

The intranet management handbook

Martin White
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I expect many of us will have contributed to the implementation, review or redesign of an intranet at some point in our careers and will have assumed that there is a well-defined procedure to follow. When I picked up this book I was quite intrigued by the claim on the back that there is virtually no professional literature on intranet management, but a quick search on Amazon and in the professional literature confirmed that there are very few recent books, and most of these are software manuals. Martin White has set out to provide a complete tool-kit for intranet managers covering all stages of the process from defining the user requirements and writing a business plan to marketing the intranet. The author makes clear in the first chapter that people who take on the role of intranet manager will have come from very different backgrounds including IT, librarianship, web design, communications and marketing. He writes in a very clear, jargon-free style which should be accessible to anyone managing a project or moving into a new role. The book is very clearly laid out in four sections: foundations, technology, operational planning and governance and strategy. Each section is further subdivided into chapters covering more detailed topics such as developing a content strategy, specifying and selecting software, establishing the intranet team and measuring user satisfaction. Although I do not have much experience in this field, it seems to me to cover the topic very comprehensively and in the right amount of detail for anyone setting up an intranet from scratch or upgrading an existing system. In my view this book would be invaluable

reading for any manager starting up an intranet implementation or review.

One of the most impressive features of the book is the continual reference to the end users. Smith believes that good intranets 'are based on a very clear understanding of how people use information', that they should not be technology-led or information-led and that they require strong senior management support. The longest chapter deals with measuring user satisfaction, with some very useful advice that could apply to other projects such as website design. It is made clear throughout that an intranet will be successful only if it is easy to use and employees feel it is actively supporting business processes. The author recommends that the intranet team be very visible at all stages of the process, and that they actively gather and publicise success stories to ensure widespread usage. This book appears to fill a clear gap in the professional literature and its accessible style will ensure that it appeals to a wide variety of practitioners in different sectors. I certainly felt after reading it that any manager or project leader tasked with implementing an intranet would find it extremely useful when starting their planning.