CREATING AN EXCEPTIONAL RETAIL INTRANET: **YOUR EMPLOYEES ARE THE NEW CUSTOMERS**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

WHY YOUR EMPLOYEES ARE THE NEW CUSTOMERS

All organisations need to be adaptable and modern in order to be competitive in the market place and this has always been particularly crucial within the retail sector. With brand perception and customer experiences, both in-store and digitally, making or breaking retailers, it's vital this industry equips itself with the necessary innovative tools to keep ahead of the competition.

CONSUMERS HOLD THE REINS

The old adage 'the customer is always right' is today's digital mantra. It lies at the heart of innovative e-commerce that places as much emphasis on the consumer experience as it does on the purchase transaction itself. Consumers now have access to multiple tools, such as comparison shopping engines and price protection, as well as incentives and promotions like free shipping and cash back.

The power balance has fundamentally shifted to the consumer and it shows no sign of abating. The challenge for the retail sector is how to keep consumers engaged and loyal to your site.

**Bottom Line: It's all about the customer experience.
But how can you support your own employees to drive this mantra?**

ARE EMPLOYEES SUPPORTED ENOUGH TO DELIVER THESE HIGH-QUALITY EXPERIENCES CONSUMERS DEMAND?

The focus on e-commerce innovation is often funneled into the customer-facing side of the business and rightly so; without great customer experiences a brand is at risk of failing. However, the rapid innovation that customers now expect when shopping is often not reflected internally within a retail organisation. This means that those tasked with delivering the brand face-to-face, such as the shop floor staff, are often poorly equipped to do their job brilliantly.

In an industry where customer experience, communication and staying modern is do or die, is the retail industry missing a trick by delivering sub-standard digital experiences when it comes to their employees?

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

WHAT WILL THIS GUIDE ANSWER?

> Why quality employee experiences are essential in retail

> How to create an engaging employee intranet

WHO SHOULD READ THIS GUIDE?

If you already have an intranet but want to ensure you're using it to its full potential, or are planning to re-design it, this guide will help you plan your project in line with modern digital working best practices – ensuring you get the most out of it.

Suitable for Internal Communications, HR, IT and Executive teams.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Hannah is a BCS certified Business Analyst at BrightStarr. Passionate about solving business challenges with technology, Hannah works with customers to define requirements, develop functional specifications, facilitate workshops and design solutions that will drive value for organisations. Hannah's personable nature and an understanding of what makes people tick, combined with a deep knowledge of enterprise technology, allows her to think outside of the box and deliver unique, engaging solutions for every business challenge.

WHY DO INTERNAL EXPERIENCES MATTER?

Employee churn in retail is a serious issue and it's continuing to grow, reaching 5% turnover a month in 2014.[1] The more frequently employees move on from the business, the more pressure there is to find new staff to fill their shoes and get them trained-up.

Subsequently, employee engagement is one of retail's biggest concerns for 2016 as *"better levels of employee engagement, supported by a culture that fosters it and technology that facilitates it, extends retailers' employee lifecycle and increases profits."*[2]

However, more importantly, if employees don't feel engaged in a retail environment, they are less likely to deliver great customer experiences. *"Unenthused employees can have a significant impact on bottom-line results"*.[3]

Adding to the challenge, the younger workforce entering the retail industry have high expectations from their employer. They expect development programmes to support their work and keep them connected. They also want to feel valued and given a reason to stay at the company. The more supported and engaged they feel, the more likely they are to hit performance targets, drive sales and deliver the brand with a smile.

EMPLOYEE CHURN REACHED **5% TURNOVER A MONTH** IN 2014

INTERNAL EXPERIENCES CAN:

IMPROVE CULTURE

DRIVE ENGAGEMENT

MORE SUPPORTED EMPLOYEES =

SALES TARGETS BEING REACHED

BETTER EXPERIENCES FOR CUSTOMERS

BUT WHERE DO YOU GO FROM HERE?

This guide will investigate where the internal employee experience could be enhanced in order to improve collaboration and communication, driving employee engagement and bottom line results.

[1] http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2015-03-06/why-retailers-are-suddenly-desperate-to-keep-their-least-valuable-workers

[2] http://retailtouchpoints.com/features/executive-viewpoints/predictability-and-fairness-in-scheduling-the-foundation-of-employee-engagement-in-retail

[3] http://www.retailtouchpoints.com/features/special-reports/industry-players-converge-to-improve-associate-engagement

HOW ARE KEY TRENDS IN RETAIL SHAPING THE NEEDS OF EMPLOYEES?

It's helpful to start by analysing the experiences that external retail customers have come to expect and how they are shaping the industry and key trends. How can these trends be adapted to provide an exceptional experience for employees and supporting culture?

CONSUMERS WANT THINGS FAST

The new trends of 'click and collect' and next day delivery are becoming common place within the industry and customers expect this service. Retailers such as Amazon and ASOS have previously stood out from the crowd, because of their superior delivery logistics.

PERSONALISED EXPERIENCES

Within e-commerce, a personalised shopping experience is something that is becoming top of the desirability list for consumers. By delivering personalised experiences in the form of product recommendations, remembered searches, most popular items and personalised vouchers and offers, customers feel unique during the buying process. The content that is least likely to appeal to them is filtered out and instead the customer is encouraged further down the buying chain.

It is this attention to personalisation that helps keep customers coming back and makes some retailers preferable to others.

In fact 75% of consumers log in to e-commerce websites that cater for their personal preferences based on previous behaviour (40%) or to get product personalisation (34%).[4]
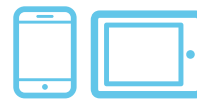
MULTI-CHANNEL & MOBILE EXPERIENCES

The idea of multi-channel shopping almost needs no explanation now. The average consumer now uses an average of 5 devices when making a purchase – a significant increase from the 2.8 devices reported in 2014. According to DigitasLBi's 2015 Connected Commerce study of the latest retail trends across 17 countries including Australia, China, India, Japan, the UK and the USA, consumers indulge in a range of devices to browse products and purchase, including laptops, tablets and smartphones[3]. In fact, one third of e-commerce sales are now happening on mobile devices, enticing customers who like to shop where ever, whenever and however they like.

The mobile experience for customers is a huge part of this. Google's own statistics show that 50% of all searches are now made from mobile devices. Mobile has rapidly become the norm for consumers and, if the experience isn't easy and intuitive, it's highly likely a sale won't be made.

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SOCIAL

For any millennial, social media is engrained in their lifestyle and is a part of modern life. Social media is hugely important to retailers in a couple of different ways; firstly, social sites such as Instagram, Facebook and Twitter are fantastic avenues for retailers to build up brand loyalty and inspire their followers with events, giveaways and competitions. These social media platforms are also instrumental in triggering customer engagement, from 'Likes' in Facebook to image posts in Instagram.

Social aspects of the buying process such as product reviews and comments are also becoming increasingly important with 66% of shoppers opting to read them when buying online and 36% when shopping in-store.[5] Today's consumer behaviour shows the importance of the views and action of others within an individual's social sphere. With such transparency becoming encouraged, retailers must ensure they are always in touch with their customers to maintain brand loyalty.

CHOICE

The crux of the matter – and the cornerstone of customer loyalty - is that customers love choice in every aspect of the buying experience; choice about how they shop (in-store or on-line), how and where they get their items delivered, what discounts they use and what device they purchase from. Customers want to save time and money whilst being able to choose from more ways to shop than ever beforee and ultimately, the more choices you give your customers, the more likely you are to keep them happy enough to get a sale.

QUESTION TIME

Whilst reading those key points on the current trends we see in the retail industry, think about your own retail situation internally.

Out of 5, how many of these options are you supplying to your own employees?

[4] http://screenmediadaily.com/consumers-want-multi-screen-experiences-and-personalisation/
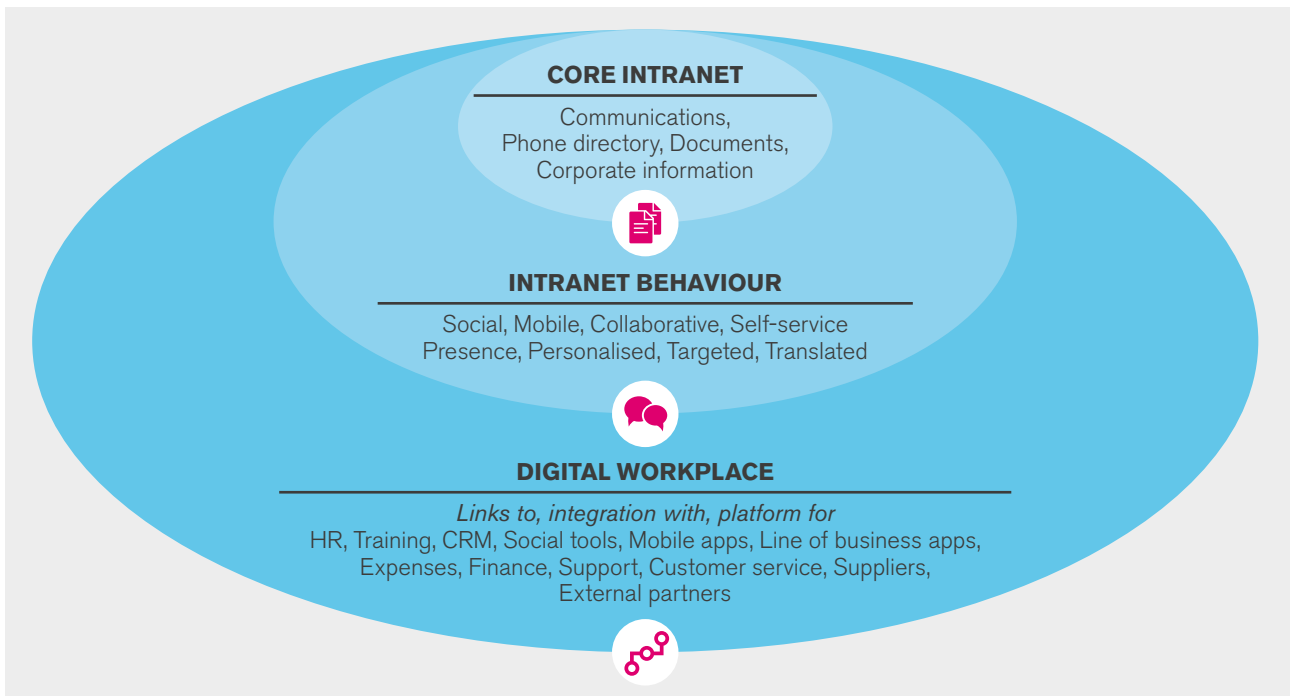
[5] http://www.talk-retail.co.uk/tag/digitaslbi/

HOW CAN COLLABORATION TECHNOLOGY HELP DELIVER THE RIGHT INTERNAL EXPERIENCES?

The intranet is still commonly seen by lots of employees as quite an unexciting place to visit. Often it can be labourious to use and an all-round clunky and difficult experience, mainly taken up by corporate news and dull HR forms that are out of date.

CORE INTRANET, INTRANET BEHAVIOUR, DIGITAL WORKPLACE

CORE INTRANET

Communications,
Phone directory, Documents,
Corporate information

INTRANET BEHAVIOUR

Social, Mobile, Collaborative, Self-service
Presence, Personalised, Targeted, Translated

DIGITAL WORKPLACE

Links to, integration with, platform for
HR, Training, CRM, Social tools, Mobile apps, Line of business apps,
Expenses, Finance, Support, Customer service, Suppliers,
External partners

However, these out-dated misconceptions are being challenged by a new era of corporate intranets and digital workspaces that have the power to drive collaboration, internal communications, sales processes, HR processes, order fulfillment, customer service process, social interaction and much more. **Quite simply, they put the employee experience back into the heart of the business.**

For retail in particular, employees have a variety of day-to-day systems they use to keep customers happy, whether it's to look up product availability, dispatch an order, manage a customer query or update a website. The intranet can be the hub of all this activity, with links and integrations to the processes you use everyday, giving employees a central location to get work done.

This encapsulates the trend of a Digital Workplace, the idea that the more connected, streamlined, flexible and transparent your digital systems are, the more engaged employees will feel, as it's easier (and more enjoyable) for them to do their jobs.

The Digital Workplace trend has flourished due to the increased availability of cloud based solutions that are more manageable cost wise and allow disparate systems to be connected and integrated more easily. They also allow for more flexibility and scalability, making it easier for retailers to build upon and edit current systems as their business grows and technology advances.

However, it's essential that all digital systems are social, mobile, personalised and targeted to allow employees to get the most out the Digital Workplace, enabling them to work anywhere, connect in new ways and only see information that's relevant to them. **Most crucially of all, this all needs to be enveloped with a consistent, visually engaging and intuitive user experience to really drive value.**

START WITH THE PEOPLE, NOT THE TECHNOLOGY

It is commonplace within retail companies to profile the potential customer base and target market in order to accurately target the product offering. This is a key step that is often overlooked when approaching employee engagement and interaction with digital internally.

There are many roles and personas within a retail business that all have different levels of engagement with the company. Their digital experience must be targeted and appropriate in order to meet their individual needs:

> It's essential that all digital systems are social, mobile, personalised and targeted to allow employees to get the most out the Digital Workplace.

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TARGETED DIGITAL EXPERIENCES

SHOP FLOOR WORKERS

They often don't have access to a work laptop and may use their personal mobile or tablet. They work shift patterns and are not always aware of head office news. They are on the front line with customers and may not have time to engage with the business – but they are the ones delivering the brand face-to-face.

HEAD OFFICE WORKERS

They may be issued a work laptop and mobile and work closely with corporate functions. They may or may not be involved with what is happening in-store and may only occasionally visit the stores themselves.

CALL CENTRE WORKERS

For security reasons they are often without any personal mobile devices and use a locked down shared machine. These employees are directly communicating with customers but may not have experienced head office or the shop floor. They may feel disconnected or unfamiliar with the retail experience.

RETAIL MANAGERS

Working within their store or across a number of stores, these managers are implementing top-down directives. They often work in isolation from their peers, but would benefit from seeing what is working well in other stores and collaborating on the practicalities of strategy implementation.

# KEY FOCUSES FOR DELIVERING AN EXCEPTIONAL INTRANET EXPERIENCE

If we take a look further into internal process, tools and technology, we can see some clear areas. We've identified some key elements that can help ensure your intranet truly helps to drive communication and engage employees. These are:

> "Consumerisation is an opportunity for IT to introduce new business efficiencies and innovations and increase IT's relevance to employees. Simply put, consumerisation can close the experience gap between consumer and enterprise applications."
>
> **GARTNER,** CONSUMERISE YOUR ENTERPRISE REPORT
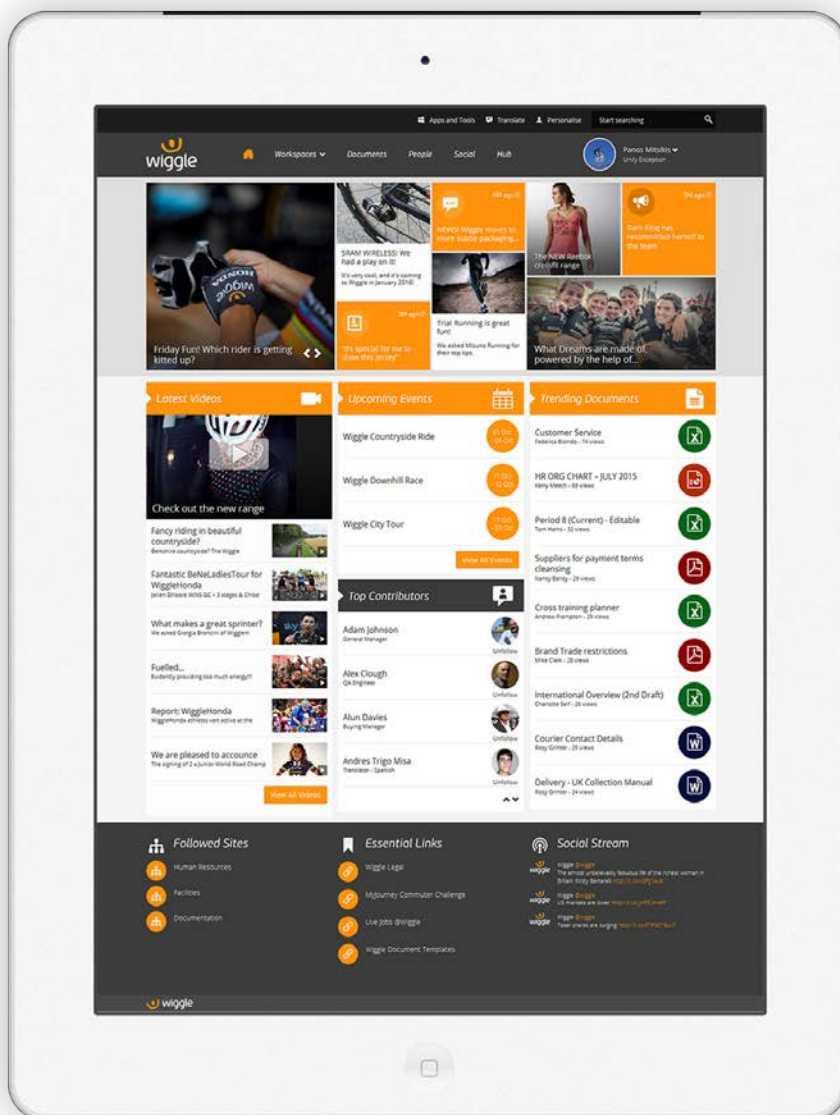
DESIGN AND UX

Retailers are typically creative and the industry is driven by design, brand, look and feel. Many people who work in the industry are also used to visually engaging content that has been carefully designed to appeal to consumers. The same attention to creative detail should play a key role in intranet design.

Taking the time to design your solution in line with your externally facing brand will really make a difference in terms of initial impact and adoption overtime. The use of rich-media and compelling, easy to consume content will bring communications to life and help drive engagement of news and information. Most importantly of all, strong content needs to be supported by great user experiences as the more easy and intuitive a solution is to use, the higher your adoption will be.

TARGETED AND PERSONALISED CONTENT
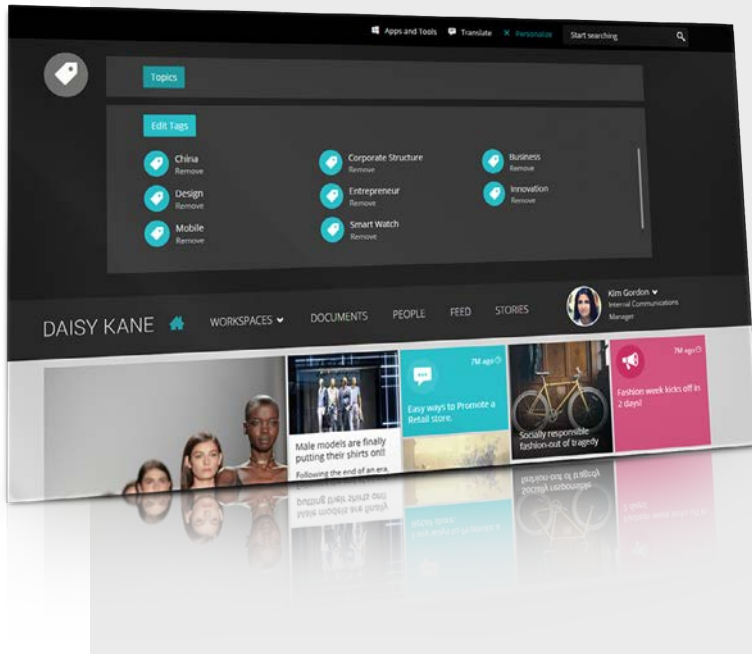
As well as focusing on creating well designed internal tools that are engaging; it is also increasingly necessary to target content and functionality to employees and enable them to personalise based on their own preferences. For example, users within the main office will have different needs than those on the shop floor. Think about including functionality in your intranet that will allow you to:

> **Target content** and messages at specific groups and branches from an admin level. For example, all employees in the UK will see corporate news and information that is relevant to them, whilst those in Spain will see different news.

> **Let users personalise** and control their intranet experience from the front end. Think about the ability for users to choose the type of information they want to see, whether it be through choosing the news topics, or personalising the applications and quick links they see on their homepage to be most relevant to them.

INTEGRATED PROCESS

In order to maintain a competitive edge and keep your customers happy, the internal process and integration of systems should be seamless. As customers' demand for speed and personalised experiences is increased, all internal systems need to be in line with this goal. By creating a Digital Workplace with your intranet at the centre this becomes a much simpler task. Start by providing 'Essential Links' for staff from the intranet, personalised by role/department/location so each employee sees what's relevant to them and is certain of what systems they should be using. From there, you can prioritise your most important systems and start integrating them deeper into the intranet. Some examples of where this works are:

> **Integration** with PO & ordering systems

> **Integration with e-Commerce** click and collect service – retailers would like the store to be able to say when the products are ready for a client to collect from store within the intranet. This system can then automatically email the client to let them know that the goods are ready for collection at this location.

> **Staff on-boarding processes** – Clear processes integrated with the intranet to speed up repeatable activities such as new staff on-boarding. The retail industry utilises large numbers of temporary staff, time can be saved due to automated actions and it will allow for faster scaling of resources.
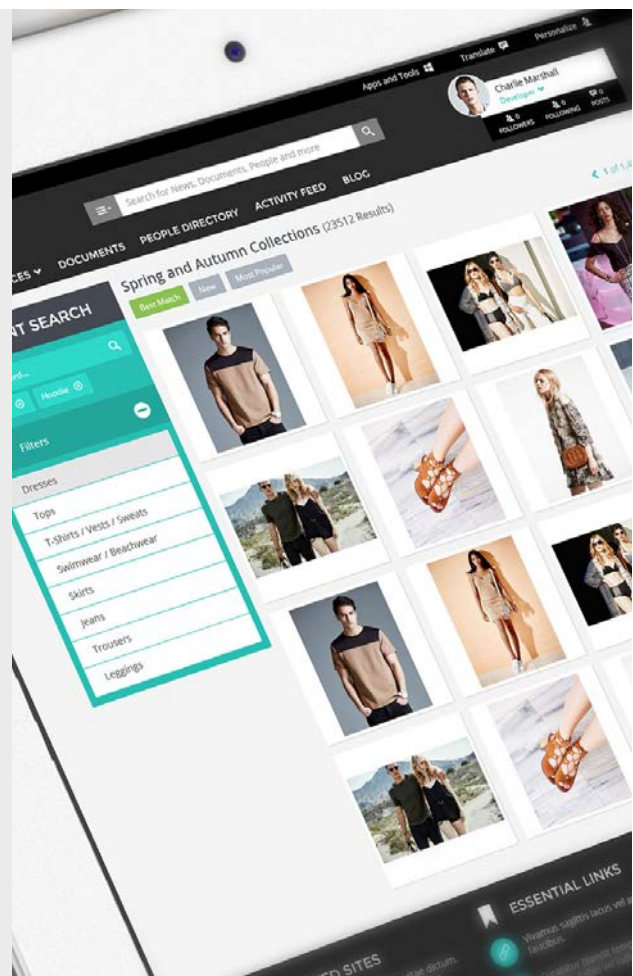
SOCIAL

The retail industry heavily relies on social networks to hook customers in and promote their products. Why does this stop at the office door? There is great collaboration value in allowing your employees to interact with each other and with content using enterprise social functionality.

For example, social feeds and groups can enable managers in different regions to discuss different store layouts, promotion successes and product feedback, allowing knowledge to be shared faster and driving new, innovative ideas. It is this horizontal communication that really adds value for employees as they don't have to rely on the corporate communication teams to get an understanding of the buzz of the company. In turn, it helps internal communications teams to get more of a real-time understanding of employee morale and engagement levels.

Engagement and adoption is crucial to the success of a social platform which is why we suggest integrating your social network directly into your intranet. Have essential feeds and groups 1-click away and allow employees to comment, like and discuss any internal communications directly from the intranet.
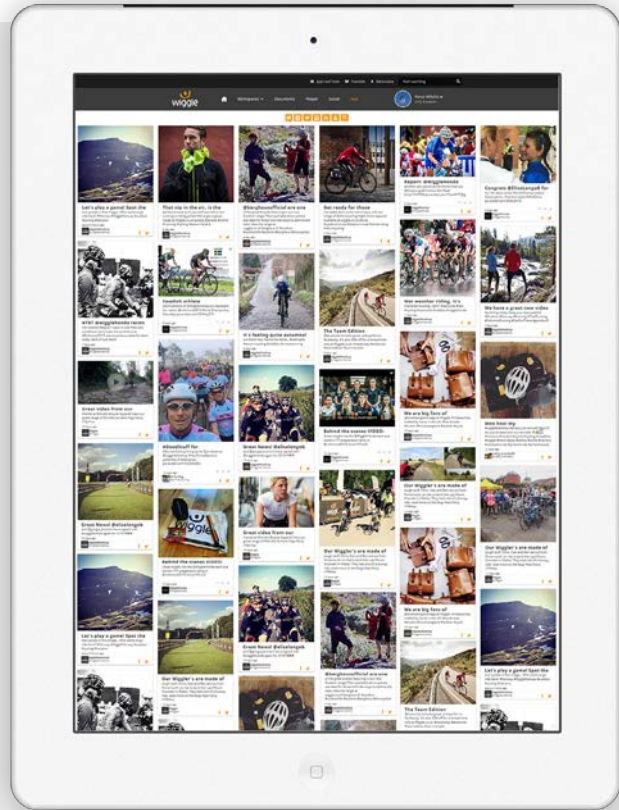
MOBILE

As the trend for consuming content on the move is prevalent for customers, it is also popular within businesses. Many organisations are allowing 'bring your own device' policies. Therefore, content presented on an intranet needs to be compatible with any type of device. This is especially important in an industry with so many geographically spread shop workers who don't have access to a desktop.
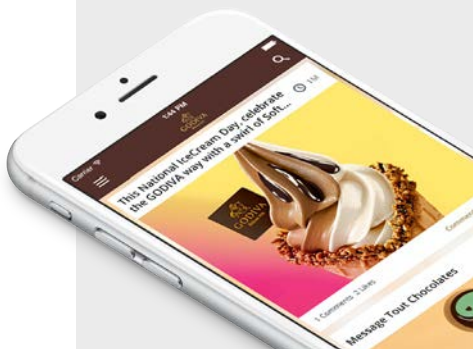
ANALYTICS

1. Garner crucial information about employee behaviour

Analytics are not only the gateway to understanding your customers, they are also the way to learn about your employees, to find out about their behaviours, engagement and satisfaction levels in relation to the intranet.

The use of Google Analytics and similar tools are commonplace for external sites, these practices need to be applied for internal activities. For example, internal communication teams should be able to see who their communications have reached, when people are most active and which areas of the intranet are most popular in order to target and focus information.

2. Report on key business criteria

As well as garnering crucial information about your employees' behaviour, include reporting systems within the intranet to report on important information:

> **Business Intelligence** – Automate weekly reports to deliver information such as product performance and store data straight to the people who need it

> **Compliance** – Facilitate the recording of daily tasks in each retail location and then automate alerts if things have not been done in particular stores

THE NEXT STEPS TO ACHIEVING A SUCCESSFUL INTRANET

Ask yourself some of the following questions to understand where value could be added in your organisation and how you can become more effective:

THE RIGHT QUESTIONS TO ASK TO ENSURE A SUCCESSFUL PROJECT:

Where are your users located?

How do we currently disseminate best practice through our business?

What devices do employees use?

What are our business critical processes? Can any of these be streamlined or integrated with a central intranet?

How are we communicating with our employees? Are our communications reaching the desired audiences?

What key Business Intelligence do we need to know?

NOT CONVINCED? ASK YOURSELF THESE QUESTIONS:

1 If you ask a member of your shop floor staff what the brand stands for, do you get an answer that is aligned with those of senior management?

2 What would the bottom line look like if you halved staff turnover? And how would that impact the experience that your customers receive?

3 If 34% of shoppers would rather search for an answer on a smart phone than ask a sales assistant whilst shopping in store, are you confident that the remaining 66% of shoppers will get a better answer from your staff than they can get on the internet? And will the answer they give ultimately influence a sale?

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TALK TO US ABOUT YOUR DIGITAL WORKPLACE STRATEGY.

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HOW CAN WE HELP WITH YOUR RETAIL INTRANET STRATEGY?

BrightStarr have an abundance of experience working with retail clients including Godiva, Mulberry and Wiggle to support collaboration and improve internal communications. Our Intranet-as-a-Service product, Unily, has proven particularly popular for the industry due to its ability to provide consumer level user experiences for the enterprise. Unily is cloud, mobile and social at heart and can be deployed in just 4 weeks. Completely scalable, flexible and with a Digital Workplace attitude, Unily is the solution of choice for organisations striving for a truly connected workplace. Fully supported and complete with upgrades and updates all as part of the package, Unily is the future proof Digital Workplace solution for retail.

ABOUT BRIGHTSTARR

BrightStarr is a multi-award winning digital consultancy, with a focus on intranets for the enterprise across all sectors. BrightStarr are known for their award-winning user experiences, with their intranets being the solution of choice for communication, HR and IT teams looking to step up their digital strategy.

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