

GlaxoSmithKline

Ten tactics to align your intranet with the strategy

By Jenny Cowderoy, global digital marketing manager, GlaxoSmithKline

1. Assemble a team representative of the major business areas. They will drive a review project and develop a proposal with clearly identified aims. (Ideally these will be willing volunteers!) Ensure they have enough time to devote to this project, absorb research and attend workshops to develop solutions and proposals.

2. Identify the key decision makers and drivers of strategy within each business area as early as possible. Gain their buy-in to an intranet review program by explaining clearly and in business terms the benefits to them of aligning intranet development more closely with their strategy and objectives. Assure them that the input from their area will be key to guiding the new direction of the company intranet – and keep that promise.

3. Identify a second, equally influential, group of employees within the organization – the doers. These are the people who maintain the infrastructure and content or coordinate groups of developers and communicators. It's essential to understand what they do and to engage them fully. Remember that the people on the ground, who work with the intranet and its users every day, will often tell you (in no uncertain terms) where the real issues lie.

4. Gather meaningful input from these two groups using a method that is aligned with accepted practice in the organization. At GSK, for example, a link to a targeted online questionnaire was sent to around 20 "strategic" people from the first group

and 30 "operational" people from the second. The results were then analyzed and presented back to these groups and the central steering group in face-to-face meetings, allowing plenty of time for discussion. (Directing targeted questions at these different groups should provide you with a picture of the long-term vision for the intranet across the business and also the shorter-term requirements of the development project.)

5. Take the time to do thorough external research and benchmarking. Network with counterparts in other companies and look at each other's intranets. Although your aim is alignment with internal company strategy, understanding the (often huge) differences between intranets and the reasons for these can really open your eyes to the possibilities and allow you to take a step back and assess your own company intranet more objectively.

6. Ensure employee input is sought and gathered at all stages. Do this even to the point of having a "customer board" who are consulted on all key decisions. Even at the outset of a highly strategic project employee input can be extremely useful. Insights into what works well currently and, especially, areas which can be improved to help employees work better are invaluable. Employees should also be asked to feedback on strategic plans and actual developments before they are implemented as it is this group that will often spot practical flaws in a plan which looks brilliant on paper.

There is a related point about employees – alignment with strategy is essential but never at the expense of usability. The

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Figure 1.5: The GlaxoSmithKline intranet home page



communications team might now deliver 10 times more messages in half the time, a heavy-weight CMS might allow hundreds more pages of content to be created with no additional expense and the 20 major tasks most essential to employees' daily work, might now be 100% percent self-service. But if it isn't as simple as Google or self-explanatory as Expedia, your employees won't use it.

7. Document the strategy. Most people involved with driving intranet development will have an understanding of the strategy they're working towards, but unless this is written down and agreed by all involved, there is no way of ensuring everyone is on the same page. All new projects and major developments for the next one to three years should then be fully aligned with the objectives listed in the strategy document. This document can take a number of different forms, and will probably have many iterations before it's agreed, but as long as the following elements are fully covered it should be an extremely useful document: the overall strategy of the organization, agreed objectives for the employee intranet broken down into three

key areas:

1. Content/ communications
2. Technology (the big three to cover are CMS, self-service (or collaboration) and search)
3. Governance (remember to include training here and usability not just standards and checklists).

8. Develop "big-picture" measures and metrics that are universally understood, business-friendly and clearly identify whether the intranet is moving nearer to its long-term objectives. IT, cost-saving and other metrics are still useful – to those groups that understand them – but the overall metric should be something much more real. For example, I like the idea of a Blue Peter-style wall chart which depicts the latest measure of employee satisfaction against an overall usability metric such as "average time to complete the 10 key tasks." This will tell you much more about progress than reams of metrics about down time, costs savings or uptake of technology ever will.

9. If your company is large and complex or comprised of distinct business areas or

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sub-companies (GSK has 110,000 employees and operates in 80 countries) there will be more than one strand of the company strategy to align to. It's essential to have a central team who take responsibility for bringing the many areas of the business together and get agreement to the priority objectives which will be driven centrally. However, it's equally important that they promote understanding and sharing between the teams and support the different areas of the business to progress their own developments with support and advice. If all teams are aligned in this way and understand the overall strategy and direction, then achieving individual objectives within the business areas will

automatically contribute to achieving overall alignment of the wider intranet with business needs and company strategy.

10. Finally, one of the most important learnings from driving a strategic review of the GSK intranet has been the real benefit afforded by close collaboration and understanding between the business, communications and IT disciplines. When these teams work separately, small misunderstandings can grow into apparently huge conflicts of interest. But, in reality, each team has the same objective in mind for the company intranet – to enable employees to do their best work.



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