

What to look for when buying intranet software



Workshop

Buying intranet software can be tricky because each company may be looking to solve slightly different problems with their intranet. You'll also likely have multiple departments within your organization that may want to be involved in the process of choosing what software to use. While trying to appease multiple stakeholders and solve problems for different departments can be tricky, you can reduce the stress of making a decision if you clearly understand who and what you are trying to solve for upfront. Below, we'll outline the questions you should ask yourself before looking at intranet software and how to navigate through the process.

What timeline do we have to implement our intranet?

If you are a team that recently went fully remote due to Covid-19, this may be a higher priority to put something in place to help better connect your newly distributed workforce. You'll likely want to work with a platform that you can have up and running fairly quickly instead of choosing a platform that is infinitely customizable and requires hundreds of hours of implementation to get something in the hands of your employees. If your company has a much larger employee base (say 10,000+ employees), it may be harder to find software that would allow you to "plug-n-play" and be ready to go in a few days for such a large employee base. Because the team is so large, there is a high likelihood that you'll want more customizable options that are going to require much more upfront work but will be better able to accommodate a larger companies needs that may span across multiple subsidiaries and thousands of employees.

What is our budget?

Just like buying a house, you'll want to have an approximate idea of what you can spend on your intranet. You wouldn't look at \$2 million dollar houses if you know that your budget is \$500,000. The same goes for intranet software. Work with your finance team to see how much budget you can allocate to your intranet software before determining which providers you want to engage with and learn more about. Most intranet providers will charge between \$5 to \$35 per month per employee. Larger organizations can often get a bulk discount, but it's a good idea to at least see if you are even in the ballpark of pricing that a provi-

der charges to ensure you aren't wasting anyone's time.

Determine a few intranet providers to get more information from

Now that you've done the pre-work of determining who will own the intranet, the problems you need to solve, your timeline, and your budget, you'll be ready to start engaging with a few providers. Spend a little time doing some Google searches for intranet providers, reach some online reviews, and see if the messaging on their website resonates with the specific problems your company is trying to solve. Once you find 2 or 3 that look promising, it's worth requesting more information.

When you request more information, one thing you'll want to do is give them as much information upfront as possible. This helps save everyone some time. When requesting more info, if you provide how many employees you have, your timeline, and any specific problems you are trying to solve for, this will help them prepare a demo that will be catered to the things that are most relevant to you and will save everyone some time.

If you set up a demo with one of the providers, try to bring other stakeholders to the demo as well. This will help reduce the need for a follow-up call where you basically do the same demo a second time for the stakeholders who weren't on the first call.

Narrow down your choices

After doing a few demos, there may be one or two clear front runners. At this point, it would be good to request formal price quotes from them to bring back to your finance team. Ideally, you should already have a rough idea of the pricing based on their website or the first conversations you've had with them, but at this point, everyone should have enough information to get a more specific quote prepared.

If there are any stakeholders who weren't able to be a part of the earlier demo calls or email threads that provided more information, you'll want to make sure

they get brought in by this point. If you try to anticipate the questions they might have, you can provide it to them proactively to help the process move a little faster.

Implementation time

Depending on who you choose for your intranet provider, the implementation of the intranet may lean towards more work on their side or your side. For highly customized intranets, it's not uncommon for there to be a Solutions Engineer that is employed by the company who will build you an initial version of your intranet. This can sometimes take a few weeks to a few months and might be an additional, one-time service fee. For other intranet providers, the software may be more user friendly and allow the intranet owner to do much of the work on their own. Depending on the complexity of your organization, the implementation may be able to be done in as little as a couple of hours up to a few weeks. Regardless of your provider, you should be able to lean pretty heavily on their customer success team to ensure you are successful. With intranet software, getting started off on the right foot is important, so they often willing to provide a decent amount of white-glove service upfront to make sure you are happy.

Conclusion

Regardless of where you are in the process of implementing your new intranet, the most important thing to remember is that while there is an entire ocean of choices out there for you, they often excel at different things. By narrowing your focus to your organization's most critical needs, you'll help ensure that your new intranet is a success. The rest of the process will help ensure you find the perfect intranet for you and help you do it in a much more efficient way.