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ready-to-use NEWS

Your intranet: Make it ‘Grand Central’ for everyone

Is the intranet still on your radar? This internal web platform should be. Intranets can be your information hub for everyone, from principals and board members to support staff. In one or two clicks, they keep everyone in the loop — and help them become your ambassadors with the public. Staff get secure login codes, you save time and money by avoiding paper, and in some cases, staff meetings. Reinforce the site as their “go to” location at staff meetings and huddles.

The bottom line is that everyone gets the *same* accurate message as *quickly* as they want it.

Useful tips

Content must be relevant. This is an information and resource page. In addition to the essentials (HR policies, emergency plans, training resources, phone/email lists), you should base content on what your staff want. To learn what that is, use focus groups or surveys to define your content and check in regularly to stay on course.

Content should support your mission, while sounding personal and informal. Consider making priority topics most prominent. Remember the reading route that viewers normally take: the upper left corner is where readers typically start to scan, unless you have a compelling visual.

Define the information they need (and want):

- Upcoming events and schedules
- Training opportunities
- School board updates
- Links to departments, like HR for benefits and salaries
- Links to each school website/social media pages
- Forms to download, including how to nominate co-workers for awards
- Links to off-site resources and “job alike” associations
- Internal job postings
- Consider your own “classified ad” section where staff can sell/donate items (but clear the idea with legal dept.)
- “Kudos” section to honor and thank employees
- Don’t forget the search box!

The hospital where I work has key sections under colorful banners, all based on researching what our staff values most with one main news section called “Daily Dose” that’s updated almost daily.

Keep it current. Regular updates and purging are critical. Stale content gives the impression you don’t care; that you’re unreliable. During a crisis, this is the best way to reach everyone

(Over)

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instantly with the same message to prevent misinformation, provided you also use social media and emails, driving staff to “the source” of what’s really going on.

Invite tough questions. The most popular section of my hospital’s intranet where I work in internal communications is called “Rumor Has It.” Anyone can ask almost anything — and we answer! Transparency builds trust — and trust can stop rumors or “fake news” in its tracks.

Ownership and schedules are critical. Identify content owners and create an accountability structure (e.g. check-in meetings, which can be virtual). Make this group responsible to review “click rates” to guide changes. If you have the budget for a PR staff, it could be someone’s part-time job, working with the tech team (or person) who can track usage. Create a master calendar of key events and plug them into a task list; make that part of your regular check-ins so you don’t miss something.

Stay flexible. If something isn’t getting many clicks or seems useless, don’t keep it just because someone thought it was a good idea. “That’s the way we’ve always done things” doesn’t fly here.

Use engaging visuals. You know photos draw eyes (and clicks), so take advantage of that. Student-generated art, action photos, or even just including staff photos with content written by staff will draw more readers. Short videos are great “click-bait” and can be done by almost anyone (get permission, or make sure parent permission on file as part of student registration).

Show you care. Consider a “community matters” section where staff is featured helping the community beyond the classroom. Got any Habitat for Humanity, food bank, humane society, or senior citizen service volunteers? Brag about them.

The biggest benefit of a lively, engaging intranet is that everyone will feel part of a team focused on the same vision. If your public-facing website shows how great you are, it won’t matter unless the internal work is done first, which means happy, informed and inspired staff who share your message everywhere from parent nights to the grocery store.

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