

How to successfully manage an intranet

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The SWOOP Analytics team. So Cai and I were going to be sharing highlights from the 2026 SharePoint Benchmarking Report. This is actually the largest study that we've run to date for intranets, but I think one of the biggest emerging themes this year is clearly that while intranets are everywhere now, attention hasn't necessarily kept up and content quality is becoming the thing that really matters. So also I will flag for this particular session, also for the whole festival, you should be staying on the line for the whole time.

But at the end of this SWOOP session, we have a very big, exciting announcement and showcase about the next generation of measurement in SWOOP. So at that point, I'm going to loop in Matt Dodd, our product director. But before we get to that, we're going to share some of the practical insights from the benchmarking. We like to focus this all around one central question, and that's how do you successfully manage an intranet? And we want it to be in a way that reflects real employee behavior, not just based on assumptions, of course.

And for many organizations, we know this is becoming a very urgent question. Intranets, they're no longer side projects or just publishing platforms. Intranets are now that central place for people to find information, complete tasks, stay aligned. So this session is really all about what the data says good intranet management looks like and where teams should focus next. And for this year's report, it's based on real usage data as always. So we're looking at over 410,000 intranet visitors across 250,000 plus pages, 41 different organizations worldwide that we've been analyzing over a consistent three-month period.

And we think that matters because it means that we're not just talking about opinions or preferences or design trends. What we're looking at is how people are actually working in intranets. So adoption is no longer the big main issue. The bigger challenge is relevance, quality, and governance. And with that limited attention, growing content volumes and increasing reliance on AI. We want to make sure that you're getting the most value out of it, which was all about keeping content useful, keeping it current, keeping it well managed, of course.

And so let's jump into the findings today. So of course, we've got Laurie and Kai joining me. Laurie is going to share some of the key insights and then Kai is going to jump in and share some of the practical actions that you can bring into play with your own intranet. We'll have a quick poll question, so keep an eye out for that along the way. But Laurie, I'll hand over to you to kick things off. Okay, thank you, Emily. Well, for those of you who aren't aware, we are a benchmarking company. So we've been benchmarking Viva Engage for nearly over a decade now.

And we're building up our benchmarking for intranets. And I think this is our fourth year now. So it's getting very exciting. And I think with 41 organisations, we're even getting to the level where we can start to compare organisations. But there's a lot of data here around pages, employees, and so forth. So starting out, well, basically 95% of employees now access the intranet. Well, it's pretty much

saying it's not an adoption issue, right? It's like email, everybody uses the intranet. But of course, the issue then is, well, when they come to the intranet, do they get value from it?

So these are the sorts of things that we're looking at in much more detail. Your intranet, obviously, is broken up into content pages, what we call content pages, and news pages news has grown a lot. And there's probably nearly as many news pages as there are as content pages across the sample. But in fact most people come for the content about 60, about two thirds of the people will read news. So that's something to be aware of as we move forward. So over to you, Kai. Yeah, well, so the thing is that it's kind of undisputed that the intranet is now, like, it's called like the pole position, it's there.

Now, that does carry some consequences. And like, we just heard from Essential Energy before, you actually now have to treat it as like a serious, as a serious platform. That means investing in governance, investing in user research, navigation, architectures, analytics, and all those things, because it becomes such a dominant platform. And if it's not a dominant platform for you, well, I think that it shows that it could become that many organizations for, I often ask the question, what would happen if we turn the intranet off tomorrow?

And there's like shock and horror, could I go off it wouldn't work for us. So even simple things, if you're using email a lot use it as a teaser, and then point people to the intranet. But it's definitely there, it's undisputed. Now, you have an obligation to look after it. Okay, so content growth. Now, this is an interesting one. So we probably had about 24, 25 organizations that we had benchmarked the year before this year. And I looked at the sort of growth in the content that they'd been publishing.

And on average, it was 20%. so that's a pretty big number. So if this was compound interest, and this was your mortgage rate you'd have concern to be very scared with a number like that. So what we found that only two organizations out of that 24 actually had their content slightly level or slightly lower. So in essence we're dealing with a growing content base. And that's something we've got to be very careful about. And we'll certainly address that in some future slides. Over to you, Kai. Yeah, well, I guess, for all of you listening in today, maybe a good question is, you have to think about it and say, well, how many pages do you have on the intranet today?

And how many pages did you have last year? And what are your rules for archiving or deleting or moving, whether it's news or other things that are no longer useful? So one of the things you've got a quote here from the German pharmaceutical boy, Engelheim, and if you join us for the European Lake later today, of this festival, you can hear Robert Thieme from Boeing and talk about this. He talks about this having 2000, delivered to them, he didn't ask for these, right. But when you got 2000 people that can publish content, and without very clear governance, then well, the result was exponential growth.

So I think some of the things you really got to think about is putting in place for this, for archiving, deleting content, as Essential did, maybe really have a good look at the news. No one wants to read a COVID-19 vaccine article when we got another virus that can potentially impact us landing in our backyards. And then make sure we invest in training for editors, so they understand templates, they understand it's everything around training and governance, basically. Okay, so where do people spend their time when they come to the internet?

I think last year, we talked about this time budget that people would allocate to the internet. It did go up a little bit. So it went up to 11.3 minutes. But the sad part for you internal comms people writing news, they only allow about less than a minute to actually read a newspaper. So that puts the pressure on, doesn't it? So they basically only come for the content pages. This is how they get their work done, whether it's policies or procedures or practices. Now, that's where they mostly come. And you can see with that bar chart there, the red is the news.

So some organisations are very, well, not many are news centric, but largely they're there for the content pages. Do you go? Yeah, I think we'll have a quick poll question, I think, just to I think, like, well, it's quite clear in the data that employees are coming to the internet, but attention is obviously quite tight at the moment. And if we're pushing out more and more content and not necessarily cleaning it up, then are we helping or are we just continuing to overwhelm? So I'm going to launch a quick poll.

And we're really simply wanting to do a bit of a post check. Do employees suffer from information overload? I've got a few options on the screen. If you can't see the poll, just maybe share some insights from your own perspective in the chat. But I'll give you all a moment just to share. I wonder where this one's going to sit for this group. Give you all a moment to submit. Okay, well, it's definitely already very heavily leaning towards like a very strong yes. Majority of people saying that it's frequently and it's definitely still an ongoing issue or that your employees are constantly overwhelmed.

We've got a small handful somehow. I want to hear from these people where they say never not a concern for us. Maybe you're the ones who are already prioritizing all of the actions that Kai is speaking to so far. Kai and Laurie, like any, like, I guess this probably isn't a surprise for us. No, it's 20% growth a year. you're going to run into problems, aren't you, over time. So hopefully, that's the average. So hopefully, you're at the bottom end of that. It's not just the internet, many other digital comms platforms.

And I think one of the challenges is that internal comms, there's no like, just normally, this whole space, lots of people can publish news. So it's hard to maintain the role of something in air traffic control. And on one side, there's just how much content there is. But then what about, like the actual length of the content, how much we're trying to create into one piece of news? Yeah. Okay. So we've run this a few times now. And the results are pretty stable. there's a sweet spot around the 200 to 400.

shorter than that is still okay. So, but I was interested in Sian's comment that they have their copilot set up to a good number around 250. And I was more interested in when she said, well, it doesn't always take notice and comes back with 1000 words rather than 250. So I keep thinking, the next prompt is, didn't you see the last prompt, I said 250, you came back with 1000, try again. So I think there's really no excuse, I think, to hit the optimum space. We measure that readability, our engagement measure is that people spend enough time to completely read the article and what have you.

So just viewing it isn't engagement in our terms, it's spending enough time to read the whole article or the whole content piece. So that's our measure of engagement. Kai? Yeah, well, so, well, you saw the prompt, I think, Sian, you had it in your, you had it in your 250 words. So yeah, keep it concise. I

would say that you can probably write longer, just be mindful that it's very unlikely that people are going to read it. So if you do write longer, make sure you got the important bits at the top, because that's probably the only bit that people are going to read.

So be selective about long articles, and maybe even split it into separate parts. Now, when I say that, you might say, well, didn't we just have a problem with information overload? it doesn't really help to then blast it out in lots of little small pieces. And I need you to be the judge of that probably having good analytics will help you find the sweet spot in there. But we do think you have to design for attention and not completeness. Yeah, people just scan news. So we've got to help them find things very quickly.

Yeah, so sorry, internal comms people writing the news articles, but people mainly come to the internet for the content pages. And as it showed like less than a minute, sort of a day for you and your news pages. But content is an interesting thing, because like, what we did find was that there is evergreen pages of content that people do continually come back to. And that's good, because it says, well there's some content that people really use extensively. But what about if the information on it isn't quite correct then a lot of people are spending a lot of time reading the same thing.

So content is king so let me pass over to Kai and he's got some comments about that. Well, I'll just we talk about evergreen, right? But mold is also green. So we've got to be we've got to make sure that it's the right form of green that we're looking at. And that's why content governance is going to be so important. So if I have to say that if you want to focus on something, it is improving the content pages. I also have to say, when we check for health scores, and the news pages, in the beginning, get a much better score, because they're typically, I'm going to say typically written by people that actually are good at writing most of the time, whereas the content pages can be very long instructional things that might be written by subject matter experts.

So and they typically, over time, score worse than the news pages. So do focus on improving those content pages, and maybe having templates, not just for news, but other forms of content. And maybe also think about having agents that will help the subject matter experts write content for their pages. That's probably going to deliver you a lot of ongoing value, because they are very popular, those pages. And then also, I've got that little quote, at the end bring news to content pages. It's just that if the reality is that people really come for the content pages, well, then maybe, maybe could we inject a bit of news that's relevant for that piece of content into that page as well, instead of having everyone going to this is the news section.

Certainly food for thought. I'd love to hear if any of you are doing that, or are off for trying to experiment and bringing Mohammed to the mountain rather than the other way around. Okay, people come to the internet around on average, three times a day, and they look at two pages each. So it's very precise, but it is an average. What we can say, though, is that they they don't just come to the same pages. So over the three month period, we saw that on average, people will come to nearly 40 different unique pages.

So they do read broadly, but in essence, they're not actually browsing, they're coming with a purpose. So that's why I think when Sian said, we want them to find what they're looking for quickly that's very important. So and if you add the time budget as well so if they don't get what they need in the time they're prepared to spend, then of course, they're not going to, they're going to go away unhappy,

right. So I think the thing, the message from this is that like they're not spending a lot of time whilst they'll read broadly they're not just there waiting for the next update on the internet you've got to really, you've really got to sort of make it easy for them to be able to do their jobs through the information that you're containing in those content pages.

So we can't emphasize that anymore. No, that's actually the same point that I'm making here, Laurie. The only thing I might add is that in the beginning, Laurie talked about 95% of people visiting the internet. And oftentimes, we get the question, well, what about those that just come because they're going on to Google or somewhere else what would it really look like if we, if we remove those homepage only views, and, and the, it's actually only about 6% of people that only visit the homepage, and then don't go any further.

So when we say they visit the internet, like three times a day visiting two pages that remember that this is we're talking about 95%, right. So that's why we're saying it is really become quite a dominant platform. Yes, the people that are in our benchmarking study are probably organizations that do have a high internet use. So if you're looking at this, but like, there's no, I've got nearly not that many people visiting my internet. Well, think about this as a realistic goal that what the platform could become.

Okay, so internet health, those of you that haven't been exposed to the way SWOOP measures its health, the internet page health, well, it's certainly covered in the report in some detail. But what we did this year is that typically, it's a quality experience engagement, I've already mentioned that engagement is basically people spending enough time to consume the content fully. And quality is always a big thing. This year, we broke those down into the subgroups that are on SWOOP, things like readability, spelling, heading, length, accessibility, all this sort of stuff.

And it gave me the opportunity to sort of run some statistics on this to say, well, what predicts the amount, what predicts engagement that the people will spend enough time and what factors in your health score are most important. Now, interesting or not interestingly, in fact, the factors that were important were different for content pages, as they were from news pages. So these are actually in the order of importance. So in terms of content pages, the readability, and in fact, spelling mistakes and broken links were important and aging content in that order.

For news page, it was very much the paragraph to heading ratio and the heading length. So the things that catch your eye, if you like, and accessibility issues as well in there as well. So read the report, because it gives you some sort of idea of what the highest priority things that you need to look at in your health scores in improving those. Okay, so this one, I enjoyed doing this one, the first time we did, I think we did it last year, maybe the year before as well. But we often said, well, which functions are actually reading the intranet the most.

And so what I did was I took all of the in your active directory, you'll probably have a category called title or job title or something like that. And there'll be some title in there. Now, I know some of those titles are very specific to your organisation. But about from that sample of 400,000 employees, about 200 and something 1000 had a job title that could be classified by AI into one of these categories that you see on this on this bar chart. And what we found was the top two most that and it works out the percentage of people that have that job role are actually accessing the intranet or reading on the intranet.

And the leaders the leadership and executives and the management were actually the top two. So your leaders are actually going the intranet as a percentage of their function more than anybody else. But I wouldn't ignore the people at the other end. So when you look at finance and legal and was that other one sort of engineering and technical? Why are they down the bottom? sort of do you have enough content for those people to consume do they have enough stuff to help them do their job? So we should be looking at both ends of this bar chart, not just the ones at the top.

Any comments, Kai? Yeah, well, I just think maybe something that many of us know that immediate managers are the go to people for a lot of information. Maybe we need to think about the intranet in that context of leaders being information disseminators. So how do we make sure that it's kind of written in a way that for them that they take the content to their people? So how do we make sure it's kind of like dissemination ready? How do you make sure that we know leaders and managers out there to make decisions?

How do we make sure we highlight the content so it's ready for them? And maybe also is there a way we can make things easier? Having like something like a share this thing, this piece of content with your team, just making really easy ones, having copy and paste a URL and put it in a team chat. Can we build the web part that allows us to share things faster for managers, particularly with their team? I think it's important we have a look at our intranet from that perspective and really think about leaders and how can we make, they're already time poor, how can we make it even easier for them to spread all the great content you have on the intranet?

Well it wouldn't be a presentation today if we didn't talk about AI, would it? So last year we brought in this index we call the AI Readiness Index and basically it looks at your content, which is the highest weighted element, your engagement readiness, which is basically looking at how good is your engagement right now without AI? And then the search effectiveness. Now we've heard Sian say that well the search has actually improved for her, well in fact it turns out that search has improved for everybody across our sample.

So those that are familiar with what AI does, a good part of that is just doing a search. So they call that, I won't go into technical details about RAG, but search is important. But we ranked it sort of lower compared to content, so content readiness was the main sort of factor in AI readiness and it had declined slowly. So engagement itself, generally it's fairly poor across the intranet, so it dropped slightly. So in essence we're pretty much just a little bit worse off than last year. So I think really looking at your content, which is part of what we've been talking about anyway, trying to build that engagement through looking at those health factors, if you do all of that your AI will work better.

That's all we can say about that. Yeah, it's actually when I sort of was making fun of this green collar and the difference between the evergreen content and things being moldy, that is probably the biggest risk. It's really not the hallucination bit. If you're building an intranet bot that's grounded in all the intranet content, well we better make sure that the content is ready for that and it's not grounded in outdated content. And one of the things that really concerned me when Laurie told me that one of the big findings is that a lot of this old content is actually quite popular and by popular we mean it's accessed by a lot of people.

If you think about your own intranet content and you're like, oh that's lovely, so it's still got some of my old content, yeah it's fantastic. You might go like and if I ask you then, are you comfortable that

people are accessing this old content? You go, I don't know, like for some of it the answer is probably yes, I'd imagine. And I think for you might go, no. So it's a real risk, isn't it, if you don't really know if that old content that people are using is old and good or it's old and moldy. And so from an AR perspective it does actually become really important if it's grounded in all that intranet content.

So what do you do? Well that leaves us no choice by cleaning up. Cleaning up doesn't necessarily just mean throwing out or archiving but does mean cleaning up, ensuring that it's actually still relevant and it still delivers value and you still think it's something that AI should be grounded in. If that seems to be too big a task, you're saying there's simply too much content here, well maybe think of another alternative and that's to extracting the bits of content that is good and putting it somewhere else where you can say that's the bit that AI is going to be grounded in.

But just promise me that we don't end up with the same problem in a year from now where that repository is then getting out of date because no one is now looking at that anymore. So it's a battle you've got to constantly be on top of and maybe managing it well at the source might be the best thing you can do. Okay so the other measure we introduced last year which is companion measure is the clutter index. We sort of like that term clutter. We did call it noise at first but when someone thought well clutter is actually a better term.

But in essence when we look at what constitutes clutter a lot of it is out-of-date content as Kai's been talking about. So pages that people just don't go to. We've already talked about news that hasn't been archived. it's people say well it's old news so people sort of won't read it. But well they won't want to read it but in fact AI gives it a second life if you leave it there. So in terms of when you look at this bar chart you can see it's mostly the unvisited pages and the sort of unarchived news pages and what have you that are really getting and creating a lot of the clutter that AI will have problems with.

So but anyway that's something to keep monitoring. It's it increased slightly. In terms of mobile use this is sort of an interesting one. We measure this not by organisation but by individual. So when we say that it's dropped or it's collapsed we're looking at a very much bigger sample than we did the previous year. So over 400,000 people in this sample so and there's only 1.7 percent of those that are actually using mobile to access the internet. Now of course you've heard a case from Essential Energy and there'll be others in our sample that will say no we've got probably half of the people that are using mobile.

But when you look at it per person it's quite low. Now that made that was food for thought for us because we always felt that it was good if you had more people using mobiles internet access the internet. But reflecting on that this year it's not necessarily the case because if they're coming for content and content is better consumed through a desktop then why would you try and access it through a mobile. So we're starting to change our tune a little bit around that. And finally we sort of goals this is something that we've had in our Viva Engage product for quite a while.

In fact it's built into the platform. We feel that now we've got benchmarking data that we can start to set some internet goals and you can see some of the things some examples of the things that we've set goals for here. Now we typically say the top 20 percent that's the sort of threshold that you should aspire to. So some of you for some measures will already be there a lot of you won't be. So we set the bar around that 20 percent. some measures don't don't suit that sort of measure like like spelling we prefer to have no spelling mistake and things like that or no broken links.

But for many of the others it is a continuous measure. So you've got that in the report over time you'll see those things built into the SWOOP platform. So you'll see every day how far are we away from those goals.

Key findings from the 2026 SharePoint Intranet Benchmarking Report.

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