

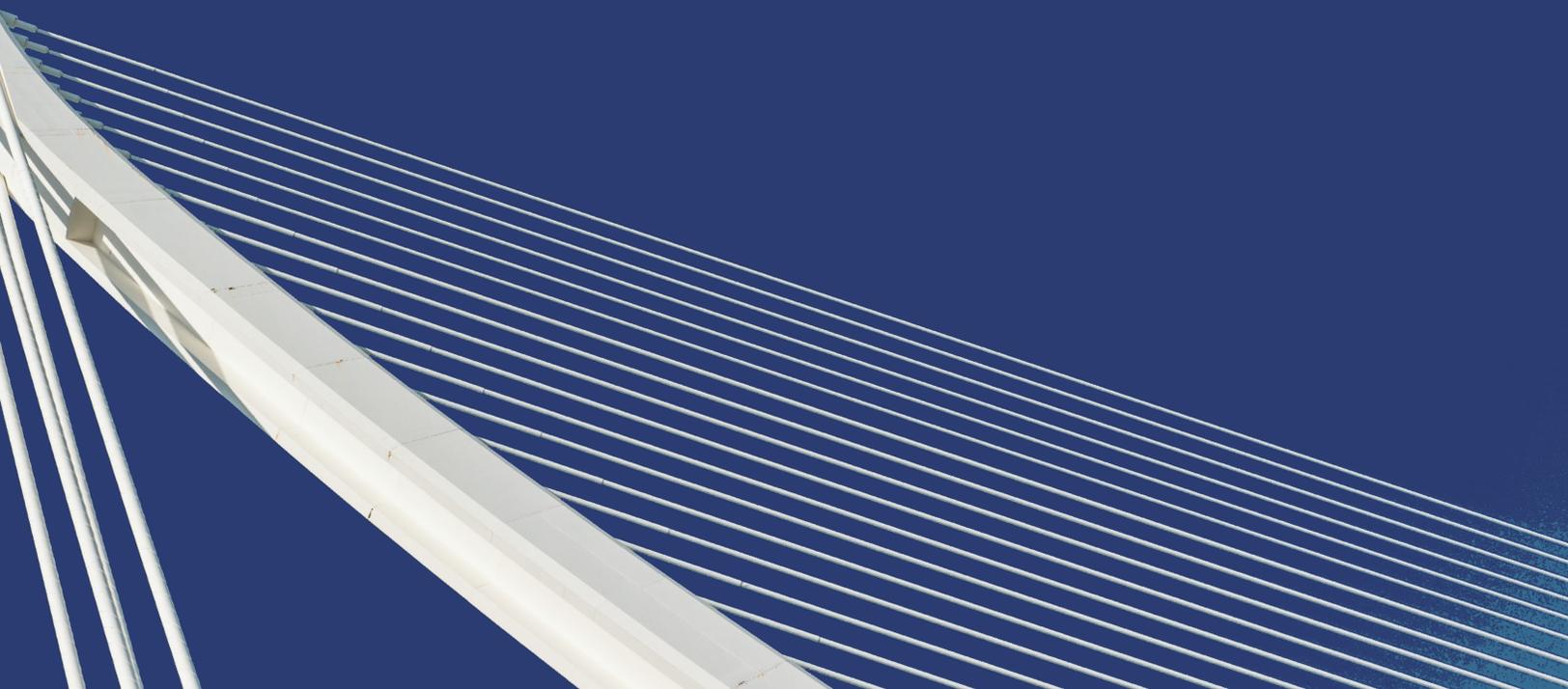


Deep Analysis

Custom Research

Moving from Intranets to Employee Experience Platforms

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Executive Summary

Over the past decade, organizations have focused heavily on improving the customer experience (CX). Indeed, great strides have been made to ensure that customer-facing websites and mobile applications have been optimized, personalized, and gamified to become dynamic and responsive to meet real-world customer needs. Agencies around the world have built teams and skill sets to rapidly design, develop, and deploy ever-improved CXs.

In parallel, technology has moved rapidly from tools to build websites (web content management) to tools for building today's sophisticated digital experience platforms (DXPs).

However, over that same time period the employee experience (EX) has suffered. Corporate intranets, the internal version of external customer websites, today are typically aging, underfunded, difficult to use, and poorly designed. Nobody really likes their corporate intranet, and all too often these intranets are designed to put across corporate leadership's message rather than communicating the information that employees need and want.

But what if the lessons learned in the world of CX were applied to EX? What if we were to reimagine the intranet experience and bridge the divide between the customer and the employee? That is exactly what some are starting to do. In this white paper, we explore new approaches that upend the traditional intranet and deliver a much more productive, dynamic, and positive experience for employees while at the same time providing a foundational platform to further improve the customer experience.

ACQUIA

This report was commissioned by Acquia and prepared by Deep Analysis.

The Problem

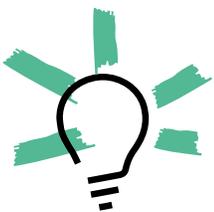
Historically, organizations have divided the world into three distinct buckets: customers, suppliers, and employees. In turn they have provided three distinct platforms: websites for customers, extranets for partners, and intranets for employees.

In the current digital era, influenced by the pandemic, strict delineation no longer works. Organizations in both the public and private sectors are recognizing that there are common requirements and overlaps in each group's experience and journey, and they need to work not separately but in harmony with one another.

At the most fundamental level, a corporate intranet provides a platform to connect all employees to the information they need. This can be as simple as providing employees with online access to HR information and corporate updates. That should be uncontroversial, yet the most typical response we get from employees and corporations alike is that the intranet is irrelevant and difficult to use, and that the information available there is stale or inaccurate.

There are multiple reasons why intranets have failed to evolve or deliver on their promise. Some of the reasons are technical, as today many intranets run on outdated platforms and/or were architected poorly from their inception. But a bigger reason for the lack of evolution is simply a lack of vision and ambition. In fact, we are increasingly hearing people say that it is time to dump the corporate intranet altogether, that it no longer works and it delivers little if anything of value. Clearly, there is a major disconnect between the original mission of a corporate intranet and the actual realization of that goal.

It is time to dump the corporate intranet and instead rethink, reframe, and reimagine the employee experience. But we need to understand what went wrong to determine what needs to change. In short, most intranets were designed to meet the needs of corporate leadership, or to put it another way “this is what we want to tell you” rather than “here is the information you need.”



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A Solution: Employee Experience Platforms

Responding to employee dissatisfaction with poorly performing intranets, forward-thinking companies are slowly replacing their traditional corporate intranets with modern employee experience platforms (EXPs).

Though they have much in common with intranets at an architectural and technical level, EXPs start out from a completely different perspective: they reflect and support the “employee journey.” They are designed to support the real-world, practical needs of employees, using a framework that understands the employee experience. EXPs are optimized to enhance the employee experience and in turn improve the end-customer and overall corporate experience; they are focused on supporting the most important elements of work life and can stimulate and facilitate forward-thinking planning.

It's true that many traditional intranets have been underfunded and poorly designed and supported. But at the root of the problem is the power dynamic of telling versus listening and responding. That's good news, as in practical terms it means we know how to reframe and rethink the situation. We know how to approach it anew and build, at a relatively low cost, an experience that employees want to use and enjoy using, one that can deliver substantial productivity and customer satisfaction improvements.



Getting from A to B

The starting point for building a successful EXP is to understand what the employee needs. You do that by mapping employee journeys within your organization.

Journey mapping is not a new concept, but it is an activity that almost always focuses on customers. Within your organization, you likely have all the resources that your employees need to do their work effectively and efficiently. But which resources they need, along with how and when they need them, is likely a mystery. A good EXP does not aim to rip and replace those existing resources, be they an HR system, a KM repository, SharePoint, or an ERP system. What a good EXP does is to create a unified, adaptable place where employees are provided with, or can access, the right information at the right time to effectively do their work. That's a pretty straightforward requirement, but getting it right requires thought and planning.

Ultimately, then, we strongly recommend that you identify one or more of your most critical employee activities, focusing on the things that make a measurable difference to your business, and study and map them out accurately. Every organization is a little different, and that is why it is critical to journey-map your employees' specific day-to-day experiences and requirements. Remember, happier employees almost always mean happier customer experiences; it's a win-win situation.



Definitions

CXP – Customer Experience Platform

An integrated suite of tools to support the management, delivery, optimization, and composition of digital customer experiences. CXPs deliver a platform to guide, speak to, and listen to customers.

EXP – Employee Experience Platform

An integrated suite of tools to support the management, delivery, optimization, and composition of digital employee experiences. EXPs deliver a platform to guide, speak to, and listen to employees.

DXP – Digital Experience Platform

An integrated suite of technologies and tools to create and manage productive relationships between customers, employees, partners, and prospects.

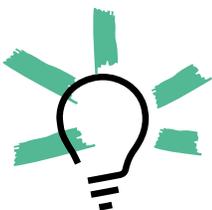
Designing a Platform for Success

If journey mapping is the place to start in designing a great EXP, how do you translate those new insights into a working application? First of all, start with a goal in mind. Remember that every organization is different, so you need to set an ambitious but achievable goal, then break it into bite-sized chunks. It's that simple.

At the highest functional levels, though, you will need to cover the following bases:

- Inventory and make sure you have access to the applications and information sources your employees need to access.
- Define practical measurements for success – metrics that you revisit over time – and adjust those metrics accordingly to fix glitches or further improve performance.
- Define specific parameters or limitations of your EXP. Remember, it cannot be everything to everyone, and it's better that it does a few things well than many things poorly.
- Understand any elements your current intranet is missing and figure out how to provide those elements in the EXP. (For example, though many firms have great web search capabilities, their internal enterprise search is typically weak.)

With these four bases covered, on paper at least, you can start to think about the core architecture and design of your new EXP. At this point you have a good understanding of your internal customer's (your employee's) needs, so you know what you have to work with, what is missing, and what you want to measure and achieve. Now we'll look at a real-world example of an EXP and examine how it was architected.



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Case Study: Successful EXP

A US healthcare support agency had been running the same intranet system since 2001. The agency had high staff turnover and poor client satisfaction ratings. Their work is difficult and highly regulated, and quite frankly their clients were difficult to please. Replacing the intranet with an EXP was never going to completely change the challenging reality of their work, but it did deliver a significant improvement. The agency employees had three needs that had to be met, none of them addressed adequately by the legacy intranet system.

1. They wanted accurate, immediate, and confidential access to HR information regarding how much vacation time they were due, how many days off they had taken, pay, and benefits.
2. They wanted side-by-side access to the multiple systems they needed to access daily to answer clients' questions.
3. They needed an accurate and easy-to-use search tool that worked across all their systems.

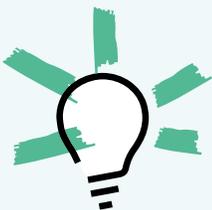
Though this agency had to deal with complex data privacy and HIPAA requirements, its needs are in line with those of many other organizations. On the surface they may not seem very ambitious, and one could argue any intranet should be able to deliver on these three needs. But the fact is that few intranets

can. Employees at this agency faced these hurdles:

- They typically emailed HR for any information they needed and waited days or weeks for a reply.
- They emailed HR because the data on the intranet was either lacking or inaccurate.
- They had to jump from screen to screen and write relevant details on notepads to answer client questions.
- They barely ever used the provided search engine as it seldom gave correct results.

After journey-mapping the work of key call-takers and comparing that against the clients' journey maps, the agency was able to quickly improve the situation and implement a new EXP. From an architectural standpoint, the agency recognized that it needed to replace and rethink the internal search engine, integrate the EXP with the HR application, and design a much more friendly and intuitive user interface (UI) that eliminated most, though not all, instances of screen jumping. Though there were many client applications, three dominated day-to-day usage. The agency was able to meld these into a single experience on the desktop for the employees.

This six-month project resulted in a dramatic reduction in employee turnover and, importantly, much improved client satisfaction rates. Client call times decreased from an average of 15 minutes to slightly under 5 minutes.

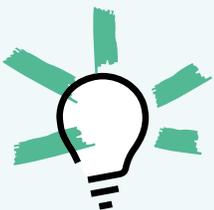


Replacing the intranet with an EXP was never going to completely change the challenging reality of their work, but it did deliver a significant improvement.

What is important to note in the case study is that with the exception of the search engine, no existing applications or infrastructure were ripped and replaced. Rather, the daily working experience of these applications was dramatically improved. From an IT standpoint, the largest pieces of work here were replacing the search engine and assisting in the secure integration of the back-end application. Neither of these were onerous tasks, and they were completed relatively quickly and well within budget. In fact, more time was spent on designing the EXP's UI to make it as simple and intuitive as possible. They engaged an outside team of CX/EXP designers for this work but remained closely involved to ensure the design truly met their employees' needs.

The case study embodies the most common type of EXP project – “phase 1,” if you like – in moving from a legacy intranet to a modern and intuitive EXP. It was not overly ambitious, it focused on critical needs that had to be met, and it delivered a major result in a short period of time.

In the process, it also designed the foundation for future improvements, changes, and developments. For example, the legacy search application was replaced by a modern machine learning (ML) and artificial intelligence (AI) system that delivers accurate federated (cross-system) search results but can also “push” timely and accurate information and knowledge to employees based on their current work task. That moved things from “*manually searching because it's lost*” to “*the system proactively providing information as required.*” In and of itself, that is a game changer and sets up many new possibilities to further improve the experience in future rollouts. Similarly, by replacing and re-architecting the UI platform/framework, this healthcare agency can easily design and roll out customized and personalized EXPs for other departments and roles within their organization, including a planned overhaul of the CXP using the same foundational components.



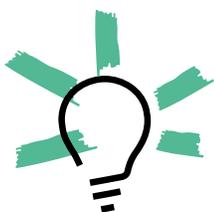
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Technical Requirements for an Employee Experience Platform

Building an outstanding EXP will require some form of technical framework and platform that provides the functionality and capabilities to design modular services.

It will require a framework inasmuch as you need a portal style UI to host and deliver your services, dashboards, search, and forms, and a platform in the sense of a broad range of pre-configured services/modules to give you as many out-of-the-box functions as needed.

Those functions could be content authoring, workflow, publishing, social collaboration and communication tools, analytics, intelligence, personalization, and security tools, to name a few. And don't forget pre-built connectors, integration points, and adapters to external applications and systems.



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Our Recommendations

To build a successful EXP, you need to start with the end in mind. Ultimately, you want to build an environment that enables your employees to improve their productivity, where possible in a self-service and automated manner.

You want to improve collaboration and communication across your organization in a personalized and user-friendly way. But really what you want to do is to add value to your employees' daily activities, inspiring them and engaging with them to work together to meet your organizational and customer needs. If you can pull that off, then you will have happier employees and customers alike. You will engender a sense of loyalty and job satisfaction, while also improving your organization's ability to adapt to change, remain agile, and grow.

Though these seem like lofty goals, the reality is that building an outstanding EXP is actually much easier than building an outstanding CX, for the simple reason that your employees and the work they undertake are relatively easy to define and understand. Journey-mapping your EX is much more straightforward than mapping erratic and unpredictable customer journeys. In addition, the technology options available today to build an EXP are leagues ahead of early intranet technologies: easier to build and deploy and underpinned by AI and intelligent automation. EXPs are not one and done; they are smart enough to evolve to meet changing needs.

Following are our recommended actions for undertaking a move from intranet to EXP.

1. Create an employee journey map for your intranet.
2. Cover the four bases outlined earlier: inventory the current situation, define measures of success for the new EXP, set parameters for the new EXP, and determine what elements are missing and need to be added.
3. Decide on a technical framework and platform.

Employees have needs that are quite separate from those of the organization or its customers. Ensure that those are met. It's not so much about setting a low bar for success, rather it is about ensuring that your employees are happy and their basic needs are taken care of. Use an EXP project as an opportunity to start the process of reimagining and reframing your overall experience management. Align your organizational, employee, and customer needs, and at the very least lay the foundations to ensure that they are not mutually exclusive, rather, that they enhance one another.

About Deep Analysis

Deep Analysis is an advisory firm that helps organizations understand and address the challenges of innovative and disruptive technologies in the enterprise software marketplace.

Its work is built on decades of experience in advising and consulting to global technology firms large and small, from IBM, Oracle, and HP to countless start-ups.

Led by Alan Pelz-Sharpe, the firm focuses on Information Management and the business application of Cloud, Artificial Intelligence, and Blockchain. Deep Analysis recently published the book "Practical Artificial Intelligence: An Enterprise Playbook," co-authored by Alan and Kashyap Kompella, outlining strategies for organizations to avoid pitfalls and successfully deploy AI.

Deep Analysis works with technology vendors to improve their understanding and provide actionable guidance on current and future market opportunities.

Yet, unlike traditional analyst firms, Deep Analysis takes a buyer-centric approach to its research and understands real-world buyer and market needs versus the "echo chamber" of the technology industry.

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About the Author

Alan Pelz-Sharpe is the founder of Deep Analysis. He has over 25 years of experience in the IT industry, working with a wide variety of end-user organizations like FedEx, The Mayo Clinic, and Allstate, and vendors ranging from Oracle and IBM to start-ups around the world. Alan was formerly a Partner at The Real Story Group, Consulting Director at Indian Services firm Wipro, Research Director at 451, and VP for North America at industry analyst firm Ovum. He is regularly quoted in the press, including the *Wall Street Journal* and *The Guardian*, and has appeared on the BBC, CNBC, and ABC as an expert guest.