

Intranets: what staff really want



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Staff overwhelmingly want a better organized intranet where they can quickly find people, policies and procedures, and forms.

In July 2007 we carried out an intranet survey using our Customer Carewords approach. We gave people a list of intranet tasks and also a list of things they might like to see improved on their intranet.

Tasks included: annual leave/holidays; complete a timesheet; find people; organizational charts; etc. Improvements included: better content organization and classification; knowledge sharing; personalization; more open culture; etc.

242 people mainly from Europe, North America and Australia/New Zealand participated in the survey. They were asked to choose their top five most important tasks out of a list of 58, giving 5 to the most important, 4 to the next most important, and so on. They were also asked to choose their top three most important improvements from a list of 40.

The results showed an overwhelming consensus about what really mattered. The task of finding people got a massive 18 percent of the vote, more than the bottom 35 tasks combined.

The top 5 percent of tasks (find people, find procedures/processes, find forms) received 33 percent of the vote. This is the concept of the Long Neck. The Long Neck states that in any environment, a very small set of tasks will always be disproportionately more important.

We have generally found that the Long Neck constitutes roughly 25 percent of the vote. However, with 33 percent of the vote in this particular survey, the Long Neck was very pronounced indeed. What this means is that there is an overwhelming consensus about what staff really want from an intranet.

In relation to the improvements, the Long Neck was not quite as evident but was still very substantial. The top three improvements (better content organization and classification; easier to find the information I need; and better search), which represented 7.5 percent of the total carewords, received 32 percent of the vote.

The results reinforce the many other Customer Carewords surveys we have completed on intranets over the years. First and foremost, staff see the intranet as a practical place that should make it easier for them to do their jobs. While things like wikis, blogs and personalization got some votes, they were way down on the list when compared to finding people and forms.

Intranets require better organization, but instead many of them are becoming dumping grounds for all sorts of content. They need much better search, but search is nearly always neglected.

The problem lies with the fact that most intranets have not articulated a clear purpose and business case. If an intranet is to get the investment and attention it requires, it must show that it can increase productivity and reduce costs.

Finding people is a substantial and increasing cost within most organizations today. The cornerstone of a quality intranet should thus be a fast and efficient find people facility. It is neglected because the cost of finding people has not been properly quantified and communicated to senior management.

The key measure of the success of your intranet is task completion. When John went looking for Mary from Accounts, how long did it take him to find her?

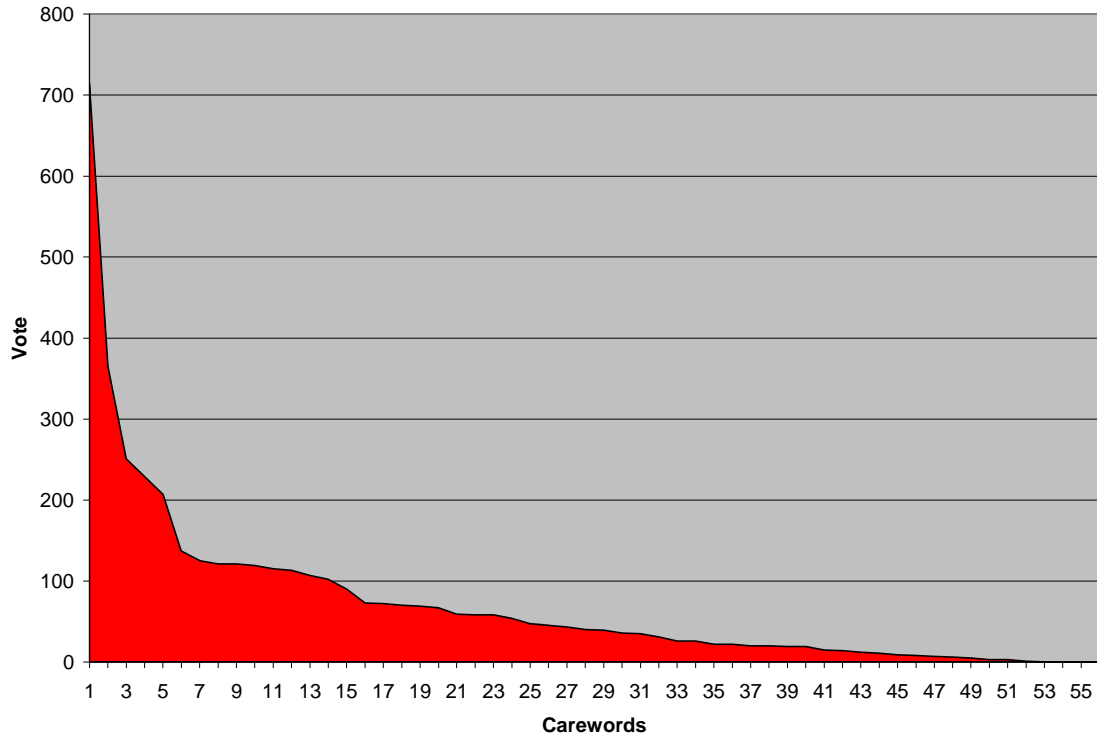
Task voting

Tasks	Total	%	Cumul %	Cumul % of Carewords
Find staff (phone directory, etc.)	714	18%	18%	2%
Policies, procedures, processes	365	9%	26%	4%
Find a form	251	6%	33%	5%
Employee benefits	229	6%	38%	7%
Organization news	207	5%	43%	9%
Job vacancies	137	3%	47%	11%
Pay / salary details	125	3%	50%	12%
How to guides	121	3%	53%	14%
Book a meeting room	121	3%	56%	16%
Annual leave / holiday	119	3%	59%	18%
Organization charts	115	3%	61%	19%
Claim expenses (travel, etc.)	113	3%	64%	21%
IT support	107	3%	67%	23%
Find a department	102	3%	69%	25%
Events (technical, social, marketing, etc.)	90	2%	71%	26%
Complete a timesheet	73	2%	73%	28%
Training	72	2%	75%	30%
Technical manuals and documentation	70	2%	77%	32%
Marketing material	69	2%	78%	33%
Collaboration (Communities of practice, discussion forums, etc.)	67	2%	80%	35%
Information from the CEO	59	1%	82%	37%
Time reporting	58	1%	83%	39%
Book travel (flight, hotel, etc.)	58	1%	84%	40%

Best practice guides	54	1%	86%	42%
Customer information	47	1%	87%	44%
Lunch menu	45	1%	88%	46%
General organization presentations	43	1%	89%	47%
Update my personal details	40	1%	90%	49%
Employee offers	39	1%	91%	51%
Career options	36	1%	92%	53%
Learning	35	1%	93%	54%
Find a location	31	1%	93%	56%
Success stories	26	1%	94%	58%
Organization facts and figures	26	1%	95%	60%
Vision, mission, core values	22	1%	95%	61%
Corporate Governance	22	1%	96%	63%
Sports and social clubs	20	0%	96%	65%
Press releases	20	0%	97%	67%
Research and development	19	0%	97%	68%
Purchasing	19	0%	98%	70%
Health and safety guidelines	15	0%	98%	72%
RSS feeds	14	0%	98%	74%
Find an image / graphic	12	0%	99%	75%
Acronym, abbreviation, glossary finder	11	0%	99%	77%
Book catering	9	0%	99%	79%
Lessons learnt	8	0%	99%	81%
Pensions	7	0%	100%	82%
Wikis	6	0%	100%	84%
Organization magazines	5	0%	100%	86%
Competitor Information	3	0%	100%	88%
Blogs	3	0%	100%	89%
Crisis management	1	0%	100%	91%
Supplier information	0	0%	100%	93%
Set up a video conference	0	0%	100%	95%

Set up a conference call	0	0%	100%	96%
Organization history	0	0%	100%	98%
Book a courier	0	0%	100%	100%

Task long neck



Total improvements

Branding	Total	%	Cumul %	Cumul % of Carewords
Better content organization and classification	193	12%	12%	3%
Easier to find the information I need	164	10%	22%	5%
Better search	162	10%	32%	8%
Clear intranet strategy	99	6%	38%	10%
Get rid of out-of-date content	91	6%	44%	13%
Knowledge sharing	70	4%	48%	15%
Making staff feel more informed	66	4%	52%	18%
Saving employees' time	61	4%	56%	20%
Easier to collaborate and share information	53	3%	59%	23%
Single sign-on (Too many passwords)	49	3%	62%	25%
Clear ownership of content	47	3%	65%	28%
Greater opportunity to collaborate and discuss	47	3%	68%	30%
Consistent navigation	38	2%	70%	33%
Remote access to intranet (from home, hotel, etc.)	38	2%	73%	35%
Quality, not quantity	36	2%	75%	38%
Better editing of content	33	2%	77%	40%
Personalization	31	2%	79%	43%
Simpler web applications that are easier to use	31	2%	81%	45%
Easier to find the person I need	28	2%	83%	48%
More open culture	27	2%	84%	50%
Help make 'one' company	26	2%	86%	53%
Access to intranet from multiple devices (mobile phone, etc.)	25	2%	87%	55%
Easier and faster to publish / upload	22	1%	89%	58%
Eliminate duplication	20	1%	90%	60%
Less is more approach	17	1%	91%	63%
Fast in, fast out	16	1%	92%	65%

Common look and feel	12	1%	93%	68%
Keep it simple	12	1%	93%	70%
More news	12	1%	94%	73%
Fewer clicks	11	1%	95%	75%
Give more inspiration	11	1%	96%	78%
Faster loading pages	10	1%	96%	80%
Plain language	10	1%	97%	83%
Fix broken links	9	1%	97%	85%
Global-focused, not HQ-focused	9	1%	98%	88%
More fun	9	1%	98%	90%
Opportunity to send feedback	8	0%	99%	93%
Improved stability and performance	7	0%	99%	95%
More local information	7	0%	100%	98%
Eliminate dead ends	3	0%	100%	100%

Improvements long neck

