

IGLOO

A Next-Generation Intranet: The Secret to an Award-Winning Employee Experience

An HR Guide to Digital Transformation

The bottom half of the page features a large, abstract graphic composed of several overlapping circles and organic shapes in various shades of green, creating a modern, layered effect.

Work has changed

The concept of work has drastically changed over the last 20 years. The new digital era ushered in a world of possibilities in terms of innovation, automation, and the speed at which companies could do business. But the way we work has not kept pace. And now we're faced with a whole new set of challenges – related to communication, collaboration, knowledge management, and culture and engagement – that require our immediate attention.

Layered on top of these challenges are four trends that are disrupting the workplace as we once knew it:

The Remote Workforce

Today's workforce is becoming more and more distributed. Employees work in different offices, locations, and time zones – which can result in communication breakdowns and a watered-down, disparate culture. The challenge for dispersed organizations will be finding digital tools that help them replicate a traditional office environment, while capitalizing on the benefits of remote work.

The Generation Gap

The majority of today's workforce is comprised of two generations that entered the workforce during two very different times. The way Generation X and Millennials process information and the rules they each align to can cause friction. And with a widening gap in digital fluency, there's an urgent need to find solutions that drive productivity – no matter what attitudes and abilities are at play.

To avoid falling behind, organizations must acknowledge these workplace realities and leverage digital workplace technology solutions to combat them.

Bring Your Own App (BYOA)

More and more, employees are using their preferred tools and applications to communicate and collaborate at work. Why? Because they're fast and familiar, and don't require IT involvement. But accommodating for every employee's app of choice can not only lead to poor knowledge-sharing practices across the organization, it can have serious implications for corporate security.

The Talent Wars

People no longer stay at companies for life. If organizations don't devote significant resources to attracting, developing, and retaining talent, employees will come and go at their leisure. Organizations need communication and culture-building tools that create a sense of purpose, pride, and belonging – to hold on to high performers and keep HR budgets at bay.

HR: A strategic partner in digital workplace transformation

These workplace trends and challenges are putting human resources departments under increasing pressure. At the top of the agenda: shaping an award-worthy employee experience that retains top talent, drives business results, and prepares the organization for the future.

With technology as a key enabler in the employee experience, HR leaders must have a seat at the table when it comes to choosing digital workplace solutions. Any new solution should serve the interests of both the organization and the employee base, with improved productivity and engagement as the overarching goals.

How a next-generation intranet can help

A next-generation intranet is a powerful tool that can be leveraged to achieve these goals. From onboarding, to learning and development, to recognition and promotion announcements – all employee-focused programs and news are accessible via one organization-wide platform.

With features and solutions built for people-focused organizations, a next-generation intranet can help you achieve the following objectives, and more:

- Improve employee morale and engagement
- Inform employees of the company vision and objectives
- Shape and celebrate company culture
- Onboard employees effectively
- Provide self-service access to HR information
- Motivate and recognize employees
- Establish a strong employer brand and retain top talent
- Connect and engage a remote workforce

In this guide, we'll explore some of the top HR challenges and provide a variety of technology-enabled solutions that can help you address them. You'll also find six things to look for when evaluating intranet solutions and a set of KPIs to help you measure success.



88% of chief HR officers say they need to invest in at least three or more new technologies over the next two years.

– Gartner Group

Communications

An informed employee is more likely to be an aligned and engaged employee. Yet the average knowledge worker spends almost 20% of their workweek searching for and gathering internal information. When staying informed is a slog, frustration – not engagement – is the outcome.

In a poll of 1,000 American employees, 91% said subpar communication reflects negatively on executives. And a global survey of workplace communication professional found poor communication impacts the ability of employees to understand company vision, financial performance, short-term business plans, and long-term strategy.

All of these items are critical to employee performance and engagement. When executives communicate directly with employees and invite their direct feedback, it builds **trust and loyalty**.

Go beyond standard leadership bios and annual employee surveys to create a **leadership center**, a dedicated space for leadership communications. Showcase everything your leaders are doing and saying – from media appearances and social media activity to blogs and dedicated internal notes for employees. Then make sure there’s a way for employees to ask questions and leave comments.

A **virtual town hall** is another way to bridge the gap between employees and the senior leadership team. By creating a digital home for town hall content and feedback, you can ensure that no one misses out and everyone has a say.

Employee recognition

In the age of the empowered employee, recognition programs matter more than ever. But the old approaches don’t work, and the stakes are high.

The new generation of workers has an even greater need for performance feedback. 60% of Generation Z employees say they want multiple check-ins from their supervisor during the week, and two-thirds of them say they would leave their job if they didn’t **receive feedback** at least every few weeks. It can be brief, but it should be regular, prompt, and visible to the whole workforce.

A Gallup poll found that employees who feel adequately recognized are half as likely to resign in the coming year. Yet only 30% of U.S. employees strongly agree that they’ve received recognition or praise for doing good work in the last week.

An intranet is the ideal spot for shining a light on employee effort and success. A **recognition center** is an all-in-one solution for managing every part of your recognition program. You can integrate kudos in company-wide communications, give people an easy way to nominate their peers, showcase promotions, and integrate with existing tools.



72% of employees ranked recognition as having the greatest impact on engagement.

– Achievers

● Challenge:

With over 50,000 employees across 30 facilities in seven countries, this apparel manufacturer outgrew its outdated intranet. They needed a better way to manage company-wide communications.

● Solution:

Gildan created a central communication hub for company news, events, policies, and resources – called *GildanConnect*. They built in translation features so content could be delivered in three languages, integrated their digital training software, and implemented a Recognition Center and Professional Development Center.

“94% of respondents said they felt more informed about what’s going on with Gildan’s global news and operations because of *GildanConnect*.”

Lucas Sellyn

Business Analyst for Global Web & eCommerce, Gildan

Onboarding

Many organizations have developed – or overhauled – onboarding programs in response to the overheated labor market, but the majority are still falling short of employee expectations. A recent study by Gallup found that only 12% of employees strongly agree that their company does a great job onboarding new hires.

When onboarding falters, productivity suffers and turnover increases. Losing new hires in the first couple of years is expensive – costing an organization up to 3X an employee’s salary – prompting a growing number of enterprises to invest in employee onboarding solutions.

Onboarding programs should extend beyond an employee’s first day or week. A study by HCI found employers who stopped onboarding after just a week left new hires short on resources, discouraged, and confused. To ensure employees feel supported during this critical stage of their lifecycle,

your onboarding program should guide them through their first **30, 60, and 90 days**.

You can take it one step further by developing department-specific onboarding. Help employees get up to speed on team objectives, tools, and processes while getting to know their new co-workers in a more intimate setting.

With an online **onboarding center**, this is all possible. You have everything you need to prepare people for success in one place, from a welcome center and essential company information to FAQs and training resources. It’s a positive, memorable way to root the employee experience, and a cost-effective method to accelerate the productivity of new recruits.

Self-service HR

How much time does your team spend dealing with administrative tasks and repeatedly answering the same employee questions? How much time do employees spend tracking down HR policies on vacations, training, benefits, and more? Likely far too much.

A survey by G&A Partners found that more than 70% of HR time is spent on administrative or operational tasks, which doesn’t leave much time for more meaningful, strategic initiatives.

A next-generation intranet allows you to centralize critical HR information in a single, easy-to-access digital destination. By helping people to help themselves, it reduces the administrative burden on your team while providing an efficient and seamless experience for employees.

By creating **self-serve portals** that satisfy a majority of employee queries, you can reduce costs by focusing HR resources on truly complex cases or niche questions.

A digital **employee handbook** is one way to store and share workplace policies and guidelines on your intranet. In order to be effective, it must be interactive, searchable, easy to navigate, and contain up-to-date content featuring read-tracking capabilities.

And in industries where compliance is a top priority – such as finance, legal, and healthcare – an online **governance center** can be the single source of information for all policies, procedures, and documents related to regulatory requirements. Broadcast updates and enable read tracking and commenting to ensure everyone knows how they can help mitigate risk and meet compliance requirements.



“Our new hires now complete their onboarding faster, and they feel confident and empowered. I’m hardly fielding any questions – which is a huge change from our old system.”

Asher Primrose
HR Director, Allied Health Media

- **Challenge:** This growing continuing education provider was using a standalone HR onboarding system, but it required employees to jump from platform to platform to find information and complete their onboarding tasks.
- **Solution:** They implemented a New Hire Zone as part of their intranet that includes checklists for their first week, month, and beyond; a digital employee handbook; important links and forms; key contacts for questions; and an FAQ section.

Culture

A healthy culture nurtures engagement in all kinds of employees, but especially in the largest generation in today's workforce. Millennials now make up 35% of workers, and they place a high value on culture.

A Deloitte study found 57% of millennials rated culture as very important in choosing a position, just ahead of financial rewards at 51%. And according to LinkedIn, 70% of professionals would turn down a position at a leading company if they thought the culture was lacking.

So how do you create a culture that **attracts and retains top talent?** It's not enough to offer perks like free lunches or ping pong tables. Employees need to feel a sense of belonging and purpose. They need to be personally invested in the success of the company and empowered to build relationships with their co-workers. That's the type of culture that keeps people engaged.

An interactive **feedback center** on your next-generation intranet gives employees an open forum to share their ideas and opinions with the leadership team. You can invite employees to weigh in on products and services, processes, facilities, or any other company happenings that affect them. Asking for input not only gives employees a voice, it can also lead to improvements that the leadership team may not have discovered on their own.

A strong culture is a connected one. Which is why it's imperative for employees to be able to form personal relationships with their co-workers, regardless of location. A **social center** on your company intranet gives employees a chance to get to know each other outside the context of work. Share information about company events, contests, holidays, and clubs, then invite employees to leave their comments on the social newsfeed.

Remote work

By 2020, half of all workers will work remotely most of the time. Flexibility is a leading consideration for job-seekers, including the 50% of millennials who say it's "very important" when choosing where to work.

Not having to get into the office every day has economic, health, and lifestyle advantages for employees, and it can save money for organizations.

But there's a downside. Remote workers struggle with loneliness and a lack of community, which can lead to burnout, low engagement, and decreased productivity. More than half of remote workers in a recent survey said they missed out on important information and/or were excluded from meetings because they weren't on site.

A next-generation intranet brings all employees together in a **central digital destination** where they can collaborate, socialize, and easily find the information – and people – they need to do their best work.

By incorporating a comprehensive **company directory** that supports robust employee profiles, you can enable remote workers to get acquainted with their colleagues, learn about changes in the org chart, and search for specific expertise. It also supports more informed HR planning and decision-making by providing a quick visualization of the company structure – including any gaps or redundancies.

And a **mobile app** gives remote employees a direct line into HQ – so they can virtually connect, collaborate, and contribute, while balancing their work and personal responsibilities.

● Challenge:

This global nonprofit organization had outgrown its previous intranet. It needed to do more than store content. With 1,100 employees (800 who work remotely), they needed one place for employees to have conversations with each other – and leadership.

● Solution:

To achieve their goal of creating an inclusive and open culture, they created an online Think Tank for employees to share ideas, dialogue, give advice, listen, and learn from one another. They also set up a social space called "The Buzz" where employees can post quick, fun notes to each other.



“We want to provide each person the best possible service by equipping and empowering them with the information they need while fostering online and in-person connections. We are in a better position now to tackle our biggest challenges.”

Chelsey Louzeiro

Global Communications Senior Specialist, Heifer International

6 signs of a successful intranet in the making

Choosing the right technology is the first step

Your intranet platform should offer solutions to your organizational and departmental challenges. But if it doesn't check off these **must-have features and capabilities**, you'll struggle to get buy-in from employees, IT, and your leadership team.

1. Easy to use

The most successful intranets are built with the user experience in mind. The user interface should be simple, familiar, and intuitive so there are no unnecessary barriers to engagement. Unlike intranets of the past that relied on internal network access, today's intranets should be accessible from any browser, on any device so employees can easily log on from wherever they are.

2. Easy to manage

Your IT team is already juggling competing projects with limited resources. That's why your intranet must be easy to manage and configure (even for the most non-technical person) with an intuitive **drag-and-drop interface** and user-friendly publishing tools. It should also sync with your Active Directory and support Single Sign-on (SSO) to enable easy access.

3. Cost effective

Not surprisingly, any significant technology investments are scrutinized by leadership and budget holders. That doesn't mean you should opt for the cheapest solution. Instead, you should be prepared to present the cost of poor communication, collaboration, knowledge management practices – and be able to compare that to the value your intranet brings. Plus, if you can replace, remove, or integrate with other tools, there are additional cost savings to be found.

4. Secure

As with any other tools or systems in your organization, your intranet must offer security features that ensure your employee and customer data is protected. A next-generation intranet is hosted in a secure cloud environment, such as Microsoft Azure, and content is delivered securely via the web browser. It should be able to undergo the most stringent of tests and audits and meet all compliance requirements.

5. Scalable

A successful intranet should grow with your business. Whether you're tackling a new business challenge or expanding to other departments or new user groups, such as customers, partners, or franchises, it should be easy to extend it beyond its original purpose. And year after year, it should continue to evolve into a digital destination for connecting your business – inside and out.

6. Integrates with other tools

A next-generation intranet integrates with many of the tools and apps your employees use, including Human Resources Information Systems (**HRIS**). By using your intranet as the starting point, you can add context – in the form of conversations, FAQs, and announcements – to information stored in learning management systems, time-tracking systems, rewards and recognition platforms, organizational chart software, and more. They're all right there, as part of a unified digital workplace experience.



How to show the value of your intranet

It's no secret: digital workplace tools require an investment and buy-in. But any organization-wide tool that satisfies a variety of needs across multiple departments inevitably will.

The key is justifying the cost in terms of the value it brings to your organization. Will it save you time, money, or resources? Will it improve culture, productivity, and engagement – and maximize your existing technology investments? Without these answers, it will be nearly impossible to build a business case.

Start by assessing your current landscape – with existing tools and processes – and use concrete data points to demonstrate productivity issues and engagement levels in your organization. If this information isn't readily available, that may be a good sign that you don't have an effective measurement model in place. And that alone should be cause for concern for your leadership team.

You can use this information to build your business case, and eventually to create **KPIs** (key performance indicators) that will help you track progress and demonstrate return on investment (ROI) once your new tool is launched.

Alongside your benchmarks, you should also establish a set of objectives to ensure your new tool is delivering incremental business value over time. We call this **ROO** (or return-on-objectives) and it typically relates to the business challenge you set out to address in the first place.

Example Intranet KPIs

- Active users
- Content downloads
- Social interactions (e.g. likes, comments, ratings)
- Page views
- Subscriptions and followers
- Frequency of new articles or content
- Activity by team or department
- Requests or questions submitted
- Mobile app users

Example Intranet Objectives

- Keep employees informed and engaged
- Improve leadership communication
- Enhance collaboration
- Increase organizational intelligence
- Increase productivity
- Streamline processes
- Reduce email traffic
- Adopt a self-service culture

Planning for change

The challenges we've discussed in this guide are not new to your agenda. And the stats should not surprise you. Our intent was to paint a picture of the current digital workplace landscape alongside technology solutions that can help you navigate it.

The **employee experience** is leap-frogging the list of business priorities because an engaged workforce is a productive one, and a productive organization is a profitable one. And as a dual advocate for employees and leadership, HR leaders are in the best position to create positive change.


But this transformation isn't possible without first establishing the need – backed by data and insights – then choosing the best tools and technology to help you reach your goals.

A **next-generation intranet** can help you improve the full employee experience which encompasses communication, collaboration, knowledge management, and culture and engagement – across the board. By championing a tool that can drastically improve the way you do business, you'll be setting your employees and your organization up for long-term success.

Ready to take the next step?

Book a demo to see a next-generation intranet in action. Or learn more at igloosoftware.com/HR.





Igloo is a leading provider of digital workplace solutions, helping companies move beyond traditional intranets to inspiring digital destinations that improve communication, knowledge sharing, collaboration, and culture. All Igloo solutions are 100% cloud-based, mobile-enabled, and integrate with leading enterprise and cloud apps.

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