

CHOOSE THE RIGHT INTRANET



A Practical Guide With 10 Important Themes
To Be Aware Of.

Summary

The world of work is changing rapidly – with hybrid work models, mobile employees, and growing demands on digital tools. The need for a unified digital platform is therefore greater than ever.

When choosing a new intranet, you should think broadly and look ahead. Technology is developing quickly, and employees' needs are evolving accordingly. It's wise to review multiple platforms early in the process to gain insight into the latest options.

Focus on the value the intranet should create – for both employees and the business. Think in scenarios and identify both functional and non-functional requirements. Use the 10 themes in this guide as a framework for your internal alignment process and in discussions with potential vendors.

Involve leadership early on, and review the vendor's finances and experience. It can be valuable to talk to other customers similar to yourselves to get a realistic sense of the platform's value and the vendor's support.

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Introduction

An intranet is a strategic investment intended to create value for the entire organisation and support employees in their daily work. A modern intranet can boost productivity, knowledge sharing, collaboration, and engagement – creating cohesion across departments and locations.

Defining the value of an intranet and selecting the right solution can be a complex process with many stakeholders involved.

This guide gathers a series of practical tips and questions to help you make a more informed choice.

Target Audience for the Guide

Primarily those in HR, Communications, IT, or leadership who have been tasked with analysing, evaluating, and selecting an intranet platform.



Hybrid Workplace

Many organisations ask themselves: How do we create meaningful communication and collaboration in a hybrid work environment?

Hybrid work is here to stay – and places new demands on the tools we use. The competition for talent is increasing, and the employee experience becomes a key factor for both retention and engagement.

It's about ensuring employees have the right tools to do their work effectively – no matter where they are – and that they feel part of the community.

DID YOU KNOW...

A study by Gallup shows that 24% of the global workforce is disengaged at work.

Digital Complexity

Many experience that their workday is characterized by multiple digital systems and increasing complexity. Where you could once ask a colleague at the coffee machine, it's now harder to get help when working remotely or on the go.

Especially employees in mobile roles – such as healthcare staff, tradespeople, or drivers – need simple, secure access to information and communication wherever they are.

A good intranet solution and collaboration platform provides clarity, simplifies the digital workday, and brings people together.

KEY POINTS:

- ✿ Hybrid work can challenge wellbeing and engagement
- ✿ Digital tools are more important than ever before
- ✿ More systems increase the need for overview and cohesion

Considerations

Purpose and Business Goals

Organisations are different, but there is often value in strengthening shared areas such as internal communication, knowledge sharing, cross-departmental collaboration, and better overview of digital tools.

The value of a new intranet can be mapped based on the challenges you face today. If implemented correctly and used actively, a modern intranet can improve both employee satisfaction and business outcomes – from higher productivity to better retention and engagement. With good preparation, the impact can even be measured and documented.

Here are some suggested themes and questions you can use:

Employee Engagement:

- ✿ Is employee wellbeing affected by physical separation?
- ✿ Do employees feel informed and included day to day?
- ✿ Can we strengthen the culture digitally?

Collaboration and Knowledge Sharing:

- ✿ Are we good enough at sharing knowledge and collaborating digitally?
- ✿ Do we need a different way of working together?

Internal Communication:

- ✿ Is internal communication sufficient, and is everyone included?
- ✿ Are relationships with 'remote' employees too loose?
- ✿ Are we relevant enough in our internal communications?

Onboarding and Retention:

- ✿ Should we strengthen onboarding and training for new employees?
- ✿ Is it too difficult and time-consuming to find files and information?
- ✿ Can we increase employee satisfaction and reduce turnover?

Productivity:

- ✿ Can we better support employees in completing tasks and projects?
- ✿ Are employees lacking an overview of the digital tools?



Systems and configuration options

Before you choose a new intranet platform, it's important to map the systems and tools you use today.

What are they used for, what value do they create, and should they be integrated with a new intranet?

There is no single intranet solution that fits all. Your digital workplace will always consist of multiple systems and tools that can be intelligently integrated via an intranet that matches your needs.

Broadly speaking, there are four paths to your next intranet:

1. Build your own solution from scratch with a CMS

Requires extensive specification and development effort but is no longer a widespread approach. Read more on page 14.

2. Build your intranet in SharePoint

A smaller solution might get by with branding adjustments and light configuration. External assistance is necessary for larger and more advanced solutions. Read more on page 15.

3. Choose a 'standard' intranet solution

There are several ready-made solutions that are very likely to include many of the features you need. Read more on page 16.

4. Choose a 'hybrid' intranet solution.

For example, use SharePoint as a document management system (DMS) with a 'standard' intranet solution layered on top as the user interface for employees. Read more on page 17.

Did You Know?

A study from Oxford Economics shows that engaged employees are twice as productive as less engaged ones.

Search broadly

Even though many have Microsoft 365 and therefore think “SharePoint first”, you should challenge that assumption.

For example:

- Do you have a large group of mobile employees? Then a strong mobile app is crucial.
- Do you have many systems that need to be brought together in a clear interface?
- Should the solution be simple to use and customise without heavy development projects?



Budget

Organisations behave differently. In some companies, management wants to see an analysis of the organisation's needs before even suggesting a budget, while others have a more or less fixed budget cap to stay within.

Understanding the budget and how much you have available for a new platform is important – also when it comes to negotiation and decision-making.

In any case, it is recommended that you at least have a rough idea of your budget. And to use a familiar analogy: you don't buy a Ferrari if you can only afford a Volkswagen. And speaking of that – do you even need a Ferrari?

The point is that you shouldn't go looking for a custom-built solution if you don't have the budget and resources for it.

KEY POINTS:

- ✿ Set goals for the intranet so you can better evaluate its value
- ✿ There are 4 configuration options with pros/cons
- ✿ Search broadly as technology evolves quickly
- ✿ The budget frames your choice of intranet type

Needs assessment

TASTE THE MARKET FIRST

If it's been a long time since you last looked for an intranet, or you just need an overview of what's available now, take the opportunity to get a couple of non-binding demos of different solutions on the market today. It may seem a bit spontaneous or unplanned not to have a long process and requirements list ready, but today's solutions are often so good that it can have great value for your team to get updated on what's possible first. It can also give you a more efficient process with a more dynamic approach.

STRATEGY AND PURPOSE

Of course, having an intranet strategy is important. You should always consider what value you want from the new solution and how it can support your business, as described on page 5 in the "Considerations" section.



What is your starting point?

The first intranet

The starting point for a strategy varies from organisation to organisation. If this is your first intranet, it can be useful to describe concrete use scenarios as a supplement to the requirements specification. For example, how the communications department reaches all employees – including those in the field or production – or how HR ensures structured onboarding across countries or promotes collaboration and knowledge sharing between departments.

Replacing the old solution

A classic requirements list is especially relevant for organisations with experience of intranets. They know their use scenarios and can define both non-negotiable requirements and areas with room for compromise. Functional requirements might include a mobile app, Teams integration or a good search function, while non-functional requirements relate to user-friendliness or the ability to brand with your visual identity. With a clear idea of your requirements, you can find the type of solution that suits you best.

Supplementing the existing intranet

Some organisations find that the current intranet no longer meets their needs but contains indispensable content and structure. Here you might consider supplementing with a new platform as a display layer on top. This can address new needs for communication and user-friendliness while preserving the content from the old intranet.

10 Themes for your Intranet Requirements List

Use this as a checklist and conversation tool in your process. Each section contains suggested questions and topics you should clarify – as well as why it matters.

1. Usability and visual quality

A good intranet experience should feel simple and intuitive. Consider:

- Is the design modern, easy to navigate and adapted to your branding? Can colours, logo and layout be easily customised without development?
- Do users get a clear experience on both desktop and mobile devices?
- Are notifications clear and help keep everyone updated?
- Can all employees easily find colleagues, groups and relevant documents?

TIP: Look for solutions with a “no-code” editor with widgets so you can easily build your own pages and customise continuously.

2. Mobility and accessibility

Employees don't just work at desks. Consider:

- Is there a dedicated mobile app with access to news, documents and tasks?
- Is the experience on smartphones/tablets fully functional and engaging?
- Does the solution support push notifications?
- Can branding and design also be customised on mobile?

Colibo offers both a mobile app and an info-screen module – valuable for frontline employees without a fixed PC.

3. Internal communication

An intranet should be the central tool for communication. Check:

- Can you create and target news to specific audiences?
- Does the platform support multiple languages – including automatic translation?
- Can you manage content lifecycle (scheduling, expiry)?
- Is there the option to show content on info screens in offices or production floors?

Look for news segmentation, personalised feeds and publishing scheduling – all of which Colibo offers as standard.

4. Engagement and employee relations

Create a culture where everyone can contribute. Consider:

- Can employees comment, like, or share content?
- Are there workgroups, forums, or blogs for cross-team collaboration?
- Does the platform support surveys or questionnaires to “take the temperature” of the organisation?
- Are there features that promote inclusion and social interaction?

Colibo, for example, has groups, chat, surveys, and an onboarding tool.

5. Search and knowledge sharing

Search is essential as content grows. Check:

- Is the search function powerful and filterable – including advanced results?
- Can administrators highlight important results?
- Does it support “people search” with profiles and contact information?
- Can users give feedback on search results?

Colibo's enterprise search can search across internal and external sources.

6. Administrator experience

It should be easy to manage the intranet. Consider:

- Is there a simple and visual admin interface?
- Can content and pages be built without technical skills?
- Are translations and multilingual versions supported?
- Can user permissions be easily managed?

No-code editor, role-based access, and widget library simplify the work.

7. Data and analytics

To continuously improve the intranet you need data. Check:

- What reports and dashboards are available?
- Can you measure engagement, traffic, and popular posts?
- Is it possible to analyse search behaviour – e.g. both hits and “no-results”?
- Are A/B testing or other optimisation tools supported?

Colibo offers statistics on usage, content, and searches per department.

8. Integrations

An intranet should bring your digital tools together. Consider:

- Are there out-of-the-box integrations for e.g. Microsoft 365 or Google Workspace?
- How are documents from SharePoint or Google Drive handled?
- Can you integrate with MS Teams (chat, meetings, document sharing)?
- Is there a marketplace with integrations for e.g. Plan2learn or Salesforce?
- Does the platform support single sign-on?

Colibo has strong integrations with Microsoft 365, SSO, and an open API.

9. Implementation and “time-to-value”

Time and complexity of implementation are important factors. Ask about:

- What is the typical implementation time – from kickoff to go-live?
- What steps are included in the project plan?
- How are tasks and responsibilities divided between vendor and customer?
- Is there support or Customer Success throughout?

Colibo offers structured onboarding and is known for quick implementation.

10. Customisation and branding

Even if you’re not building from scratch, the platform should feel like yours.

Consider:

- How easy is it to customise logo, colours, and visual style?
- Can users choose their own favourites and shortcuts?
- What options do admins have to tailor the user experience?

Colibo offers no-code customisation with widgets and branding without developers.

KEY POINTS:

- ✿ Take the plunge and get a couple of demos early in the process
- ✿ Think about scenarios as well as functional and non-functional requirements
- ✿ Use the 10 themes to qualify scenarios and requirements

And don't forget

Scalability

Think about how the platform can keep up with your organisation's growth – both up and down. If you grow and get many new employees, the system should handle quick creation and changes of user rights. Conversely, it should be easy to adapt during restructuring or staff reductions.

Ask about how the platform handles changes in, for example, Active Directory (AD), and whether it supports automatic updates of roles and access.

GDPR and data security

The EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) is highly relevant for your intranet. Even if the platform itself does not process personal data, the vendor must be able to document high security, transparency, and responsible data handling. Typically, there are three hosting models:

1. Locally (on-premise) in your own server environment
2. In the cloud with an Azure Cloud solution located within the EU
3. In the cloud via the intranet provider within the EU

Your choice should depend on the need for security, control, and internal IT resources. Remember to discuss both technical and legal requirements with potential vendors.

Onboarding – help, training, and support

The foundation for a successful intranet is including user onboarding in your implementation planning. When introducing something as important as an intranet, it is crucial that the vendor has the knowledge and resources to ensure you get the expected value from it.

Ask about the vendor's customer support and service – since the intranet will likely be a tool for all employees in your company, there is a good chance you will at some point experience downtime or something not working as it should.

Check the vendor's customer service and support thoroughly. How can you reach them? How many levels of support are offered?

THE INTRANET LANDSCAPE

There are several paths to a new intranet. Broadly speaking, you can choose to develop a solution yourself or buy a ready-made product. Either way, it's about knowing your needs and priorities.

1. Build yourself – based on a CMS

Although it's becoming less common, some organisations still choose to build their intranet from scratch. However, this often requires detailed specifications, tight project management, and can take 6–24 months from idea to launch.

Flexibility and ambition

The advantage is full control. If you have a specific vision or special requirements, an in-house developed solution may be the only way. Many intranet products actually began as internal projects.

Costs

For large organisations, licensing costs for standard products can seem high – especially with many frontline employees. If you already have a CMS with relevant licences, it may be cheaper to build on that.

Customisation

In-house developed solutions can be very flexible – but they require ongoing resources to maintain and develop. You also risk longer wait times for new features or updates to be implemented.



2. Build with – a SharePoint-based intranet

Many choose Microsoft SharePoint as the foundation – either in its standard form or with an intranet product layered on top.

Development needs

Although SharePoint offers a lot out-of-the-box, it still requires resources. A simple setup can be handled internally, while complex needs typically require external help.



Benefit for IT

Consolidating solutions with a few vendors gives the IT department peace of mind and makes it easier to leverage existing Microsoft partners.

You might already have it

If you have Microsoft 365 licences, you already have access to many SharePoint features at no additional licensing cost – depending on licence type.

Easy to get started

SharePoint provides a user-friendly web interface, especially for simple sites or hubs with a uniform structure.

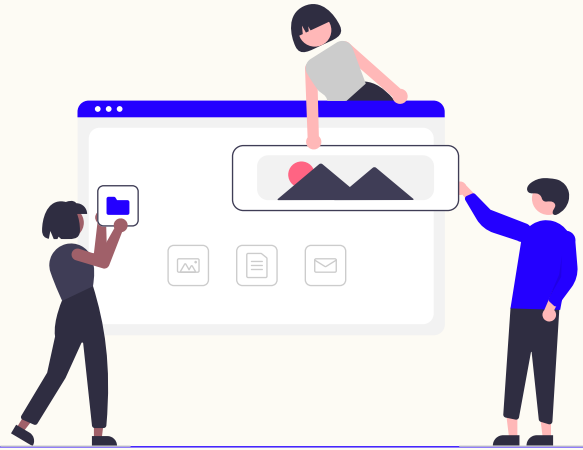
Integrated search

A major advantage is that all content stays in Microsoft 365 – search works across Teams, documents, and the intranet without extra integration.

Microsoft 365 integration

If you want to take full advantage of the Microsoft ecosystem – Teams, Power Platform, etc. – SharePoint is a natural part of a unified digital workplace.

3. Buy a standard product (a SharePoint-independent intranet)



The market for ready-made intranet solutions has matured significantly. Today you can buy advanced standard products with communication, collaboration, and productivity features that previously could only be developed in-house.

Flexible design

Most offer good options for customising the user interface and content, so employees experience relevance and familiarity.

Costs

You avoid large development projects and expensive consultancy hours. Improvements and updates are typically included in the licence.

Ease of use

Standard products are often easier to manage and maintain, with simple configuration and intuitive administration.

Integrations

Most offer integration with Microsoft 365, and are often open to third-party systems via APIs and widgets.

Fast rollout

A standard product can typically be implemented within weeks, given a clear process and a dedicated project team.

Mobile app

Many solutions offer strong mobile support, which is important for employees without a fixed office workspace. An app for iOS and Android is now standard.

4. Combine the best of both worlds

Many organisations today choose a hybrid approach. If you already use SharePoint for document management, you can layer a standardised, user-friendly intranet on top.

This provides a strong backend in SharePoint with a modern, customised frontend, making the intranet more accessible and relevant for all employees. It can often be implemented relatively quickly and gives you access to knowledge-sharing in existing user communities.

KEY POINTS:

- ✿ Build your own if you have the resources and a strong need for customisation.
- ✿ Buy a standard solution if you need a fast rollout, low maintenance, and a manageable budget.
- ✿ Combine platforms if you have a specific need to preserve old content but want the benefits of a standard solution.



The Process

We've already covered strategy, needs, and the intranet landscape. Many choose a classic approach with analyses, descriptions, and requirements specifications – a process that is often heavy and time-consuming. Meanwhile, technology advances so quickly that you may not even know all the possibilities.

Try it first

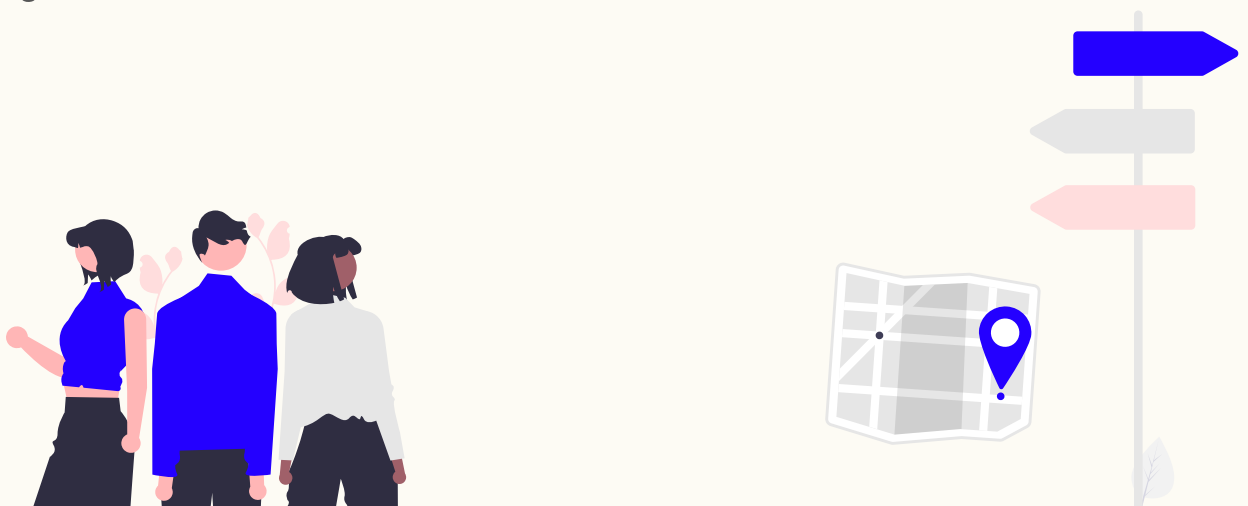
We recommend kick-starting the process with live demos of a few relevant platforms. This way, the team quickly gets up to speed on the options and can adjust expectations from the start.

After the initial phase, you should at minimum get a live demonstration tailored to your own use scenarios. A testable “demo site” is the next step and gives users a more tangible sense of the solution. For organisations with complex needs, a dedicated proof-of-concept may be relevant.

Your final choice does not have to be the platform with the highest general score – but the one that solves your most important scenarios best and offers the right balance of price, flexibility, and support.

Get management on board

Management buy-in is crucial. It ensures commitment at the decision-making level and creates understanding of why an upgrade is needed. Thorough preparation provides a clear evaluation of which solution is best for you – a decision basis that management can act on.





Choosing a supplier

The relationship with the supplier is important. For some, local presence is an advantage, but it shouldn't be the only criterion. Others place more emphasis on the platform's features and development direction.

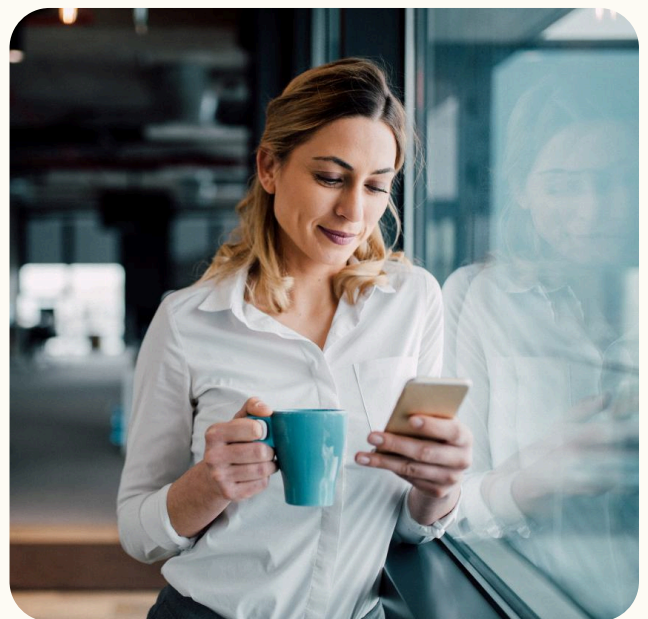
In dialogue with the supplier, it may be relevant to ask about:

- The company's background
- The opportunity to speak with current customers
- How updates and support are handled
- The length of their customer relationships

References

Few would hire a manager without references – the same goes for an intranet. Unknown platforms can be a risk, so experiences from other customers are important. Check online reviews, industry commentary, and speak with customers similar to you.

Ask the provider for specific references so you can get a realistic assessment of the platform's strengths in a similar context.



KEY POINTS:

- ❁ Choose a dynamic approach: test 1–2 platforms early
- ❁ Involve management from the start and maintain close dialogue
- ❁ Use other customers as references before signing a contract

Summary

Hybrid workplaces

The job market is changing quickly, with greater distance between employees and increased complexity in digital tools. This makes the need for a unified platform even more important.

Look broadly

Consider what value you want from your intranet, how it should support your processes, and integrate with other tools. Be open to possibilities – technology is constantly evolving. Evaluate whether a standard solution meets your needs, or if you want to build your own. Remember to consider the budget.

Try, analyse, and prioritise

Choose a dynamic approach. Start with a couple of demos to keep the team updated on the market. Think in scenarios and get an overview of both functional and non-functional requirements. Use these insights to qualify your needs when talking to potential suppliers. That will prepare you well for the dialogue with vendors.

Use references

Involve management early and ensure ongoing dialogue. Don't hesitate to talk with other customers similar to you to gain insight into their experiences.

About Colibo

Colibo is a modern intranet platform designed for complex organisations that need strong internal communication, collaboration, and knowledge sharing – across departments, locations, and languages. With an intuitive user interface, flexible integrations, and mobile access, Colibo supports both the hybrid workplace and employees' daily tasks. We help you create an intranet that actually gets used – and that delivers value from day one.

See for yourself what Colibo can do:

[**BOOK DEMO**](#)