How to Unify Your Global Workforce with an Effective Intranet

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People and businesses are more connected than ever before thanks to incredible advances in technology, making this a promising time for global enterprises seeking to better manage the weight of expansion and distance.

Global enterprises face unique challenges when it comes to communication, workflow, and tracking knowledge and resources. Differences in time, language, technology adoption and platform usage can hinder a company's growth and productivity as well as damage its culture. A well-designed global intranet can address these issues. When built to be accessible across languages and technical abilities, it acts as a powerful unifier, connecting individuals and teams so they can work together no matter their location. Once disparate data is organized and searchable, common tasks have time-saving workflows, localization and personalization provide appropriate access based on international boundaries or roles and existing applications vital to your business can be integrated.

Addressing Three Challenges of a Global Workforce

| Increase productivity across teams and systems | Support a complex and diverse workforce | Optimize communication and collaboration |

Issues with productivity, communication and the needs of a complex workforce are not unique to global enterprises, but their scale adds complexity. The solution of a global intranet built to scale can address these challenges and help facilitate real change.

Loss in Productivity
Due to Siloed Information

Are you losing $2.5 million per year? Interact[1] reports that workers spend approximately 19.8% of business time searching for information and documents necessary to do their job effectively. That's the equivalent of one day per work week. For organizations of 1,000 employees or more, that wasted time can total losses up to the aforementioned dollar amount.

Research continuously points out that the inefficient organization of data leads to a costly loss of productivity. In a study of 1,000 full-time employees across industries and departments, Nintex[2] found that 39% of employees believe their document management system is broken and nearly half of those employees (49%) have trouble locating documents.

Is inefficiently stored data and siloed information costing your global enterprise valuable time and dollars? If global teams are spending precious time searching for resources then they don't have the necessary tools to do their jobs effectively. Especially salient for global enterprises, time lost on inefficient data organization means that precious hours of overlap between international offices aren't being fully maximized and therefore could be costing your teams in terms of collaboration opportunities.

Recapturing this time and productivity means that your employees can spend more time doing what really matters for the company's business goals, like improving a product, brainstorming new campaigns or investing in long-term planning.

ORGANIZATIONAL TECHNOLOGIES CAN RAISE PRODUCTIVITY BY

20-25%

Source: MGI[3]

1   it-analysis.com/services/outsourcing/news_release.php?rel=38149
2   info.nintex.com/rs/272-JVS-996/images/Nintex%20AMBP%20Ebook%20Final.pdf
3   mckinsey.com/~/media/McKinsey/Industries/High%20Tech/Our%20Insights/The%20
    social%20economy/MGI_The_social_economy_Full_report.ashx

Managing Increasingly Complex and Diverse Teams

With a more diverse workforce constituted of mobile and remote employees, international offices, as well as a growing percentage of digital-native millennials in the workspace, no two offices look entirely alike.

These complex teams aren't going anywhere anytime soon. In fact, increasingly complex teams made up of disparate workers with unique backgrounds are becoming more the norm than the exception. This doesn't just apply to the entirety of an international company. Individual offices within global enterprises are facing new workforce challenges.

As businesses continue to tap into the powerful resource that is remote employees and as more millennials enter the workforce, the so-called "traditional" office is changing shape. While it certainly makes sense that the entirety of a global enterprise's workforce would be separated by state and international lines and would experience differences in time zones and culture as well as communication challenges, it is now increasingly likely that its individual offices are also experiencing similar complexities.

A staggering 1.2 billion employees, that's over 36%[4] of the global workforce, are mobile. These remote workers save American businesses $11,000[5] per person per year and are just as productive as traditional in-office employees—making out-of-office employees highly valuable to businesses.

> **IN 2016, MILLENIALS BECAME THE LARGEST GENERATION IN THE WORKFORCE.**
>
> ## How does this affect a global enterprise?
>
> These tech-savvy digital natives expect and thrive in digital environments. Currently accounting for 35% of the American labor force and with the number expected to rise, millennials are reshaping the future of business practices and organization.

The communication and content management needs of a global workforce are complex and unique, and entirely critical to success.

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4   technavio.com/report/mobile-workforce-solutions-market
5   globalworkplaceanalytics.com/telecommuting-statistics

These complex teams call for a fresh look at the way enterprises function—from general organization to the digitization of critical tasks. Both the increasing number of digital-native millennials in the workforce and the advantages offered by remote and mobile employees make use of communication and collaboration technology critical to the success of individual and global offices alike.

Improving Collaboration and Communication with Global Expansion

Many companies continue to rely on paper-heavy or otherwise siloed processes for things that could be digitized, contributing to wasted time and difficult-to-track information. Not only is this method archaic for most of today's businesses—it is entirely unscalable and inefficient for a global company.

As an enterprise expands globally, consistent procedures regarding the exchange of information help to cultivate a knowledgeable and productive workforce. While processes that include things like sticky notes left on a manager's desk to request time off or a commonly used form, or a culture that relies on the knowledge of a select few colleagues may have functioned in the past, they aren't scalable.

Without a central location for information storage and the exchange of ideas, employees will function independently and miss out on valuable resources offered by other colleagues, teams and offices. These workflows result in pitfalls such as overlapping efforts and an insufficient exchange of information.

A global enterprise needs reliable and predictable organization and workflows that can operate smoothly even as teams shift and a company grows. An intranet addresses these concerns. As a customized internal network, a digital workspace built on a private network and contained within an enterprise can act as a hub for data storage and communication. Compared with other benefits offered by intranet usage, improvement in enterprise communication and collaboration are perhaps the biggest payouts.

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Grow Your Global Business with an Effective Intranet

If you don't yet have a digital workspace, are using a dated intranet and face an increasing number of communication and productivity issues, or have simply outgrown your current solution thanks to global expansion—it's time to upgrade.

An intranet makes it easier for large, complex teams to work together, but in order to reap the benefits of a digital workspace, it is critical to truly understand the root problems and actual workflows. Without insight as to the real issues and sticking points, an intranet cannot improve the employee experience or make communication easier. Similarly, adoption is key to success and a digital workspace won't be adopted if it doesn't address the most pressing needs.

> **In addition to truly understanding the pain points of your current organizational structure, for an effective digital workspace to be built it is critical to understand your users.**

Optimize Communication with Custom Roles and Permissions

Spread across time zones and separated by language, global enterprises face real and ongoing communication challenges. Remaining well-connected and ensuring that all business divisions are fully informed requires continual attention and a well-defined organizational strategy. An intranet can address the challenge for offices to remain informed regarding things like upcoming events and company updates—and it can be scaled according to your business needs and growth.

An effective global intranet will allow for the creation of roles and permissions within a digital workspace, as well as offer localization support. These tools create intranet access tailored to each employee's specific position, need and location. Roles and permissions are vital features that can be used to create news and content stakeholders at both the local and global levels—ensuring that each team stays well-informed of company objectives and updates.
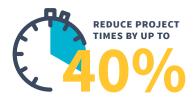
For a global enterprise, there is no such thing as one-size-fits-all. Support and empower global teams through the building of their own sites, manage access through granular permissions, create custom roles, and share content based on location and language.

Increase Productivity Through Streamlined Search

Powerful online search engines have forever changed the way people seek information. Given the prolific nature of search engines like Google, users expect a similar experience when using the search feature in a digital workspace. Build an intranet that combines knowledge bases, forums and tagging with a powerful search engine.

Adoption of Unified Communications

75%
WASTED TIME AND EFFORT ELIMINATED

REDUCE PROJECT TIMES BY UP TO
40%

Source: Information Age

Secrets to Search Success

For a search feature to yield effective results, a global knowledge base needs to be carefully managed. It is critical to establish:

- Rules and defined processes for the addition and removal of information and documents, especially for documents that age out of use or require routine updates. This also calls for employee training.

- Supporting technology, such as content management tools and meta tagging.

- Consistent and quality metadata, enriched by AI/ML services to auto-tag images and transcribe video or audio files, etc.

- Personalized access so that useful and relevant content is made available based on the user's role and location.

- Federated search to access knowledge across content silos.

- Search facets, content type filters, suggested files, etc.

- Weekly evaluations to continuously measure and tune the algorithm and interface as well as review top search queries, measure click rates and provide curated results for commonly searched terms.

Create Workflows that Address Unique Global Needs

Optimize your digital workspace by tailoring it to the unique needs and workflows of your company. An intranet should help ensure consistency across multiple regions and aid in the organization of large, complex teams. One such way this is possible is through a team's ability to design and adopt time-saving and highly customized workflows.

**Acting as an integration platform, an intranet can
pull together the unique legacy systems and applications
that make your company tick.**

Human resources processes are just one example of how custom workflows can help streamline business tasks. Through the definition of processes or workflows and roles assigned to users and groups, a centralized data repository and request system can be organized for items such as time cards, tax information and time off requests. The same applies to tasks like submitting work requests of different teams or tracking a project's process.

Digital workspaces also need to support the creation of forms, which can be used for everything from business process automation to replacing complex paper applications. The ability for users to build custom forms, set rules for the data entered, pre-populate fields and authenticate users can drastically improve daily business tasks and allow for more streamlined operations.

Conclusion

An intranet is uniquely positioned to address the productivity and communication needs of a global enterprise. By building a custom platform for employees, a global enterprise can address pain points and improve core functionalities while recapturing productivity and providing better support to global teams.

Results like improved team communication and organization, streamlined search, the creation of optimized workflows and language accessibility make an intranet more than just a digital workspace—it acts as a global unifier.

**A global intranet can recapture valuable time lost
and free up your company to spend more time
doing what they do best.**

Moving Forward

Above point solutions and other technology, a digital experience platform (DXP) is uniquely positioned to build exactly the global intranet needed by a global enterprise. Thanks to the ability to integrate with existing applications and legacy systems, a digital workspace built on a DXP can truly be a custom fit.

Learn more about why a digital experience platform might be a good fit for your global intranet at liferay.com/solutions/intranets.

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Liferay makes software that helps companies create digital experiences on web, mobile and connected devices. Our platform is open source, which makes it more reliable, innovative and secure. We try to leave a positive mark on the world through business and technology. Hundreds of organizations in financial services, healthcare, government, insurance, retail, manufacturing and multiple other industries use Liferay. Visit us at liferay.com.