TRANSFORMING COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT: A LOCAL GOVERNMENT COUNCIL'S INTRANET SUCCESS STORY

DISCLAIMER

The screenshots provided in this case study are recreations based on the customer's intranet environment to protect their privacy.

BACKGROUND

Our client is a Local Government Council based in Australia with over 1000 employees that provide essential services to their communities like roads, garbage collection, water, sewer, town planning, and governance.

THE PROJECT

With over 400 field/deskless employees and 600 office employees, the Communication team found an increasing need to provide a more efficient and engaging intranet with modernized capabilities to ensure they can cater to a wide range of audiences and organizational needs.

For this intranet project, the Communications team, in coordination with the IT Department, aimed to implement a modern intranet solution.

OBJECTIVES

1

Centralize Communication: Provide a single platform for council-wide announcements, collaboration, and inter-departmental communication including the council's mobile workforce.

2

Improve Document Access: Create a streamlined document management system where employees can easily find and share resources.

3

Enhance Employee Engagement: Foster a more connected and engaged workforce by providing social interaction and recognition tools.

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CHALLENGES

Several internal surveys were conducted across all departments to ensure the project requirements reflected the needs of the Council and its wide range of employees and business units. A panel of senior stakeholders then assessed the feedback.

Key findings included:

- Fragmented Communication Channels: The Council relied on multiple tools (email, instant messaging, and shared drives), leading to missed information and duplicated documents.
- Poor Document Management: Important documents were scattered across different platforms, making it difficult for employees to find what they needed quickly. Document duplication also created an environment without a single source of truth.
- Difficulty of Continuous Improvement: Due to SharePoint's technicality and the lack of internal resources, no significant changes were able to be made to the intranet, and external resources were required in the ongoing management of the SharePoint sites.
- Lack of User Adoption: Previous attempts to introduce internal tools were met with low adoption rates due to a lack of user-friendly design, internal resources to provide training, and external training materials. The previous intranet was also only accessible through internet browsers, making it highly difficult for frontline workers to access the intranet on the go using their council-issued mobile devices or in an environment where mobile signal is limited. Mobile responsiveness was also very poor, creating frustrating user experiences for many users.
- Lack of Tools for Social Engagement: The lack of tools in the previous existing intranet resulted in the inability to create highly social and engaging spaces for the employees to interact and collaborate
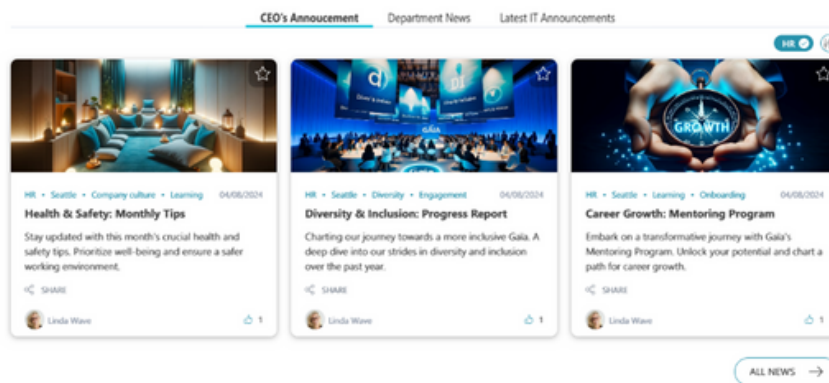
WHY POWELL INTRANET?

The Council's Communications team, with assistance from the IT stakeholders, partnered with a Powell Software implementations partner to develop an intranet using the Powell Intranet platform

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SOLUTION

1. A Centralized News Feed: A council-wide news feed was created with a dedicated space for the CEO to publish important updates or announcements. A second tab enabled the team to consolidate news from various business units into a central feed. Decisions were also made to highlight IT updates and announcements in this news feed to help address previous complaints from the frontline workers who found it difficult to stay on top of important policies regarding the use of council-issued mobile devices and other cybersecurity-related information.

The redesign of the Homepage and consolidation of news significantly helped enrich the Homepage while maintaining ease of use for employees, ensuring that information is not scattered and difficult to find.


2. Personalization and Content Targeting: Using out-of-the-box Powell Intranet features, content targeting was enabled to provide personalized experiences for the Council's employees. Each user could subscribe to specific news streams based on pre-defined content tags, such as departments.
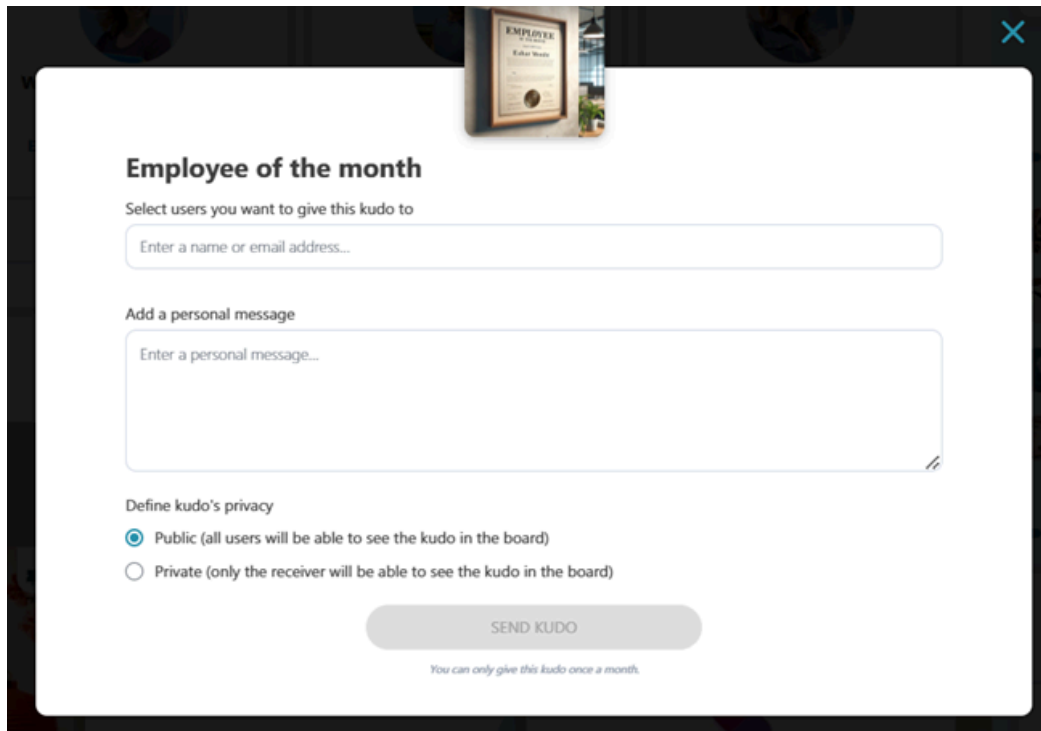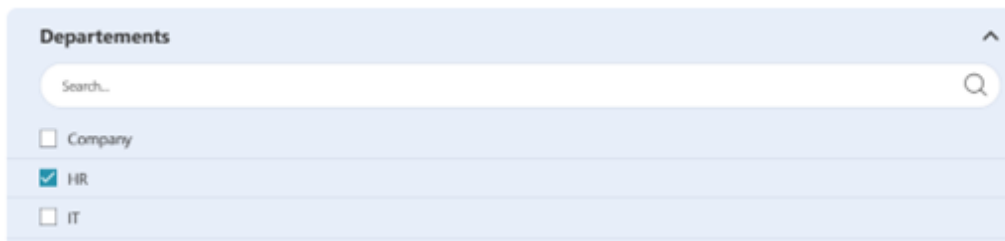

3. Distributed Content Model and Site Ownership: One of the key issues the communication team faced concerning the previous intranet was the team's ability to frequently publish news and updates to maintain a high level of engagement with the rest of the council. A conscious decision was made to migrate to a distributed content model whereby each department site has a nominated owner from said department to maintain the content and the department sites. As a result of distributed ownership, the communications team can now focus on more specific responsibilities and have greater capacity to maintain content and general information on the Homepage. The communications team and the department site owners found that the user-friendliness of Powell Intranet helped simplify the transition of this ownership model and enabled these contributors to adapt to the new content publishing process quickly.

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4. Document Management System (DMS): A series of independent and robust search centers were created to allow employees to easily search for News, People's Directory, Documents, Events, and Videos. The addition of advanced filters based on department, author, document type, and topics enabled employees of the council to further narrow down the search results for a more efficient search
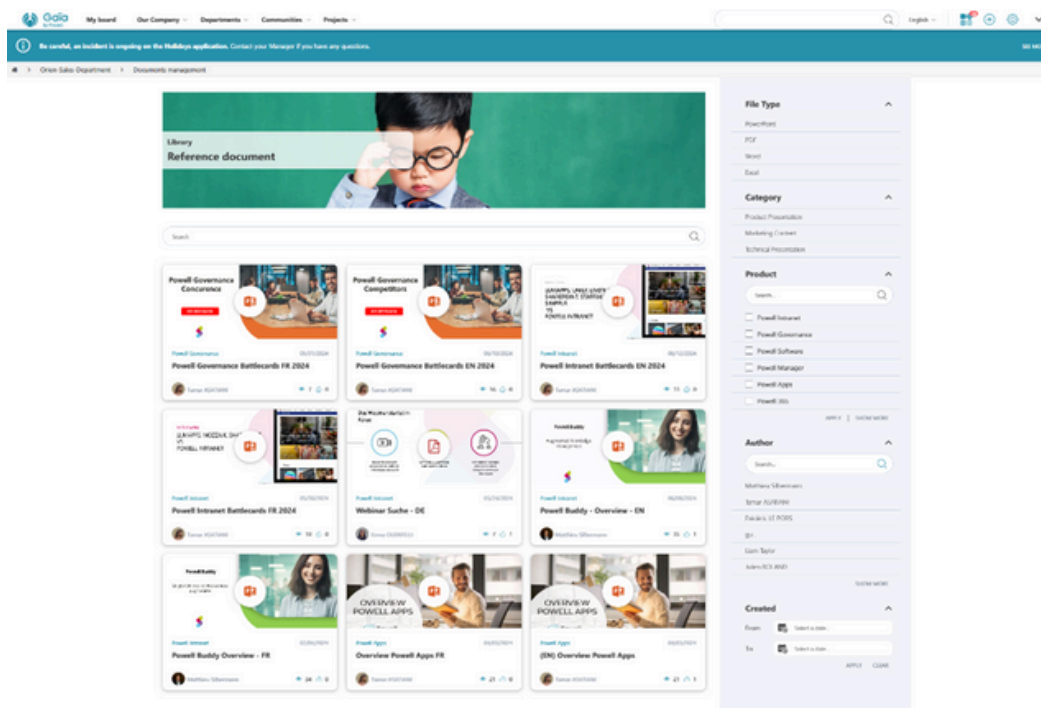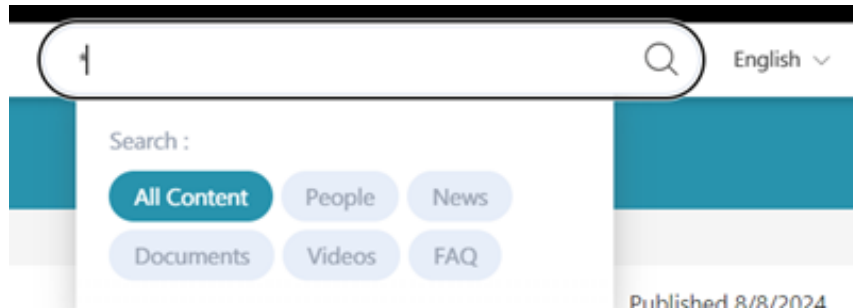
5. Ideation and Collaboration Spaces: Powell Intranet allowed the council to create communities within the council intranet to foster a more inclusive and socially responsible culture. Using the community template provided, a running club was created to bring together the employees who enjoy running in their private time and employees who are interested in running socially. With 18 members, the running club has organized fortnightly morning runs open to anyone who would like to participate. The council hopes to expand on this capability and create additional spaces for another topic of interest to promote more social engagement opportunities for employees.

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6. Social Features and Communities: The new intranet included Viva Engage, Polls, Communities, and Kudos, where employees could give and receive recognition for various topics such as teamwork, support, excellence, and proactivity. With the implementation of Kudos, The Council immediately saw high adoption upon the launch of the new intranet from all business units to promote accomplishments within the council. One key example of the positive impact this has had includes several kudo mentions of our services team due to the great public feedback the council has received for the high quality of service they provided to our local community.


7. Delegated Templates and Intranet Administration: With the assistance of the Powell Software Implementation partner, 5 different site templates (Event Hub, Crisis Management, Community, Projects, Department) were developed to ensure the Council's Communications team is equipped to implement additional sites based on the evolving needs of the council workforce. Also, Powell Intranet provided front-end configurations for site navigation, which enabled the Council's communications team to manage site navigation without the help of the IT team and update it as required when additional sites are created, such as the Runners Community site.

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8. Mobile Accessibility: As mentioned in the Challenge section, the previous council intranet was only accessible through internet browsers, making it difficult for frontline workers who rely on council-issued mobile devices to communicate. The newly developed intranet is now fully accessible on mobile devices through the Microsoft Teams mobile application and has improved mobile responsiveness when accessed via a browser and the Microsoft Teams application. This has allowed these frontline workers to easily access key documents and forms that need to be completed on-site such as a Traffic Control Plan or Risk Assessment Documents.
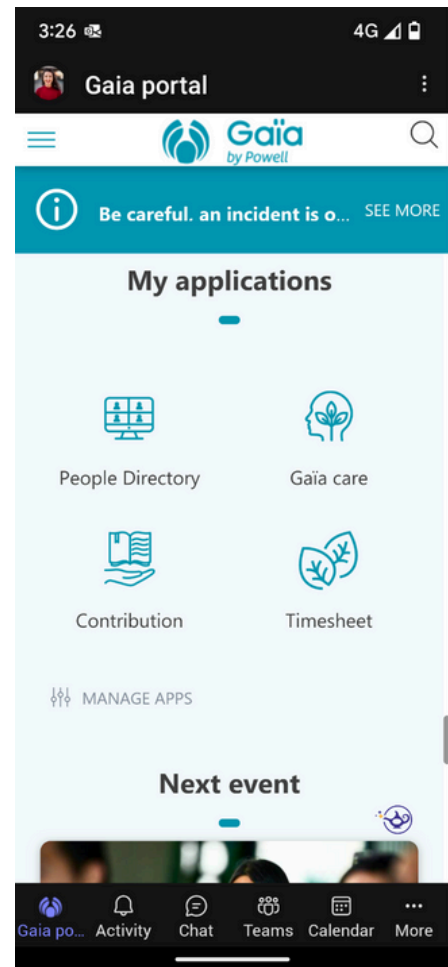
IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

The project was implemented in phases:

- Phase 1: Needs assessment and stakeholder interviews to ensure the platform would meet the specific needs of the company.

- Phase 2: Design and development of the intranet platform, with input from key users to ensure a user-friendly interface.

- Phase 3: Pilot testing with a small group of employees to gather feedback and make necessary adjustments.

- Phase 4: Full deployment across the company, accompanied by comprehensive training sessions to drive adoption.

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RESULTS

- Increased Communication Efficiency: The centralized news feed and collaboration spaces significantly reduced the reliance on email and other fragmented communication tools, leading to a 40% reduction in email traffic.

- Improved Document Access: The new DMS reduced the time employees spent searching for documents by 70%, enhancing overall productivity for most employees including frontline workers.

- Higher Employee Engagement: Social features, Community and easy access to information resulted in a 60% increase in content engagement metrics, as measured by internal surveys and analytics. The consistent high engagement means fewer employees miss out on the latest updates or policy changes and time saved on creating various reminders for form submissions and other time-sensitive tasks.

- Strong Adoption Rates: The intranet saw a 90% adoption rate within the first three months, thanks to the new user-friendly design and comprehensive training. The new mobile capability plays a big role in ensuring that the council employees can access the intranet easily through their mobile devices. The adoption rate continued to average 87% for the first 12 months, proving the success of the current design and user experience enhancements.

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CONCLUSION

The intranet project was a success, delivering on all key objectives and significantly improving internal communication and document management. The council continues to see benefits from the platform, with ongoing updates and feature enhancements based on employee feedback. This case study highlights the importance of a well-designed intranet in fostering a connected, informed, and productive workforce.

"We are very happy with our new intranet and how it changed the way we engage with each other. The improved user experience and increased social engagement as well as the significant reduction in document search time has been a key highlight for us."

— Communications Manager

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