

[Company] Intranet and Portals White Paper

An enterprise portal serves a multitude of purposes, but one of its primary functions is to provide users access to information, content, and applications in an engaging and easy to use fashion. In this white paper, we'll look at the challenges in deploying an enterprise portal, why SharePoint provides an economical alternative to other solutions, and how the risk can be mitigated to help ensure success.

SharePoint as a Portal Platform

Look across any large organization today, in any industry, and chances are you'll find SharePoint deployed. It may be Office 365 in the cloud, or an on-premises version of SharePoint, but chances are SharePoint is available to every desktop in the organization. It's been reported that 80% of Fortune 500 companies use SharePoint, and in some organizations every person in the organization has access to SharePoint. No other collaboration or content management platform has ever achieved this pervasiveness and penetration across the enterprise.

What is it that has made SharePoint so successful? It's the functionality provided by the platform, combined with its ease of use. SharePoint is far more than a simple document management or collaboration tool.

The core set of services SharePoint provides includes:

- Content Management – File viewing, check-in/out, versioning, Microsoft Office integration, records management and retention
- Social Computing – Wikis, blogs, discussion threads, file sharing, identity presence
- Search – For documents, metadata, and people; across SharePoint, local file stores, Exchange mailboxes, and more from a single interface
- Business Intelligence – Excel and Visio services, analytics, and dashboards
- Identity Management – Claims-based, server-to-server and app-based authentication
- Mobile – Mobile device support across Android, iOS, and Windows
- Fast and Easy Sites and Branding – Rapid site creation and deployment for portals, intranets, and extranets; easy customization using HTML5, JavaScript, and CSS

All of this is delivered in a single, web-based platform, tightly integrated into other Microsoft technologies like Exchange, Microsoft Office, and Skype for Business. This provides a personalized work environment like no other -- one that brings together people and content in a browser-based collaborative environment. For IT, it delivers a single technology platform that can be managed and extended, built on familiar, proven technologies that they're already familiar with.

For these reasons, many companies automatically turned to SharePoint for their corporate intranets, portals, and extranets. But many organizations haven't achieved the success they expected. Why?

Challenges in Portal Deployment

Enterprise portal initiatives are begun in order to increase access to information and drive knowledge sharing across an organization. But experience has shown many of these projects don't come close to achieving their noble objectives. The time and level of effort are often underestimated, leading to

projects that run over schedule and budget. In a recent report on enterprise intranets, the **best** intranets took an average 1.4 years (16.7 months) to deploy, with an average team size of 19 staff (full or part-time contributors).¹

The reasons these projects take longer than expected or aren't successful vary, but often it's due to a combination of causes:

- A low cost or free open source wiki or portal tool is selected. While low in initial cost, it requires integration of a multiple add-in components or extensions or custom development. Support is limited to online forums and blogs or requires a subscription from the vendor.
- Integration is required to existing ECM, ERP, or other line-of-business systems. This custom development becomes more complex than originally anticipated or scope creep begins.
- The organization fails to take an enterprise approach. Development is done for one department or project and the intranet simply grows sporadically from there, without a vision for the enterprise.
- The portal becomes cluttered with old, obsolete content. Portal content doesn't expire based on usage or policy. End users continue to contribute but nothing is ever deleted.
- Performance suffers as the amount of content and number of users grow. The infrastructure and/or platform are outgrown.

Once launched, an enterprise portal is only as good as its maintenance and upkeep, but that's one of the key challenges. Custom built portals become expensive to maintain over time. Portal software gets updated to new versions and custom code stops working. ERP, ECM, or line-of-business systems get upgraded and homegrown integrations break. Often, the developers who wrote the original custom code have moved on to other projects and/or companies, and it takes time to decipher what was originally done.

As an alternative, SharePoint is often selected as the platform for intranet projects. Due to its pervasiveness, there is a familiarity with SharePoint and other Microsoft technologies across organizations, as well as a large talent pool to tap into. But like other portals, SharePoint portals have a tendency to be deployed virally, departmentally, or project by project. The local SharePoint administrator creates a SharePoint site collection and applies some level of branding (templates, colors, logos, CSS, etc.) and adds a few web parts. Some content types are defined, some libraries created, perhaps a workflow or two, a little bit of custom JavaScript, and now we've got a portal. In and of itself there's nothing wrong with this process. The problem is that this process is repeated hundreds of times for different departments, new projects, product launches, and other initiatives. In a short time you suddenly have hundreds of SharePoint portals, often using different versions of SharePoint. Each has a different look and feel, some look like SharePoint out-of-the-box, others nothing like SharePoint. Each contains different content types and libraries, all with a complete lack of governance. There's no consistency in the user experience and, as users move between the portals, they get frustrated at not being able to find what they need, when they need it. They turn to search as an alternative, but the search experience is inconsistent and thousands of results may be returned, most with little or no

¹ Nielsen Norman Group (January 2015). *Intranet Design Annual: 2015*.

relevance to what the user is looking for. All of this creates a negative perception of SharePoint and users develop a resistance to using it.

[Company] Intranet & Portals for SharePoint

At [Company], we believe SharePoint is the right platform that delivers the core services and capabilities required for enterprise intranets. But platforms are designed to be extended and built upon, and we've discussed the challenges of taking on large custom development projects. So how do we address these challenges and deploy an effective, engaging enterprise intranet while remaining on budget and on schedule?

[Company] Intranet & Portals transforms SharePoint into a content-rich, corporate intranet in record time. Unlike custom-developed solutions, [Company] Intranet & Portals is built on industry best practices, has been tested in multiple customer deployments, and is fully supported by [Company]. Our enterprise-class extensions build upon the best of what SharePoint and Office 365 have to offer for search, corporate branding, web content management, personalization, localization, and social collaboration. We combine that with our rich user experience and governance capabilities to help you deploy a user-focused, engaging intranet experience in weeks, not months or years.

[Company] Intranet & Portals is an out-of-the-box portal solution that minimizes the need for costly custom code. This lowers maintenance costs and gives you a supported upgrade path for your intranet as SharePoint and Office 365 evolve and grow. It is designed around rapidly configurable components, uses predefined templates and methodologies, and provides centralized management and configuration of your enterprise intranet. It's designed to support cloud deployments in Office 365, on-premises deployments in SharePoint 2013, or a hybrid scenario where users may be navigating between both platforms.

[Company] Intranet & Portals offers pre-built site templates and functional component

[Company] delivers more than just portal technology. Drawing on our deep experience in SharePoint governance and compliance solutions, we deliver an enterprise intranet and portal methodology that achieves information governance for both the look and feel and the content. Our approach includes strategy and design, information lifecycle definition, implementation, content analysis and migration, and user training and adoption to ensure success and return on your investment.

Benefits

SharePoint provides a robust and scalable platform for development of an enterprise intranet and/or portal. Extending that platform with [Company] Intranet & Portals delivers a host of benefits versus doing custom portal development on another platform, or even on SharePoint. These benefits include:

Built Around Industry Best Practices – We've developed our solution based on the requirements of our customers. Having deployed a number of multi-thousand user portals on SharePoint, we know what it takes to create a scalable solution that delivers the functionality end users expect. Our products incorporate our experience and expertise to deliver this in an out-of-the-box solution.

Rapid Deployment – Our solution is designed for rapid deployment through centralized configuration and management of reusable components. By minimizing or eliminating custom code development and leveraging reusable templates and methodologies, deployment time is slashed.

Advanced User Experience that Drives Adoption – One of the biggest challenges of any portal project is user adoption. Our reusable components provide a personal, contextual user experience through search, personal sidebars, newsfeeds, social interaction, and personalization. It enables the user a level of self-service to find and consume high value content in rapid fashion. Content owners can easily create and manage new content through familiar SharePoint lists and forms. With consistent branding, menus, navigation, and display templates deployed across the intranet, users have a consistent, user-friendly experience across the portal.

Governance and Compliance – It's not just the content that requires strong governance, it's the entire portal experience. [Company] Intranet & Portals allows SharePoint administrators to centrally manage the branding, menu structures, navigation, and display templates across every site and sub-site that make up your intranet. Information lifecycles can be centrally defined to create an intranet wide content governance strategy, ensuring stale content is removed in an automated fashion, based on policy, not user discretion. At the same time, local site administrators can be provided a level of autonomy in branding and configuration while ensuring the overall site structure, look, and feel adhere to the corporate governance guidelines.

Summary

The benefits of a well-defined intranet and portal are without question. Users are happy and engaged and IT is free to focus on other, high value tasks and projects. But deploying an enterprise-scale corporate intranet and portal project can be risky. Let [Company] show you how we've slashed the time it takes to deploy an engaging intranet and portal while minimizing the risk involved in doing so. We've done it for a number of customers in a variety of industries and we can do it for you.