

Case Study:

Gisborne District Council

Gisborne District Council (GDC) is a local government authority based in the North Island of New Zealand.

Information Leadership partnered with GDC to deliver an intranet on their existing Office 365 platform. This sets them up to take advantage of the Office 365 toolset and incorporate cloud technology enhancements as required. The purpose of the project was to improve communication and bring staff together.

Challenge

The old intranet platform was bespoke, heavily customised and no longer supported. Content was out of date because updates could only be completed by a small group of staff due to the difficult to use management interface.

Staff used various technology to communicate and there was no 'one place' to bring it altogether. Emails were relied on heavily to send news around the organisation. The Chief Executive and management were not easily able to communicate organisation wide news with staff.

Strategy

GDC were keen to get the most out of their Office 365 licensing - an intranet built on top of SharePoint Online was consistent with this approach. They had confidence in the longevity of the Microsoft platform and potential support from multiple partners, despite being located away from the main centres in New Zealand.

The council were already making good use of Microsoft tools, such as Skype for Business and Yammer. The project team took the intranet development as an opportunity to test Teams for internal and external collaboration. They benefitted from features such as video calling, conversations, shared Document workspaces, OneNote for tracking meetings content and Planner to track project tasks.

Design workshops held as part of the project kickoff helped to educate the project team about what was possible using the SharePoint Online platform; and to agree on the functionality and information architecture. The workshops included examination of audience needs, how to inventory existing and new content, wireframe mockups and discussions about navigation. Key considerations throughout this process were to provide easy to use Content Management and functionality that would present users with lots of opportunities to interact with the content.

Other outputs subsequent to the workshop included development of a creative brief and design mockups to make sure the look and feel of the new intranet would accurately reflect the organisation's cultural identity.

Information Leadership lead change and governance management workshops to handover tried and tested approaches to managing change, communications and role definition to ensure ongoing success of the project post go-live.

To ensure self-sufficiency a 'train the trainer' programme was rolled out to ensure responsibility for managing content was de-centralised and the intranet was kept up-to-date and relevant to staff.

Results

'*Naumai*' – meaning 'welcome' in Maori was chosen as the name for GDC's new intranet. With over 50% of the population of Gisborne of Maori descent this name reinforces their intranet's unique cultural identity and relevance in the organisation.

The Chief Executive regularly posts blogs to connect with staff to let them know what is 'top of mind'. The intranet is the social hub for staff where staff "shout out" praise for their colleagues and post photographs to build community via "post-a-pic". Building a sense of community is enhanced by out of the box features in SharePoint that enable users to "like" and "comment" on content they see, similar to popular social media platforms.

The intranet is used by all parts of the council, in particular Human Resources and Finance. Enterprise content, that currently resides in a different electronic system, is able to be surfaced in one place so users can quickly find the information they need to do their job.

The process of keeping content up-to-date is decentralised to staff in each business unit. Referred to a 'Content Contributors', these users are benefitting from use of the modern SharePoint lists interface to author much of their content (which is then automatically surfaced on pages). They are creating pages using custom layouts that ensure the process of authoring content is as intuitive and painless as possible. This includes use of the edit panel in page edit mode to provide a one-step process for in page content creation.

"Super users manage the administration and the back-end but they are not IT staff due to the relatively intuitive administration interface."

- Jason Derr, Team Leader Business Solutions

To monitor usage Azure 'Application Insights' is used to measure traffic. Communication staff have set KPI's for continuous improvement of user adoption. If pages are not doing well, they work with the business units to improve the user's experience of that content by providing suggestions for improvement and user feedback where available.

Staff are discovering other useful tools in the Office 365 suite such as Planner and One Note, and momentum is building as staff see how the tools help them in their job.

"We looked at "intranet-in-a-box" options based on SharePoint, Google, and proprietary platforms, but found them too rigid and with high annual license costs...We ultimately decided to work with Information Leadership (IL) as our "custom build" partner for a number of reasons, but primarily:

- 1. Built on SharePoint, and we had implemented Office 365**
- 2. Flexibility and integration of a custom-built SharePoint based intranet**
- 3. Reputation, references, and body of work for Information Leadership (especially with councils)**
- 4. Ability to control the balance of requirements delivered and the final cost**
- 5. Low ongoing annual cost"**

"We now have an intranet that is easy to use, engaging for staff and adaptable..."

- Jason Derr, Team Leader Business Solutions