



The IC Space

Case study: Gaining fresh insights on government intranets

Tom Miles, Intranet Manager at the Department for Transport (DfT), explains how he used a World Café to get to find out how departments across government manage their intranets and to kick off a new intranet community.

Using a World Café to find ways to improve government intranets

“We should host a World Café for other Government Departments to see what they’re doing with their Intranet’s” said my new boss!

Given the limitations of our hospitality allowance - I had visions of croissants, muffins and double shot vanilla lattes - and having never heard of the World Café process I was initially a little sceptical.

After a little reading and watching of [videos on YouTube](#) I was quickly sold, this would be a great process for gaining fresh insights on a topic and drawing on the collective intelligence of a group. Within DfT we’re at the initial stages of exploring what to do with our Intranet so any ideas and lessons we can pick-up from other areas of government would be invaluable.





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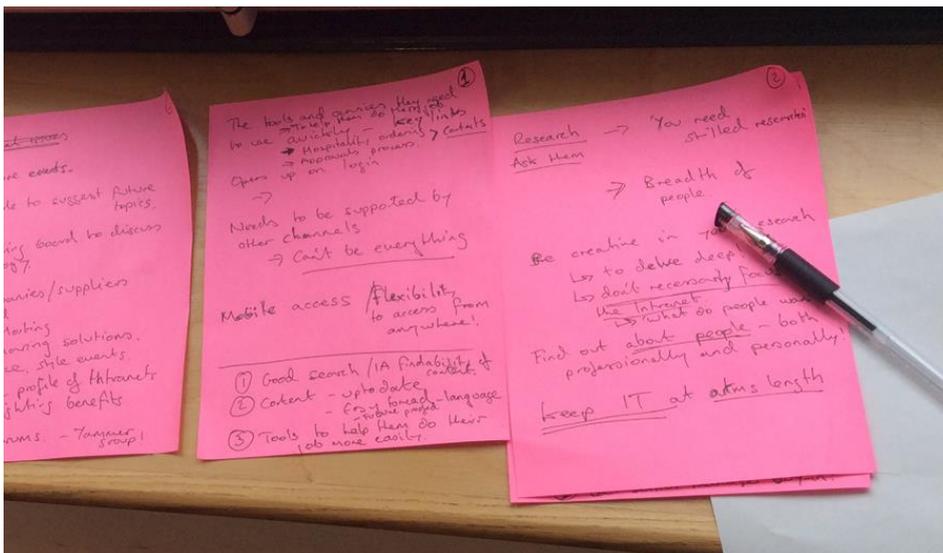
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Intranets are often seen as the poorer cousin of other digital channels so it wasn't a huge surprise that there was an appetite for other 'intraneters' to get together and chew the fat and share ideas (moan about lack of appreciation, understanding and funding!) We only initially had room for 25, so had to limit the initial flood of positive responses to one per organisation and quickly find an extra table to squeeze in another five.

A wide variety of organisations made it, from the more *niche* organisations like the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency to the classic central departments like the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

We had settled on two questions to discuss during the session with a third to be decided on the day based on any emerging themes or suggestions.

There was a lot discussed and to process from just a one hour's discussion.



The first question we discussed was 'What do users value about our Intranets?'



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A good search was first on most people's list followed closely by accuracy, tone and relevancy of the content – *content is still king it seems!*

The second question looked at how we develop our intranet to address user needs. The obvious answer straight off was 'research, research, research!' and as we delved down it became clear it was more than just about the intranet – be creative and even fun in order to find out about your people, what they want and expect both from their professional experience and personal life. Though this work isn't easy and really finding out about your users is a skill that takes investment and time.



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'Don't put solutions before problems, understand your users first', David Fawbert, Highways Agency.

Oh, and involve senior managers from the start – there's no point going off finding out everything users want if there aren't the resources to achieve it.

The final question discussed was how to keep the community going, there was definitely an appetite to get together more regularly and share ideas. One suggestion was to hold sessions on specific intranet subjects - one such topic which kept cropping up was devolved publishing. Everyone seemed to have any opinion, with different experiences and lessons being shared.

Maybe a world café dedicated to intranet devolved publishing would be a good idea? Though I think we might need a bigger venue (and more coffee) next time!

Tom Miles
Intranet Manager