

White Paper

10 Ways to Improve Workforce Efficiency with an Intranet Solution


INSIDE

introduction	2
case one: he's not available right now	3
case two: alpha this is bravo, over	3
case three: who, what, when, where?	4
case four: creativity on tap	5
case five: save often, save well	6
case six: what we will do without papers?	8
case seven: where are the controls on this thing?	9
case eight: googling your colleagues	10
case nine: what's new?	11
case ten: who's going to carry the piano?	12
conclusion	13
about bitrix	14

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Intranet systems allow you to increase workforce productivity, protect investments and attain sustainable business development by creating effective internal workspaces and solving a wide range of crucial collaboration and communication issues:

- organize shared document storage and build a centralized knowledge base
- synchronize employees with calendars, schedules, and an absence chart
- utilize teamwork in specific projects
- monitor task performance and receive custom reports
- stimulate creative activity among employees, generate ideas and strengthen the esprit de corps
- automate routine processes and ensure rapid adaptation of new employees

This white paper has tweetable references. To tweet the content simply click  the button wherever it appears

INTRODUCTION

An intranet is a gateway that unifies access to corporate data, enables effective communications among employees and provides rich collaboration features. It helps you manage files, applications, information and business processes more easily, and through personalized views.

From an outside view, modern companies might seem to be strongholds of elemental chaos. Despite, and sometimes because of, the myriad of internal policies, orders, by-laws, regulations and instructions, there is quite a lot of confusion and simple hope in providence in much of what is actually performed by office staff. Indeed, the rise of Dilbert-esque comedy is completely understandable, given the huge number of people who encounter a widespread phenomenon: the absurdity that results in modern work environments caused by conflicts arising between actual work and attempts to give structure to the work performed.

Reasons for time getting wasted are like clouds of locusts, devouring everything in sight. Reaching out to a colleague in another office takes an email, then a short wait, then a phone call and voicemail, and a short wait, then checking again before finding out, for example, that the person is on vacation or a business trip. Each year it gets harder and harder to gather together in the proverbial brainstorming meeting and get the right heads together to address issues from all sides. One is at a meeting, another is in a different city, a third has been working onsite with the client for a month already. Even a simple order for office supplies, sent to the secretary several weeks ago, seems to be lost in the office machine like a sock in a dryer. How can one really work in such conditions?

It doesn't take an MBA to understand that it's time for change. Even if your organization doesn't need a revolution, now is still the time to evolve, to take advantage of modern corporate management tools.

This paper addresses ten typical collaboration and communication issues in a modern company and outlines ways to solve them using a full-featured intranet system. It also provides valuable advice for choosing the right intranet solution that can bring your organization maximum functionality by covering mission critical operations.

Powered by evolving Enterprise 2.0 capabilities, an intranet tremendously improves business performance and minimizes risks associated with data availability and knowledge continuity. Moreover, it allows capitalizing on the social dimension by leveraging deeper employee involvement and introducing creative communities.

CASE ONE: HE'S NOT AVAILABLE RIGHT NOW...

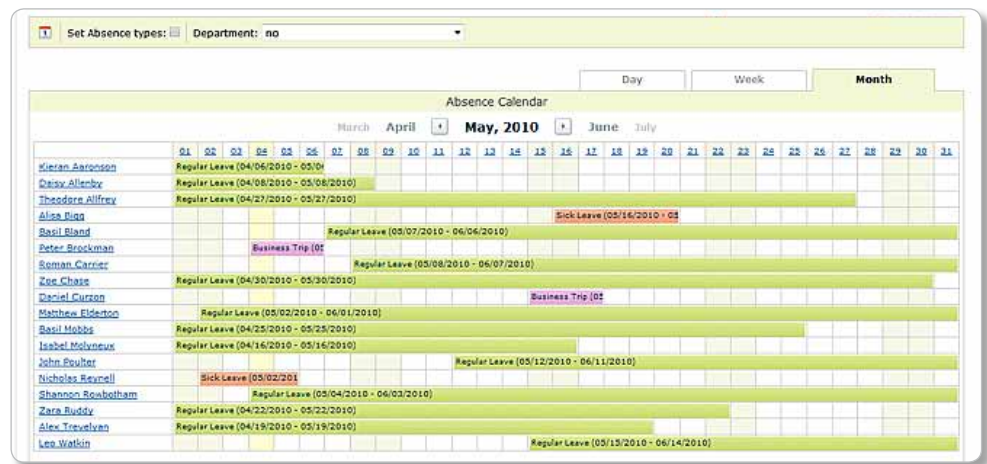
ISSUE: How to monitor employees' availability and streamline the internal work?

instant
tweet

watch
video

INTRANET IN ACTION: The absence chart in [Bitrix Intranet](#) gathers data from personal calendars and provides an aggregated view of employee availability

Have you ever walked into a neighboring department and been unable to find the person you're looking for? Or perhaps, as a supervisor, you've been unexpectedly informed about the absence of one of your team? To determine where the person in question is, simply check the absence chart in the intranet portal. Here, in convenient form, all scheduled and authorized absences are displayed in daily, weekly or monthly views. Normally, absences are shown in different colors according to types, and a filter for departments allows you to find the specific data that interests you about past, present and future absences.



CASE TWO: ALPHA THIS IS BRAVO, OVER

ISSUE: How to speed up internal communications and improve decision making?

instant
tweet

The desire to simplify and speed up business communication has never been out of fashion. Quickest in the pre-Internet era was undoubtedly the phone. But there were certainly short-comings, especially in that it was voice-only. The onset of the computer age has given impetus to the development of electronic means of communication. First came e-mail, then instant messaging programs. For their part, intranet systems may have a built-in instant messenger (IM), video chat, presence and activity notifications, and various broadcasting features to complete the suite of modern business communications.

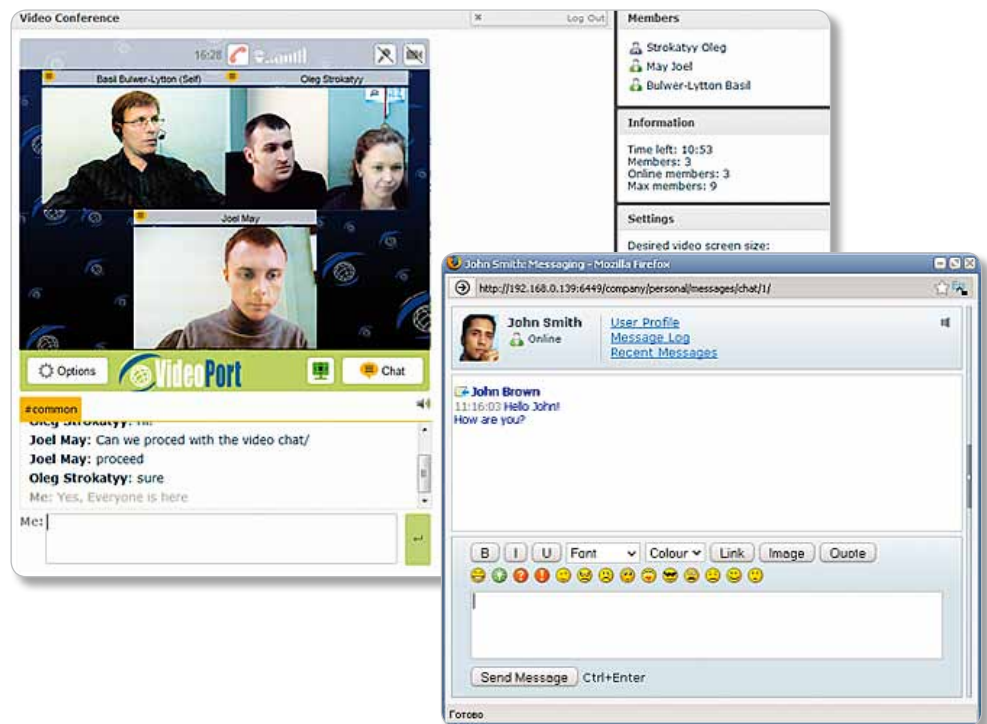
Now, to determine whether or not a person is in the office, you don't need to walk down a couple of floors or call the person with the freshly superfluous question 'are you in?' Rather, you can simply take a look at the online indicator in the intranet's IM and you'll know whether to expect an immediate response to your inquiry or not.

If you're not too familiar with your interlocutor, the IM can serve as an excellent tool for first contact, as it provides pictures and links to more detailed information about other employees.

The IM replaces e-mail and phone calls dealing with issues requiring your immediate, but not really your full, attention. Additionally, communication via IM is less formal than e-mail or phone communication, and therefore contributes to a more trusting relationship.

An important advantage of corporate instant messenger is that employees are not distracted by the dubious «chatter» in public analogs such as MSN Messenger and Skype. Their communication is strictly limited within the organization and a centralized message archive allows for retrospective analysis of communications.

watch
video



INTRANET IN ACTION: [Bitrix Intranet](#) provides multi-channeled internal communications including video conferencing and cross-platform instant messaging

CASE THREE: WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHERE?

ISSUE: How to quickly gather colleagues in a meeting?

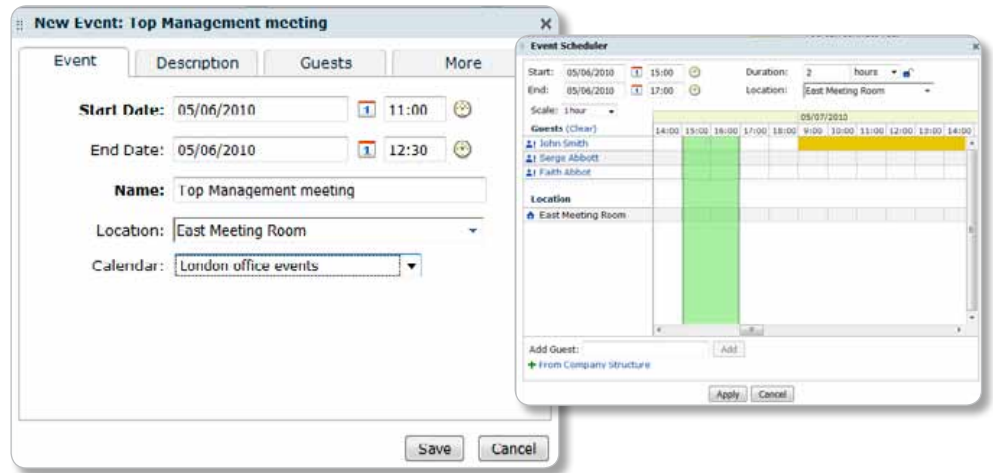
It's difficult, at times, to collect half a dozen people to discuss a project. A meeting must be scheduled, invitations sent and accepted, a meeting time must be negotiated and a cancellation requires the whole process to be repeated. Then, once that part is finished, success is still dependent on the availability of a meeting room.

Event scheduling in modern intranet systems allows you to significantly simplify the process of harmonizing all the components (who, where and when) of the meeting. The organizer can see the personal calendars of other participants and choose the time most convenient for everyone without interfering with their scheduled tasks. Additionally, you can find and book a free meeting room in the process, thereby eliminating the last potential snag for the meeting.

instant
tweet

INTRANET IN ACTION: Setting up a meeting in [Bitrix Intranet](#) allows you to specify the details, send invitations and reminders, find the best time and book a meeting room

[watch video](#)



CASE FOUR: CREATIVITY ON TAP

ISSUE: How to encourage creative activity and form organic workgroups?

[instant tweet](#)

Work on complex and lengthy projects not only requires focused efforts from all participants, but also deft organizational skills from the project manager. Keeping track of all of the human, material, knowledge and financial resources involved in a large project is not an easy feat. The task is only complicated when the persons involved work in different departments or even different cities. Greatly varying temporal and geographic conditions make basic communication difficult, and nearly preclude the possibilities of genuine teamwork and synergy.

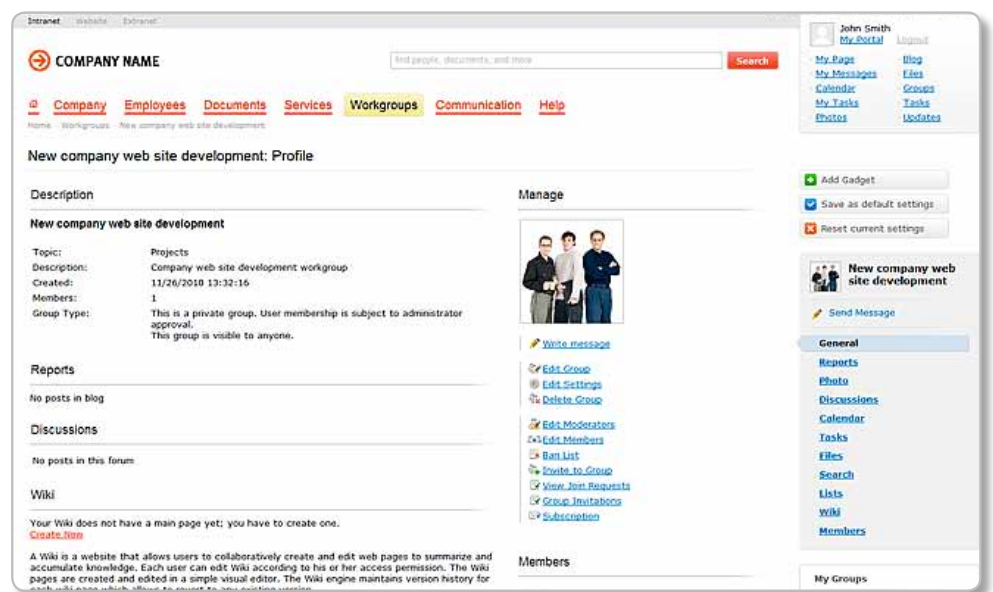
With the intranet system in place, uniting a team, no matter the diversity in schedules and location, can be done efficiently. Workgroups create an always-on, always-current space where the discussions, documents, drafts, tasks, and knowledge base of the project team reside. This organizational structure enables fast and accurate information exchange and consolidation of knowledge. Goals can be discussed and set; team members can monitor tasks and create reports. The people in the group need not be gathered together, but close interaction, idea exchange, brainstorming, and more are enabled through this highly versatile virtual environment.

Internal blogs and forums help to generate ideas. Often, blogs, social networking and other Web 2.0 features are considered malevolent in the corporate environment – an impediment to workflow. However, if this energy is harnessed properly, it can be the greatest source of return from the intranet. Discussions in workgroups and around the ‘digital water cooler’ often lead to innovative solutions to current problems and new approaches to routine operations. Thus, corporate social networks and personal blogs let employees satisfy their need for self-expression in a format that encourages engagement in business development at all levels – an equitable replacement for external social networks.

Also on the subject of blogs, there is another application. Practice has shown that this feature is an excellent as a tool for reporting. After completing a task or completing a project, an employee makes a record of the event in his blog. Messages are sent automatically to subscribers of the blog – including supervisors, as applicable. Thus, the need to report multiple times to multiple parties is eliminated. A single post documents the tasks completed, provides links to the details of each task, and notifies all interested persons.

Returning to supervisors and management, all tasks that have been assigned (or received) can be viewed in a summary chart with progress and responsible parties listed. This is especially useful for refreshing one's memory or getting up to speed with the most recent activities of each employee after a vacation. There are also management tools for monitoring performance and accountability of the workgroup – greatly improving the transparency of the project.

Similarly, the virtual workgroup gives a great amount of real information and context to persons who are brought into the group in the course of the project.



INTRANET IN ACTION: Virtual workgroups in [Bitrix Intranet](#) provide employees with shared files, task management, reports, discussion board, photo gallery and calendar

CASE FIVE: SAVE OFTEN, SAVE WELL

ISSUE: How to arrange a centralized, shared document storage and secure knowledge continuity?

A network drive, on which the organizational structure of a company is roughly recreated, with each department having a folder with countless subfolders and documents and drafts of documents is a familiar presence to many a working professional. This 'corporate archive' with no search capabilities is better termed a file dump.

To keep some manner of record concerning the contents of such archives, department heads and experienced employees instruct newbies how to find

instant
tweet

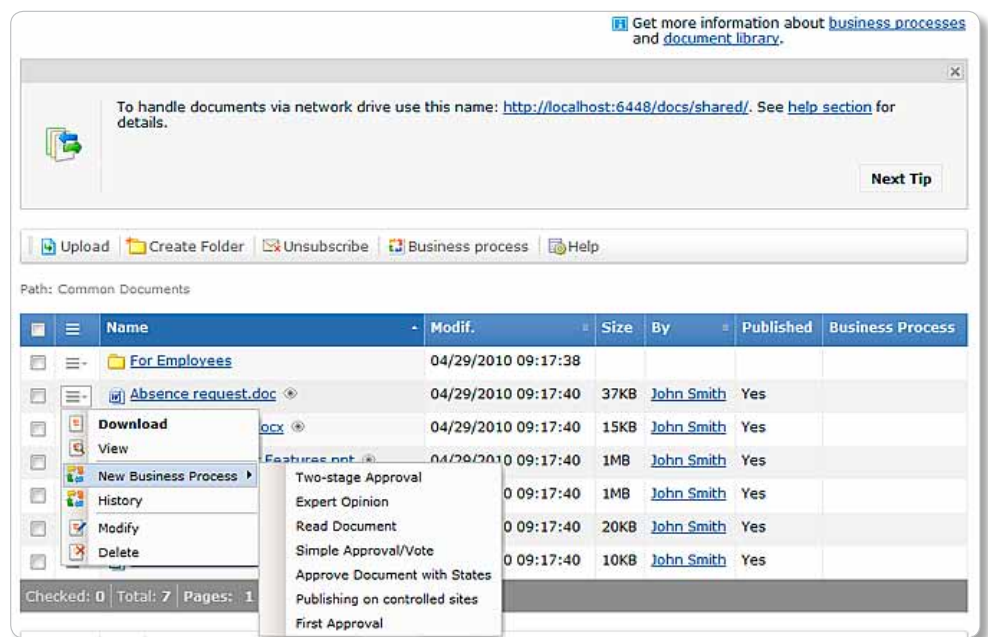
documents and where things are generally located, though there is no fixed rule. From time to time, an attempt is made to structure the information, so old parts of the directory are axed, and new ones patched on. But it is impossible to call the result of even the most heroic efforts 'order,' and often times there are unpleasant side effects.

In theory, it's not that difficult to solve the «file dump» problem. The primary issue isn't content, but rather structure. But how can a structure be put in place that will serve for the long term? Clearly, the structure must dynamically change according to the company's needs. When a new project starts, a new branch in the structure must be seamlessly added.

It is this type of structure that workgroups in the intranet system create. Workgroups, which unite sets of employees working on shared projects, are simultaneously storages of unstructured information (reports, discussions) and libraries of actionable documents and files directly related to the project. Document history, restoring previous versions and the instant search feature provide flexibility and accessibility throughout the workgroup. In essence, the workgroup establishes a knowledge base that is one coherent unit of the company.

Perhaps the most important business benefit of this approach is the accumulation of knowledge from each employee in each project into a centralized repository. This ensures the preservation of experience and continuity within the organization. As a result, there is no interruption of business processes caused by an employee's absence or departure. The replacement does not need to examine all the details of workflow for days, but rather can grasp the essence of the processes and use the knowledge base to fill in the details.

watch
video



INTRANET IN ACTION: Private, workgroup-specific and public file storages in [Bitrix Intranet](#) allow you to organize, store and share documents with versioning, roll-back and instant editing

CASE SIX: WHAT WE WILL DO WITHOUT PAPERS?

ISSUE: How to reduce paper flow in office?

instant
tweet

There are numerous how-to's and recommendations concerning optimization of your use of paper which, in some approximation, reduce to a scheme with three trays: «incoming mail», «pending papers» and «outgoing mail». The experience of many generations of workers will not be debated here, nor whether a system of that nature could stop the avalanche of papers that collects in a modern office. Instead, an offer to completely abandon paper documents in favor of electronic will be advanced.

In itself, working with documents in electronic form has many advantages. The ease of making changes, the possibility of collaboration, versioning, fast and easy search of the necessary documents and information within the document, enhanced security and ease of file backups - all these and many other features clearly speak in favor of electronic documents.

Typically, the transition to electronic documents is a titanic job with an immense timeframe. However, most companies do not need a heavy ECM solutions with intricate generation of digital signatures, or establishment of certification authentication. Companies generally need features that will facilitate rather than impede the use of electronic documents.

An intranet allows implementation of a system in a single day and provides all the tools needed to make the transition to electronic documents, as well as enabling phased or simultaneous work on documents, setting of access rights and maintaining of recoverable versions of documents. There is, however, at least one obstacle to the ideal paperless society – the 'print' button that developers of office applications can not yet part with.

The screenshot shows the Bitrix Intranet interface. At the top, there is a search bar and a navigation menu with options like 'Company', 'Employees', 'Documents', 'Services', 'Workgroups', 'Communication', and 'Help'. Below the navigation, there is a section for 'Upload Files' with a button to 'Get more information about business processes'. The main content area shows a file list table with columns for Name, Size, Type, and Modified. The table contains various files, including documents and PDFs.

Name	Size	Type	Modified
02_vmbtrix_guide 2.doc	1 593 KB	Microsoft Office Word 97...	22.10.2010
02_vmbtrix_guide 2.htm	345 KB	Firefox Document	22.10.2010
admin_guide_KP.doc	1 024 KB	Microsoft Office Word 97...	08.10.2008
ajax_guide.pdf	288 KB	Adobe Acrobat Document	19.06.2008
banner_show.pdf	129 KB	Adobe Acrobat Document	12.08.2008
btrix_env_install.pdf	787 KB	Adobe Acrobat Document	13.08.2008
Bitrix_EULA.doc	96 KB	Microsoft Office Word 97...	10.09.2008
bsm.chm	5 480 KB	Compiled HTML Help file	14.05.2008
BSM_5_IntegrationGuid...	962 KB	Adobe Acrobat Document	15.05.2008
BSM_quick_start.pdf	976 KB	Adobe Acrobat Document	14.05.2008
catalog_tutorial.pdf	1 533 KB	Adobe Acrobat Document	29.05.2009
contenxt_selling.pdf	2 585 KB	Adobe Acrobat Document	07.08.2008
index.php	120 KB	PHP File	10.07.2008
inst_guide_is.pdf	2 790 KB	Adobe Acrobat Document	18.12.2008
inst_int_19.pdf	1 632 KB	Adobe Acrobat Document	14.09.2009
installation_guide.pdf	1 956 KB	Adobe Acrobat Document	14.05.2008
installation_guide7.pdf	1 899 KB	Adobe Acrobat Document	16.07.2008

INTRANET IN ACTION: Batch file uploading in [Bitrix Intranet](#) allows quick transfer of documents to the proper intranet storages while the storages can be easily mapped by employees as network drives

CASE SEVEN: WHERE ARE THE CONTROLS ON THIS THING?

ISSUE: How to automate routine processes?

instant
tweet

Even if you work for a company for several years, there are always issues that must be taken care of that are not directly associated with your job. For example, the procedure for ordering a courier or ordering a repair for the ceiling of your office. Although such problems arise infrequently, this is in fact a typical form of interaction between departments and service providers.

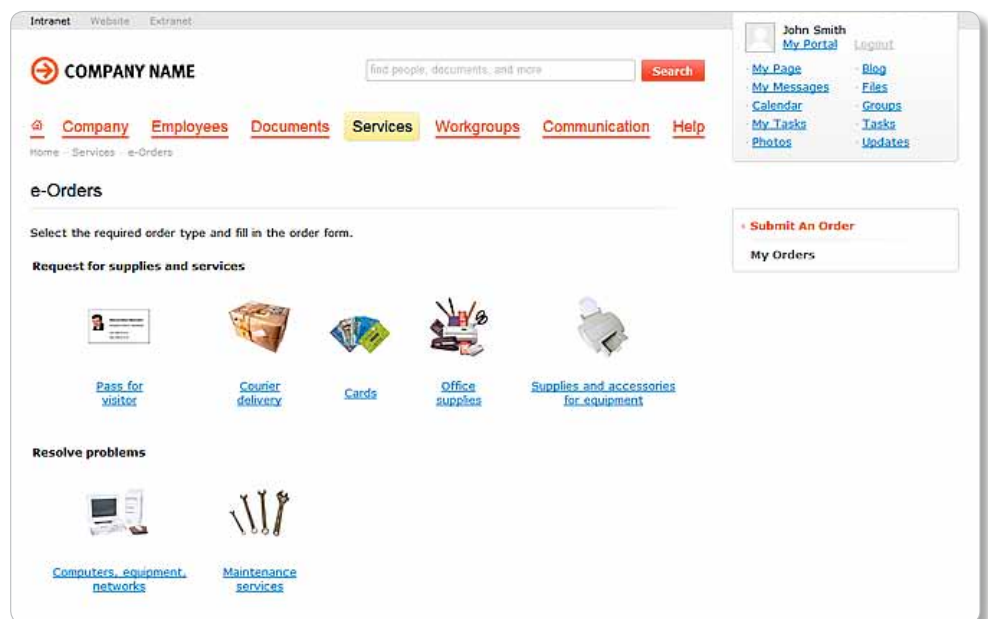
These processes lend themselves well to standardization and automation. Modern intranet systems use electronic service order forms to handle interactions with service providers, whether in-house or contractors. These routines can be modified so that they reflect precisely the needs of the individual organization.

The user who created the order can be assured that it will not be lost or neglected. Persons responsible to complete the order or task receive notification and the actions which they perform are recorded and reported back. Status is visible at all times.

Another closely related issue is access to standard documents and information that is both frequently updated and frequently in demand. For example, where can an employee get the form to apply for a vacation, and who is responsible for those? What are the mailing addresses of the various branch offices? What are the most essential things for new employees to know?

Actually, all of this general information is easily and accessibly stored on an intranet, and these simple, everyday needs are what draw employees into using it more and more because of the obvious efficiency. An intranet is not a status-symbol for a company, neither is it a toy for IT, HR, or management; it is a tool that is useful in nearly every part of the working (and vacationing) environment.

watch
video



INTRANET IN ACTION: Standard service requests in [Bitrix Intranet](#) can be extended with customized forms using a visual business process constructor

CASE EIGHT: GOOGLING YOUR COLLEAGUES

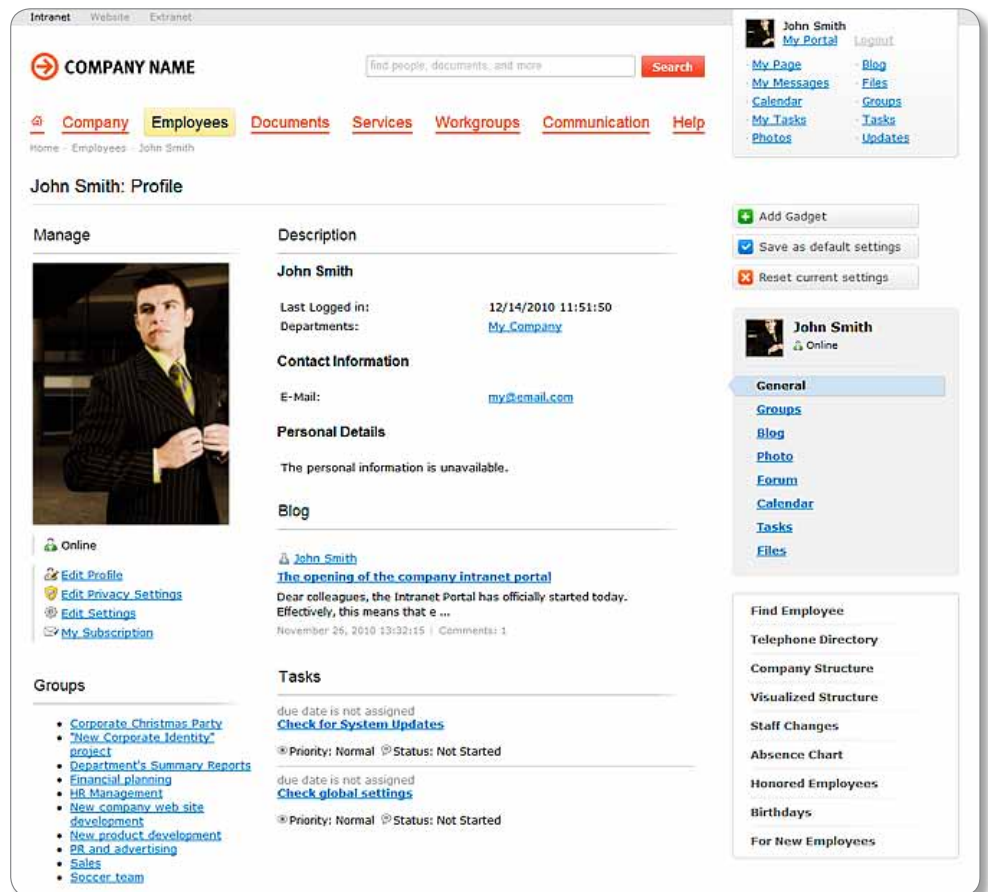
ISSUE: How to simplify the search for proper information inside the company?

instant tweet

Does this sound familiar: the growth of the company lead you to stop learning the names of new colleagues and just saying hello without really knowing who you are talking to, while marveling at the rapid development of business? The downside of this is the difficulty of communication. Often, employees lose their sense of organizational structure, making it difficult to know who is in charge of what, and how to contact them.

The intranet system offers an elegant solution to this typical problem. Each employee is assigned a personal profile containing detailed information about his job duties, location and contact information. Employees can keep their own blogs, moderated forums and post pictures and videos. These personal profiles update promptly to reflect the changes in personnel, and the built-in enterprise search engine quickly finds the right person. Additionally, the organizational structure of the company is automatically generated in the intranet, giving a clear and complete picture of the corporate landscape.

watch video



INTRANET IN ACTION: Employee directory and rich user profiles in [Bitrix Intranet](#) give comprehensive insight into the organization's structure

CASE NINE: WHAT'S NEW?

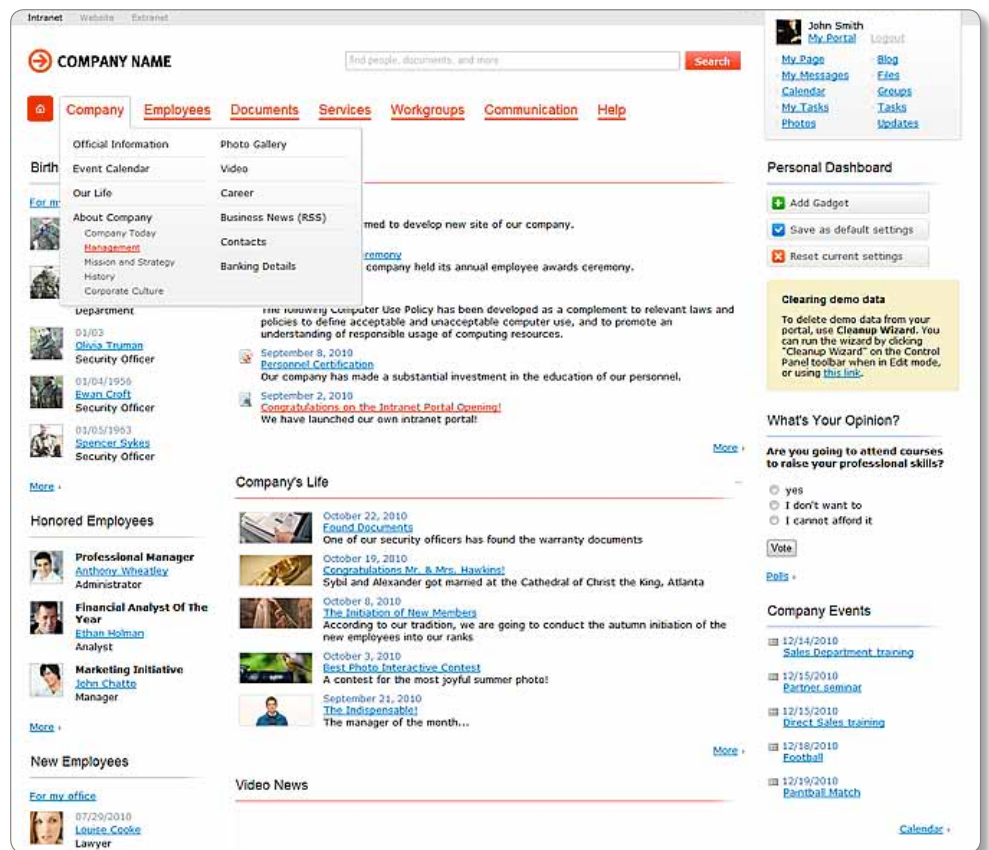
ISSUE: How to create a team of like-minded people and raise esprit de corps?

instant tweet

For every employee, it is important to feel like part of the team. In this respect, there is nothing worse than remaining in the dark about company news. Morale and productivity in isolated units are unlikely to be outstanding. But the feeling of belonging to a common cause, on the contrary, raises the intangible but extremely valuable esprit de corps. This is the essential contribution of internal public relations and of information officers.

An intranet solution offers a wide range of tools to meet the needs in this area. News about the achievements of the company will increase confidence that the company is on the right track. Reports of new appointments inform employees about new colleagues and help newcomers quickly integrate into the community. Birthday reminders provide an extra chance to express appreciation and reinforce personal connections. Additionally, a Hall of Fame and other honors motivate employees to go above and beyond in their duties.

An intrinsic advantage of the intranet is the enabling of a transformation from the traditional vertical management structure: «boss-subordinate» to a more contemporary, horizontal structure of associates. The ability to communicate directly with the leaders, put forward new ideas, and take part in the development of solutions allows staff to feel like part of the business and happy to contribute. In turn, the organization develops loyal and engaged employees who generate ideas from their individual perspectives for the benefit of the business.



INTRANET IN ACTION: Employee directory and rich user profiles in Bitrix Intranet give a comprehensive insight into the organization's structure

CASE TEN: WHO'S GOING TO CARRY THE PIANO?

ISSUE: How to arrange incoming tasks and supervise their execution?

instant
tweet

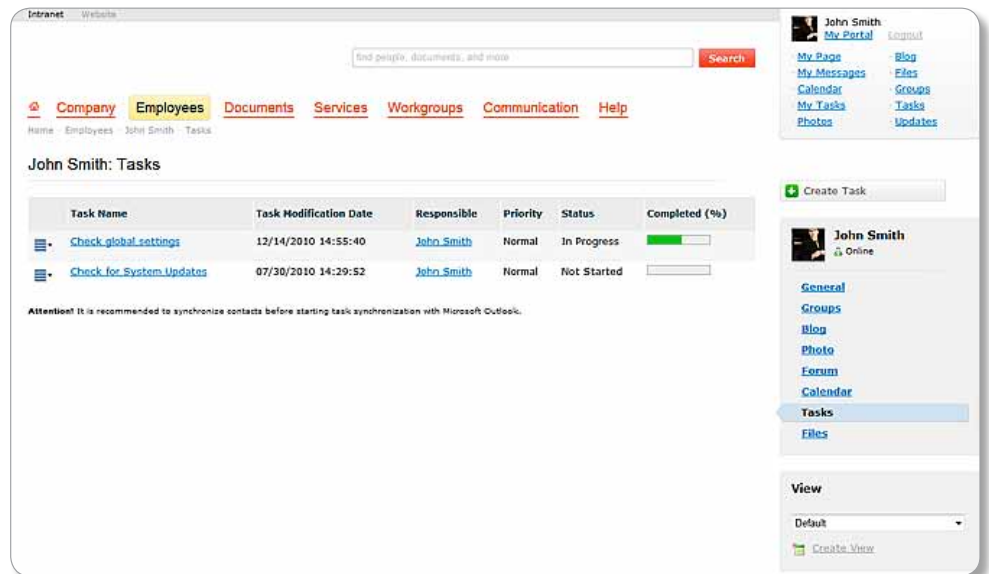
Sometimes, being the boss has advantages: you can delegate work to other people; in fact, you have to. Basically there are two types of tasks: those that are assigned to oneself, and those that are delegated with varying degrees of follow-up. Eventually, of course, tasks get too numerous, prioritizing becomes a critical factor, and maybe even important items slip through the cracks before a structured system is put into place.

In today's world, unfortunately, forgetfulness is a widespread phenomenon. There are simply more facts and information than our heads are designed to process. No employer is ready to reduce the amount of information that comes into the company, but streamlining incoming tasks and easier monitoring of them is always a good idea.

Modern intranets provide extensive task management capabilities. Tasks are simultaneously a simple and effective way to view and keep track of workflow. An employee set various options on tasks, including time dedicated to the task and priority levels, appoint 'followers' who can be supervisors or simply observers, and set up email or instant messenger notifications. Over the course of the task, comments and supporting documents can be added by employees. Reports can be sent automatically to superiors upon completion.

A quick view of tasks allows team managers and other superiors to view all the tasks of a given workgroup. It only takes moments to see what at what stage various tasks are, determine which tasks are likely to not be completed on schedule, and what the task distribution among employees looks like.

watch
video



INTRANET IN ACTION: Personal and workgroup tasks in [Bitrix Intranet](#) increase employees' productivity, project transparency and enable business performance monitoring

CONCLUSION

An intranet system sets out a wide selection of tools to increase the efficiency of the daily tasks of organizations.

The trump cards held in a proper intranet are the variety of tools and their readiness for immediate use, the ease of implementation, and the price.

But quickening daily operations is just the tip of the iceberg. When choosing an intranet solution, organizations should check if it provides a tool to lend transparency to workflows. For example, an integrated business process management feature can speed up and guarantee maximum performance for even the most comprehensive internal procedures.

Further, the availability of an extranet module lets you connect the organization with partners, lead customers and contractors securely and conveniently, making face-to-face meetings less frequent but more productive when they are necessary. Video conferencing puts internal communication at a new level. E-learning can greatly improve long-term production of employees and allows management to see who is doing their homework. A built-in records management feature can eliminate the burden of expensive third-party CRM thus reducing the overall IT spending.

When talking about the capabilities of the intranet solution, we often use the word «simplify» and «accelerate». Indeed, the second comes from the first. The simpler access to information, the more on-focus and quicker decision-making becomes. As processes become quicker, more time can be used for other activities. So the question is: what will employees do with the free time they have?



Implementing an intranet helps save significant time and money in the long run. Truly a boon to all industries, the benefits of intranet to business has made it a necessity rather than a luxury for most organizations.

USEFUL LINKS



Bitrix is a privately-owned company developing an **advanced business communications platform** to bridge SMBs with their customers (Internet), partners (Extranet) and employees (Intranet).

ABOUT BITRIX

Founded in 1998 and located in Alexandria, VA, [Bitrix](#) now incorporates [90+ staff](#), [40,000+ customers](#) and [4,000+ partners](#) worldwide. The customer list includes Hyundai, Volkswagen, Panasonic, Gazprom, Xerox, PricewaterhouseCoopers, DPD, VTB, Samsung and Cosmopolitan. Localized into 13 languages, the company's products are distinguished for their pioneering technology, unique [security features](#), extreme [performance capacity](#) and unmatched ease-of-use.

CONTACTS

US HEADQUARTERS
901 N. Pitt St.
Suite 325
Alexandria VA 22314
USA

Tel./Fax: +1 (703) 740-8301

SKYPE: [consult.bitrixsoft](#)
TWITTER: <http://twitter.com/bitrixsoft>
E-mail: info@bitrixsoft.com

www.bitrixsoft.com

RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT
261 Moskovskiy Prospekt
Kaliningrad
236001
Russian Federation

Tel./Fax: +7 4012 51 05 64

FIND MORE WHITEPAPERS

about intranet collaboration best practices at

COPYRIGHTS

[Bitrix](#) is a registered trademark of Bitrix, Inc. in the United States and other countries.

The names of actual companies and products mentioned herein may be the trademarks of their respective owners.