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Effectiveness Of The Intranet As An Employee Communications Tool

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EFFECTIVENESS OF THE INTRANET AS AN EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATIONS TOOL

BY

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Gone are the days when employees used to rely on bulletin boards in the lunchroom, company newsletters or even the office grapevine to receive corporate messages and other pieces of internal information. The objective of employee communication according to Smith (1991), is “not just to share information, but to build understanding and to help resolve conflicts and motivate positive actions” (p. 18). The tools of internal communications in a company used to be memos, newsletters and fliers as per Bevan and Bailey (1991). But Bevan and Bailey elaborate that, “electronics and computer technology, often combining with long-existing methods (such as telephone), are placing exciting new tools into the hands of organizational communicators” (p. 218).

Research indicates that companies these days use the Intranet as one of the methods to communicate with its employees. Perreault and McCarthy (1999) support the theory that these days “many firms, even very small ones, have their own intranet—a system for linking computers within a company” (p. 214). In a seminar titled “Building a Corporate Web” (as cited in Bernard, 1999) that focuses on the importance of an internal web site, hosted by Wordmark Associates, Inc., an on-line resource that specializes in strategy, information architecture, content planning, content development, and training for business applications delivered over the Web, the author of the seminar says that “At its heart, the true value of Web technology lies not just in ‘putting your organization on
the Internet map', but more importantly in improving communication between your organization and its employees, customers, and suppliers.

According to Perreault and McCarthy (1999), the Intranet uses the same type of technology as the Internet does. The Intranet is used to communicate with the employees by posting various types of pertinent information that is regularly monitored and updated. Bearing these studies in mind, the author will try to find out how different companies use the Intranet to provide and exchange information with its employees.

Stellin (2001), in her analysis of how Intranets nurture companies like I.B.M., explains that, though the concept of the Intranet started in the mid 1990s, it is only in the last 2 years that companies are seeing the urgent need to build out their internal web site in an effort to change and improve internal communication processes. Substantiating this theory, Bernard (1999) presents an analysis of why developing an Intranet has become such a priority for companies. Bernard argues that given the high volumes of information coming into a company, and the increasing amounts of space, time and resources needed to keep a paper-based version of the information for internal use; companies have recently realized the potential of having most of the information on-line in one central location. Considering that the concept of an Intranet is fairly new, the author has reviewed relevant literature from 1996 through 1998 to provide a perspective about the usefulness and effectiveness of the Intranet as an employee communications tool.

The author has also focused on studies from the early 1990s through the year 2000 in order to put the reader in perspective about the trends in employee communication that preceded the revolution of the Intranet. To support the study, the
author surveyed 70 employees from various companies and industries in the San Francisco Bay Area, in an attempt to gauge the perception of the employees about the Intranet and to find out whether they consider it an important and effective tool for employee communications.

Problem Statement

Traditionally, companies used memos, bulletin boards, face-to-face communications or even posters and newsletters to communicate with its employees. Companies today are often relying on the Intranet, together with traditional methods of internal communications to impart and share knowledge with its employees. This research will attempt to present a perspective as to whether the Intranet is indeed an effective employee communications tool.

Subsidiary Questions

This research will attempt to answer the following relevant subsidiary questions that will help the readers understand the importance of employee communications as well as the role of the Intranet in the communication process:

1. What are the goals of employee communications?
2. What vehicles do companies use in their employee communications process?
3. How has the Intranet evolved as an important tool in employee communications?
4. What is an Intranet?
5. What kinds of corporate information are companies using it for?
6. What are the advantages of having an Intranet?
7. What are the disadvantages of the Intranet?

8. How effective do the employees consider the Intranet to be?

The author provides answers to these questions by reviewing applicable literature on the subject. The author also conducted an employee survey about the effectiveness of the Intranet and uses the results of this survey to substantiate the literature review and to support the study.

The Need for the Study

Having established that the Intranet, as a tool for employee communications has been gaining popularity only in the past few years, the author has referred to Intranet studies from the year 1996 onwards. An interesting seminar about how the Intranet is used in businesses, an on-line magazine called CIO Web Business (1998) outlines the vast potential of the internal web site (also known as the Intranet) and considers it the “next-logical step” (paragraph 7) in the process of informing employees. The seminar also asserts that, before the evolution of the Internet, many companies were investing financial and human resources to resolve the challenge of connecting disparate groups of employees to a reservoir of internal company information and tools.

Through a review of pertinent literature, the author found that companies--big and small--are spending significant dollars in building the Intranet infrastructure simply because of the merits of having a “mechanism to present and access information much more easily than before”, says CIO Web Business (1998) in a seminar about how companies use Intranets. “Not surprisingly, the intranet is a magnet for startups. Much of
the entrepreneurial energy is focused on meshing Web systems with existing systems”, because it is easy to start from scratch, affirms Cortese (1996, paragraph 31). However, Bernard (1999) poses an important question to readers, with regard to the effects of Intranets on all companies, regardless of their size:

The past few years have seen an explosion in technologies that relate to the World Wide Web...however many forward-looking companies are now using their internal networks [the Intranet]. But will their efforts enhance the organization’s strategic goals, or will this be just another pretty (useless) set of home pages? (paragraph 1)

These research findings prompted the author to find out if the Intranet serves its purpose as an excellent tool for employee communications.

Objectives of the Study

The author aims to accomplish three main objectives through this study. To find out:

1. How organizations use the Intranet in the employee communication process?
2. If employees consider the Intranet to be effective?
3. How organizations could further leverage the Intranet’s capabilities?

Definition of Terms

1. **Employee Communications (EC)**: It is the vital process through which the organization survives, adapts and thrives (Bevan & Bailey, 1991).
2. **Internal communications**: An employers’ communication process with the employees within the company.
3. **Intranet**: An informational web site within a company that works on the same technology as the Internet does. This is also known as the internal Net, private Net or internal web site.

4. **Web site**: One or more Internet addresses at which an individual or organization provides information to others often including links to other locations where related information may be found (Britannica [On-line], 1992).

5. **World Wide Web**: A part of the Internet designed to allow easier navigation of the network through the use of graphical user interfaces and hypertext links between different addresses, also called Web (Britannica [On-line], 1992).

6. **Home page**: The first page that one comes across on the Internet that contains links to the other pages of the site or to other sites.

7. **Questionnaire**: A list of questions that is typically used to obtain answers in a survey.

8. **Employee relations**: The relationship between an employer and an employee.

9. **Internal communication**: It is the process of communication between people within a company or organization.

10. **Internal audiences**: The employees within a company.

11. **Vision statements**: A statement describing the vision of a company.

12. **Mission statement**: A statement describing the purpose of a business or company.

14. **Internet**: An electronic communications network that connects computer networks and organizational computer facilities around the world (Britannica [On-line], 1987).

15. **Servers**: A main computer in a network that is used to provide services to other computers in the network.

16. **Browsers**: A program that is used as a tool to access web pages on the Internet, for example-Netscape Navigator.

17. **Firewall**: A software program that protects information within a private network like an Intranet, from outsiders (Cortese, 1996)

18. **Database**: A usually large collection of data organized especially for rapid search and retrieval (as by a computer) (Britannica [On-line], 1962).

19. **Search engine**: A software that allows people to search a web site (internal or external) for specific information.

20. **Corporate portals**: A web site that acts as a gateway to other web sites.

21. **Bandwidth**: The pace or rate at which data travels in a telecommunications network.

22. **Scalability**: A telecommunications terminology to define the ability of a network to transport both low-speed and high-speed applications.

23. **Webmasters**: Professionals who maintain and update a web site.

24. **Hacking**: The process of getting into a computer system illegally by breaking its security system or firewall.
Limitations

The limited academic research material available that specifically looks at the value of a corporate Intranet is one limitation of this study. Another limitation is the population and sample of the survey. The survey population selected by the author consists of employees in various levels of management but leans more toward middle and junior level employees, and so the results may be skewed. Therefore, the author realizes that the sample provides a perspective from employees in some corporate environments and does not represent the thinking of employees in all corporate environments.

Further, the author's sample is limited to employees in the West-San Francisco Bay Area and as a result, there might be a bias. In addition, the actual sample size is, of course, not statistically valid to represent this type of group nationwide. The survey questionnaire consists of a mixture of open-ended and specific questions and this inconsistency may provide some amount of error during the analysis of the results. The author used an on-line survey web site to develop and deploy the survey, collect and tabulate the results of the survey and so this might be another limitation.
Chapter II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Employee Communications

Bevan and Bailey (1991) define employee communication as “the process through which organizations share information, build commitment, and manage change. A key factor in employee motivation and performance, communication plays an increasingly important role in maintaining competitiveness” (p. 214). Charlton (1990) feels that it is important for companies to have a formal employee communications program to support the corporate objectives and to share knowledge with its employees, together with improving communications between its employees. According to Charlton, back in the 1970s and 1980s, “Employee Communication began to earn recognition as an important management responsibility” (p. 26). Bevan and Bailey, commenting on research done in the field of employee relations, say that employees traditionally preferred one-on-one communications with the superior but as the “volume of information increases, and as time becomes scarcer, face-to-face processes can’t accomplish every communication need” (p. 215).

Newman (1990), in his studies about internal communications at Polaroid Corporation, stresses the importance of internal employee communications. Newman believes that “creating a good working system for organizational communication is much like nurturing a small, demanding child” (p. 34). Corbett (1988) and Smith (1991), add a new dimension on employee communication. Corbett (1988), stresses the importance of
the internal communication process because companies will not be able to communicate
with its publics if "internal audiences are not first, fully informed, involved and
motivated to do an effective job" (p. 1). Smith (1991) agrees that employee
communication programs are important and that "it is a legitimate management
discipline, one that can have a tremendous influence on the attitudes and work
performance of employees" (p. 22). Smith further comments that employee
communication programs must therefore "be responsible for carrying their part of the
management load, and they must be held accountable for the effectiveness of their
activities" (p. 22).

Goals of Employee Communications

Perhaps the most readily available and basic information that employees receive is
their own job description and responsibilities as per Bevan and Bailey (1991). After this
primary information need is met, Bevan and Bailey explain that the employee then
becomes ready for more information about the company as a whole and about his or her
place in the organization (p. 215). Explaining the employee communication model of
researcher Roger D’Aprix, Bevan and Bailey say that initially, the employee wants an
answer to the question "What’s my job?" and as that "question is satisfactorily answered,
employees become involved in successively broader issues, and eventually are ready to
explore ways in which they can make a greater contribution to the organization" (p. 215).
Research findings (Bevan & Bailey, 1991; Charlton, 1990; Corbett, 1988; Dalton, 1990; Smith, 1991) show that the goal of a company’s employee communication program must be to share information with the employees, in order for them to be effective in their roles and to help them synchronize the internal messages with the external messages. “Leaders of winning organizations know the strong connection between the quality of their communication with employees and the quality of their products and services to customers (Shaffer, 1990, p. 23). Explaining how employee communication became an important corporate function in the 1990s, Charlton (1990) says, “This evolution came about in part when top management realized the good sense of having all of the communication oars--external and internal--rowing in the same direction to achieve maximum synergy and productivity” (p. 26). Dalton (1990) is also of the opinion that employees are the first most important target audience for a company.

The success of an employee communication program, depends on how companies treat it (Charlton, 1990; Smith 1991). Charlton (1990) also says that EC programs can have varied goals in an organization. Informing employees about the happenings within the organization—good or bad— is key and calls for “coordinated communication programs that could get business news to employees fast, while also meeting external reporting requirements [external communications]” (p. 26). Smith (1991), explains that “effective communication programs must have body and soul”(p 17). Smith is of the opinion that the “body components” (content of the message that is communicated), should have information that is both “good and bad” (p. 17). The “soul” of the company’s employee communication process is the “management’s attitude” (p. 18) or, in other words, the approach that management takes with respect to communication. According to
Smith, the manager's objective should be "to share information, to encourage good ideas and to transmit the information they receive to other appropriate people in all directions" (p. 18).

**Vehicles used in Employee Communications**

Employee communication is a two-way process and was made famous by International Business Machines (IBM), according to a study conducted by Smith (1991). Smith talks about IBM's innovative employee communication:

International Business Machines (IBM) wrote the book on upward communication thirty years ago with the introduction of its Speak Up program, and still considers it one of the most important aspects of an extensive employee communication system. But IBM also uses many other channels of personal, print and visual media, with increasing emphasis on satellite television and videotapes. (p. 37)

Studies (Bevan & Bailey, 1991; Corbett, 1988), in the field of employee communication show that newsletters, memos, brochures, employee bulletin or message boards, audio tapes, videos, telephone hotlines, teleconferences, voice mail, procedure manuals, attitude surveys, posters carrying the company's vision and mission statements, meetings--both one-on-ones as well as group--and the old fashioned grapevine served, and still serve, as vehicles of employee communications in a company. Corbett (1998) comments that throughout the world, "organizations utilize the wonders of the written word, through in-house newsletters, bulletins or newspapers, or by the ever popular
"memo"" (p. 2). But, Bevan and Bailey feel that the advancements in computer technology are soon making electronic methods of employee communication very common.

Smith (1991) comments that the basic vehicles in an employee communication program of an organization “include things like printed materials, telephone or electronic news lines, video and film presentations and face-to-face communication in various forms” (p. 17). Supporting the fact that personal communication methods were popular up until the 1990s, Bevan and Bailey (1991) say that employees like personal communication with their superiors as it helps resolve issues at once and the results are immediate. Although Corbett (1988) agrees with the other researchers (Bevan & Bailey, 1991; Smith 1991) that employees in the past preferred more personal methods of communication, he however thinks that “written communications with personal interaction” should complement “various channels of mass communication and technology” (p. 2).

The evolution of technology in the employee communication process during the early 1990s, is evident in some of the studies (Bevan & Bailey, 1991; Smith, 1991). Commenting on the technological revolution of the late 1990s when information became available to the employees at the click of a button and provided an instantaneous method of spreading and sharing information, Blanchard and Waghorn (1997) say that, “With everyone having access to the same facts and figures at the same time, decision making no longer remains the exclusive domain of leadership- it becomes a requirement of all”(p. 83).
Evolution of the Intranet

Amy Cortese (1996) of Business Week, explains how the parcel-delivery company Federal Express (FedEx), started using the Internet or the World Wide Web in the year 1994 to help customers track their parcels. The company made phenomenal savings of about $2 million that year. FedEx officials then thought about the wonders that could be achieved within the company by setting up an Intranet. Federal Express set precedence in the use of both the Internet and the Intranet by being one of the earliest companies to start using the Intranet and the Internet to do business more effectively. Following this success story, other companies started implementing internal systems to manage and provide information to its employees. Cortese also talks about the velocity with which the concept of the Intranet started to evolve:

It’s happening with amazing speed. Just as the simple act of computers around the world on speaking terms fomented the Internet revolution, connecting all the islands of information in a corporation via an intranet is sparking unprecedented collaboration. "The intranet has broken down the walls within corporations," says Steven P. Jobs, CEO of NeXT Computer Inc. [Jobs is now the CEO of Apple Corporation.] From AT&T to Levi Strauss to 3M, hundreds of companies are putting together intranets.... Scientists working in fields such as genetics and biotechnology credit intranets with allowing them to share information with colleagues and quickly sift through volumes of data that might have taken days to find in the past. (paragraph 7)
The growth of the intranet culture has been tremendous. Equally mind-boggling are the existing statistics that describe the revolution. Cortese (1996) highlights the 1996 survey results of analyst firm Forrester Research—that out of 50 companies that were surveyed, 16% already had an intranet and 50% considered it a top priority in their future goals—to emphasize the fact that companies began realizing how simple the intranet made internal processes and yet how powerful an employee communications tool it can be.

The LPI Software Funding Group (1998) presents a commentary [a section in their web site that focuses on a current popular topic each month] about the sudden growth of the Intranet. According to this commentary, research firm IDC (International Data Corporation) has staggering numbers to describe the growth in the use of the Intranet. IDC estimates that at the end of the year 2000, the number of Internet servers that will be shipped, will be about 450,000 while as, units of Intranet servers that will be shipped in that same period will be about 4,500,000!

The explosion of the Internet in the early 1990s was closely followed by a realization that the potential of an internal web solution is boundless, according to some reports. Cortese (1996) highlights the ultimate benefit of the Intranet—“universal reach”—and cites this fact as one the main reasons that “made the Internet grow so rapidly in the first place” (paragraph 6). The reasons why the Intranet is becoming one of the top priorities for businesses with respect to employee communication, as per the LPI Software Funding Group (1998) are, “they are cost effective, easily updatable, make information delivery easy, make information available on demand, basically secure, relatively easy to
configure, use and manage... and since they are based upon browser technology, many
users already have experience in them or can easily learn (paragraph 5).

The Corporate Intranet

Competia (1999) an on-line resource, provides information on how the Intranet
operates on the same web technology as the Internet and explains “the individual users
access all this data through the standard web browsers they use to access Web pages on
the Internet” (paragraph 6). Experts in the field explain that the only difference between
the Internet and the Intranet is that the content on an Intranet is for use only within a
company. It is inside a firewall that prevents people outside the company from having
access to it. Competia defines the Intranet as “any site based on Internet technology that
is placed on private servers within an organization, a site designed not to allow outsiders
in”. The LPI Software Funding Group (1998) provides a definition of the Intranet in the
words of the company, JBS Computer Systems, Ltd.

It is the implementation of Internet technologies within a corporate organization,
rather than for external connection to the global Internet. It lies behind fire walls,
but accessible internally by employees either directly or through the Internet and
often by suppliers and customers who are password protected. (paragraph 3)

CIO Web Business (1998) presents a pictorial representation of the Intranet that
helps in understanding how the external and internal Web sites are linked and where the
firewall is (see Figure 1). The Intranet sites or internal sites are connected to databases
within the company and have a search engine that will help the user find information that
lives on the private, internal server. The Intranets also have links to the external World Wide Web and so access to a company’s internal information as well as other material is available in one location.

Figure 1. A schematic representation of an intranet and its applications
Applications of the Internal Web

Studies show that corporations or companies use the Intranet in many different ways. Some companies use it for simple information like the company’s phone directory and some companies use it as a storehouse for information about the different streams of businesses within the organization. Initially, companies use the internal information site to make available “internal phone books, procedure manuals, training materials, requisition forms” (Cortese, 1996, paragraph 4); information that can be modified readily to reflect any change. But, according to Cortese, “more sophisticated intranets are coming” and that companies will “let employees fill out electronic forms, query databases, or hold virtual conferences over private Webs” (paragraph 20).

CIO Web Business (1998) gives statistical evidence from a survey conducted by the Forrester Research group; that companies build their internal information resource or the internal Net for many uses. In July 1996, Forrester Research found that two-thirds of the Fortune 1000 companies surveyed, had an Intranet in place. The article reports, “it is important to keep in mind that intranets can range from simply making product information available, to more complex systems that integrate workflow between departments within the company”. CIO Web Business (1998) also reports, “there are a wide variety of Web-based applications, ranging from static document access systems to data access systems. According to their studies, typical applications on a company’s internal web site are, “product Information, project information, access to data warehouse, product support databases, training and registration, newswire clippings,
software libraries, phones directory, conference room reservations...directions, maps, indexing engines and information catalogs”.

There is significant evidence that the Intranet is a boon to employers and employees. RewardsPlus, a benefits company, conducted a survey that was reported by InternetNews (2000) that said: “Companies are investing more time and more money designing corporate portals to streamline internal communications, outsource human resource functions and create a broader sense of community among employees”. InternetNews (2000) quotes Ken Barksdale, president and chief executive officer of RewardsPlus as saying:

A portal should not only strive to integrate corporate operations, it should help employees balance their work and life schedules. Employers should also keep in mind that, as the work site becomes more virtual, the corporate portal will be the closest thing many workers will have to a community of peers.... The beauty of the corporate portal is that the possibilities are limitless. For employer’s, it’s an efficient way to communicate with employees and boost morale. For employees, it’s the best way to solve the issues of every day work and life. (paragraph 3)

Benefits of the Intranet

Stellin (2001) highlights studies done by the research firm the Meta Group that almost 90% of big companies have some sort of Intranet that enable the employees to view and manage their benefits, order office supplies, keep a track of various projects within the organization and various other duties. But, Stellin explains that even small
companies are relying more and more on the Internet and the Intranet to make their
business processes more efficient. Stellin emphasizes that in general, companies these
days are spending hundreds of thousands of dollars on Intranets because they are
becoming crucial to productivity, saving the company a lot of money and changing the
way employees perform their duties.

Companies are realizing the benefits of "adopting the Web as a part of their
internal information strategy" according to CIO Web Business (1998). The "potential" of
the Intranet "is endless" agrees Competia (1999), an on-line resource, in an article about
the emergence of Intranets. The article also brings to the fore that big companies like
"General Electric, Motorola, Ericsson, Microsoft and Cisco" use their internal web site to
"manage their business intelligence". "The biggest" advantage of the Intranet, say CIO
Web Business, is "that more information is available to more people --at less cost".

CIR [Complete Intranet Resource] (2000), a web site that is dedicated to Intranets
and all information concerning an Intranet, consider themselves to be experts in the area
of Intranets and list the top ten myths of the Intranet, some of which are that "Intranets
are cheap, Intranets are for Big Organizations, Intranets are not secure". Supporting the
myths, Cortese (1996) on the other hand, says that the "The Web, it turns out, is an
inexpensive yet powerful alternative to other forms of internal communications". Cortese
also points out that the Intranet can "pull all the computers, software, and databases that
dot the corporate landscape into a single system that enables employees find information
wherever it resides".
Drawbacks of the Intranet

There are disadvantages of using the Intranet as a tool for employee communications according to many studies in the area. CIO Web Business (1998) lists various “challenges” of the Intranet like the volume of users and documents that could make the system inefficient and the need for constant updation as drawbacks. CIO Web Business also cautions companies about factors like “security, bandwidth, scalability, manageability, getting and keeping skilled Webmasters, ongoing change and growth”.

Cortese (1996) cites the example of Lotus Development Corporation [software makers] that “has had to defend its Notes program—a powerful system for helping workers collaborate across networks—in the face of cheaper Web alternatives”. Cortese explains that while the Intranet certainly boasts various advantages, “it also poses a big threat of dozens of companies and products. Suddenly, the Web provides a simple way to do things that in the past required gobs of complex code and specialized programs”. In her analysis of the disadvantages of the Intranet, Cortese studies the example of SAP, a German software maker that has a market capitalization [in 1996] of $1.9 billion because of the “complicated programs” that they had created “over the differences among computer systems. Now, at least in theory, the Web can do much the same job—faster and for a lot less”. Cortese also believes that the Intranet may not be the answer for “every software ill”. The internal Web cannot take the place of sophisticated “business programs that have been refined over many years and companies may still opt for the unimpeachable security of conventional programs”.

Commuter hacking is another drawback of using the Intranet as one of the main internal communication channels. "Phony messages" keep the "computers so busy that legitimate users" end up having no access to the company's information as per an online study conducted by Encyclopedia Britannica (Alexander, 1996).

Summary

The literature review answers the questions that the author raised in chapter one of this thesis study. The author specifically examined the goals of a company's internal web site, the resourceful applications and types of information that live inside the Intranet, and the advantages and disadvantages of the Intranet. The author also found that while there have not been too many studies that focus particularly on the effectiveness of the Intranet as a communications tool, researchers of the Intranet believe that it certainly has the potential to be one of the most powerful internal communications tools of a company. Also, experts feel that the Intranet is most effective as an internal communications tool when it is used in combination with the traditional methods of employee communication.
Chapter III

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

Population and Sample

The author worked to find out how employees of various organizations perceive the usefulness of their company’s Intranet. To achieve this, the author designed a questionnaire (see Appendix A) to provide an insight on various factors, for example, how often do the employees use their company’s Intranet, if they have one; what type of information is available on the Intranet; how useful is the Intranet; is the Intranet used with other communication methods; and what are those other methods.

To conduct the survey, the author targeted a total of 70 employees belonging to various companies within the San Francisco Bay Area. The employees selected belonged to various ranks ranging from junior management to the executive level. The companies selected for the survey ranged from small start-ups to large corporations and represented a variety of industries. The author selected a sample of this type because it would be valuable to see how employees in different levels of an organization use the Intranet and how they perceive its effectiveness.

To administer the survey, the author used an on-line resource called Zoomerang (www.zoomerang.com). Zoomerang is a web site where surveys can be developed, launched and distributed to the participants by customizing the tool, as per the surveyor’s needs. The web site also helps tabulate the results of the completed survey. The author first learned about the Zoomerang web site and its survey tool from a friend, whose
organization uses the web site to conduct employee attitude surveys. After visiting the
web site, the author was convinced that the survey tool offered by Zoomerang would help
in conducting the survey quickly and conveniently, as it employs the electronic email to
send the survey and receive the results. The author first launched a pilot survey to test the
efficiency of the tool and to ensure that the results were satisfactory. Once the pilot
survey proved successful, the author decided to use the Zoomerang web site to conduct
the survey for this study.

Survey

The author surveyed companies of different magnitudes (small start-ups to some of
the bigger corporations) within the San Francisco Bay Area, to find out what kind of
information is typically found in a company’s Intranet and what are some of the more
complex or sophisticated systems that companies make available to their employees.
Using the survey, the author also examined the Intranet from an employee’s point of view
and tried to find out if the Intranet is an effective tool for employee communications.

The questionnaire (see Appendix A) was designed and launched using the Zoomerang
site. The web site provided a web address (or URL) of the launched survey to the author.
The author sent out an electronic mail or e-mail (see Appendix B) to the 70 survey
participants on January 28, 2001 along with a summary explaining the objectives of the
study. The participants were given time until February 10, 2001 to complete the survey.
On February 11, 2001, an e-mail reminder was sent to participants who had not yet
completed the survey. The author also personally reminded some participants over the
telephone in order to have them complete the survey. The survey was available to the
participants until February 28, 2001. The author, however, had access to the survey for tabulation purposes until March 3, 2001.

The author received confirmation via electronic mail each time a respondent completed the survey. The author would then visit the Zoomerang web site to view individual responses of the survey participants. Three weeks after the launch of the survey, the author had received a total of 45 completed responses out of the 70 participants.

Data Collection

The questionnaire was used as an instrument to facilitate the survey for the purpose of this study. The Zoomerang web site made the distribution of the survey easy. The author used e-mail to send the survey to the participants because e-mail is one of the most convenient methods of communication these days. By carrying out the survey electronically, the author was able to collect, organize, tabulate and analyze the information quickly and efficiently.

Zoomerang is a web site that helps both businesses as well as individuals to conduct surveys. Zoomerang even allows the user to collect and tabulate the results of the survey using the various survey management tools available on their web site. Once a survey recipient completes the survey, the survey program saves the result and tabulates the final outcome automatically with respect to the other results received. Zoomerang members can quickly create and customize surveys on topics such as customer satisfaction, event planning, new product testing, and much more. The results are
captured and presented in graphically rich formats in real-time that allow users to measure the incoming responses and act on the findings very quickly.

Zoomerang is a division of MarketTools, a privately held company that was founded in 1997, with headquarters in Sausalito, California. Zoomerang was founded in 1999. Zoomerang leverages the experience and knowledge of MarketTools, the parent company. MarketTools provides advanced Web-hosted technology and advisory services to help businesses conduct cost-effective and secure Web-based market research. MarketTools also works with leading market research firms, which use the company's proprietary enabling solutions to conduct eResearch for organizations worldwide.

The author found the collection of data easy and quick using the Zoomerang tool, compared to paper-based methods, or conducting personal interviews. Using the Zoomerang tool, the author was also able to customize the survey in such a way that the participants could choose to provide additional comments wherever applicable. The advantages of using such a website to conduct the survey are numerous. For example, the web site provided the option of selecting a professionally designed survey template and of creating and maintaining an e-mail list of all the survey participants. The author or the creator of the survey could review the results that were presented, in a variety of powerful graphic forms, making analysis of the data an easy process.
Chapter IV

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

Introduction

The review of literature revealed to the author that researchers, like Bevan and Bailey (1990), felt that with the recent advancements in technology and the popularity of the Internet, companies are seeking electronic means to support their existing employee communications efforts. Based on the review of relevant research, the author made the assumption that the Intranet is evolving, just like the Internet did, more than a decade ago. This is supported by an on-line resource of The Encyclopedia Britannica (Alexander, 1996). The Encyclopedia Britannica found that the computer industry sees a major explosion of interest in the creation of Intranets. The web site comments that companies grew conscious of the fact that Intranets, like the Internet would change the way that people do business.

Some of the recent studies (CIO Web Business, 1998; Competia, 1999; Cortese, 1996) support the authors assumption that many companies start out initially by building an Intranet for basic applications like electronic mail, phone books, benefits information and company news. The author hoped to get an insight about the common applications companies are using the Intranet for, and about the improvements that employees would like to see in their company’s Intranets.

According to Stellin (2001), I.B.M. recently conducted a survey asking their employees what the best ways of learning about the company are. The results of that
survey revealed that the employees ranked their co-workers as the number one and most credible source of information. The results did not surprise the I.B.M. executives; what did surprise the executives was that the employees gave equal points to the company's Intranet as the number one information resource. Stellin cites yet another example of a survey that was recently conducted by Charles Schwab, the financial brokerage house. About 52% of Schwab employees said that the first place they go to for information is the company's Intranet.

Research material reviewed led the author to hypothesize that although there are certain drawbacks to using the Intranet as an employee communications tool, the benefits of the applications that the Intranet makes available to employees far outweighs the drawbacks, making the it an invaluable employee communications tool (Bevan & Bailey, 1991; CIO Web Business, 1998; Smith, 1991; Stellin, 2001). Past findings also supported this theory that although traditionally, employees preferred personal face-to-face communications to even paper-based communications like memos, the evolution of the World Wide Web is changing the way companies communicate with its employees (Alexander, 1996; Corbett, 1988; Kelly, 1989).

The author found another revelation from the literature review that, companies these days are using the Intranet in combination with other methods of employee communications to talk to its employees (Bevan & Bailey, 1991; Charlton, 1990; Smith, 1991). Using the results of the survey, the author attempts to find out in this study if companies these days are indeed using the Intranet with other traditional methods of communications. The author also hopes to understand how employees perceive the
success of the Intranet as an internal information resource, and if they consider it an important and effective internal communications tool.

Data Review

The author’s assumption that most companies in the San Francisco Bay Area, have some sort of an intranet holds true (see Table 1). Out of the 45 respondents, 98% indicated that their companies had an Intranet as an employee communications tool. The companies that had an intranet ranged from small-sized, having less than a 100 employees, to large corporations having over 5000 employees.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
<th>Percentage of responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intranet used as an employee communications tool</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small-sized company</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium sized company</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large corporations</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data in Table 1 clearly supports one of the author's theories that these days, the Intranet is fast becoming a vital part of employee communications in companies and
that companies both big and small are recognizing the importance of having an internal database of information.

Upon reviewing the survey results, the author also found that, out of a total of 45 respondents, 95% of the employees said that their Intranet is used with other methods of traditional employee communications, supporting yet another assumption of the author. It turned out that a majority of companies use e-mail as another method of communicating messages to its employees. One-on-one meetings ranked as the second most widely used method of employee communications (see Table 2). Other methods that were listed were compact discs (CD), telephone and video conference calls, paper-based newsletters, bulletin boards, audio or videotapes and paper-based memos (see Appendix C to view survey responses).

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intranet with Traditional Employee Communication Methods</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intranet used with traditional methods of employee communications (EC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intranet used with e-mail for EC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intranet used with meetings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
According to a study by Stellin (2001), companies like I.B.M. and Charles Schwab conducted employee surveys and found out that their employees turn to the Intranet first when they want some information. The survey that the author conducted for the purpose of this study, also yielded similar results. As illustrated Table 3, 56% of the 43 respondents indicated that they use the Intranet very often, and when asked where employees first look for common information like training schedules, phone directory, sales and marketing information or human resources and benefits, the Intranet ranked first as the most information-rich communications tool within an organization. These results too corresponded to the author's assumptions that a lot of companies use the Intranet for some of the more basic functions like directory information and collateral material.

Table 3

**Usage of the Intranet**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
<th>Percentage of responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How often is the Intranet used</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information on training</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone directory information</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales &amp; Marketing collateral information</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Apart from the most common applications, employees also listed other kinds of information that are available on their company's Intranet like: competitive information, product specifications, stock related information, the company store catalogue, links to the Internet for maps, information on individual departments, instruction manuals for setting up functions like voice mail and various company forms. Companies these days are designing their Intranets to house all kinds of information for an employee to work effectively (Competia on-line, 1999; Cortese, 1996; LPI Software Funding Group on-line, 1998).

Table 4 shows how employees that the author surveyed, feel about the advantages of the Intranet with respect to the drawbacks of the Intranet. Out of 43 respondents, 86% appreciated the fact that the Intranet gives them fast access to information and 84% felt that a huge benefit of the Intranet is that it is a centralized storehouse of information with a wide outreach. Some of the respondents mentioned other benefits to be cost-savings, the fact that it is more up-to-date than paper-based information resources, and the 24-hour availability.

Stellin (2001) highlights the benefits of the Intranet by citing studies carried out by the Meta Group research firm. The Meta Group found that the Intranet is beneficial to companies that are “geographically dispersed”, have a lot of “mobile employees or are burdened with big bureaucracies that impeded workers’ ability to be self-sufficient”. The survey conducted by the author also resulted in employees pointing to some of the same benefits.
The main drawback, according to 74% out of 43 respondents was the challenge of keeping the Intranet up-to-date. A fascinating result was the fact that 36% of the respondents thought that the Intranet was an impersonal means of communication. This correlates with the author’s assumption that most companies leverage the potential of the Intranet along with the traditional methods of communication like face-to-face meetings with the supervisor so that employees do not feel alienated because of the technology (Bevan & Bailey, 1991). Other drawbacks that employees mentioned in the survey are, difficulty in searching for information quickly, the inability to personalize the internal web site to suit individual needs and the risk of outdated information if the web site is not properly managed. Despite this, as per the author’s hypothesis, 93% out of 45 of the employees surveyed felt that the advantages of the Intranet make it a powerful employee communications tool and that the advantages overshadow the drawbacks of the Intranet (CIO Web Business, 1998).

Table 4

**Benefits Versus Drawbacks of the Intranet**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
<th>Percentage of responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fast access to information - benefit</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central storehouse of information- benefit</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenge of updating the</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intranet drawback</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of personal touch</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>drawback</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefits outweigh</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>drawbacks of the Intranet</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter V

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Through this study, the author hoped to see if she could support her opinion as to whether the Intranet has evolved as an important element of a company's employee communications equation. By reviewing relevant literature in the field of the Intranet and by conducting an employee survey, the author found that most of the companies these days have an Intranet in place and, companies that did not have an Intranet, considered it a high priority and are working towards building one. The author found that companies are leveraging the potential of the Intranet along with other methods of employee communications in order to exchange knowledge. Even though companies continue to use memos, bulletin boards and personal meetings to convey messages, the presence of the Intranet reduces human cycles and makes information available anytime and virtually anywhere.

Research as well as the survey data indicated to the author that a good corporate Intranet makes employer-employee communication very effective. The author found that the majority of employees considered the Intranet to be a boon because it has numerous benefits. For example, it reduces cost, saves time, provides high storage capacity for current and archived information, centralizes information database and is easy to use without much training. Even though the Intranet has drawbacks such as: challenge of keeping information up-to-date, being prone to breach of security, and the possibility of an overload of information, the employees surveyed had no doubt that the benefits outweighed the drawbacks, supporting the author's research findings and theory.
The author agrees with the survey data that companies still have plenty of room to improve their existing Intranets, to make it a powerful employee communications tool. Employees want to see more applications made available, easier navigation tools, frequently updated information and logically laid out sites that make information access uncomplicated. This data further strengthens the author’s hypothesis that employees have come to expect a central warehouse of information, like the Intranet in their companies and are eager to maximize its potential. The author agrees with the LPI Software Funding Group (1998) that “the use of Internet technology to provide Intranet networks will grow immensely” in the future years and that “all users should now review the use of the Intranet technology to ascertain to what extent it can meet both their communication and groupware needs”. The author feels that, the way and the extent to which, a company uses the Intranet, is what makes it a successful and effective communications tool.

Future Studies

The author believes that the literature review and empirical research contained in this report, contributes greatly to the existing research material related to the use of the Intranet as an employee communications tool. The author feels that there are very few studies that cover corporate Intranets and so urges researchers to examine this interesting and fairly unexplored field of study. Future studies could also study the users of the corporate Intranet and find out if junior, middle, or senior management use it the most. In this Internet age that we live in, technology keeps changing rapidly and so do processes and the way people live their lives. Communication researchers and scholars alike must
continue to analyze how companies use technology (like the Intranet). This report provides research data as well as survey results that show how companies can improve employee communications by investing in and developing content-rich Intranets. The author hopes that just like the Internet technology has taken over our lives, Intranets will soon be the way of life for internal communications not only in companies in the San Francisco Bay Area, but nationwide.
References


Appendices
Appendix A

Sample Questionnaire
SAMPLE QUESTIONNAIRE

This survey is intended to study the effectiveness of the Intranet. All information that is provided by you will be strictly confidential and will be used only towards the completion of my Master’s thesis.

1. What is your company’s primary business?

2. What is your title or position?

3. How many employees are there in your company?
   - 1 - 99
   - 100- 499
   - 500 – 1999
   - 2000 – 4999
   - More than 5000

4. Does your company have an internal web site (Intranet)?
   - Yes
   - No

5. How often do you use the Intranet?
   - Very Often
   - Often
   - Sometimes
   - Rarely
   - Never

6. Is your company’s Intranet used:
   - As the only tool of employee communication?
   - In conjunction with other methods of employee communication?
7. What other tools of employee communications does your company use besides the Intranet (check all that apply):

- Bulletin boards
- Electronic Newsletters
- Meetings
- Other (please list below):

- Newsletters (paper)
- Electronic mail
- Audio/Video Tapes
- Memos

8. Which of the following information does your company's internal web site have (check all that apply)?

- Phone/email directory
- Sales/Marketing collateral
- Link to the Internet (news, weather)
- Product/Service information
- Knowledge Management
- Other key information (please specify):

- Forms (expenses, benefits etc.)
- Training
- Company news
- Stock related information

9. When you need information on training (e.g. schedules, course descriptions, etc.), what would you do first?

- Call the training department
- Check the Intranet
- Other (please specify):

- E-mail the training department
- Ask your supervisor or co-worker
10. When you need to obtain the phone number of a co-worker, you would first:

Check the electronic phone directory  
Check the paper-based directory

Call the switchboard

Other (please specify):


11. When you need Sales/Marketing collateral information, you would first:

Call the marketing department  
E-mail the marketing department

Check the Intranet

Other (please specify):


12. When you need HR/benefits information, you would first:

Call the HR department  
E-mail the HR department

Check the Intranet

Other (please specify):


13. What according to you are the advantages of the Intranet (check all that apply)?

Fast access to information  
Access to more people
Powerful communication tool Saves time

Other (please list below):

14. What according to you are the drawbacks of the Intranet (check all that apply)?
- Security concerns
- Lacks personal touch/contact
- Low bandwidth due to many users
- Information overload
- Challenge to keep updating
- Complicated programs

Other (please list below):

15. In your opinion, do the benefits outweigh the drawbacks as a good tool of employee communication?
- Yes
- No
- Neutral

16. Other comments?


Appendix B

Survey Cover Letter
To the participants of the survey – Effectiveness of the Intranet

Hi,

Below is a link to an on-line survey that I am conducting as a part of my Master's thesis. The purpose of the survey is to measure the effectiveness of the Intranet as an employee communications tool.

The survey should only take approximately 10 minutes to complete. Your responses are an important part of the study. All information will be used solely for the purpose of my study and your individual responses and identity will be kept private.

I would greatly appreciate it if you could complete the survey by Feb 10, 2001. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 408-571-5096 (work).

Thank you for taking the time to do this.

Best Regards,
Meera Gopinath.

Go to: http://www.zoomerang.com/survey.cgi?EB0G3BFQCR4XY705EYGEIJXVS
Please click this link now (or go online and retype the address into your Web browser). If you do not want to take this or other surveys, please click "reply" and ask the survey creator to remove you from the email list.

Zoomerang is a survey clearinghouse. We do not censor the questions or messages in the surveys or the invitations to take surveys that third parties may propound, nor do we censor the responses you may provide. The sender of a survey is solely responsible for the subject matter and contents of the survey invitation and survey in which you participate, and you are solely responsible for the contents of your response.

According to Zoomerang's Terms of Agreement, <http://www.zoomerang.com/terms.html> survey senders promise that they have an ongoing business or personal relationship or they've obtained consent to send emails to survey recipients. Please send questions to abuse@zoomerang.com.
Appendix C

Survey Results
### What is your company's primary business?

**View 45 Responses**

### What is your Title or Position?

**View 44 Responses**

### How many employees are there in your company?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Employees</th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
<th>Response Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 - 99</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100 - 499</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500 - 1999</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000 - 4999</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 5000</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>45</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Does your company have an internal web site (Intranet)?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
<th>Response Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>45</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### How often do you use the Intranet?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
<th>Response Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very often</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>43</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Is your company’s Intranet used:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
<th>Response Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>As the only tool of employee communication?</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In conjunction with other methods of employee communication?</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### What other tools of employee communications does your company use besides the Intranet (check all that apply):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tool</th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
<th>Response Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bulletin boards</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newsletters (paper)</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper based Memos</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electronic mail</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meetings</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audio/Video Tapes</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other, Please Specify</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Which of the following information does your company's internal web site have (check all that apply)?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information</th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
<th>Response Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phone/e-mail directory</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forms (expenses, benefits etc.)</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales/Marketing collateral</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training information</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Link to the Internet (news, weather, etc.)</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company news</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product/Service Information</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stock related Information</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge Base</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HR &amp; Benefits Information</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>View</strong> Other, Please Specify</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Which of the following information does your company's internal web site have (check all that apply)?

1. Competitor Information, Events
2. Time tracking
3. Travel Planning, Store for all purchasing. Complete supply chain from customer through accounts, manufacturing to procurement and supply management.
4. Bulletin board for employee items for sale, clubs, etc.
5. Place to send suggestions, departmental websites (that require passwords), contains pictures of employees in all the sites.
6. Enterprise application such as Travel and Expense, Time entry, reports and other
7. Maps for locations
8. Cafeteria menu
9. Info on individual groups
10. How to documents, such as how to set up voice mail.
11. Employee Information, Scheduling/Staffing information

### When you need information on training (e.g. schedules, course descriptions, etc), what would you do first?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
<th>Response Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Call the Training Department</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-mail the Training Department</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Check the Internet</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask your supervisor or co-worker</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>45</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### When you need to obtain the phone number of a co-worker, you would first:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
<th>Response Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Check the electronic phone directory</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Check the paper based phone directory</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Call the switchboard</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>45</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### When you need Sales/Marketing collateral information, you would first:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
<th>Response Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Call the Marketing Department</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-mail the Marketing Department</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Check the Intranet</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>43</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### When you need HR/Benefits information, you would first:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
<th>Response Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Call the HR Department</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-mail the HR Department</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Check the Intranet</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>45</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### What according to you are the advantages of the Intranet (check all that apply)?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advantage</th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
<th>Response Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fast access to information</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to more people</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ease of use</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Powerful communication tool</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central location for all internal company information</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>VIEW Other, Please Specify</strong></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### What according to you are the advantages of the Intranet (check all that apply)?

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Cost savings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>More up to date than paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Maintain records of all communications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Most cost efficient, it's use impacts opening costs and margins directly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>link companies that have multiple sites.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Available 24/7 and from anywhere (such as log in)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Least resources needed to support it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Always instantly available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Uptodate information</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### What according to you are the drawbacks of the Intranet (check all that apply)?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
<th>Response Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Security concerns</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Information overload</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lacks personal touch contact</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Challenge to keep updated</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Slow</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Complicated programs</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other, Please Specify</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### What according to you are the drawbacks of the Intranet (check all that apply)?

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Difficulty finding information location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Difficulty finding information location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>hard to find desired information without additional phone contact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Sometimes while talking with people, other questions come to mind which can be answered right away on the phone whereas on email you end up going back and forth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Searching, ability to easily publish information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>can be hard to get quick answer or find info I need</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>I can't organize it according to my needs, which we all should be able to, like a My Yahoo, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Poor classification and categorization of information, Outdated material, etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Prioritize the information, keep the link depth shallow, flatten the information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Accessing information seeking may be listed under different headings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In your opinion, do the benefits outweigh the drawbacks of the Intranet as a good tool for employee communication?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
<th>Response Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>45</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other comments:

1. The Intranet is a valuable resource that is available to all employees at all times. In order to maximize its effectiveness, it needs to be logically organized and constantly updated. It's not enough just to "put the information up" on the Intranet; users also need to be directed to the information.

2. The Intranet is a valuable resource that is available to all employees at all times. In order to maximize its effectiveness, it needs to be logically organized and constantly updated. It's not enough just to "put the information up" on the Intranet; users also need to be directed to the information, often by a human being.

3. I feel that the Intranet will soon become the primary source of internal information for any company.

4. Actsare's main form of communication is through email. The Intranet site is utilized by only a couple of departments. Not all departments in the company have an Intranet site. Human Resources and Training are examples of departments that do not have an Intranet site and this is a major drawback. It would be helpful to have this information on the Intranet so we do not have to access different sources.

5. Self-service is the key issue. Employees must be allowed to update and maintain the Intranet. It should not be the job of some people but of all employees.

6. The Intranet currently has a very complex navigational model because it was not very well planned and additional features were added without reorganizing the site. It would be a very effective tool if implemented correctly.

7. Intranet benefits Info is very useful as in company news organization of Info and poor search still makes it difficult to find specific Info.

8. I have not trained myself to use the Intranet very much outside of the phone directory and the stock price. It is just easier to call someone than to read through stuff. In that I am an active/pragmatic learner and not a reflective/theoretic learner. So I never read instructions or manuals unless I absolutely have to. It all comes down to a matter of best learning style for me. Also, as an extrovert who networks easily, I depend on my network of contacts and not on essentially written material stored under some scheme that I do not know and potentially distrust.

9. The Intranet is largely dependent on the size of the company. It is a very useful means of communication if updated regularly.

10. Intranet is definitely very useful to have as a central source of information, since it can always be used as a fallback tool for information in case of the name the few/availability of HR etc for direct answers. It also provides easy access to expense report forms, timesheets etc. Issues of unavailability of such frequently used standardized documents at your office site.

11. I don't use it for most things at my site, but if I need to find out about something happening or someone's number at a different site of our company I may try the Intranet.

12. Corporate Intranet is a great tool if implemented and used correctly. With the advent of new Enterprise Information Portals such as Plumebee, the Intranet can become a become a true collaborative environment leading to efficiencies in many areas.
13 | Intranet has helped streamline quite a few departments which was difficult to do in a paper-based environment where information was lost quite frequently. Storage and archives do help here a lot since you can access it at will. Intranet is faster than the Internet.

14 | A must-have tool...

15 | Changes the way business is done by providing information when it's needed, rather than sending it and having each person store it.

15 | The intranet is a very powerful tool which serves as a very effective medium for sharing internal corporate information.