Keeping a large global intranet clean, trusted and ready for AI

Robert Thieme and Stefan Thormann, Boehringer Ingelheim

Cai Kjaer

I'm delighted to have Stefan and Robert. They're the two partners in crime. I think, is that all right to call you that? They are respectively the, I guess, you own the business side and the IT side of the Boehringer Ingelheim intranet. And yeah, take it away.

Robert, IT Capability Lead, Boehringer Ingelheim

Thanks, Cai, and thanks for having us today. It's a great pleasure for us to present our approach how we actually maintain our intranet behind the scenes to make it, let's say, trusted and AI ready at the same time. So, let me share my screen and get directly into the presentation. So, welcome, everyone, again. So, we are actually from Boehringer Ingelheim, and we're going to present today our approach how we maintain Insight, our intranet.

I will come to that in a sec, why we have named Insight like that. And just to give you a brief overview about ourselves, about the company, pharmaceutical company, family owned, founded in 1885, so a long time ago, and we're really active on the human health, human pharma and animal health sector. We have roundabout 54,000 employees worldwide. And I maintain actually our business on 25 sites worldwide, R&D sites, with a net sales of roundabout 28, almost 28 billion. That's a beautiful picture of our Boehringer Ingelheim campus in Ingelheim.

And so, Stefan and I, we're going to present. Stefan is actually our product owner for Insight, working in the corporate affairs business unit. And we are, as well as me, covering more of the IT side of the things we do for corporate affairs. And we operate actually our intranet, just to give you a brief kind of overview in an agile way. So, we have actually, since 22, 23, we operate Insight or Intranet Agile.

We have Stefan as the product owner, spearheading the product. We have a scrum master, MIT, two UX researchers, two business analysts, and some technical analysts or developers. And all that sits in our IT capability, where I'm in charge for the team, and let's say more of the technical budget and staffing issues. So, some pictures from the past. There will be plenty of new ones, hopefully this year, when we have our face-to -face again.

So, to just give you an overview, these are the people behind the scenes working every day for the intranet. Some people from the past, some people actually have changed over time into different roles and opportunities. And I will come to our intranet again. We call it Insight. And Insight is actually a play of words.

So, it means inside and insight, suggesting actually knowledge and internal accessibility. So, that's how we rebranded our intranet some years ago. And as I said, we have a unified intranet at Boehringer Ingelheim. We actually wanted to simplify the entire user experience, creating actually a kind of intersection where people go to, where people read news, do tasks, search things. It's a living product.

We actually built on continuous user research and improvement. And actually, it's a personalized workspace. So, it's tailored to your role, to your kind of subscriptions for news, and also what you need to do in terms of tasks, approvals, and whatnot. So, that's all part of our approach. We roundabout have 36,000 daily unique users.

We have 2,000 editors and about 34,000 pages, which is quite a lot. And we'll actually tackle more on the right -hand side or more in the middle in our presentation, because there's a strong correlation between the number of editors and also the content quality, but also the number of pages in the company. So, let's take a closer look into Insight. And also in our editor experience. So, we actually wanted to give you a brief overview of how it looks, and then we jump directly into a live demo.

So, first, it starts all with the process of becoming an editor. There's plenty of training. There's kind of tutorials, how you design a page, guidelines, style guides, et cetera. You create a page actually in our intranet, and then you have something like a go -live where you get more information on how to maintain your page, and you will get a 30-day kind of health score review to check your quality, your broken links, what you can enhance and whatnot. There's also ongoing community support we give in a community, which is really a strong one and really engaged one.

So, we are continuously in contact with the editors. And also we have a small kind of feature in place, which we call the Pac-Man flow, which actually is eating up a little bit of the content. I will come to that later. And yeah, so also a way how to control growth over time. So, like how we build all these kinds of things you see here into a governance.

And without further ado, I think we have a short live demo, and Stephan will be taking over.

Stefan Thormann, Product Owner for Insight, Boehringer Ingelheim

Yes, thank you, Rob. Let me share my screen. So, hi, everybody. Welcome. As Robert just explained our editor journey, I would like to kind of give you a few demos along the way of what those steps actually mean.

And we do start with the training. So, whoever wants to become an editor or is supposed to become an editor needs to do the Insight training. It is important for us that everyone has a base knowledge of how we want to operate here on Insight. The page quality, the content governance, everything is tied together to the knowledge of our editors also on our content managers. And therefore, we said you only get permissions to work in Insight if you have done the trainings.

So, we compiled a set of training modules. Here you can see the introduction of it. Hi, welcome to Insight. What does it all mean? You get an overview.

And then you can see different training modules for our editors and four of them are mandatory so that they can understand the SharePoint basics. You know, what are web parts and sections and how do you work with drafts and how do you publish pages? And yeah, what are the do's and the don'ts when it comes to SharePoint? Then there is page design, how to structure a page so it's well written. What about accessibility?

Yeah, what to use, what not to use, how to stay on brand, these kind of things. Page management, how to work with many different pages, how to link between them. And then there's also user experience, how to structure a page, how to think about the user basically at all times when you create content on Insight. Then afterwards you will get permissions, you can get in touch with your content manager. So as Rob already explained, there's quite a huge structure here on Insight with many different pages and departments and hubs and whatnot.

So we have our content managers who are working on a kind of a middle level there who manage wider sections of Insight and then they also align with editors about their permissions and whatnot. Just quickly, we also have optional trainings for those who work with news or events, the translation settings and so on. We just had created a new training specifically for page design. Again, kind of a revamped one because our editors really ask for best practices and some hands-on stuff. And so we did create a new training format for them walking through, again, best practices, but really hands-on stuff on how to structure pages and how to make them efficient and so on.

As soon as you get your permissions and as you are an editor, you will also automatically be part of our editor community that Rob already mentioned. That is in MS Teams. I can quickly show you, we have different channels. There is the general one where we as the Insight team, we give updates about our latest developments or if, so we work on SharePoint Online. If there are any new features coming up that our editors should know, this is the place.

We ask them some questions or get some feedback. We do have an editor community call that is a quarterly basis where we really want to get in touch with our editor community so that they can also ask questions kind of live and face-to-face and we'll make some sessions and prepare the content and prepare our news. And then also, yeah, any updates that we have, we share here with them. And then there's another channel that is very active. Actually, there is questions nearly every day.

This is the Q&A section where our editor community can ask their questions and we provide answers in real time, so to speak. We're really keen on working with them to offer a quick help and assistance here along that way. And that works quite well, I got to say. Now, so in the editor journey, they have now become a trainer. They are part of the community.

They got the permissions. They are working on their first pages. Then we already introduce, well, that's one step to further. We introduce a checklist or we came up with this idea before you even start publishing content, can we make sure that it's actually relevant? It's up to date.

It has a good quality. So we provide this checklist as an option for our editors so that they can quickly go through this checklist and be like, so is this content relevant that I'm going to publish? We don't want clutter in our intranet. We have many pages already and we had many more. I think Rob will tell you about this in a minute here, but we want to make sure our content is relevant.

It is up to date. It is accessible. And here with this checklist, our editors can go through this and really think about the content again. And then also, so is it on brand? Do we have the right tone of voice here?

What about some metadata that might be helpful here also for search and so on? And then there's already also the first hint about analytics and swoop and regular updates that we also provide to our editors. And that also goes along with some maintenance workflows. One is that we introduced lately is using the swoop health score and provide this to our editors after they publish their first or their pages. So we scan all the pages that have been published for the last 60 days and we list them in a SharePoint list.

And then we look at where do some pages need attention? Where are the scores below 60, right? So our goal, first goal is everything should be above 60 so that we get a good health score overall. Now we introduced some helping or assisting content here. You can see this page is specifically developed for our editors so that they can understand this health score and how it works, some recommended targets for insight that we aim for.

And then if our workflow detects a page that is below 60, it will send out an email notification to our editor or to the editor that has last or that has created this page. And then in the email, they will find a link to this list and they will only see the items or at least per default, they will only see this. So you can imagine you have a few or just a few pages that you can see here. And then you already see the health score with a color coding that needs attention. You have this straight link to the page and also a link to the swoop report.

So if you want to dig deeper on why this score is as low as it maybe is, then you can find out. And as mentioned, this has been introduced just a few a month ago, but we can already see some of our editors taking action and working here. So just as an example, you can see this page started as an health score of 59 and then the editor took some actions and now it's actually with 81, that's a really great score. There are also some still urgent cases here that have not been touched and so on. But this is like a good start so far.

It has been received quite well by the community that they know, oh, there is something where I really should take action when it comes to the pages and the content quality. And this is kind of the way how we tackle this. Another workflow that we introduced is about our broken links. This has been around for some years, actually, because we found out, and I think it's no surprise, that broken links are like one of the biggest pain points when it comes to user experience, when it comes to the user journey. If something is not working, it's very frustrating and it's a waste of time.

So we are really fighting against broken links here with this development. Again, there's a page that explains what are broken links and what to do about it. And similar again, but this time it's more of a manual process that we do twice a year, let's say, where we run this and we, again, inform our editors who have broken links. So we see who last edited the page. Again, they will get a notification and they are asked to take some action.

They will find the selection of their links or their pages where a broken link has been detected. And then we build this, a little bit of an interface here in the SharePoint list, where I can as quickly as possible decide, well, let me check this link. Is it really broken? Can I fix it quickly? And then I can quickly put it to done.

Or also, because that happens, as you know, there are many different types of links also. So it does happen that there is a false positive. And so you can also flag this here. And so the system understands, oh, this has not been broken. It is actually working as intended.

So that was, I think, a nice way of fixing this issue. And then as we go along, the content has been published and fixed and whatnot. So then at some point, content needs to expire. And this is where I head back to Rob again.

Robert

Thanks, Stefan. So you might wonder, how do we fight content expiration? And we have actually, I would say, a quite sophisticated approach how to fight the linear growth of content. And we have developed over time, I would say, for the last couple of years, many iterations, many updates, many versions of it, like a content expiration flow. And what it does, actually, is a four -step flow, which checks all the pages which haven't been updated in the last two years.

And editors are receiving something like, and the content owner is receiving an email to inform them, well, your page hasn't been updated. You might have a look. You might take some action. You might review it or even delete it. And there's also some kind of reminder built in.

So if there's no action, there's another reminder after 40 days. And actually, if there's no action at all, we basically delete the page and the related site assets. And how it looks, it's basically Power Automate slash Flow. We have built, the team built over the years, and some examples here below, how the email notifications would look like. And what it does, actually, and I will come to the dashboard in a sec, it's literally eating up thousands of pages where we see there's no clear ownership or it hasn't been updated.

And it actually reduces the clutter in our intranet. And to give you a number, we started back in 21, 22, with a baseline of 60,000 pages for our old intranet. And everyone complained. Everyone said, search is not really good. I cannot find my content.

Why is it outdated? Why is it so old? There's an orphan page. And we really tackled it in the first wave, back in the first migration project we had as a team, to start with the three metrics. So was it clicked?

Was it searched? And was it updated? And actually, we inherited a little bit of this kind of technical debt over time. So we started from scratch. And we wanted to really avoid that our new home becomes like messed up again.

So you can imagine when you move from one place to another place, you don't bring actually all your boxes and books maybe to the new apartment. So you really carefully decide what you want to bring to your new home. And that's what we did. So there's also a dashboard. So as an editor, as a content owner, you have a dedicated spot where you can find your items.

You can track. So what will expire? Do I need to, let's say, do I want to even update it? Or is it good to go into the recycle bin? And also, in case you miss to take action, there's always a way to restore it within 30 days.

So if the deletion kicks in, you always have the ability to go back and say, well, it was a mistake. I want to restore it. So to show you a little bit of the numbers, I'll move to the dashboard here we have built. And this is actually the, let's say, content growth over time. We haven't run another kind of expiration Pac-Man flow this year.

But it's about to come in a few weeks or months. And what you see here, I mean, maybe pick the last one from last year. And the other one, you see a massive decline, starting around about like 34,000 pages down to 29,744. And this is actually our expiration workflow. That's what it does.

It's cleaning the content and actually deleting outdated content. And therefore, it makes our whole intranet more relevant, more grounded, and more updated and groomed. And that's how we do it. So you see over time, there's always linear growth. But you also see there's a movement between the 34,000 and 30,000.

So that's actually our, let's say, stable corridor. And you might also ask, OK, how does it now contribute to the use of AI, right? And I will jump back to the slides. And I saw also some really interesting questions in the chat around AI translation and use translation and multi-language. So jumping back to the slide, we have an answer for it.

And we believe that this whole exercise is really, really helping how we actually provide a really good value in the future for AI. So it's coming up again. Jump to the slide again. So how does it help us to drive that readiness of building it? And we actually see four, let's say, key points.

So the first one is we have clean data by design. So we remove outdated content. We remind the editors they have to update or let the content expire. And that means we don't have really obsolete or conflicting information in the company. At the same time, we believe it's actually providing high signal and low noise to AI.

So we have, Stefan elaborated on that one. We remove, actually, or we fix the broken links. So that means, at the end, better grounding, more accurate information for Copilot and any other AI. And the third one is it's really also, from our point of view, structured and reliable. So a stronger context, better summarization, fewer hallucination, because it's all kind of by design provided to any agent or AI in the future.

And the last one, because we have already embedded it into our ways of working, it's like a continuous AI readiness. So people are already, editors, more like aware of it. It's part of our culture. They're also part of the intranet experience, so to say. They are our biggest allies.

So without them, it wouldn't be possible. And also, the circle is kind of closing, because if they will see how the content is being managed and updated, it contributes to the overall search and experience of building it. So it's like closing the circle again. And we also hope that we can, let's say, improve the whole satisfaction around search and the use of Copilot and any other AI at Boehringer. So that's actually it from our side.

And I'm happy to answer your questions together with Stefan. And yeah, thank you so much for your attention. And thank you for exploring Insight together with Stefan and Wendy.
Yeah, can you-