"10 things you need to know in order to succeed with tomorrow's intranet – My Digital Workplace"

A GUIDE PRESENTED BY PRECIO FISHBONE

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1. Introduction

The modern intranet, often called Digital Workplace, is an application with a high level of ambition when it comes to facilitating the daily work of its users, regardless of where they are or which client they wish to work with. But in order to succeed with this ambition, a change of approach is required. Having previously focused on making major investments in the development of its own solution, today's organisation must instead look to utilise standard products and ensure that they really are being used.

In this document we aim to tell you more about today's modern intranet, My Digital Workplace, and we offer our 10 best recommendations regarding how an intranet investment should be planned and implemented in order to be successful.

2. Tomorrow's intranet is already here

2.1 Intranet becomes My Digital Workplace

The first intranets saw the light of day sometime during the end of the 1990s, and just a few years later the intranet had become an extremely common application in Swedish organisations. A lot of water has passed under a lot of bridges since then, and the level of ambition in relation to intranet as an application has been continually raised during that time, from a collection of static HTML pages, via the idea of a company portal, to today's concept of the digital workplace.

This development, described in the diagram below, has meant that solutions have become increasingly comprehensive, often resulting in more expensive implementation projects and management, with solutions that have become more difficult to understand, learn and use.
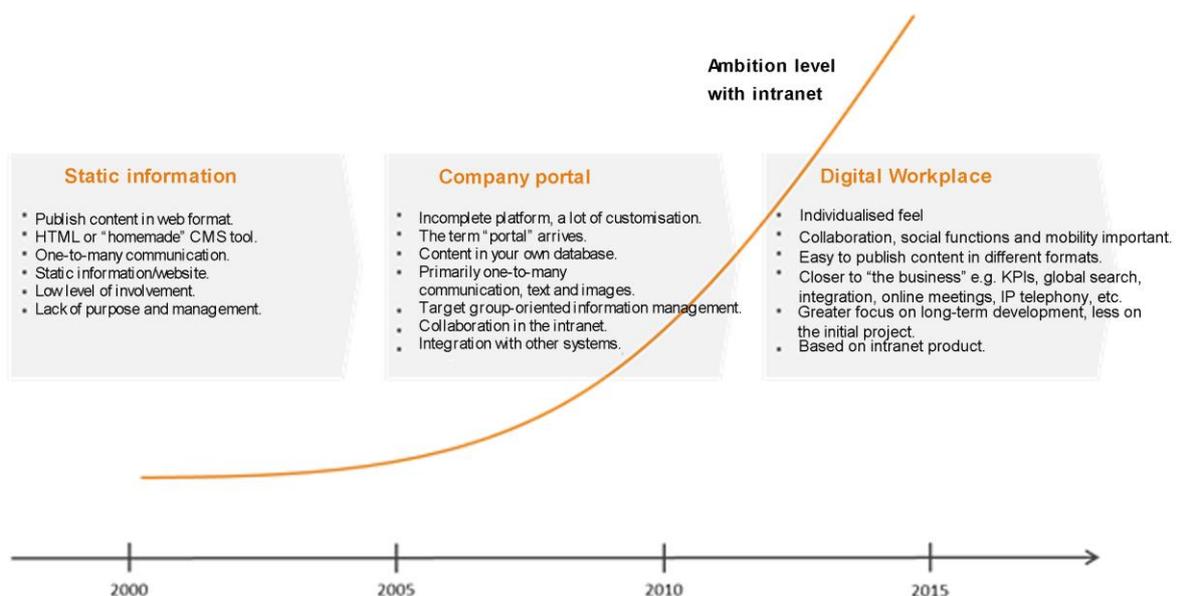
It is well known that the IT industry loves to come up with "buzzwords" to describe epoch shifts and new technical possibilities, and the intranet application has been no exception. Sometime during 2011 the term Digital Workplace made its appearance as a description of the modern intranet's ambition to become something akin to the user's workplace, or at least a significant part thereof. Since then the use of the term in articles and seminars has taken off, and many forums and conferences about intranet have changed their names to now include this trendy term.

So what does the term Digital Workplace actually imply? Well, to begin with, and as is almost always the case when it comes to new, popular terms related to the IT industry, there are a great many different definitions in existence. But a simple analysis of how various knowledgeable persons describe the application quickly reveals the following points as common components of how the digital workplace is viewed.

The traditional intranet is usually described as a more delimited application, with publication as its primary function, whereas the term Digital Workplace refers to a more consolidated application that includes a number of different aspects. One such aspect is the possibility to collaborate and share information with others and to create social contacts and networks.

Another important aspect of the term Digital Workplace appears to be the possibility to actually be able to perform work tasks within the application, for example the ability to make bookings and enter orders, call off services, manage cases and produce documentation for decision-making processes, as well as the existence of support for controlled flows and processes.

A further central part of the term Digital Workplace is the possibility to work anywhere you want, with any client or device (e.g. PC, tablet or phone) of your choosing.

The figure below provides a simple overview of how the more traditional intranet has gradually grown and developed to become more comprehensive over time, all the while taking on a form that is increasingly in line with the description of the term Digital Workplace.
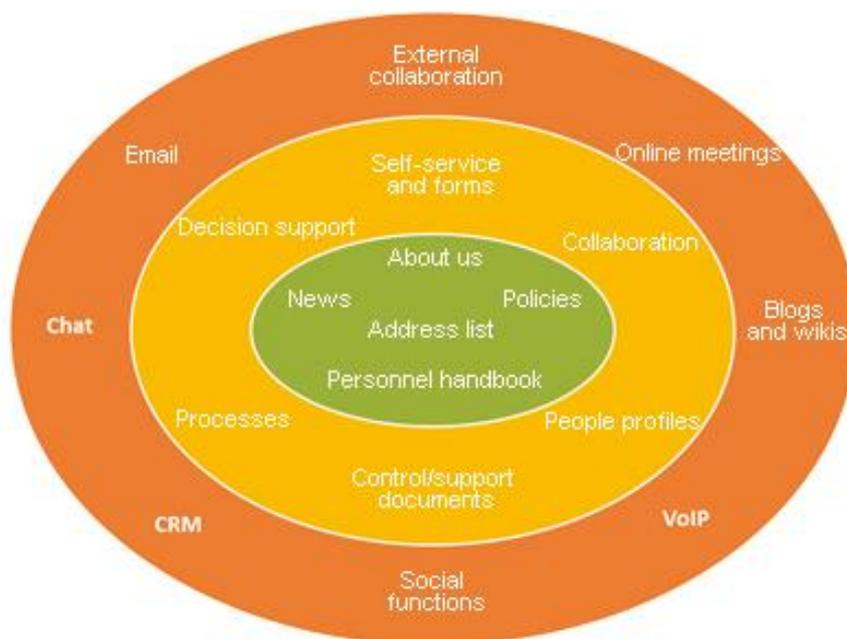
Yet another aspect of the term Digital Workplace that is often highlighted is the fact that, despite the name, it is a term that not only refers to technology but has just as much to do with organisation, structure, management and users. Many people also maintain that the digital workplace is more centred around the user than is the case with the traditional intranet. This increased focus on the user can be expressed by making the solution more individually oriented and/or by making it easier to find information and perform tasks.

In our opinion it is this latter aspect that is worthy of particular emphasis, which is why we hereinafter choose to describe the modern intranet as My Digital Workplace.

At first glance one might think that the more comprehensive solution, My Digital Workplace, would require significant resources for its establishment but, as we have already mentioned, the opposite is in fact the case. These days there are greater opportunities than ever before to create this type of application based on standard products. One excellent facilitator for Digital Workplace is Office 365, Microsoft's suite of products that is delivered as a service from the renowned cloud.

2.2 Office 365 provides new possibilities

In our opinion, Office 365 provides very good fundamental support for the creation of a Digital Workplace application based on standard products. To begin with, the Office 365 suite of products offers the possibility to establish applications that support the solution's aims regarding internal communication. This could have to do with possibilities involving, for example, the publication of websites, blog entries, documents or films.

Furthermore, there is good support for establishing and maintaining collaboration with internal and/or external parties, and the same applies in relation to social forums and conversations. A number of different tools are available for this purpose, for example Team Sites, Office 365 Groups or groups in Yammer.

Within the Office 365 family there is also the possibility to provide the user with access to email, online meetings and telephony (VoIP), and for business systems like CRM or Project Management to be delivered in the same interface as other applications. Furthermore, there are a number of secure and relatively simple ways to integrate the solution with existing data sources and systems, as well as possibilities to make things easier for the user by presenting information based on previous user patterns in the solution.

Users can have interesting information served up to them, or else they can use the excellent search engine to find what they are looking for. Office 365 also offers the use of notifications, for example when a new email arrives or when the user is assigned a new task. In addition, selected parts of Office 365 provide good support for mobile use, either via the solution having a responsive design or via apps that can be downloaded to a mobile phone or tablet.

In other words there is currently an excellent opportunity to take a major step towards achieving that which we call Digital Workplace based on Office 365, without the need to make major investments in the implementation and development of one's own solution.

2.3 Simply add the pieces of the puzzle that are missing

Despite our positive views on Office 365 as described above, it must also be said that many of the organisations to which we have delivered solutions feel that they don't quite get all the way to the finish line with Office 365 alone. The areas that these organisations most often feel are lacking have to do with, for example, a natural home page, aspects related to navigation in the solution, how news is published and displayed, and responsive design in relation to published content. A further issue can concern the creation of collaboration-oriented team sites based on customised website templates, or how one can stay up-to-date regarding what is happening on the team sites to which one belongs.

There is, however, a simple solution to this problem, namely the possibility to use one of the off-the-shelf products that can be run together with Office 365 and which deliver the pieces of the puzzle that are missing. Omnia Intranet from Precio Fishbone is a product that has been developed with the aim of filling just such a gap that may exist between the organisation's expectations and what can actually be delivered with the standard functionality provided by Office 365 and SharePoint.

It is our opinion that tomorrow's intranet, or at least an extremely good first version of such, can be established entirely based on the standard functionality available in Office 365 and Omnia Intranet. Consequently we would contend that, not only is the intranet of the future (or My Digital Workplace, as we are choosing to call it) within reach – it can also be established and implemented using fewer resources than ever before.

The intranet of the future really does entail more for less, and the solution can be established in less time than has been possible in the past. But in order to succeed with tomorrow's intranet today, it is important to understand that one's approach and strategy in relation to the solution must also be updated, just as the technical products have been and will continue to be.

3. New approach required in order to succeed with My Digital Workplace

We shall now move on to discuss some of the most important areas in terms of how to succeed with tomorrow's intranet.

3.1 Base the first version on standard product

Historically it has been common for a project aimed at developing and implementing an intranet to last 12-18 months, and often even longer than so. This has meant that the solution that is finally presented to users is based on requirements specifications that applied more than a year ago, which has often led to users not embracing the solution to the extent it had been hoped.

Even in these drawn-out projects the people working within the project have soon come to the realisation that, despite the significant resources being invested in the work, it is necessary to prioritise which of the business' requirements one wishes to meet. This has also contributed to a sceptical reaction from users, when they find that much of that which they requested a year ago is not included in the solution provided.

In our view it is better to try to shorten the length of time from project start to implementation of a first version and instead take care to inform people that this is just a first version and not the final solution. In this context it is also recommended to clearly communicate to the organisation that the strategy is to put a good first version in place and then further develop the solution from this initial level.

Implementing customisations in an intranet based on users' often very detailed wishes is expensive, especially if the users have participated in the process of developing the wish-list for how the solution should appear and work. It is much more cost-effective to wait and only gather in and look to satisfy such user requests once the users have been able to understand how an existing solution works as standard. This also supports the idea that it is better to actually put a solution in place as a first version and to then gather feedback and requests from users via a more hands-on approach than to attempt to plan and carry out the entire process with nothing more than a blank piece of paper to work from.

Yet another factor that supports this approach is that it is easier for a user to get used to and assess a new intranet in suitably small doses, in other words it is better to introduce several smaller versions over time than to simply present everything in one "big bang".

The quickest and most cost-effective way to achieve a good intranet is thus to base the solution on a standard product and invest your resources in a timely and effective implementation process with elements of a "hands-on" approach.

3.2 Change strategy when it comes to management

Historically the management of an intranet has often been a struggle against the tide. In most Swedish organisations the results achieved from a new intranet have not been as hoped, and the natural reaction is to try to make the solution better in the users' eyes by developing and implementing new functionality. However, this approach seldom leads to any positive differences in the end result – in such a situation it seldom pays off to believe in the motto "build it and they will come".

In order to succeed over time, we recommend a change in focus when it comes to management, from trying to find, map, build and implement new functions yourself, to building and spreading understanding of how the standard products can best be used. Start by making sure that those who own the intranet understand how they should act in order to get the organisation to utilise that which is available in the best way, rather than investing resources in trying to rebuild that which Microsoft delivers. Furthermore, if you have chosen the right product as a complement to Office 365, you already have an idea of how an effective intranet should work. Naturally you can place demands and expectations on such a product to capture effective solutions and work methods within all the usual areas of need in a modern intranet.

It is also important to have chosen a product from the very beginning whose roadmap is clear and understandable and points in the direction one wishes the intranet to be developed. If that initial choice is the right one, a large part of the management process can then be based on the updates that are delivered to make the solution better for the organisation's users. If, in addition, there exists a creditable way to contribute suggestions regarding the development of the supplier's roadmap, the

likelihood of future updates being of value to the organisation increases even further – and because one is sharing the cost of development with others who have also based their solution on the same product, this becomes a very cost-effective way to go.

3.3 Move resources to where they produce the best effect

There is one very important common denominator in the above recommendations regarding, on the one hand, the timely implementation of a first version of a new intranet and, on the other hand, the management of that solution, namely that both these approaches free up resources from pilot studies, requirements specifications and system development. It is our contention that such resources produce a significantly better effect if they are instead utilised within another crucial area – the process of acceptance and implementation.

When an organisation chooses to invest in a new intranet it is of course looking to achieve some form of improvement within the business. The specific results one wishes to achieve may vary from case to case, but fundamentally it has to do with wanting to change the attitudes and behaviour of the members of the organisation. In order to successfully achieve these types of desired effects, the intranet must actually be used – which in turn means that the users must be able to and must want to use the solution.

Consequently, a key prerequisite for achieving success with the intranet is ensuring that one has users who are suitably satisfied and suitably knowledgeable. Based on the approach we have described above, the possibility now exists to move resources, in the form of time and money, from rebuilding standard products to making the most of the best practice on which the products are based. In other words, we recommend that our customers move resources from in-house system development to the process of internal acceptance, introduction and implementation of the new solution.

3.4 Some final pieces of advice

Tomorrow's intranet is already within reach, and establishing and managing the solution will require fewer resources than in the past. But in order to achieve success via a well-used solution, a well-considered investment and approach is of course still required. In addition to that which we have discussed above, it is also important to implement an approach to the solution whereby regular follow-ups of the goals that have been set form a central part of this approach. This could, for example, have to do with mapping user patterns, comparing these against one's goals, and continually implementing resultant improvement measures.

Look to set viable goals not only for users but also for editors and administrators, and make sure that follow-ups are carried out in relation to these goals. When it comes to users the goals should cover both the number of visits aimed at retrieving information and the extent to which the users themselves contribute through activities in the solution. For editors the goals might concern the number of publications or perhaps the fact that content should never remain active beyond its expiry date, while for administrators a suitable goal could be that support cases are answered within a certain amount of time. These days there are excellent functions available for measuring performance within vital areas, and it is important to make the most of these possibilities.

When it comes to the actual procurement process for an intranet product and partner, it is important to examine costs and benefits throughout the solution's entire useful life, which is normally 5-7 years. Naturally it is important to choose a product that already satisfies all your basic needs at version 1, but it is even more important to know that the product can and will be further developed and managed throughout the intranet's entire lifetime. Furthermore, it is important that you understand how the product's roadmap appears and the possibilities that exist to contribute to the supplier's development of the roadmap over time.

It is also worth noting that there are many affordable alternatives available on today's market that involve the purchase of intranet and associated services (updates, installations, training, support and documentation) as a subscription. An intranet that gives neither its users nor its owners any headaches, and which can be purchased "on tap", can be an interesting alternative not least for organisations that have no desire to build up or expand their in-house resources within this area.

4. Top 10 recommendations regarding My Digital Workplace

Tomorrow's intranet, or My Digital Workplace, provides the user with an individualised and mobile "consolidated view" of different types of information, collaboration, social functions, self-service, presentation of data, cases and events in systems and portals as well as functions like email, online meetings and telephony. Below we have set out our top recommendations for how to succeed with tomorrow's intranet today.

Procurement	Project	Management
Choose a standard product that meets the basic areas of need.	Establish a good first version with delimited implementation project.	Focus on how the products should be used rather than rebuilding them.
Ensure the product's long-term viability and roadmap.	Focus on acceptance and implementation rather than customisation.	Base your management on the products' updates. Stay on top of and influence the roadmap.
Consider buying intranet "on tap".	Work "hands-on" in the implementation project.	Customise in accordance with recommendations from Microsoft. Identify business requirements hands-on.
		Regular follow-ups of the goals that have been set.

When it is time to initiate the procurement process for a product and partner for a new intranet, the following is of the utmost importance:

4.1 Procurement

Office 365 means that the intranet of the future, My Digital Workplace, is already within reach, without the need for the types of major investments that were necessary just 3-4 years ago. But in order to create a positive experience for users and thus increase the chances of having a well-used solution, it is necessary to also have a product that complements Office 365 and drives the actual intranet application.

It is important to consider the following in relation to procurement:

1. Select a standard product that, together with Office 365, satisfies the most important and fundamental areas of need.
2. Make sure that the product will be around throughout the solution's entire lifetime, and check that it has a roadmap that points in the desired direction.
3. Consider the option of buying your intranet "on tap" rather than owning the entire responsibility yourself.

4.2 Implementation project

We recommend that you create a good first version of the intranet based on Office 365 and a standard product like Omnia Intranet, in order to be able to carry out a timely and effective introduction and implementation of a solution that meets all your basic needs. The quickest and most cost-effective way to a good intranet is to base the solution on a standard product.

During the implementation project it is important to consider the following:

4. Establish a good first version of the solution based on the product you have chosen via a timely implementation project.
5. Invest resources in ensuring internal acceptance of the solution and the introduction of "best practice" for the product rather than gathering and specifying user requirements that involve customisation of the product.
6. Work "hands-on".

4.3 Management

Shift focus when it comes to management from in-house development to the implementation of the standard product's best practices. Focus should also be placed on influencing the product's roadmap and improving the cost-effectiveness of your own solution by posting suggestions aimed at improving the supplier's development of the product's roadmap.

An intranet is only effective if it is actually used, and the best results will be achieved when you move resources away from investments in system development of your own intranet and instead focus on the process of gaining internal acceptance of the solution and introducing it to users. The management of a new intranet should also be characterised by continual evaluation and follow-ups against the goals that have been set as well as the implementation of improvement measures as a result.

It is important to think long-term when procuring a standard product for intranet. In addition to the functions that are available today it is also very important to understand how the development of the product will continue during the years to come.

When it comes to the long-term management and further development of the solution, we recommend that you give particular consideration to the following:

7. Focus your management on spreading understanding of how the standard products should be used, rather than investing time and money in rebuilding the products. Base the management and further development of the solution on the products' updates.
8. Build an understanding of the products' roadmap and examine the possibilities that exist to influence the continued development of the products.

9. When the need to create customisations does arise, do so in accordance with recommendations from Microsoft. Gathering and specifying requirements from the business can now be done via a "hands-on" approach in the solution.
10. Regular evaluation and follow-ups should be a central part of the management process.

Tomorrow's intranet is already here, but in order to succeed a change of approach is required. Having previously focused on making major investments in the in-house development of its own solution, today's organisation must instead look to utilise standard products and ensure that they really are being used.

Best of luck with the planning, implementation and continual evaluation of your investment in My Digital Workplace!