

eBook



History of Intranet.

Introduction

In today's fast-paced and ever-changing world, technology is constantly evolving at a rapid pace. Let us take a moment to remember the first cellular phone – bigger and heavier than a house phone and with a singular function: to call someone. Compare it to today's smartphone devices, with a variety of different features and functions; actually being able to phone somebody has become the least important feature in a phone these days. Intranet software is no different, it has come a long way in the last 20 years and the basic functionality of an intranet has become less important than the bells and whistles. Let's take a look at the history and evolution of the intranet by starting at the beginning.

The World Wide Web & Information Sharing

Before intranets came to be, employees traditionally shared information manually, through physically exchanging documents, phone conversations, and face-to-face meetings. As companies began to adopt computer networks, sharing information saw a shift towards digital communication and employees began using email and shared folders to accomplish the same tasks more efficiently.

Eventually, companies embraced the World Wide Web, which enabled them to host webpages internally, allowing information to be distributed much more rapidly and easily than ever before. This changed information sharing among organizations forever.

The Intranet Was Born

There is much debate and discussion around who created the first intranet, how the term “intranet” was coined. What is obvious and undebated is first intranets were simple, static websites that allowed employees to access information in a central location supported by nothing more than a web browser. The general purpose for these first intranets was primarily to increase employee productivity.

Then in 1996, Frontier Technologies introduced a product that would revolutionize the intranet software industry, named Intranet Genie. Intranet Genie was a bundle of applications designed to facilitate communication with document sharing, employee discussions, electronic messaging, and more.

Since the introduction of Intranet Genie, over the last two decades, several other intranet products have been introduced to the market with the goal of providing similar services to organizations. Intranet features began slowly evolving with the introduction of new key communication tools, such as:
Corporate News and Employee Directory.

While Intranet Genie appeared to be the first product named after the relatively new term, “intranet”, during this time the name “intranet” became synonymous with content served via web server and consumed via browser, rather than for a suite of applications, which was really what Intranet Genie provided.

Evolution to Web Portals

The Intranet Genie was very different from the intranet products of today, in fact it wasn't even a website, but rather a client-server application that consisted of both server software as well as a collection of software components installed on each client computer. These client applications allowed users to share documents, participate in online discussions, and to exchange secure email. The popularity of the World Wide Web spurred a major change in how intranet software was used by companies. Intranets evolved to operate as web portals, which greatly simplified their installation and management, since the only client software required was a common web browser. In 1999, IC, one of the first web-based intranet software products to come to market, was born. The evolution from client-server to web-based solution reduced the cost of both development and implementation of intranet products, which solidified the success of intranets in the market-place for years to come.

The Intranet Joins Web 2.0

Over the next six years, websites continued to evolve and shift towards a more interactive style. In 2005, Tim O'Reilly, Founder and CEO of O'Reilly Media, called these new types of websites "Web 2.0".

Although Web 2.0 was mainly a buzzword, it symbolized a change in websites that were primarily designed around the retrieval of information to websites that allowed users to create, store and retrieve content all in a single location.

Soon after, intranets followed suit with functionality that would allow users to build webpages and create customized forms, ultimately providing users with a more interactive experience. As a result, companies, departments, and individual users were able to add content specific to their needs. IC integrated key Web 2.0 style features during this time as well, such as dynamic forms, online tests, and online surveys, as well as the ability to create custom sub-sites and HTML pages on the fly that position it as an industry leader in this area.

The Modern Intranet

Over the past two decades, intranet software has come a long way. From client-server platforms consisting of multiple heavyweight applications, to fully interactive lightweight web portals built around customizability and social features.

Modern intranets now provides functionality that increases employee engagement, employee retention, collaboration, internal communication, and employee productivity. It allows employees to work more effectively and efficiently by allowing them to easily communicate and share information in a simple, intuitive way.

The modern intranet ensures time is not wasted searching for important information and complex business processes and workflows are always followed correctly. The intranet has become a tool to promote corporate culture and has the ability to align with the company's brand and image.

Regardless of the industry, modern intranet software has evolved and continues to evolve to the point where it can provide a benefit to any organization in any industry.

The Mature Intranet

The intranet has certainly evolved since the dawn of a few simple static webpages. With the addition of intranet applications, the intranet took on a vital role in organizations, which it still plays today. A huge shift in accessibility of intranets was made with the introduction of web-based intranet software, turning intranets into web portals.

Then as intranets joined the Web 2.0 revolution, key productivity tools were integrated into the platform, such as online forms, automated workflows, HTML-pages, sub-sites, and much more. As the social media craze traveled worldwide, it also hit the world of intranets with instant communication and social functionality.

Finally, today intranets have evolved to lightweight, comprehensive portals that serve a myriad of purposes for companies and their employees. Today's intranets have become extremely versatile and in some cases uniquely tailored to a specific industry, such as Financial or Healthcare. The usefulness of an intranet today knows no bounds. How will intranets evolve in the next few years? We will have to wait and see.



Your Employee Intranet

Your employee intranet is a powerful tool that can improve processes and productivity within your financial organization. Not only does your intranet engage and involve users, promoting your culture and company values along the way, it gives your employees the tools they need to perform their jobs efficiently.

At IC, we've built these ten intranet best practices into our employee intranet software to ensure the needs of your organization are met. To see if our intranet solution is right for you or to learn more, book a no-obligation call with one of our team members.

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