How the Intranet Can Improve the Digital Employee Experience

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Foreword

Digital employee experience (DEX) is more important than ever.

Workers are distributed across geographies and environments, and many never step foot inside an office. Regardless of how or where they work, people are feeling increasingly disconnected to their organizations, and the proliferation of technology we've seen over the past few years is making it worse.

The digital workplace has become complicated. So complicated, in fact, that just getting work done can be a challenge.

In this guide we'll cover challenges facing the digital employee experience and how the intranet – an unlikely savior if ever there was one – can serve as the cornerstone of a powerful, intelligent digital workplace that supports employee success for years to come.

Frank Pathyil
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Footnote: These insights have come <u>as a result of a discussion</u> I had with James Robertson, consultant and founder of Step Two, as well as Brad Rooke, senior solutions consultant for Igloo Software.

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Challenges of the digital workplace and DEX

Digital friction is destroying DEX

If there's one challenge we would charge with being a significant contributor to digital workplace and DEX struggles, it's digital friction - the effort employees must exert just to use the technology they interact with on a daily basis.

This can be blamed on the sheer volume of apps and platforms that have been released in recent years.

Harvard Business Review has been tracking the rate of context switching employees have to endure and that number has been steadily rising over the years.

Consider an example from a Fortune 500 consumer goods organization they studied. For one supply-chain transaction to be executed, each person involved switched approximately 350 times between 22 different applications and websites.

This means that in the course of an average day, an employee might toggle between apps and windows more than 3,600 times.

That's friction, and it is incalculably bad for DEX.

> "Ease of use and simplicity must now be at the heart of organizational strategy."
> – Gerry McGovern, digital experience visionary

If employees can't effectively access the tasks and information they need, when and where they need them, then the digital workplace has failed and DEX will continue to suffer.

Simplicity and ease of use are integral to solving this issue.

Organizations need to simplify the work experience and drastically reduce the amount of time employees spend interacting with technology, so they can spend more time on the meaningful, high-value work that drives fulfillment.

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Top 3 mistakes made in the digital workplace today

Top 3 mistakes made in the digital workplace today

There are 3 key mistakes businesses are making that contribute to the problem of digital friction.

- **Lack of employee-centric design**

- **No holistic focus on employee experience**

- **No forward-thinking vision**

Let's take a look at each of them in greater depth...

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Lack of employee-centric design

While there's lots of focus on wellness initiatives designed to help employees improve their health and manage their work-life balance, there's been a pervasive lack of consideration for how employees are coping with their digital work experience. No understanding of what employees are thinking when they're interacting with the digital workplace or what their experience is like.

It's a big, missed opportunity, because employees are overwhelmed and could use help in simplifying their work day.

By taking an employee-focused approach to designing the digital workplace, driven by an understanding of employees' challenges, organizations could eliminate the daily frustrations employees have to deal with, notably the frustrations that arise from having to navigate a maze of disparate apps.
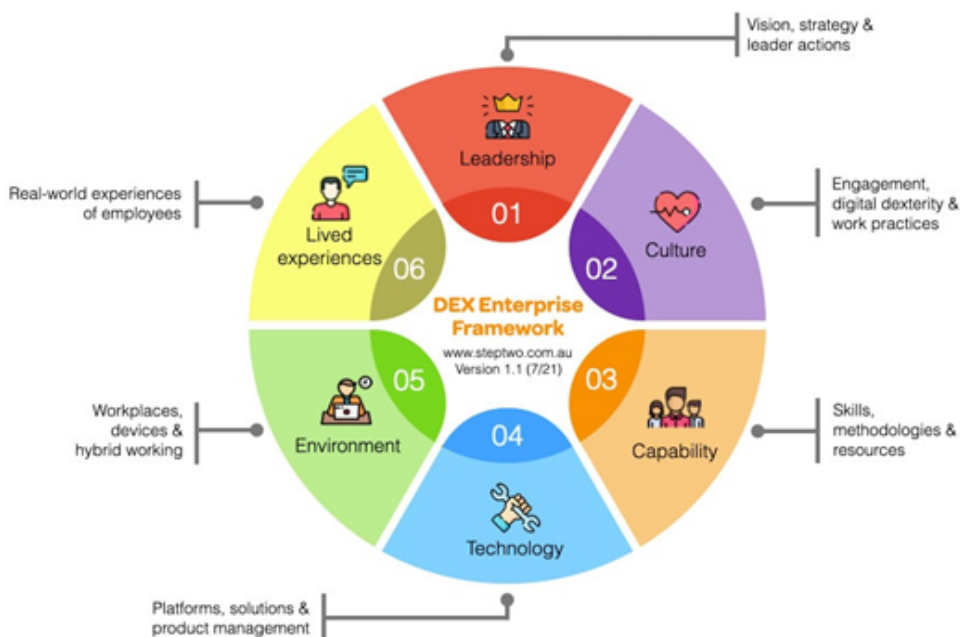
No holistic focus on employee experience

Given the siloed nature of most organizations, it's no wonder that the issue of digital friction has festered over the years.

As each functional unit has purchased and implemented its own solutions to meet their needs, there's been little consideration for how those tools fit into the greater technology landscape of the organization. The result is a disjointed experience that's frustrating and inefficient for employees.

This issue will persist until there's dedicated focus on the holistic vision of the entire digital employee experience. And that doesn't mean putting IT in charge.

No one group should hold that responsibility because a modern, intelligent DEX can't be built in a vacuum. The experience of employees spans the breadth of the organization - and so should the responsibility for it.

Developed by Step Two Designs, the DEX Enterprise Framework helps organizations ensure meaningful coverage of all aspects of the digital employee experience.

No forward-thinking vision

Exacerbating the lack of holistic focus or employee-centric design is a gap in understanding how to proactively create an intelligent, modern digital employee experience.

Yes, conceptually everyone agrees that the digital workplace needs help. Projects and work are not aligned, tools aren't coming together, and there is a lot of money being spent in ways that aren't fully effective, such as newly implemented HR systems that struggle with adoption.

But organizations struggle to cast aside the old-school cycle of "this is how we do things" and take the steps necessary to enact lasting change. And sometimes, they simply aren't even sure where to start.

What's ultimately needed is a top-down vision for what the ideal digital employee experience should look like - a voice and direction that can underpin all the work that needs to take place to make it happen.

How the intranet can help reduce digital friction

The intranet - a key player in DEX

When you really think about the issues plaguing the digital workplace and DEX, it can feel like an unsolvable problem.

Digital friction will persist as long as you keep adding tools to the tech stack. And you *are* going to keep adding them, that's a given. You need those applications and platforms to power your business.

So, if there's no getting around the reality that applications are going to continue to come and go, the logical course of action is to figure out how to implement them in such a way that employees can seamlessly access the specific features and functionalities they need without the headaches.

This is where the intranet comes in. Putting the right information into the hands of the right employees, at the right time - without them having to get bogged down in the minutiae of where a system is, how to log into it, or what it's even called.

The intranet is ideally suited to taking a leadership role in this.
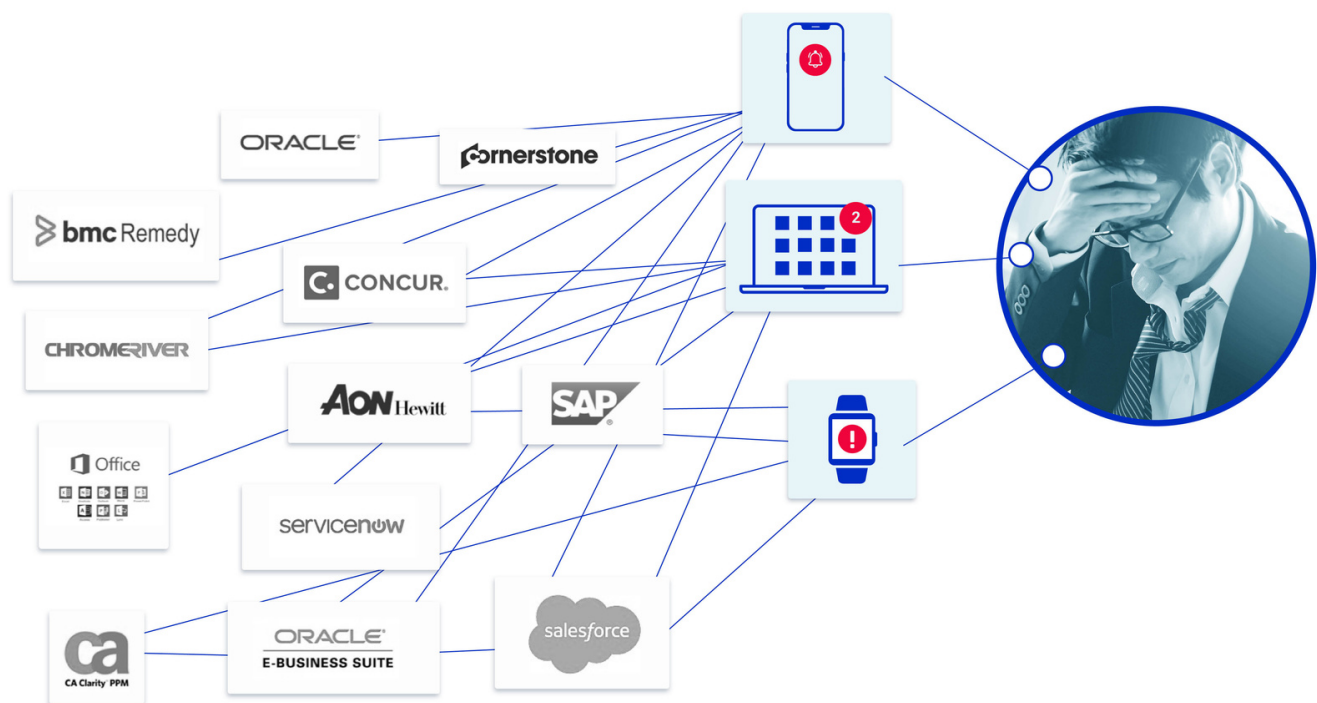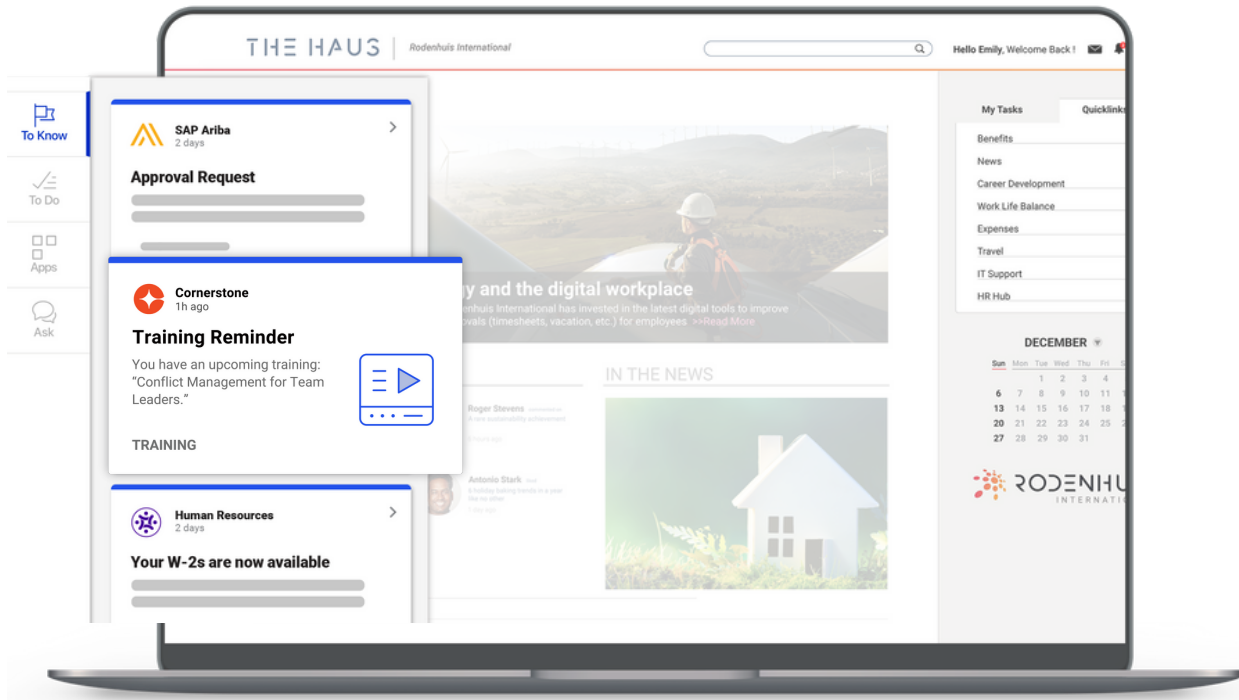
Creating a single source of truth

Major systems of record might try to be the "one app to rule them all," but they're not intended to meet the holistic needs of employees, nor are they designed to.

They're focused on solving major problems, and they're beholden to the customer records, the transactions in financial systems, or whatever else it is that they're responsible for.

The intranet is only beholden to employees, purpose-built to serve their needs.

The key to unlocking the full potential of the intranet is in understanding that employees' needs have changed. They aren't just looking for news anymore. They need a tool that helps them cross all the mundane, routine activities off their to-do lists so they can focus on more meaningful work.

CHAPTER 4

Making the best use of the intranet

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3 focus areas for a better intranet experience

So how do you create an intranet experience that can drive maximum value for users?

That comes down to a focus on three important categories:

1. **Usability**
2. **Personalization**
3. **Execution**

Let's take a look at each of them in greater depth...

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Usability

Organizations have to get past the idea that intranets are largely a delivery mechanism for news.

Instead, they should focus on providing an intranet that's useful, a site that can deliver important tasks and information to help them cross items off their to-do lists.

If you can give employees that, not only will they visit, they'll stick around to check out the news as well.

"The intranet is great real estate. Give it a purpose."

— Frank Pathyil

Personalization

Employees are used to a world that caters to their interests.

Amazon lets them know when books by authors they like are on sale, Netflix suggests what their next binge-worthy series should be based on viewing habits, and Spotify curates playlists based on their musical selections.

Generic communications that aren't relevant to the majority of employees who see them aren't helpful. They only overwhelm employees and cause disengagement over the long-term.

A better approach is to engage employees by using the intranet to deliver personalized communications that are contextually relevant to each worker.

"Employees should feel that the intranet is MY resource for MY information and MY tasks that I need to be productive."

— Brad Rooke, Igloo Software

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Execution

While your intranet serves as the keystone element in your digital employee experience, it will need some help to get the job done.

Relax. This isn't about adding another tool to use or place to check to your already complex tech stack.

It's about making better use of the tools you already have. Abstracting critical business functionality from your core systems and integrating it into the intranet experience, so your intranet has the tools and resources it needs to deliver a truly intelligent, modern experience that guides employees' attention to the tasks and information they need, whenever and wherever they need it.

Intranets are great at delivering the news employees expect. And when done well, they're an excellent facilitator of corporate culture, packed with features like blogs, forums, polling, broadcast, and multimedia.

But to deliver the level of utility employees really need...

- Personalized tasks, information, and communications from enterprise systems
- Self-service functionality for routine tasks
- An easy way to access information from across the organization

...they need some help.

To Know   To Do   Apps   Ask

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This is where Workgrid comes in

To see how Workgrid can modernize your intranet and deliver the digital employee experience your employees need to thrive, check out these resources:

[Overcoming Digital Friction with Guided Attention Technology](#)
[Anatomy of a Successful Intranet](#)
[Elevate Your Intranet from Zero to Hero](#)

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