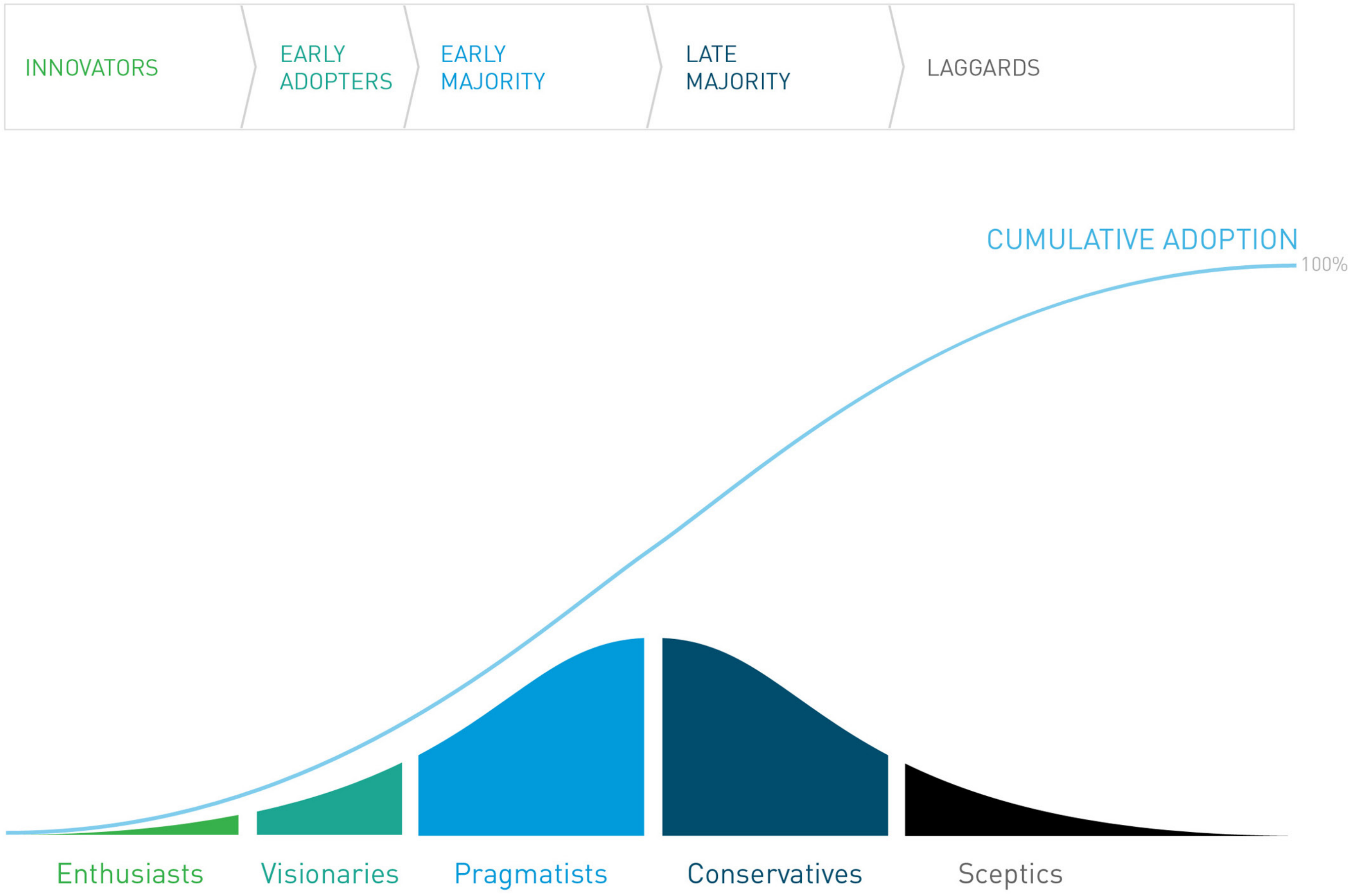
The first few days look good. Lots of people are logging on. Usage statistics are going up. Hopes are high that before long, this site will be the buzzing information and social hub of the company.

But after a week or two the usage stats start to level off, and after a month they have reduced significantly from their glorious peak back down to a slow trickle. By your first bi-annual review, the usage hasn't really picked up at all, and you are left scratching your head to figure out where to go from here.

So what just happened? Well, clearly the launch of a new intranet, or feature within an existing intranet, will be accompanied by a spike in usage. This is quite normal, but it is **how the curve behaves after this initial peak that will govern your site's adoption in the mid-term and beyond.**

This is where Everett M Rogers' Technology Adoption Lifecycle comes in. in 1962, Rogers postulated that any new technology will follow a loosely similar adoption pattern, based on different groups of people with different attitudes toward new technologies.





So during the first week or two of launch, we had the Enthusiasts, the Visionaries, the Pragmatists and perhaps even the Conservatives show a bit of interest. The Enthusiasts and the Visionaries logged on, saw some cool features that they liked, they set up their profile, added all their colleagues to their contacts list and started eagerly imagining how this new site could fit into their day-to-day jobs.

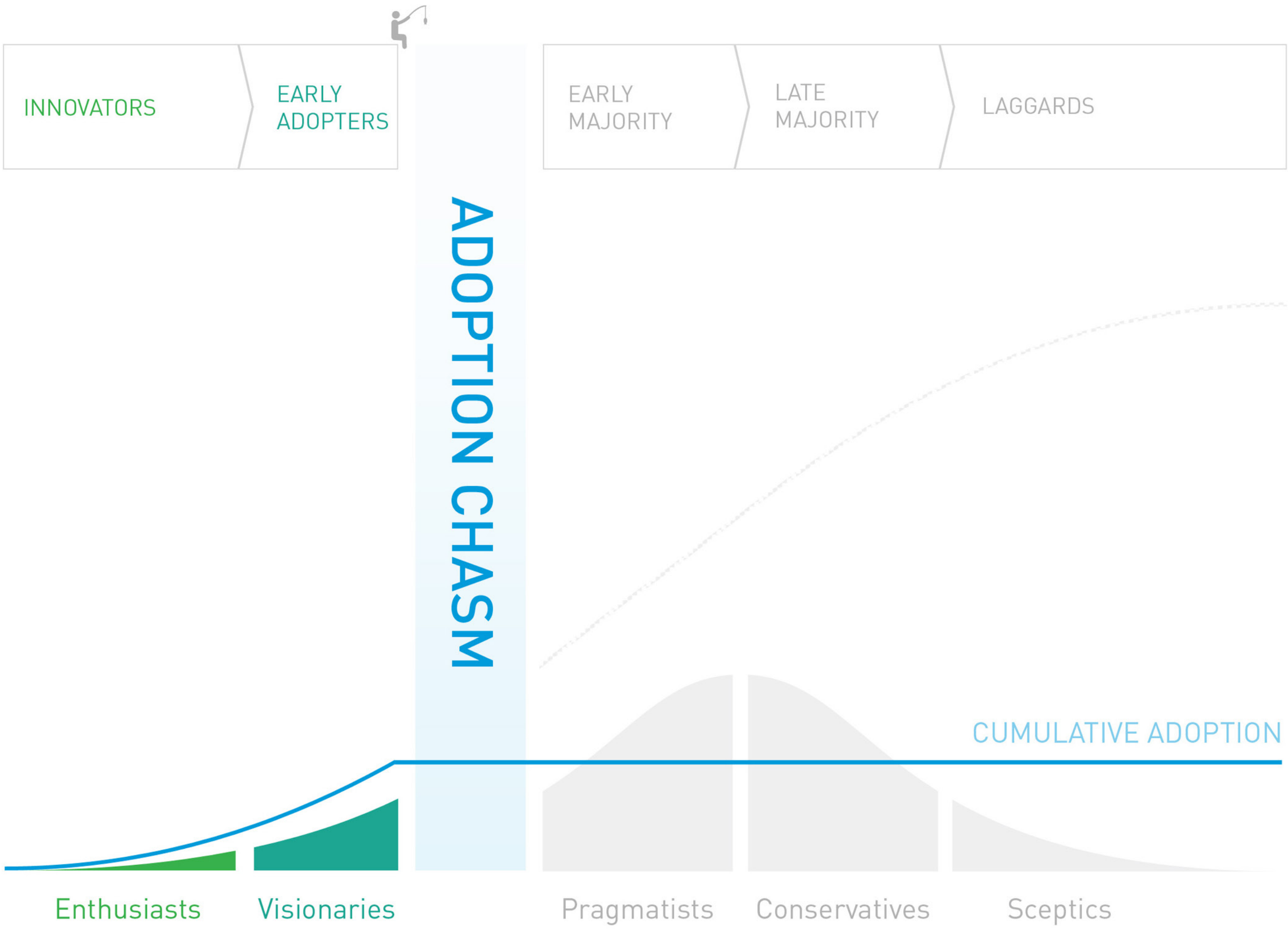
The Pragmatists logged on and saw a site packed full of features, assumed that their intended use will become apparent over time and then logged off, awaiting a time when they would be required to log back on.

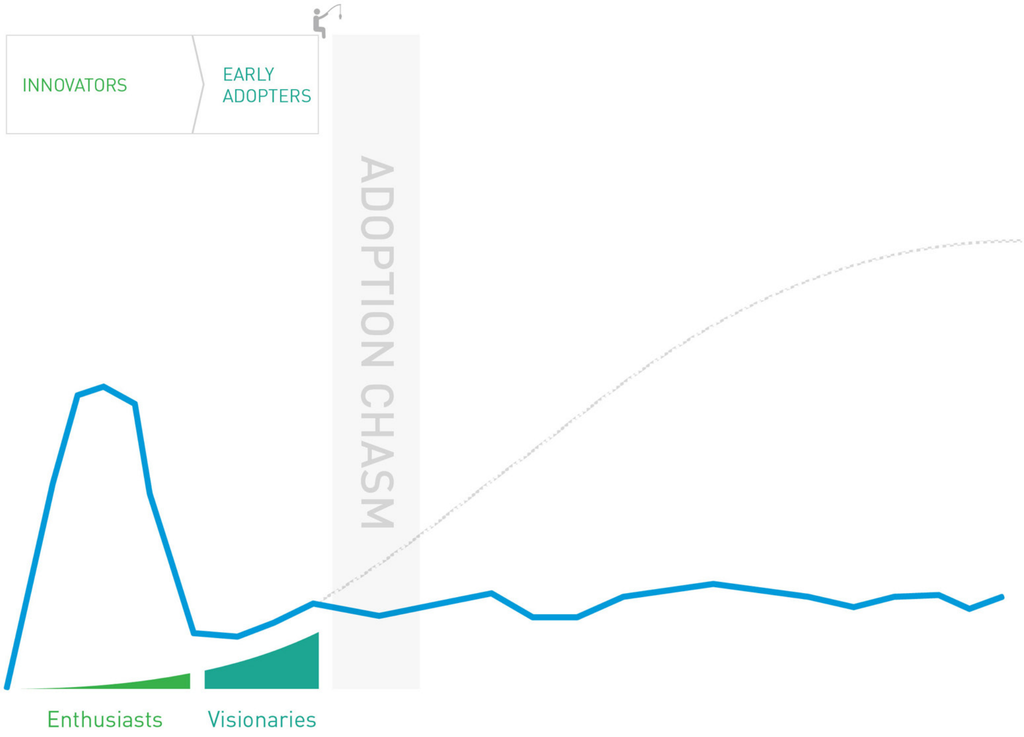
The Conservatives may have logged on, seen a site full of stuff they don't really see the point of, and logged off again, hoping that they would not need to give up their existing, comfortable routines.

After the first week or two of launch, the only people left using the site are the Enthusiasts and the Visionaries.

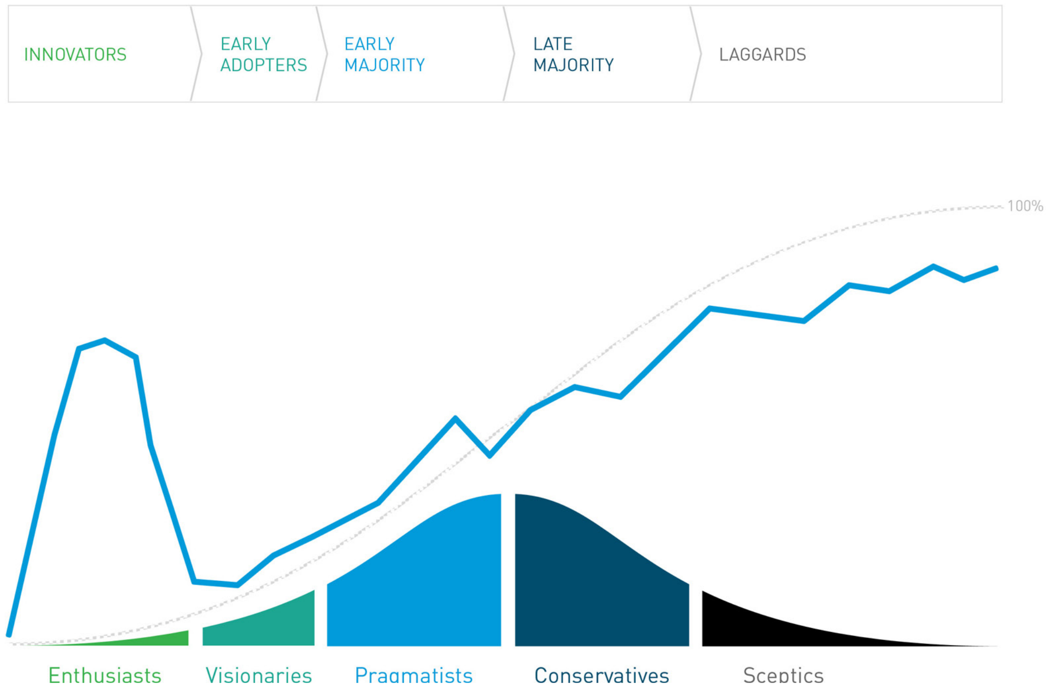
This pattern of behaviour was first identified by Geoffrey A Moore in 1991, and he called it the Adoption Chasm.

Let us take for granted that the launch of any new intranet will be accompanied by a peak in usage. Let's then focus on the usage pattern after this initial peak. If usage remains nothing more than a slow trickle of Enthusiasts and Visionaries, you have failed to engage the Pragmatists and Conservatives and have fallen foul of the adoption chasm.





So how can we stop this from happening? How can we turn our usage graph into this instead?



We will need to Bridge the Adoption Chasm – we need to find a way of engaging the Pragmatists and the Conservatives.

UNDERSTANDING HUMAN BEHAVIOUR

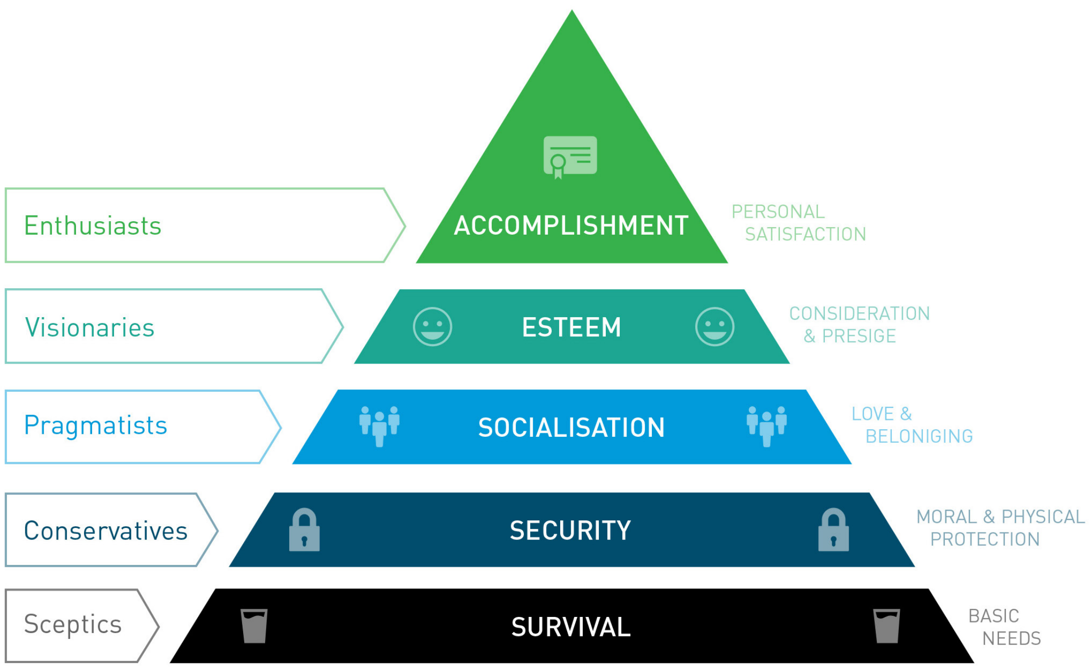
To bridge the adoption chasm, we must first understand a bit more about why people behave in the ways that they do. If we can understand this then we can begin to formulate a plan to better engage the Pragmatists and the Conservatives.

This is where Abraham Maslow's 1943 Hierarchy of Needs comes in. Maslow states we are all governed by a hierarchy of needs that we must satisfy in order achieve personal fulfilment and wellbeing. Our most basic needs are at the bottom of the hierarchy and our more aspirational ones are at the top.

Maslow develops this idea, stating that **we cannot focus on a particular stratum in the hierarchy unless we have first satisfied all the supporting strata.**

At first this may not seem relevant to technology adoption, but in 2013 Aaron Kim, Head of the Digital Social Collaboration Centre of Excellence at Royal Bank of Canada, noticed that the five personality groups in the technology adoption lifecycle could be loosely identified with the five strata in the hierarchy of needs:

MASLOW'S HEIRACHY OF NEEDS



This connection allows us to understand a bit more about why each personality group behaves in the way it does.

The Sceptics and the Conservatives will be motivated to use a site when their survival or wellbeing are at risk. In other words, you must make sure your site offers functionality that is essential for their day to day work. Anything less and although they may log on once at launch, they are unlikely to return.

The Pragmatists will use a site if it can demonstrate a useful purpose to them and their work. In other words, you must make sure your site contains functionality that makes their lives easier or more enjoyable.

You can appeal to the Visionaries and the Enthusiasts by giving them opportunities within the site for prestige and recognition, typically with social or collaborative features.

You should then use all the levers at your disposal to propagate momentum throughout the organisation. This is done with a mixture of traditional messages and a strategy to create and maintain buzz around the intranet.

Finally, you must base the entire intranet project on firm grounding by ensuring that you have wholehearted support from the management. This will ensure that proper resources and funding are available where necessary. You can do this by demonstrating why the intranet will benefit them directly, as well as the organisation as a whole. In other words, ROI.

THE PRINCIPLES OF INTRANET ENGAGEMENT

So to summarise:

1. For the Sceptics and Conservatives the site needs to be essential for day-to-day business (i.e. **reasons to log on**).

2. For the Pragmatists the site needs to be worth returning to (i.e. **reasons to return**).

3. Appeal to the Enthusiasts and Visionaries by giving them opportunities for prestige and recognition (i.e. **reasons to lead**)

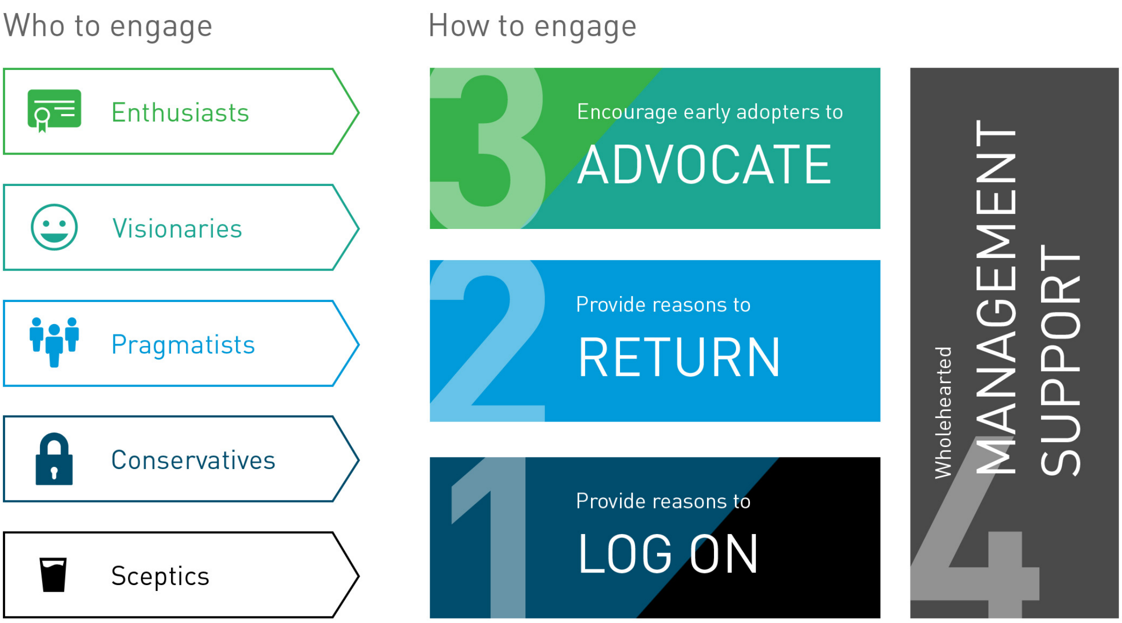
These building blocks are the 3 principles of intranet engagement. But as we know, strong building blocks must be built on solid foundations:

4. Secure wholehearted support from the management (i.e. **reasons to sponsor**).

Finally, we need a communications strategy to spread the word to the furthest reaches of the organisation:

5. Propagate momentum throughout the organisation by leveraging the enthusiasts and the visionaries as well as traditional messaging techniques (i.e. **ways to advocate**).

This is the **SmallWorlders Intranet Engagement Framework.**



Engaging your userbase. © Smallworlders 2014

The key to bridging the adoption chasm is one of momentum. People will use the site if they think that everybody else is using the site. There is a buzz that naturally accompanies the launch of any new site, and it is capturing this buzz and turning it into an ongoing excitement that is the key difference between a highly engaged intranet and a barren digital wasteland.

The 3 principles represent a thorough, 360° approach to engaging all personality types within an organisation. If properly executed they will keep the momentum and the excitement high enough that the post-launch usage spike will not fall back to nothing, but rather turn into a healthy, increasing usage pattern for the future.

Over the next 5 posts in this series I will focus on the foundations and each of the 3 principles and explore in detail how to achieve them.

PART 2:

ENGAGING THE CONSERVATIVES AND SCEPTICS

SYNOPSIS

One of the 3 principles of intranet engagement, the "Reasons To Log On" is a checklist of functionalities and features that an intranet must possess in order to appeal to the hardest adoption categories: the Conservatives and the Sceptics.

These features should have several characteristics:

- Essential for day-to-day work

- Only available on the intranet

- Easy to use and easily available to all who need to use them

This is arguably the most important of the 3 principles and it underpins every other purpose the intranet has.

INTRODUCTION

We saw in my last post (An Introduction to Intranet Engagement Theory) that in order to bridge the so- called adoption chasm you must consider human behaviour and build your intranet around the needs and personalities of various groups within the organisation.

These groups are: Enthusiasts, Visionaries, Pragmatists, Conservatives and Sceptics. Each group is progressively more resistant to new technologies. In this post I will discuss how to engage the hardest of these groups: the Conservatives and the Sceptics.

ENGAGING THE CONSERVATIVES AND SCEPTICS

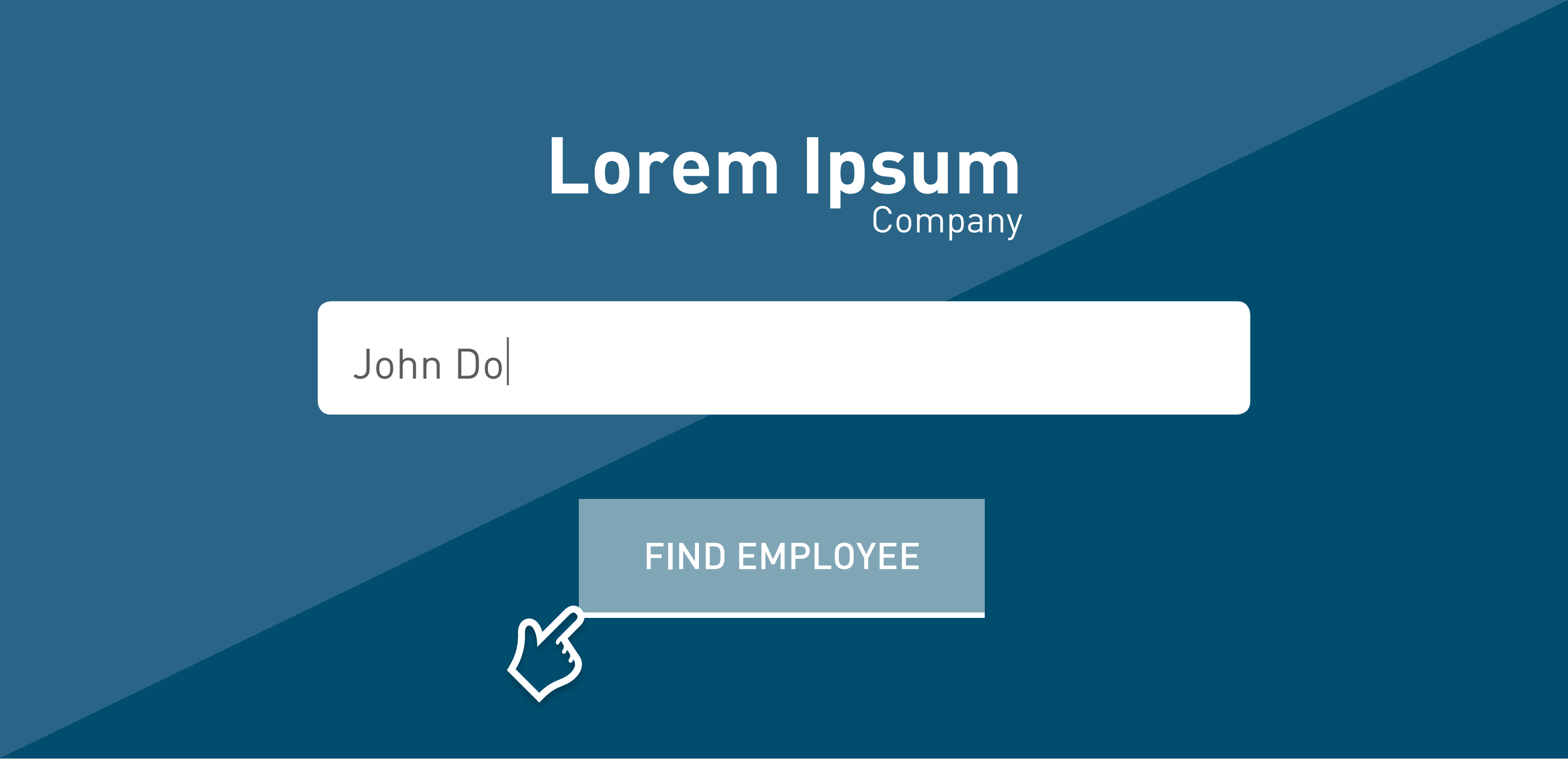
The Conservatives and the Sceptics will not naturally want to start using a new site. They will be instinctively resistant to change and they will prefer the existing way of doing things.

In order to persuade them to adopt the new site, it is important to ensure that there are functionalities and features that are essential for their day-to-day work, and that they cannot access anywhere else. Anything less and they will simply not be interested.

In fact they may even be actively resistant to adopting the new intranet. If they have no choice except to go there, an opportunity is created to get them exposed to the new way of working and they may begin to accept it as a part of their work lives.

It may sound obvious, but including essential functions on an intranet is well, essential. These functions will be the bread-and-butter of the intranet and form the backbone of the intranet's engagement potential, as well as being the only way to engage the Conservatives and the Sceptics.

In other words, give employees a "reason to log on".



FINDING REASONS TO LOG ON

So how is this done? There are some features that are fairly easy to put on an intranet. They may or may not be used for day-to-day business, but they remain a solid basis for some reasons to log on.

These features include:

- **Employee directory**: A common feature on the modern intranet, an effective and simple to use person-finder would make an essential tool for most employees at some point in their professional lives. The key is to make sure that it is the only person finder tool that employees can use. If this is not possible then at least it must be the most effective and simplest to use person finder tool in the organisation.

- **Reference repository**: Governance documents, codes of practice, and other organisational reference material can easily be placed exclusively on the intranet.

- **Employee induction materials**: from the very outset, new employees can use the intranet as their basis for orientation and induction.

- **Help & support**: Technical support, support from other departments (finance, HR etc.) can be managed within the intranet environment. If an employee has a problem, "go to the intranet for help and support" should be the response.

- **Transactional systems**: Booking leave, expense claims, meeting room booking, event sign-up, form submissions, etc.

COMMUNICATIONS: INTRANET VS EMAILS

I lose track of the number of my clients over the years that have complained there are too many emails from the centre out. The reasons for this are many and varied, e.g.:

- The centre has a lot of messages to communicate to employees.

- Particular groups of employees can be hard to segment from the rest so an email only relevant for certain employees will get sent to everyone. The problems with communicating every message via email are also many and varied, e.g.:

- Employees will start to ignore emails from the centre (email "blindness")

- Emails can get lost in overfull inboxes, and there is no guarantee that an employee will even open the email to read the contents.

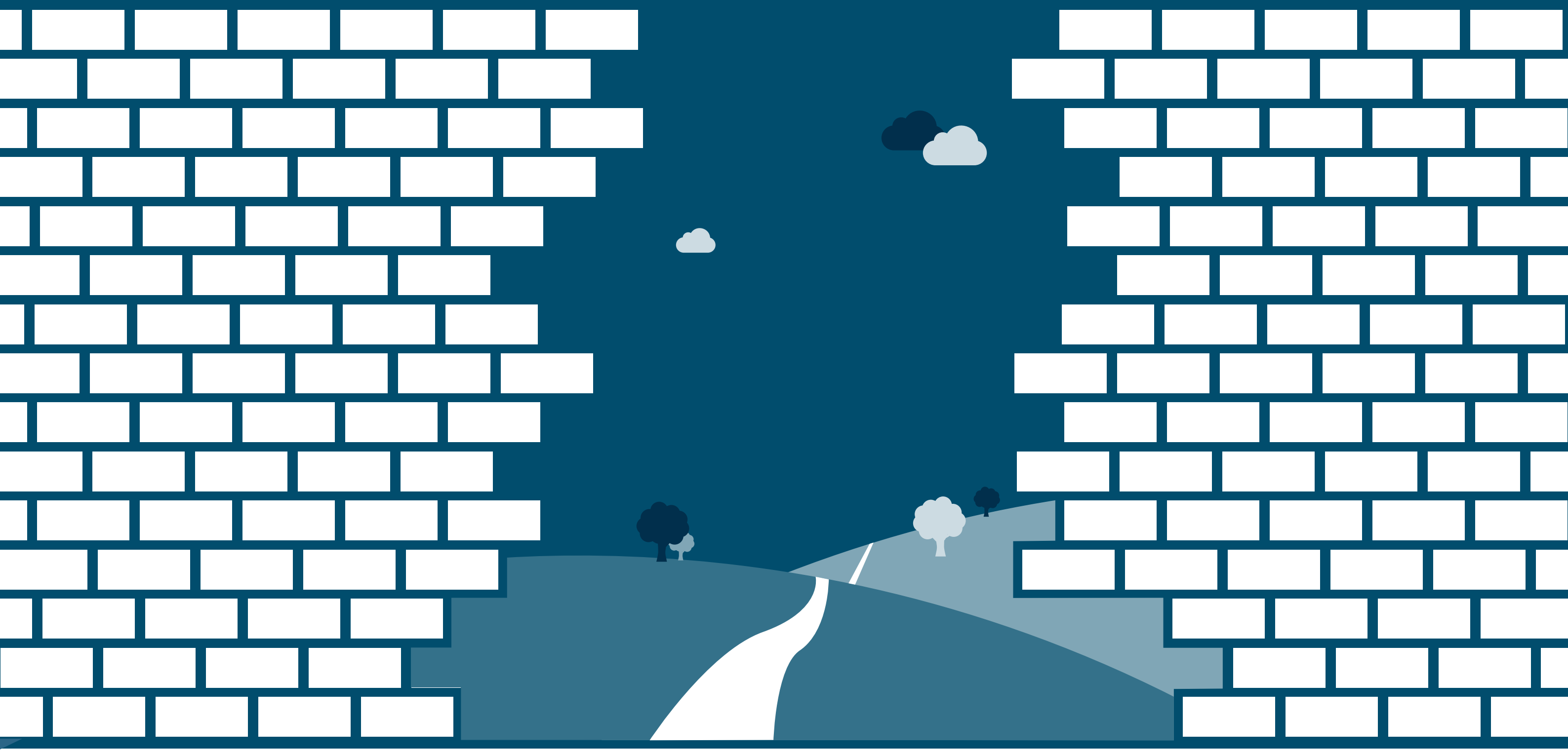
- Communications managers spend all of their time composing and sending emails to middle management, who then spend a lot of time emailing their teams etc.

Now imagine that an organisation could just switch off emails entirely as an internal communications channel. Instead, all messages and announcements could be found in a newsfeed on the homepage of the intranet. This newsfeed could be personalised to each employee, based on various tags assigned to each news item by the author.

So now the only way for employees to get communications from the centre is by logging on to the intranet. Furthermore messages will be available to all levels within the organisational structure simultaneously. It is now in the interest of management to monitor the intranet newsfeeds so that they remain as informed as their employees.

I knew an internal communications manager [Larraine Solomon, Thomson Reuters, https://www.simply- communicate.com/ news/event-reviews/driving-business-value-thomson-reuters video: 15:30 – 20:30] who did just this: shut down all centre-out emails and moved internal comms exclusively onto the intranet. After a week, she had middle management on the phone asking why all their team members knew about things before they did. After a month, all middle management and employees regularly logged onto the intranet to stay informed.

In addition to the obvious boost to the intranet, she was able to spend more time on her other responsibilities and less time passing on comms from the top down. What's more, she had opened up a two-way communications channel with her employees, where there previously had been a one-way channel.



REMOVING BARRIERS

Of all the different user groups, the Conservatives and the Sceptics will be the first to give up if they perceive a difficulty in achieving what they are trying to do. To avoid this, special care must be taken when developing the “reasons to log on” functionalities in order to ensure that access is as simple and quick as possible.

Put this key functionality into easy menus or obvious quick links or shortcuts from the homepage. Make sure it is obvious how to operate the functionality once the user has arrived.

Do this and the Conservatives and Sceptics will be pleasantly surprised. Fail to do this and their fears and worries will be confirmed.

CONCLUSIONS

In order to establish a base level of intranet engagement, and possibly the only way to engage the Conservatives and the Sceptics within the organisation, intranet planners should seek to include functions and features that:

- Are essential for employees jobs (daily or otherwise)
- Can only be found on the intranet
- Are easily available and easy to use.

If necessary, a case can be made to move other systems or certain functionalities of other systems exclusively onto the intranet, including transactional or communication functions.

Achieve this and you will be well on your way to a highly engaged intranet.

PART 3:

KEEPING THE PRAGAMTISTS COMING BACK

SYNOPSIS

One of the 3 principles of intranet engagement, the “Reasons to Return” are a set of intranet development standards designed to make sure that the site appeals to Pragmatists within the organisation.

These standards require the site to be:

- Useful
- Interesting
- Likeable

By adhering to these three standards, the Pragmatists will be encouraged to return to the site regularly, and the site will be better engaged as a result.

INTRODUCTION

We saw in my first post (An Introduction to Intranet Engagement Theory), that in order to bridge the so- called adoption chasm you must consider human behaviour and build your intranet around the needs and personalities of various groups within the organisation.

These groups are: Enthusiasts, Visionaries, Pragmatists, Conservatives and Sceptics. Each group is progressively more resistant to new technologies. In my last post I discussed how to engage the conservatives and sceptics by providing them with reasons to log on. In this article I will discuss how to engage one of the largest of these groups: the Pragmatists.

The Pragmatists, otherwise known as the "early majority", will not be actively resistant to new technologies but they will not naturally gravitate towards them. They will go there when they see a need to do so, and more importantly if they are given good reasons to come back then they can become loyal and regular consumers of that technology.

For these users, we need to ensure that the site satisfies three standards:

1. The site must be useful
2. The site must be interesting
3. The site must be likeable

How do we achieve these standards? We will discuss each in detail.

MAKING AN INTRANET "USEFUL"

This sounds like an obvious requirement for an intranet, but "useful" can be a very subjective matter. It will mean different things to different people. For employees to find a functionality useful it must enhance their day-to-day jobs in some way.

Some of these functionalities may overlap with the reasons to log on, but in general I refer to functionalities that are not necessarily essential for day-to-day business.

Think about personalisation for different types of users – and not just personalised content. Personalised navigation and personalised homepage features will help provide different users with their own set of "useful" features.

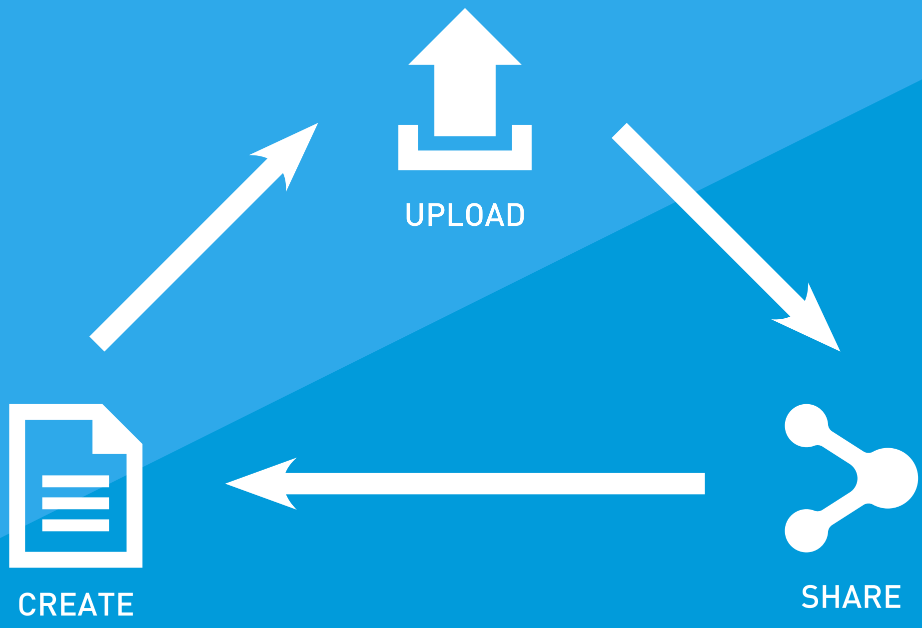
If this degree of personalisation is not an option then consider what features will provide the best **direct benefit** to the biggest number of users.

Some examples include:

- Team Rooms or private collaboration areas
- "Ask a question" areas
- Best practice libraries
- News Feeds
- Tools & Toolkits

MAKING AN INTRANET "INTERESTING"

By "interesting" I mean worth returning to on a regular basis, rather than on an infrequent basis. There are three key aspects of making an interesting intranet: turnover, relevancy and evolution.



REGULAR TURNOVER OF CONTENT

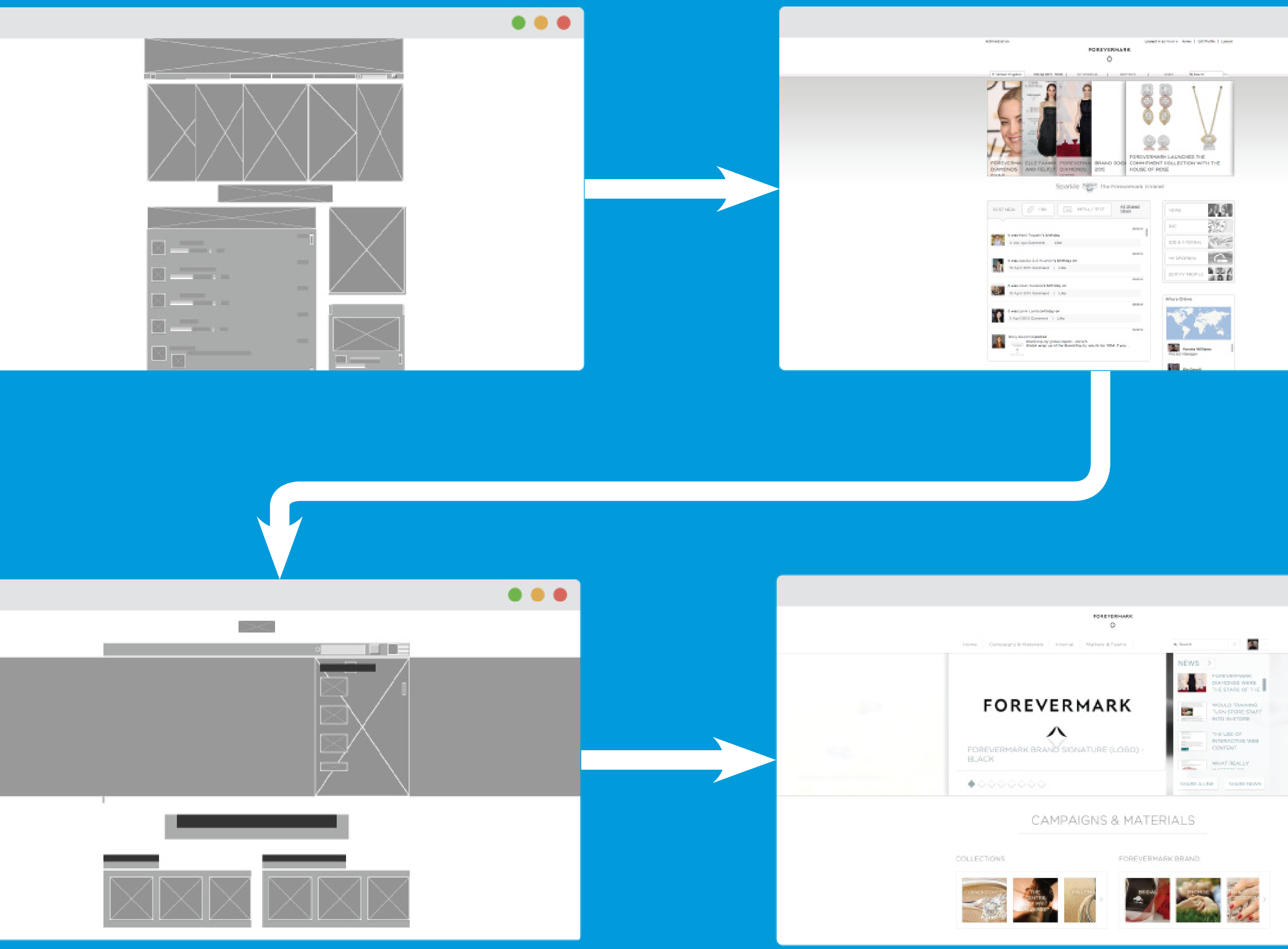
It is absolutely crucial in order to sustain interest and engagement in an intranet that it is not seen as being static and unchanging. In fact the opposite must be the case: an intranet must be perceived as continuously changing.

As a general rule, users should never see the same homepage twice. If you can assume that a typical user will log onto the intranet every day or two, then this gives an idea of how quick the turnover of "content" must be.

This can be achieved in various ways:

- **Editorial Content**: Some content-based intranets will have a dedicated team of content producers that will be placing high quality editorialised content onto the intranet on a regular basis. If you are lucky enough to have this, then do not bury this content deep in the intranet but surface it to the homepage. Regularly published good quality content is a great asset to have. Flaunt it.
- **User Activity**: An easy way of producing an ever-changing homepage is to include an activity feed. It needs no maintenance and will constantly provide something new to repeat visitors.
- **UGC**: If you have collaboration features or any other non-private user generated content, then surface it to the homepage as well. It will help keep the homepage looking fresh.
- **News**: If your intranet has a communications aspect then make sure there is a news feed on the homepage. Not only is it useful (see above), but it will keep up the turnover or "content".

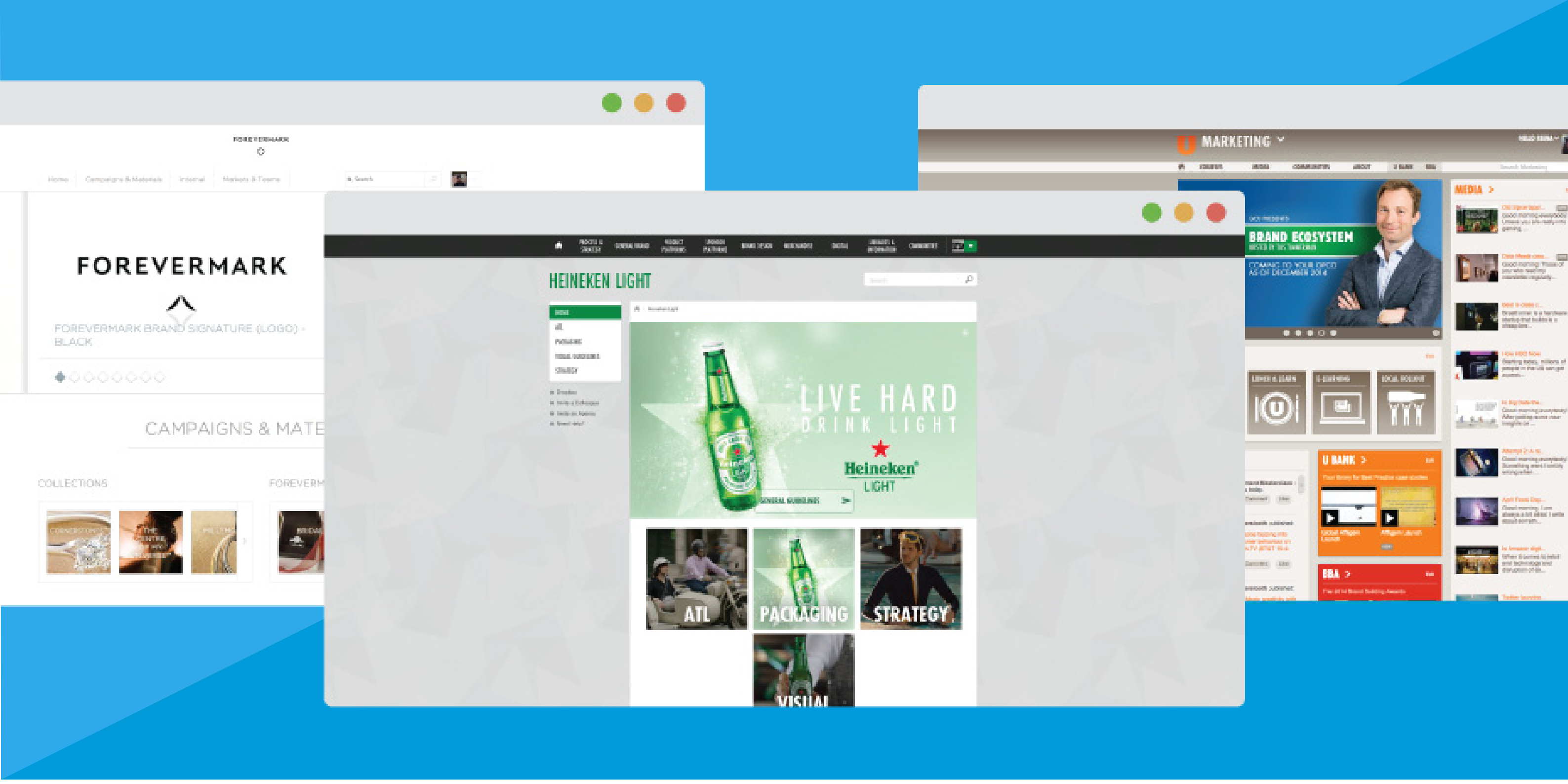
If you keep a good turnover of content, then you will avoid any perceptions of stagnation. In fact you are reinforcing the idea that the intranet is the source of the latest information within the organisation.



CONTINUOUS EVOLUTION

Not an option for every intranet, but the idea of continuous evolution has become popular in recent years. Think of Google or Facebook. On an almost monthly basis they make small incremental changes to their sites. As a result their sites never feel outdated. In addition there is rarely any opposition to new features and designs because the difference in each change is so small.

In the intranet context, continuous evolution may mean adjustments to page layouts or navigational structure based learnings from any ongoing UX research. It could also mean the inclusion of additional features or removal of obsolete features.



MAKING AN INTRANET "LIKEABLE"

It's all very well making an intranet packed full of useful features and interesting content, but if the presentation is poor then it will simply not appeal to the Pragmatists in the way that it should.

The intranet must have "likeability". Likeability boils down to two things: it must be

- Easy to use
- Fun to use

EASY TO USE

Employ UX techniques to make sure that the site is very simple and easy to understand. Usability is everything these days. Users expect the operation of functionalities to be straightforward and obvious. Even the site structure and the structure of the pages should be clear and well thought out.

There are whole books written on this subject so I won't go too deeply into it now. However, there is no excuse for poor user experience.

FUN TO USE

The site should be nicely designed, easy on the eyes, slick and glossy. This will add sparkle and fun into user experience and ensure that the site is well perceived. Everyone these days is used to slick and well- designed websites and apps. The intranet should be no different.

CONCLUSIONS

A vital component to any intranet engagement strategy, the "reasons to return" are designed to appeal to the pragmatists within the organisation. If we give them a site that satisfies the three standards of

- Usefulness
- Interestingness
- Likeability

then we will be providing a site that not only supports, but enhances their daily routines. Get it right, and we can be confident they will return to the site on a regular basis. With the pragmatists engaged we can look forward to watching the usage levels grow and grow.

PART 4:

APPEALING TO THE ENTHUSIASTS & VISIONARIES

SYNOPSIS

One of the 3 principles of intranet engagement, the "Reasons to Lead" are a set of intranet development standards designed to make sure that the site appeals to Enthusiasts and the Visionaries within the organisation.

We can appeal to these users by ensuring the site gives them opportunities for:

- Contribution
- Visibility
- Leadership & Innovation

If we successfully encourage these tendencies, then we can build a loyal group of superusers that in turn will provide content, activity and enthusiasm for the site.

INTRODUCTION

We saw in my first post (An Introduction to Intranet Engagement Theory), that in order to bridge the so- called adoption chasm you must consider human behaviour and build your intranet around the needs and personalities of various groups within the organisation.

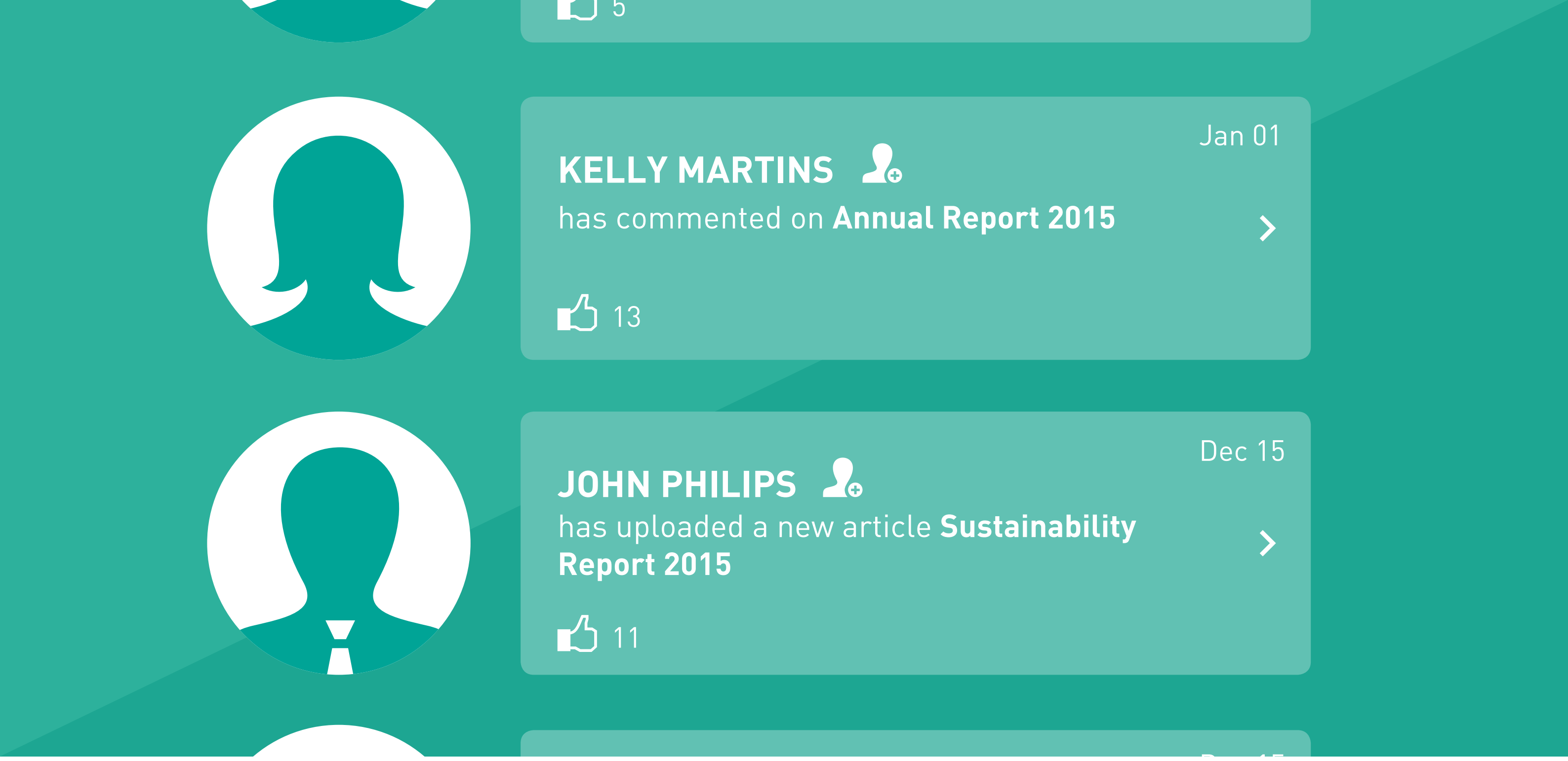
These groups are: Enthusiasts, Visionaries, Pragmatists, Conservatives and Sceptics. Each group is progressively more resistant to new technologies. I have previously discussed techniques to engage the Sceptics, Conservatives and Pragmatists. Now I will concentrate on the Visionaries and Enthusiasts.

These personality groups need little encouragement to become engaged In the first place, but if we provide them opportunities for recognition and prestige they will easily become the so-called superusers of the site - those responsible for the much of the user generated content and visible activity.

So how do we appeal to these people beyond the measures outlined in the reasons to log on and reasons to return?

To appeal to the Enthusiasts and the Visionaries, we should provide opportunities for:

- Contribution
- Visibility
- Leadership



CONTRIBUTION

This is key to gaining the prestige that the Enthusiasts and Visionaries are looking for. They will see opportunities to contribute on the site, and they will naturally want to take them. This in turn will help them to establish themselves as a visible presence on the site (see next section).

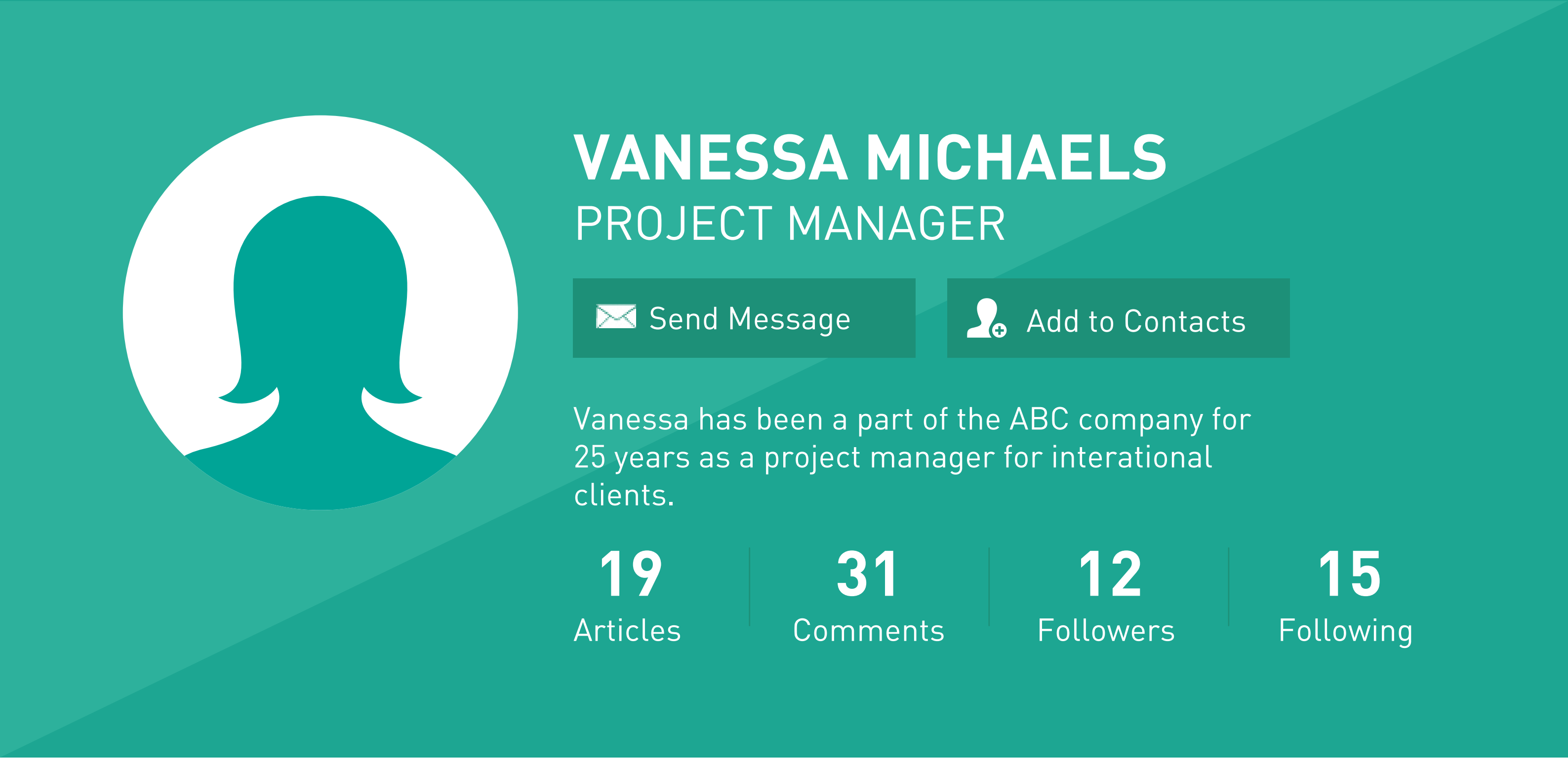
There is quite a spectrum of opportunities to contribute on a complex site such as an intranet. The Visionaries will potentially behave differently to the Enthusiasts. The Visionaries will be quite happy with basic social features such as:

- Commenting
- Liking
- Rating/Voting

The Enthusiasts may be tempted to engage in more complex contribution features such as:

- Posting Articles / Content
- Forums

It is important to remember that social features are not the exclusive domain of the Visionaries and Enthusiasts. There are plenty of opportunities for social features in the reasons to return, however here the emphasis is on contribution whereas previously the social features have been selected for their usefulness to the user.



VISIBILITY

As well as the prestige from contributing to the site, the Visionaries and the Enthusiasts will enjoy the opportunity to enhance their personal brand. This recognition is gained by their presence being visible to other users.

When planning features designed to appeal to Visionaries and Enthusiasts it is important to include the profile picture of the contributor wherever possible. The more they see their own face on the site, the more visibility they will feel, and the more recognition they will have earned.

Opportunities for the inclusion of the user's picture include:

- Commenter's picture
- Article's author picture
- "Most active users" lists
- "Latest Posts" lists

I once worked on an innovation community where each month an html email newsletter was sent out to all the members. In every issue we included a section called "Innovator of the month", where we named a particular contributor and publically thanked them for their efforts and dedication. This kind of visibility

and recognition was extremely well received by each of the featured users, and often they went on to become even more prolific contributors to the site as a result of their special mention.

LEADERSHIP

I have already mentioned in the "Contribution" section that some complex forms of contribution will appeal to the Enthusiasts within the organisation. These types of features will appeal because they allow users to get involved with the site and the content of the site.

There is another reason that the Enthusiasts will want to get involved, and that is one of leadership. They may feel that they have skills, opinions or knowledge they can offer to other users of the site, and if we give them the right opportunities they will be happy to take them.

Leadership can itself be subdivided into various types of opportunities:

- Leading conversations
- Supporting other users
- Being an ambassador

LEADING CONVERSATIONS

For the Enthusiasts who have opinions they would like to share with their colleagues, opportunities to lead conversations are very appealing. Such opportunities could include ways to create self-service groups or around a particular topic. The creator then becomes the supervisor of that group and can manage their followers/members and create whatever conversation that they so wish.

Another opportunity to lead conversations is through user-blogs. Give an opinionated user a blog and they will have a channel to start conversations around their chosen topics. I once knew a community manager from Bosche who offered user blogs to people who wanted to commit a small amount of their time. These number of these blogs was limited so it was considered quite an honour to own such a blog. Every month the community manager would encourage some of the senior management (who also owned blogs on the community) to read the user blogs and to leave comments. Imagine the blog owners' delight when they were rewarded with comments from senior management on their articles. The senior management also enjoyed the opportunity to have conversations with highly engaged individuals within their organisation. Well done that community manager.

SUPPORTING OTHERS

Another form of leadership is that of supporting others. Enthusiasts who have particular skills or knowledge will be happy to share their expertise with others, so opportunities such as answering questions or forum posts will appeal.

One of the reasons to return for the pragmatists was an opportunity to "ask a question", or access questions that others had asked. The other half of this feature is right here with the Enthusiasts – "Answer a question".

AMBASSADORIAL OPPORTUNITIES

These kind of superusers are the perfect target group for YES! Teams or ambassador networks. This w ill be discussed in Part 6: Creating and maintaining the buzz (ways to advocate).

CONCLUSIONS

Often when new sites are being planned and conceived it is these sort of features that are the most exciting, but it is important to remember they will only appeal, at least initially, to the Enthusiasts and Visionaries. So they cannot be relied upon for site-wide engagement from the outset.

A few years ago when the "social enterprise" first became fashionable, I worked on an intranet where the focus of the homepage was a large social feed. All sorts of social activities were encouraged: commenting, liking, rating, sharing, posting etc. The site launched with a big fanfare and very quickly the homepage activity feed filled up with a constant stream of activity. After a while, despite the site appearing to be bustling with activity, the visitor numbers began to show differently – in fact the visitor levels were low. The remaining visitors were a very active but small group of individuals.

We had successfully engaged the Enthusiasts and Visionaries with "cool" social features and forgotten about the Pragmatists, Conservatives and Sceptics. After a redesign of the homepage much more focus was given to reasons to log on and reasons to return, and after the relaunch we developed a much more stable visitorbase.

So when used to enhance (but not to define) a site, social features are an effective way of appealing to the Enthusiast and the Visionaries. Get the balance right and they will flourish into the kind of superusers that every intranet manager dreams of. Get the balance wrong and you are left staring down into the adoption chasm with no way across.

PART 5:

CREATING AND MAINTAINING THE BUZZ

SYNOPSIS

The foundation of intranet engagement, “reasons to sponsor” are an essential component to any thriving intranet venture. In order to gain wholehearted management support, intranet planners must be able to demonstrate that the site will provide an excellent benefit to the organisation.

There are 2 types of benefits that an intranet can provide:

• Streamlining existing activities
• Creating behaviours **not possible without the intranet.**

The latter can be thought of as “serendipity” – the unplanned connections between entities within the organisation that would never have connected otherwise. The intranet is a powerful facilitator of serendipitous connections.

INTRODUCTION

I have previously discussed in my first article (An Introduction to Intranet Engagement Theory), that in order to bridge the so-called adoption chasm you must consider human behaviour and build your intranet around the needs and personalities of various groups within the organisation.

While this is undoubtedly true, it does not quite address the complete 360° environment in which an intranet operates. The 3 principles of intranet engagement provide a sound basis for appealing to the various personalities but in order to achieve any of these principles, it is quite likely that intranet planners will need the space to be able to make big decisions about the way the intranet is planned, developed and managed.

In order to be awarded this space to manoeuvre, it is going to be necessary to secure the wholehearted support of the management. They will need to be convinced that the intranet is worth the investment in terms of cost, resources and time.

So how is this done? We need to demonstrate the benefits that the intranet will provide to the organisation.

HOW DOES AN INTRANET BENEFIT THE ORGANISATION?

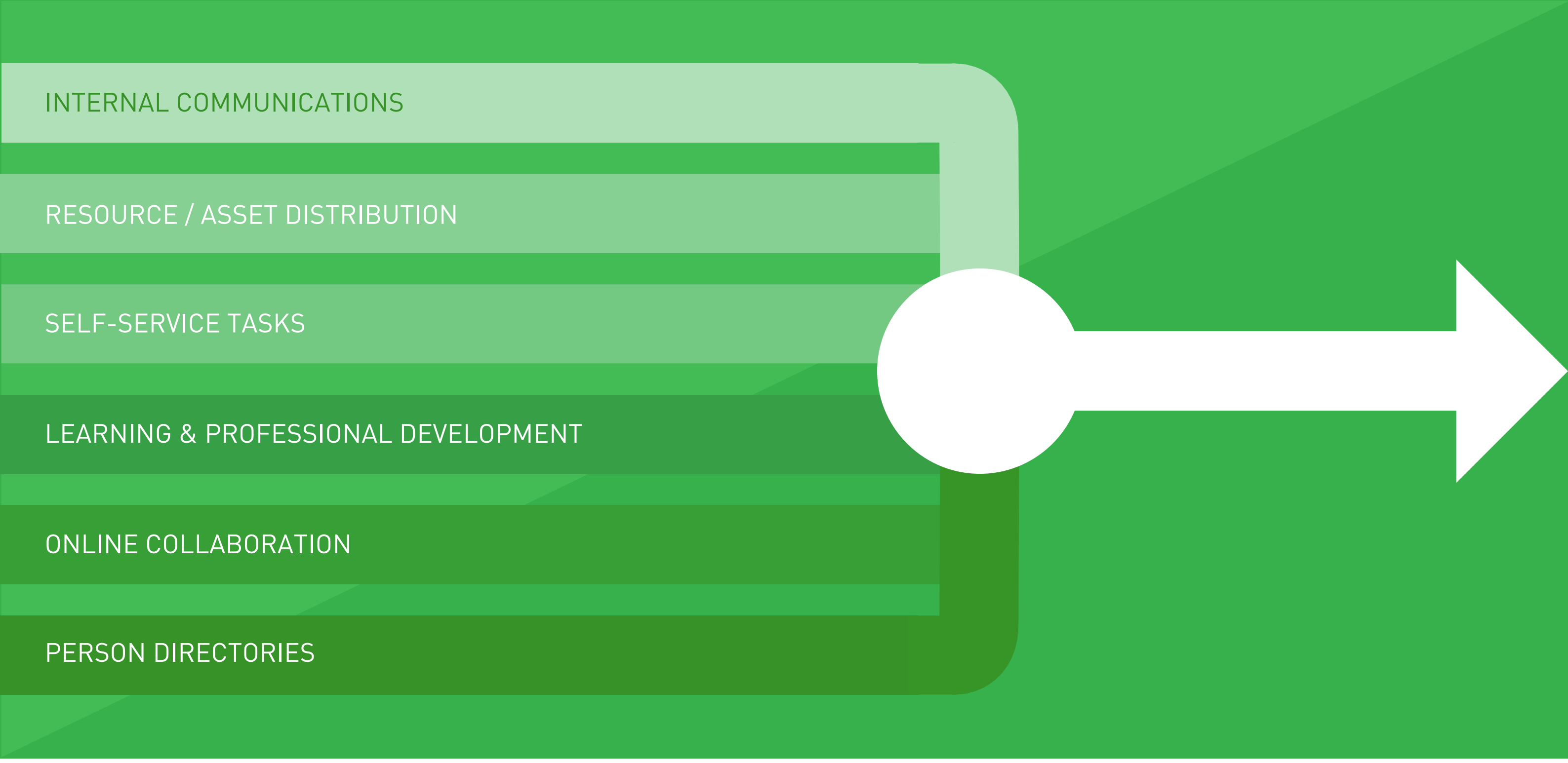
This may sound like a stupid question. After all, the fact that the intranet exists or is being discussed at all implies that it is considered to be a beneficial addition to the IT portfolio. However, all too often the intranet is considered to be a thing that was invested into in the past, and should just sit there doing "whatever it is doing" for the foreseeable future.

If the potential benefits of having a well-engaged intranet could be demonstrated to management, then they might be more willing to invest time, cost, resources or all three into its future development. Furthermore, managemental support is a key aspect of the ways to advocate.

So how DOES an intranet benefit the organisation?

There are 2 types of benefits that an intranet can provide to an organisation:

- Streamlining existing activities
- Creating new behaviours not possible without the intranet



STREAMLINING AND EFFICIENCY

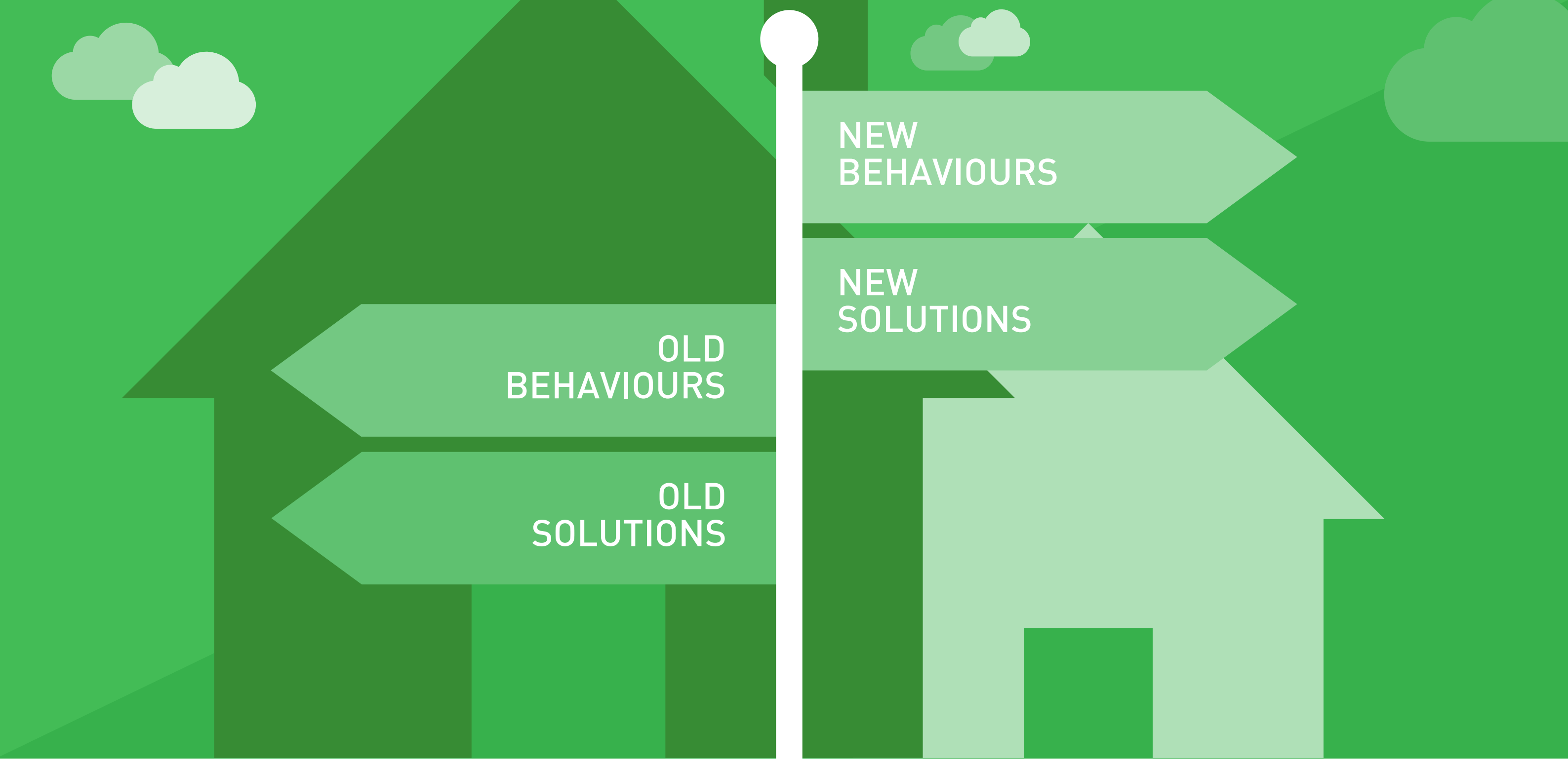
Many of the perceived benefits of an intranet to an organisation are in this category. Historically, too intranets have tended to focus in these types of benefit.

There are many areas in which an intranet can streamline existing activities, for example:

- Internal Communications
- Resource/Asset distribution
- Self-Service Tasks
- Learning & professional development
- Online collaboration
- Person Directories

In some cases these benefits are acquired by taking an existing offline activity and taking it online (e.g. booking annual leave on paper vs an online form). In other cases the benefits are gained through the centralisation of an otherwise highly distributed activity (e.g. internal comms emails vs online newsfeed).

There may well still be areas of the organisation that can be streamlined or further streamlined with the right intranet feature. In the context of demonstrating a benefit to the organisation, these are “quick wins” for intranet planners.



CREATING NEW BEHAVIOURS

These types of benefits are far more subtle than the streamlining and efficiency benefits, and as such they are harder to demonstrate to management. The key point that needs to be communicated is that the intranet is such a powerful tool, it is capable of more than just making familiar tasks easier. In fact it is capable of delivering new behaviours and dynamics into the organisation that are simply not possible without it.

PROGRAMMED CONNECTIONS

If we consider an organisation very simply as a group of individuals each with a list of tasks to complete, each within their own spheres of contact. These individuals know exactly who they need to contact and what they need to know in order to complete their tasks. Their spheres of contact have developed into exactly the right size in order for them to complete their daily tasks, and encompass all that they need to be aware of within the organisation.

These are called programmed connections: connections where people know with whom, for what and why they are trying to connect.

Programmed connections are the normal way of operating for almost all of us, almost all of the time, and could be the only type of connections currently existent within the organisation.

Examples of intranet features that can assist programmed connections within an organisation:

- People finder/employee directory
- Enterprise search
- Latest news/communications
- Activity Feeds

These are NOT considered new behaviours created by the intranet.

SERENDIPITOUS CONNECTIONS

Since the arrival of the internet as a key information source in all our lives, we have become used to the idea of targeted advertising and all manner of attempts to draw us in to websites that we weren't previously aware of, or even looking for.

This is normally considered quite annoying and we do our best to avoid these types of connections. However, in the marketing-free world if intranets this type of capability can be used with great effect. It can be used to create connections within an organisation where neither of the connected parties knew the other person existed, or that they were of benefit to each other.

These are called **serendipitous connections**: people "stumble" across new connections that they were previously unaware of. **A serendipitous connection creates new behaviours and adds value to an organisation that is not possible without the intranet.**

Examples of features that could be placed on an intranet to encourage serendipitous connections:

- "more like this article"
- "experts on this subject"
- "Other people searching on this"

I knew a manager once who strongly believed in the serendipitous power of intranets. He worked in a massive international organisation [European Commission] and was looking for an adviser on a particular area of expertise. The traditional way to get such an adviser would be to put out a notice within his department and wait for applicants to reply. He suspected, however that the applicants he would get from his own department would be more interested in the prestige of the position than being able to offer him the best advice. So instead he posted a highly technical article related to the area of expertise.

He knew that this article would be almost impenetrable to most people, but after a few days he noticed a low level employee from another department had left a very interesting comment. He connected with that employee and it turned out that he was an expert in exactly the field of expertise in question, and he had found his new adviser.

Without this serendipitous connection he would never have known about that expertise within his organisation.

CONCLUSIONS

We have seen that the key to a successfully engaged intranet is more than just fancy features and a cool name. It requires investment not just in terms of cost, but in terms of time and resources as well. It requires time to research the reasons to log on and the reasons to return, and then it takes more time to develop them into an intranet that is capable of appealing to all of the personality groups within the organisation. It can't be rushed.

It then takes continuous, ongoing resources in order to maintain the buzz around the intranet, as well as to ensure the regular turnover of content and continuous improvement of the site.

This is quite a considerable investment and in order to secure this commitment, "wholehearted support from management" must be sought. Gain it and the freedom to develop, deliver and maintain a highly successful intranet is there. Fail to gain it and the intranet adoption chasm starts to look very wide indeed!

PART 6:

MAKING THE CASE

SYNOPSIS

The final element of intranet engagement, the “ways to advocate” are a strategy for creating a bandwagon effect that propagates an engagement momentum throughout the organisation. It consists of four parts:

- YES! Team (Ambassador Network)
- User Generated (Automatic) Communications
- Traditional Communications
- Senior Management Involvement

Each part relies on the principle that if there is a perceived “buzz” about a new site, more people will go there to check it out, and (we hope) eventually become regular consumers of that site. The advocation strategy contains a mixture of off-site and on-site activities.

INTRODUCTION

We saw in my first post (An Introduction to Intranet Engagement Theory), that in order to bridge the so- called adoption chasm you must consider human behaviour and build your intranet around the needs and personalities of various groups within the organisation.

These groups are: Enthusiasts, Visionaries, Pragmatists, Conservatives and Sceptics. Each group is progressively more resistant to new technologies. I have previously discussed how to engage the enthusiasts and visionaries, how to engage the pragmatists and how to engage the conservatives and sceptics. However we still need some extra help to spread the word to these people in the first place. This is where the final element of intranet engagement comes in: the "ways to advocate".

The launch of a new site will always create a certain amount of interest and buzz, particularly amongst the Enthusiasts and Visionaries within the organisation. What we aim to achieve with the advocation strategy is to spread the word beyond these groups to ensure that the maximum number of people will be tempted to go to the site and check it out.

Of course, a good advocation strategy achieves far more that simply spreading the word. We aim to create a buzz and an excitement around the new site. Achieve this and people will be flocking onto the new site to check it out.

Eventually our advocation strategy will evolve away from propagating momentum, to maintaining momentum. There is a continuous advantage in maintaining a certain amount of buzz and interest in a site.

So how is this achieved? There are 4 parts to a good advocation strategy:

- YES! Team
- User Generated (Automatic) Communications
- Traditional Communications
- Senior Management Involvement

Each will be discussed in this article. It is important to note that much of an advocation strategy will be designed to appear spontaneous or user-driven, even though much of it has been centrally choreographed.

YES! TEAM

A YES! Team is a network of ambassadors or champions for your site, and is a vital tool for the ongoing management of large communities, especially within large organisations.

IDENTIFICATION & RECRUITMENT

They are recruited largely from the enthusiasts and visionaries, but could be from any of the personality groups. In fact, sometimes the greatest ambassadors are former sceptics that have changed their opinions about the site. Great examples of this are where sceptical management or other influential people have had the benefits of the site successfully demonstrated and have subsequently turned into powerful advocates.

As a general rule, watch out for particularly engaged users. Ones who are regularly leaving a lot of comments or contributing to the site. Even better, any users who have publically commented positively about the site would make great targets for recruitment.

After identifying a potential ambassador, simply connect with them offering them the opportunity to join the network.

Membership of the YES! Team should be optional, and it is important to allow ambassadors to leave if they no longer wish to participate. To this end, membership could be on an annual renewal basis.

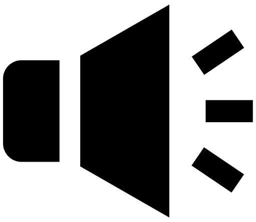
WHAT'S IN IT FOR THEM?

Remember, most of these people will be in it for prestige and recognition. Offer them access to exclusive content, particularly learning content around advocation and being a good ambassador.

Give them access to an exclusive community, where they can communicate with other ambassadors. This community could be gameified - reward ambassadorial activities with status within the ambassador community e.g. badges, points, ambassador levels. Set challenges around and reward certain activities, for example "go and answer 3 questions in the support forums". Finally, give ambassadors exclusive access to beta versions of new features and areas of the site.

Their feedback will be invaluable.

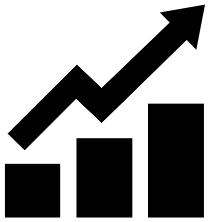
WHAT'S IN IT FOR YOU?



AMPLIFICATION

The main purpose of an ambassador network is to spread the word about the site throughout the organisation. Task them with this. Reward this. Their activities could include:

- Casual interactions with colleagues
- Proactive involvement in on-site communities
- Guest articles
- Blogs
- Offline publications or activities (e.g. company newsletter)

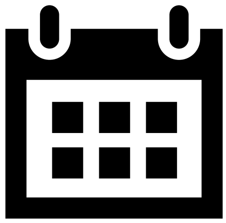


INSIGHTS

Ambassador networks are an invaluable source of feedback about the site, aspects of the site, or users of the site. Set up a feedback loop between you and your ambassadors. Not only are they best placed to represent and relay the general feelings from users, but they will feel that their feedback makes a difference to the decisions that are made.

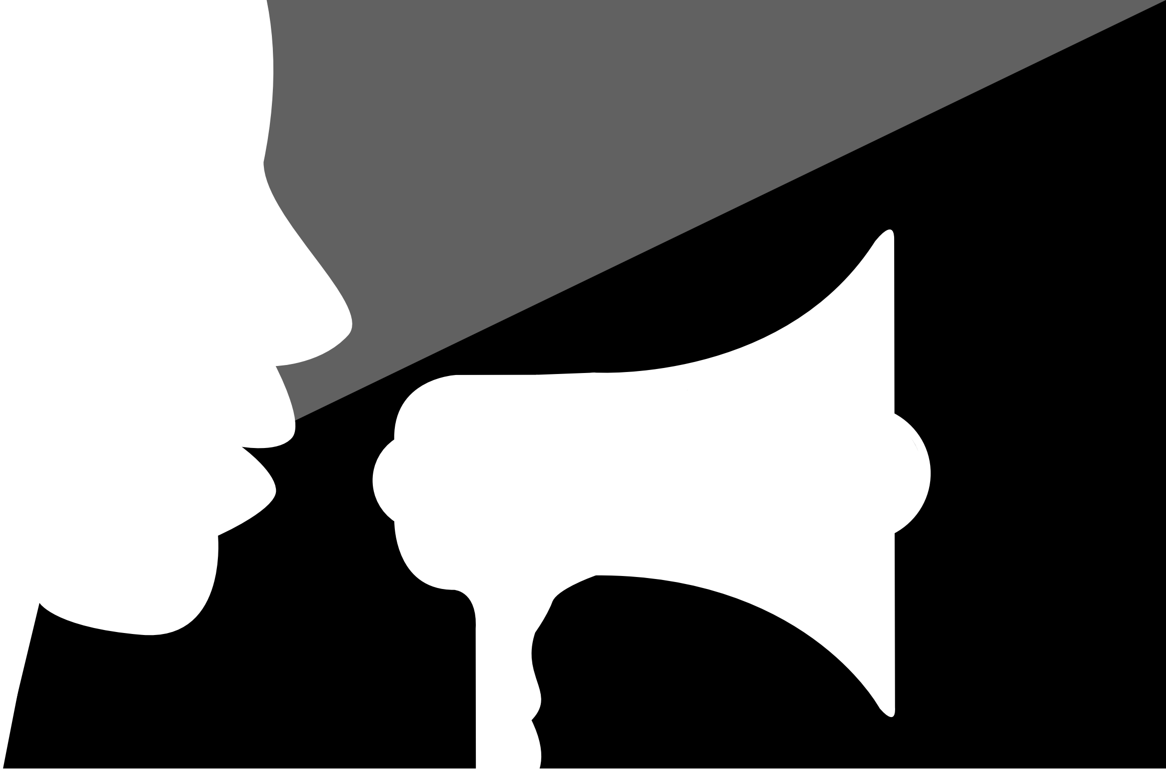
SUPPORT

In a large organisation it is a time-consuming challenge to stay on top of all communications with individual users. Ambassadors are well placed to take on this responsibility. They can be tasked and rewarded for answering questions in support forums, or they could even be a named contact for a certain subdivision of users' questions and queries.



EVENTS

Encourage and support ambassadors with events, such as training events or localised events supported by the site. The ambassadors will enjoy the prestige and recognition associated with running such events. Support them with funding, materials or other resources. They are an excellent builder of awareness within the organisation.



USER GENERATED (AUTOMATIC) COMMUNICATIONS

Make sure that every opportunity is taken to allow user activity to generate further communications and advocation:

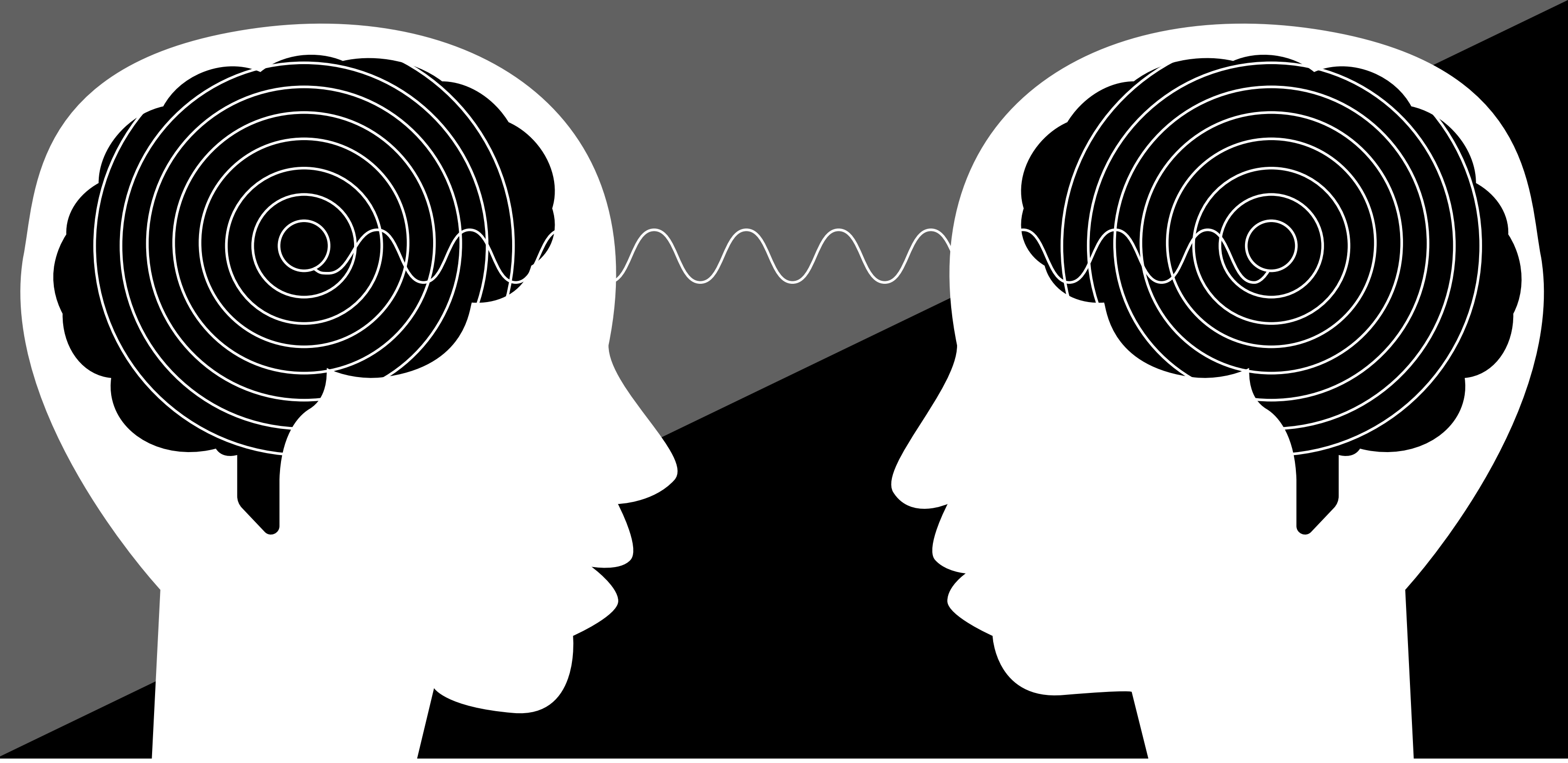
- **Notifications**: send out notifications to relevant people when something happens on the site. This keeps the site at the forefront of people's minds whenever they receive such a notification, as well as reinforcing the message that the site has a regular turnover of content.

- **Sharing**: Allow users to share articles or other pieces of content with other users.

- **Competitions**: run competitions to reward sharing of content or other advocational activities

- **In-Site Gamification**: introduce gamification that rewards the sharing of content with other users.

- **User Visibility**: reward content sharing with some visibility on the site. For example in an activity feed or a special "Latest Shared Content" box.



TRADITIONAL COMMUNICATIONS

Communicate the benefits of the intranet as well as what is expected of the people who use it. Try and be as transparent as possible. Be open about what the site is trying to achieve and what is expected of employees. If the site is an upgrade from a previous version, try and highlight the problems with the old site and what has been done to address them in the new site. Transparently recognise anyone who contributed to a particular improvement.

In the name of continuous improvement, keep a channel of communication open for suggestions and comments about the site. A special page or community where users can suggest improvements, have conversations and develop new ideas for the site. As well as reinforcing the impression of transparency, this sends out the message that everyone can get involved with the continuous improvement of the intranet. It also allows admins a direct line of communication with disaffected users, who might be less disaffected if they feel they are being listened to.

In addition to this, all manner of traditional communications can be built around the launch of the new site or a new feature within an existing site:

- Launch Activations (posters, stickers, balloons, key rings, mouse mats etc..)
- Email Communications
- Articles in existing organisational publications
- Competitions (e.g. first 100 people to complete their profile win a prize)

SENIOR MANAGEMENT INVOLVEMENT

There are two ways in which senior management can benefit an advocation strategy:

- **Public Backing**: They can publically back the intranet in interviews or articles around the organisation.

- **On-Site Contributions**: If senior management are seen to be contributing to the site, it will generate additional buzz and inspire others to contribute. As a general rule, management blogs or other over-complicated managerial contributions often lose momentum and become counterproductive. Instead, try and encourage senior management to make the occasional comment or status update (what they did today, thanking individuals, etc.). They will probably enjoy the direct feedback and comments that they receive from employees.

As a final thought, bear in mind that they are busy people and consider how easily they might post a comment using the mobile or tablet interface.

CONCLUSIONS

The "Ways to Advocate" is an important component of a successful site and without one, we may fail to bridge the adoption chasm and reach the pragmatists, conservatives and sceptics. Much of the activities outlined in this article can be choreographed centrally, particularly the early involvement from senior management and the activities of the YES! Team.

The key is to give the impression of a bustling and lively site, right from beginning. I once knew a community manager who literally went room to room after a launch and stood over people's shoulders, telling them comments to post. The effect was that the site appeared busy from the outset and it wasn't long before others started commenting and posting content on their own.

Unlike the reasons to log on, reasons to return and reasons to lead, which typically require the most consideration during the intranet planning stages, the "ways to advocate" is a continuous, ongoing concern. Many people would consider the delivery of a new intranet to be the end of a long project, but in reality launch day is just the beginning!

PART 7:

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

SYNOPSIS

If we take all of the learnings from the previous 6 articles we can organise them into a categorised checklist of considerations that must be made throughout the lifetime of an intranet. The checklist can be categorised in 2 ways:

According to the Framework:

- Reasons To Log On
- Reasons To Return
- Reasons To Lead
- Reasons To Sponsor
- Ways To Advocate

According to their execution:

- Technology
- Design
- Communications / Launch
- On-Going

Both provide useful ways of visualising the SmallWorlders Intranet Engagement Framework.

INTRODUCTION

We have seen over the previous 6 articles that the key to bridging the intranet adoption chasm is to appeal to each of the personality groups within the organisation on their own terms. These are the 3 principles of intranet engagement. We have also discussed how to create the space and freedom required to apply these principles, and we have a strategy to create a bandwagon effect to propagate momentum throughout the organisation.

In this final article we will put together all the elements from the SmallWorlders Intranet Engagement Framework. What we arrive at is a checklist of considerations that should be made throughout the lifetime of an intranet, from conception through to delivery and beyond.

INTRANET ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK – CHECKLIST

Here is a summary of all the considerations that should be made over the lifetime of an intranet. By organising them into the SmallWorlders Intranet Engagement Framework, we can easily see how each feature is designed to complement the other features in its category. It is important that each of these considerations retains its context, so colour categories have been introduced.

✓ REASONS TO LOG ON

- Essential functionalities (essential, exclusive, easy)

✓ REASONS TO RETURN

- Useful functionalities
- Regular turnover of content
- Personalisation
- Continuous improvement plan
- Good UX/Usability
- Slick/Fun design

✓ REASONS TO LEAD

- Social Features
- User profile pictures wherever possible
- Self-service groups/team rooms
- User Blogs

✓ REASONS TO SPONSOR

- Support for serendipitous connections
- Streamlined business functions
- Realistic KPIs (based on engagement score)
- Measuring tools in place to gather data.

✓ WAYS TO ADVOCATE

- Well defined purpose for intranet
- YES! Team strategy
- User generated communications
- Traditional communications plan
- Management involvement plan
- Good mobile interface

PLANNING A SUCCESSFUL INTRANET - CHECKLIST

By rearranging items according to their execution, we arrive at the following checklist. This arrangement provides a useful overview of how each consideration might fit into the planning for a new intranet.

This is a fairly crude checklist and it should not be used out of context or as a standalone representation of the Smallworlders' Intranet Engagement Framework. The colour categories give some context around the meaning of each of the checklist items:

✓ TECHNOLOGY

- Essential functionalities (essential, exclusive, easy)
- Useful functionalities
- Personalisation
- User generated communications
- Social Features
- Self-service groups/team rooms
- User Blogs
- Support for serendipitous connections
- Streamlined business functions
- Good mobile interface
- Measuring tools in place to gather data.

✓ DESIGN

- Good UX/Usability
- Slick/Fun design
- User profile pictures wherever possible

✓ COMMUNICATIONS / LAUNCH

- Well defined purpose for intranet
- YES! Team strategy
- Traditional communications plan
- Management involvement plan

✓ ON-GOING

- Regular turnover of content
- Continuous improvement plan
- Realistic KPIs (based on engagement score)

CONCLUSIONS

Engagement considerations are all too often made at the last minute, or even worse, only after the failure of an intranet. As we have seen, to implement a successful intranet, engagement considerations must be made at all stages from conception through to delivery. And they don't stop there but continue on an ongoing basis for the entire life of the intranet.

The Smallworlders Intranet Engagement Framework can support and maintain a thriving intranet for many successful years. It allows intranet planners and managers to understand their userbase in terms of their personalities, needs and requirements and then to specifically appeal to them in a targeted way.

It gives us a reference point for all decisions made about the intranet, and after decisions are made it allows us to validate the success or failure of those decisions.

Most importantly though it gives us a clear strategy to avoid the common pitfalls of failed intranets and to engage the whole spectrum of personality groups within the organisation. That is how you successfully bridge the intranet adoption chasm.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

From a background of astrophysics (MSci, University College London) and business management, Dan Jones has been working with SmallWorlders and their intranets for nearly 10 years. As Head of Consulting he maintains a particular interest in the art and science of intranet engagement and in 2014 co-authored the white paper "The Science of Intranet Engagement Measurement".

Since then he has been presenting and talking on the subject of intranet engagement measurement, as well as developing his "Intranet Engagement Theory", the main subject of this series.