

Intranet Applications

Intranets today include a spectrum of applications that are of use to organizations. From the days of textual searches in stored documents to incorporating state of the art knowledge management systems, the intranet today reaches the heart of operations in all the areas of the enterprise's business.

Broad Categories:

While there are numerous applications dished out by various vendors for intranets today, there seems to be a general pattern or classification of these applications according to their utility and user base. Following are some broad categories of applications found in an intranet:

Information management systems

Intranets exist to make information available to different people of the organization in whichever department or remotely situated office they might be in. Information management systems make various kinds of information available in the form of documents, publications and manuals on the intranet. A document management system is the most common example.

Properly planned and created information management system enables organization to publish different kinds of information into documents that are carefully indexed according to their subject matter for people to find them easily. Around 60% of an employee's time is spent in searching for relevant information and an information management system tries to reduce that figure. Relevant, fresh and well-written information makes an information management system a success. Similarly various domain/ function - related activities are performed on the intranet using information management systems. The sales department for example, uses applications like the contact management and lead management to work at their efficient best.

Some common applications in the above category can be:

- Document management system
- Contact management system
- Customer management systems (also used extensively by customer support executives)
- Intelligent search and FAQ applications
- Personnel databases and directories
- Content management applications (to add, edit and manage content on the intranet)

Transaction processing applications

One of the many advantages of an intranet is that it reduces the amount of paper work and time involved in dealing with the same. Transaction processing applications in an intranet enable the organization to manage several processes from over the intranet saving time money and paper work. Applications like procurement systems are often found on intranets where users can order office supplies over their intranet instead of going through erstwhile manual requisition process. The HR department uses online applications like the leave application system or publishing of policies and manuals, job descriptions and new postings on the intranet.

Common applications in this category:

- Online procurement system
- Domain/ function specific applications
- Expense reporting
- Newsletter publishing
- Leave application systems
- Online training modules

Collaborative applications

The collaborative applications help members of an organization share, distribute and interact with each other to work on common issues and problems. Collaborative applications lend the facility of remote members of an intranet working on a single presentation or a proposal at the same time thus saving enormous costs and time on the organization's part. Information management systems like the document management

systems can be made more effective if they are made collaborative in nature.

Common applications in this category:

White board applications
Document/ software sharing
Calendar application
Remote software (MS Outlook), PDA synchronization

Communication applications

An intranet is designed or rather should be designed to facilitate seamless exchange of thoughts and ideas between different members of an enterprise, more so if they are remotely connected to each other. Communication tools like chat applications, bulletin boards enable fast communication between the organization and its employees on one hand and between employees themselves on the other. Important and critical information regarding new projects, change in company policies etc can be made on the intranet's bulletin board where all the employees of the organization can see without unnecessary delay in printing and distributing the same if its distributed in paper.

Common applications in this category:

Address books
Discussion groups/ message boards
Bulletin board
Corporate Email

Others

Besides the above listed applications specific applications pertaining to an organization's processes can be built in to the intranet. To illustrate different teams remotely placed working on a single project for a client can exchange documents and notes by using the document management and communication applications listed above. At the same time they can also keep a track on project management over the intranet by creating an application that keep track on milestones and tasks with people responsible for the same

and give out alerts when a certain task is due. Project status can be tracked by such applications and the client can be made a part of the application giving him the rights to view and track his project status.

Top vendors in application categories

Following is a short list of the current top solution providers providing information management and collaborative applications & solutions that are used in an organization's intranet. Few companies with contact management solutions are also highlighted below.

Document management/ content management solutions

- ★ Xerox - content/ document management <http://www.xerox.com/>
- ★ Adobe <http://www.adobe.com/>
- ★ Livelink (a leading collaboration and KM software from OpenText Corporation) <http://www.opentext.com/>
- ★ Documentum (Documentum has acquired **eRoom** thus adding collaboration software features to its existing content management solution) <http://www.documentum.com/>
- ★ Filenet <http://www.filenet.com/>
- ★ Plumtree <http://www.plumtree.com/>
- ★ Vignette <http://www.vignette.com/>
- ★ Redbrigde Interactive's DynaBase <http://www.rbii.com/>

Contact management solutions

- Concerto Software <http://www.concerto.com/www/index.php>

- GoldMine by FrontRange Solutions Inc. <http://www.frontrange.com/>
- Aspect Communications Corporation <http://www.aspect.com/>

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