ClearBoxCONSULTING

2024

V3.0

INTRANET AND EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE PLATFORMS

Reviews of the best products on the market

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V3.0 # Contents

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☆ FULLY STANDALONE   Ⓢ REQUIRES SHAREPOINT   ⚙ OPTIONALLY WORKS WITH SHAREPOINT   📱 FRONTLINE FOCUS

Section Three: Product Overviews

Need help choosing a new intranet?
We can help - please get in touch and one of the team will get back to you.

⭐ FULLY STANDALONE   🅂 REQUIRES SHAREPOINT   ☑ OPTIONALLY WORKS WITH SHAREPOINT   📱 FRONTLINE FOCUS

INTRODUCTION

WELCOME TO THE 2024 EDITION

2024 marks seventeen years since ClearBox Consulting began working in the intranet industry. In that time, we've seen technologies emerge, evolve, reinvent themselves and disappear in equal measure. We're reassured, however, that intranets continue to make a real difference across organisations (where they are well maintained). Whether you call it an intranet, a digital workplace, an employee engagement platform, a comms platform, employee mobile app, or something else – there are common problems we're all trying to solve.

These platforms help people get things done, stay informed about what's going on, and help find that expert, that application or that little piece of data they need.

They contribute to the way an employee feels about the place they work, encourage and reflect organisational culture, and can even improve levels of customer service. They are strategic investments that drive organisational benefits and support employees through their working day.

We've been reviewing the best intranet and employee experience software for eight years. Following feedback from readers both via a survey and through interviews, we've made some improvements to this introduction and to the reviews themselves which make them clearer to read. Thank you to everyone who took part and please keep an eye out for the same activity during 2024.

If you're choosing new software

This report's purpose is to help you choose the correct software for your business strategies and employee needs. Our reviews are detailed, pointing out both the strengths and weaknesses, and include dozens of screenshots so that you can see different elements of the platforms. The product review format section will explain what you'll find in our reviews. Note that sales-y and marketing language is reserved for the 'voice of the vendor' sections, while the 'voice of the customer' sections give you an insight into real customer experiences.

The how to choose a product section is particularly helpful and includes an overview of arguments about build or buy, SharePoint, add-on, or independent – which will be relevant for many of you.

The product comparisons section is helpful for all readers. It includes charts, tables, and written summaries that will allow you to compare products and identify which reviews to read. We'd advise you to read reviews of those products that perform best in the scenarios that matter most to you. Our Choices awards identify those products that stood out to us during the report process and we expect at least some of them to appear on your shortlist.

If you're interested in market trends

We've provided an overview of what we looked for in our scenarios as usual, but you can also read about our overall scenario findings too. Of particular note:

■ Artificial Intelligence is a very hot topic and we've written an overview of AI trends in the next section, so you can see what vendors have been up to. We've not included a dedicated AI scenario in our reviews, however, as we think AI offers a way to address scenarios (such as search or content creation) rather than a scenario in its own right.

■ For the past couple of years, vendors have been turning their focus towards internal communicators' needs and the features on offer this year will certainly appeal to comms folk. We're particularly impressed by the variety of channels comms can manage from within these platforms, reducing the number of tools and simplifying the publishing process too.

■ We've seen improvements in analytics over the past year or so, but this remains the area that would most benefit from improvements across the industry. We've been talking about it for years and vendors are listening, but it's a slow-paced change.

■ We've been impressed by the engagement and people-focused features that vendors have introduced. While social tools aren't anything new, there are some great peer-to-peer recognition features, events management, employee journeying (stepping people through an onboarding process for example), and a lot more inbuilt in these platforms.

■ The products we've reviewed have started to fall into three categories: social / communications platforms, modern intranets, and mobile-first products. Some then are reliant on SharePoint / Google / something else, or are 'independent' and operate without other software in the background. Understanding these categories and what approach is right for your organisation will help you choose the right solution.

A final thought

Although there's always room for improvement, what this report illustrates more than anything is just how many excellent options are available to organisations looking for a new intranet, employee digital platform, or mobile-first tool. The technology is mature, you no longer need to rely on in-house IT experts just to get the basics underway, and there are some genuinely innovative features coming through.

It's a great time to update your intranet or introduce an employee experience platform. We have a variety of consulting services to support you, so please get in touch if you need a hand.

Suzie Robinson
ClearBox Consulting
January 2024

AI TRENDS

When we were writing last year's report, Artificial Intelligence was barely mentioned and where there were AI features, they were rarely labelled as such. ChatGPT's emergence and the attention on Generative AI during 2023 means that this year we've been asked "Will AI be its own scenario?" Short answer: no. We decided against a dedicated AI scenario, as we believe AI features offer a way to address and meet our scenarios, rather than being a scenario in their own right.

AI offers an opportunity to support organisations and improve various aspects of their operations – this is how we've assessed the features we've been shown. We've also considered how secure the AI features are (as far as we're able), for example whether intranet content is sent out into the ether of the broader internet or ring-fenced to a certain degree.

The features we've seen so far fall roughly into four categories, described below. Sam Marshall, ClearBox's founder, has also shared his thoughts based on his background and MSc in industrial AI.

Generative AI for content creation

Over half of the products we've reviewed now have generative AI features for written content, although only five included generative image creation. The way they approach these features does vary, however, offering some or all of the following:

- A natural language prompt for publishers to instruct AI to create a page of text
- Settings for tone, length, formality – applied as part of generation and / or to guide the AI to edit text
- Generated summaries of written text

Some vendors, like Atlas, have a form-type approach to content generation – where publishers choose a variety of settings that augment the prompt used to generate the content. Other vendors, such as MangoApps, have a more fluid approach where publishers can generate content, then edit different aspects of it gradually as wanted.

> *Generative AI is unlikely to replace content written by comms pros, but early studies show that it can raise the quality of writing for many knowledge workers. Internal Communicators should welcome this – it will free them up from 'rescuing' poorly-written intranet pages and let them focus on more strategic goals.*
>
> **Sam Marshall**

A few of the features we were shown particularly stood out as being innovative (in an already innovative space!). The first example is from Oak Engage, which has an inbuilt policy template that is applied when a publisher wishes to create a new policy page. The AI then completes the template, generating a draft policy for review and editing. This is a helpful approach, although the template might feel too restrictive (and overly comprehensive) for some.

Microsoft Word introduced an 'inclusivity' language checker during 2022 and we've been surprised that only Interact have replicated this in their page builder. The sentiment of the page's tone is also checked in the same way, allowing publishers to consider how their piece might be perceived before it's published. This is a small yet supportive feature that we think will help publishers finesse their pages.

Where publishers want to use AI to generate the majority of their content, there are some tools like Unily that not only ring-fence organisations' data (a more secure approach than a simple integration with ChatGPT for example) but also apply an 'internal audience' filter to ensure generated content is more audience-appropriate first time. Generally, across the products we reviewed we saw security-conscious features, but feel that greater ring-fencing needs to be introduced to make content more closely tailored to organisational needs.

In this example, the Oak Engage AI has generated a 'working from home' policy.

Powell and Sociabble are the first two products we've seen to introduce configuration options for admins, which provides context for the AI to refer to. Powell applies intranet location context on top of any generated content, while Sociabble has sophisticated settings for organisations and individuals to write context statements that any generated content is passed through. The 'tone' that's typically defined by vendors is also configurable within Sociabble, so admins can define exactly what "warm" or "humorous" means within their organisation.

Overall, generative AI features in these tools are now fairly common and we expect the remaining products we've reviewed to add generative AI features in the coming months. We would advise that organisations should decide whether they want to use generative AI features and how, before exploring what's available.
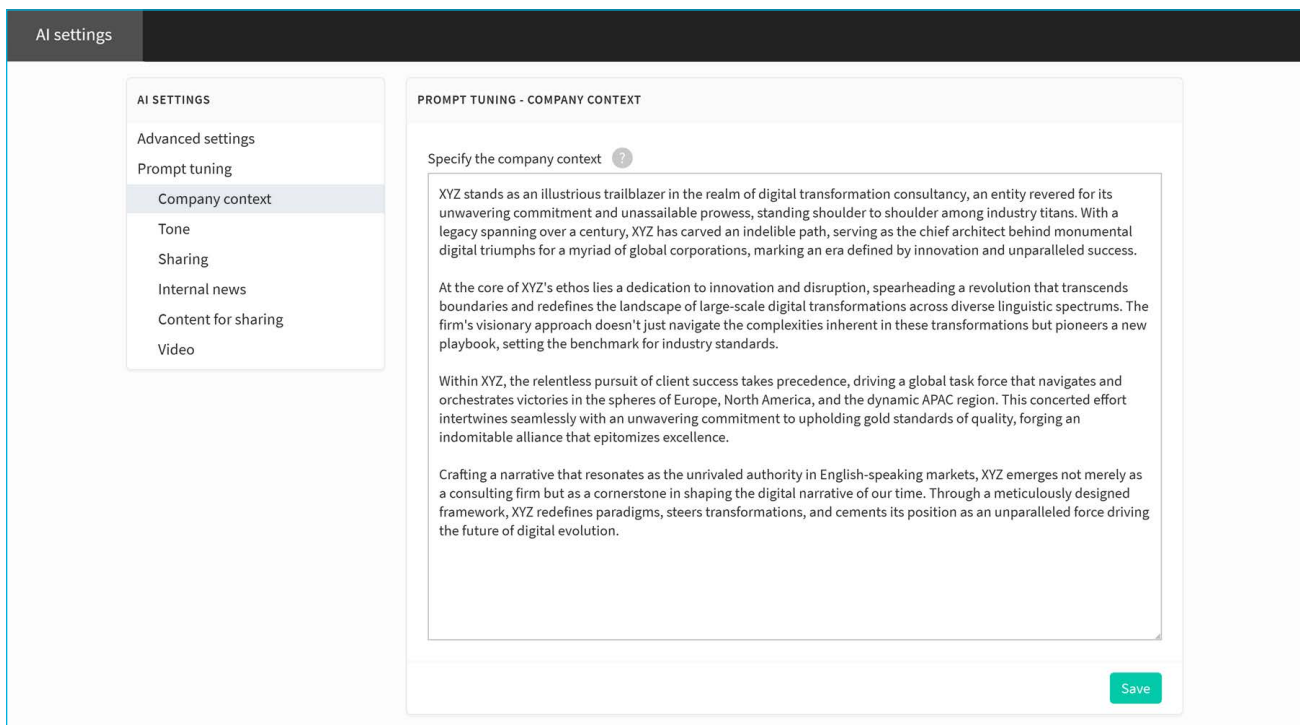
Sociabble includes a variety of configuration options for admins,
so that generated content is more appropriate to the organisation first time.

Search and information finding

Very few products have introduced AI into the search experience, which is a surprise given how often 'search' appears high on the list of improvements employees wish to see. Granted, issues with search aren't typically associated with the technology itself, but there is a lot of potential for AI to make real improvements here.

Also, to clarify, some products do sometimes or include AI to help match results with search queries; however, this is difficult for us to test and is mentioned in passing in the reviews where we're aware of it. There are still some products with chatbots too and we've discussed those where relevant, but they are far less common than they were a few years ago. In this instance we're interested in innovations with the overall search experience, which also includes improvements in information finding (and presentation).

A handful of products have introduced 'likely answers' into search results that are generated by AI, including ahead, Atlas, Haiilo, MangoApps, Microsoft (via Copilot), Engage (from Sorce) and Workgrid. This replicates a Google-like experience, where the search presents the answer to a question rather than merely lists of results of pages where the individual would have to continue their hunt for information.

The different products vary in the way they provide 'likely answers' though, typically only offering some of the following (we think it would be beneficial for all these features to be present):

- 'Teaching' the AI when it has provided an inaccurate answer

- Integrations with third-party tools, such as Salesforce or Workday

- Presenting additional resources, such as an associated file, within the answer or providing a link to it

- Analytics to help admins see what is or isn't working within search

- A chatbot-style interface and / or making this part of the standard search experience

- Contact information for subject experts should someone want more information.

> *For a long time, I've been advocating that enterprise search should provide answers not links. The potential is now there for AI to create this experience by summarising existing texts into more accessible chunks, and to do this on the fly. Companies deploying this approach, however, will need to pay careful attention to the information sources that the AI system draws from.*
>
> **Sam Marshall**
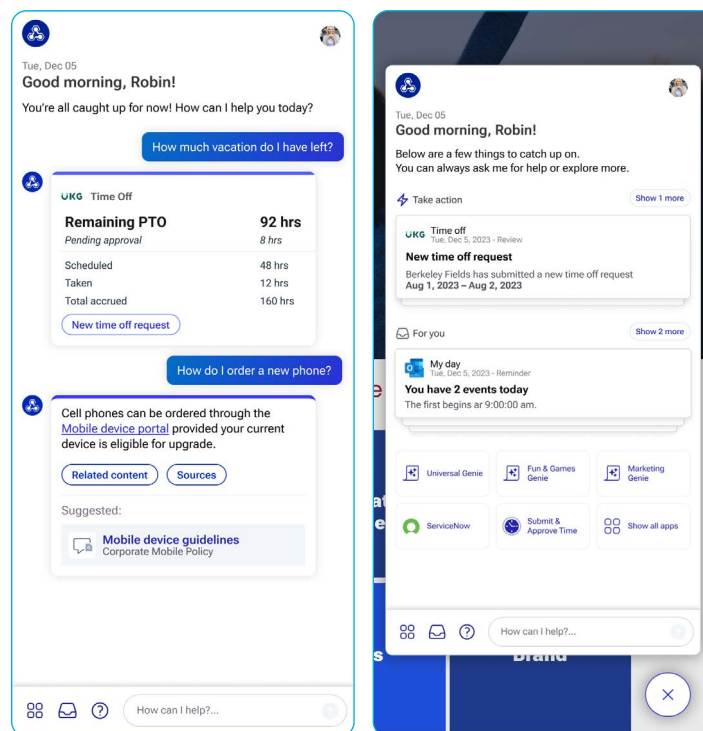
Workgrid is a pop-up assistant that lets people ask natural language questions, then will present 'likely answers' to them.

Using AI to generate content tags is another good example of aiding information finding and search, as this can be something publishers forget to do themselves. Akumina includes a tool to assist with this and we think this is really helpful. Likewise, effective titles can be tricky for some people to create – products like Staffbase have introduced AI tools to assist with this part of the process too.

In terms of information finding, some products have (e.g. Interact) AI-generated answers. These take the content of a page and summarise the information in a question-and-answer format that publishers can then edit. This approach provides a bite-sized way for people to consume the information and allows for a pleasant browsing experience to find what they're looking for. As a slight variation of this, Copilot in Viva Engage will present 'readers may ask' prompts to help publishers cover all relevant information in their initial post.

We think there is a lot of potential to dramatically improve employee experiences of products if AI is effectively applied to search. Debate has raged for years as to whether intranets and associated tools can be 'front doors' into organisations' digital workplaces. If AI-driven search is developed, then these products are in a very good position to offer that way in – potentially more so than other digital workplace tools.

> *When it comes to information finding within an organisation, the potential of tools similar to ChatGPT isn't just the generative AI side, but also the leap forward they have taken in dialog management. This is the ability to track interaction history in a logical way and to apply context to help make sense of each query.*
>
> *For example, a modern chatbot can make sense of "How many of those were in France?" as a follow-on query to "Who were our top 10 customers in the last quarter?". This is a very natural way for humans to refine what they want, but until recently chatbots would stumble because a high-quality response requires an understanding of all of these ambiguous terms: "our" (= the company), "the last quarter" (=trading period in a business context) and "those" (= customers in the preceding query).*
>
> *We look forward to seeing AI in the workplace make considerable progress in this area.*
>
> **Sam Marshall**

Staffbase includes AI that will help with tagging pages and with crafting titles.

AI support for Admins

This aspect is getting less attention, but for intranet managers we see great potential for automating some routine tasks.

For example, Copilot in SharePoint will soon be able to generate a SharePoint site from a prompt such as "Create an employee onboarding site featuring our company logo and using the Welcome to Contoso.pptx file." Think of it as being a little like the 'Designer' feature in PowerPoint. Just like fine-tuning text, additional prompts can be used to adjust the layout, branding and so on.

We also liked the concept of AI-driven analysis to give greater depth to analytics. For example, with Viva Engage storylines, leaders can see a summary of popular and trending themes in employees' posts. Given the rich potential for development in this scenario (which is historically the worse performing area), we feel more vendors could be considering AI for analytics.

Finally, there is scope for AI to assist with content governance. LumApps' forthcoming 'governance engine' automatically identifies stale content and suggests areas where there may be content gaps, for example.
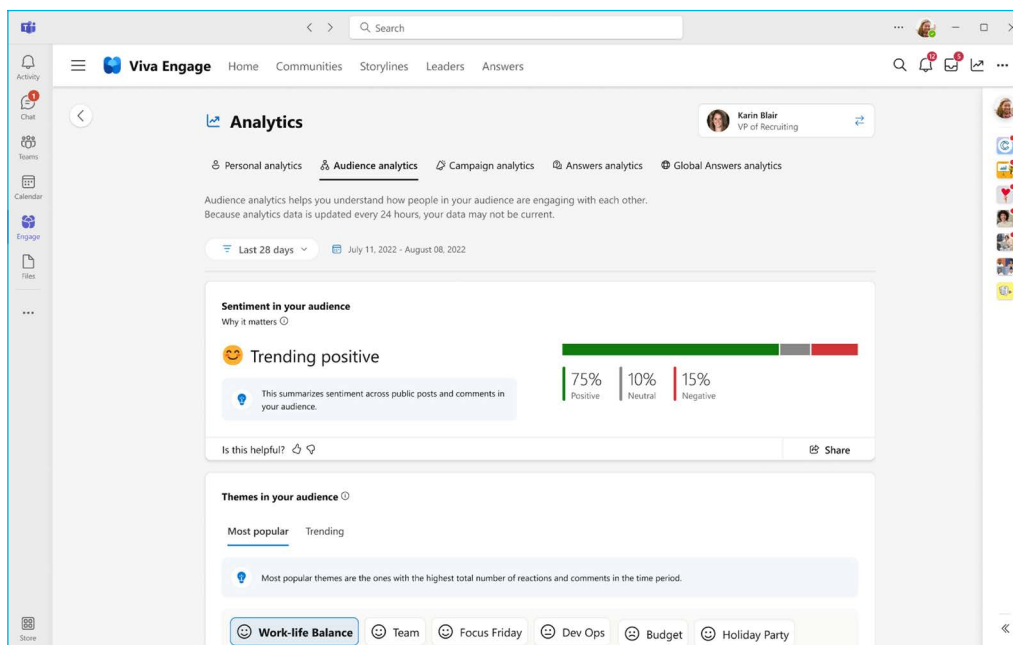
With a Viva Engage premium license, leader's Storylines will show rich analytics on feedback and sentiment to recent posts.

Governance has been a perennial headache in the intranet and digital workplace world. Although it's not a glamourous application of AI, it could be a very virtuous one. We already have examples in other fields, for example using automation to detect fraudulent transactions; to search for legal precedents; and to identify suspicious patterns in online behaviour. The analogue for intranets would be things like detecting duplicate sites, searching for outdated content, and checking for copyright or brand infringement. With the cost of AI transactions falling dramatically, we hope to see vendors incorporate such features soon.
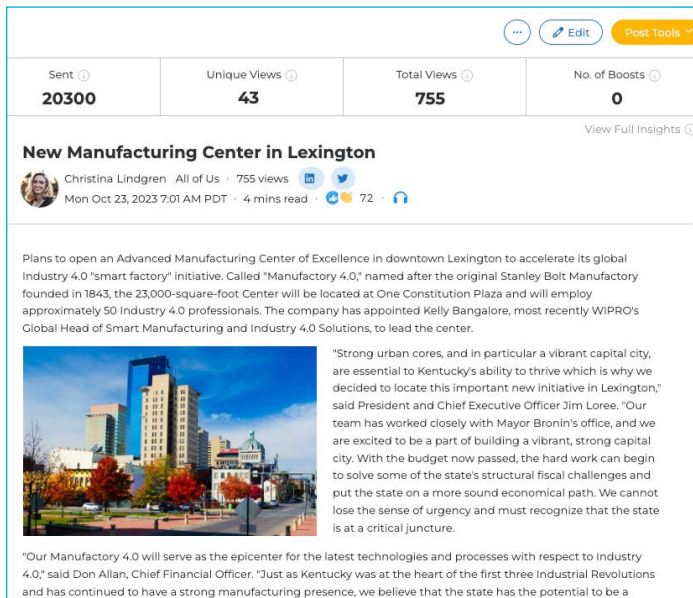
Sam Marshall

General UX enhancements

The final area is a catch-all for other AI features, which are smaller tools that still contribute towards improving the overall user experience. Auto translation is the most common of these features, yet is still not common across the products we've seen, which we think is a shame. However, Unily offers speech to text to automatically generate captions in video and these can also be auto-translated – so there are some vendors taking steps in the right directions here.

Similarly, MangoApps has an exciting AI audio generation tool that renders an audio version of a page without the need for publishers to record anything. This is a great accessibility feature and is a pseudo podcast feature, that will allow people to keep up to date with news without having to read something. We hope that the next step is audio translations.

A handful of vendors are using AI to assist with personalisation and audience targeting too, which means employees are more likely to see news that's relevant to them. Firstup's Orchestration Engine is a good example, which has been around for a little while and surfaces content to people at a time that's right for them and appropriate for the message.

MangoApps' AI audio generation tool is innovative, taking a written piece and turning it into a podcast.

AN OVERVIEW OF THIS REPORT

The report is split into three sections:

1   Section One: Introduction

- **How to use this report** – A guide to the different sections of each review and how we evaluated them. The 'scenario definitions and findings' and 'company and product tables' pages are particularly helpful.

- **Product comparisons** – We capture *a lot* of information during the review writing process, so we've collated tables and charts here for you (including scores and technical information from across all products). Our ClearBox Intranet Choices for 2024 are also here, as is a summary of all Full Reviews and Product Overviews.

- **How to choose a product** – How to select a product (and what process we recommend you follow to do this), including the case for choosing SharePoint-based solutions or looking more broadly.

2   Section Two: Full Reviews

Longer format reviews that assess products against business scenarios that we've devised based on experience (from our work with clients and working in the industry). Also includes lots of screenshots and technical data.
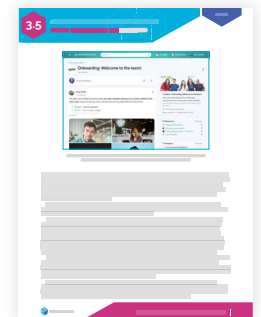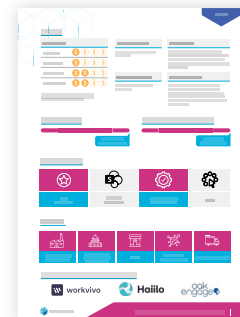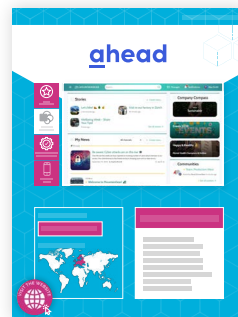
3   Section Three: Product Overviews

Shorter format reviews, which cover products that are still worth considering for your shortlist but aren't assessed against our scenarios. We've included our views of the products (following a short demonstration), screenshots and there is technical information too.
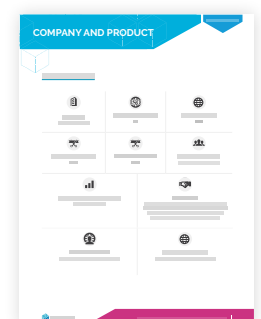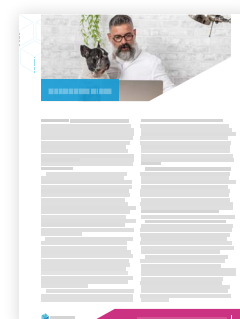
ClearBoxCONSULTING

INTRANETS | COLLABORATION | SHAREPOINT

TRAINED PUBLISHERS
CREATE BETTER CONTENT

When you rely on departmental contributions as part of your internal communications, you'll want to provide training to support your publisher community.

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Topics match and emphasise your existing guidance.

COMPETENCE AND CONFIDENCE

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See the topics covered and contact ClearBox to discuss your needs:

www.clearbox.co.uk/content

How to Use This Report

We've created this section to give you a little context behind our reviews, so you know exactly what it is you're looking at.

We've provided an overview of what each full product review contains, which is a simple diagram with explanatory notes. There's an explanation about how the scores work and how we gathered the pricing information. Each scenario has been detailed, so you know which business situation was explored and where, plus we've written an overview of our findings in each scenario too. Finally, you'll find a description of what we asked vendors so that we could complete the 'company and product' tables.

Back to index.

PRODUCT REVIEW FORMAT

Each full review contains the following sections (and more):

- A 'splash page' for quick reference information about the product

- Overview of pricing
- Product type and branding opportunities
- What system (if any) forms the foundation of the product
- The sectors they target
- If you like this product, you may like these others

- A summary of the product's strengths and weaknesses
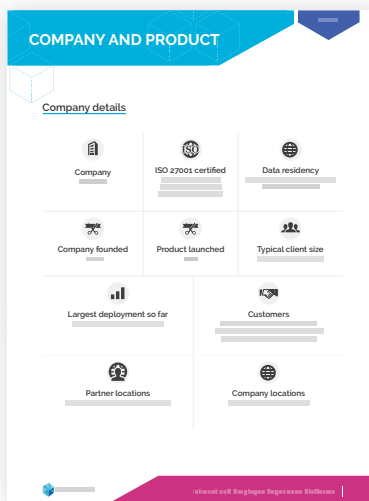
- Details of the company
- Technical specifications and support

- 'Voice of the vendor' – a statement from the vendor

Voice of the vendor

- 'Voice of the customer' feedback from customers

Voice of the customer

SCENARIOS & SCORES

- Scores for each scenario
- A write up of our findings for each scenario

1. USER EXPERIENCE & VISUAL APPEAL

- Summary of scores
- Key strengths, improvements, and considerations

5. INFORMATION FINDING & SEARCH

- Up to four scenarios include highlights of some of the most interesting or well-done features

THINGS TO BEAR IN MIND

Why choose this product

Vendor roadmap

- Some things to keep in mind when considering the product
- Summary of why you should choose the product
- The vendor's development roadmap

A note on SharePoint products

Requires SharePoint

Any product that needs SharePoint in order to work has this icon displayed in the introduction and as part of their review. Each of these products are likely to make use of SharePoint's basic features and we've highlighted where they bring added value or where SharePoint features have been obscured.

Please see the 'SharePoint / Viva Connections' review to see what basic features are on offer, but then refer to each other product to see what's done better (or possibly worse). The 'product comparison table' collates all scores, which will also be helpful for you to compare. Additionally, SharePoint often makes use of other Microsoft applications that can be in direct competition with vendors' tools. This means you may find some vendors ignore SharePoint or Microsoft features in favour of their own. Where there is functional overlap, you'll have to carefully consider which is the correct approach for your business to take.

TELLING THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PRODUCTS

Each review includes four icons labelled 'base systems':

Fully standalone	Requires SharePoint	Optionally works with SharePoint	Other

You'll also find these icons on the first page of a product review, in the index, plus in the 'technical table' for comparison purposes.

Fully standalone	Requires SharePoint	Optionally works with SharePoint	Other

This icon reflects that the product is an independent intranet, or similar product, that doesn't require SharePoint, Google Workspace, or anything similar in order to function.

Fully standalone	**Requires SharePoint**	Optionally works with SharePoint	Other

SharePoint intranet in-a-box products and those that work on top of SharePoint are included here. These products must have SharePoint in the background in order to work.

Fully standalone	Requires SharePoint	**Optionally works with SharePoint**	Other

These products can be used stand-alone but have also been designed to work closely with SharePoint as a document repository, for example.

Fully standalone	Requires SharePoint	Optionally works with SharePoint	**Other**

This icon is for those products that might rely on Google Workspace, Drupal, or something else in order to work. We've explained what it means in each case where it's used.
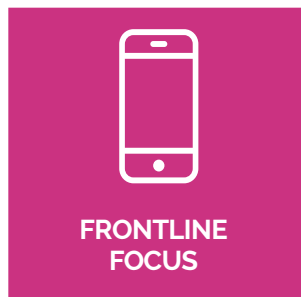
FRONTLINE FOCUS

Finally, you might see this icon coloured on the first page of the review (or in the index and in the technical table). We've added this to those products we believe have been built with a focus on frontline workers and are typically employee mobile app products. Although this icon is associated with the performance in Scenario 8 (Mobile and Frontline Support), it doesn't mean products without this icon are poor when it comes to the mobile scenario. We would therefore recommend you refer to the scores for Scenario 8 as well as this icon when deciding which reviews to read.

SCENARIO DEFINITIONS AND FINDINGS

We evaluated each product in our full reviews against the eight scenarios detailed below. We don't dictate a long list of specific features, but instead outline common employee needs. We then ask the vendors to demonstrate how they would address the scenarios in whatever way they see as the best approach. In a lot of cases, we know that not all organisations will want everything we expect to see in a scenario. We believe in giving people choices though, so we highlight missing and poorly implemented features where products don't fulfil scenario expectations.

Additionally, our reviewers have expanded up to four scenarios in each review, adding detail around the standout features and including images to illustrate the functionality.

Scenario 1: User experience and visual appeal

What we explored

We wanted to see the overall experience of using the product from an end-user's perspective. This not only included the branding / look-and-feel that can be achieved with the site, but how people may choose to consume the content. This scenario explored:

- The overall quality of the user experience, such as whether notifications are easy to find and whether the interface is contemporary in its approach.
- How easily users can navigate through the site using well-structured menus, targeted menu options, and visual cues.
- Whether the branding options are flexible, without any platform constraints or issues with upgrades applied at a later point. The overall visual impact of the product was also considered here.
- What support was offered for businesses that may want sub-brands, such as where part of the organisation has a distinct identity (for example PlayStation within Sony) or where a business may want to reflect multiple locations (such as Hilton in Las Vegas vs Hilton in Paris).

What we found

It's very unusual for the platforms we review to deliver a poor user experience. If we find a product delivers a particularly poor experience, we typically don't invite them to participate in subsequent reports, which means the average score for this scenario is high at 3.9 out of 5. We will highlight where something is clunky or doesn't behave as we'd expect though. Likewise, most products are easy to use but the comprehensiveness of the platforms varies and has an impact on the user experience – we have commented on this where it is evident.

It's then in the nuances of this scenario where we see real differences. For example, most products support multi-brand organisations, however to what extent branding or other design choices are offered does vary. Many products, like SharePoint, offer simple logos and colours, while a few offer highly flexible design choices that result in tailored and very attractive sites, such as Akumina. Most fall somewhere in between, giving some semblance of design options while not being fully flexible.

Navigation is another area where product approaches vary. Most offer some form of multi-level navigation, such as a mega menu, while a few have simpler single-level navigation. A handful have navigation that's not configurable, in that they reflect pre-defined spaces such as 'pages' or 'communities' that display lists of what sub-spaces people can access. While this approach works well it may not meet the needs of those who want greater control.
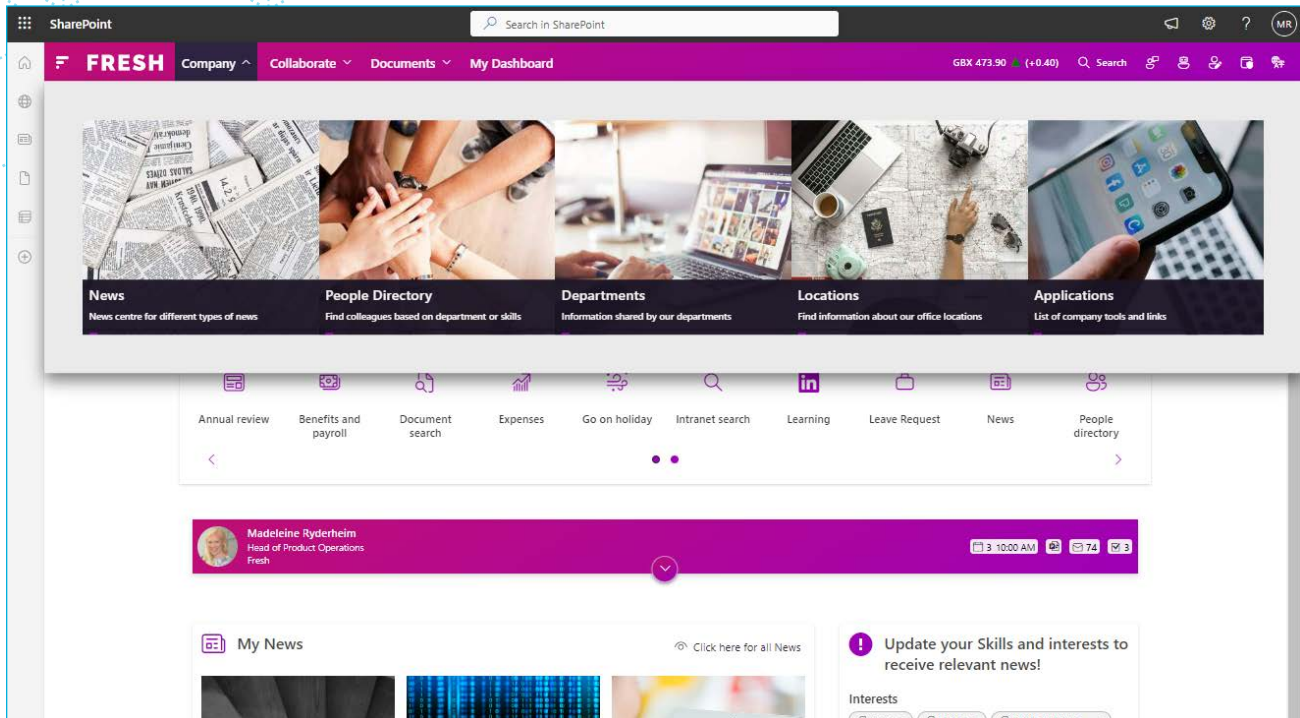
Fresh includes a variety of attractive navigation approaches,
such as this one showing 'tiles' to take people through to subsites.

The final area of nuance in this scenario surrounds notifications. This sounds minor, but when you consider even Outlook has its own notification bell now, there is a great risk of overwhelming employees if these aren't carefully thought through. Most products do an OK job with notifications, but we'd like to see more capabilities like 'save for later' added so that people can manage their activities more effectively.

How SharePoint and Viva fared in this scenario

From a user point of view, modern SharePoint is capable of some very attractive page designs that use images, space and highlights effectively and generally the experience is good. However, navigation in SharePoint can be a challenge overall, as can navigation when one application is embedded within another (such as SharePoint within Teams via Viva Connections). Notifications are either missing or spread in different applications and we'd like to see a more coherent approach. Branding approaches are simple and it's tricky to apply consistency without a third-party tool.

Scenario 2:   Publishing and communications management

What we explored

Internal communicators will often rely on these platforms to reach their audiences, so we wanted to see what tools were available to help them create and manage the flow of news to appropriate audiences. This included different news types, crisis communications, and ways of reaching people beyond the given platform. We tested:

- What tools were available to build appealing and effective content using a range of media, as well as how easy this experience was.
- How content could be dynamically and flexibly targeted to individuals or groups, and whether individuals could also opt in or out of channels.
- What tools were available to manage the quality of content, such as publication workflow settings, as well as the flow of articles, for example a news calendar.
- Ways that messages could be published in one place but reach audiences wherever they may be, such as through digital signage.

What we found

We've seen an evolution of these platforms over the past couple of years, where many vendors have focused on internal communications teams as core product owners or stakeholders. While internal comms has been important for a long time, we've seen a shift in the functionality on offer so that these platforms are addressing internal comms needs and challenges head-on. Given the importance of these platforms in organisations, we think this is sensible and have developed this scenario with these changes in mind.

For example, every product has some form of news creation process. We pay attention to the overall experience of creating articles and will highlight where something is comparatively weaker than other products. Ultimately, it's unusual for any product to do badly with this aspect.

However, joining the mix for the first time in this scenario are generative AI features in around half of the products we've reviewed. Most provide a natural language prompt approach to generating copy and / or AI-driven editing tools, like amending tone and length. Some have specific content checkers, such as Interact's 'accessibility checker', alongside broader creation tools. Sociabble has among the most advanced generative AI tools we've seen, where company and an individual's context are applied by the AI to whatever it generates. This is still a fast-evolving area and we're looking forward to seeing how it develops. Please see the 'AI Trends' section of this introduction for more on AI.
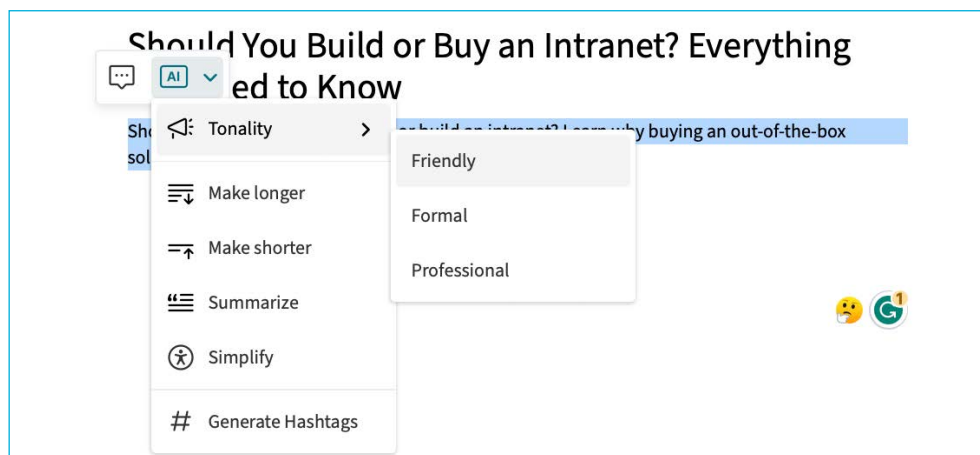
Haiilo added the first ChatGPT integration we saw and we think it's still excellent.

Another area of this scenario that stands out is news flow management, such as through a calendar or Kanban board or something similar. This is still an area that's hit-and-miss, with a lot of products relying on simple publication dates which we think is a shame. A few offer AI-driven news delivery, like Firstup's Orchestration Engine that's been around for a number of years, and a handful of others have calendars etc. We think internal communicators will increasingly want news management features as additional channels are added (see below) and we hope to see this area expand across products.

Finally, we want to highlight the inconsistencies around multi-channel approaches in this scenario. Internal comms folk will likely have to manage multiple comms channels and having a tool that will allow them to create once then share in many places is incredibly valuable. We expect to see a good range of additional channels in this scenario, but it's not unusual for platforms to only work with one or two. Staffbase does this well, with an inbuilt newsletter tool, digital signage facilitation, and the ability to share into SharePoint and MS Teams just a few examples from the range. There are some unusual channels and approaches too, like Workvivo that has great livestreaming features, and LumApps that includes a strong native video management feature. Where vendors are focusing on internal comms teams, as mentioned at the start of this section, then they will need to address multi-channel needs.

How SharePoint and Viva fared in this scenario

It is easy with SharePoint to create a news story page, and straightforward to add images, videos and even charts. News can be rolled up from other sites and targeted to show only stories tagged with metadata topics. Audience targeting is completed via Entra ID (formerly Active Directory), which is likely to need the support from IT. Currently, news can be scheduled to publish on a pre-set date, but there is no site-wide way to plan or monitor this. There's no 'alert' feature or ability to push out a notification, although many companies get around this with a suitably styled web part or by sending out emails from SharePoint. For cross-channel publishing, the Viva Amplify module introduced a campaigns capability. News can be created as a series of 'broadcasts' around a campaign and then pushed out to specific M365 channels such as SharePoint, Outlook and Engage (Teams is on the roadmap).

Scenario 3: Community and engagement

What we explored

To really engage employees, we need to give them a voice. We wanted to see how platforms facilitated dialogue with employees, the gathering of feedback, and the ability to take a 'temperature check'. Some of the best internal content can come from people sharing thoughts and generating ideas together, so we also looked at how internal communities were cultivated. We explored:

- How users could react or interact with content, such as through liking and commenting (including what moderation features were available).
- What social collaboration or communities of practice features were available, such as themed discussion boards, wikis, blogs, or activity feeds (similar to those that could be found on a social media site).
- How HR or internal communicators could gather thoughts and opinions, for example using surveys, polls, or ideation tools.
- What other 'people' oriented features were included to help encourage themes of wellbeing, engagement, and inclusion. This could include recognition schemes, mindfulness features, or onboarding processes.

What we found

This scenario offers vendors an opportunity to expand their product's usefulness within an organisation, potentially removing the need (and associated complexity and expense) for additional engagement products. The areas we explore also bring heart and personality into these platforms, helping to present company culture to employees and making them tools people want to use. For example, a small but significant feature that employees frequently look for is a variety of reaction types to content, mirroring their experiences on external social media platforms. Gone are the days where a simple 'like' was enough, people now want to express their opinions but without having to add comments. This is an area where many platforms don't meet social-media-led expectations and we hope to see it develop over time.

A small number of vendors choose to rely on Microsoft applications to deliver community features, such as Viva Engage for social spaces or Forms for surveys. The summary of how SharePoint and Viva fared in this scenario is below, which helps add context. Understandably, the vendors that typically choose this approach are SharePoint intranet in-a-box products, although others will also optionally integrate with Microsoft applications.

Most products offer some form of native community or social features; this might be dedicated spaces such as 'Hubs' in Oak Engage or social elements that can be added where relevant across the intranet, such as Unily's 'Channels'. Overall, we were generally impressed with the community features that were on offer.

There are some good surveying tools across the products too, although the comprehensiveness of these does vary. This means some products, such as Workvivo, offer alternatives that are strong enough to replace dedicated tools like SurveyMonkey, while others provide simple approaches that would be helpful for quick surveying rather than an annual employee survey, for example.

For organisations looking for 'people-focused' tools, there's a real mixed picture in the industry, where some vendors claim to have tools but in fact merely offer content containers. For example, providing content containers for onboarding new employees is common but tools to progress people through these early days (to do lists, workflows associated with activities etc.) is unusual.

Some vendors do offer excellent features that will improve employee engagement, however. For example, dedicated onboarding tools like the one found in Omnia will provide an excellent initial impression for new employees. Peer-to-peer recognition is becoming a more common tool now, but some products do it particularly well – Workvivo, for example, tie praise into company values to tackle two engagement areas at once. Events (including livestreaming), micro-learning, gamification and badges, wellbeing features, and company awards support are all examples we've seen in different products.
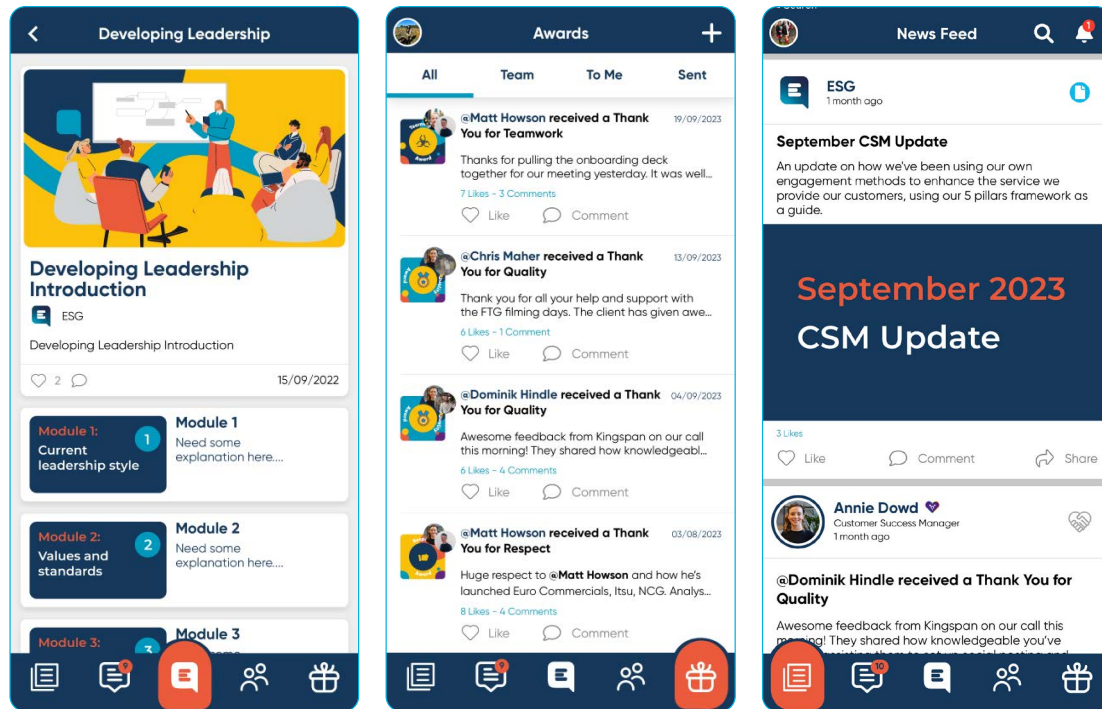
Engage (from ESG) includes some excellent engagement tools, including micro-learning, employee recognition, and social features.

How SharePoint and Viva fared in this scenario

Microsoft's primary tool for community and social engagement is Viva Engage (formerly Yammer), although the social side of SharePoint is weaker than rival platforms. Engage provides a good option for communities of practice and more recently for individual creators via the 'Storyline' feature. Engage activity can be made more visible with SharePoint web parts that allow flexible embedding of groups, topics or even one person's posts into a page. 'Leaders' are particularly well supported and there are some interesting AI developments coming soon using Copilot. There are polls and more sophisticated surveys are supported via Forms. Microsoft's play for the 'Wellbeing' dimension is Viva Insights, which includes a free element for employees while organisations may have to pay for additional features.

Scenario 4:   Integrations and services (including M365)

What we explored

Digital workplaces are often a fragmented set of tools, so we wanted to see how the products helped simplify an employee's experience. For example, integrations with systems to reduce the number of sites, apps, or platforms someone must visit, which could be through links, iframes, or fuller integrations, and where an 'external' activity is brought through into the intranet. Additionally, the Microsoft suite is pervasive, and many companies want their intranet to work well alongside their M365 investment, even if they have chosen not to use SharePoint as a publishing platform. We explored:

- How integrations with common enterprise systems, such as Salesforce, Workday, or Zendesk, were presented on the intranet. This could include dashboards, iframes, or actionable notifications, and we wanted to see the end user and administrator experience.
- How the products supported sources such as SharePoint, Google Drive, Dropbox and Box as cloud file sources to collaborate and share.
- What kinds of content could be integrated into the intranet product from SharePoint. For example, could users post into SharePoint news or show SharePoint news stories, or was there an overview of sites?
- How an integration worked with MS Teams, covering conversations, documents, and calls. MS Teams can generate a lot of notifications, so we wanted to see how these were handled too.
- How far Viva applications have been integrated, particularly Viva Engage and Viva Connections.

What we found

We're often told by vendors that this is a scenario where requirements can vary greatly from client to client. While we agree, we want to reflect how flexible or not products are when it comes to addressing these requirements. The average score here is 2.6 out of 5, which is low due to the prevalence of 'optional scores' that reflect the additional time and / or cost effort required here for organisations to achieve what they desire.

The majority of products we've reviewed include open APIs for integrations, with some vendors providing pre-built integrations and others leaving it entirely open to clients to request (then build or work with the vendor to build). For example, Involv has developed an integration with CV Warehouse, a jobsite platform, which displays vacancies on the intranet. Some vendors offer developer portals or other support for admins to set up integrations from a suite of options. Some products make good use of Power Automate too, such as Appspace Intranet that displays the output as Adaptive Cards.

As you may expect, SharePoint intranet-in-a-box products typically integrate very well with M365 applications. As an example, Atlas builds onto standard Microsoft functionality to expand what's on offer – such as Viva Topics that is integrated into Atlas web parts, where Viva Topic cards show for related metadata rather than the default behaviour of only appearing over a mentioned keyword.

Across all products we generally saw good integrations with Teams, but integrations with other M365 applications varied in quality between products. Surprisingly, SharePoint integrations were missing or very basic in some products – given its strengths as a document management solution, we feel the quality of integrations here should be improved.

Overall, vendors tend to take a variety of approaches when it comes to integrations. As a

result, this is an area where we'd urge you to identify exactly what your expectations are of the platform (do you want two-way integrations with key business systems for example) and of the vendor (do you want them to support with integration development?).
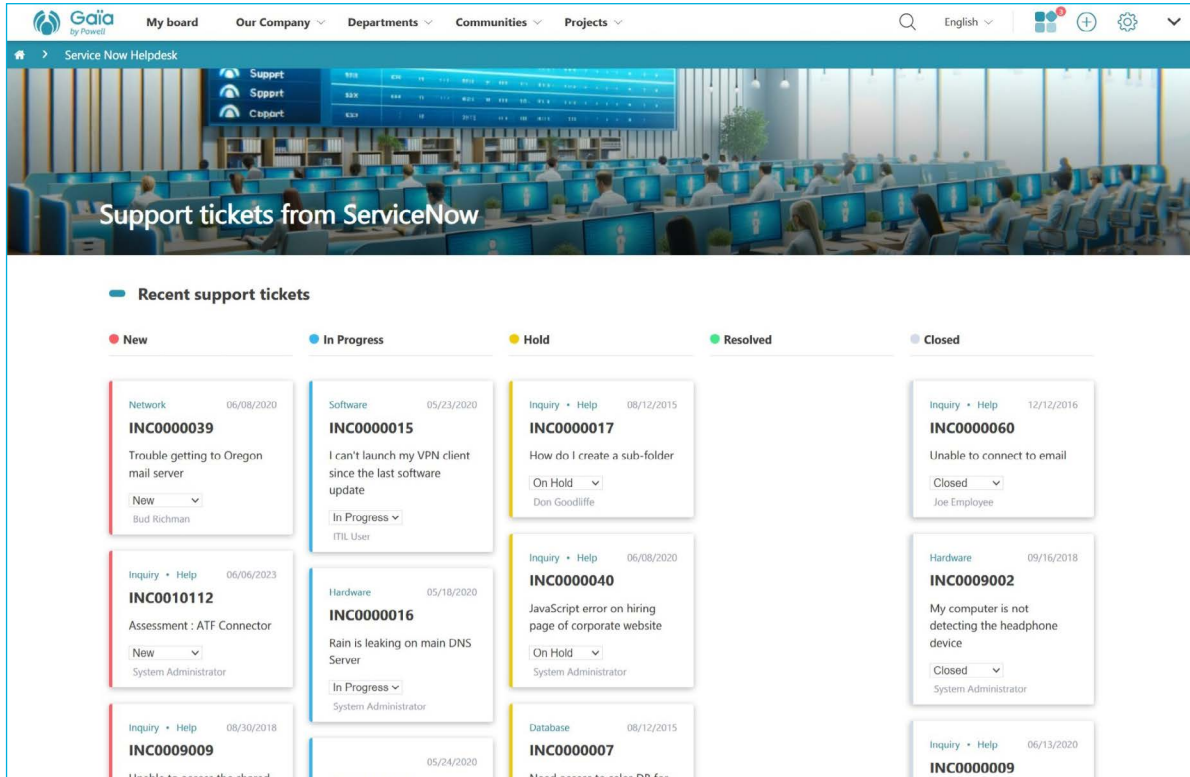
Powell Intranet includes a nice integration with ServiceNow that displays service tickets in an intuitive interface.

How SharePoint and Viva fared in this scenario

Integration between M365 applications is generally strong, but there are areas where SharePoint and Teams aren't integrated as tightly as you might expect. Multiple vendors have connectors that will work with the Viva Connections dashboard feature, and this offers the most direct integration with SharePoint. A second route is to use Power Apps, which can be embedded on a SharePoint page and made to work well on mobile too. The third possibility is the Teams app store. Finally, there is the full-development route using APIs and SharePoint Framework (SPFx). These approaches offer simple or sophisticated integration options, and vary in terms of complexity to implement, so the support of IT or a technical partner will be needed.

Scenario 5: Information finding and search

What we explored

Finding information can be a challenge for users, not only within intranets but across the broader digital workplace. We wanted to see how the products approached findability and ease of information seeking. Some platforms support enterprise-wide search and we welcomed any demonstrations that went beyond the intranet. We wanted to see:

- What the search service and experience was like on the platform. This included clear and accurate results being returned, the potential to refine results dynamically, the indexing of content (documents in particular), and an attractive interface.
- How admins could influence results, such as through promoted results or topic tagging.
- Whether the search would federate content from some or all integrated systems.
- What the people search experience was like, again through clear and attractive results, plus a detailed organisation chart, and useful suggestions such as type-ahead or alternate spellings (Suzie – Susie – Susy – Suzy etc).

What we found

Whenever we speak with clients' employees, the search always comes up as an area needing improvement. Often this isn't associated with the technology behind the search, but sometimes platform decisions do make an impact – such as those products that are still missing simple features like search refiners. These vendors tend to argue that their search technology will automatically present the right result to people, but given search issues are usually associated with content problems, we are sceptical of this response. Features like fuzzy and partial matching would be welcome additions here, particularly where controls aren't in end users' hands to refine results.

Search management tools, like promoted results / best bets, can give administrators greater control over search results to help present the right things to employees. However, the extent and effectiveness of these tools really varies or are missing altogether from products we've seen. On the flip side, MangoApps provides a good search experience for end users and admins alike, with a feedback feature that includes good analytics to help admins tweak the experience for people. MangoApps and a handful of other vendors have started to introduce AI features into search. These present likely results or even consolidate likely answers from across the platform. Some, like Workgrid, even consolidate answers from multiple systems. AI in search is in its early days but our initial findings look promising.

The people search experience is generally good across the products we've seen, with most allowing for any profile field to be searched. Some profile pages are more attractive than others though, with equally hit-and-miss org charts (with some products missing org charts altogether). Some products will allow employees to update their own profile fields and others, like LiveTiles, go one step further to encourage people to update their profile with helpful prompts and completion rates based on configurable settings.

LiveTiles includes an excellent people finding module with a configurable admin bot that will prompt employees to update their profiles.

How SharePoint and Viva fared in this scenario

Microsoft Search provides the search experience across M365 applications and is very powerful. Content across the Microsoft ecosystem is indexed and federating into other business systems is possible with some development work. There are sophisticated search management tools, including metadata and 'bookmarks' (promoted results), which are likely to need IT to administer. A new 'Q&A' feature intelligently presents likely answers to people. People search is good for individual results (a nice contact card and smart spelling correction). We expect to see this area progress significantly as Microsoft's Copilot product evolves.

Scenario 6:   Administrator experience

What we explored

It's important for all users to have a good experience when working with an intranet, particularly where there is a decentralised model to intranet management. We therefore wanted to see how easy it was for administrators and publishers to manage the site as a separate experience from end-users. This scenario explored:

- The different menus and options that were open to admins and how complex tasks were made easier.
- What tools were available to build or configure the home page(s) and / or other landing pages. We wanted to see features such as templates, a variety of web parts / widgets, and elements to help such as info buttons.
- Mechanisms for managing content life cycles with easy ways for people (including devolved content owners and publishers) to update content and / or associated dates.
- How multiple languages were supported from a user and publisher point of view. For example, the ability to change languages for both the interface and content or helping publishers with translation workflow.

What we found

Unfortunately, admins can sometimes be overlooked in favour of end users and the experience here can be quite different. The average score here, for example, is 3.5 vs the score for Scenario 1 at 3.9 out of 5. Overall, we would like vendors to bring parity in experience between the front and back end (and across admin screens more generally in some places) – although there are products that do better than others.

Additionally, the admin experience isn't always something vendors voluntarily demo during product selection, so we would advise you ask to see how this works. In advance, you should also think about how your platform is going to be run and by who. A decentralised publishing approach may mean page creation and governance needs to be simple. Perhaps IT colleagues will be actively managing aspects of the site, so access to technical tools might be wanted. You'll find simple and comprehensive approaches among the products we've reviewed, so be prepared to consider what your colleagues will work best with.

Regardless of the overall admin approach, governance and content life cycle tools should be easy enough for publishers to use so they keep on top of associated actions, while also be comprehensive enough to effectively manage the site. We've found this is still an area of inconsistency, despite poor governance often being behind poor employee experiences. We've noticed that customers are now feeding this back more frequently too, so we hope to see improvements in this area.

Multi-language needs vary between businesses, but again we want to reflect the choices available to meet the needs of those who have requirements in this area. There are generally good auto translation options across the products we've seen, both for publishers to then edit but also for end users to translate on-the-fly. Those organisations that have publishers that work in different languages may find options too simplistic overall, but some products such as Omnia do include excellent tools that allow for side-by-side comparisons and tracked changes

Omnia includes an excellent multi-language tool for those who want to more closely manage translations of content.

How SharePoint and Viva fared in this scenario

Administration for sites, and particularly for a whole intranet, can soon feel very complex. Part of the challenge with SharePoint is that settings can be spread across multiple locations. However, for administrators of SharePoint pages, the experience is consistent and accessible. For governance, reporting will show usage against storage quotas, but it is much harder to find unused sites because they don't generate usage data. By design, SharePoint reflects a low-governance philosophy by Microsoft, where anyone can create a site. This can be blocked, but there is no nuanced middle-ground. SharePoint makes it easy to create a multilingual experience, supporting around fifty languages for both the interface and for content, although there is a machine-translation option.

Scenario 7: Analytics

What we explored

Intranet managers and content owners need to be able to measure the effectiveness of their intranet, which not only shows the performance but will lend guidance to ways to improve the site too. We have tested:

- What information was available to admins so that they can get an idea for site-wide and individual section content usage and adoption.
- How the analytics deliver actionable insights that help improve the way the intranet is managed, not just generating numbers because they can; and how the data could be adapted to suit a business' specific goals.
- Analytics and tools for communicators, such as ways to measure individual article and overall communication campaign performance.
- Support of mandatory reading and search analytics, such as to help admins identify when users give up on search terms or where there are gaps in results.

What we found

This is an area we've been talking about for years, as historically this has been the lowest scoring scenario. While there have definitely been improvements, this is still an area that could be a lot better – as the average score of 3.2 out of 5 shows.

Often vendors argue that clients want different things from analytics, so they give little data as standard. We feel there are basics that could be improved across the board that clients could then expand upon. Additionally, some vendors argue that having loads of charts and reports means that they address this scenario fully. We disagree, as some data is basic and arguably not particularly useful, even though it's easy for vendors to surface. Intranet managers need actionable insights – data that helps them make decisions rather than just showing them irrelevant numbers.

Very few vendors are hitting the mark with analytics, particularly when it comes to data around search. Given the introduction of AI features in search and prevalence of poor search experiences among employees, this area in particular needs greater focus. With the addition of more internal comms tools, we'd expect to see more supporting analytics in this area too.

A handful of vendors are doing well, however, such as Staffbase that has an excellent analytics suite that would be made even better by the addition of search data. Firstup is a market leader in this area too, with data presented in different and helpful formats on general site usage, content performance, search, community activities and more.
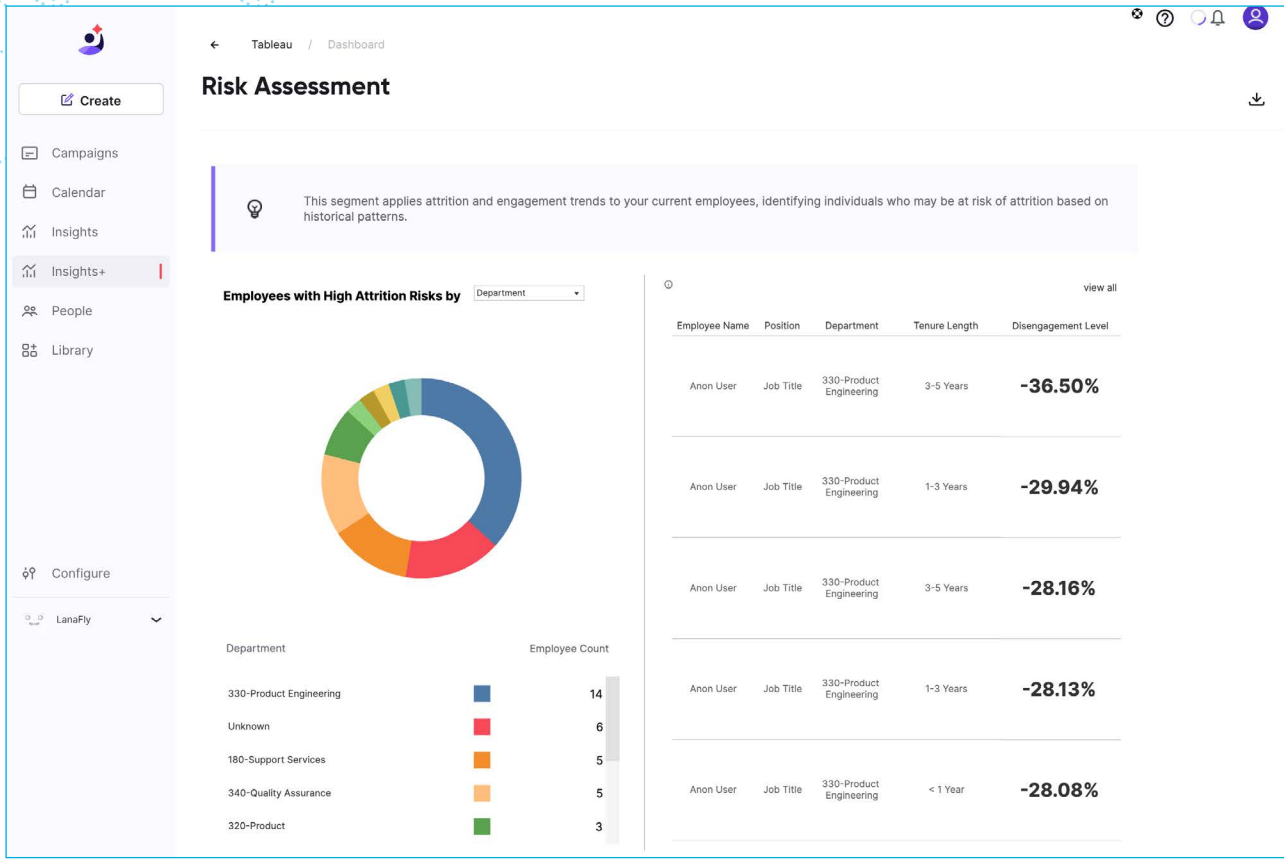
Firstup plans to expand their already strong analytics, such as through the introduction of an Employee Retention report that forecasts the risk of employee attrition.

How SharePoint and Viva fared in this scenario

There is data and reporting across Microsoft applications, but this can feel fragmented, especially if you consider your intranet to be a combination of SharePoint, Viva Engage, Stream and Teams. It is possible to extract all the data into Power BI and there is a 'Microsoft 365 usage analytics' report to start you off, but this requires configuration and Power BI Pro licensing. Viva Amplify includes helpful reporting on campaigns and search analytics are good. 'Mandatory reads' would need to be supported via Forms and PowerBI.

Scenario 8:   Mobile and frontline support

What we explored

People often need to access information or check updates away from their desk (or have a role that is entirely deskless). We asked vendors to show us how their product made it easy to deliver an engaging experience on devices such as mobiles, tablets and on shared screens. We wanted to see:

- What solutions were offered to help businesses enrol users onto the mobile version of the site, particularly where users may not be on central databases or where centrally held contact information may be incomplete.
- The ease of use and whether the experience mirrors a consumer app.
- What features were present on the mobile experience to support the needs of frontline workers.
- How easily admins could control the content and layout of the app, ensuring that anything presented was suitable and relevant to mobile users.

What we found

We've broadly seen three approaches to this scenario, which stems from the overall approach the vendors are taking with their products. The approaches are: social / communications platforms, modern intranets, and mobile-first products. Organisations should therefore consider what experience they want to provide for employees across device types before making any buying decisions.

Social / communication platforms typically focus on community content (such as covered in Scenario 3) and / or internal communication needs (such as covered in Scenario 2). Often there is a parity of experience across device types because products take an overall simpler approach to features, for example navigation doesn't tend to have multiple menu layers. An example here is ahead, where features particularly suit a mobile environment and so the experience is strong.

Modern intranets typically serve the needs of a classic intranet – document / policy storage and presentation, top-down communications, a good search, engagement tools, and a variety of other features that vary between products. We find that many of these products lift and shift their platform into an app environment, which can be overly comprehensive for frontline or other mobile users. Some allow admins to control what mobile audiences see and simplify the experience. Interact is a good example here, where admins have a great deal of control over both desktop and mobile environments.

This year we've introduced mobile-first products into the range of platforms we've reviewed, many of which are employee mobile apps that enable frontline workers to do what they really need to from one place. These products are very simple on desktop, but this translates into an excellent mobile experience as this is the focus for the vendor. These vendors typically understand frontline and other mobile audiences very well, so the all-round experience is positive. Blink is an excellent example here, offering services beyond just a product to serve frontline needs well overall.

Blink will send a rollout team to clients, to help their employees successfully access and start using the app.

How SharePoint and Viva fared in this scenario

The browser-based experience for SharePoint generally works well. The SharePoint and Teams mobile apps are clean and snappy to use, but neither feels like an 'intranet in your pocket'. The Teams app, when Viva Connections is enabled, does show an icon for your intranet, but it opens onto a dashboard view rather than news. Teams is marketed as a frontline solution, particularly as a mobile app, and there are some features to support this approach.

SCORING AND PRICING

Explanation of scoring

No one product is the same as another and each approach the scenarios in different ways. Our scoring aims to be accurate and simple, to provide a point of comparison between products, but there are some aspects to explain:

3+

Product score – How far the product addresses the scenario our of a potential five points.

Optional extra - Features that may be added at extra cost and / or effort.

Potential score - All scores are out of five; empty spaces indicate where the product did not score full marks, which may be because the product includes features for only part of the scenario, where the features just don't meet the criteria set in the scenario, or where the product doesn't include the feature.

Examples

0

This isn't an area that is addressed by the product.

2.5

Half of the scenario criteria have been met. This may mean that the features aren't as extensive as we would hope, or it may mean that the product doesn't address features that form part of a scenario.

2.5+

Half of the scenario criteria have been met again. However, with additional time or money invested the product would be improved and score the maximum of five points.

Explanation of pricing

PRICE BAND				
250 users	$	$	$	$
1,000 users	$	$	$	$
5,000 users	$	$	$	$
20,000 users	$	$	$	$

Very few vendors are willing to publicly show pricing for their products, as there are many configuration dependencies, or potential volume and sector discounts to consider. To help you group products by price range, we asked each vendor to quote a list price for 250, 1,000, 5,000, and 20,000 users over three years (in US$), with only the basic services needed to install the system.

Where vendors had multiple price options, we have matched the pricing to the version we reviewed and used the 'optional extra' score to show what could be achieved at a higher price point (see the explanation of scoring symbols, above).

We also gathered information on:

- Pricing model – for example, whether it's based on a subscription model.
- Spread of costs – we let you know how evenly costs are spread across three years, for example, whether there is a higher cost at the start of a project.
- Discounts – sometimes vendors award discounts to certain business types and / or sizes, such as charities, those with frontline workers, or very large organisations.
- 'Price includes' – we ask vendors to supply pricing so that it includes installation, configuration, licensing, and any paid-for optional features they demonstrate to us for the review. Some vendors automatically include other services, however, and we present that information here.

Note that prices are indicative, offering a comparison of the products featured in this report only. Please contact the vendor for a bespoke quote.

Observation of SharePoint and independent intranet pricing

According to our report (and generally speaking), independent intranet products are more expensive than those that rely on SharePoint. Independents must develop all aspects of their product, as they cannot rely on SharePoint's framework, so arguably there is more development costs associated with them.

However, it's worth noting that the SharePoint dependent products have quoted for the cost of their product licensing only. While you may have Microsoft 365 (M365) licenses anyway (for Word or Outlook for example), some plans are very expensive for all features (such as the full Viva experience). Including SharePoint / M365 licenses would make add-on products significantly more expensive than their independent cousins, particularly for larger businesses.

It's worth considering all costs when researching costs associated with your intranet, especially if you plan to include frontline workers that may not currently have M365 access. We're pleased to see some SharePoint-based products offering options for frontline worker access that get around this requirement though.

'COMPANY AND PRODUCT' TABLES EXPLANATION

Each review includes a 'Company and Product' section, which covers details of the most common non-functional requirements that we have identified. This section will speed up the RFP or tender process, as quite often these 'non-functional requirements' can be a showstopper for an otherwise promising product. Here's an overview of what these sections cover.

Company details

	Company	The vendor company name, this can often be the same as the product, but not always.
	ISO 27001 certified	ISO 27001 is an international standard on how to manage information security. We have highlighted where vendors have been awarded this certification, and / or what else they have in place.
	Data residency	It's important to know where your data will reside if the vendor is the host (as covered in a question below). Some companies may not want to have data held outside of their continent, for example.
	Company founded	How well-established a vendor is may be a factor in deciding to partner with them.
	Product launched	This gives a sense of how established the product is.
	Typical client size	We ask this to give you an indication whether the vendor is used to working with businesses of your size. Whether you are very large or very small, each comes with its own challenges and ideally your vendor will be familiar with these.
	Largest deployment so far	This will be important to enterprise-scale businesses as it gives a sense that the vendor has a track record with large deployments.
	Customers	Vendors tell us up to five sectors that their clients typically fall into, and this is presented earlier in the review. However, we also include this section so that they can name up to ten of their clients, so you can see who they have worked with in the past. Note this list is unlikely to be all clients vendors have worked with and sometimes there is a link out to their website for more case studies.
	Partner locations	Some vendors work with partners across different regions who will help with the set-up and support of a product. Even if the vendor isn't local, they may have a partner who is.
	Company locations	Some vendors have offices in a variety of locations and finding a vendor that's local might be important to you.

Product details

Name of product

The specific product we reviewed.

Deployment

There are a variety of factors that will influence where your company is happy for your intranet to be deployed and hosted, such as within your country, or the sensitivity of the information you handle. We have asked the vendors to indicate where they can support the intranet being deployed onto your private cloud or on-premises server. Alternatively, they may use web servers, such as Microsoft Azure, Amazon Web Services, or your Microsoft 365 tenant. Finally, some vendors may host themselves or have another solution available.

Client data encrypted

Where data is stored outside of your facilities (i.e., it's not hosted in your cloud or on your server) we asked vendors at what point(s) data is encrypted. This could be in transit only, at rest only, or in transit and at rest (no product has no encryption). This is where the sensitivity of the information you handle will influence what products you can shortlist, based on their responses.

Authentication supported

The digital workplace is vast and so reducing the number of times and places users have to sign in is a big bonus. We have asked vendors to tell us the different methods that their product supports. We expected them to support a mix of Entra ID (formerly Azure Active Directory), ADFS, Okta, Open ID, Oauth, and Google Workspace, although we do provide space for them to tell us about any others they support.

Mobile app deployment

There are three common methods for apps to be downloaded onto a mobile device. The first relies on users downloading themselves via public stores, i.e. Google Play or Apple. Despite in-built security measures to manage ex-employees, organisations can feel nervous about allowing users to download 'company apps' via public stores. The second method is therefore via mobile device management where an IT team takes responsibility for device content. Similar is the third method, mobile application management, where IT takes responsibility for individual apps on a device.

Accessibility

Accessibility is about designing intranets to assist those with a disability, impairment, or other difficulty. For example, high contrast text / backgrounds, and scalable font sizes can help with visual impairments; keyboard shortcuts assist people that have difficulty using a mouse. This is an important area as many countries have legislation to protect against discrimination. We have highlighted where products conform to WCAG 2.1 standards.

Document library sources integrated

Many of the products we have reviewed have their own approach to document libraries. However, you're likely to have other cloud repositories in your business and here is where we have asked vendors to share which they will support. The detail of how Box, Dropbox, Google Drive, SharePoint, OneDrive and others are integrated is covered in the scenarios.

Optional integrated enterprise search engines

Most of the products we've reviewed include a native search engine, but in this question we want to know what others the product will easily (optionally) integrate with. We're particularly interested in Coveo, Elastic, IBM, Lucidworks, Microsoft, Mindbreeze and Sinequa, but vendors are welcome to tell us about others.

User interface and menus multi-language

Approaches to multi-language can vary, so we asked vendors to tell us how multiple interface and menu languages are supported. For example, languages might be pre-configured, editible by admins, and right to left script might be among the approaches supported.

Content multi-language

Linked to the previous question, we also asked vendors to tell us how they support multiple language approaches for content. This could include machine translation for authors (that might be editible) and employees, manual creation options for publishers, and again right to left script might be supported.

Set-up and support

Set-up process for new clients	An overview of what a set-up process involves, including typical timescales for deployment.
Current version	This highlights the version number we have reviewed, so you will know whether there have been updates since the review was written. It also gives you an idea of how active a vendor is in enhancing their product.
Product updates	The frequency of product updates varies and can range from every two weeks, to every few months. While that may not be too much of a concern for you, the resulting impact on users when a new feature is launched will be.
Product update process	We asked vendors to explain how product updates are rolled out to customers. For example, they may choose to update everyone at once, or you might be able to influence the timing, or if something goes wrong then what are the options for rolling back an update.
Reverse-out options	We know that not all relationships work out. Where this is the case with your intranet vendor, you need to know that your data is your own and that you can easily extract what's yours (to move into a new platform). Vendors have summarised that information for us here.
Technical support	This covers channels for technical support such as phone / email / chat. Support hours can be particularly important for multi-national companies as many vendors only offer support during their own office hours – although critical issues, such as a platform outage, is usually supported 24/7. The customer feedback in the 'voice of the customer' sections will give a sense of service levels.
User community	Learning from others in a similar situation is a great way to develop how you use an intranet in your business. Vendors have provided an overview of what community spaces or activities they have on offer.

ClearBox CONSULTING
INTRANETS | COLLABORATION | SHAREPOINT

OPERATIONAL GOVERNANCE TO SUPPORT STRATEGY

ClearBox can help you develop governance that simplifies working practices and supports your digital strategy.

We'll consider your internal comms and engagement goals, and the needs of your central service colleagues, operational staff, and frontline workforce.

PROPRIETARY FRAMEWORK

The ten dimensions of the digital workplace brings clarity to the sprawl.

SHARED UNDERSTANDING

Our collaborative approach builds trust between stakeholders and across departments.

BUSINESS NEEDS AND USER NEEDS

We focus on required outcomes before we consider solutions.

Product Comparisons

We collect a lot of information during the creation of this report and so it helps us as much as you to collate some of it!

The 'product comparison table' aggregates all scores across the full reviews. We've then presented some of this information as a charts showing scores vs prices. A 'technical table' summarises the key company and product information across all reviews (full and product overviews).

We've selected our ClearBox Choices winners for 2024, selecting those products that stand out from the crowd, and you'll find those here.

Finally, we've also given you a summary of the platforms we've reviewed in both the Full Reviews and Product Overviews sections, so you don't miss one that could be helpful.

Back to index.

PRODUCT COMPARISON SUMMARY

PRODUCT	USER EXPERIENCE & VISUAL APPEAL	PUBLISHING & COMMS MANAGEMENT	COMMUNITY & ENGAGEMENT	INTEGRATION SERVICES	INFORMATION FINDING & SEARCH	ADMINISTRATION EXPERIENCE	ANALYTICS	MOBILE & FRONTLINE SUPPORT
ahead								
Akumina								
Appspace Intranet								
Atlas								
Blink								
Firstup								
Fresh								
Haiilo								
Interact								
Involv Intranet								
LiveTiles Intranet								
LumApps								
MangoApps								
Oak Engage								
Omnia								
Powell Intranet								
SP Online & Viva								
Staffbase Intranet								
Unily								
Workvivo								

■ = product score ▢ = potential score

Please see the reviews for detailed scores, including the 'potential' scores where products will perform better where time / money is spent in a particular area.

V3.0 2024 Edition

PRICE VS SCORE

This chart shows average product scores in our scenarios against the overall average price band. It gives some idea of price-performance ratio, but the positions do vary according to the number of licenses involved. In general, we maintain that there's no 'best' intranet platform, and instead encourage buyers to consider what is the best match for them. Sometimes a well-featured product is not worth the extra outlay unless you know those are features you'll need.

Note base system licenses (e.g. M365) aren't factored into the pricing provided by vendors that rely on those systems. Please see the 'Scoring and Pricing' information for more on this.

Average scenario score / Average price band chart showing: Involv Intranet, Omnia, ahead, Powell Intranet, LiveTiles Intranet, Fresh, Oak Engage, LumApps, Blink, Haiilo, Firstup, MangoApps, Appspace Intranet, Akumina, SP Online & Viva, Interact, Atlas, Staffbase, Workvivo, Unily. Highest value zone indicated.

V3.0 2024 Edition

Average scenario score
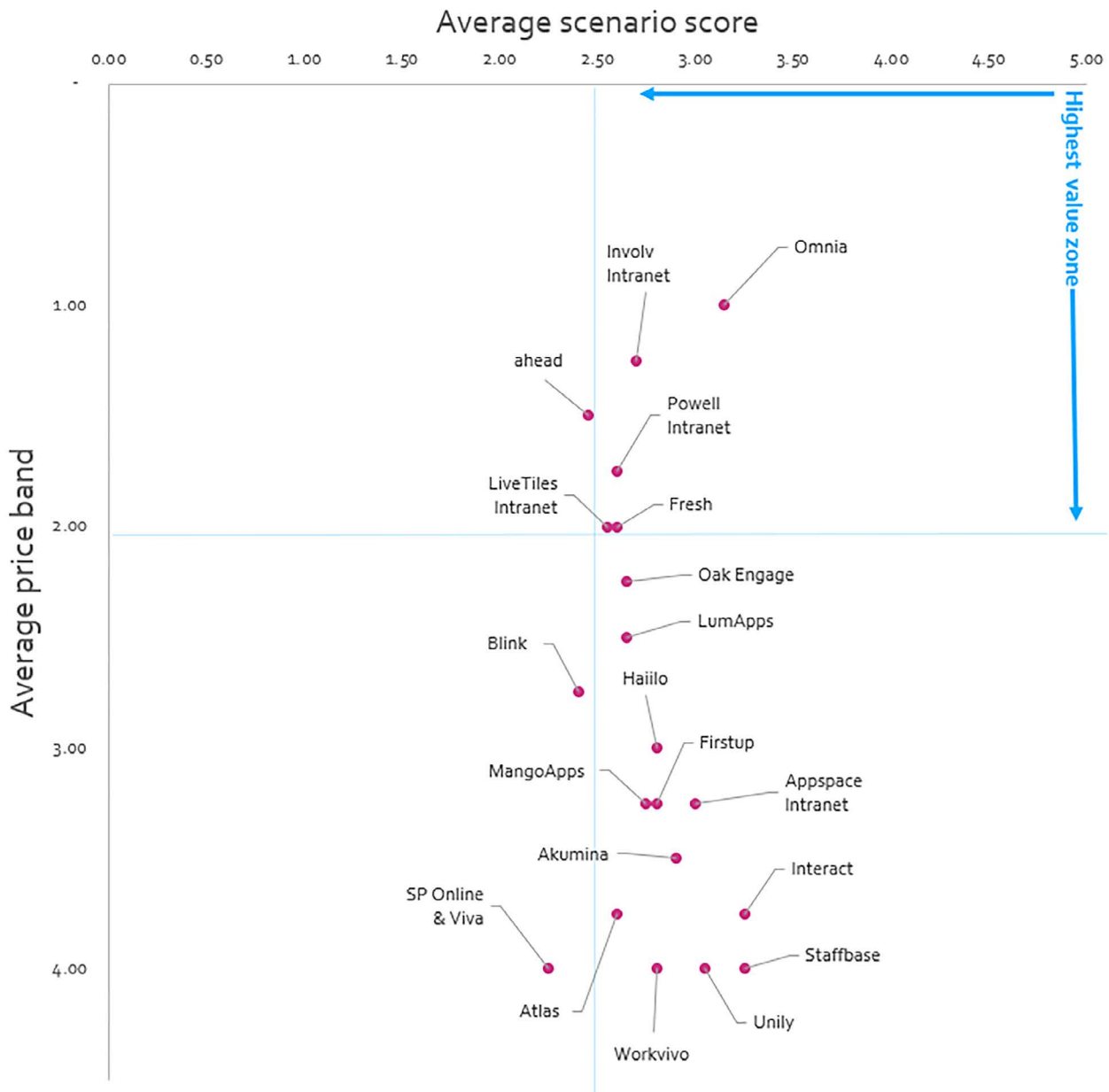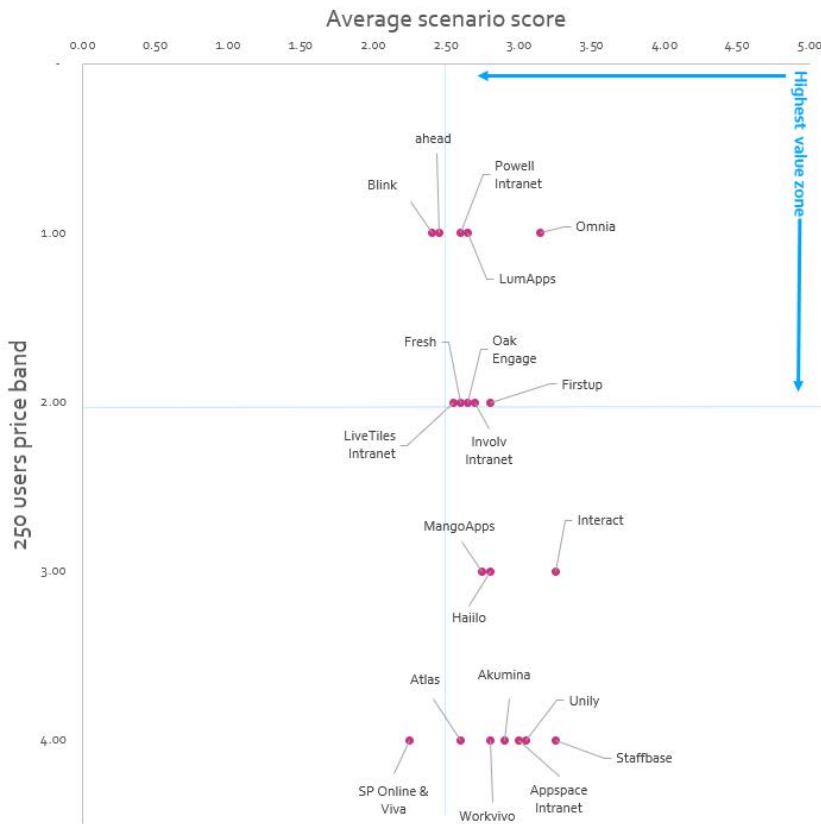
250 users price band
This chart shows the average scores against the price bands for 250 users. Use this chart if you belong to a smaller company to get a sense of the performance across the vendors.

V2.3 2023 Edition

Average scenario score
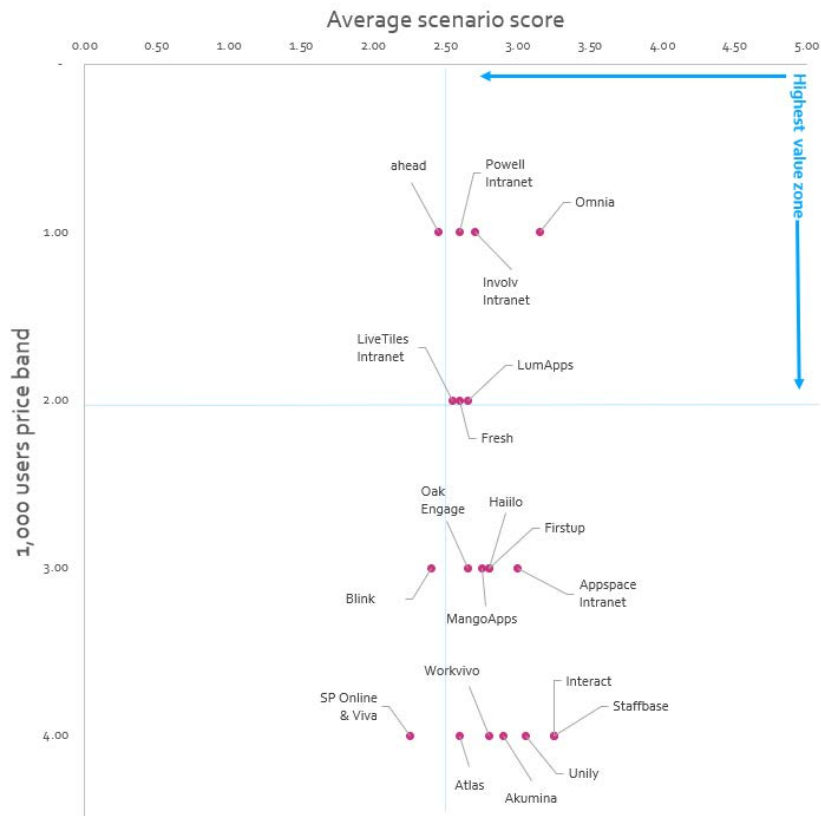
1,000 users price band
Small- to medium-sized businesses can use this chart to gauge the value of the products we've reviewed. The chart displays the average score and the price band for 1,000 users.

V2.3 2023 Edition

Average scenario score
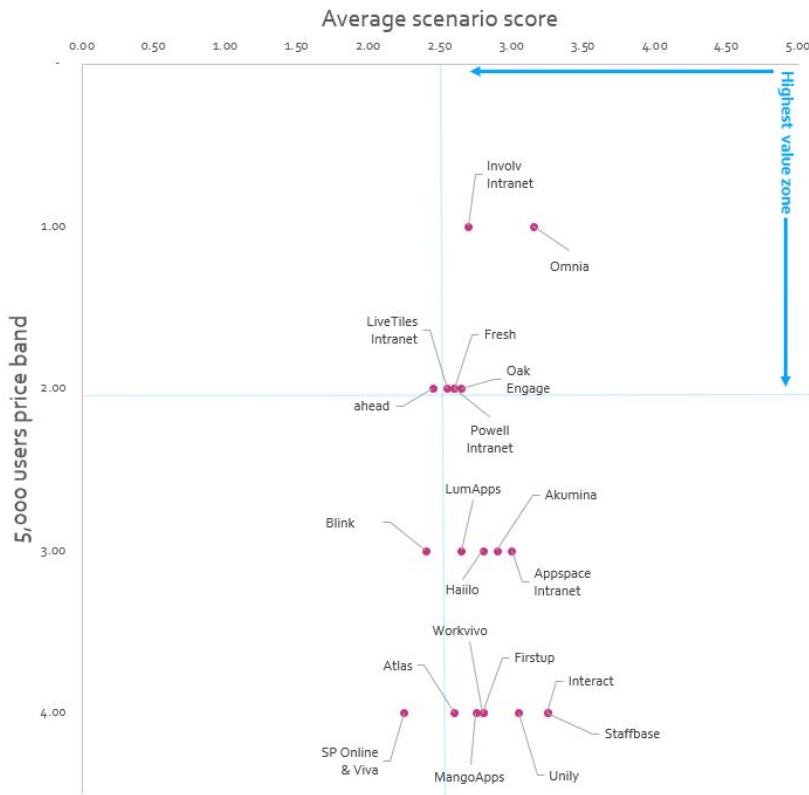
5,000 users price band

This chart displays the average score with the price bands for 5,000 users. Medium to larger organisations can use this chart to get a feel for the value of each of the products we've reviewed.

Average scenario score
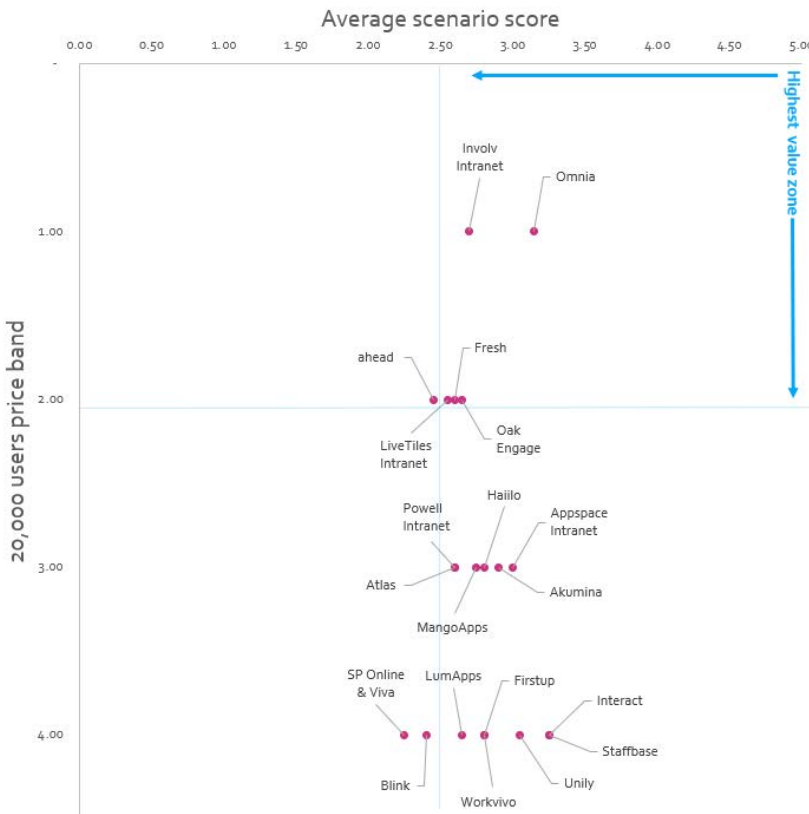
20,000 users price band

Enterprise scale businesses will find this chart helpful to get a sense of the value offered by the products we've reviewed. The chart shows the average scores and with price banding for 20,000 users.

V2.3 2023 Edition

PRODUCT	LOCATION	BASE SYSTEMS				PRICE BAND			
		Fully Standalone	Requires SharePoint	Optionally works with SharePoint	Other	250 users	1,000 users	5,000 users	20,000 users
ahead	Switzerland, Spain	✓	✗	✓	✗	$$	$$	$$	$$
Akumina	USA, Canada, UK, India, Bosnia, Brazil	✗	✗	✓	✓*	$$	$$	$$	$$
Appspace Intranet	USA, Malaysia, Portugal, Spain, UAE, UK	✗	✓	✗	✗	$$	$$	$$	$$
Atlas	UK, USA, Spain	✗	✓	✗	✗	$$	$$	$$	$$
Attollo Intranet	UK, USA	✗	✓	✗	✗	$$	$$	$$	$$
Beacon	UK	✗	✓	✗	✗	$$	$$	$$	$$
Blink	UK, Australia, USA	✓	✗	✓	✗	$$	$$	$$	$$
ContactMonkey	Canada, UK, Australia	✗	✗	✗	✓**	$$	$$	$$	$$
Engage (ESG)	UK	✓	✗	✗	✗	$$	$$	$$	$$
Engage (Sorce)	UK	✓	✗	✗	✗	$$	$$	$$	$$
Firstup	USA, UK	✓	✗	✓	✓*	$$	$$	$$	$$
Fresh	UK, South Africa	✗	✗	✗	✗	$$	$$	$$	$$
Haiilo	Germany, UK, USA, France, Finland	✓	✗	✗	✗	$$	$$	$$	$$
Ichicraft Boards	Netherlands	✗	✓	✗	✗	$$	$$	$$	$$
Interact	USA, UK, Poland	✓	✗	✓	✗	$$	$$	$$	$$
Involv Intranet	Belgium, UK	✗	✓	✗	✗	$$	$$	$$	$$
JungleMail 365	Lithuania	✗	✓	✗	✓**	$$	$$	$$	$$
Lightspeed365	UK	✗	✓	✗	✗	$$	$$	$$	$$
LiveTiles Intranet	Ireland, Portugal, Romania, Switzerland, USA, Denmark, Australia	✓	✓	✓	✓*	$$	$$	$$	$$
LumApps	France, USA, UK, Japan	✓	✗	✓	✓*	$$	$$	$$	$$
MangoApps	USA, UK, India	✓	✗	✓	✗	$$	$$	$$	$$
Oak Engage	UK	✓	✗	✗	✗	$$	$$	$$	$$
Omnia	Sweden, UK, Germany, Canada, Vietnam, Denmark	✗	✓	✗	✗	$$	$$	$$	$$
OneSource	(global)	✗	✓	✗	✗	$$	$$	$$	$$
PeopleOne	UK, Belgium, Canada, Colombia, France, India, Netherlands, UK	✗	✓	✗	✗	$$	$$	$$	$$
Powell Intranet	France, USA, Germany, Australia, UK, UAE	✗	✓	✗	✗	$$	$$	$$	$$
SP Online & Viva	(global)	✗	✓	✗	✗	$$	$$	$$	$$
Sociabble	France, USA, UK, India	✓	✗	✓	✓**	$$	$$	$$	$$
Staffbase	Germany, UK, USA, Netherlands, Canada, Australia	✗	✗	✓	✗	$$	$$	$$	$$
TŌGŌ Social Digital Workplace	(global)	✗	✓	✗	✗	$$	$$	$$	$$
Unily	UK, USA, Canada, Australia	✓	✗	✗	✗	$$	$$	$$	$$
Workgrid	USA, UK	✗	✗	✓	✗	$$	$$	$$	$$
Worksy Modern Intranet	Turkey, USA	✗	✓	✗	✗	$$	$$	$$	$$
Workvivo	Ireland, USA, UK, UAE, Australia	✓	✗	✓	✗	$$	$$	$$	$$

* See the review for details   ** See 'Product Overviews' section   V3.0 2024 Edition

WHO STOOD OUT: CLEARBOX CHOICES 2024

With so many intranet products to choose from it can be hard to know where to start. From the reviews featured in this report we have compiled our annual list of 'ClearBox Choices'.

This year we took the highest scoring products in the scenarios as a start point, but also factored in price point, customer feedback and the overall capabilities of each product. The idea of the 'Choices' badge is to highlight products that would make a good start point for your own shortlist.

Note though that we don't say that the Choices are the 'best' products. There is no single 'best' platform; there is only a product that is the best match for your needs, and you may need to read about several scenarios to understand what that means for you. We encourage potential buyers to do the groundwork on requirements and strategy first, so that you know exactly what you need rather than be swayed by impressive features.

The ClearBox Choices for 2024 are:

Blink is a frontline-focused, mobile-first product that understands its target audience perfectly. Organisations of any size that have frontline workers will find something to like about Blink. It offers a good companion to desktop platforms too, meaning desk workers and frontline workers can be served by products that best suit their needs without clashing.

Firstup is an excellent communications-focused platform that delivers strong capabilities around content creation, audience targeting, engagement and multi-channel posting. The Orchestration Engine uses machine learning superbly and helps publishers deliver communications to the right people, at the best time.

Interact is a fully featured product, where the years of experience from the vendor are evident. Business of all sizes will find plenty of functionality to meet their needs, but large and complex organisations will especially appreciate the advanced features for content creation and the flexible options for targeting a variety of audiences, including frontline workers.

Involv offers a compelling, ready-to-use communications-focused intranet solution at an attractive price-point. It has many valuable, intuitive features, and helps admins and employees use these by providing simple adoption tools. We think Involv will particularly appeal to medium-sized organisations but also enterprise customers that are looking for excellent ongoing support from the supplier.

Oak is a simple but effective product that provides excellent publishing and community features for employees and admins alike. Oak is also highly flexible, which means admins can easily configure the site to deliver an intranet that meets all employee needs. At an attractive price point, Oak offers a lot while delivering a good employee experience.

Omnia provides a comprehensive toolset for constructing and managing a large intranet on top of SharePoint. It delivers an excellent experience for employees on desktop and mobile, and offers administrators a high degree of control over all aspects of the site. Its close integration with M365 presents opportunities for developing innovative approaches to delivering workplace services.

Businesses looking to provide first class, multi-channel communications to employees will find much to admire in **Staffbase**. This is a mature product with a wide variety of well-developed features at both front and back end, a comprehensive analytics section and an impressive selection of community and engagement tools, allied to an excellent user experience on both desktop and mobile.

REVIEWS SUMMARY

We've reviewed 34 products in this report and appreciate it can be a challenge to know which to read. Below you'll find a summary of them all and a thumbnail of a typical home page, plus an overview of which scenarios they've performed best in.

As a reminder:

FULLY STANDALONE	**REQUIRES SHAREPOINT**	**OPTIONALLY WORKS WITH SHAREPOINT**	**FRONTLINE FOCUS**

ahead

ahead's strengths are in its overall usability, which is intuitive and effective. The community and social features are also strong, and the mobile experience is one of the best we've seen, meaning frontline workers would be well served. ahead is well suited to organisations of any size looking to provide a communications and engagement platform across a dispersed and multilingual workforce. Its attractive price point means it is worth exploring alongside more in-depth solutions, making it an option for the frontline while desk-based workers could use a complementary system.

Worth reading by those exploring Scenario 2, Scenario 3 and Scenario 8.
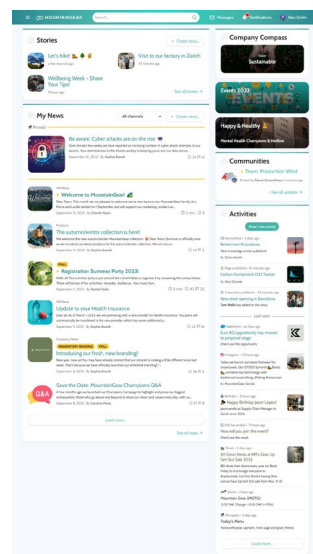
Akumina

Akumina is highly flexible and mature that delivers a top-tier experience on desktop and mobile. Features for content creation, collaboration and information finding are excellent, and the options for integrating with third-party applications are among the best we've seen. It's worth noting that Akumina relies on the Microsoft ecosystem in order to work, but it does not require SharePoint to deliver intranet pages. Overall, Akumina is likely to appeal mainly to large and complex enterprise organisations. Smaller businesses can make use of an out-of-the-box offering, but the price point is high.

Worth reading by those exploring Scenario 2, Scenario 3, Scenario 4, and Scenario 5.
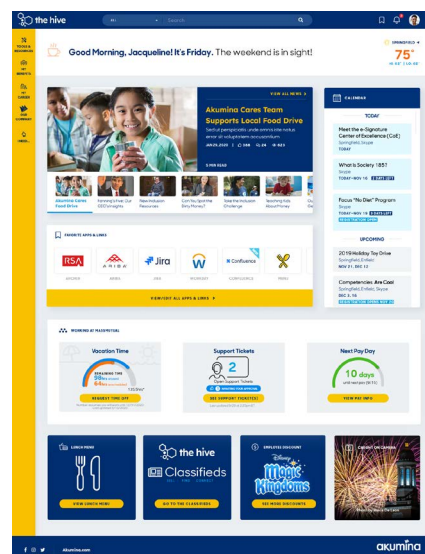
Appspace Intranet

Appspace Intranet runs on SharePoint but provides a unique user experience for employees and publishers that is significantly different. This is augmented by strong branding and digital workplace integration capabilities, along with comprehensive social collaboration and a decent mobile app. Employees benefit from a dynamic and personalised feed that aggregates relevant news, community updates and activity from connected applications. Appspace Intranet's capabilities will be particularly relevant to large and complex global organisations that have invested in Microsoft 365, but find that the standard SharePoint user experience falls short.

Worth reading by those exploring Scenario 2, Scenario 3, and Scenario 8..
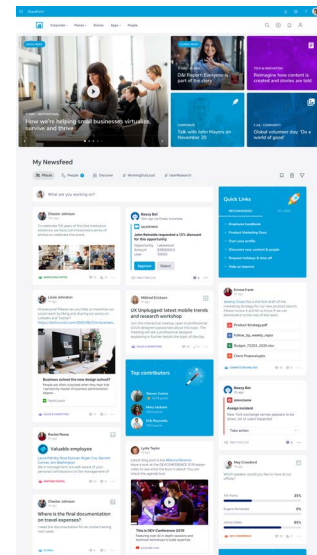
Atlas

Atlas combines intranet, collaboration, and knowledge management capabilities to connect people to the information that matters. Building on M365, Atlas plays heavily towards information-rich organisations looking to support and mature their knowledge management capabilities. While Atlas does a good job of enhancing SharePoint's presentation and intranet navigation, its real strength is in how it brings coherence across sites and content that might be scattered over multiple tools, in multiple formats. While businesses such as law firms are typical customers, any organisations facing information sprawl or wanting to make more of their Microsoft 365 investment should consider the Atlas offering.

Worth reading by those exploring Scenario 4, Scenario 5, and Scenario 6.
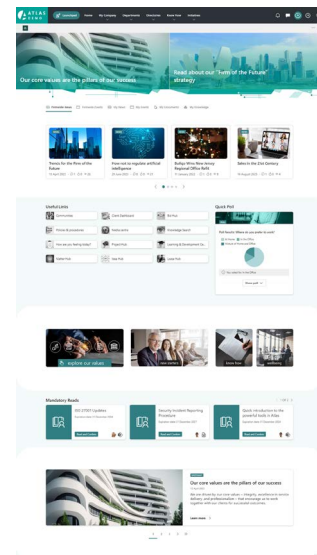
Attollo Intranet

Attollo is a SharePoint in-a-box product that provides a more user-friendly experience and greater versatility in site creation than comes natively with SharePoint. It combines M365 functionality with additional features, multiple templates and can be fully branded, including individual styling of web parts. Developed to align to Microsoft's roadmap, changes and updates to SharePoint are immediately integrated into Attollo.

Worth reading by those exploring Scenario 4, Scenario 5, and Scenario 7.
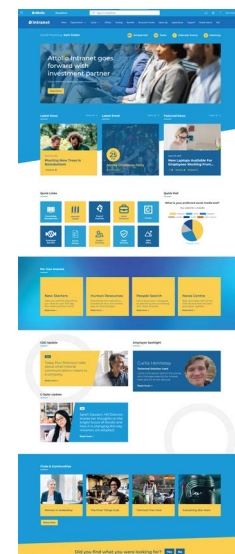
Beacon and Ripple

The Silicon Reef suite is comprised of three products that are designed to complement Microsoft's offerings, without masking standard SharePoint functionality. They all work together and there is no co-dependency, so customers can choose the combination they wish to use. Beacon provides more flexible branding and design options than those offered by Microsoft, Ripple is focused on supporting internal communication campaigns, and MyTools assists with the display and management of tools in the SharePoint app bar.

Worth reading by those exploring Scenario 1, Scenario 2, and Scenario 6..
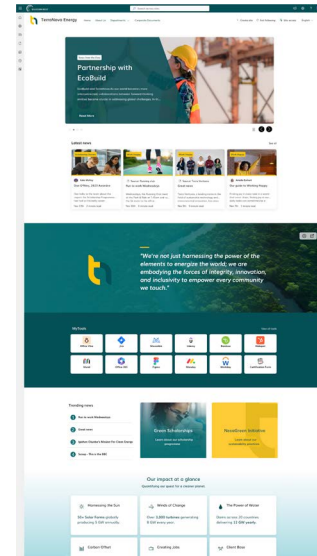
Blink

The focus Blink places on the deskless audience is among the best we've seen in this report and makes a compelling choice for organisations with a frontline-heavy workforce. The community and engagement features are also first-class and the approach to practical tools and integrations works very well. Blink is an effective communications channel, meaning internal communicators could easily add it into their matrix instead of expecting Blink to run them all. Overall, Blink would suit any size organisation that has a significant frontline workforce, although larger organisations should explore the price options with the vendor.

Worth reading by those exploring Scenario 2, Scenario 3, and Scenario 8.
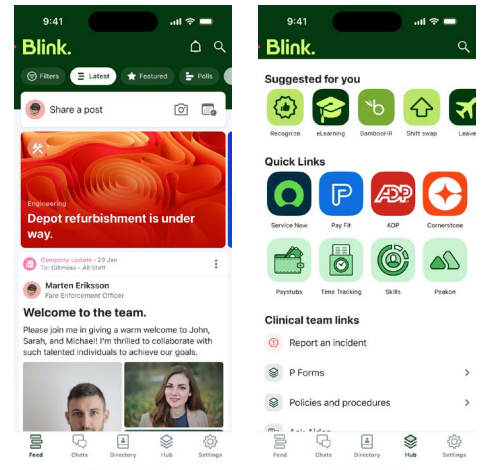
ContactMonkey

ContactMonkey is an email platform designed to help internal communicators reach employees via email effectively. ContactMonkey is an excellent newsletter and SMS building tool that admins will enjoy using and employees will appreciate for the sophisticated emails that they receive.

Worth reading by those exploring Scenario 2, Scenario 7, and Scenario 8.
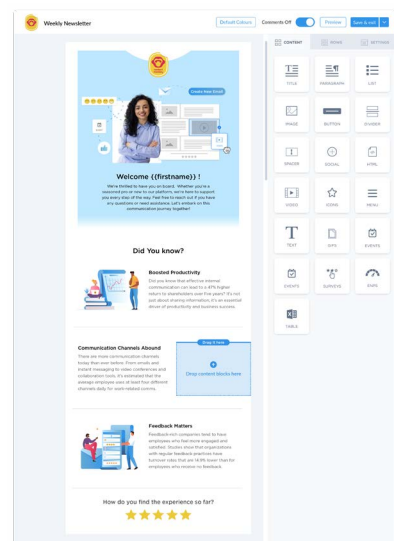
Engage (from ESG)

Engage (from ESG) launched in 2019 and we are impressed by the range and depth of features on offer in a comparatively young product. Engage is unusual as it focuses on the employee life cycle as a means to influence what is presented to individuals, so an employee in a 'development' phase will have a different experience from an alumnus. The desktop environment is simple but the mobile experience is particularly strong and is the focus of our review.

Worth reading by those exploring Scenario 3, Scenario 4, and Scenario 8.
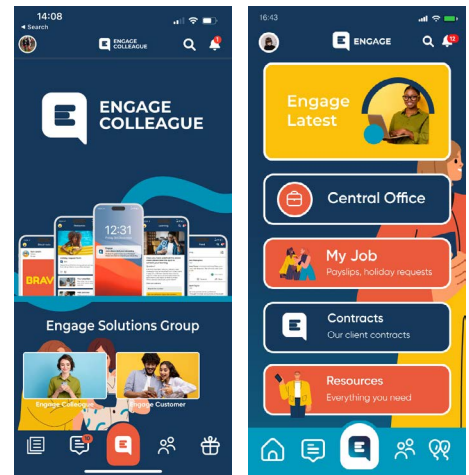
Engage (from Sorce)

Engage (from Sorce) is a classic intranet platform from UK-based Sorce, who are an experienced intranet software supplier having been a presence in the industry since 2001. Engage is simple to use, with many features that admins can tailor for their organisation and across device types. It comes at an attractive price, particularly for larger organisations.

Worth reading by those exploring Scenario 3, Scenario 5, and Scenario 8.
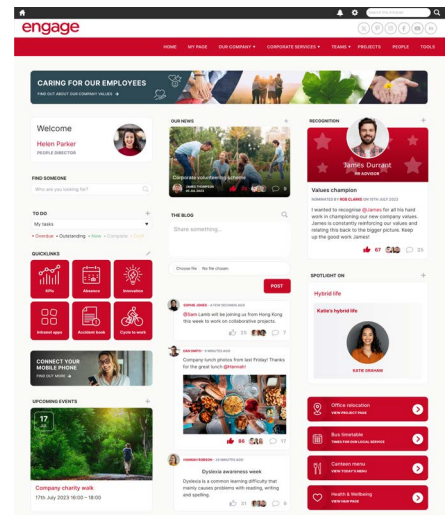
Firstup

Firstup is a powerful communications platform that delivers strong capabilities around content creation, audience targeting, engagement and multi-channel posting. The user experience is contemporary across devices, and a digital assistant benefits from this good UX to provide simple but effective access to practical tools. Overall, Firstup will likely appeal to large or complex businesses that are looking for ways to address employee communication and engagement needs. Note, however, that it is among the more expensive products we've reviewed.

Worth reading by those exploring Scenario 2, Scenario 7, and Scenario 8.
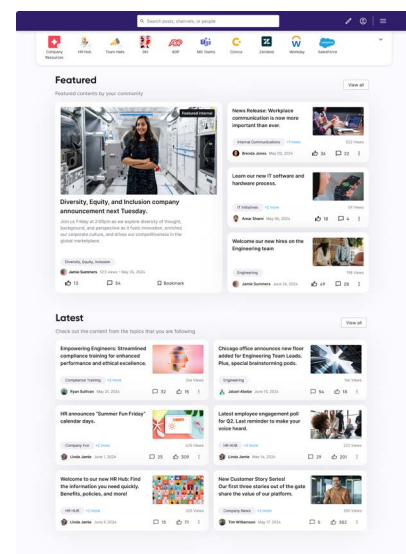
Fresh

Fresh is a thoughtfully designed product that integrates well with SharePoint and M365. It offers plenty of flexibility to create a visually attractive and feature-rich employee experience that helps bring social content into the intranet. Communicators will appreciate the engagement analytics, along with the options to create and deliver news content, which can be surfaced in Viva Connections. End users will appreciate the features which bring their M365 content into the intranet, the enhanced search experience and employee recognition features. Fresh will particularly appeal to medium and large organisations that already have Microsoft 365 and want to maximise their investment.

Worth reading by those exploring Scenario 3, Scenario 5, and Scenario 6.
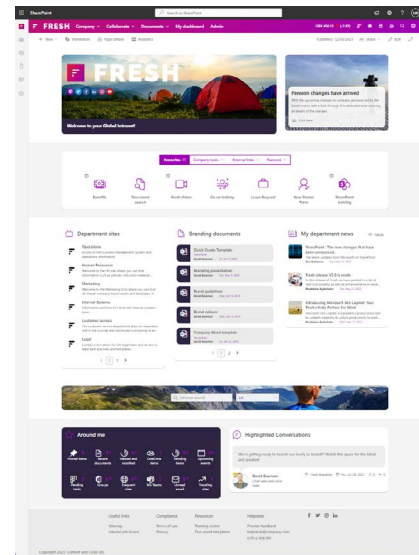
Haiilo

Internal communicators will like the range of channels they can manage from within Haiilo, including an effective employee advocacy feature. Social and community features are excellent, with a particularly good pulse survey tool. The employee experience is strong too, both on desktop and mobile, with a familiar social media approach that is likely to aid adoption. Overall, Haiilo would suit organisations of any size who are looking to improve internal communication, while also giving employees a voice.

Worth reading by those exploring Scenario 2, Scenario 3, and Scenario 8.
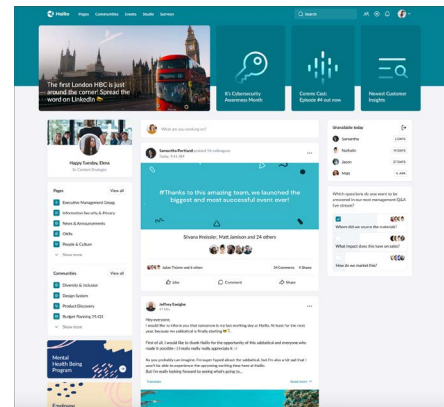
Ichicraft Boards

Ichicraft Boards is a unique SharePoint and Teams dashboard add-on from Netherlands-based Ichicraft. The product provides attractive, configurable and targeted dashboards that can be further personalised by end-users. The dashboards display full-page or may run alongside other SharePoint web parts on a page; the product is essentially a single web part that is a container for a multitude of 'widgets' that display diverse information from news to applications.

Worth reading by those exploring Scenario 1, Scenario 4, and Scenario 6.
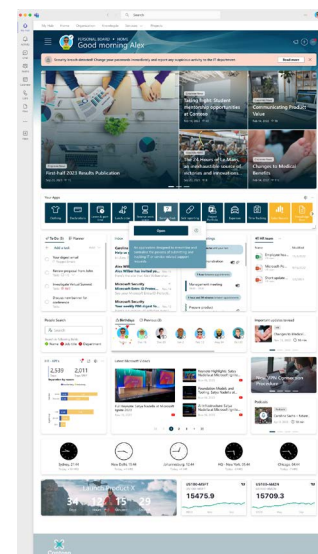
Interact

Interact is an attractive product that offers strong functionality across the board. There are powerful news and content creation tools, its social and community tools are good, and the approach to digital signage is simple but very effective. There is a fully featured mobile app and multiple options to enrol frontline workers. Overall, Interact is a mature product with excellent and varied features that will meet the needs of most businesses. Large and complex organisations with a diverse workforce will be attracted by the advanced features for content creation and audience targeting. While the product is in the higher price bracket, there are a number of optional modules included in the pricing provided to us.

Worth reading by those exploring Scenario 2, Scenario 3, Scenario 5, Scenario 6, Scenario 7, and Scenario 8.
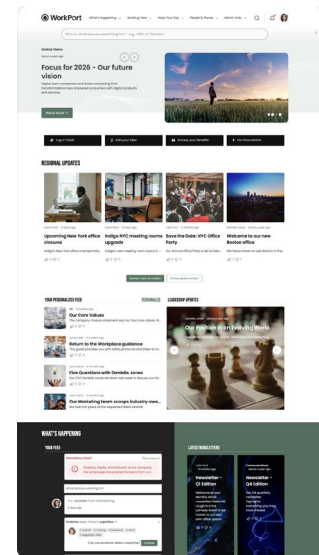
Involv

Content publishing and communications is a key strength of Involv – content editors are supported with an improved workflow that will speed up the creation and publishing of news articles. Publishing and administration tools are intuitive and easy to use. Search is an impressive component that powers many of the products' innovative features, along with tight integration with M365. Overall, Involv offers an attractive SharePoint-based intranet-in-a-box that will appeal to organisations looking for an easy-to-use product from a vendor that customers love working with. The price point is very competitive as well, particularly for medium- to enterprise-size organisations.

Worth reading by those exploring Scenario 2, Scenario 5, and Scenario 6.
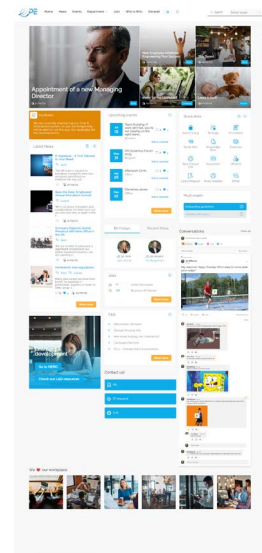
JungleMail 365

JungleMail 365 is an email newsletter tool primarily built to work alongside M365 and SharePoint intranets. Its focus is on creating newsletters using content pulled dynamically from existing SharePoint communication sites, and it offers an impressively versatile set of options for constructing newsletters within a nicely styled and well laid-out administration interface.

Worth reading by those exploring Scenario 2 and Scenario 4.
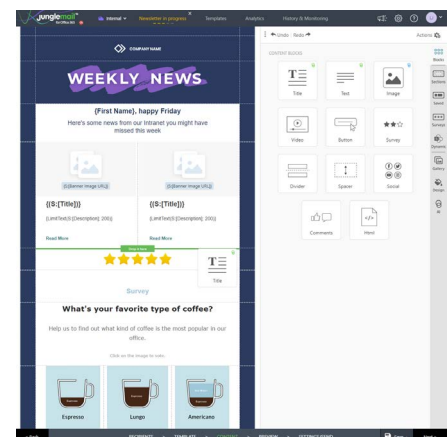
Lightspeed365

Lightspeed365 is a suite of useful SharePoint add-on web parts from UK-based vendor, Content Formula. The suite includes a range of features and we have written about our favourites. For example, 'page tour' introduces the intranet via a walkthrough, which helps drive adoption. Lightspeed365 complements and builds on the functionality of standard SharePoint well, with all the web parts supporting audience targeting, using Entra groups. It will appeal to those looking for some additional features and granularity of control over SharePoint design, without going for a full-blown add-on product.

Worth reading by those exploring Scenario 1 and Scenario 5.
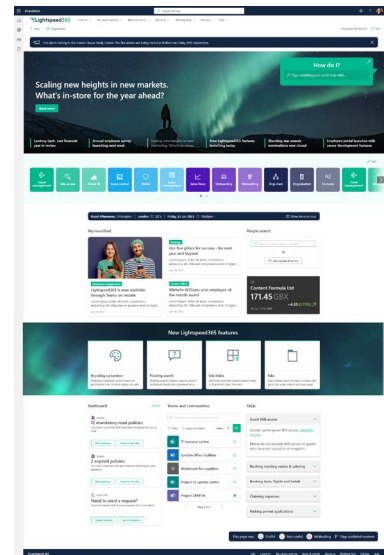
LiveTiles

The LiveTiles platform consists mainly of a core SharePoint-based module and an independent module called 'Reach', which is optimised for mobile use. These are complemented by other modules, such as a powerful people directory and an integration with an external provider of employee recognition software. LiveTiles says that enterprise businesses often combine all these modules to address different requirements. Overall, LiveTiles offers a good modular approach with a smooth user experience across the product. The full enterprise solution presented here will appeal to larger or more complex organisations with a broad range of needs and is offered at an attractive price point.

Worth reading by those exploring Scenario 2, Scenario 6, and Scenario 8.
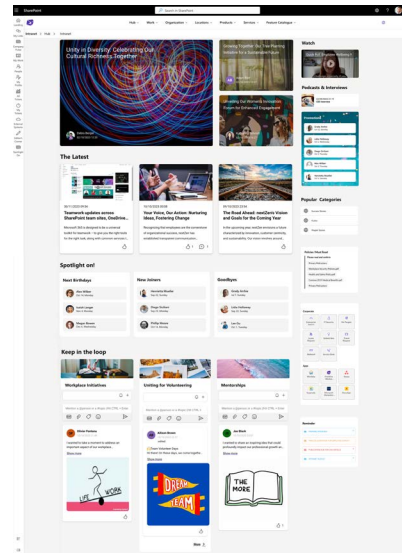
LumApps

LumApps is a very flexible, feature-rich solution, which delivers an excellent user experience with a consumer-grade flair at times and a decent mobile app. Publishers and admins will also find much to like. A core feature is fully integrated community 'Spaces', which we feel offer a great solution to organisations looking to support mature communities of practice. It's worth noting that the vendor is both a Microsoft and Google partner and they are often a leading choice for Google Workspace clients. Overall, LumApps would work for any mid-sized or large organisation seeking a flexible, feature-rich solution that can unify a digital workplace ecosystem into one branded user experience.

Worth reading by those exploring Scenario 2, Scenario 6, and Scenario 8.
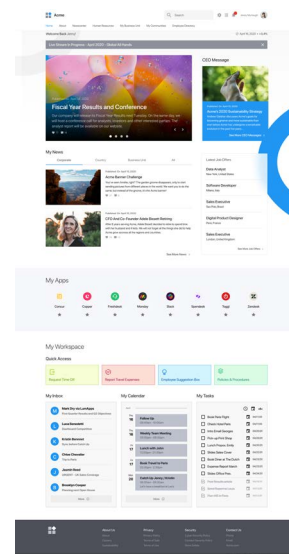
MangoApps

MangoApps provides a broad set of features for creating and managing content and communications, but it's in the many smaller features, such as search term translation that MangoApps distinguishes itself from competitors. There are comprehensive configuration options throughout, its community elements are strong, and the mobile app works well. MangoApps is likely to suit medium to large businesses looking for an extensive out-of-the-box toolset for delivering communications and engagement, both for desk-based and frontline workers. Prospective customers will want to note the cost, which is towards the higher end of the scale.

Worth reading by those exploring Scenario 3, Scenario 5, and Scenario 8.
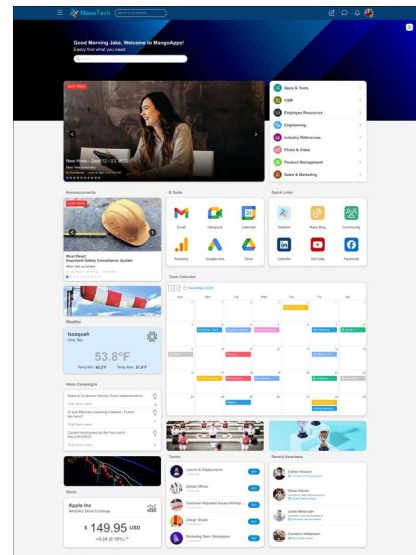
Oak Engage

Oak Engage offers a simple yet flexible platform that delivers a strong user experience. Page and home page creation is particularly pleasant, using 'applets' to build content as required. Community features are also strong, using Hubs to collate activity together to serve informal conversational groups, or even effective communities of knowledge. Overall, Oak is offered at an appealing price for a good range of helpful features. Oak would suit organisations looking for a simpler intranet for employees while still seeking flexibility to create what they need. Organisations with multiple employee types, such as frontline workers or multiple locations, will appreciate the audience targeting and content tailoring options.

Worth reading by those exploring Scenario 3, Scenario 5, and Scenario 8.
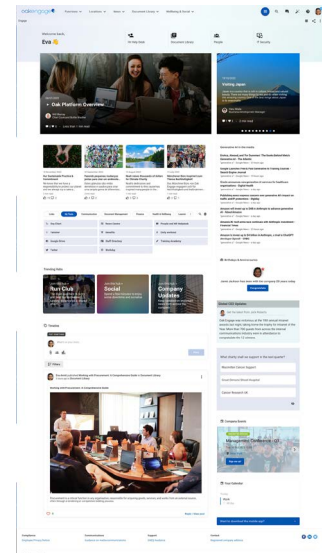
Omnia

Omnia's strengths are in the features and controls available for building and managing a compelling site, offering admins a wide range of configuration controls to deliver tailored experiences for employees. SharePoint is required for master data and content storage, but the product has its own enhanced user interface in many areas. Overall, this is a powerful, mature and feature-rich tool. It has an attractive price point, regardless of size of company, and is likely to appeal to large, complex organisations due to its capabilities for creating and managing large, multi-faceted intranets.

Worth reading by those exploring Scenario 2, Scenario 3, Scenario 5, Scenario 6, and Scenario 8.
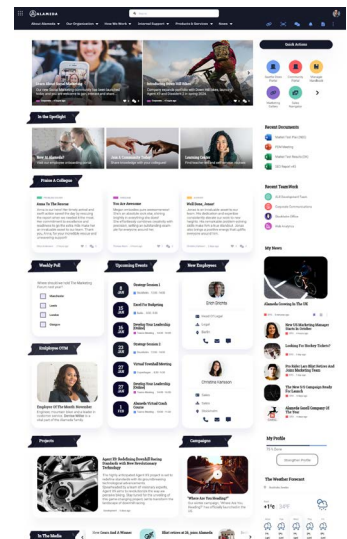
OneSource

OneSource is a SharePoint-based Intranet from Canadian company, OpenText, which acquired former vendor, MicroFocus, in January 2023. OneSource runs on SharePoint, but completely replaces the interface for employees and admins. This will appeal to organisations looking for an alternative user experience, while keeping IT happy with the underlying technology. Overall, OneSource provides a well-rounded, simple approach to an intranet that will appeal to organisations that want to utilise the SharePoint platform, but don't want the full complexity of building an intranet with modern pages.

Worth reading by those exploring Scenario 6 and Scenario 7.
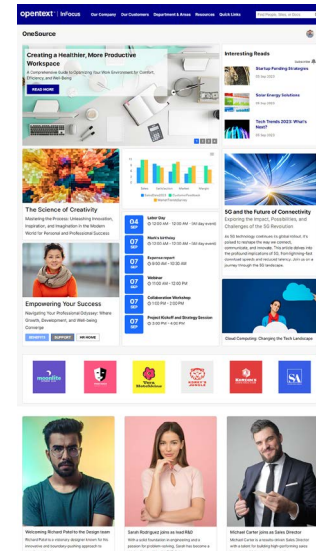
PeopleOne

PeopleOne offers some useful features out of the box to help communicators build and run an engaging intranet. We like the user-friendly interface, lightweight community features and customisable analytics which can help measure engagement. Built on SharePoint and making the most of Microsoft Flow, there are some simple integrations with Microsoft Teams and OneDrive to give users an overview of their documents and workspaces in a tidy interface. Overall, PeopleOne offers some thoughtful features for organisations wanting to host an engaging intranet with lightweight community features.

Worth reading by those exploring Scenario 7 and Scenario 8.
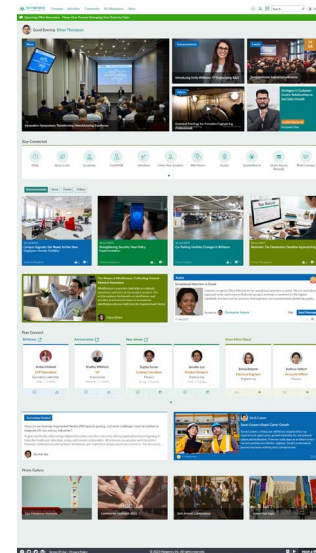
Powell

Powell is based on SharePoint and the broader Microsoft ecosystem but offers significant added value in areas such as employee advocacy, ideation, gamification, and frontline worker access. The product is well-suited to medium and large organisations, allowing them to efficiently manage a complex intranet setup, but it also offers ready-to-go templates that will appeal to smaller organisations.

Worth reading by those exploring Scenario 2, Scenario 3, and Scenario 6.
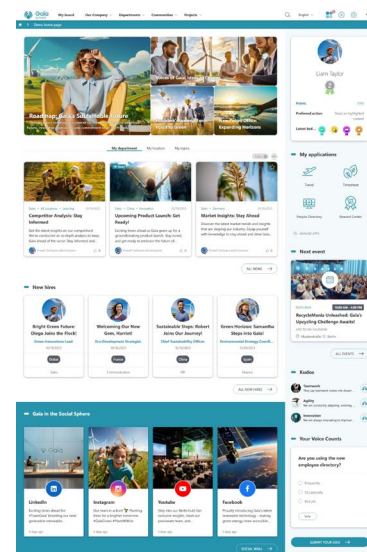
SharePoint and Viva

SharePoint in Microsoft 365 is positioned as 'the intelligent intranet'. It offers a modern, highly flexible approach to employee communications, as well as powering many elements of M365 behind the scenes. Teams, Viva Connections, Viva Engage and Viva Amplify support with additional communication, integration, and collaboration features, and are included in this review.

Worth reading by those exploring SharePoint and the broader Microsoft 365 ecosystem for digital workplace purposes.

Sociabble
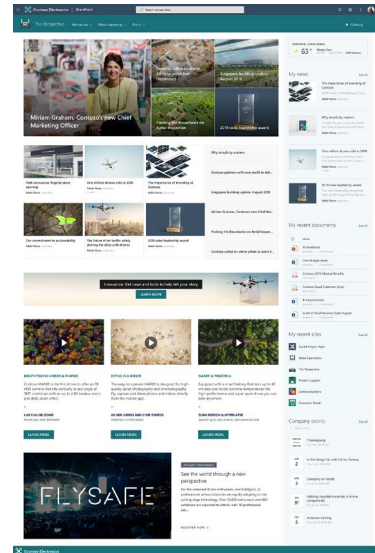
Sociabble has a focus on improving organisational communications and employee engagement, through social and practical features. The attractive interface is easy to use and works well on desktop and mobile, with parity between environments. It's likely Sociabble would complement a platform like a knowledge management system. It could also certainly serve as a front door to business systems for employees across devices.

Worth reading by those exploring Scenario 2, Scenario 3, and Scenario 8.
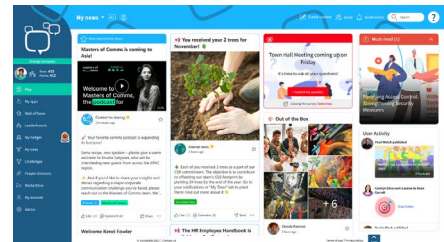
Staffbase

Staffbase is a mature product, with well-developed and thought-through features. It's particularly strong in content creation and its community elements are excellent. The mobile experience is very good and behind the scenes there is a substantial administration and analytics function underpinning the management of sites. Aspects such as Campaign reporting and audience-specific content 'Journeys' are impressive and help it stand out from the competition. Staffbase is likely to be best suited to medium to large businesses with a dispersed workforce. It's also worth noting the cost, which is at the higher end of the spectrum for organisations of all sizes.

Worth reading by those exploring Scenario 2, Scenario 3, Scenario 6, Scenario 7, and Scenario 8.
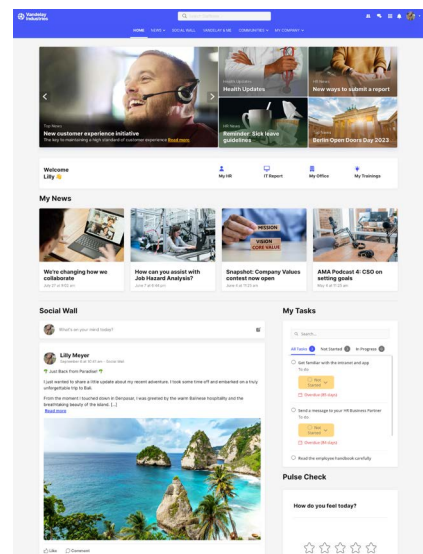
TŌGŌ

TŌGŌ Social Digital Workplace is a SharePoint intranet in a box product from the European arm of global IT services company, NTT DATA. The product was launched 2017 and is a well-featured and rounded product that adds useful capabilities to the standard SharePoint offering. It will appeal to large, complex organisations that have sophisticated content publishing and targeting needs.

Worth reading by those exploring Scenario 2, Scenario 5, and Scenario 6.
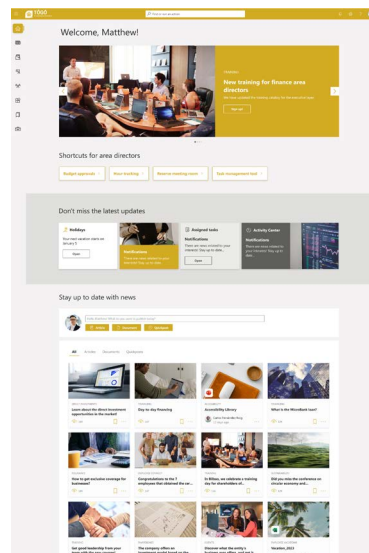
Unily

Unily performs very well across most of our scenarios and will meet different business needs for multiple departments. For example, internal communicators will find a lot to like, with notable features such as 'Campaigns' for managing multiple communication items and channels to reach people beyond the intranet, such as a configurable newsletter. Overall, Unily will particularly appeal to large or more complex organisations and will meet their needs well. It falls into the highest price bracket in our report, yet clients get a lot for their money and there will be places to make savings where not all features are wanted.

Worth reading by those exploring Scenario 2, Scenario 3, Scenario 5, and Scenario 6.
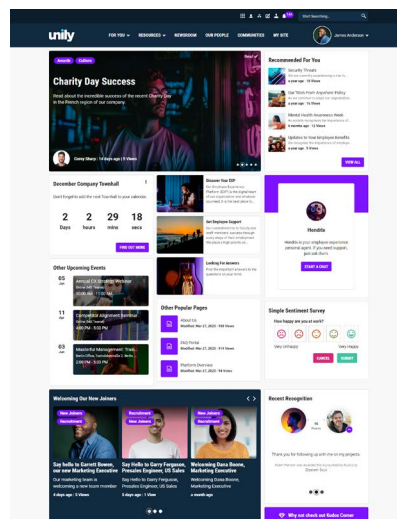
Workgrid

Workgrid is not intended to replace an intranet, instead it works as a pop-up assistant which brings a stream of notifications, tasks and alerts into a single, conversational feed. Whilst it can offer a way for communicators to notify employees about content, we can see it being particularly useful for more transactional and technical processes. Workgrid is best suited to companies with a complex digital landscape; it may be seen as an additional cost on top of existing intranet licences, but we can see the potential for valuable improvements to user experience that save people considerable time where disparate systems are in place.

Worth reading by those exploring Scenario 4 and Scenario 5.
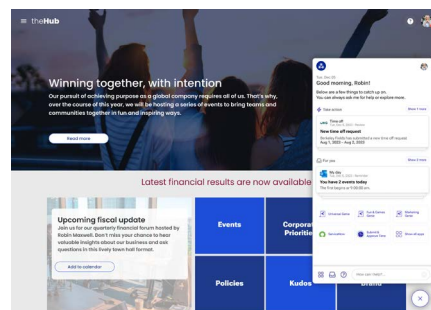
Worksy

Worksy (formerly Juno) is a SharePoint-based, desktop and mobile intranet product. At the time of the demo, Worksy was in the process of being updated to SharePoint modern for desktop browser and content management, which is due to complete "summer 2024". Overall, Worksy is very competitively priced for medium to large organisations, so for those that have modest needs and an equally modest budget, Worksy is worth a closer look.

Worth reading by those exploring Scenario 8.
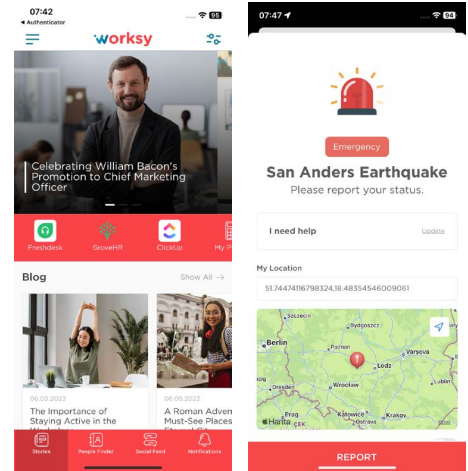
Workvivo

Workvivo's social and community features provide a dynamic, user-driven experience. The internal communications and messaging features equip internal communications teams and content publishers with the tools they need to easily plan, build, and publish attractive site content. Additionally, Spaces provide an excellent way to form community groups, thanks to the numerous features available. Workvivo will most suit medium to large sized organisations where communications and engagement are the key priorities. Note that pricing is among the higher products in this report, but Workvivo is modular so there is the potential to reduce this somewhat.

Worth reading by those exploring Scenario 2, Scenario 3, and Scenario 8.
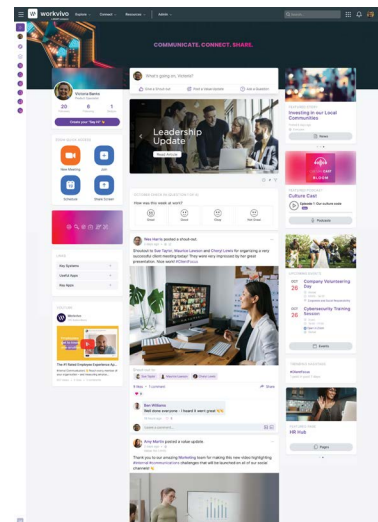
HOW WE EVALUATED

The initial selection

There are more intranet products on the market than we've been able to cover in our report; you can see all the ones we're aware of in the [directory on our website](). We selected the products to feature based on prior knowledge of the best candidates. We also considered their presence in the market, which included our experience with client projects, and their installed user base.

We're able to offer this report for free because vendors have contributed to its production costs. The independence of our reviews is critical. In order to ensure that reviews are unbiased and independent, all vendors included have signed an agreement committing to these principles. We have also ensured that our review and editorial processes remain rigorous, with reviews and checks in place to preserve consistency and reduce any individual bias. If the scores seem generally good, it is because we didn't invite any vendors where we thought their product would perform poorly and not because we were lenient. Please also see the section on our 'vendor neutral' policy, below.

Live demonstrations and sandbox

Each vendor was required to give a live demonstration of their product and show how it would fulfil the criteria in the evaluation scenarios (described in the previous section). We made sure that what was demonstrated was available to buy (not a pre-release beta). We asked whether what we were looking at were ready-made features or examples of customisation so that these could be reflected in the scoring.

Where possible, we also asked each vendor to give us access to a sandbox environment (including on mobile), so we could get a hands-on feel of how it works and take our own screenshots.

By using scenarios, we can make cross-product comparisons and not be led into focusing only on the things the vendors want to show us. The scenarios reflect real needs we have seen with our clients and are focused on business scenarios rather than technical specifications.

Scenario evaluations

Each scenario could score a total of five points. If a better result could be achieved with additional product options or services, then we show this as an 'optional extra score' using one or more 'outline' score segments. To ensure consistency, each score was checked by three other reviewers and then all scores were reviewed together at the end.

Where on-premises and cloud versions of the product exist, we reviewed the cloud version and noted significant differences. Similarly, if vendors have multiple tiers of product, our review is based on the features included at the price band shown in the tables. Where a module or feature is an optional extra, we've done our best to indicate this, plus say whether it was included in the pricing we had been given.

The scenarios are not intended to cover everything an intranet might do, but to be a representative sample. Our reviewers have expanded up to four of the scenarios to include more detail of the standout features, alongside screenshots to illustrate features.

The eight scenarios selected are:

1   User experience and visual appeal

2   Publishing and communications management

3   Community and engagement

4   Integrations and services (including M365)

5   Information finding and knowledge management

6   Administrator experience

7   Analytics

8   Mobile and frontline support

Each of these scenarios is covered in more detail in the preceding section.

Voice of the customer

The idea of the 'voice of the customer' is to get some real-world feedback about what it is like to live with the product and work with the vendor.

Vendors were asked to encourage customers to contribute to our survey; we accepted a minimum of three responses, but the average was eight customer responses. Vendors didn't supply any text or take part in conversations, and submissions were verified with the customer. Secondly, we spoke to ClearBox's own contacts, where we knew they'd been using a product we reviewed. Thirdly, we put out a public appeal for feedback via a short survey. Responses are a combination of quotes from all three sources. We then edited them down into our own commentary, but the quotes have been taken directly from the feedback we were given.

Customers were asked:

1. What is best about the product?
2. What changes would you like to see?
3. How has your experience been of working with the vendor?

Of course, this is a small sample, and like any public reviews, readers should bear in mind that responses are likely to be skewed either by happy customers, or ones motivated to speak out because of a dissatisfaction. All the same, even happy customers tend to comment on what they would like to add to a product, and this in itself is revealing.

Vendor fact-check

Vendors were given the opportunity to correct any factual inaccuracies in their review, but not to influence scores or opinions. They also answered a questionnaire about the key features of the product, technical requirements, their client support model, and details on how the product can be launched within a business. This too was given a second check before going to press.

Product overviews

Unfortunately, we aren't able to do in-depth reviews of all the products out there – the report would just become unwieldy. However, there are many good products out there that may well be the ideal match for your particular needs, and we don't want those to be overlooked. The Product Overviews section at the end of this report therefore contains shorter summaries of products, including a series of screenshots too. We still give a commentary, and in all cases have seen a demo, but we don't score them in-depth.

Products in this section tend to be newer, or ones that focus on a specific market, or perhaps aren't a full intranet solution but nevertheless do some components very well.

The inevitable caveat and disclaimer

At the time of our reviews all details are accurate as far as we know. We asked vendors to check the details in our reviews but ultimately, they are independent write-ups with our own opinions on a 'best effort' basis. Vendors are working hard to improve these products and it may also be that details have changed by the time you read this, so please confirm any details with them before making a final purchasing decision.

In most cases screenshots have been provided by the vendors and are subject to copyright.

The opinions and information in this report is for guidance only. Any decision around acquiring software should be considered carefully with reference to your intranet strategy, organisational needs, risks, and technology landscape. In all cases we are not liable for purchasing decisions made based on the contents of this report.

Don't be afraid to ask us to help, we're always happy to have a no-obligation introductory chat.

Our vendor neutral policy

As a consultancy, we think it is essential that we act with our clients' interests foremost, so ClearBox has a strict vendor-neutral policy. This means that we do not enter into any agreements with vendors that would bias our recommendations to clients. We don't sell any software or licenses or take referral fees for any product we recommend.

To allow us to offer the report for free to readers, we ask vendors to cover our administrative costs. Hundreds of hours go into the production of this report, which we couldn't do without some sort of funding! However, we have only written the reviews we wanted to, and all our opinions (positive and negative) have remained in place. Our Choices selection is based on our findings, no vendor has paid to be awarded a badge.

ClearBox**CONSULTING**

INTRANETS | COLLABORATION | SHAREPOINT

SELECTING THE RIGHT PRODUCT ADVISORY SERVICES FROM CLEARBOX

ClearBox can help you select the best-fit communication and digital experience product – considering desk-based and deskless workers.

Whether you would best be served by a single solution or distinct systems for different audiences, we'll show you the platforms and apps that suit your needs.

Discovery services as you need.

Strategic review to set the direction.

Understanding your requirements.

The resulting shortlist and our expert recommendations will guide you to the ideal solution.

Take a look at our approach and get ClearBox involved:

www.clearbox.co.uk/selection

How to choose a product

We've presented you with a lot of information across our reviews and while some score higher than others, it doesn't mean those are the correct products for you.

In this section we've included some guidance about how you can use this report to select the right product for your business. We've provided guidance on how to consider whether it's better to choose to build, buy, work with SharePoint, or select an independent solution. We're working on some support packs at the moment and we've given you a sneak peek of what you can expect from those.

We've added a little information about ClearBox Consulting (so you know who we are and why we feel we can help with this report or with our services). We've also included our acknowledgements here so you can see who the reviewers are and what expertise they've brought to their reviews.

Back to index.

USING THIS REPORT TO CHOOSE A PRODUCT

The target audience for this report is intranet managers, internal communicators, and IT teams who are looking to implement a new intranet or other employee experience platform. This report's aim therefore is to help you understand the options and draw up a shortlist of potential vendors.

Four phases of product selection

There are four phases associated with choosing the right product for your organisation:

1. Strategy
2. Requirements
3. Product and vendor research
4. RfP and product selection.

We cover each phase in depth on our website, including a helpful flow chart to guide you through the whole process (and it's all free). This process will help you research and document your business needs, including how to discover what your employees want, before conducting detailed research and making a decision. This report will support you throughout all four phases.

Additionally, ClearBox often helps organisations define strategies and requirements, before making appropriate product recommendations based on those findings and using the experience from the hundreds of hours we spend researching this report. Graphic flowchart showing the steps that are listed on this page.
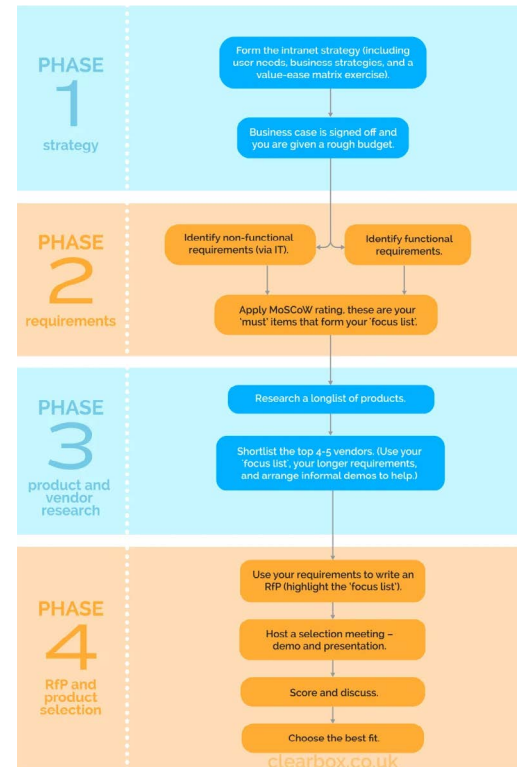
The product selection flowchart is available, free, on our website.

Strategy and requirements

Use this report to identify features you feel are appropriate for your employees and would meet business needs. This will give you a starting point for exploring, researching, and documenting your strategy, which in turn will generate the functional requirements a product must have in order to meet business needs.

It's also important to form your non-functional requirements, usually with the aid of IT, so that you know what technical or support needs your organisation has. For example, you may need to work with a vendor headquartered in your continent or country, data may have to reside on your own in-house server, or you may already have a good idea of budget. Refer to the 'Company and Product' tables explanation in this introduction, then in each of the reviews, to get an idea of the sorts of things you should be exploring.

You can then return to the report, strategy and requirements in hand, to have a more

detailed read through of the scenarios that matter most to you. Refer to the comparison information in this introduction, then at the individual reviews, to form a longlist of vendors to explore.

Product and vendor research

This report will save you a lot of time, as you won't need to thoroughly scour vendor websites, read case studies, or watch as many webinars to get a sense of what the product does. We still recommend completing these activities but use this report to form a longlist to investigate, rather than trying to explore all of them. The scenarios and scores are particularly helpful for identifying your longlist, but have a look at the 'Voice of the Customer' in each review too, as these are quotes from real customers that will start to give you an idea of how people feel about using the product and working with the vendor.

You will then gradually form a shortlist of vendors to take through the product selection phase.

RfP and product selection

We recommend building a dialogue with vendors rather than going straight in with a formal procurement process. An informal demonstration will help you to get to know the company as well as the product and help to narrow your shortlist down to a final three or four. You'll get a much better response if you are open about the process along the way.

As a minimum, you should ask for a demonstration linked to your requirement scenarios. A demo site that can be tested with your intranet users would be much better. Your final choice may not be one that scores highest overall in our report. The best value may be achieved by matching those who scored well on your priority scenarios and offer the right pricing, flexibility, and support too.

Ultimately, you should have a discussion where you share all the evidence you've gathered to help you make the best, most informed decision.

ClearBox can help you at any and all stages of this process, so please get in touch if you need any assistance.
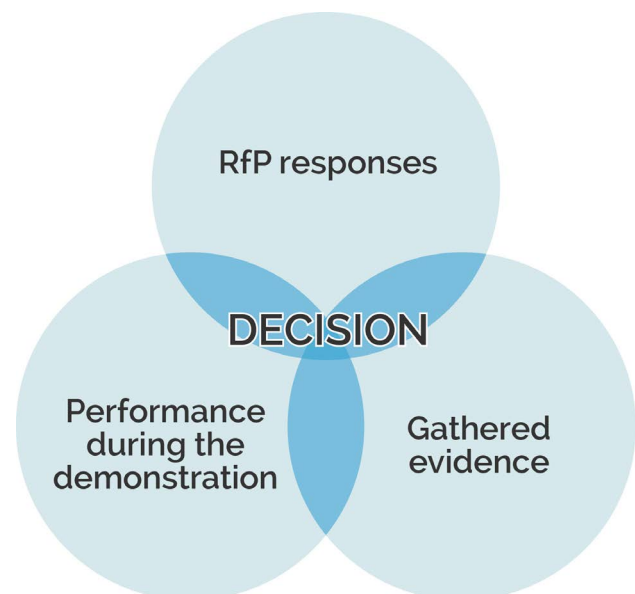
Gather all information together and discuss with your colleagues. Where the positive experience overlaps, that's where you'll decide on a product.

COMING SOON – DIGITAL WORKPLACE SOFTWARE SELECTION SUPPORT PACK

Deciding on what approach to take with these platforms isn't easy, particularly as there is so much choice. We know that not every intranet management team has budget to hire consultants to help you choose the best intranet or other employee experience platform for your organisation.

This report offers a good amount of help, giving unbiased yet expert reviews of the best products on the market. But, it's one long PDF and we know the valuable information would be better served in other formats.

So, we are going to release a 'product selection support pack' to provide more guidance.

What will be included:

■ An Excel file summarising all products (with information such as scores and pricing) to help you shortlist and that you can annotate as you explore your options

■ Information from the introduction expanded specifically to help you choose the right solution

■ Additional guidance on the 'SharePoint or not' question

■ And more!

We're working on it at the moment and hope to release it in the coming months. We want to make sure it's as helpful as possible - providing guidance and arguments to arm yourself with when discussing the project with stakeholders - and will save you even more time.

Please fill in our website form to be told as soon as the pack is released. You'll see there's space for ideas or requests for content, so please share your thoughts and we'll do what we can to make the pack as comprehensive as possible.

A NEW INTRANET – BUILD OR BUY, SHAREPOINT, ADD-ON OR INDEPENDENT?

Given the prevalence of SharePoint licenses, we typically see four possible routes to creating a new intranet:

1
Use standard SharePoint, lightly adapted with branding and configuration

2
Use SharePoint with an add-on product (see the ones listed in the technical table)

3
Buy an independent intranet platform and configure / extend it (see the ones listed in the technical table)

4
Build your own using a CMS or SharePoint as the basis, requiring extensive specification and development.

When clients engage ClearBox services to help chose an intranet platform, or do discovery work, there's often a presumption that the solution will be SharePoint-based because they already have Microsoft 365. Some feel there's no decision to be made as modern SharePoint alone is more than capable of whatever the requirements reveal.

However, this decision is not as clear-cut as it first appears, and we often encourage clients to think more broadly about what matters most to them. Virtually all the products we list in this report will integrate SharePoint document libraries with the intranet experience, for example. The ability to work across an intranet and collaborative content can be over-weighted too; users can sometimes be worried if they search the 'open' intranet and see results including 'their' documents, for example. It's easy to conflate 'SharePoint' with 'everything Microsoft' too – if you choose not to use SharePoint, it doesn't mean you can't keep using Teams, Viva, Entra ID or anything else Microsoft provides.

Whichever route you take, the advice in the previous section 'Using this report to choose a product' still applies, as creating a strategy, identifying requirements, and exploring your options are sensible no matter what your starting preference.

The case for basing your intranet on SharePoint

1
You already have it. We're going to assume that many reading this already have Microsoft 365 as a start point, and that this has been chosen for many reasons beyond the intranet such as Exchange, Teams, Entra ID and so on. So long as all users are already licensed, there's a big win in not having to make the case for more budget.

2
SharePoint is a strong contender for straightforward intranets. If you just want one simple site, or many similar sites with central hub, then it is easy to get going with SharePoint. The interface for site building and publishing are attractive and learnable.

3
Integrated search. This is often seen as a core argument for SharePoint or a SharePoint add-on: all your content stays within Microsoft 365, so there's no overhead of search integrations across intranet and collaborative content in a document or in Teams conversations.

4

Integration across other parts of Microsoft 365. If you buy into Microsoft's vision, then a modern digital workplace spans SharePoint, Teams, Viva, the Power Platform and more. The 'intranet' is secondary and having these work well together is more than the sum of the parts.

5

A single supplier to deal with. IT teams can be reluctant to set up more supplier relationships. Even if you choose a SharePoint add-on product, the vendor may still be a Microsoft Partner and within the same ecosystem. For similar reasons, there's a large marketplace of skilled contractors too.

6

Add on products expand capabilities while keeping the benefits. If you need more power, then the SharePoint add-on products we list will greatly enhance the functionality whilst keeping the appeal of single search, integration with Teams, OneDrive, Viva Engage etc.

The case for choosing an independent (non-SharePoint) platform

1

Flexibility. It's hard to deviate from the SharePoint look even with an add-on product (though some do a commendable job). However, independent products can provide broader options and the flexibility to get it looking exactly as you want.

2

Cost of ownership. Although the licenses might be 'free', configuring SharePoint requires specialist knowledge that is in-demand. Some of the add-on products do a good job of simplifying the interface for admin tasks but add complexity elsewhere. In the long run, it can be cheaper to buy an independent intranet product closer to your needs than adapt SharePoint to do it.

3

Easier to live with. IIndependent intranets tend to have a more straightforward admin interface and coherent set of options. Done well, an independent intranet can evolve more readily as non-technical users are able to manage it themselves and find it easier to add content.

4

Integrations. SharePoint in-a-box products tend to offer better integrations with M365 tools. However, independents are better at integrating with non-SharePoint cloud storage and tend to be better at offering open APIs or marketplaces for further development (which could of course include Microsoft applications).

5

Quicker deployment. It can be much quicker to go from project start to launch with an independent intranet product, though many of the add-on tools do a good job of shortening this phase for SharePoint too.

6

Frontline and Mobile experience. We're not too keen on the current SharePoint / Viva mobile experience, particularly for frontline workers. You'll find more options, and a more mature approach with independent vendors, some of which began as mobile-first platforms.

The case for building your own

Over the last five years, we have seen fewer organisations opting to build their own intranet. The technical maintenance burden can be significant (or maintenance doesn't happen because the developers are no longer available). Specifying requirements from a blank page is much more complex than choosing a product off-the-shelf, and the time between project start and go-live can easily fill 18 months or more. However, there are still some points to consider:

1

Flexibility and ambition. Building your own means that you can have just what you want. If you have a vision for something really innovative, or specific to how your business works, then there may be nothing off the shelf that fits. Quite a few intranet products began as in-house projects that were so good they spun off into companies.

2

Cost. For very large organisations, the cost of intranet products can be off-putting, especially on a per user / per month model when there may be 20,000 or more frontline workers to pay for. Build your own costs scale very well, and you may already have a license for the base CMS if it is used for your website.

3

Iteration. Some of the best intranets we've seen have a team behind them that constantly improve both the functionality and the content. Although you can do this with independent or SharePoint-based intranets too, there are more constraints on the modifications that will be supported, or you may have to wait a year or more for the feature to get on the vendor's roadmap.

ABOUT CLEARBOX CONSULTING

ClearBoxCONSULTING

Who we are

Based in the UK but with clients around the world, ClearBox Consulting Ltd. is a specialist independent consultancy that believes in making the workplace a better and more productive experience. Our goal is to help organisations collaborate and communicate more effectively.

Since 2007, we have been helping organisations of all sizes improve their intranets and wider digital workplace. We cover digital internal communications and collaboration tools (including Microsoft 365). We understand technology, but we approach it from the people side first.

ClearBox is run by Sam Marshall, together with a specialist team and a wider network of associates that can be introduced as needed. We all have hands-on experience of the realities of introducing change in organisations.

What we do

We bring clarity to digital workplaces. Often our clients want to reinvigorate their digital communications or introduce more collaborative ways of working. We help them develop and implement a strategy that supports their business goals, but which also understands employee needs.

What makes us different is that all our consultants have first-hand experience of managing digital workplaces, so we're not just about the theory. Collectively we've worked on over 200 intranets, so we can help you plan effectively and anticipate any challenges.

We are also technology and vendor neutral: we don't implement any specific tools or get fees for recommending them. That means we help our clients make choices with their business needs in mind.

Consulting for intranet product selection

If you need further help to choose the right product for your digital workplace, then we can apply our extensive knowledge of the marketplace to meet your specific needs. Our consulting help can range from:

- Our 'express strategy' service, which uses stakeholder-driven workshops to help your organisation converge on a vision and roadmap for your digital workplace.
- Detailed requirements discovery from stakeholders, employees, and partners and then our in-depth support to develop a strategy and requirements.
- A guided process to capture your platform requirements and our expert help to shortlist suitable vendors.

Our other services

- Intranet and digital workplace discovery and strategy consulting to directly support organisation goals
- SharePoint and Microsoft 365 strategy, governance and adoption
- Training on 'writing for your intranet' for content creators
- Information Architecture
- Intranet design and usability
- A 'one week intranet review' to create a prioritised plan for incremental improvements.

Who we work with

We work with organisations that range from a few hundred employees to over 100,000, typically as partners to Communications, IT and HR functions. Our assignments have included projects with both profit and non-profit sectors, including Bayer, Diageo, GSK, Marie Curie, Ofgem, Skanska, Royal British Legion, Sony, Loves Travel Stops, Unilever Vodafone, Electrolux and Scottish Government.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Report Manager and Lead Reviewer

Suzie Robinson is an intranet and digital employee experience consultant at ClearBox and has responsibility for this report.

Suzie has worked with intranets since 2008 and has practical experience with all aspects of an intranet lifecycle, from research, to implementation, to ongoing governance, and overall strategy. Suzie's intranet experience has grown out of the roots of internal communication, so she has a focus on employee experience and engagement, plus strong content. Remote and difficult to reach users were often the core user-base for the intranets Suzie managed, so she has extensive experience at finding ways to engage and connect a broad audience range.

Suzie is a skilled writer (not just of reviews, she's also a published author) and editor, and she is active in the internal communications community, both writing and getting up to speak at conferences. Suzie is always happy to have a chat, so please feel free to follow her on LinkedIn.

Report Executive Director

Sam Marshall is the owner of ClearBox Consulting and has specialised in intranets and the digital workplace for over 20 years, working with companies such as Bayer, Vodafone, Diageo, UK Government, Sony, FIFA and GSK.

His current activities focus on intranet and digital workplace strategy, and the business side of Microsoft 365.

He is a regular keynote speaker at international conferences and has been named a 'Contributor of the year' for his CMSWire column seven years in a row. In 2015 Sam was given the Intranet Now award for 'remarkable contribution to the intranet community'. Follow him on LinkedIn.

Reviewers

Allan Tanner is a digital management professional with over 23 years' experience in digital services. He has worked in public, private and third sectors delivering digital workplace programmes and corporate intranet projects for the likes of Abrdn plc, Citizens Advice Scotland, and Forestry and Land Scotland. He believes in using technology to make work simpler and, with many years based in communications teams, knows the role effective communication plays in helping employees make sense of their digital landscape. You can connect with Allan on LinkedIn.

Andrew Marr is an intranet and digital workplace consultant at ClearBox, having over 15 years' experience in digital business strategy and management practice. He has completed a wide range of digital workplace strategy, intranet management and technology vendor selection assignments for world-leading brands and government organisations. Coming from a practitioner background, Andrew was responsible for intranet strategy and development at international healthcare group Bupa and implemented pioneering social and collaboration applications during his time there.

Guy Van Leemput is an independent intranet and digital workplace consultant based in Brussels, and the founder of ValueIntranet. He has more than 10 years of consulting experience and has worked with many large and mid-sized organisations across the Benelux countries. Previously he was a corporate intranet manager at financial services provider Swift. Guy frequently advises organisations about intranet strategy and governance, product and technology selection, and user adoption of digital tools in an increasingly complex hybrid workplace.

Lisa Riemers is an independent communications, content, and digital workplace consultant, with over 15 years of experience helping organisations tell their stories. She's worked as an in-house intranet manager, product owner and marketer, and bridges the gap between comms, digital and technology teams. She works with large organisations like the UK government (Department for International Trade), G4S, Veolia, FirstGroup, British Red Cross and Direct Line Group. Lisa loves connecting people. She builds communities online and offline and co-runs the Intranet Now conference. She's also an artist, who brings her creative flair to the workplace. Connect with Lisa on LinkedIn.

Luke Mepham is a passionate intranet and Microsoft 365 professional. He has been involved in the IT side of intranet development and management since 2000, leading and delivering several projects to create, migrate and redesign intranets for large international financial service organisations. Luke enjoys speaking at conferences on the topic of intranets and sharing his insights and best practices on how to leverage the power of M365 to create modern and effective digital workplaces. He is currently the M365 Product Owner for a large UK insurer, where he oversees the strategy, governance and adoption of the suite.

Michalla Sedano is a knowledge management practitioner and digital workplace strategist. Michalla currently works at the Massachusetts-based nonprofit VentureWell where she focuses on maintaining and improving a portfolio of technology systems and tools, partnering closely with the teams and staff who use them. Prior to VentureWell, Michalla worked at Ideal State, a digital transformation consulting firm for clients in the social sector. In her role as a consultant, Michalla led clients through digital workplace transformation projects and knowledge management strategy. Michalla also has experience of working in nonprofit organisations, launching Microsoft Teams and implementing enterprise social intranets. Connect with Michalla on LinkedIn.

Sophie Gowsell has more than a decade of expertise in storytelling and content creation. As an internal communication and change professional, she has a passion for fostering employee engagement and knows the transformative power of feeling seen, valued, and engaged at work. Sophie has dedicated her skills to crafting internal communication and change strategies for various organisations, aiming to support innovation and cultivate connections in the workplace.

Report Editing

Steve Bynghall is an independent digital workplace and intranet consultant and writer. Steve works independently as well as through consultancies such as the Digital Workplace Group and Step Two. He has written extensively through blogs, articles and books. Steve co-founded Spark Trajectory, a company offering training and consulting for digital workplace teams.

Following an MSc in Information Science from City University, Steve worked at accounting firm BDO LLP for over thirteen years, working in various knowledge roles including managing the firm's global extranet programme. He has been freelance since 2010. Connect with Steve on Twitter at @bynghall.

Report Design

Debbie Brown is a seasoned freelance designer holding a Bachelor of Arts Degree. Debbie has 19 years of experience working on a diverse range of design disciplines including: publication design, print and online advertising, logo creation, branding design, homepage concept / UI design. To see a selection of her work view her portfolio and follow her on LinkedIn.

Vendors

We are grateful to each vendor for their co-operation in demonstrating their products to us. The products we feature are a combination of companies we approached and ones that asked to be involved in this edition. If you're the vendor of a product and would like to be included in the next version of this report, please visit our website for details.

BECOME A CLEARBOX REVIEWER

We're always looking for more people to join our team of reviewers for our reports. ClearBox is only a small consultancy firm, and we need support from critically minded, passionate writers to help us cover the breadth of products we feature in our reports.

What being a reviewer involves

Each of our reviews takes about a week in total to complete, but spread over a couple of months. This includes writing, responding to editing recommendations, and sharing with your vendors. During a demo we expect you to be able to identify the great (and less great) features of the products you see. Afterwards you need to be able to express your thoughts cohesively and coherently – while we want to know what something does, it's more important to express how well it does it.

We fact-check everything with vendors, so managing that relationship and related conversations is also important. Of course, we also need people who can meet deadlines so that we can keep pushing towards launch.

"I've been a ClearBox reviewer for several years now and I find the experience enriching and rewarding. It's a great way to learn about new products and new trends in a rapidly evolving market. I also enjoy being part of an international team of experts that produces one of the industry's most significant reports."

Guy Van Leemput, Intranet and Digital Workplace Consultant

How we support you

We assign each product to a reviewer, so you and the vendor have a consistent experience. We template everything, provide guidance, offer training, and will mentor you through your first review. We're always on hand to answer questions too, and we welcome queries as they may help the wider reviewing team.

We pay for your time, of course, and you gain the benefit of experience of a variety of platforms during the process.

What to do

Have a read through of this report; if you find the type of content interesting and think, "Yeah, I could write that," then please get in touch with me. You're welcome to DM me via LinkedIn or email me instead (suzie@clearbox.co.uk).

I'm really proud of the reviews we produce, particularly as we've been able to release them for free. The vendors who take part appreciate the level of detail we go into, and our reviewers get a huge amount of insight into the industry. It's a lot of work, but it's extremely rewarding and benefits the digital workplace industry as a whole.

Suzie Robinson, Report Manager

FULL REVIEWS

ahead

FULLY STANDALONE

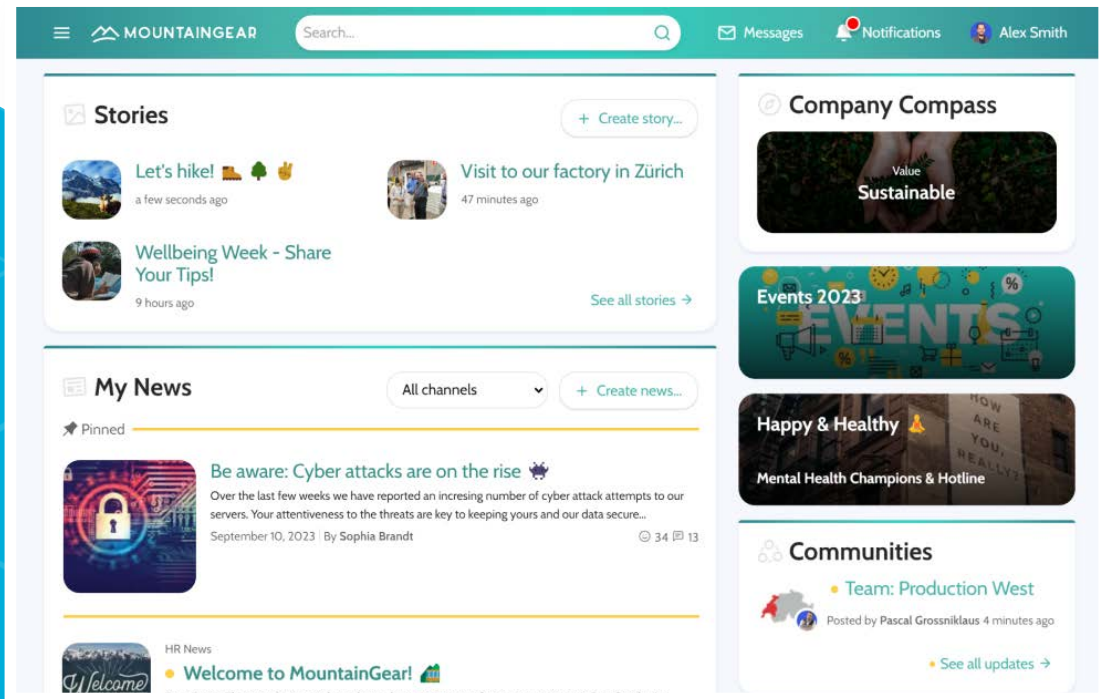**REQUIRES SHAREPOINT**

OPTIONALLY WORKS WITH SHAREPOINT

FRONTLINE FOCUS

Typical deployment:

500 – 5,000 employees

Company locations:

VISIT THE WEBSITE
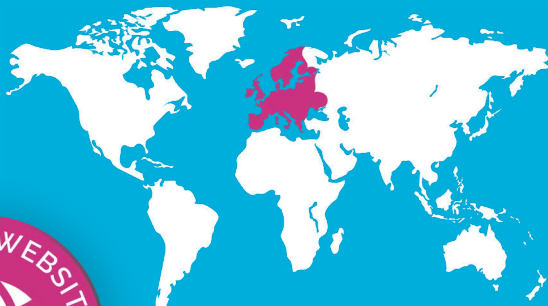
The product in a nutshell

ahead's highly usable communications platform combines an impressive mobile offering with great engagement functionality that will appeal to businesses looking to connect a dispersed workforce.

ahead owned by ahead AG

ahead is one of the younger products we've reviewed in our report, having been launched in 2020 by Switzerland-based ahead AG. Its relative youth only shows in the range of features, as what is on offer generally works very well – particularly the mobile offering.

ahead is primarily a communications and engagement tool; its strengths are in its overall usability, which is intuitive and effective. The community and social features are also strong, with good multilingual options to support a diverse workforce. The mobile experience is one of the best we've seen of its type, with even administration functions easy to use in that environment, meaning frontline workers would be well served.

Its limitations typically revolve around a lack of flexibility for admins, such as design options and home page layout. Additionally, it doesn't support

building a deep navigation and while the administration system is very usable, it lacks some key elements such as content review workflow. The analytics provided are relatively basic too. Overall this might make it too simple for organisations with complex needs. There's also a reliance on Microsoft Entra for setting permissions, creating users, and aspects of audience creation which some companies might find restrictive.

However, ahead is well suited to organisations of any size looking to provide a communications and engagement platform across a dispersed and multilingual workforce. Its attractive price point means it is worth exploring alongside more in-depth solutions, making it an option for the frontline while desk-based workers could use a complementary system.

Pricing

PRICE BAND	
250 users	$ $ $ $
1,000 users	$ $ $ $
5,000 users	$ $ $ $
20,000 users	$ $ $ $

These prices are indicative, offering a comparison of the products featured in this report only. Please contact the vendor for a bespoke quote.

PRICING MODEL

Subscription – price per user per month.

COSTS TYPICALLY

Fairly evenly spread across three years.

DISCOUNTS

Charities and non-profit organisations, schools and educational institutes, frontline users, multi-year commitments and FTE based pricing (for industries with lots of part time workers).

PRICE INCLUDES

Updates and new features, unlimited support (in-product / email / phone) during work hours, ahead X community events, bi-weekly / monthly or quarterly CSM meetings, best-practice sharing and benchmarking.

Product type

Ready-to-run, installed in hours

Branding opportunities

All branding, complex options

Base systems

Fully standalone	Requires SharePoint	Optionally works with SharePoint	Other

Sectors

Engineering and manufacturing	Public services, government and administration	Retail	Science and pharmaceuticals	Transport & Logistics

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Over the last few weeks we have reported an incresing number of cyber attack attempts to our servers. Your attentiveness to the threats are key to keeping yours and our data secure...
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HR News
● Welcome to MountainGear! 📈
Dear Team, This month we are pleased to welcome some new faces to our MountainGear family. Jim, Pierre and Lucille started on 1 September and will support our marketing, product an...
September 12, 2023 | By Charlie Myers   🕐 2 min 💬 3

Products
The autumn/winter collection is here!
We welcome the new autumn/winter MountainGear collection 🍂 Dear Team, Summer is officially over as we introduce our latest products for the autumn/winter collection. We are very e...
September 12, 2023 | By Sophia Brandt   😊 14 💬 2

[POLL]
● Registration Summer Party 2023!
Hello all, Our summer party is just around the corner! Help us organise it by answering the survey below. There will be lots of fun activities: -karaoke. -barbecue. -live music ban...
September 11, 2023 | By Rachel Parks   🕐 2 min 😊 43 💬 25

HR News
Update to your Health Insurance
Dear all, As of March 1 2023, we are partnering with a new provder for Health Insurance. You plans will automatically be transfered to the new provider, which has some additional p...
September 9, 2023 | By Sophia Brandt   😊 22 💬 16

Company News
[MANDATORY READING] [POLL]
Introducing our fresh, new branding!
New year, new us! You may have already noticed that our intranet is looking a little different since last week. That's because we have officially launched our refreshed branding! T...
September 8, 2023 | By Sophia Brandt   😊 38 💬 5

Save the Date: MountainGear Champions Q&A
A few months ago we launched our Champions Campaign to highlight and praise our biggest ambassadors, those who go above and beyond to share our vision and values every day, with ou...
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Company Compass

Value
Sustainable

Events 2023

Happy & Healthy 🧘
Mental Health Champions & Hotline

👥 Communities

● **Team: Production West**
Posted by Pascal Grossniklaus 4 minutes ago

● See all updates →

⚡ Activities

[Show 1 new activity]

◯ ServiceNow · 2 days ago
Retirement Procedures
New knowledge article published
By Claire Smith

📄 Page published · 15 minutes ago
Carbon Foortprint & CO2 Tracker
By Alex Donate

🖼 3 new story additions · 23 minutes ago
New store opening in Barcelona
Tom Wells has added to the story.

——— Last seen ———

💬 Salesforce · an hour ago
Kurz AG opportunity has moved to proposal stage
Check out the opportunity

📷 Instagram · 13 hours ago
Today we launch our latest footwear for snow lovers. Our ST500 Summit 🥾 Boots 🥾 combine top technology with traditional handcrafting. #hiking #mountain
By MountainGear Social

🎂 Birthday · 5 hours ago
🎉 **Happy Birthday Jason López!**
Jason works as Supply Chain Manager in Zürich since 2016.

📊 Poll has ended · 17 hours ago
How will you join the event?
Check out the result

➤ Travel · 2 days ago
30 Great Deals at REI's Gear Up Get Out Sale 2022
REI shuts their doors every year on Black Friday to encourage everyone to #optoutside, but first they're having their annual Gear Up Get Out sale from Nov. 11-21.

📈 Stocks · 3 days ago
Mountain Gear (MOTG)
13.31 CHF, Change: −0.15 CHF (−1.11%)

✖ Menuplan · 3 days ago
Today's Menu
Pasta with peas, spinach, mint, sage and goat cheese.

[Load more...]

COMPANY AND PRODUCT

Company details

Company
ahead AG

ISO 27001 certified
ahead AG says this is underway and expect certification in Q2 2024

Data residency
Microsoft Datacentres in Europe West or Switzerland

Company founded
2020

Product launched
2020

Typical client size
500 – 5,000 employees

Largest deployment so far
24,000 employees, 18 countries

Customers
Clients include: carhart WIP, Loeb, Brugg Group, Vebego, Salvation Army, Variosystems, Läderach, Medartis

Partner locations
Germany, Austria, Spain, Switzerland

Company locations
Bern, Switzerland (HQ), Spain

Product and technical details

Name of product

ahead

Deployment

Client on-premises	Client private cloud	**Microsoft Azure**	Amazon Web Services	Vendor-hosted	Microsoft 365 tenant	Other

Client data encrypted

In transit only	**In transit and at rest**	At rest only

Authentication supported

Entra ID	**ADFS**	Okta	Open ID	Oauth	G Suite	Other

App deployment

Google Play store	**Apple store**	**MDM**	MAM	Other

Accessibility

Contrast can be set by the individual user, Alt text is in use for images and keyboards can be used for navigation.

Document library sources integrated

Box	Dropbox	Google Drive	SharePoint	OneDrive	Other*

*ServiceNow, QM-Pilot

Optional integrated enterprise search engines

Coveo	Elastic	IBM	Lucidworks	Microsoft	Mindbreeze	Sinequa	Other

User interface multi-language

Pre-configured	Editable	Right to left script supported	Other

Content multi-language

Machine translation for publishers	Machine translation for end users	Editable machine translation for publishers	Manual creation for publishers	Right to left script	Other*

*Machine translation services integrated (DeepL, with Google and MS Azure Translation services for languages not supported by DeepL)

Set-up and support

Set-up process for new clients

ahead is a pure SaaS product. Integration into the customer's Office 365 environment comes with the product and can be enabled with one click. ahead includes guided onboarding for set-up that personalises the intranet. Tools and best practices are shared using a dedicated customer onboarding portal. Additional onboarding professional services can be purchased upon request.

Current version

Evergreen SaaS solutions with weekly updates

Product updates

Evergreen SaaS solutions with weekly updates

Product update process

All customers receive updates simultaneously to ensure a consistent user experience. For releases with significant changes, ahead offer a 'feature switch' option, allowing customers to transition within a designated timeframe. ahead hosts regular webinars that not only introduce new features but also provide previews of upcoming versions. These sessions are complemented by training materials to facilitate a smooth adoption process.

Reverse-out options

All content data can be retrieved by the customer. Documents remain in SharePoint (no-replication) where they have been integrated.

Technical support

Email support	Phone support	Chat support	Online portal	24/7 support	Office hours only

User community

There is an active ahead X community with regular webinars, product updates and a user conference. Please see their website for details.

Voice of the vendor

ahead AG says: "ahead is the digital home for employees where we don't just inform; we connect and inspire. Imagine a workplace where every individual, from the boardroom to the factory floor, feels a sense of belonging and purpose. That's the environment ahead cultivates for our customers.

What sets us apart? It's our unique blend of simplicity and functionality. ahead is so intuitive that anyone can jump right in, yet it's powerful enough to handle your most complex internal communication needs. We go beyond merely informing your team; we create avenues for meaningful connections and moments of inspiration. Features like campaigns, communities and stories turn routine interactions into opportunities for building culture and engagement.

Fragmented information is a challenge in today's complex work ecosystems. ahead tackles this by integrating seamlessly with key tools like Microsoft Office365, Service Now, HR systems and many others. We break down information silos, centralising all your essential data in one digital home for employees.

And let's not forget the non-desk workers. ahead's mobile capabilities ensure that everyone is included in the conversation, wherever their work takes them. From blue-collar workers to remote teams, ahead makes sure everyone is informed, connected, inspired and engaged.

In summary, ahead is more than an internal communications platform; it's the future of employee engagement. We're not just breaking down barriers; we're building bridges to more cohesive, productive, and satisfied teams."

Voice of the customer

Customers love the simplicity of using ahead and the fact that both admins and employees can get started with the tool quickly. One comment summed up the view by saying: "Simplicity! Configuration and operation is very self-explanatory. Users can work productively after a short time." They also called out the mobile experience and the tool's ability to bring all employees together easily. "All employees, regardless of function and location, are part of the community", said one. Another commented "I find a lot of value in the mobile app. I think it's very aesthetically pleasing and easy to use on the go".

Areas for improvement included more flexibility over layout and improvement to menus. "More flexible placement of elements depending on customer needs", commented one customer. A further suggestion was "Quick links really as quick links and not hidden in the burger menu". Another would like to see a more coherent approach by providing "a menu of stories, news, [and] campaigns".

Feedback about working with ahead was unanimously positive. The vendor was variously described as 'very kind', 'knowledgeable' and 'patient', providing "close and personal support". "The company communicates open and quickly", commented one customer, with another summing up: "The provider has a lot of experience and you can tell. The project support was complete from A-Z."

SCENARIOS & SCORES

Please see the Scenarios below for more detail on each of these.

SCENARIO AND SCORE	KEY BENEFITS	IMPROVEMENTS / CONSIDERATIONS
3.5 **1. User Experience & Visual Appeal**	Highly usable interface on both desktop and mobile. Easy to move around and consume content.	Not suited to building out deep navigation. Design options are basic.
3+ **2. Publishing & Communications Management**	Creating pages from scratch is straightforward. Pages can be easily copied for reuse as templates.	Lacks some tools useful to publishers such as approval workflows or a calendar view of scheduled content.
3.5 **3. Community & Engagement**	Dedicated 'Communities' and 'Stories'. Broad opportunities for engagement throughout the site.	No native surveying features.
2+ **4. Integrations & Services (Including M365)**	Good options for integration in the activities feed, notifications and 'personal space'.	Teams and wider M365 integration is basic. Limited outward integration into third-party tools.
3 **5. Information Finding & Search**	Predictive and fuzzy search provided. Integrates well with M365 and other third-party content sources. AI search feature is strong.	No search configuration options. Filtering options are limited.
3 **6. Administrator Experience**	Easy to configure the site. Navigation management is straightforward.	Home page layout is fixed. User management is exclusively through Microsoft Entra.
2.5 **7. Analytics**	At-a-glance stats provided in the article context are helpful.	Little to help site admins understand site performance. No search analytics.
4 **8. Mobile & Frontline Support**	A first-rate mobile experience both for end users and administrators.	Relies on Microsoft Entra ID for authentication.
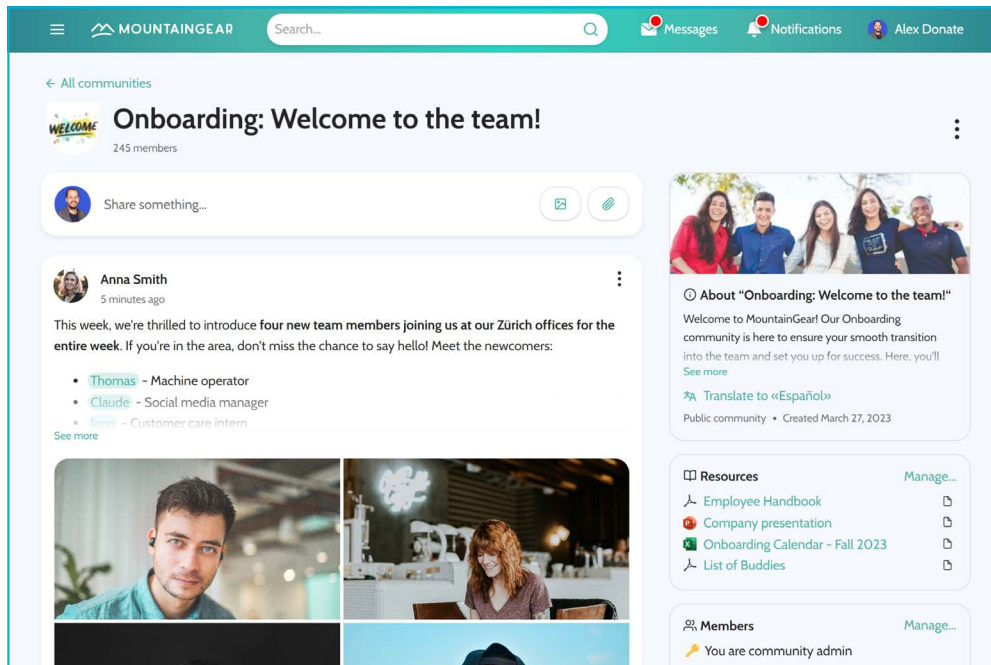
ahead's engaging design strikes a good balance between use of images and text, where individual designs can be targeted to different audiences.

The home page - ahead prefers 'start page' - presents as a two-column format on desktop and a single list on mobile (see Scenario 8 for more on mobile). On desktop, user-generated 'Stories' content heads the page, the News section follows below and can be configured to sit above Stories if preferred. The 'Company Compass' (see Scenario 3), campaign panels and 'activities' feed live in the right hand column on desktop. The focus is on short, digestible, scrollable content, which we think is effective.

Admins have a good degree of control over design elements but there are limits on what can be changed and brand-conscious companies might find this restrictive. Site design can be audience targeted though, helping support multi-brands.

ahead isn't suited to creating deep layers of navigation although each navigation item can be audience targeted. The menu page (accessible via a burger icon) provides a selection of categories which in turn contain only one further tier of sub-navigation. The sub-navigation layout is presented in the left-hand column. News, Stories and 'campaigns' (see Scenario 2) each have aggregated content pages, but these are not accessible from within the menu; as an employee there isn't a way to view all campaigns and their content. With larger volumes of content, there is a risk that navigation may become slightly incoherent. We think the on-page links could usefully be included in the menu, a suggestion echoed in customer feedback.

Notifications are accessed via a bell icon at the top of the page and include mandatory reads. Notifications are cleared from the list once acknowledged and remain for fourteen days in chronological order. There's no option to filter for read or unread items, which would be a helpful addition. Search and 'messaging' (see Scenario 3) also sit in the top bar, along with access to the people directory, which is a recent and welcome addition.

Overall, ahead is an engaging communications-focused product providing a consistent experience for both desktop and mobile. The site has notably good usability, is easy to interact with, the layout is clear and there's a good balance between use of imagery and text. However, the overall design lacks sophistication for those with complex requirements.

Content creation is straightforward; publishing and metadata details are located alongside the main editor, with tooltips available to assist publishers.

Page and news article creation is easy on ahead, principally set up using varied components called 'building blocks'. These allow publishers to compile the page and add elements such as rich media, polls, quizzes and documents, and to highlight associated page content from elsewhere in the site. Helpfully, pages can be set up from scratch and then re-used as a template – duplicated with a single click.

The settings and metadata fields for the page, such as choosing an audience or selecting the site section to contain the published content, are situated alongside the publishing interface. We liked that publishers don't need to leave the main page editor to manage these fields. Content can be previewed and kept in draft until ready for publication and authors can publish as another user.

Audiences are based on people data which is imported from third-party systems or integrated Entra ID Groups and can be assigned to individual pages as well as associated with entire channels and content sections. Content can be made private to an audience, as it is otherwise findable by all users. An 'advanced targeting' option is available (included in the price provided here) for creating bespoke audiences. This works by using profile attributes combined with the existing Groups, all from Entra ID. For example, users in Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg Groups could be brought together as a single 'Benelux' ahead audience. Authors may also use advanced targeting to create bespoke audiences directly from the page editor when setting up a new page or article.

Articles can be associated with 'campaigns'. A clickable tag on the article leads to a simple campaign landing page containing associated content. There's a dedicated panel on the start page for highlighting a campaign article, which can carry an 'update' label to indicate new campaign material is available. Admins are able to view a list of all campaigns, whether they are running or paused, and have the option to start or stop a campaign, create a fresh one, or make minor alterations to campaign landing pages. Communicators will find the feature useful, although it is a simpler approach to campaigns than we've seen elsewhere. Please see Scenario 3 for details of the 'Company Compass', which associates content with organisational values.
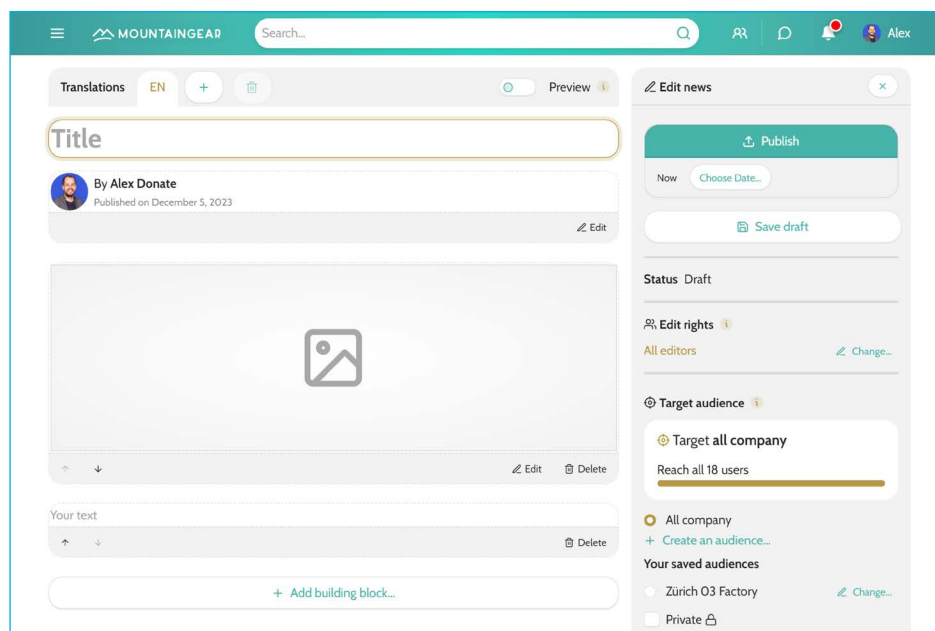
News articles are compiled using building blocks to populate the page, with admin functions helpfully provided alongside the content editor.
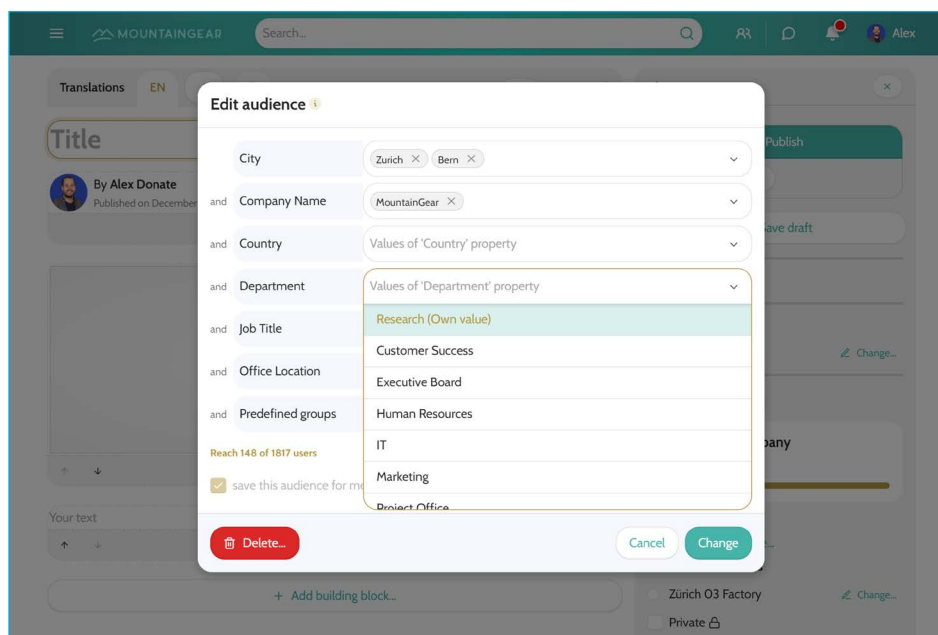
Editors can create audiences 'on the fly' from within the content editor. The parameters are based on attributes imported from Entra ID.

Publishers can make articles and pages live instantly or schedule them for future publication. There's no calendar view of publishing activity and no publishing workflow. However, there is an overview for admins showing all content in draft, published, scheduled, or archived, along with details such as date of original publication and last update, and an at-a-glance display of views and engagement activity.

Multi-channel publishing is catered for by providing an API for use with digital signage solutions. Pages can be set up and be targeted so different content appears on different screens or different locations. The vendor highlights that it's possible to run a digital signage browser displaying an intranet page but recommends the API-based approach for a better experience.

ahead lacks specific banner or pop-up functions which could be used for crisis or urgent messaging, however some of its default functionality could be used for this purpose. For example, on the start page the 'My news' section contains all the news that is targeted to the individual. Articles are filterable by channels and people may choose to follow or unfollow a channel. Items can be pinned to the top of the news section and editors set the pin duration, which will promote urgent messages. There's no limit on the number of pinned items, so this area will need some curation to manage the visibility of key items. Publishers are also able to use @mentions to notify individual users to highlight highly important content through a site notification.

The mandatory read function could also support crisis messaging and there's flexibility to change the call-to-action labels on the mandatory read fields to elicit a specific response. The confirmation rate is tracked in a downloadable Excel report and admins can send a reminder via in-app notification, email and mobile push notification to all users who haven't responded, although only once per day.

Overall, creating pages and news articles is simple in ahead with easy access to admin controls, such as metadata. There is room for improvement, however, particularly for communications management and multi-channel options, although the campaigns feature shows promise and we hope to see this evolve further.
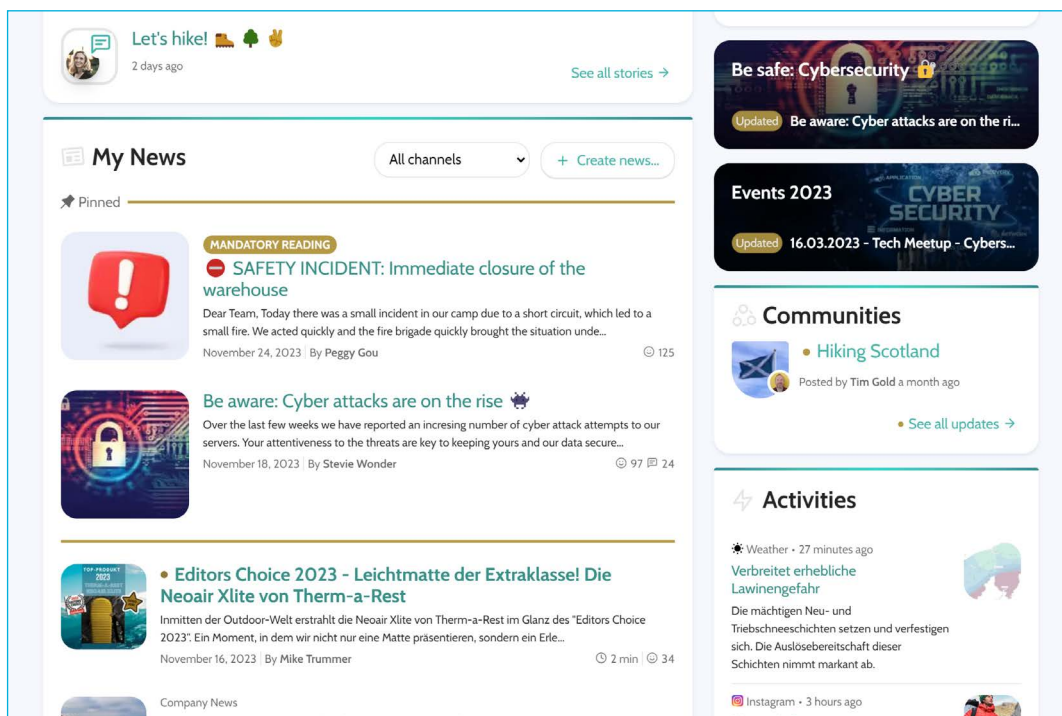
Crisis messaging is supported by pinning news items to the top of 'My News' and using mandatory read statuses to emphasise the message and elicit a response from users.

3.5

3. COMMUNITY & ENGAGEMENT
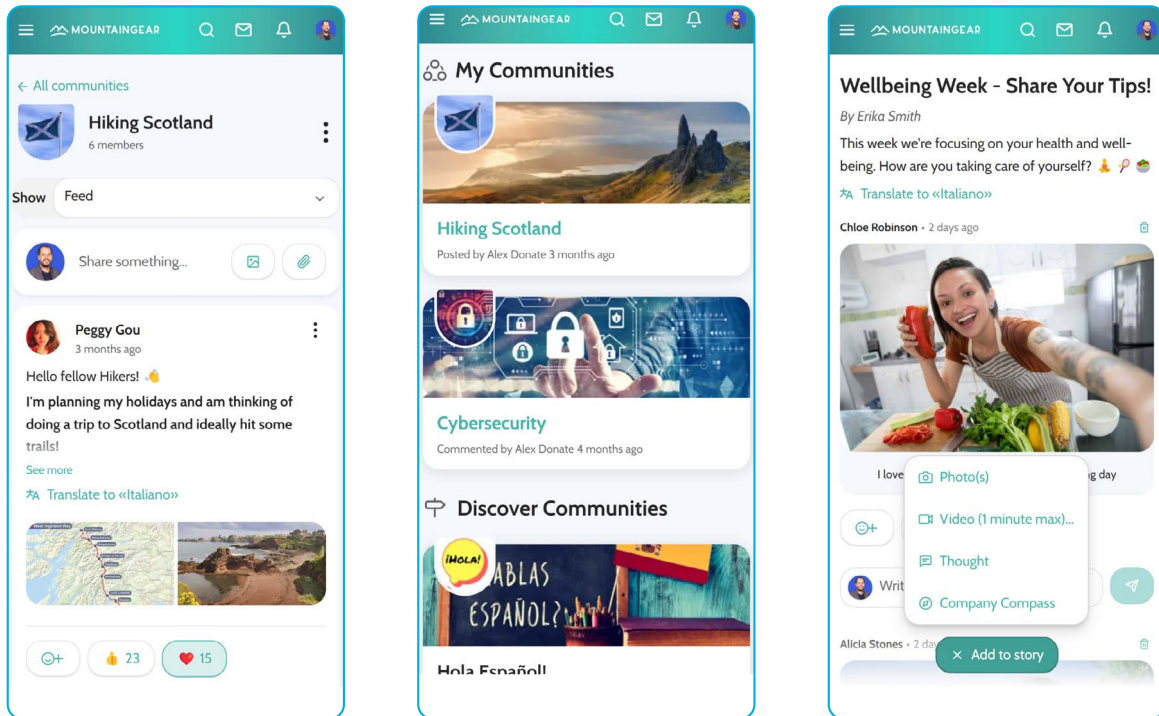
*Employees engage with each other through ahead's 'Communities' feature,
which benefits from the product's excellent usability on mobile.*

'Communities' provide employees with a way to engage on topics of mutual interest in a Facebook-like timeline format, which is well suited to mobile although works well on desktop too. The Communities section is accessed via the user profile menu and the landing page is split into 'My Communities' and 'Discover Communities', which highlights other Communities that might be of interest. These are listed randomly and we think making recommendations based on an employee's profile would be helpful. There are three types of community: public - open to all employees, gated – visible to all but requiring a request to join, and private - with access by invitation from the community owner or administrator only. Private communities won't display in search or the Discover Communities list without relevant permissions.

It's easy to create a post in a Community feed, as well as react to and comment on posts. We'd like to be able to caption uploaded images individually, and an option for adding alt text is missing. Users can toggle notifications for the community directly from a post; we think this is helpful and isn't something we've seen elsewhere. We also liked the auto translate option, allowing all users to participate regardless of native language. We can see the social and collaboration potential here for frontline workers who might not have access to a tool such as Teams.

ahead also promotes colleague-led engagement through the use of 'Stories'. These are short-duration, user generated threads of activity, that display on the start page; they are similar to an Instagram story and we liked that they feel rather quirky. By default, Story duration is four days, although this is configurable. Stories are designed to be added to over time, with all employees encouraged to contribute, however, admins control who has publishing rights. Stories appear in search, can be added to pages and articles, and associated with the Company Compass. Expired stories are retained in an 'All Stories' timeline.

There are basic social reaction and commenting features on all published content. @mentions can be used in comments; users receive a notification to say they've been mentioned. There is comprehensive content moderation for every user-generated item – comment, Story and Community post. When reporting content, users are asked to confirm they want to log a report and are notified when the report is sent. Admins receive the report notification and can go directly from it to the reported material, where they then allow or delete the item and add a comment to explain the decision. All moderation activity is tracked in a content moderation list and the system keeps track of what has been reviewed and associated comments. Moderation activity details are held within the system but aren't currently exportable. We liked the clear and straightforward approach to this function; it's important for giving reassurance to businesses in an environment where user contributions are actively sought.
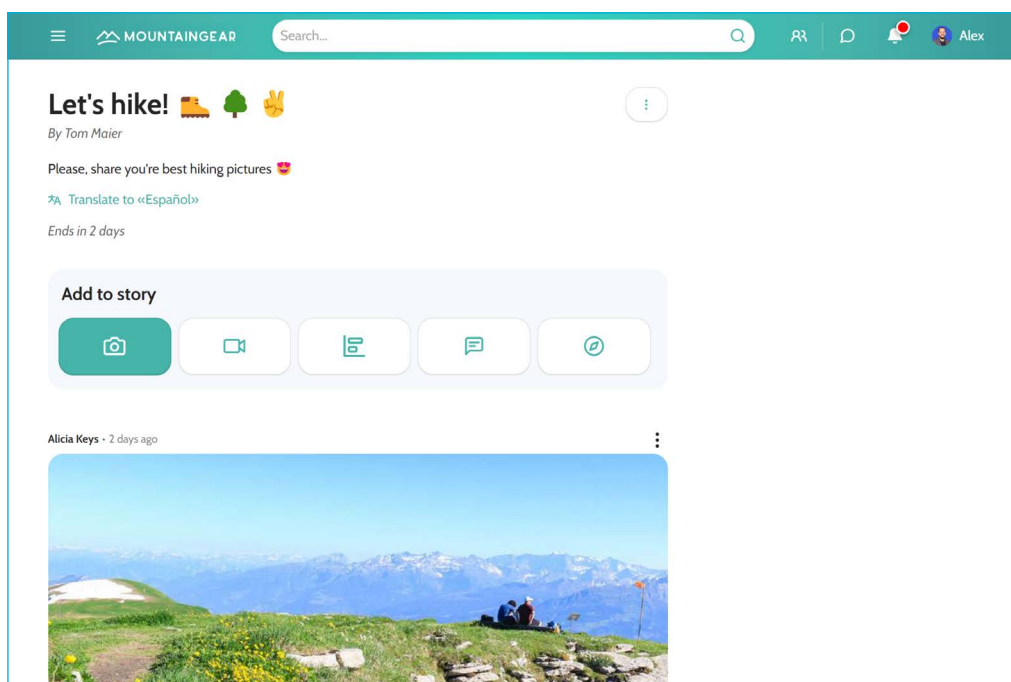
Stories are short-duration posts created by employees, designed to encourage engagement amongst colleagues. They are particularly suited to mobile use.
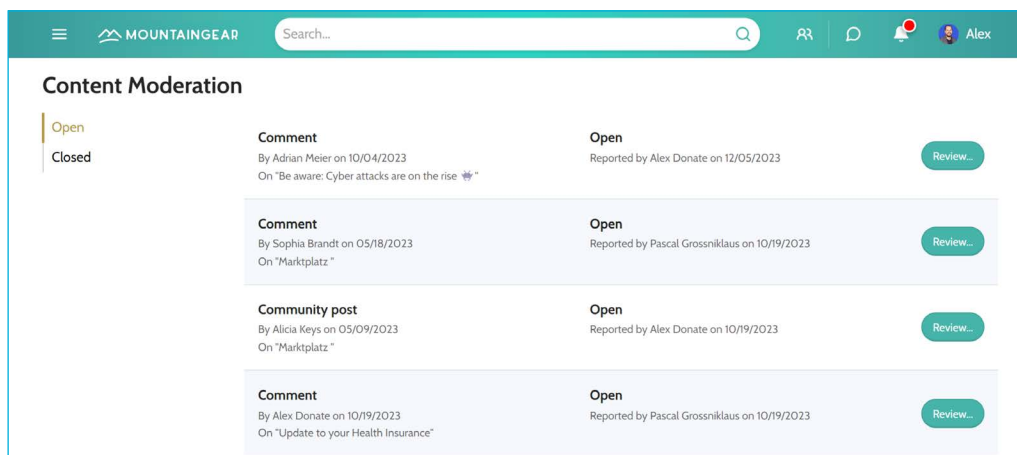
Comment moderation is a recent and welcome addition to ahead and covers all user-generated content within the product.

ahead offers polls as a feature within News items, showing a 'poll' badge next to the title on the start page. Authors can add four questions and set the poll duration. Responses are anonymous and cumulative responses are displayed when the user makes their choice. Polls can also be turned into 'quizzes', with the editor able to set a correct answer which the user sees on completion. Polls and quizzes can be used to good effect with Stories; we think being able to add them directly to the start page would enhance this feature further.

Messaging is an optional 'premium' service available with the product, although it has been included in the price provided for this report. Users can chat on a one-to-one basis or create groups with multiple users, please see Scenario 8 for more.

The 'Company Compass' provides content specifically related to a company's core values and it's given prominent space on the start page. Any content within the site can be associated with the Company Compass, helping to bring value elements into the foreground for users. For example, there's a specific call to action for anyone creating a Story to link it to Compass content. When someone views Compass content they can click on a 'timeline' showing all the content and activities associated with it, and when this association took place. Giving prominence to this type of content potentially helps establish values more firmly with employees.

Overall, ahead provides employees with several options for social engagement. These range from adding reactions and commenting on content, to more feature-rich tools like the well-executed 'Communities' section and short duration 'Stories'. We think there are gaps though, such as a dedicated employee recognition feature.
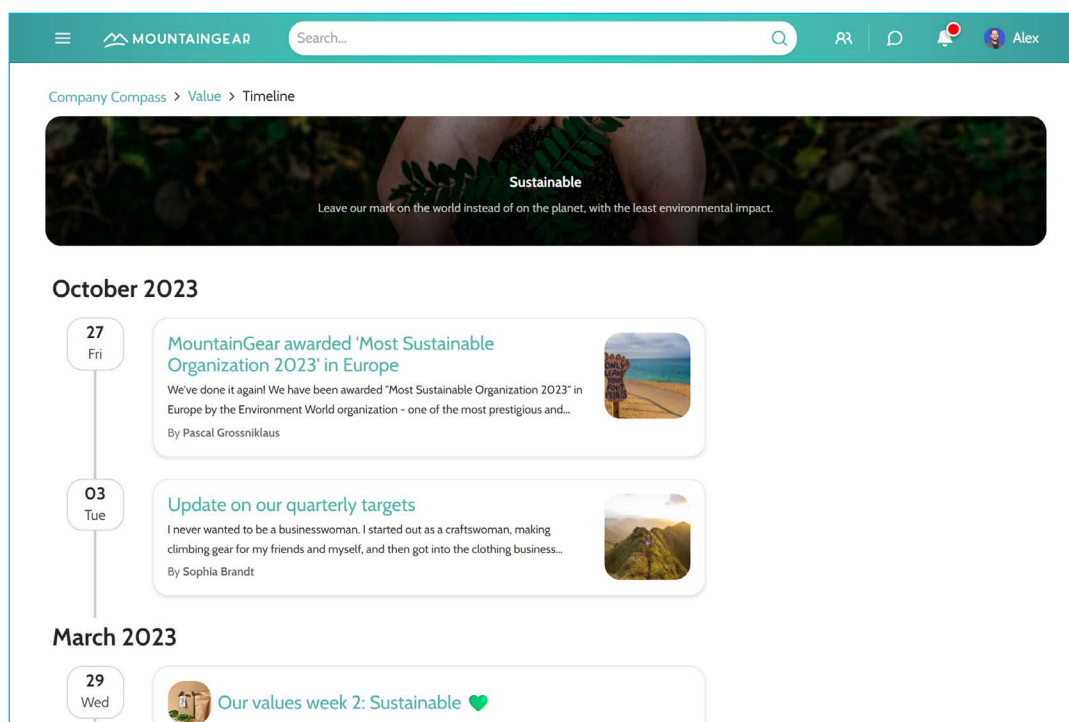
The Company Compass timeline highlights content and activities that have been associated with a particular aspect of the Compass, such as the company vision or values.
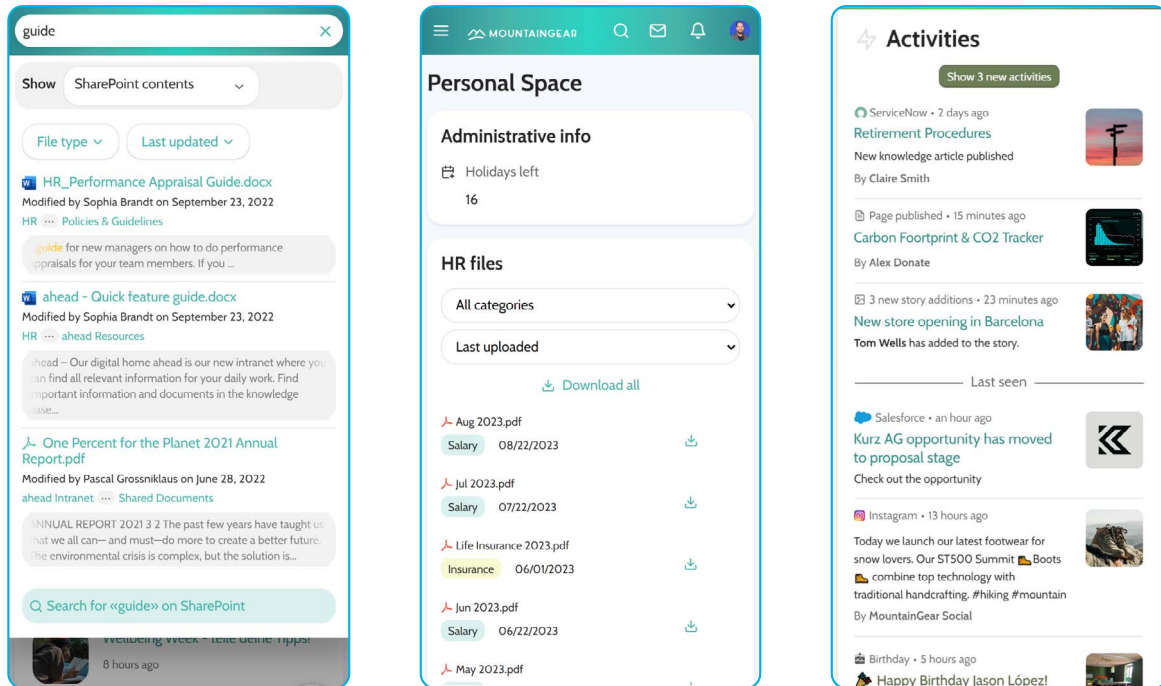
ahead offers a variety of integration options with M365 and third-party tools to bring content and notifications into the intranet and app.

ahead's connections to third-party and M365 systems principally pull information into the site. We would like to see the ability to transact with other services directly from the intranet, for instance to submit a support ticket, but there are useful features here.

'Personal space' (see Scenario 8) brings personalised information such as time off balances or payslips onto a dashboard, and search integrations allow content from external sources to be returned. Third-party system notifications display in the employee's notifications list. Additionally, the activities feed can use content from external sources, for example, social media sites or Dynamics CRM. Admins configure these using out-of-the-box connectors, or can request assistance from ahead. What can be presented is versatile – individual elements in the feed can be audience targeted, providing opportunities for personalisation and engagement.

ahead's closest M365 integration is with SharePoint. In the 'My Work' section, employees see a list of 'most used' and recently opened SharePoint documents. An optional third tab displays colleague documents in a Delve-like manner. The vendor highlights some customers have reservations about content visibility in Delve, so this tab is optional. Documents from a connected SharePoint library can be directly added into ahead articles; editors use a search option within the publishing interface to find a file (which remains held in M365) and present it in the page using the document card format. We like this as it doesn't require editors to jump off into a file structure to select content.

An ahead app is available in Teams. It's quite basic, essentially providing a notification when a news item is published and creates a card containing the article details. Users can post the card link directly into a chat feed. Teams integration is more limited than we've seen elsewhere, though the vendor has indicated closer connections are on their roadmap. There's no integration provided for Viva Engage, however, video content from Stream can be embedded into News, Pages or Stories. Microsoft Forms can also easily be embedded into ahead pages via iframe; form configuration such as the message displayed on submission takes place in Forms rather than ahead.
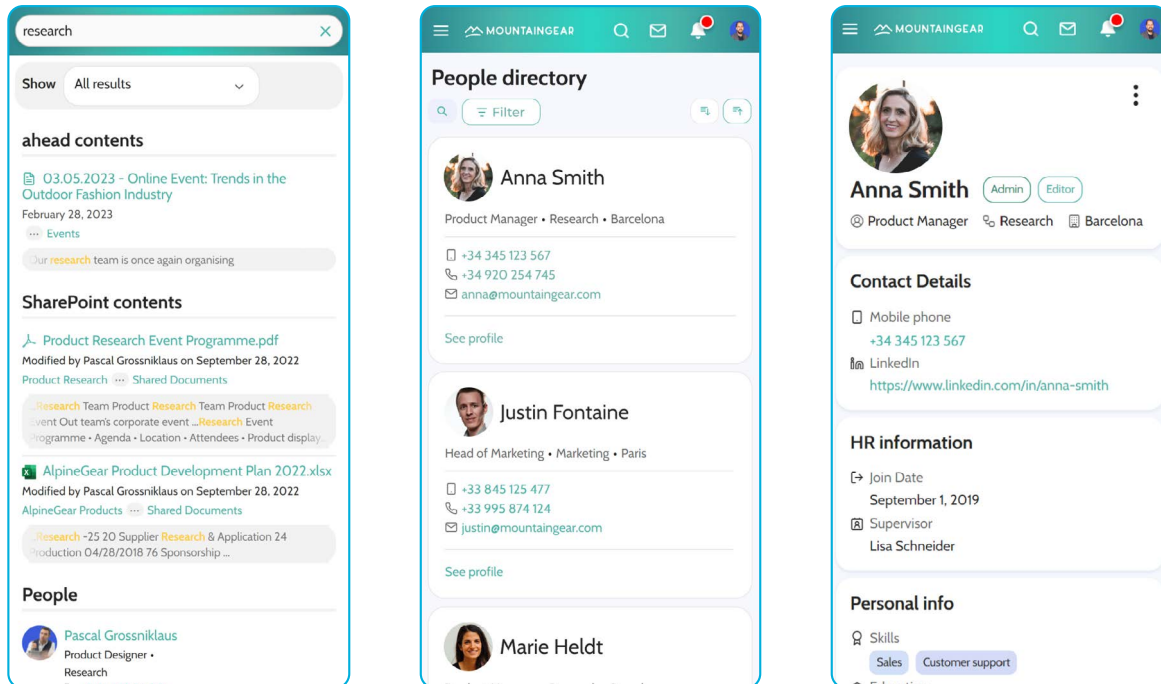
Search provides aggregated results which can be refined by source and will display content from any integrated third-party tools, including M365.

Overall, ahead's search experience is simple but an effective AI bot adds a layer of sophistication. Search is accessed through the toolbar at the top of the site and works identically on desktop and mobile. Results are aggregated and can be refined using content source tabs, as other applications can be integrated here, such as ServiceNow or Salesforce. The 'All results' tab can't be filtered but the other tabs have basic filtering, for example by file type or published date. Files uploaded as attachments into pages or community posts aren't indexed, which would be useful, however, users can open the source site or library for documents which are returned.

There's no search configuration available, such as generating promoted returns. However, results will return based on fuzzy matches; for example, a search on 'community' will return results containing the word 'communities'. This is a useful feature and not often seen with intranet search.

There are two people search options, either through the global search bar or via the people directory. ahead offers results based on partial entry of a name, although doesn't make recommendations based on misspellings - surprising given the fuzzy matching on content. Users can access full colleague profiles from any of the results. Profile fields such as department and location are also searchable. However, there is no organisational chart available.

There is an AI-driven 'ask ahead bot', an intelligent search across a defined set of information sources, designed to simplify finding content in documents – an HR handbook or process manual for example. The bot uses Azure OpenAI running in a secure environment, not a public version. Admins upload the documents to be crawled by the AI into the 'ask ahead' section of the admin system. The user asks a natural language question through the 'ask' dialogue box; details of what can be searched via the bot are provided. The bot returns an answer and displays the sources the answer comes from. ahead highlights this use of AI was selected by its customers from a list of options. We like that the initial implementation has a deliberately narrow focus, limited to documents, rather than, say, providing a generic generative AI function.
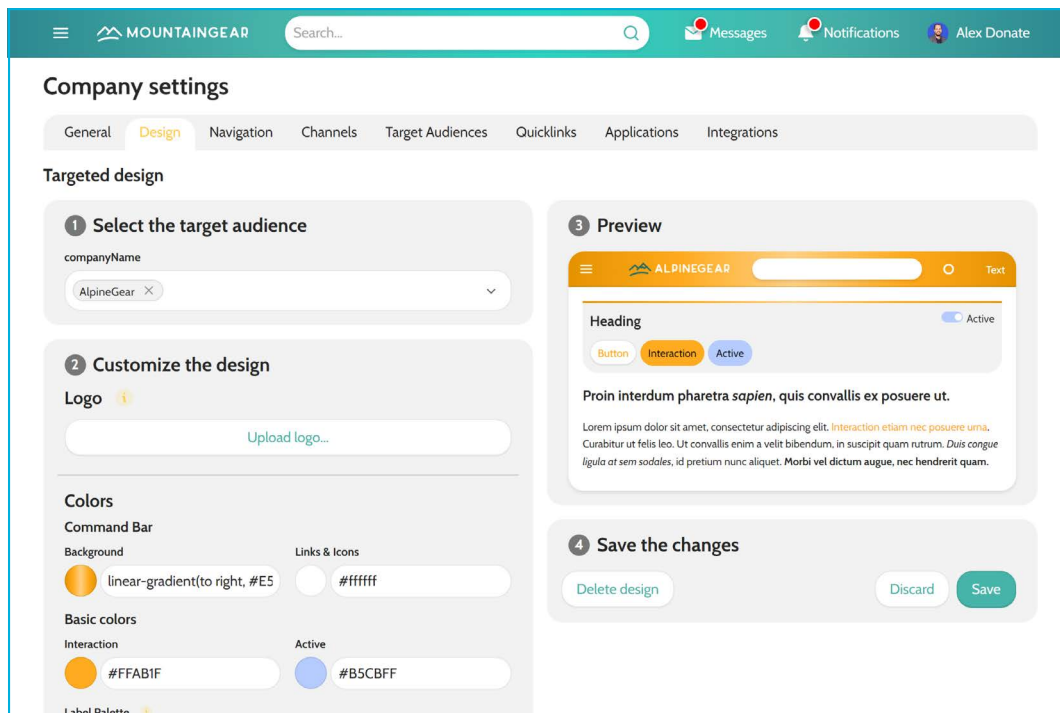
The administration area benefits from the same focus on usability that is present throughout the product.

The administration area is an enjoyably usable environment to work in, although admins don't have direct control over all aspects of the site. Administrative sections are accessed via a tabbed menu, and within each section, calls to action and settings are clearly set out. There are some tooltips providing on-page support, indicated by a small icon; however, the icon isn't used consistently and some of the tips just appear on hover-over. Making this experience consistent would be helpful. We like that admins can open a support ticket and access the dedicated help centre directly out of the application.

In the 'General' section, check boxes are used to toggle functions such as Stories, campaigns, communities and auto-translate, along with any premium features. Other tabs give access to controls for design, navigation, channel set-up, target audiences, the quick links menu, integrations (API keys and import logs) and the 'ask ahead' AI configuration. The main content menu is easy to construct and amend, even on mobile. Building the quick links and application menus is also simple – the option for adding a translation for the links is useful.

Navigation can be reordered easily using click and drop; we like that this becomes drag and drop on mobile, as it's easier to use in mobile format. Whole navigation groups or individual items can be audience-targeted and we also liked that a new audience can be compiled from scratch while a navigation element is created.

Overall, ahead provides flexible options for creating audiences, however, it must be emphasised that having good quality Entra ID data is fundamental to being able to use targeting functions to best effect. Permissions are also set in Entra ID. We did like that multiple tenants can be connected to the product – this would be useful in a company acquisition or merger scenario, for instance – but this comes at additional cost.

Admins have limited control over the layout of the start (home) page and content landing pages. Most elements on the pages are fixed, though the start page News panel can be repositioned above Stories on desktop. While this ensures a consistent experience across desktop and mobile, it relies on regular content turnover to keep the start page fresh, but this must be balanced with curating the page well so content isn't moved on too quickly, and also potentially makes highlighting crisis communications more difficult. Some customers have called out this lack of flexibility and it's an area we'd like to see improved.

Outside of the main admin area, News items and Pages are managed from a dedicated menu which provides an overview of content status, whether in draft, published, scheduled or archived. This area is well laid out with some tooltips and provides some helpful at-a-glance information, such as 'first published' and 'last updated' dates, a page view count and the number of social interactions and comments. Content items can be created directly from here. Content can be further filtered to display just the admin's own articles, mandatory read content, and 'private' news and pages; private content has been provided to specific user groups and deliberately excluded from search to preserve confidentiality. One notable omission is content life cycle options, such as automated content review notifications for when content is about to expire or past its review date. We think this would be a helpful addition.

The overall interface / system language is managed by ahead AG, who can add new options if required. Users select their preferred language on first log-on and can change this subsequently in their profile. There are three default language options: 'interface' is the language for elements such as headlines and buttons, 'content' sets the preferred language for viewing ahead content created by publishers, and 'auto-translate', which is used in news and pages.
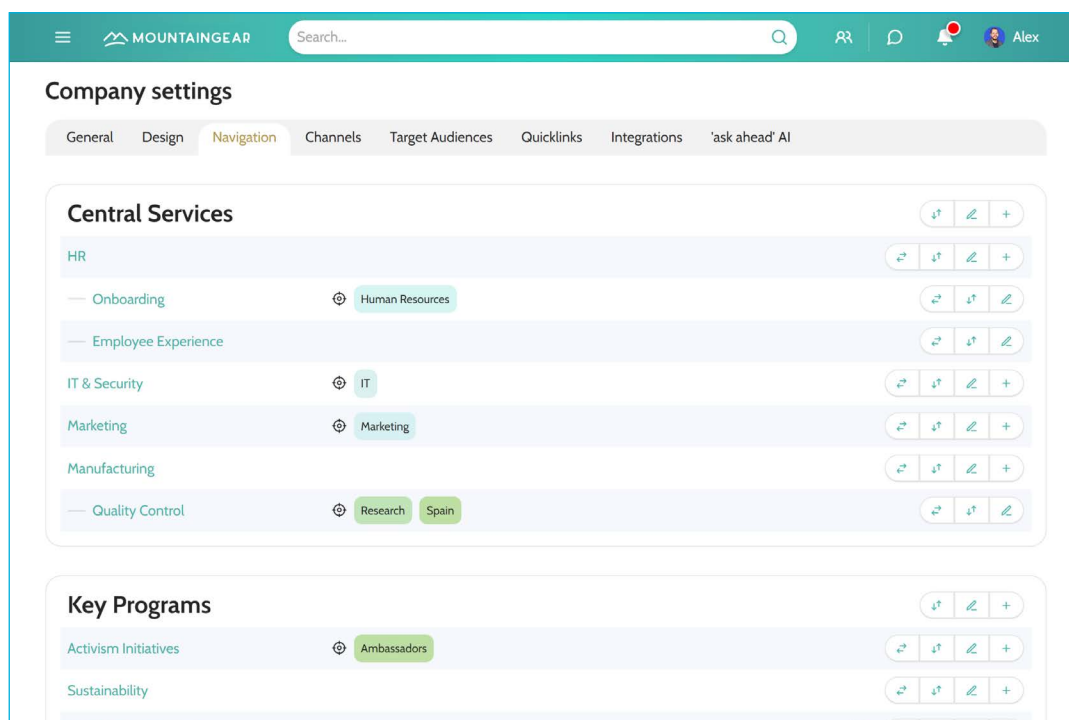
Navigation can be easily reordered using 'click and drop' and individual navigation elements or whole navigation sections can be audience targeted.

In News or Page publishing, publishers first choose the language the article will be written in. The publisher can create as many translated versions of the draft content as they wish. There are options for auto-translation, or creating the translated content from scratch. Once a Page is published, there is a simple toggle between the original text and the translation. Comments can be instantly translated using a single click, allowing users to converse and interact in their native language. Auto-translation features are driven by DeepL but provides back up with Azure translate and Google Translate. Overall, translation options and functionality are handled well for both end-user and administrators, which we have seen echoed in customer feedback.
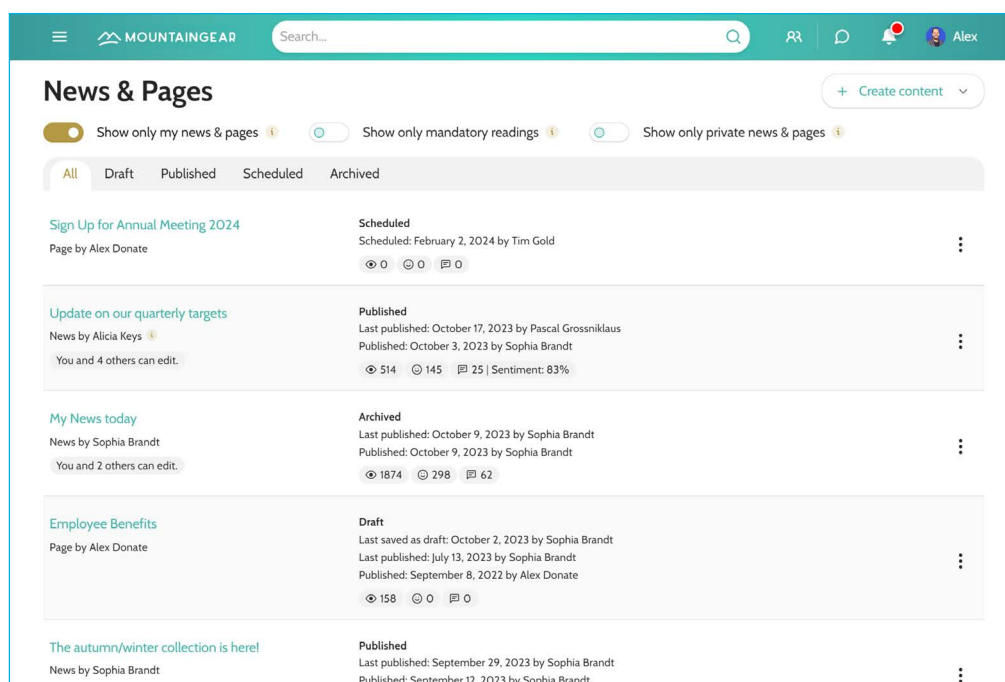
The News and Pages section provides administrators with a clear overview of news articles and page content.
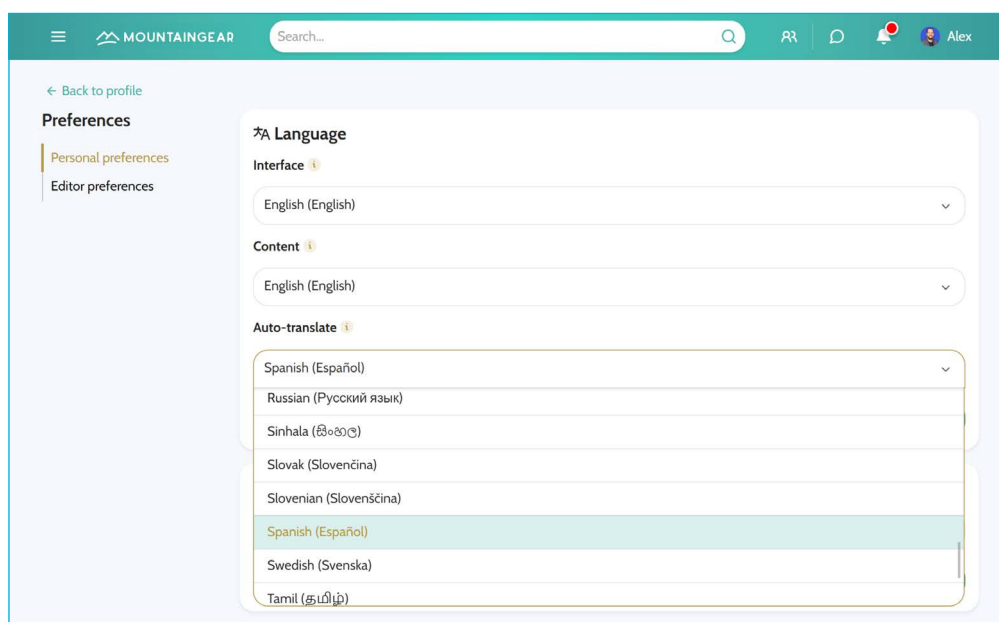
Employees can easily choose interface, content and auto-translate languages options.
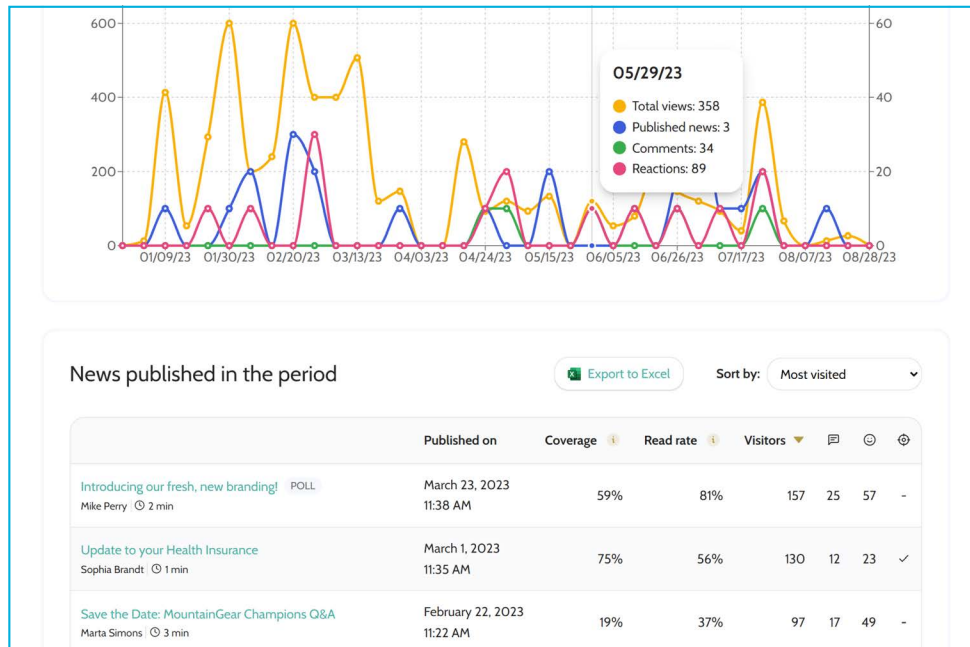
The Insights section in ahead provides a variety of reports detailing standard metrics for usage and engagement.

Analytics (labelled 'Insights') is relatively limited although the vendor has made improvements throughout 2023, so we look forward to seeing what's next. In general, the reports provide more of an overview of key activities than going into significant depth, largely covering readership and engagement metrics. Furthermore, there's additional data which is provided only within exported reports rather than being displayed in the Insights section. Bringing these details out of the download into the main reports would be helpful.

Information is broken down by overall usage, content, news and stories, and data is filterable using custom or pre-defined date ranges. Details can be segmented by target audience or all user activity. The overall usage report provides general data such as total users, number onboarded, and which of those users is engaged, i.e. has posted or reacted to content. There's a 12-month view detailing user performance over time. The content report includes stats for items published, type of content, and contributing users.

The news dashboard provides standard metrics such as visitor volume as well as a 'coverage' rate showing the reach percentage. There's also a read rate, defined as the percentage of visitors who have stayed on a page long enough to have read it all, and stats for interactions such as comments or likes.

Outside of the Insights section, in the editing interface of individual pages or articles, editors can view information about audience activity. A panel shows reach and coverage for the target audience, along with number of visitors, and a breakdown of whether readers have 'glanced', 'skimmed' or 'read' the content. The panel includes a link back to the Insight section. We liked seeing these details in the article context.

Admins can download a real-time report of mandatory read activity on demand. Note that, with all the report download requests, the system 'prepares' the file first and then sends a notification once the download is available.

Overall, we'd like to see more provided to help admins understand how the site is being used, such as reports on search, which are currently missing.
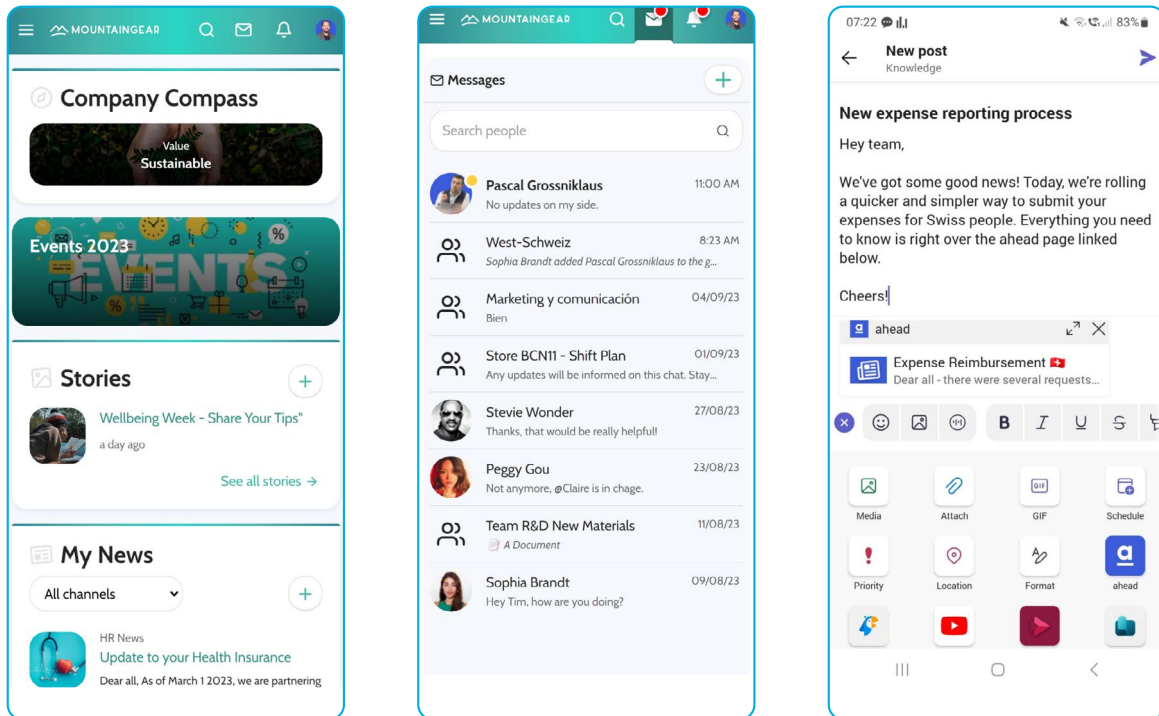
ahead has an excellent mobile experience which provides identical functionality to the desktop.

The ahead app is available through iOS and Android app stores and can be pushed out via an MDM wrapper. ahead can also provide a secure download space, accessible via a direct link, for customers whose employees might not have access to those stores. A white label version comes at additional cost – on initial installation this shows the ahead branding - but it switches to company branding thereafter. The mobile URL can also be changed to a preferred domain. Access to the app is via QR code, which is usually distributed offline, for example on posters or through team leaders. Users initially land on a web page (available in multiple languages) that gives context for using the app and instructions for getting started; we think this is a positive initial experience for employees.

Authentication is exclusively via Microsoft Entra ID and, as mentioned in Scenario 6, ahead provides the ability to connect multiple Entra directories to a single instance of the intranet, though this comes at additional cost. It's also possible to create an Entra ID account solely for authentication, removing the need for a Microsoft licence. More restrictively, users can't be added in an ad hoc way through the admin system and potential customers should note that all access and permissions must be set through Entra ID Groups.

The mobile user experience on ahead is excellent, with layout, design and usability all impressive. With functionality identical to the desktop site, it's easy to envisage mobile as the default option for many users. The quick access to the people directory through the top-level navigation works well here.

Company Compass (see Scenario 3) and Campaign (see Scenario 2) widgets sit at the top of the start page by default, followed by Stories, news, then the activities feed. While scrolling isn't a huge issue on mobile, in a busy communications environment with a lot of user interaction it's possible important messages might get lost a little in these separate sections; we'd like to see some options for changing the order in which these elements appear.

Content publishing on mobile is easy, with user-generated Stories particularly suited to the environment due to the simple creation process. For example, a foreman could spontaneously capture and post a video Story about the great work their team have completed. Creating a news article or a content page is also very straightforward, and this simplicity helps emphasise the usability in the product.

In response to customer feedback, ahead now provides the option to integrate more closely with third-party tools to deliver information and activities that are useful for the frontline. Customers work with ahead AG to define the information they want here, for instance, flexitime or annual leave balances could be brought into the site directly. Additionally, a personalised file list is available to provide employee-related files such as payslips; files can be encrypted and downloaded to the user's device.

The vendor has said this feature could be used to support activities such as employee onboarding by providing a curated list of targeted content to new starters, which we think is a good use case. While this feature is a useful addition to the product, potential customers should note the integration is not included in the price quoted for this report. ahead is exploring outward integration to other tools, such as being able to book time off from within the intranet and app.

ahead's 'personal space' provides employees with a personalised dashboard showing details from tools such as an HR system, along with a personalised file list (available on desktop and mobile).

The 'messaging' function has a potentially strong use case for frontline workers using mobile devices, giving them a way to converse with colleagues without requiring a licence for a tool such as Teams. Messaging is classed as a 'premium' option by ahead AG, although is included in the pricing provided for this report. If enabled, access is from the main tool bar at the top of the start page and push notifications will be provided if the user has enabled them. Employees can chat one-to-one or create groups with multiple users. The messaging interface has a list of all the chats the user has access to, along with options to create a new group, and the conversation panel is in a familiar consumer-app style. Chat participants can post text and images and share files. We'd like to see an option for colleagues to indicate they aren't available to chat, similar to the 'do not disturb' status on Teams.

Overall, ahead provides a genuinely first-rate mobile experience both for end users and administrators. There are a few areas that ahead AG plans to make improvements and where we've spotted gaps, but we think it works extremely well as-is.
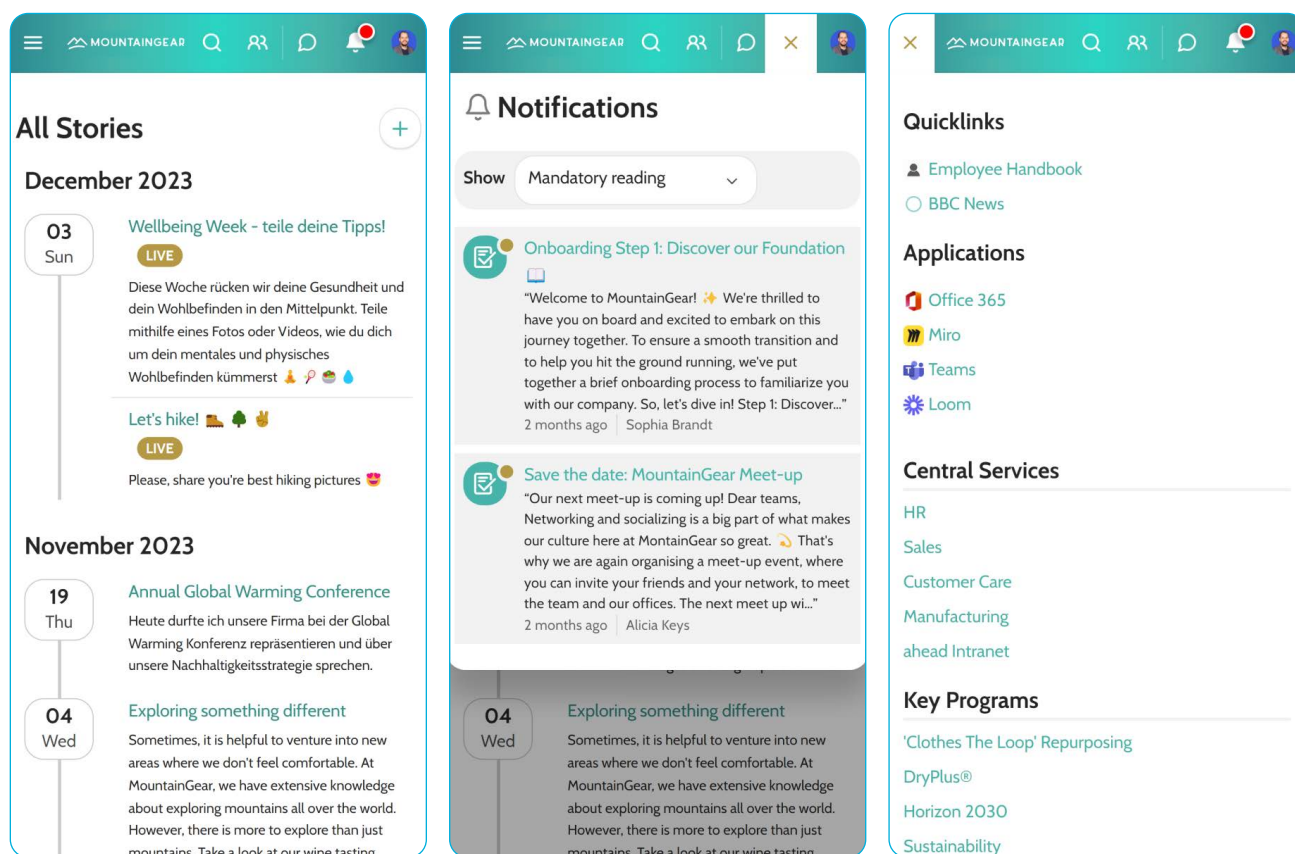
Content and functions are fully optimised for mobile in ahead. Content is easy to scroll; buttons and clickable elements are clear and well-spaced for use on smaller screen.

THINGS TO BEAR IN MIND

Overall, ahead is a very usable product and easy to administrate, but there are a number of aspects to be aware of. The reliance on Microsoft Entra for functions such as setting permissions and creating users might prove too restrictive for some, in particular larger companies where making changes to Entra might not be a straightforward process.

While the vendor has responded to feedback and made changes to navigation layout and administration, it remains the case that ahead is more communications-focused and not suited to building out a substantial set of pages with deep navigation. The vendor suggests customers use M365 as a document centre and collaboration platform, then ahead for communications (especially for frontline workers as this has no licence implications). We feel closer integration with M365 applications is needed to make this approach a seamless experience for employees. However, ahead's low price point make this an option worth exploring.

Analytics remain an area of relative weakness and, while that's not uncommon in intranet products, it's likely that customers with specific reporting requirements will need to make alternative provision. Notwithstanding the ability to change elements of the design and apply sub-brands, there are limits to what can be done with the overall design, particularly as the home page layout is fixed. Brand-conscious firms with sophisticated requirements might want to check that ahead can cater for what they need.

A further point to note is that a number of the premium options, including the multi-tenancy M365 provision and connectors to third-party systems (such as HR tools like Workday), are not included in the price quoted for this report and it is worth checking costs with ahead AG. The vendor and their partners are also only currently based in Europe, which may be restrictive for some clients.

Why choose this product

ahead is enjoyable to use, with a genuinely excellent mobile offering. It contains plenty of engagement features and has an appealing simplicity that belies the thought that's gone into the product. Businesses of any size who want to foster engagement across a dispersed and possibly multi-lingual workforce will want to consider this tool, especially with an attractive price point, regardless of the number of users.
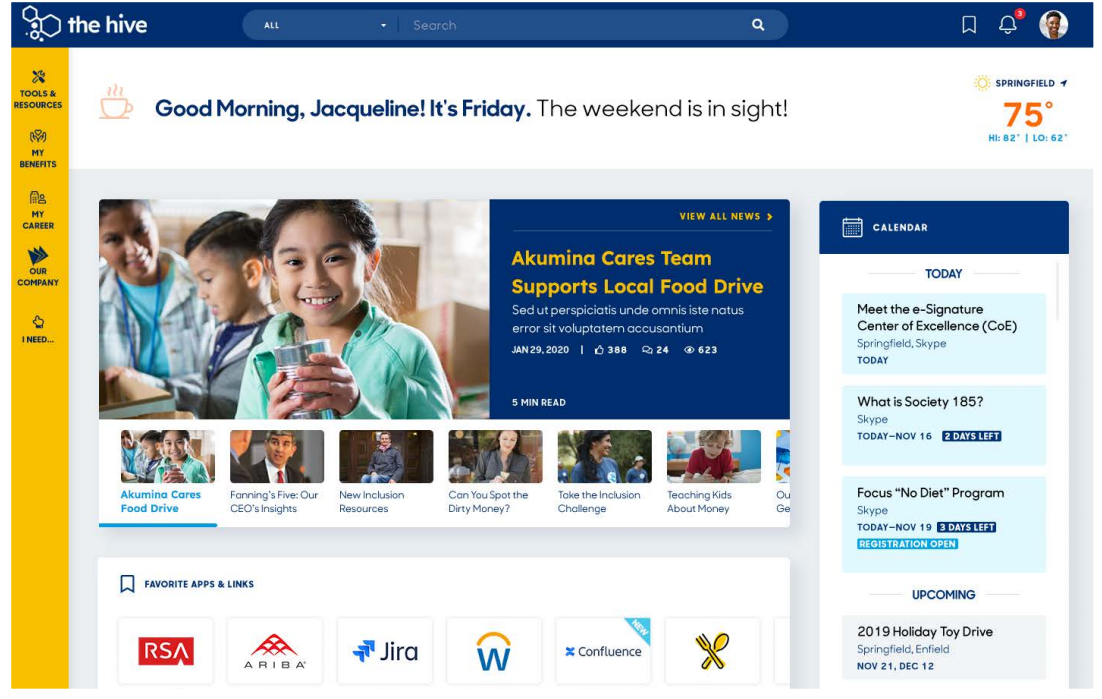
Vendor roadmap

Please [see their website](#) for details.

akumina®

FULLY STANDALONE

REQUIRES SHAREPOINT

OPTIONALLY WORKS WITH SHAREPOINT

FRONTLINE FOCUS

Typical deployment:

13,000 employees

Company locations:

VISIT THE WEBSITE

The product in a nutshell

Akumina is a highly flexible and feature-rich platform, with an excellent approach to application integration, and with a great employee experience.

Akumina owned by Akumina

Akumina was first introduced in 2015 and is owned by Akumina, who are headquartered in New Hampshire, USA. The platform is a highly flexible and mature product that delivers a top-tier experience for desktop and mobile users alike. Features for content creation, collaboration and information finding are excellent, and the options for integrating with third-party applications are among the best we've seen in this report.

There are a few areas where we would like to see improvements made, however. Since our 2022 edition review, administration screens have improved in some areas, by moving them away from the traditional back-end environment and redesigning them in the user-friendly front-end interface. In other areas, the admin screens aren't as intuitive and would benefit from a similar overhaul. In particular, the Akumina Flow module is complex and has a steep learning curve. Akumina says that they will continue to move functionality from the back-end to the front-end in future releases. Other areas where functionality is less rich than in other products are the analytics dashboards and the digital signage solution.

It's worth noting that Akumina relies on the Microsoft ecosystem in order to work, but it does not require SharePoint to deliver intranet pages. The product can be configured to rely on SharePoint for displaying content pages if desired (called a 'headed' delivery) but by default uses SharePoint only as a data service (called a 'headless' delivery). Akumina says that recent customers have consistently opted for the latter approach, and our review is based on the headless delivery model. Businesses that have Microsoft will still make good use of their investment, but without being tied to SharePoint interfaces and approaches.

Overall, Akumina is likely to appeal mainly to large and complex enterprise organisations, as its flexibility and mature features will meet many of their requirements. Smaller businesses can get up and running quickly with an out-of-the-box offering, but the price point for them is high. For those organisations that have the ambition and the resources, Akumina offers a strong proposition to create an integrated digital workplace.

Pricing

PRICE BAND	
250 users	💲💲💲💲
1,000 users	💲💲💲💲
5,000 users	💲💲💲 💲
20,000 users	💲💲💲 💲

These prices are indicative, offering a comparison of the products featured in this report only. Please contact the vendor for a bespoke quote.

PRICING MODEL

Subscription – price band based on number of users.

SPREAD OF COSTS

Fairly evenly spread across three years.

DISCOUNTS

Charities and non-profit organisations, schools and educational institutes, Government / public sector, and multi-year commitments.

PRICE INCLUDES

Akumina Training Subscription, which provides customers with the ability to join both business training (content author and administrative training) and technical training (developer basic and developer advanced) an unlimited number of times throughout the year with up to 20 attendees per training. Akumina runs all trainings on a monthly recurring basis.

Product type
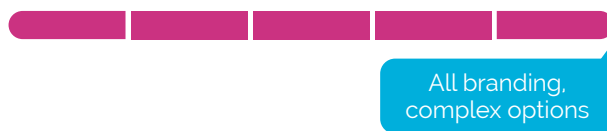
Majority ready-to-run

Branding opportunities

All branding, complex options

Base systems

Fully standalone	Requires SharePoint	Optionally works with SharePoint	Other*

*Akumina requires Microsoft in order to operate, however, businesses can choose whether the platform is positioned on top of SharePoint or separately.

Sectors

Accountancy, banking and finance	Energy and utilities	Engineering and manufacturing	Healthcare	Retail

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ATLAS

☕ **Good Morning, Jacqueline! It's Friday.** The weekend is in sight!

☀ SPRINGFIELD ⌖
75°
HI: 82° | LO: 62°

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Akumina Cares Team Supports Local Food Drive

Sed ut perspiciatis unde omnis iste natus error sit voluptatem accusantium

JAN 29, 2020 | 👍 388   💬 24   👁 623

5 MIN READ

Akumina Cares Food Drive | Fanning's Five: Our CEO's Insights | New Inclusion Resources | Can You Spot the Dirty Money? | Take the Inclusion Challenge | Teaching Kids About Money | Ou...Ge...

📅 **CALENDAR**

— TODAY —

Meet the e-Signature Center of Excellence (CoE)
Springfield, Skype
TODAY

What is Society 185?
Skype
TODAY–NOV 16   2 DAYS LEFT

Focus "No Diet" Program
Skype
TODAY–NOV 19   3 DAYS LEFT
REGISTRATION OPEN

— UPCOMING —

2019 Holiday Toy Drive
Springfield, Enfield
NOV 21, DEC 12

Competencies Are Cool
Springfield, Enfield, Skype
DEC 3, 16
REGISTRATION OPENS NOV 20

🔖 **FAVORITE APPS & LINKS**

RSA	ARIBA	Jira	W	Confluence NEW	🍴
ARCHER	ARIBA	JIRA	WORKDAY	CONFLUENCE	MENU

VIEW/EDIT ALL APPS & LINKS ›

⋯ **WORKING AT MASSMUTUAL**

Vacation Time

REMAINING TIME
98hrs unused
64hrs unscheduled
135.5hrs*

REQUEST TIME OFF

Number assumes you will work until 12/31/2020
Last updated 3/10/2020

Support Tickets

2
Open Support Tickets

👍 ❶ AWAITING YOUR APPROVAL

SEE SUPPORT TICKET(S)

Last updated 9/20 at 2:20pm ET

Next Pay Day

10 days
until next pay (9/15)

VIEW PAY INFO

🍱 **LUNCH MENU**

VIEW LUNCH MENU

the hive
📰 **Classifieds**
SELL | FIND | CONNECT

GO TO THE CLASSIFIEDS

💲 **EMPLOYEE DISCOUNT**

Disney **Magic Kingdoms**

SEE MORE DISCOUNTS

📷 **CAUGHT ON CAMERA**

Photo by Maria De Leon

COMPANY AND PRODUCT

Company details

Company
Akumina

ISO 27001 certified
Yes

Data residency
Akumina's SaaS cloud is built on Microsoft Azure and is deployed in 12 global Azure regions around the globe and each Akumina customer may choose from any of these.

Company founded
2015

Product launched
2015

Typical client size
Akumina's average customer size is 13,000 employees.

Largest deployment so far
Akumina's largest deployment is for 256,000 employees across 80 countries.

Customers
Clients include: GSK, MassMutual, Boston Red Sox, Banner Healthcare, ING, ConocoPhillips, CDPQ, Schneider Electric, BP, Keurig Dr Pepper

Partner locations
USA, UK, Ireland, India, Canada, Netherlands, Singapore, Mexico, Australia, Japan, Germany

Company locations
Nashua, NH (HQ), USA, Canada, UK, India, Bosnia, Brazil

Product and technical details

Name of product
Akumina

Deployment

Client on-premises	Client private cloud	Microsoft Azure	Amazon Web Services	Vendor-hosted	Microsoft 365 tenant	Other

Client data encrypted

In transit only	In transit and at rest	At rest only

Authentication supported

Entra ID	ADFS	Okta	Open ID	Oauth	G Suite	Other*

*SiteMinder, EmpowerID, Azure B-to-C

App deployment

Google Play store	Apple store	MDM	MAM	Other

Accessibility
WCAG 2.1 AA compliant

Document library sources integrated

Box	Dropbox	Google Drive	SharePoint	OneDrive	Other*

*NetDocs, MFile

Optional integrated enterprise search engines

Coveo	Elastic	IBM	Lucidworks	Microsoft	Mindbreeze	Sinequa	Other*

*BA Insight, Autonomy

User interface multi-language

Pre-configured	Editable	Right to left script supported	Other*

*Akumina ships with its interface fully translated into English, Spanish, German and French and additional languages can be added on a per customer basis.

Content multi-language

Machine translation for publishers	Machine translation for end users	Editable machine translation for publishers	Manual creation for publishers	Right to left script	Other*

*Double byte languages

Set-up and support

Set-up process for new clients

Installation of Akumina for a new customer is simple point-and-click and then customers will determine what type of deployment they want for their MVP. Customers will start in one of three approaches to delivering their new intranet on the platform. Those three starting places are what Akumina refer to as 'Express', 'Plus' and 'Custom'. 'Express' is an initial 'deployment of Akumina as a pure IPS leveraging out of the box templates & designs. This is usually done in conjunction with Akumina's customer success team. 'Plus' builds on the foundation and introduces a UI and UX process where a personalised / custom UI and UX is created and implemented on top of the core Akumina IPS foundation. This is usually done with an Akumina design partner. 'Custom' is almost always led by a partner and is more of a start from scratch approach – leveraging a lot of the out-of-the-box capabilities but not necessarily using any pre-defined scaffolding. This is usually done with a global Akumina SI.

Current version
6.1 (August 2023)

Product updates
As a SaaS application, there are frequent updates, however, there are typically three big new feature release updates per year.

Product update process
For SaaS customers, Akumina rolls out SaaS updates to the non-production cloud for testing and sandboxing, and approximately four weeks later those updates are deployed to the production cloud. For self-host customers, they can choose when to do the updates on their own cloud running Akumina. Note, Akumina does not force new features into a customer's experience, rather, makes them available for use by the customer, should they decide to use them.

Reverse-out options
Should a customer decide to end their subscription term with Akumina, the migration process is quite easy because of how their platform is architected. Akumina does not store managed content, metadata, digital assets and files, the search index, site information, permissions, and security groups.

Technical support

Email support	Phone support	Chat support	Online portal	24/7 support	Office hours only

User community
Akumina has several customer communities. The first is the online Akumina Community site, this site encompasses all of their documentation, user guides, how-to videos and more. There is a complete knowledge base associated with the community site so that customers can self-serve with information and tool tips inside of the platform. Adjacent to the Community site is Akumina's GitHub site that delivers developer documentation, code samples and technical approaches and their Swagger site that delivers all of their documented APIs for a customer's use. Additionally, Akumina has a Customer Advisory Board (CAB) that meets three or four times per year to review and direct the Akumina roadmap, as well as showcase customer deployments and functionality. The CAB is responsible for approximately 50% of their ongoing product roadmap development and maturation.

Voice of the vendor

Akumina says: "The Akumina EXP enables enterprise employees to do their best work in a vibrant and connected digital workplace experience. With over 7 million active daily users all over the globe, Akumina empowers communications, human resources & IT professionals to deliver personalized digital experiences to their workforce on any device, in any language and at any time.

Akumina customers are focused on creating and maintaining an award-winning modern intranet experience and/or digital employee hub that drives increased communication across the business, improved overall employee engagement, and drives dramatic gains in employee productivity – enabling an enterprise's entire workforce to do their job better, faster and easier."

Voice of the customer

What customers appreciate most about Akumina are the enterprise-level features to customise the software and to integrate with other applications. "The ability to customise the platform with your own design and user experience" is key for one user, while another praises "the ability to integrate with a variety of data sources". The targeting features of Akumina are also mentioned: "We particularly like the 'Persona' functionality, which allows us to create a targeted experience, meeting employees where they are." Another customer is "excited about the personalisation, content targeting and social engagement". Overall, customers appreciate that Akumina offers more than just the standard intranet features: "They have a base intranet offering with all the communications and collaboration features you would expect, but you also have a framework where you can customise experiences and provide deep integrations into your other enterprise systems."

There are a couple of areas where customers would like to see improvements. One area is that of AppManager, the back-end administrator tool, where one customer is looking for "more thorough documentation of using apps in the AppManager and a more robust user community". Some clients want to see the mobile experience improved and want "more flexibility to configure what's shown to a mobile user versus a desktop user". Also, while customers appreciate the integration framework of Akumina, they want to see better support for developers: "Integrations within the product need a better way for developers to test and debug their code in a non-production instance. Currently this is not an efficient process for technical teams and requires working with Akumina support." Finally, we noted that many customers are still running older versions of the product and we received some improvement suggestions for the upgrade process: "A clear upgrade path with a technical roadmap" would be helpful for one customer, and another would like to see Akumina add new features "without major overhauls for existing customers".

The experience of working with Akumina is overall very positive. "The Akumina support team goes above and beyond to ensure our needs are met" said one customer, and another added that "Akumina are fantastic partners who provide quality support". One customer has some reservations and told us that "implementation of the base product was easy but customisation was difficult to implement", while another customer said "for the most part, the experience has been good" but that there were some issues around forced platform upgrades: "It would be nice to see Akumina commit to adding new features without rendering the existing platform obsolete." Overall, though the sentiment is positive, and the spirit of partnership is praised: "We have had a very good experience working with Akumina. They have been true partners in our journey to build an intranet to support our global organisation. We have access and collaboration with all executive leadership for support, consulting, and product."

SCENARIOS & SCORES

Please see the Scenarios below for more detail on each of these.

SCENARIO AND SCORE	KEY BENEFITS	IMPROVEMENTS / CONSIDERATIONS
4+ **1. User Experience & Visual Appeal**	Highly flexible user interface. Many options to create a distinct visual experience.	Multitude of options may be overwhelming for less digitally savvy customers (and their employees).
4+ **2. Publishing & Communications Management**	Intuitive content creation process, helped by useful editorial tools. Flexible content targeting.	Solution for digital signage is available but basic.
4+ **3. Community & Engagement**	Akumina Spaces provide excellent features for discussion, engagement, and gamification.	Wellbeing and engagement features are built using Akumina Flow, which is a complex tool with a steep learning curve.
4+ **4. Integrations & Services (Including M365)**	Strong integration with external applications, through a variety of approaches.	ServiceHub requires technical knowledge.
3.5+ **5. Information Finding & Search**	Visually attractive search results page. Intuitive integration of federated search results.	The org chart is limited to a simple hierarchy view.
3.5+ **6. Administrator Experience**	Strong multilingual support to meet the needs of large multinational organisations.	The back-end administration tools are complex and less intuitive than the front-end interface.
2.5+ **7. Analytics**	Visually attractive set of standard dashboards.	Information is less rich than other products in this report, or requires customisation.
3.5+ **8. Mobile & Frontline Support**	Range of options are available to enrol frontline workers. Navigation and overall experience can be simplified for mobile.	Some desktop-oriented widgets are less intuitive on mobile.
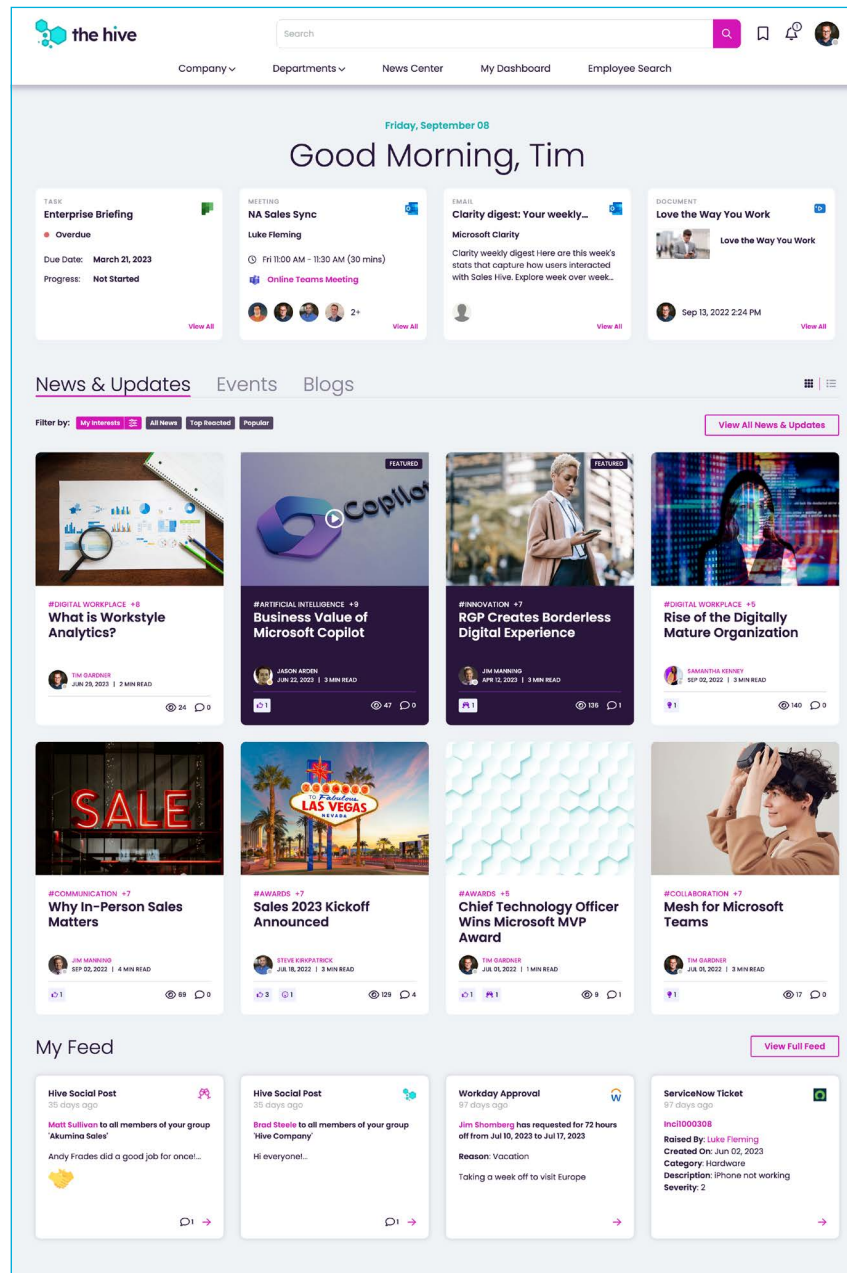
*In this design example, sales news articles and documents
are displayed using a card-based look-and-feel.*

Akumina is an attractive and flexible platform that gives administrators many possibilities to create a highly customised look and feel. While most intranets begin as an out-of-the-box 'Akumina foundation site', all aspects of design and user experience can be controlled by in-house experts where wanted, or by an Akumina partner where assistance is needed. Akumina comes with a rich library of widgets that can be configured in numerous ways and display information differently, as illustrated in the screenshots. End users too can configure many elements of their experience, such as widgets on the home page to display their tasks or surface other relevant information.

The product's flexibility extends to the navigation and how it is configured. Customers have a choice between a simple top-level mega menu, or a menu bar on the left with descriptions under the links, as shown in the screenshot below. Bolder menu layout options, such as those that feature an image or promoted content, would be a nice addition. Navigation is set up by an authorised administrator in the front-end user interface. Menu items are audience targeted and security trimmed based on Personas (see Scenario 2), potentially giving one user a very different experience from a colleague.

In this alternative design example, widgets display information as a list.
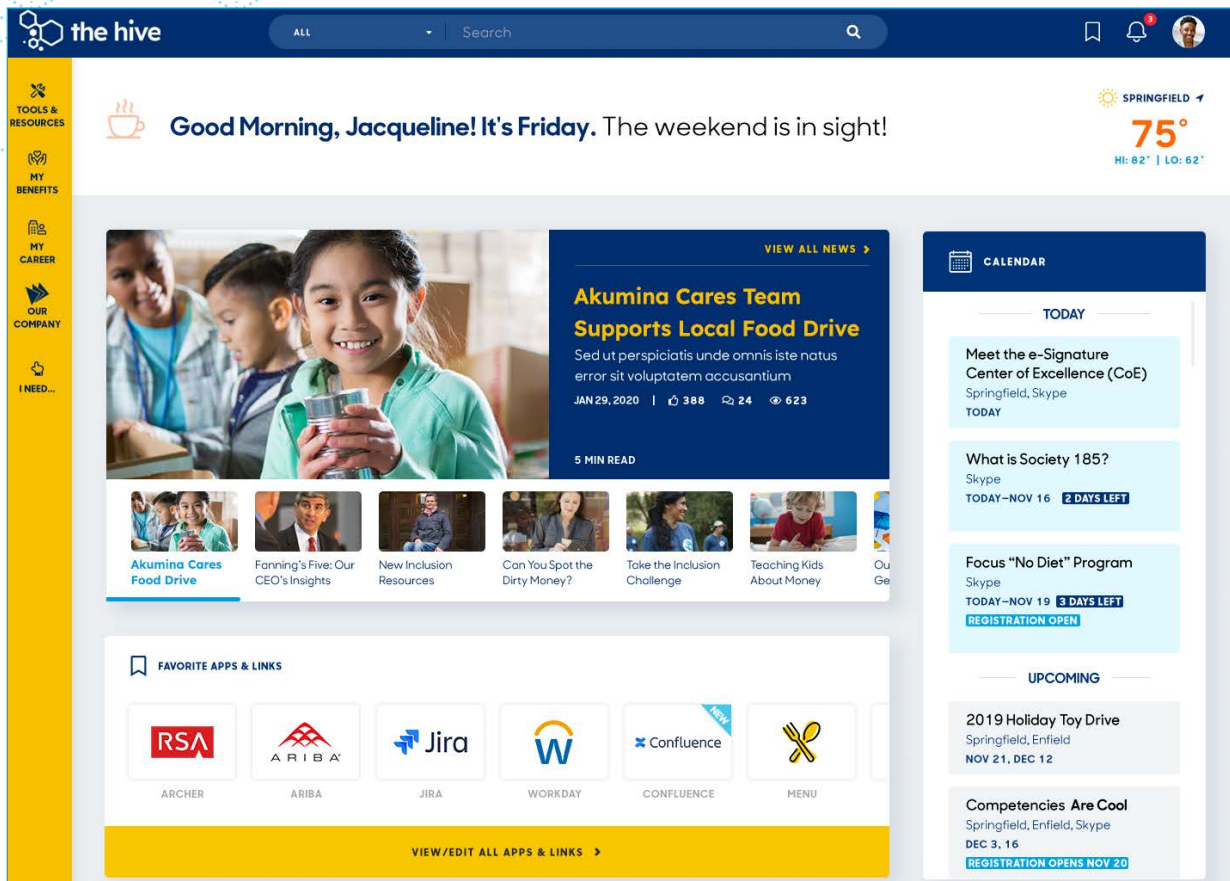
In this example, news is displayed in a carousel and navigation sits on the left.
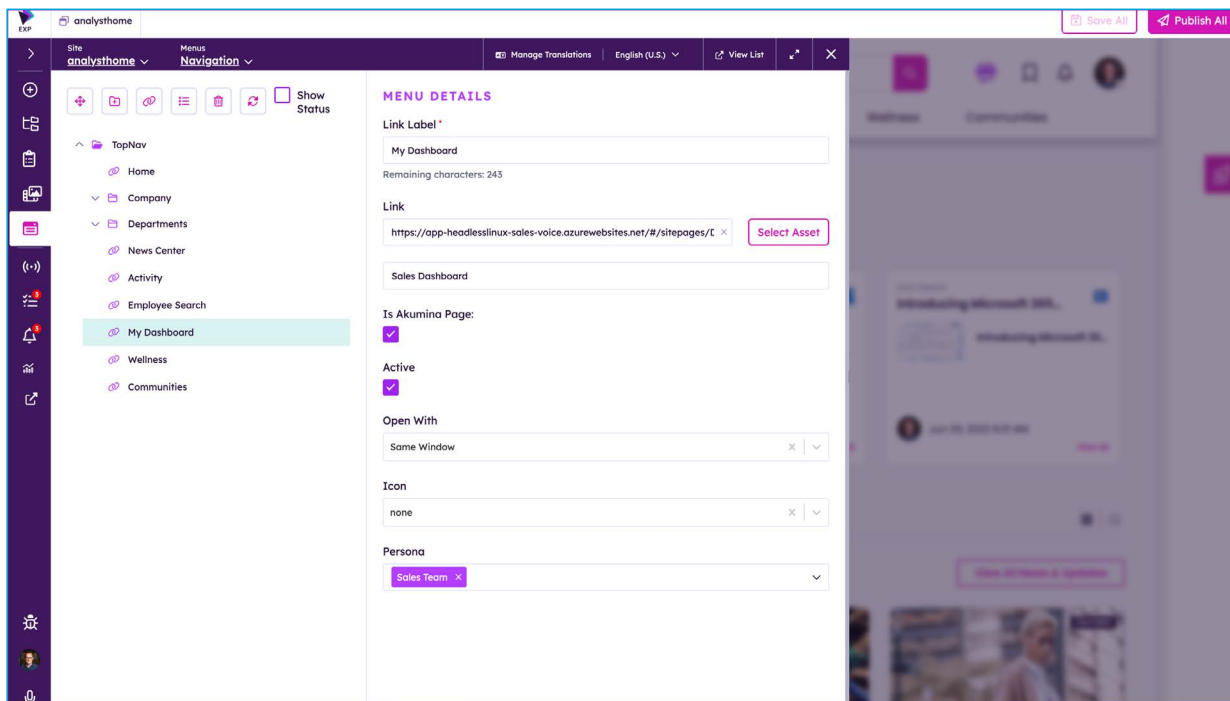
*Navigation is configured by authorised admins and can be targeted
to a particular audience such as the Sales Team.*

The user interface offers different ways for employees to stay on top of their to-do list. A centralised notification system brings messages from across the product together under a bell icon. Notifications from external systems, such as a task in Workday or an updated ticket in ServiceNow, are also accepted and integrated. We especially like the 'me-bar' widget with personalised action cards, such as an overdue task from Planner or an upcoming meeting from Outlook, sitting prominently on the home page as a strip of cards just below the welcome message. There is also an activity stream called 'My Feed' where cards surface calls to action coming from various applications. This works particularly well on mobile devices, where it turns into a social media-style feed. Caution and thoughtful design will be required though when introducing these various features, as there is a potential for overlap.

Branding is another area where the product's flexibility allows administrators to build intranets that look very different from customer to customer. When installing a foundation site, a default theme is applied, but this can be adapted and expanded later. Different site templates can be applied to regional or departmental sites, or to create a site for a sub-brand within a multi-brand organisation. Akumina says that custom designed sites often start with an InVision or an Adobe XD design before being brought to life within the product. We were shown some attractive examples from Akumina customers that show great diversity in the types of designs that can be achieved, either with the help of a partner or by clients that have the technical skills in-house.

Overall, Akumina provides an attractive set of capabilities. It's a mature product that offers a lot of choices that might overwhelm less digitally savvy users. Admins can introduce online help for people to get used to the platform, and the front-end interface for content creation (see Scenario 2) will be intuitive for most knowledge workers. Still, digitally mature organisations will certainly get the most out of the product's features.

Users can stay on top of their tasks thanks to a notification panel and a personalised 'me-bar' that sits prominently on the home page under the welcome message.
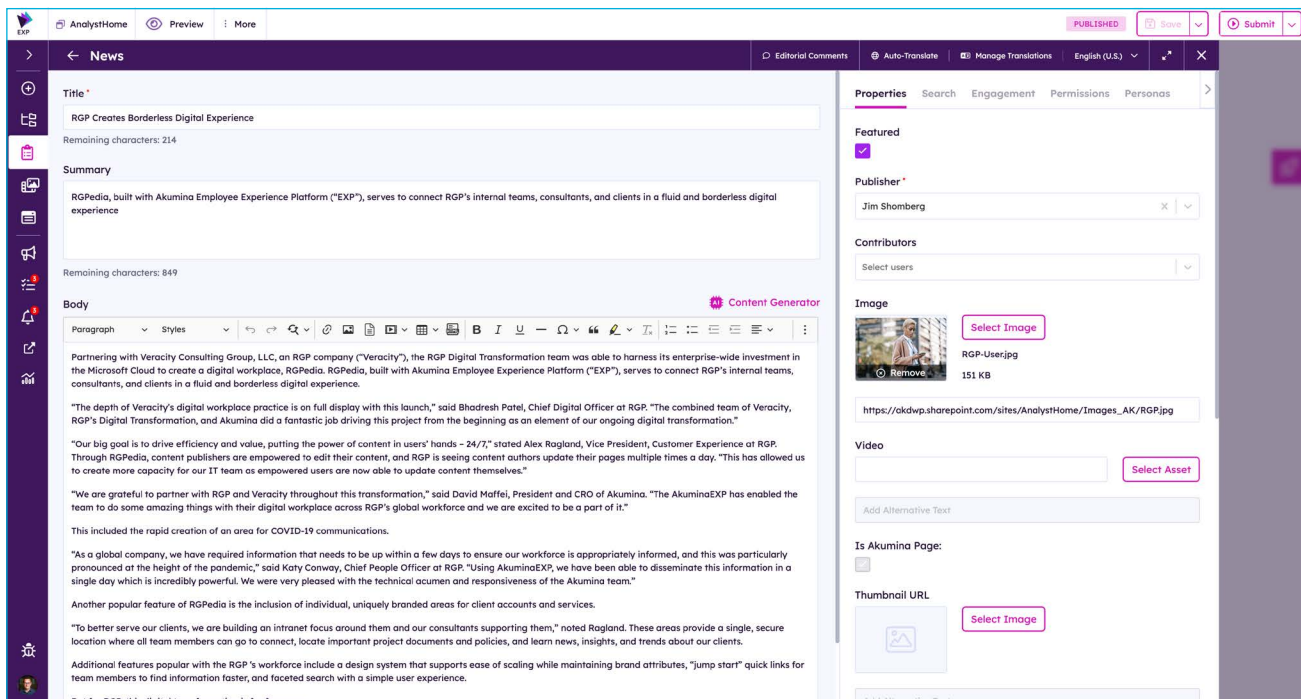
Authors use an intuitive template to create content and add appropriate metadata.

Akumina's content creation and publishing features are an area of strength and have improved since last year's review. All functionality is available in the front end of the product and has an intuitive, contemporary look and feel; see Scenario 6 for more about admin functionality related to content creation.

When creating a new 'message', content authors will select a message type, which determines several preconfigured options, such as the layout of widgets on the page and the approval process that the message needs to go through. Experienced content authors can be given full freedom to control the layout of the article, while others will follow an intuitive template to create the body of the story and set appropriate metadata. News stories can be flagged as featured, publication and archive date fields are available, and tags are easily added. Appropriate tags are suggested automatically thanks to an AI-based integration with Azure Text Analytics. Creation of static reference pages follows a similar approach. Depending on permissions, authors may be confined to work within a predefined page layout or may have the freedom to adapt the layout and change the configuration of the widgets.

As part of the content creation process, there is also a useful but basic integration with generative AI solutions, either directly with OpenAI or via Microsoft's offering in Azure. There is a ChatGPT integration that gives authors a simple interface with a prompt window and a button to insert the generated text into the body of the news article for further manual editing. An integration with DALL-E to generate images is similarly based on a prompt window and an insert button. We find the approach useful but less sophisticated than we've seen in other products in this report, especially because it puts the burden on the author to come up with an appropriate and detailed prompt, without options such as tone or length.
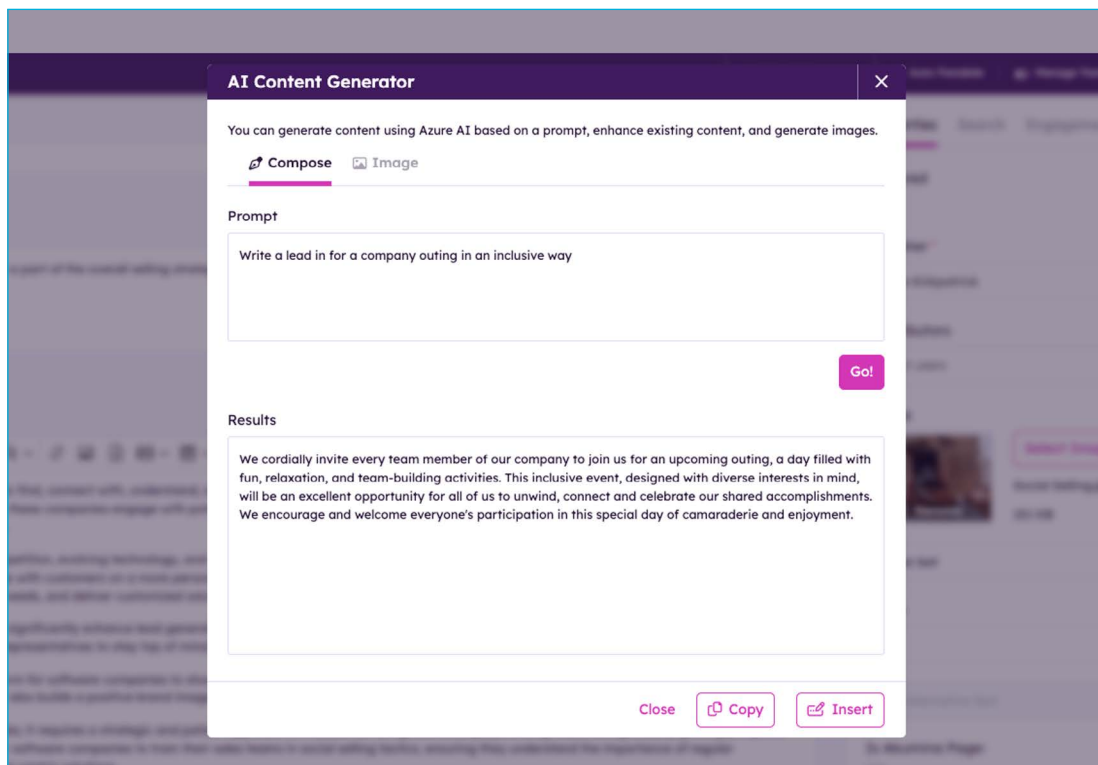
Integration with OpenAI to compose text and create images.
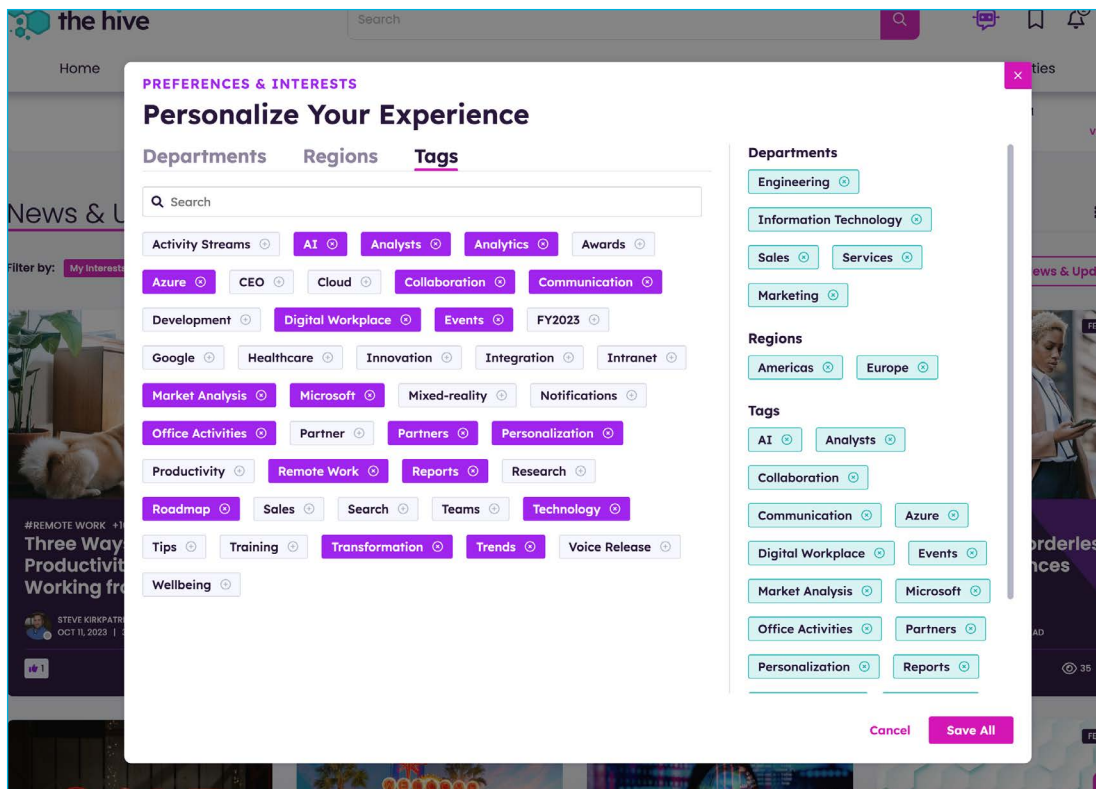
Users can personalise the content that will be displayed to them.

Akumina includes the concept of 'Personas', which are target audience groups set up by administrators. Personas are created in advance in the back-end (see Scenario 6); there is no option to define them on the fly as part of the content creation process. Personas are flexible though and are built using profile fields, so for instance a 'new hires' group can be created for employees that have been with the organisation for less than six months. This makes it easy to target news articles to the right people based on their profile data. The product also includes an extensive system of tagging and taxonomies to help publishers categorise content. End users can use these tags to personalise which content they want to see. For instance, they may opt in to see content from other departments or regions than their own.

Functionality around news scheduling and management has improved since our last review. There is an editorial calendar to help publishers manage the publication process, where those with permissions to the calendar will see everything. There is an intuitive Kanban-style board which Akumina calls 'Content Lanes' and which allows editors to drag and drop articles into the correct status. There is also a more traditional news centre with an overview in list form of all articles. Behind the scenes, Akumina's flow engine enables customised approval flows.

Akumina's 'Content Lanes' offer drag-and-drop functionality to move content items from one status to another.

Urgent and crisis communication is handled well through dedicated 'broadcast' messages. These are managed separately from news articles and include a range of specific delivery channels. For instance, it is possible to have alert messages appear as a banner, as a popup message upon login, as an email, or an SMS message. A nice feature of broadcast messages is that they can be generated through voice commands. We can see how this will be useful, especially on a mobile phone in a crisis situation where a short message needs to go out urgently.

Communicating across channels is enabled in different ways. News stories can be shared in MS Teams, while broadcast messages can be pushed out via email and SMS. Akumina also offers a comprehensive newsletter capability. Newsletters are created using configurable templates that editors can brand and fine-tune to meet their needs, for instance by adding a welcome header with a logo, and a footer section. Content items, such as last week's top news stories, are added either manually or automatically. There are also some nice supporting features such as a preview of the newsletter on different device types, and the option to send a test message to oneself.

Where users can't access the intranet on their device, digital signage and kiosks are supported via Personas, although the management of the digital signage screens is not integrated into Akumina and so is a more limited option when compared to other platforms. Finally, users may share news into personal social media channels; news articles are set up and approved for this purpose during the article creation process.

Newsletters are created by adding content items into the body of the template.
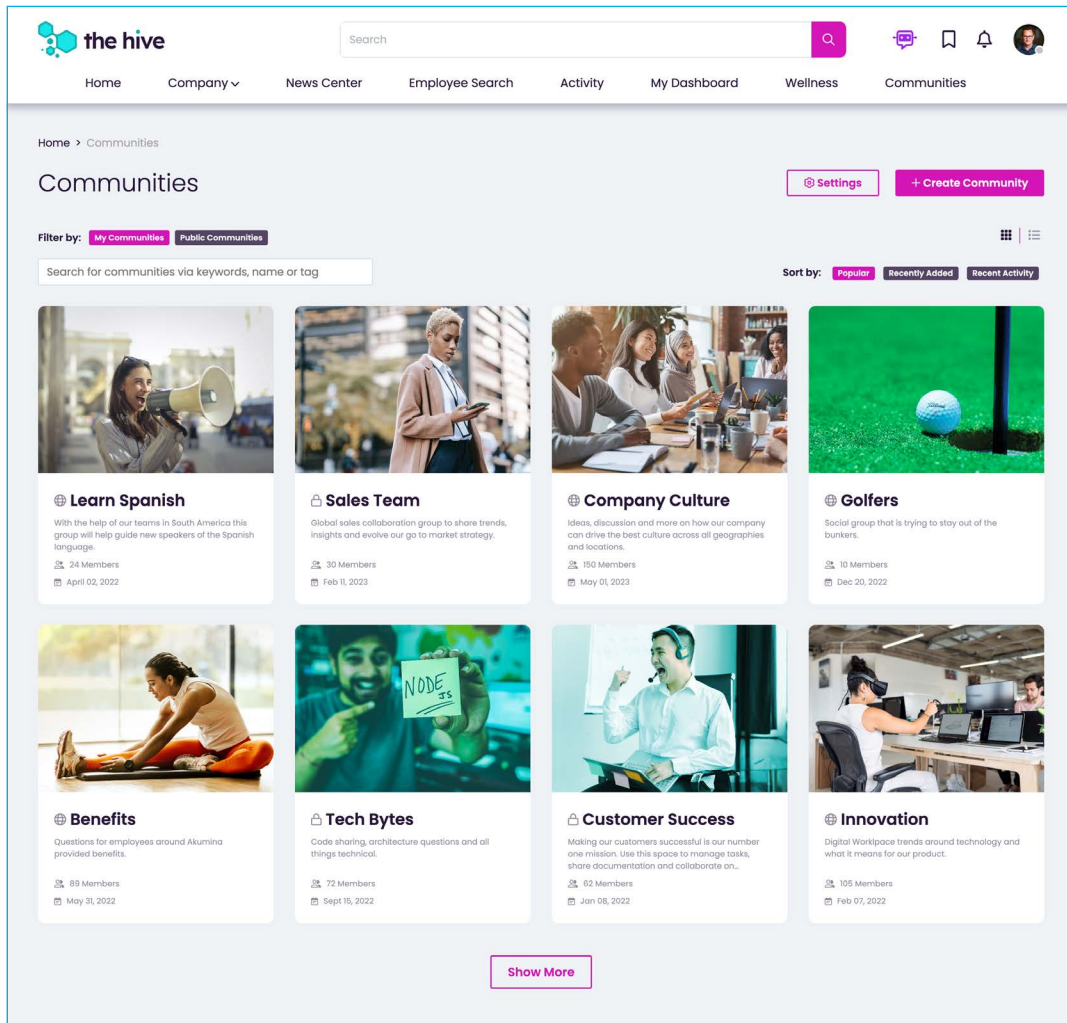
An overview of all available communities, with filtering options.

Akumina's flexibility stands out in this scenario, giving admins tools to build relevant and attractive community and engagement areas. Community collaboration is handled well through 'Spaces' which are Akumina's take on themed multipurpose workspaces. Authorised users can provision knowledge spaces, social spaces, and spaces for discussing client issues or for training purposes. These spaces can be open, for anyone to follow, or closed, just for selected members of a group or Persona, or selected individuals. While the provisioning process adds standard widgets, depending on the chosen type of space, admins have a good selection of additional widgets to choose from to then build the space appropriately. Widgets include discussion boards, an ideation area, an integrated Viva Engage feed, featured news, videos, blogs, or highlighted experts. The functionality is comprehensive, and the widgets are intuitive, but there are still some areas for improvement. For instance, discussion boards offer basic options to reply to questions but do not include richer interactions, and the ideation feature could be further enhanced to allow richer reactions and comments on ideas beyond simple upvoting and downvoting.

Akumina includes a range of features for commenting and reacting to news articles and other content. Commenting allows users to create posts and to react to the posts of colleagues in a threaded conversation. Users may report comments as inappropriate where needed, and admins can review to take action and potentially remove a post. There is also an option to have comments pre-approved by a moderator before they are published. If users don't want to leave a comment they may react instead. Reactions go beyond simple 'likes'; icons and the named reactions can be configured by an admin, making it appropriate for the business. The product supports gamification features, such as earning badges based on activity, and there is also a feature that allows users to nominate a colleague for an award, linked with a nominee dashboard and review process.
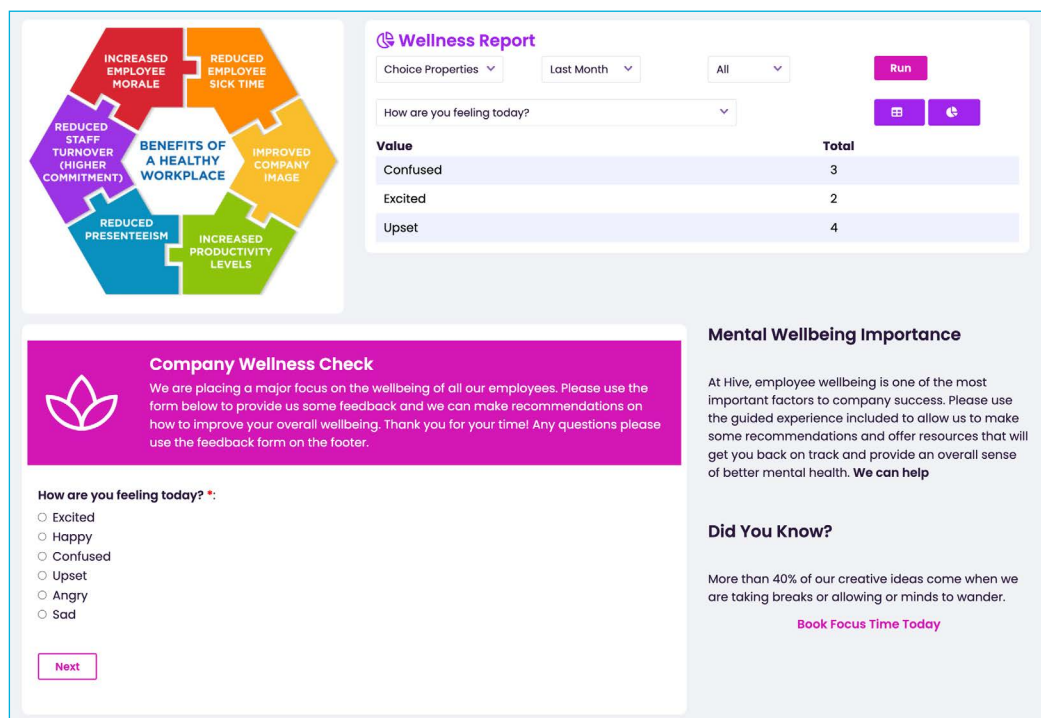
Admins can choose to add simple polls to pages, which return results to users as they are completed. There is also a basic feedback form accessible from the bottom of every page. Alternatively, for more sophisticated use cases, there is Akumina Flow, a rich form building and workflow automation tool that will be useful in a range of scenarios. It's a complex tool, however, with a significant learning curve to master its rich capabilities and therefore not within everyone's reach. We would prefer to see richer functionality for collecting feedback and polling out of the box.

The Akumina Flow engine powers some interesting and well-executed examples of wellbeing and engagement features. The tool combines workflows with micro-applications and a processing engine, giving admins the ability to build an experience that guides users through several steps and actions.

An example of a community, with an integrated ideation area.

As a first example, Akumina showed us a simple wellbeing checkup. On a content page in the Wellbeing section, a widget presents a simple poll that asks, 'How are you feeling today?'. People are encouraged to complete the poll as frequently as they can, but the poll is restricted to once a day at most. Users click on their chosen answer and are presented with the next step depending on their response. An 'excited' or 'happy' response could encourage them to browse a discussion board and get involved in a discussion with a colleague. A 'confused' reply could recommend a meditation video to help them refocus. 'Upset', 'angry' and 'sad' responses may lead to a qualifying question, as to whether it is work-related or not. If related to a feeling of being under-trained, the flow could present a list of relevant courses coming from an integrated Learning Management System.

Based on the answer provided in the quick poll, different actions or follow-up questions are presented.

Another example is onboarding an individual into the business. New hires will be shown an alternative home page that is targeted to them through a 'new starter' Persona. Various widgets that ask questions or present information are combined into different steps that the new hire goes through. Steps may include watching a video on corporate culture, completing profile information, or order hardware and software through a link to an integrated ticketing system such as ServiceNow. Their manager optionally receives updates as they complete the steps.

New hires are presented an alternative home page that take them step by step through the onboarding process.

Onboarding steps may include watching a video on company culture and security, or capturing specific interests.
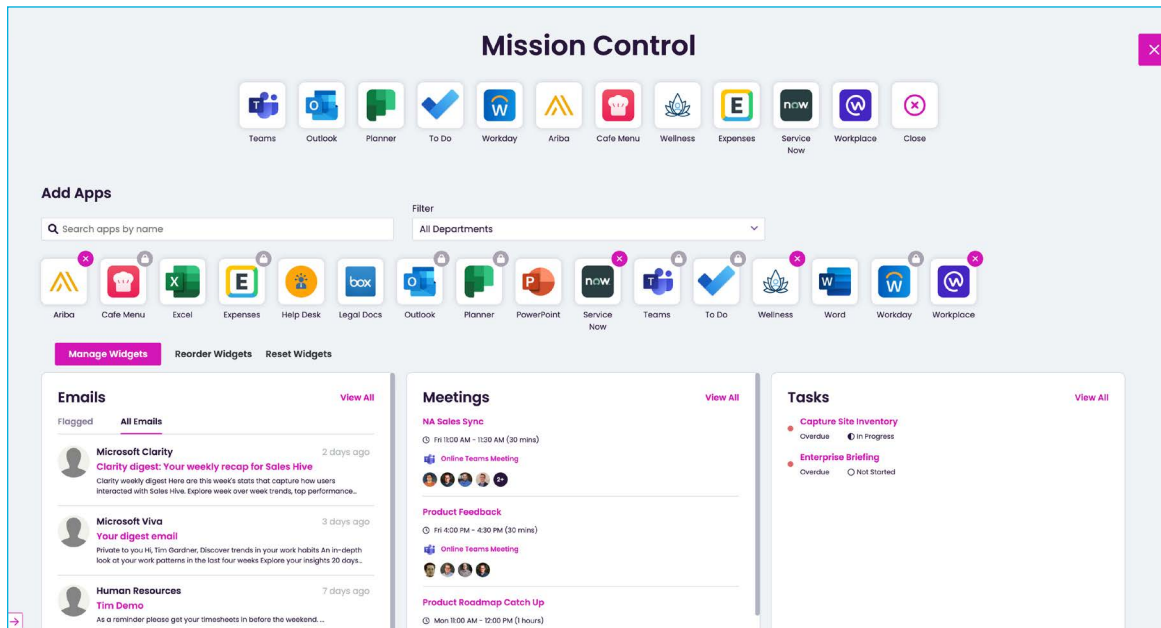
Mission Control includes a library of links that users can add and configure themselves.

Integration with third-party systems is an area of strength for Akumina. A wide range of integrations are available out of the box, with different ways to present them to users. More applications can be integrated using the product's own connector framework called Akumina ServiceHub. This is inevitably a tool that requires technical expertise, and feedback in the 'Voice of the Customer' section suggests that Akumina's support processes for testing new connectors could be improved. Alternatively, standard Microsoft approaches via Microsoft Graph or using Power Automate are also supported.

The first approach is through 'Mission Control', which can be accessed via a small, persistent rocket icon that opens a personalised dashboard with a launchpad of icons to popular systems or tools. The links make use of single sign-on where available, and can point to business tools such as ServiceNow, frequently used pages like the canteen menu, or in-built forms. Icons are configurable, so could be labelled 'ServiceNow' or 'Raise an IT ticket', and core links can be locked in place by admins. Users can then add, remove, or change the order of icons, with additional icons stored in categories for easy searching and filtering.

A second approach sees business systems integrated via widgets, providing a more in-depth experience where users interact with a source system via the Akumina interface. Widgets can include activities, such as requesting time off in Workday, or surface information, such as a Salesforce sales pipeline. We particularly like that different widget types can be linked together to display different content when a user interacts with one. In the sales dashboard shown below, when an account name is clicked in one widget (this integration shows recent opportunities from Salesforce) a real-time information feed about the selected company is shown, and case studies are populated from OneDrive. Further down the page, this user can see their expense reports in Expensify and their holiday balance in Workday.

A third integration approach is via an intelligent 'Activity Stream', which gathers content, actions, and notifications from across integrated sources that are presented in stream cards. Cards include simple messages, such as 'a new video has been added to a YouTube channel', or more in-depth capabilities, such as approving an expense request. The stream has an ever-scroll experience for each user, and a splash of most recent cards can be added to a home page. There is also an activity filter where users can activate or deactivate certain types of activities based on personal preferences. The 'Activity Stream' is a separate module within Akumina's offering, but its cost is included in the pricing in this report.

Information in the dashboard is automatically updated when clicking on an account in the pipeline.

Cards with information and actions are displayed alongside the activity filter.

Integration with communication and collaboration tools such as Zoom and Slack is also possible through these same approaches. For instance, cards in the Activity Stream can link to a Zoom meeting or embed content from a Slack channel.

As Akumina relies on Microsoft 365 to work, integrations with Microsoft applications and especially with SharePoint are strong. Akumina uses features of SharePoint, M365 and Azure for content storage, managed metadata, governance, and permissions. The product can be configured to use SharePoint also as a page rendering engine, in which case Akumina content is displayed using the SharePoint framework; Akumina refers to this as a 'headed' deployment. Alternatively, in a 'headless' deployment, pages are displayed independently from SharePoint in an Azure site. In both 'headless' and 'headed' delivery, the product can display any SharePoint content and document libraries in its various widgets. Note though that in 'headed' mode the load times of pages are markedly slower, as SharePoint adds overhead before any content is displayed.

The integration options described earlier also apply to M365 products. The 'Mission Control' dashboard includes widgets that surface recent OneDrive documents, tasks from across Microsoft applications, or upcoming events from an Outlook calendar. MS Teams is integrated in a similar way, offering Teams chat and a list of available Teams within Akumina widgets. The full product can also be made accessible as an app within MS Teams.

With regards to Microsoft Viva, Viva Engage is well supported, with various widgets that display community feeds and a list of followed communities, but other Viva apps are not integrated. There is however the possibility to have data coming from Viva Insights into Akumina's analytics solution; see Scenario 7 for more.

Akumina's Activity Stream includes support for Power Automate connectors. This provides the option to use Microsoft's technology to integrate with third-party applications, as an alternative to Akumina's ServiceHub framework.

There is also an interesting integration with Microsoft's Bot Framework to offer users a chatbot interface. We particularly like the feature whereby the bot will automatically break down longer documents, such as a 'paid time off' policy in the screenshot below, and present individual sections as clickable links, making it easier for employees to digest complex information.

Based on the Microsoft Bot Framework, Akumina Bot breaks down longer documents into digestible chunks.
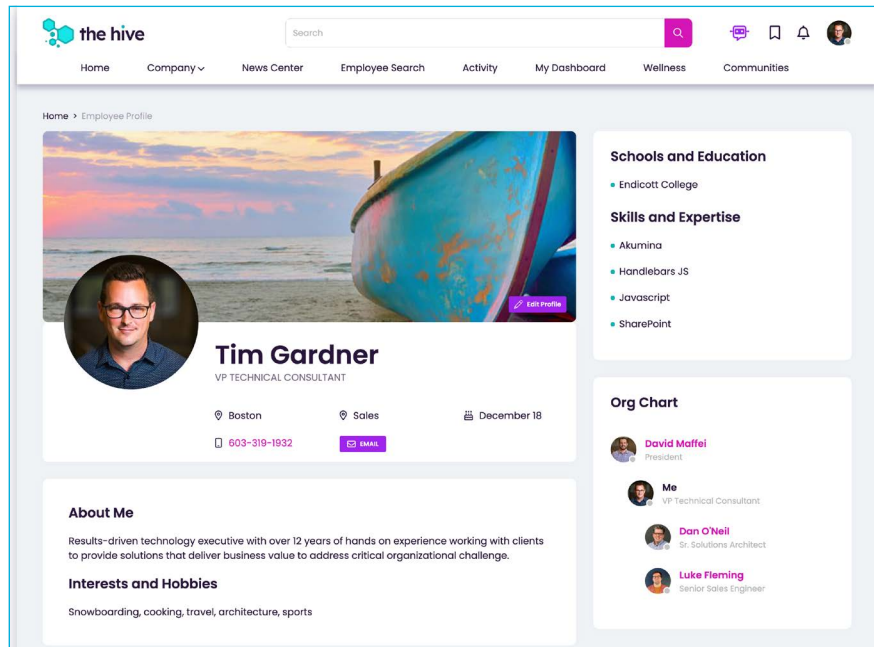
*People profiles are presented in an attractive layout.*

Akumina uses Microsoft Search by default but will integrate with other search solutions an organisation uses. This means that certain aspects of search rely on the source system rather than Akumina, for example promoted results and relevance ranking use the Microsoft functionality by default, while Akumina manages the presentation of results.

As a user types in the search box, they see suggested search terms and results. Alternatively, the search results page shows more, where the standard display is attractive with good icons alongside results to differentiate content types, and with searchable filters to refine results. We like the shortcut menu against each result that allows users to quickly download, open in a new window, share, add to favourites, or provide feedback. Simple search management, such as setting the scope of the search and excluding certain pages from indexing, can be completed via the Akumina admin screens, which are integrated into the AppManager (see Scenario 6). Broader search management configuration is handled in the source search system, so admins will have to switch between environments and make sure that settings are not conflicting.

Information finding is supported in other ways too. Contextual search boxes with filters can be embedded across Akumina, such as in a knowledge area or a news archive. Akumina also integrates with Microsoft's Bot Framework, offering a chatbot interface that answers simple questions and breaks down longer policy documents into digestible chunks (see Scenario 4).

Akumina supports federated search via Microsoft Search and the Graph connectors, or through alternative products such as BA Insight. Search results are presented under different tabs on the search results page. We were shown examples of Teams Chat and a ServiceNow Knowledge Base; the same approach will apply to any Microsoft Graph connector, although some of these come at an extra cost.

Users can search for colleagues by name or keyword in the global search, or within the people directory. Profile pages are attractive, displaying information as tags or free text boxes, although the org chart display is limited to a simple hierarchy. People data can be fed from multiple sources, including Entra ID but also from Workday or SuccessFactors. When a user updates a field, this information can be passed back to the source where wanted.
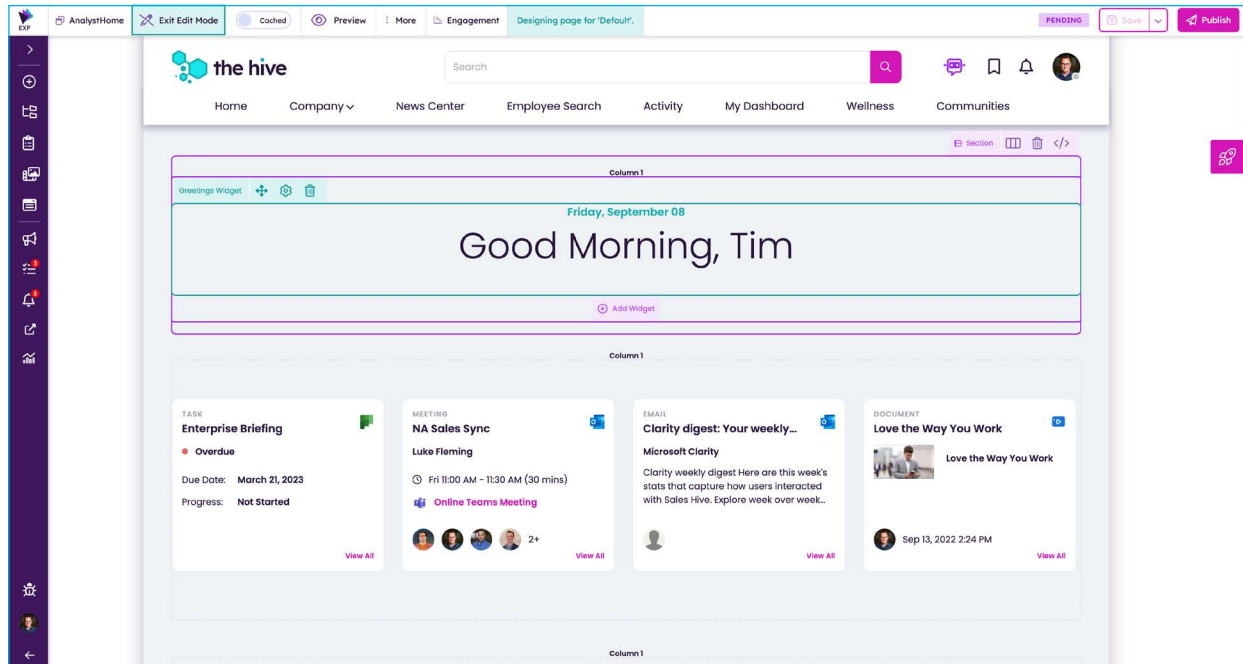
Page layout and widget configuration are handled in a user-friendly, intuitive user interface.

Administration in Akumina is handled in two different places. Management of pages and content is delivered via an intuitive front-end experience, where admins and authorised content editors can create pages and templates, adjust layouts, configure widgets, etc. Other admin functionality is grouped in a more traditional back-end environment called AppManager. Different areas within AppManager are presented as a set of large buttons, opening into more detailed screens, for instance to manage site permissions or to moderate comments. Other functionality included here is a 'Persona Builder', where user segments are created by applying rules to user profile data, and a 'Flow Designer' module where workflows are configured such as the wellness workflow described in Scenario 3.

For life cycle management, publishers see an overview of their content nearing expiry and renew, revise, or archive via a set of personalised dashboards. Expiry warning notifications are also triggered via email, the notification bell, and into the activity stream. These dashboards are part of AppManager, so content editors are exposed to the back-end environment when consulting the reports. We would prefer to see these reports migrated to the user-friendly front-end, giving editors a consistent experience.

Multilingual support is strong. By default, Akumina will display content in the user's preferred language; users can select an alternative from a toggle. Different language versions are stored together with the original content item, and workflows can be set up by Akumina to notify translation publishers if the original is updated. During content creation, an automated translation feature will translate and store the created text in all configured languages. By default, the Microsoft translator service is used, but this can be replaced by another product such as DeepL upon request.

We like the richness of the configuration options, especially in the new front-end experience. In comparison, the back-end experience within AppManager is less attractive, and areas such as the Flow Designer tool are complex and come with a steep learning curve. This sentiment was echoed by customers in the 'Voice of the Customer' section. Akumina say that more functionality is being migrated to the front-end, as evidenced in their analytics offering (see Scenario 7).
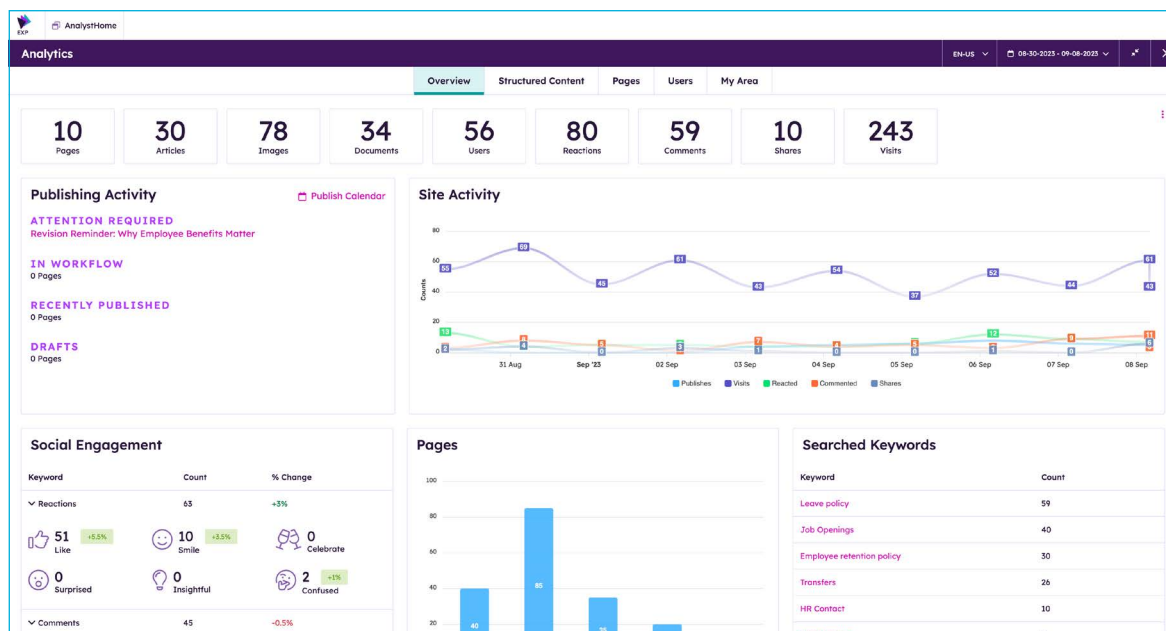
An analytics dashboard showing user activity broken down by region and department.

Behind the scenes, Akumina uses Azure to bring data together from different sources into a single place. In the front-end, these data sources are combined into several intuitive dashboards. Authorised users can adapt the built-in dashboards to their needs by adding or removing widgets or create their own custom dashboards.

The first dashboard focuses on platform-wide analytics. This includes site activity such as number of visitors, number of content items created, and engagement with content. Information can be broken down by date range and by language, which is a useful feature. A search widget shows the top searched keywords, but other search aspects are not covered.

A second dashboard has more information about content relevant to internal communicators, such as news articles. There is a good level of detail about top articles and engagement over time; information can be broken down by device type and by Persona. A similar report is available about static page content, and a final report focuses on user demographics, with a breakdown by region and by department. Reports are intuitive and useful, but we would like to see more insights into channel usage such as the newsletter described in Scenario 2, or a way to track and report on broader communication campaigns. A feature to compare time ranges, such as last week versus the previous week, would be a useful addition.

Mandatory reads are supported by marking content as mandatory with an 'acknowledge' button for users. The publisher can check progress of who has read or not, but there is no feature to remind people.

Overall, we like Akumina's approach to bring the analytics dashboards to the more user-friendly product front-end. More can still be done in terms of breadth and depth of the reports, for instance to have a specific report on usage of Spaces or to present more in-depth search analytics. For customers that want to go beyond these dashboards, Akumina offers the option to integrate with popular analytics tools such as Adobe Analytics. There is also an option to integrate directly with a customer's existing business intelligence software, but this will require significant BI expertise to set up.
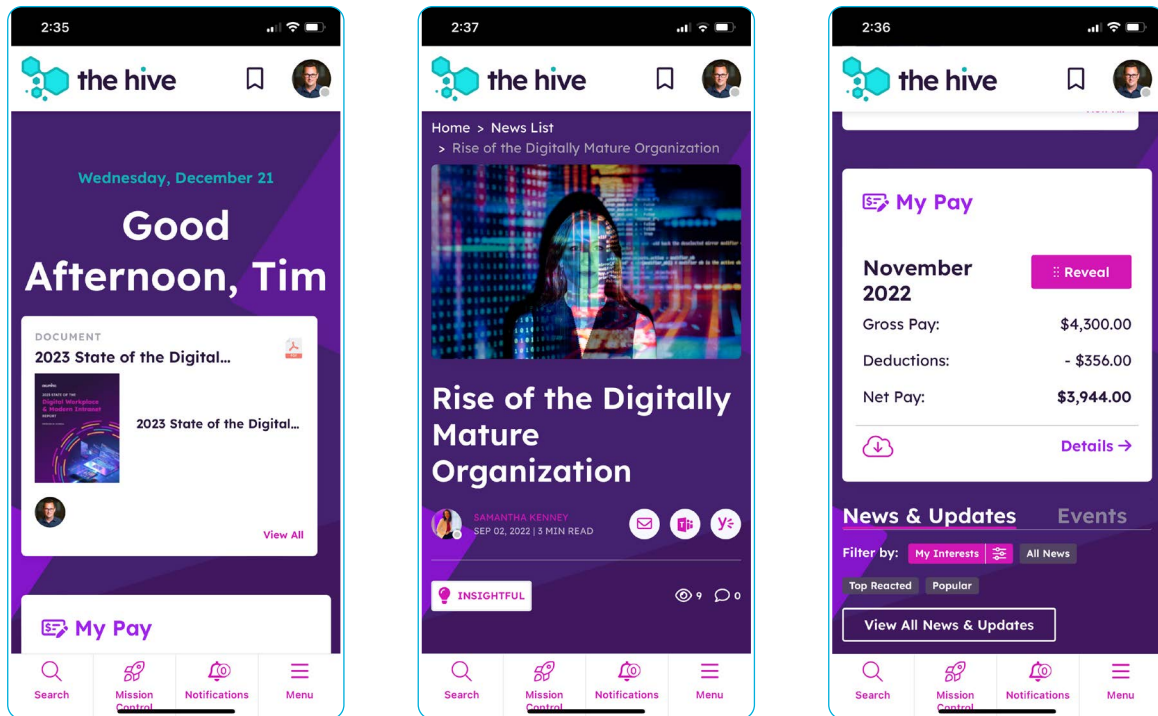
Different screens of the native mobile app, including a pay stub card showing salary information after clicking the 'Reveal' button.

Akumina offers various options to access the product on mobile devices. Even though the product requires SharePoint and M365 centrally to run, employees do not need an M365 license to use it. Next to the responsive site, a native mobile app is available for iOS and Android. A generic version of the app can be downloaded from public app stores, while customers can also choose to deploy a branded version using an MDM or MAM solution or via a private app store. There is flexibility in how employees are onboarded. Entra ID is supported, and employees that only have a registration in a payroll application can get access through a custom authentication form. For users that aren't on any central database, Akumina provides a sign-up form with a configurable background workflow to grant initial access. Biometric authentication is available as a payable add-on.

The native app uses a web view to surface content from the responsive site, while supporting all typical features of a native app including push notifications and biometric access. The app is fully featured and its look and feel is consistent with the desktop version. Access to search, notifications, and 'Mission Control' (see Scenario 4) are conveniently grouped together as icons at the bottom of the screen. Some widgets such as the 'me-bar' work less well because they require horizontal scrolling which is not intuitive. Other features, such as the card-based activity stream mentioned in Scenario 4, work particularly well on mobile.

While there are no Akumina features created solely for mobile, administrators may decide as part of the configuration that certain elements are only appropriate for mobile users. Some features, such as a pay stub display card, are particularly relevant for frontline workers. The voice command interface to create broadcast messages (see Scenario 2) will be used mainly by managers in a mobile scenario.

Administration and design of the app are handled in Akumina's back-end AppManager tool (see Scenario 6). By creating a mobile Persona, admins will target content to mobile users, directing certain features or individual pages to them. Admins may also choose to simplify navigation and overall experience for a mobile view, which is helpful given the potential for the site to be very comprehensive.

THINGS TO BEAR IN MIND

Akumina has grown and evolved over the years into a rich and highly flexible offering without any glaring gaps in functionality. It's a powerful platform that can be made to integrate with a host of external applications, but some technical skills or assistance from Akumina's internal consultants or an Akumina partner will be needed to make the most of the various capabilities.

Administration screens have improved in some areas, by moving them away from the traditional back-end environment and redesigning them in the user-friendly front-end interface. Since our review last year, the analytics area has undergone such a redesign, and the resulting dashboards are attractive, although more could be done to make them richer with more detailed information. In other areas, the admin screens aren't as intuitive and would benefit from a similar overhaul. In particular the Akumina Flow module is complex and has a steep learning curve. Akumina says that they will continue to move functionality from the back-end to the front-end in future releases.

For end-users Akumina offers a sophisticated and considered intranet experience, but for those less digitally savvy it threatens to feel overwhelming. Careful planning is needed (more than with other, simpler products) to introduce the right features on offer, rather than all of them. For less mature and less complex customers, Akumina has an out-of-the-box offering that allows them to get up and running quickly. Note however that Akumina comes at a higher price point, with pricing starting at 500 users minimum for smaller businesses.

Customers choosing Akumina must have Microsoft 365 in place, as the product relies on Graph and other elements in order to work. However, the product supports both a headless (non-SharePoint) and a headed mode for displaying pages. This makes Akumina an unusual blend of being an independent intranet with a vastly different experience to SharePoint, while at the same time being dependent on Microsoft. We believe that the headless model is the superior solution for most customers, and Akumina says that all recent new clients have consistently chosen the headless mode.

Why choose this product

Akumina is a versatile platform that is rich in functionality and highly flexible. It allows organisations to integrate with a range of third-party applications, living up to its promise of being the foundation of a full digital workplace. While there is a dependency on SharePoint and Microsoft 365 for some aspects, there is also enough flexibility to push beyond the constraints of SharePoint and create a highly attractive and personalised experience. The product will mainly appeal to large and digitally savvy organisations that have the ambition and the resources to turn Akumina into a true hub for their digital workplace.

Vendor roadmap
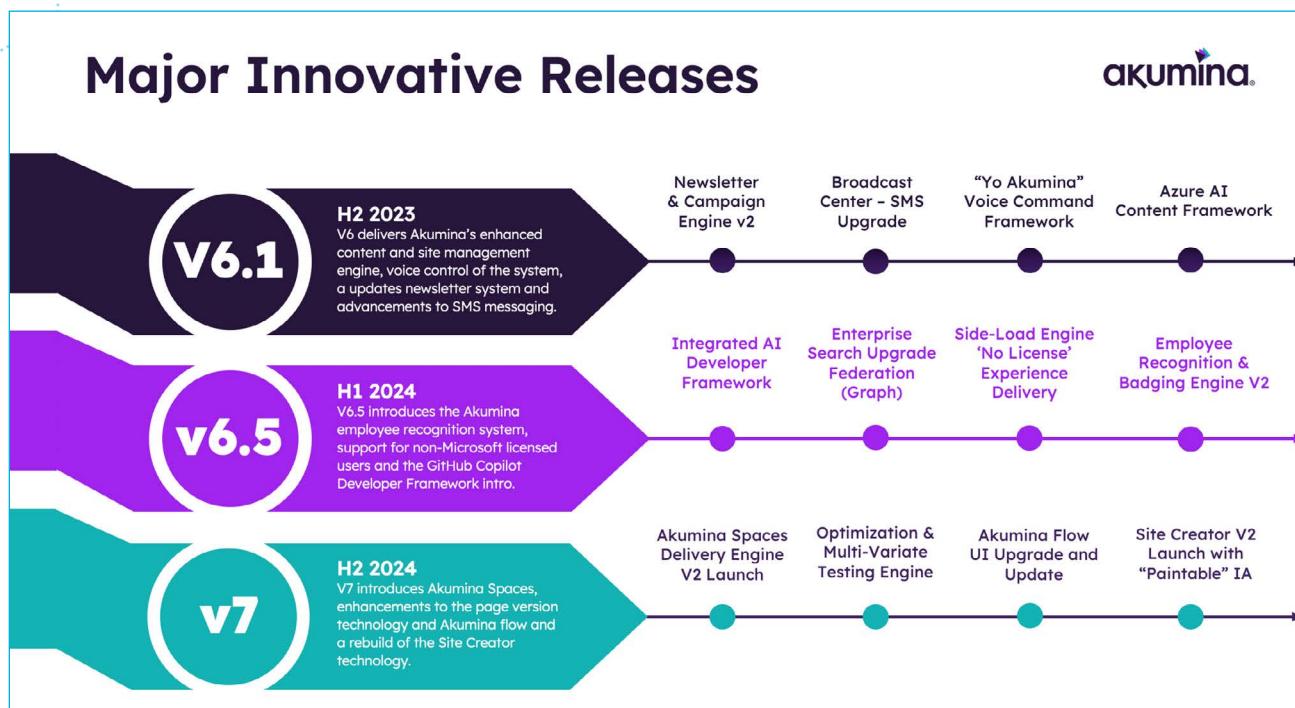
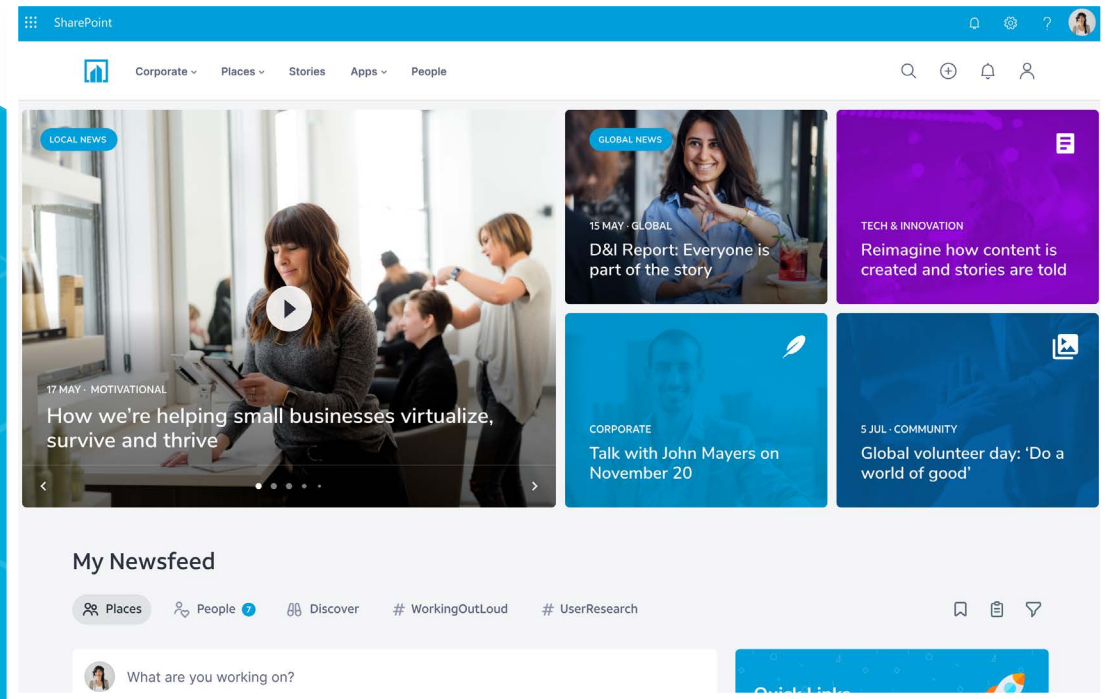*Roadmap image provided by Akumina.*

APPSPACE
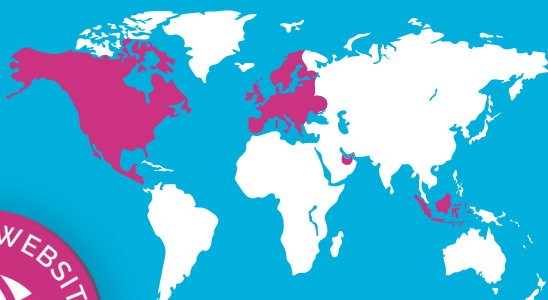
FULLY STANDALONE

REQUIRES SHAREPOINT

OPTIONALLY WORKS WITH SHAREPOINT

FRONTLINE FOCUS

Typical deployment:

10,000 - 50,000 employees

Company locations:

VISIT THE WEBSITE

The product in a nutshell

Appspace Intranet provides sophisticated communication, community and digital workplace integration capabilities. It will appeal to complex, global organisations that put user experience at the fore.

Appspace Intranet, Powered by Beezy owned by Appspace

Appspace Intranet Powered by Beezy (referred to as 'Appspace Intranet' in this report) has been around since 2013 and is owned by Texas-based Appspace, who provide a wide range of digital communication and workplace management tools. The product runs on SharePoint but provides a unique user experience for employees and publishers that is significantly different from standard SharePoint. This is augmented by strong branding and digital workplace integration capabilities, along with comprehensive social collaboration and a decent mobile app.

Communicators and content publishers will appreciate the easy-to-use page creation and editing tools for news articles and reference material. Employees benefit from a dynamic and personalised feed that aggregates relevant news, community updates and activity from connected applications. There is good integration with other Microsoft 365 services, with options for surfacing Appspace content in Teams desktop and mobile. There are also deep integrations with a digital signage product that the vendor offers as a separate platform.

There are some trade-offs with the Appspace approach, however. Standard Microsoft web parts cannot be used alongside Appspace Intranet web parts on the same page for example. Additionally, Appspace Intranet leverages Microsoft services for search, but there is a slightly disjointed experience when people move to the standard Microsoft Search results page.

Appspace Intranet's capabilities will be particularly relevant to large and complex global organisations that have invested in Microsoft 365, but find that the standard SharePoint user experience falls short of what they want to provide for their employees and publishers. Appspace Intranet isn't cheap, particularly for small organisations, but those that have the resources and budget to integrate it with other applications in their digital workplace, will be able to unlock the full potential of the product.

Pricing

PRICE BAND	
250 users	💲💲💲💲
1,000 users	💲💲💲💲
5,000 users	💲💲💲💲
20,000 users	💲💲💲💲

These prices are indicative, offering a comparison of the products featured in this report only. Please contact the vendor for a bespoke quote.

PRICING MODEL

Subscription – price per user per month.

COSTS TYPICALLY

Fairly evenly spread across three years.

DISCOUNTS

Frontline users, Businesses with more than 20,000 users

PRICE INCLUDES

Installation, configuration, licenses, Customer Success Management, training, information architecture development and admin workshops.

Product type

Ready-to-run, installed in hours

Branding opportunities

All branding, complex options

Base systems

Fully standalone	Requires SharePoint	Optionally works with SharePoint	Other

Sectors

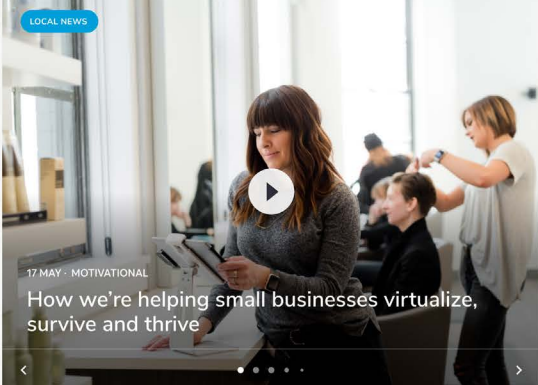| Accountancy, banking and finance	Energy and utilities	Engineering and manufacturing	Public services, government and administration	Science and pharmaceuticals

You may also be interested in...

akumina®

omnia

Powell Intranet

Corporate ⌄   Places ⌄   Stories   Apps ⌄   People

LOCAL NEWS

17 MAY · MOTIVATIONAL
How we're helping small businesses virtualize, survive and thrive

GLOBAL NEWS
15 MAY · GLOBAL
D&I Report: Everyone is part of the story

TECH & INNOVATION
Reimagine how content is created and stories are told

CORPORATE
Talk with John Mayers on November 20

5 JUL · COMMUNITY
Global volunteer day: 'Do a world of good'

My Newsfeed

Places   People 7   Discover   # WorkingOutLoud   # UserResearch

What are you working on?

Chester Johnson
15m ago
To celebrate 150 years of this fine institution existence, we have commissioned a series of photos to celebrate this event.

BARCELONA OFFICE   53   41

Beezy Bot
35m ago via Power Automate

SALESFORCE
John Reinolds requested a 12% discount for this opportunity

Opportunity	Lakewood
Amount	$360000.0
User	10000

Approve   Reject

ONLY YOU (+2)   3

Quick Links
RECOMMENDED   MY LINKS

→ Employee handbook
→ Product Marketing Docs
→ Own your profile
→ Discovere new content & people
→ Request holidays & time off
→ Help us improve

Lizzie Johnston
1h ago
Hi everyone! Please can you help us maximise our social reach by liking and sharing our posts on Linkedin and Twitter?
https://techcrunch.com/2020/08/21/is-business...

Business school the new design school?
People are often surprised when they hear that I earned my master of business administration degree...

TechCrunch

SALES & MARKETING   11   3

Mildred Erickson
1h ago

UX Unplugged: latest mobile trends and research workshop
Join this interactive meetup, open to professional UI/UX designers passionate about this topic. The meeting will see a professional designer explaining in further details the topic of the day

SALES & MARKETING   85   6

Top contributors

Steven Castro
★ 5478 points

Mary Jackson
4828 points

Erik Reynolds
3032 points

Emma Frank
2h ago
Jeremy Cross this is the first draft of the marketing strategy for our new product launch. Please review it and let us know if we can distribute it to the rest of the team.

Product Strategy.pdf
Follow_Up_weekly_repor
Budget_72203_2020.xlsx
Client Proposal.pptx

COMPETITOR ANALYSIS   85   6

Beezy Bot
2h ago

SERVICENOW
Assign incident
New York exchange serves appears to be down, lot of users impacted

Take action

ONLY YOU (+2)   3

Rachel Reese
5h ago

Valuable employee

Laura Palmby, Ross Duncan, Roger Cox, Garrett Conner, Jim Washington
We in management are well-aware of your personal contributions to the management of

PARTNER PORTAL   54   6

Lydia Taylor
1d ago
Latest blog post is live #Devconference
Have a look at the DEVCONFERENCE 2019 teaser video to see what the buzz is about! You can check the agenda too!

This is DEV Conference 2019
Featuring over 40 in depth-sessions and technical workshops to build expertise.
youtube.com

DEV CONFERENCE   11   3   3

May Crawdord
1d ago
Which speaker would you like to have at our offsite?

Tim Ferris	35%
Eugene fernandez	0%
Jimmy Gibbs	65%

DEV CONFERENCE   85   6

Chester Johnson
1d ago

Where is the final documentation on travel expenses?
I need the documentation for an onsite training next week.

GLOBAL   4   2

Discover new content

Is it particularly difficult to melt?
Eurolab27

Preferred venue for GC&E 2016?

Popular tags

User Interface   Development

Lydia Taylor
2d ago

Community Fundraiser:

COMPANY AND PRODUCT

Company details

Company
Appspace

ISO 27001 certified
Yes

Data residency
Leveraging Microsoft GCC high (secure) cloud, Appspace Intranet resides in the customers' Office 365 tenant and chosen data centres.

Company founded
2002

Product launched
2013

Typical client size
10,000 - 50,000 employees is the typical client size (smallest 300 employees, largest 250,000 employees)

Largest deployment so far
250,000 employees across 64 countries

Customers
Clients include: Glencore, Nordic Consulting, and Mattress Firm (to name a few).
Please see their website for more details.

Partner locations
Appspace maintains a strong network of implementation partners and has global coverage. They have key partners in the following countries: USA, Canada, Australia, Singapore, South Africa, and full coverage across Europe.

Company locations
Dallas, TX, USA (HQ), Malaysia, Portugal, Spain, UAE, UK

Product and technical details

Name of product
Appspace Intranet, powered by Beezy

Deployment

Client on-premises	Client private cloud	Microsoft Azure	Amazon Web Services	Vendor-hosted	Microsoft 365 tenant	Other

Client data encrypted

In transit only	In transit and at rest	At rest only

Authentication supported

Entra ID	ADFS	Okta	Open ID	Oauth	G Suite	Other

App deployment

Google Play store	Apple store	MDM	MAM	Other

Accessibility
WCAG 2.1 compliant

Document library sources integrated

Box	Dropbox	Google Drive	SharePoint	OneDrive	Other

Optional integrated enterprise search engines

Coveo	Elastic	IBM	Lucidworks	Microsoft	Mindbreeze	Sinequa	Other

User interface multi-language

Pre-configured	Editable	Right to left script supported	Other

Content multi-language

Machine translation for publishers	Machine translation for end users	Editable machine translation for publishers	Manual creation for publishers	Right to left script	Other

Set-up and support

Set-up process for new clients

Appspace Intranet is a simple set-up and configuration process. A single PowerShell script installation that takes less than 2 hours creates all the necessary resources in Azure and frontend files in SharePoint. At the same time, the CSM team engage customers with their success framework and playbook that helps get the platform ready for a successful launch. For customers without a dedicated IT resource, Appspace can do the installation at no additional cost.

Current version

4.12

Product updates

Major releases every 10 to 12 weeks.

Product update process

Appspace notifies customers of all new releases via their dedicated customer success manager (CSM) and regular newsletter. The releases are available in the portal for customers to download and upgrade their environment at their own convenience.

Reverse-out options

The customer owns the installation and the data. The end of a contract marks the time when the system is no longer accessible to regular users. However, customers keep their data, and they can migrate it out of the system via database or the Appspace API.

Technical support

Email support	Phone support	Chat support	Online portal	24/7 support	Office hours only

User community

Appspace have an active online community (Beezy Customers Club Broadcast) where customers share best practices, access technical information, and interact with Appspace product management. They also run quarterly webinars with all customers and host various other events throughout the year, including their annual user conference, Appspace BEYOND.

Voice of the vendor

Appspace says: "The world of work has changed forever and organizations need the right strategies and innovation to keep employees engaged, informed, and productive. Appspace Intranet is the all-in-one intelligent digital workplace, built for the Microsoft platform and designed to power the best possible employee experience. With its industry-leading user interface and branding flexibility, Appspace Intranet delivers personalized communication, improved collaboration, and knowledge management. Our industry-leading Intranet integrates with the key apps employees use daily, connecting people to the right team members and the information they need to do their best work.

Global brands with highly distributed workforces love the full feature set, quick and easy setup, verified data security, and mobile app. Appspace Intranet makes it simple for employees to stay connected and perform tasks in a centralized, collaborative way – regardless of where they are working or what device they're using."

Voice of the customer

Continuing the theme from previous reports, customers praised Appspace Intranet for its overall ease of use, particularly from a publisher's perspective. One respondent stated their view that the best feature is, "its news carousel and how easy it is to publish and manage news articles", while another summarised more broadly that it has, "powerful features delivered via a user-friendly experience". One customer cited the ongoing developments to the product that, "improve the experience for both employees and administrators", as being the best aspect from their perspective.

When it comes to changes they would like to see, there was little agreement between customers over the priorities. Unusually, but perhaps understandably, one customer wanted a clearer separation between the Appspace Intranet and SharePoint, indicating that sometimes employees ended up on SharePoint sites outside the 'intranet' when they would rather they didn't. Another customer felt that some basic items, including tables, analytics and admin controls, should get some attention; although the demo we saw suggests there have been some recent improvements in these areas.

Working with the vendor continues to please customers with people saying their experience has been, "consistently positive", "excellent" and "brilliant". One customer elaborated on their strong connection with the team at Appspace, sharing that, "collaborating with them has been both effortless and productive" while another cited their "excellent quality of service and 24/7 support". In our previous report the Customer Success Managers came in for praise and this has continued with one customer describing the CSM team as "responsive, knowledgeable and enthusiastic", adding that their experience of working with other teams, including Appspace executives had been, "just as good".

SCENARIOS & SCORES

Please see the Scenarios below for more detail on each of these.

SCENARIO AND SCORE	KEY BENEFITS	IMPROVEMENTS / CONSIDERATIONS
4+ **1. User Experience & Visual Appeal**	First class user experience for employees and publishers.	'Advanced search' experience is standard SharePoint and comparatively disappointing.
4+ **2. Publishing & Communications Management**	The publishing environment is a real differentiator, putting sophisticated, easy-to-use tools in communicators' hands.	Pages are not templated in the traditional sense of fixed layouts. Digital signage is managed via a separate product.
4+ **3. Community & Engagement**	Community capabilities, social engagement and feedback are fully featured.	Some wellbeing features rely on Microsoft Viva Insights.
3.5+ **4. Integrations & Services (Including M365)**	Excellent integration with M365 features and a flexible framework for integrations with third-party apps.	Third-party integrations rely on Power Automate and available connectors.
3.5 **5. Information Finding & Search**	Smart use of contextual search and filters to help people quickly home in on the information they need. 'Spotlight' also adds value to intranet-wide search.	Search management and reporting relies on standard Microsoft tools.
3.5+ **6. Administrator Experience**	Many admin features benefit from Appspace's attention to detail with UX, particularly home page configuration.	Some of the more technical options are managed via the SharePoint user interface.
3.5+ **7. Analytics**	A comprehensive set of PowerBI dashboards is available and customers can use Google or Adobe if they prefer.	PowerBI is not the most attractive and there is no filter to show individual owners. Dashboard changes need PowerBI skills.
4 **8. Mobile & Frontline Support**	All Appspace Intranet content and functionality is available via the mobile app.	Frontline workers without Microsoft licenses can be given access to intranet content via a separate app.
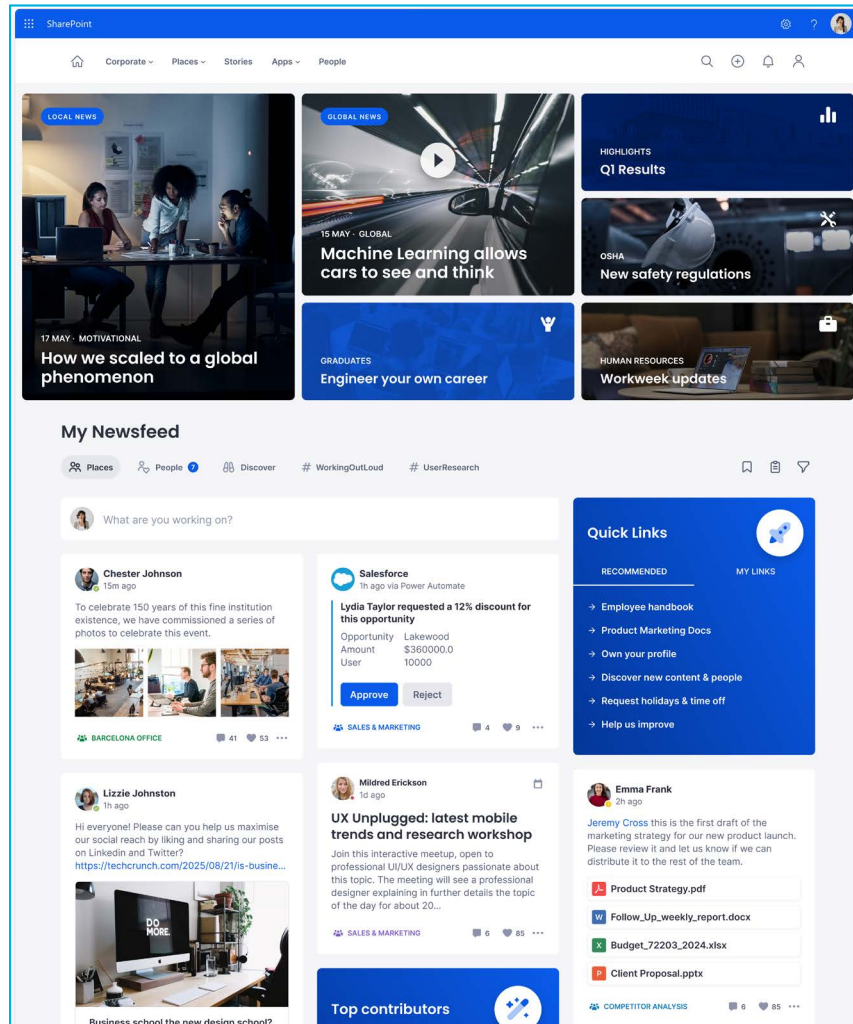
*Appspace intranet has a user experience that is unique among SharePoint-based products.*

The Appspace Intranet user experience is a real differentiator, particularly amongst SharePoint-based products. For employees and publishers alike, the interface is configured within Appspace and is much improved from standard SharePoint. On the home page employees get an attractive, dynamic experience that delivers targeted news combined with personalised community content and tasks via a card-based activity feed. News, community and reference content are similarly well presented. The only time the Appspace spell is broken is if employees go beyond 'Spotlight search' (see Scenario 5) to Microsoft Search, when the experience disappoints with the standard SharePoint look and feel.

Navigation is similarly richly featured with a highly configurable mega menu. Different top navigations and footers can be set per organisational entity (market, business unit, sub-brand etc.) with menu items targeted by audience. Alongside the usual nested text links, pictures and icons may be used for a richer experience. This works particularly well for the 'Apps' menu that provides links to third-party apps (e.g. Workday) and can be customised by employees from a menu of enterprise apps. We also like the 'Communities' menu which is personalised to the employee based on their community memberships.
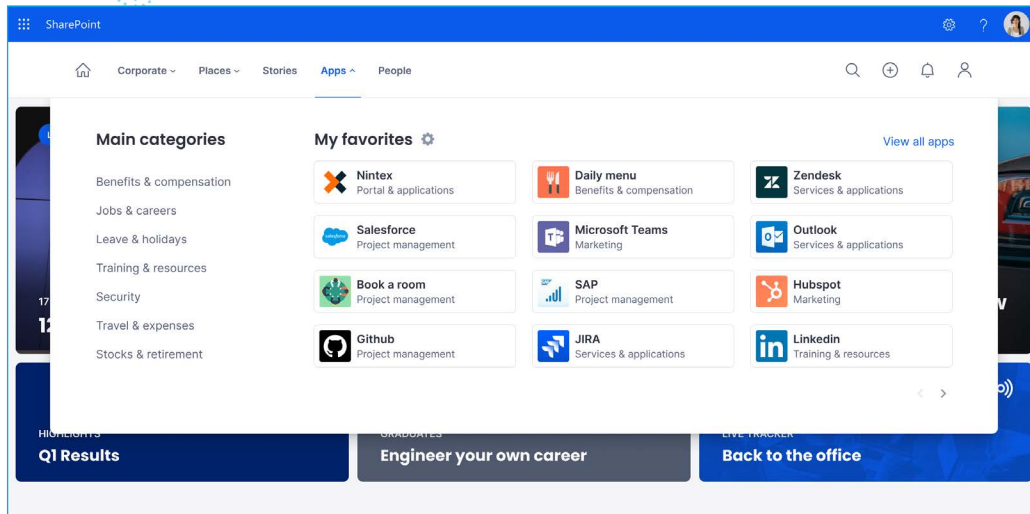
Appspace provides rich, targeted and personalised navigation that helps employees find relevant tools and information.
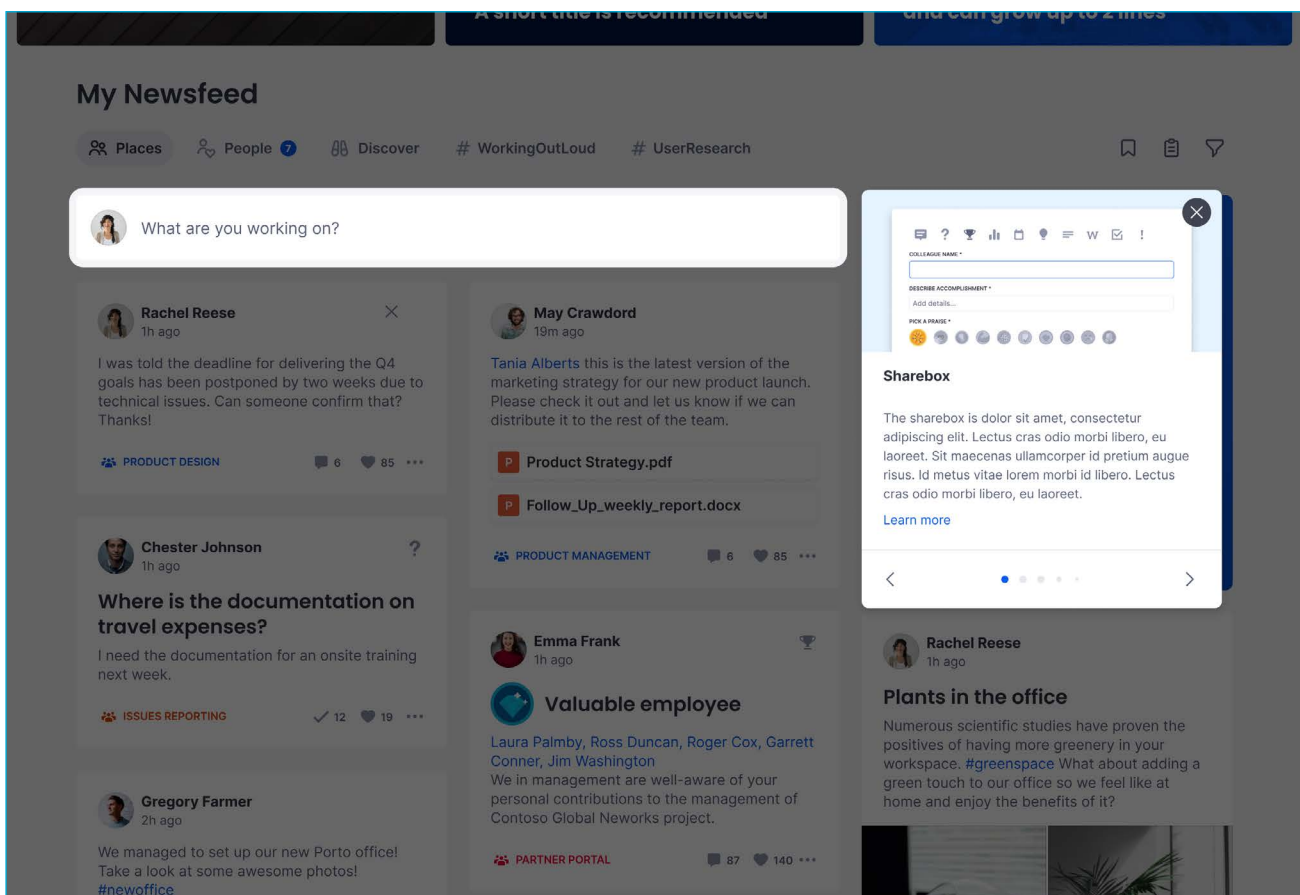
Notifications are shown via the familiar 'bell' icon on desktop or mobile push. We like Appspace's philosophy that notifications relate to a person's activity such as a colleague liking their post, being invited to a community or them being assigned a task, while excluding 'mass' notifications for communications. Clicking on a notification opens a card where people can immediately act on the notification, and then move to the next (or the previous) card without leaving the interface. The full notifications centre is split by type (mentions, comments etc.) and provides a handy option for people to get a daily email of all their notifications.
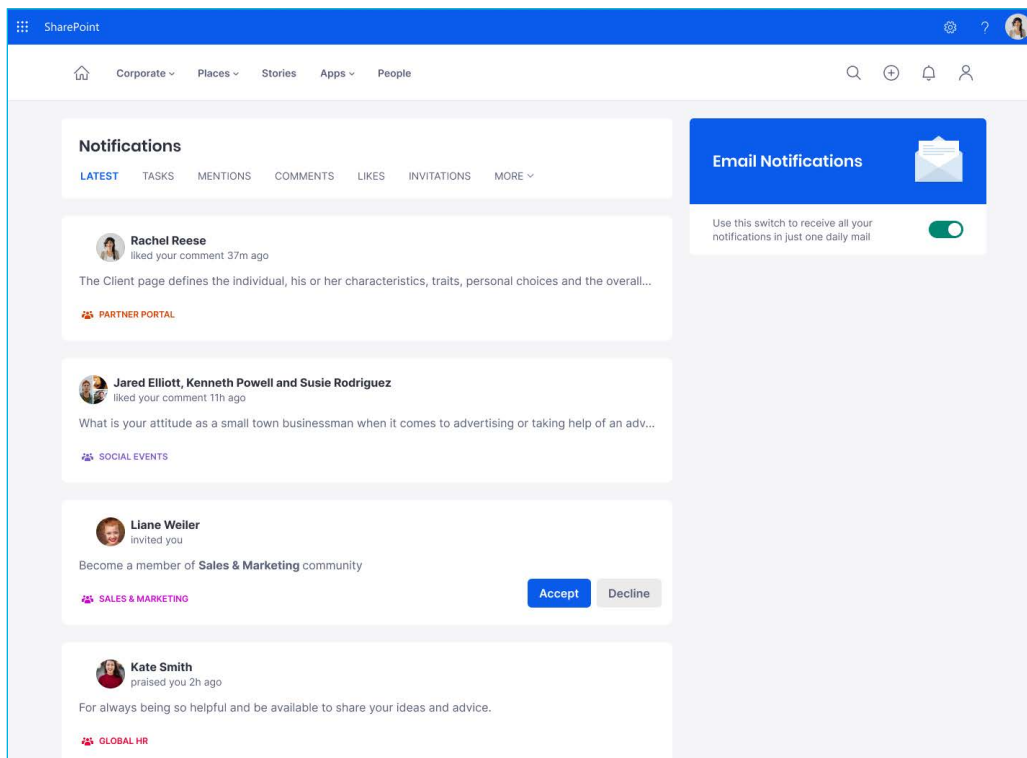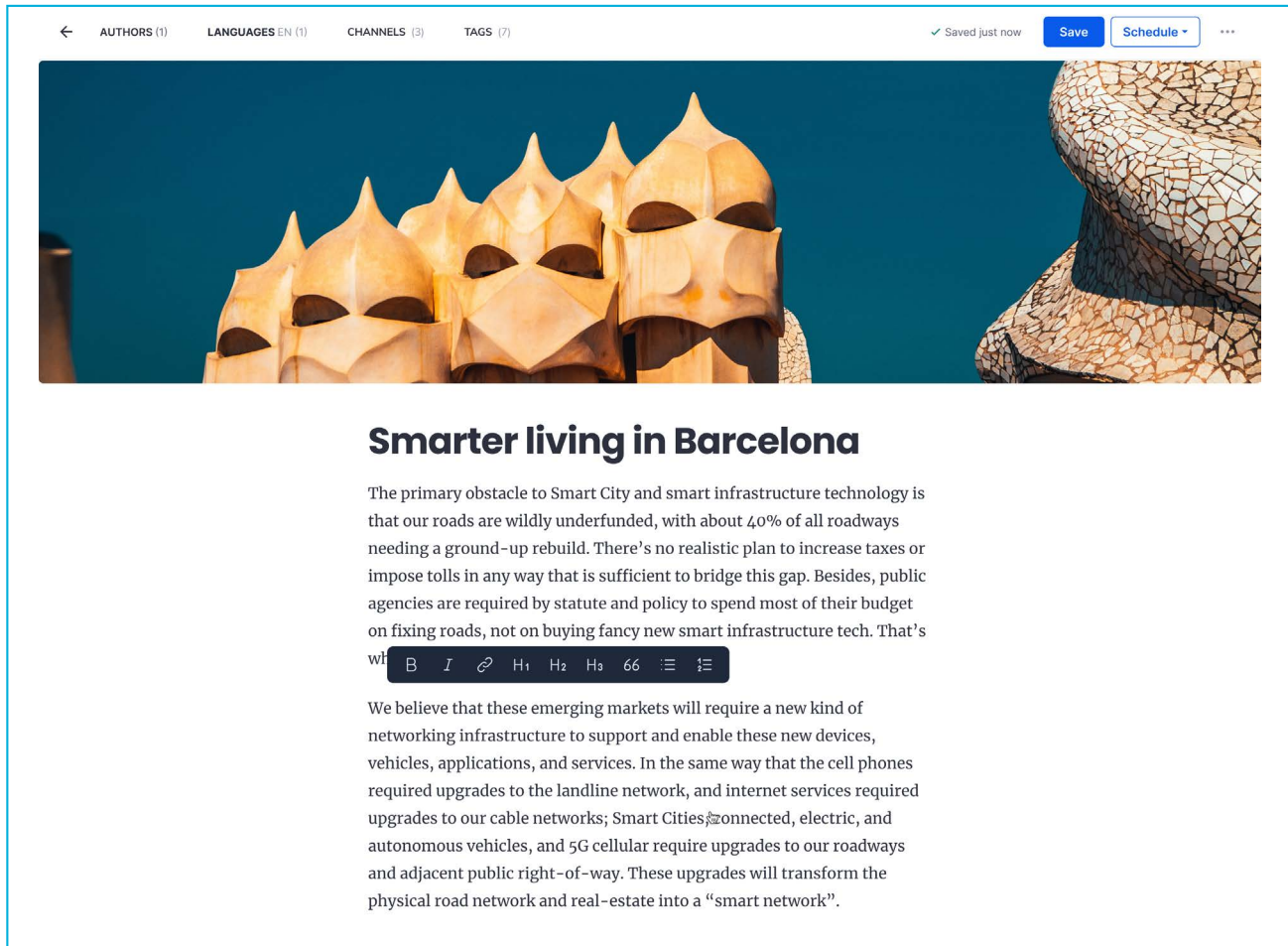
The notifications centre includes an option for employees to get all their notifications in a single daily email.

Branding in Appspace Intranet is flexible and powerful, if a little involved due to the way it replaces the SharePoint experience. Appspace includes 'branding as a service' to manage the look and feel of the navigation and footer on behalf of the client so that any changes Microsoft makes to SharePoint have no impact. Many of the visual elements such as buttons can be styled to the client's liking, along with typography and brand colours. Multi-brand intranets are well supported; each entity may have its own brand treatment or theme, giving it a completely different visual identity while still being part of the global intranet. International multi-brand groups or companies that grow through acquisitions will find this feature appealing.

One user experience feature we particularly like and think is valuable in driving adoption is the 'welcome tour'. This provides a product walkthrough for all new users that helps to explore and explain the features of this powerful product. The overlay highlights and guides people through the key features of the product, such as the navigation, the hero web part and the newsfeed, so that they fully understand the purpose and possibilities of each of these components. Appspace provides suggested template text, but clients can configure this to their liking and include language that works for their employees. Appspace help further onboard new employees with recommended links in the newsfeed and automatically adding them to an onboarding community with members ready to provide support.

The welcome tour explaining how the versatile 'share box' works.

An example news story showing some available formatting styles and image placement.

Content creation in Appspace Intranet is one of the main product differentiators, providing one of the easiest content editing experiences currently available for SharePoint. The content editor is designed with a philosophy of freedom and creativity for authors behind the approach. This might not suit organisations that want prescriptive or form-based templates, although Appspace says some kind of templating is on the roadmap. It's unlikely that pages will end up a mish-mash of fonts and styles, though. Appspace provides an attractive and consistent set of options for text formatting and content layout, so pages look clean and uncomplicated.

The look and feel of the editing environment is very similar to modern web publishing environments, and comes with powerful features to embed and style different types of content to add interest to articles. The editing controls appear when content is highlighted, enabling the author to apply heading styles, bullets or quotations, along with a recently added table layout. Imagery gets sophisticated styling too. For example, when inserting a picture, a control appears to resize the picture or change how text flows around it. Image files are automatically cropped and sized to the placeholder although there are options for the publisher to adjust afterwards. A new image gallery provides a contemporary layout for multiple pictures on a page. There is support for alt-text and pictures can be individually captioned, which is a nice touch.

The primary obstacle to Smart City and smart infrastructure technology is that our roads are wildly underfunded, with about 40% of all roadways needing a ground-up rebuild. There's no realistic plan to increase taxes or impose tolls in any way that is sufficient to bridge this gap. Besides, public agencies are required by statute and policy to spend most of their budget on fixing roads, not on buying fancy new smart infrastructure tech. That's where our tweak

> **" When we started working on smart cities, the phrase was new and few people knew what it meant, much less why they would need it.**

The design of a digital experience matters a great deal now — as much as the technology — and for that reason, design has risen considerably in importance. So although founding tech startups was long only the purview of engineers, we now see the rise of companies like Airbnb and Pinterest that are founded by designers.

Appspace Intranet's text styling options ensures copy looks good on the page.
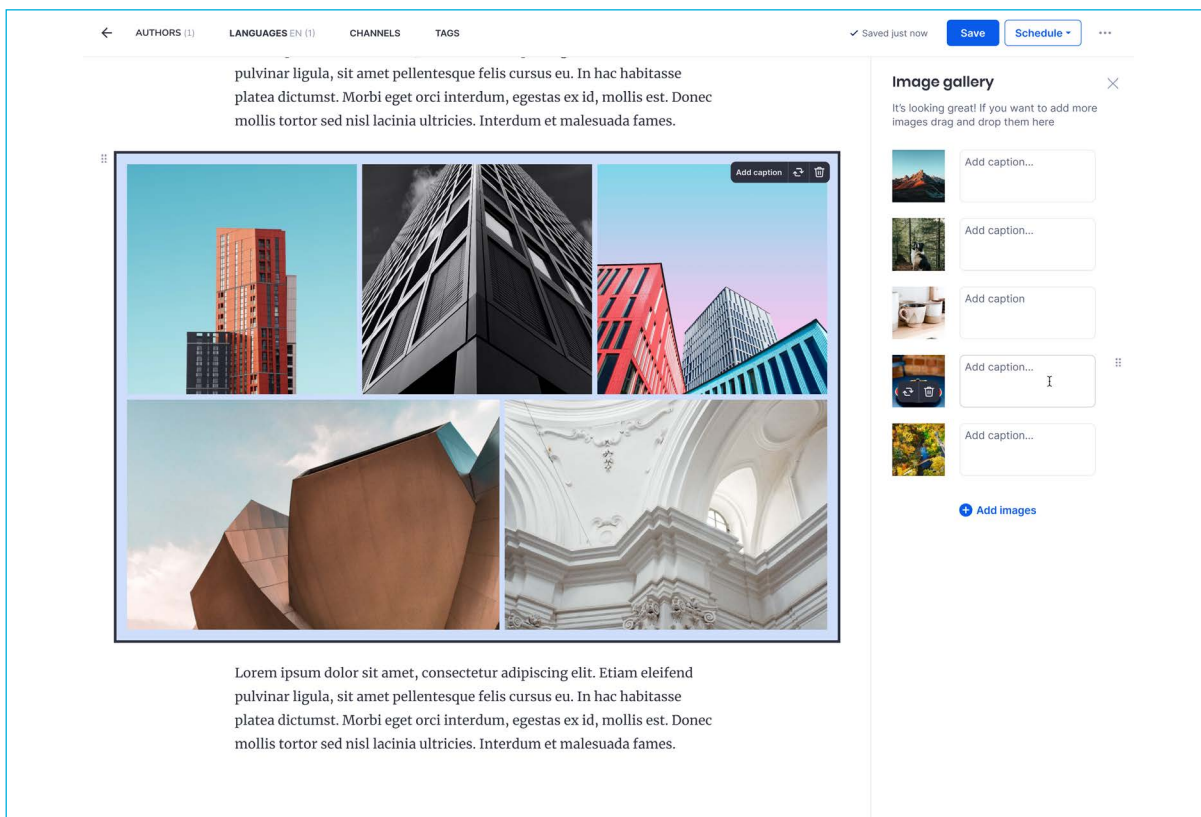
Image gallery provides an attractive and dynamic layout for multiple pictures. Each picture can be captioned and have alt-text added.

Video is an important part of the modern communications mix and Appspace Intranet has good support for platforms including Stream, Kaltura, Brightcove and YouTube. 'Video Stories' showcase this content well with video content prominently displayed and played first when the story is opened, and the video clicked. The text of the article can be read afterwards by those who are interested in more details.

Content is targeted to employees using the communications-oriented concept of 'channels'. A channel has one or more groups of people (audiences) assigned to it. An audience can be an Entra group, manually created, or created dynamically based on rules applied to profile properties, for example everyone with 'Manager' in their title. Appspace syncs profile properties with Entra ID or an HRIS such as Workday. On the employee side, people can see available channels and subscribe / unsubscribe from any they are not a member of already.

Content is published using channels and more than one channel can be assigned for a piece of content. To make things easy for publishers, channels are grouped into entities such as departments, locations, functions etc. and the channels each publisher has access to can be restricted. We think Appspace's approach to content targeting is a communications-friendly approach, and a significant improvement on having to use Entra groups directly.

An editorial dashboard shows the status of all news articles and includes useful search and filter (by date, channel, author, published status) options that busy comms teams will appreciate. Articles can be sorted by date but there is no calendar view currently. Articles marked 'featured' are shown in one of the available 'hero' panes on the home page. There is also a Kanban-style overview, with drag-and-drop capability to move articles to the next stage in their life cycle. News stories and other content can have approval workflows if needed.

Appspace's editorial Kanban view provides a useful visual overview of articles and their status.

Urgent or crisis communications are handled with targeted 'Announcements'. These take the form of a ribbon at the top of any of the hero layouts, or can be shown as what Appspace calls a 'Banner'. The Banner takes over the whole hero area and has to be dismissed before people can move on to other tasks. Appspace digital signage also includes 'broadcast' which provides urgent communications across physical devices.

The vendor's separate digital signage product can consume Appspace Intranet content and display it on screens and kiosks (see Scenario 4 for more). The Intranet product includes basic digital signage support but we would recommend discussing with the vendor if this is sufficient for your needs. Other multi-channel options include the ability for employees and publishers to share stories into Teams and a simple employee advocacy feature. The latter allows publishers to create a card in the newsfeed to encourage employees to share externally published stories with their networks on LinkedIn or X / Twitter. A feature to create an email newsletter is in development and is scheduled to be rolled out in Q2 2024.
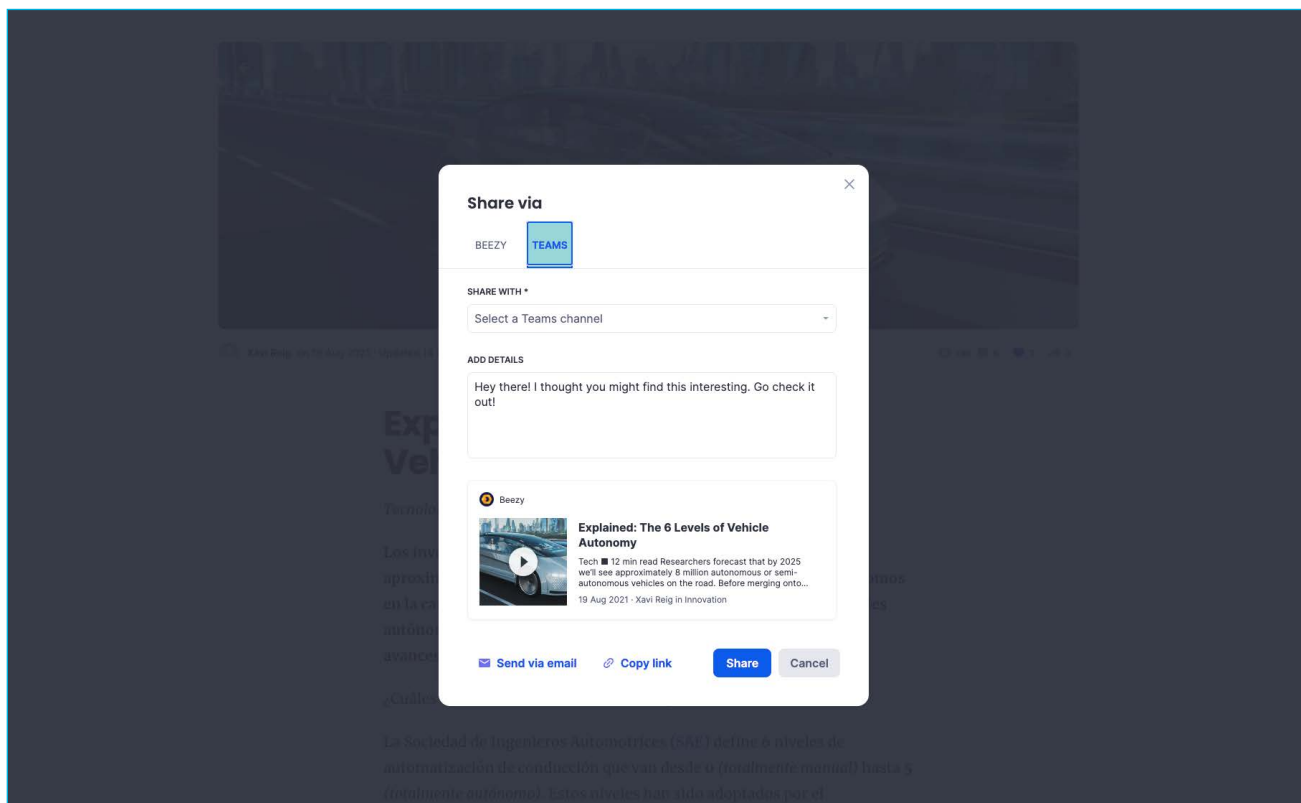

Sharing an Appspace story to Teams is straightforward for publishers and employees.
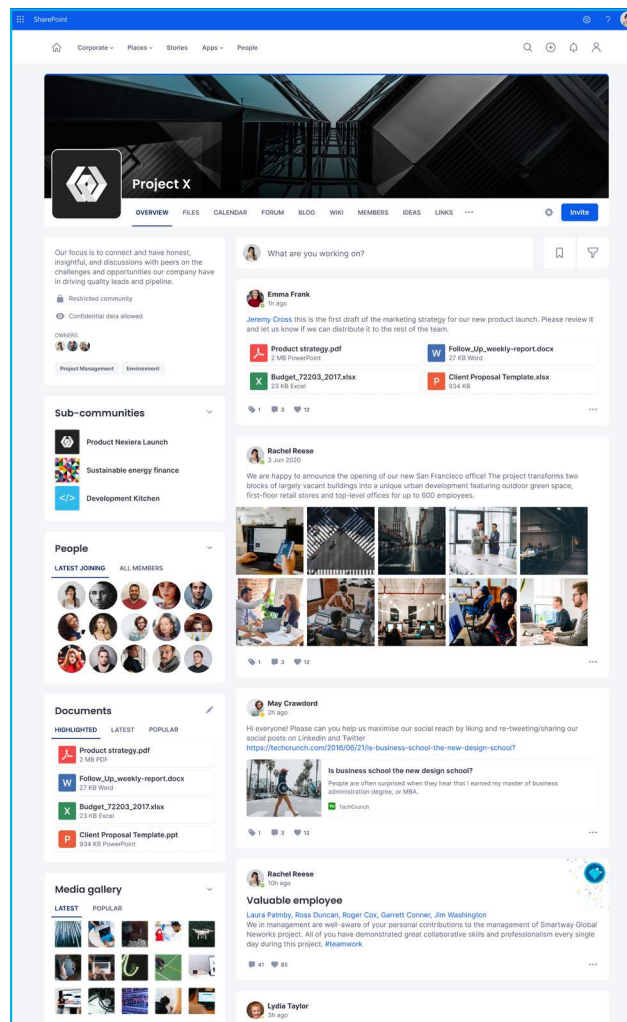
*Communities are a core part of Appspace Intranet and are richly featured.*

Community and engagement is central to the Appspace Intranet experience, since the Beezy product started out as a social community add-on for SharePoint. The product has its own fully featured 'Community' spaces for collaboration, although these can be replaced by Viva Engage if preferred. Communities are open or closed and Community owners choose whether content needs to be moderated, supporting multiple use cases such as projects, communities of practice, ideas or employee resource groups.

Features include areas to store documents, display a shared calendar, run polls, and share ideas. Blogs provide the same high quality publishing experience as elsewhere in the product. They can be audience targeted, with features such as adding a co-author, publishing on behalf of another user, translation and scheduling all included. Social reactions and comments, including retrospective moderation of any content following a report, is also included (see below). Community owners can theme and tailor the Community with different features to meet their needs. An easy-to-use interface allows them to add and re-arrange web parts with content such as people, tags, documents, and media galleries. A 'new Community request' process helps with governance by checking whether a similar name does not already exist.
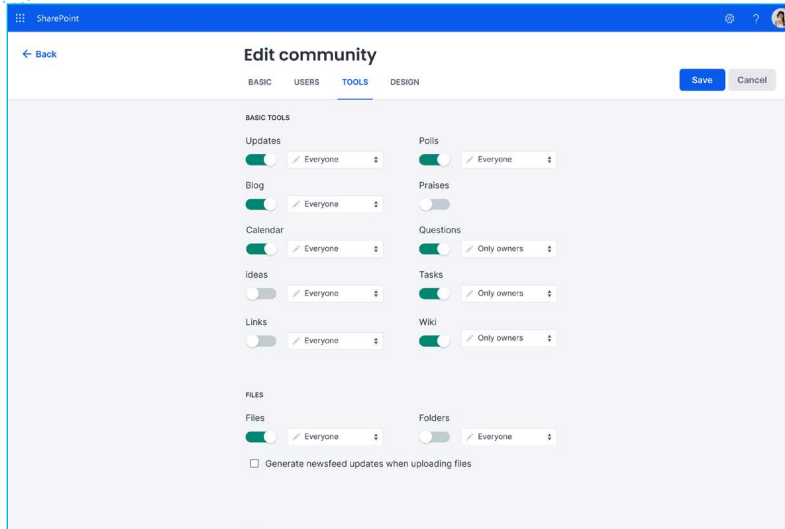
Community owners get an easy-to-use interface to configure the features and design of their community.

Appspace also has a specific idea generation template that is a special kind of Community. Ideas are grouped into campaigns and there is a flow of how the campaign is managed. Ideas go through a process of submission (along with supporting documents), refinement with comments and votes, selection for implementation, and finally reporting back on the impact post implementation. While not a substitute for a dedicated ideation platform, the features here are more comprehensive than other products in this report and work well.
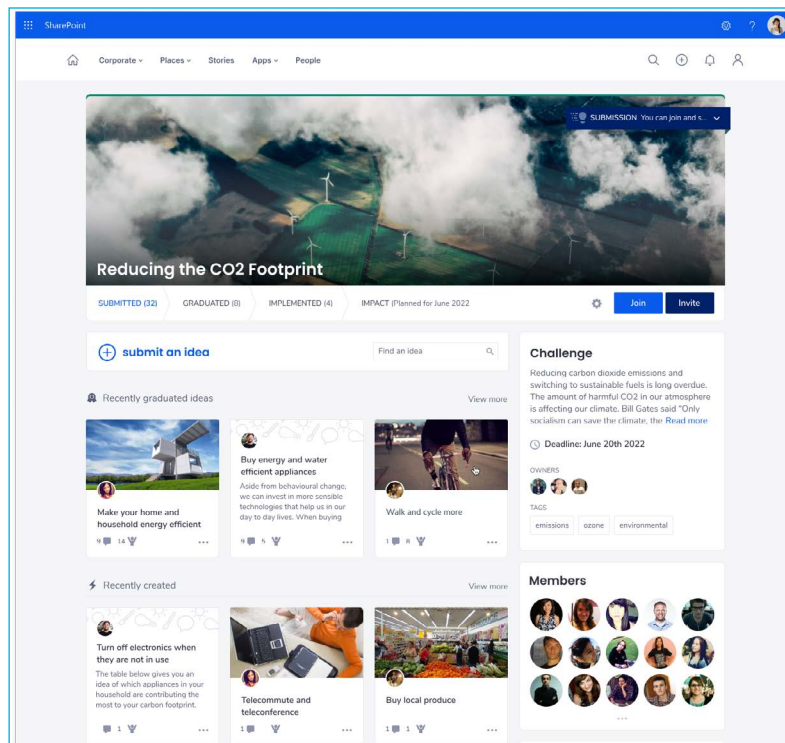
Appspace ideas campaigns help manage the flow of ideas from submission to implementation.

Items in the 'My Newsfeed' activity stream are presented as cards that encourage interaction. Likes, comments and shares for news and other content are well-integrated and the 'Like' reaction name and icon can be configured to client needs, with a wider range of emoji on the roadmap. A key part of the newsfeed is the versatile 'Share' box at the top. This is where anyone can start a discussion, ask a question, create a poll, give praise to a colleague, create an event or post a message to any of the communities they have access to. We like the prominent placement and power of this feature to encourage contribution and interaction with the platform. More detailed pulse surveys can be conducted via Microsoft Forms.
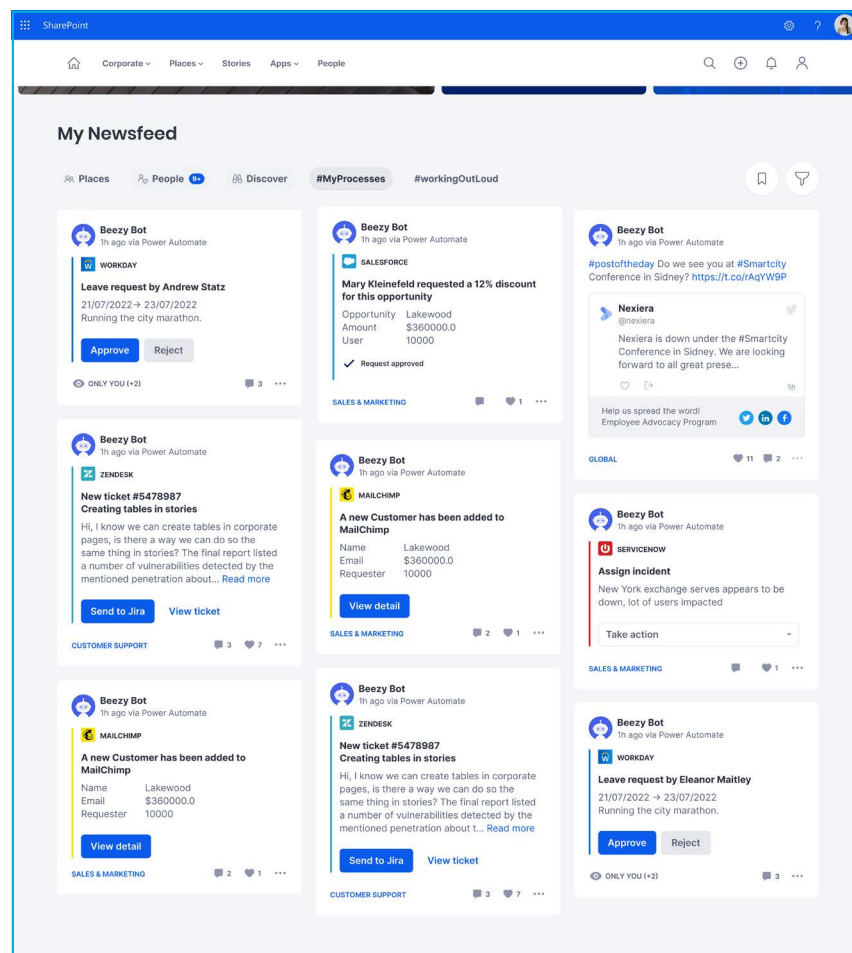

People can easily create a poll using the versatile 'share' box in Appspace.

People can send praise to colleagues from the 'share' box, which Appspace say is one of the most used features and we think is a well-implemented engagement feature of the product. Employees type a colleague name, say what they did well and choose an icon that represents the achievement. Appspace configure the icons and names for the client to reflect details such as company values. Praise received shows up on the person's profile and they get a notification too. The news feed shows a list of employees who have received most praise over a given period as well. Appspace Intranet can also integrate Microsoft Viva Insights cards.

*The share box can also be used to praise colleagues.*

*Information from third-party services shown in the Appspace Intranet newsfeed.
In this view the newsfeed has been filtered to show only third-party action cards.*

Appspace Intranet has a good range of integration possibilities, both with the Microsoft 365 suite and other cloud-based enterprise services. It comes with a ready-made framework for seamlessly integrating information and transactions from third-party applications (such as Workday or Salesforce) into the Appspace Intranet experience. Content from these applications is shown as cards in the newsfeed. Content may be a simple piece of information, such as a notification, or require some interaction, such as approving expenses. We really like that Appspace has the flexibility to deliver these cards to an individual, team or community as appropriate, meaning that expense approvals can be actioned by a specific manager, while sales opportunities could be seen by a team.

Each card shows who the audience is and there is a useful filter at the top of the newsfeed, so action cards from a specific service can be displayed while hiding everything else. As the card is delivered in the newsfeed, it has the usual set of interaction capabilities, for example people could start a discussion or create a task from it. Cards are shown both on the desktop and in the mobile app experience, so managers can approve requests quickly while they are on the go.

The integration framework leverages Microsoft's Power Automate and Adaptive Cards and there are integrations ready to go for Salesforce, Workday and ServiceNow among others. Customers can use these as-is or can change and extend the capabilities. They can also use the framework to let the Appspace Intranet connector talk to any other connector within Power Automate and build their own integrations themselves, or with help from Appspace; it's worth noting customers automatically get a certain amount of time from Appspace's 'Enhanced Services' teams but can buy more time if needed.
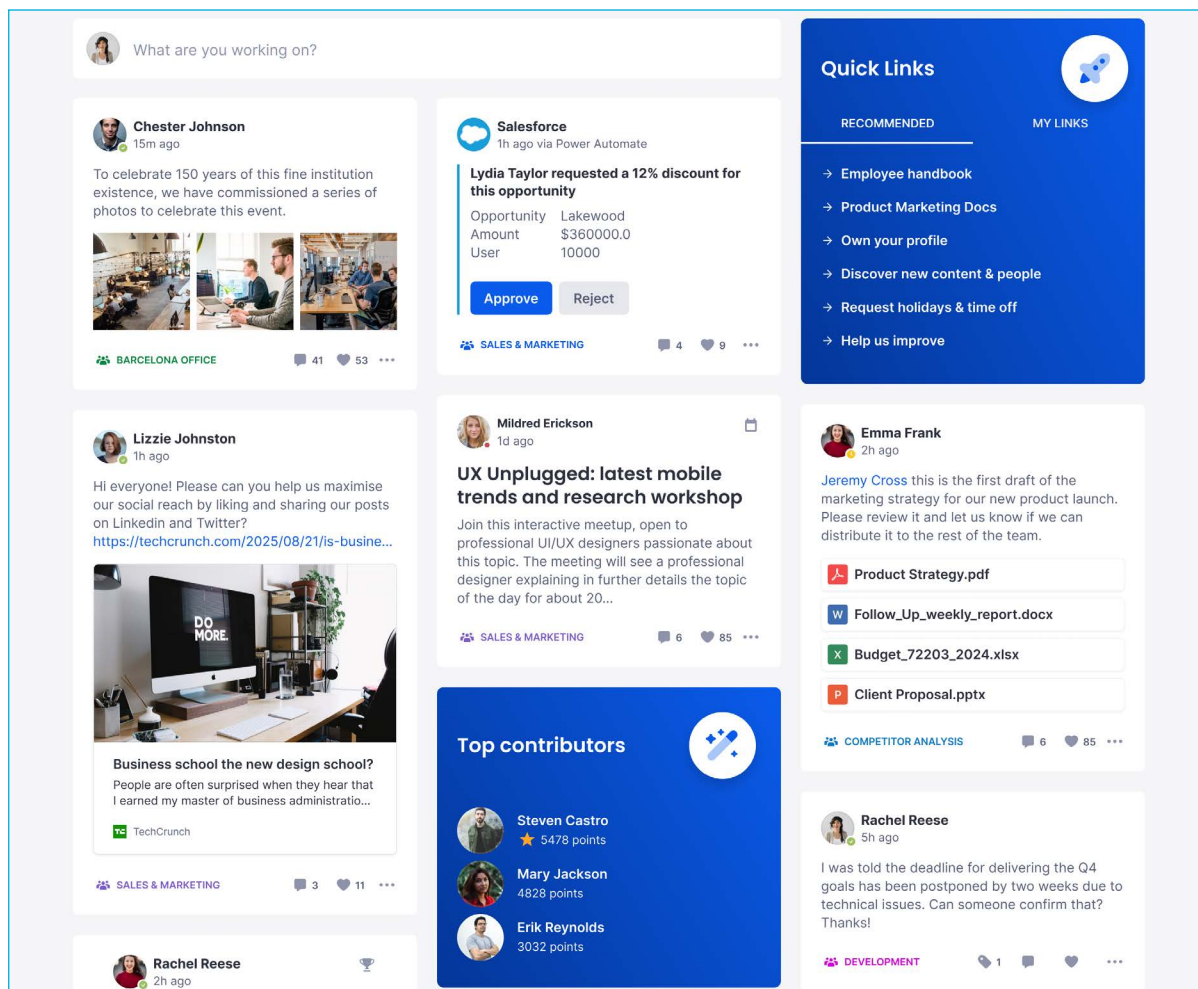

Information and transactions from third-party applications are delivered seamlessly as action cards in the news-feed alongside Appspace Intranet content and 'Discover' cards that highlight communities and contributors.

The vendor has a digital signage product in addition to Appspace Intranet and they have created integrations between the two. This makes it possible for every Appspace Intranet customer to display digital signage content within the intranet (and to show intranet content on Appspace digital signage), the cost for digital signage is included in the pricing provided here. The screenshot below illustrates the rich set of templates that are available for digital signage content. Each screen of content is called a 'card' and there is a wide range of content available, covering communications, stock market information, leader boards and social channels. Cards are first configured within the digital signage admin interface and then made available within Appspace Intranet, where they can be used like any native widget. We like how this capability increases the sense of multi-channel communication and the possibility of merging and reinforcing campaigns across different media.
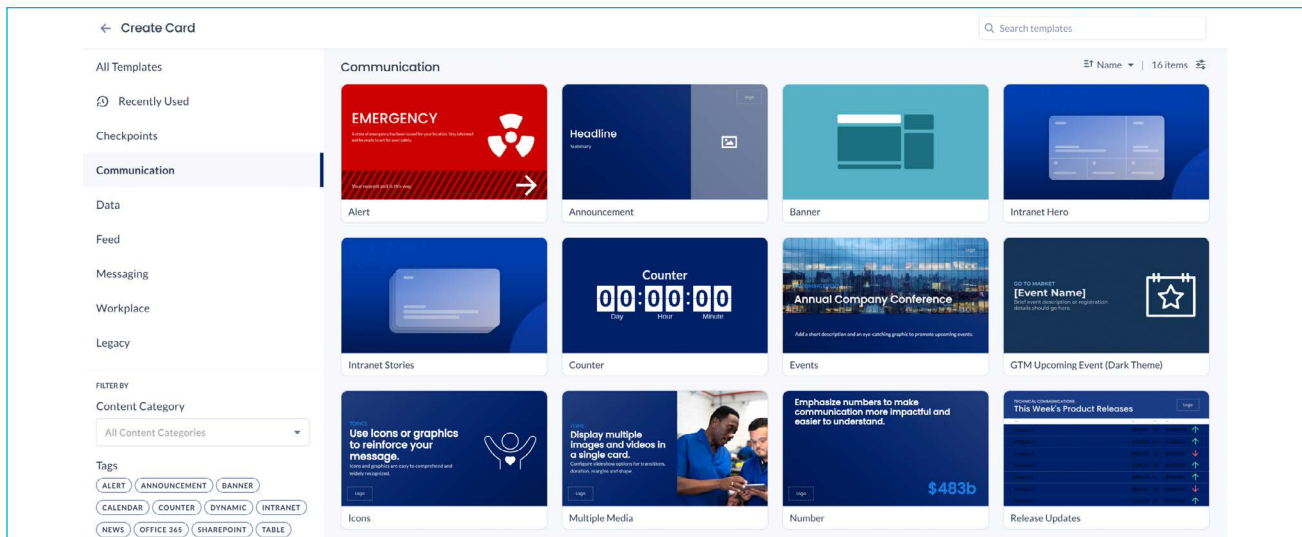
The library of card templates within the Appspace digital signage product.
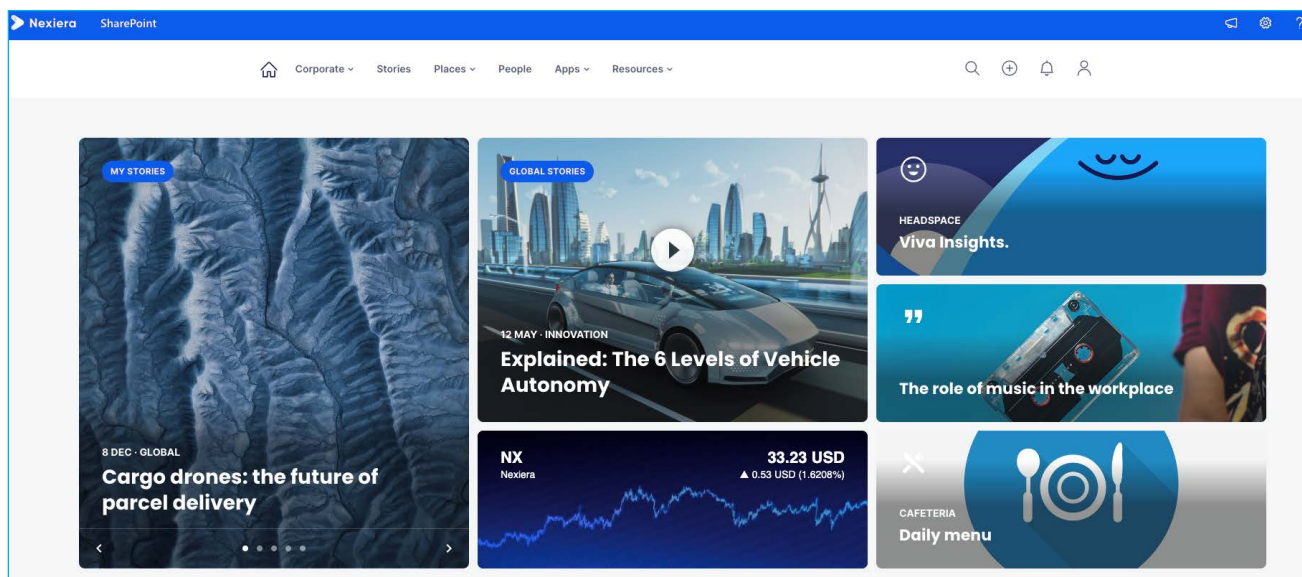

The stock price card shown bottom-centre in the hero is from Appspace digital signage.

Integration with third-party collaboration tools like Slack or with cloud storage services like Dropbox or Google Drive are not a standard part of the product, although some could be achieved using the Power Automate-based framework described above. For example, starting a chat with a contact via Slack could be substituted for the Teams standard.

Appspace Intranet relies heavily on the Microsoft ecosystem, so integration with the Microsoft 365 suite is a strength of the product. Appspace Intranet news items can be integrated with communication sites. Any content stored in SharePoint document libraries can easily be surfaced, with Appspace adding the flexibility of being able to filter documents by tags, or show the standard folder view. We especially like that creating a task from an item in the newsfeed leverages Planner; given how many different types of information can be in the feed it makes this a valuable feature.

Integration with MS Teams is strong. Viva Connections can be used to deliver the whole Appspace Intranet within MS Teams. Alternatively, there is a native Appspace Teams app that focuses on the newsfeed and pages, letting people add / remove channels and topics for a personalised experience. The Appspace Teams app is also available within the MS Teams mobile app, providing an alternative mobile experience to the one covered in Scenario 8. Further integrations enable employees to start a Teams chat from a people card or from a person's full profile.

Appspace has integrated other parts of the Viva suite, too. The Viva Connections Dashboard is part of the home page experience, bringing wellbeing content from Viva Insights and enabling employees to take advantage of personalised analytics and suggestions. Finally, for customers who have invested in Viva Topics, there is an optional extra component that can be embedded into the topic centre to surface content from and take people to the Appspace Intranet.
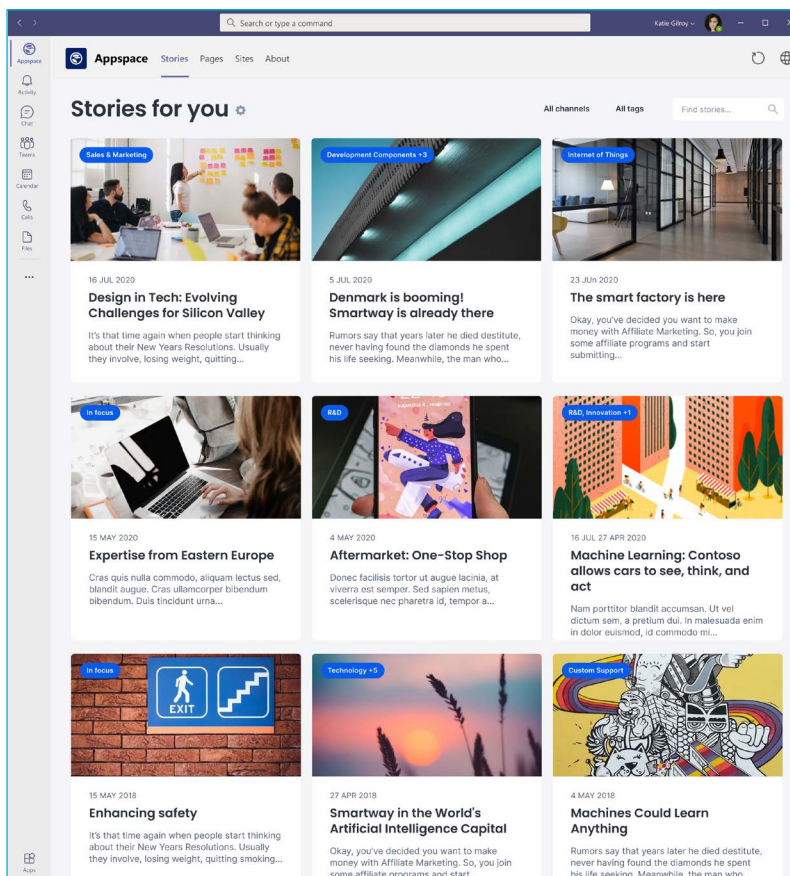
*The dedicated Teams app focuses on the basic communications elements
of the product but still allows for a personalised experience.*
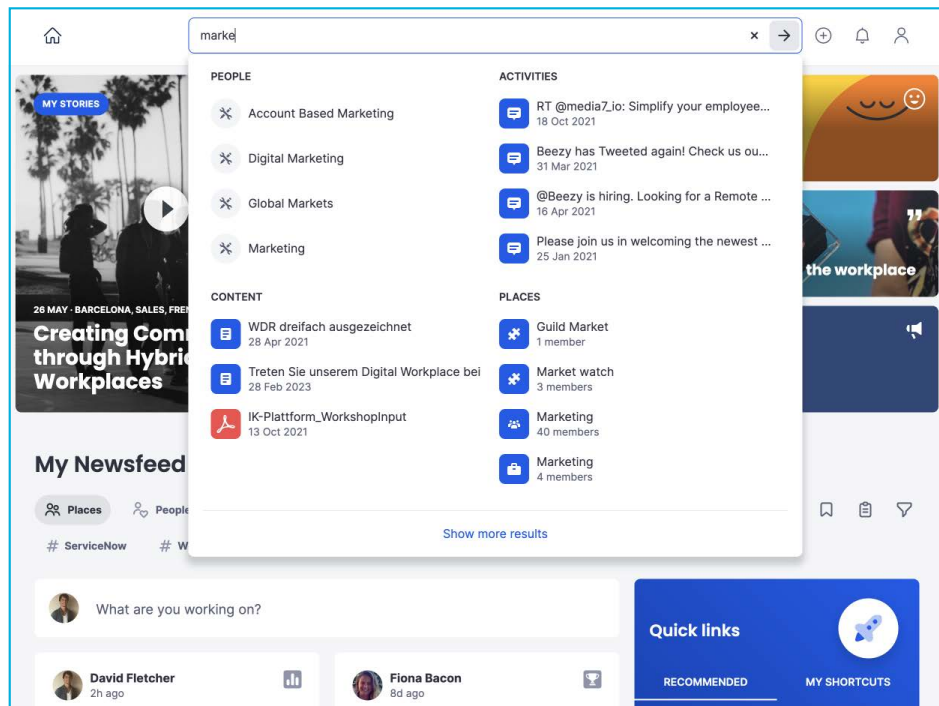
Spotlight search aims to get people to the information they need quickly.

Appspace Intranet comes with some effective search features. The main intranet-wide search box features an improved, type-ahead search dropdown called 'Spotlight'. This helps people quickly find colleagues, content (including third-party apps), activities or communities with results appearing as they type. Appspace hopes that people will find what they are looking for using this dropdown; if they don't, hitting 'enter' switches to the standard Microsoft Search results experience, which feels a bit disjointed.

There is contextual search for Communities, reference documents and news. These all work well and take advantage of channels, tags, or other relevant metadata to help people find what they need. There is also a quick way to filter content in the newsfeed by tag, @username and date.

Appspace does not add any search management capabilities, but admins can use the standard Microsoft Search administration tools for features like promoted results (bookmarks), Q&As etc. However, these only work in the Microsoft Search experience, not Spotlight.

Third-party services such as Salesforce, ServiceNow and Jira can be federated by using Microsoft Search connectors and results are included in Spotlight. As such there is some scope to search content from other platforms, but customers are limited to using connectors available for Microsoft Search.

The 'People Directory' provides a good experience for finding colleagues (in addition to Spotlight), with a contextual search box and selectable tags for skills. We like that you can narrow the search to people you are following and look for people who have recently joined. Results are presented as contact cards with photos and people can send an email or start a chat easily from here.

Each employee has an attractive profile page showing all relevant contact information and content relating to the person, including their activity stream, Community memberships and peer-awarded endorsements. People can edit some of their own profile information from this page, where permission has been granted. Appspace includes a nice feature where people profile cards can be easily added to a site for a team so you can see who's who. There is no organisation chart, however.

3.5+ 6. ADMINISTRATOR EXPERIENCE
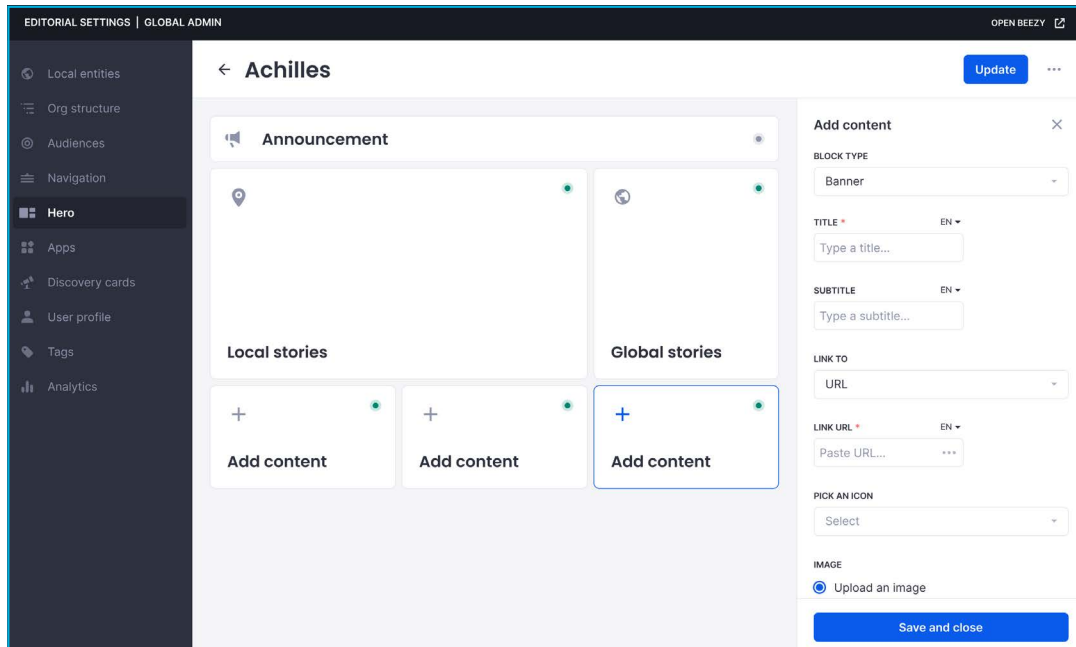
Appspace Intranet's administration centre provides control over many aspects of the product, although some technical settings are still in SharePoint.

Appspace Intranet's administration experience is a mix of the product's own intuitive interface and SharePoint's somewhat intimidating 'Site Settings' menu. The vendor is actively working on bringing more settings into their experience and has added several areas since our previous report, including tag management and reported comments. As more options are added it would be good to see a basic search included to help admins quickly find the settings needed. However, we like that global admins can set up local entities and delegate some configuration and design elements to local admins, reducing the burden on central teams while empowering other parts of the organisation.

The main 'hero' component is configured in the Appspace admin centre and there are several options to choose from, providing a blend of global and local stories and other featured content. Control of these can be delegated to local entities and we like the collaborative feature that shows if any of the hero blocks is being edited, to help teams work together smoothly. We also like the ability to preview how any named employee will experience the hero, to check the targeting is working as expected. Some of the more technical options are still accessed through SharePoint Site Settings and would benefit from being brought into the Appspace admin centre.

At page level there is good granularity of publishing roles for news and static content, including controls over the look and feel of content. There is an editorial dashboard for reference content that gives an overview of all pages, with search and filter capabilities like there is for news. Reference 'Pages' have content life cycle support, with the owner getting an email notification when content is approaching its review date. News articles automatically archive from the newsfeed.

Multiple languages are handled well, with machine translation available for published content and workflows to have translated text checked by a colleague before publication. For social content, an automated translation feature is integrated into widgets, so a comment in another language can be translated on the fly.
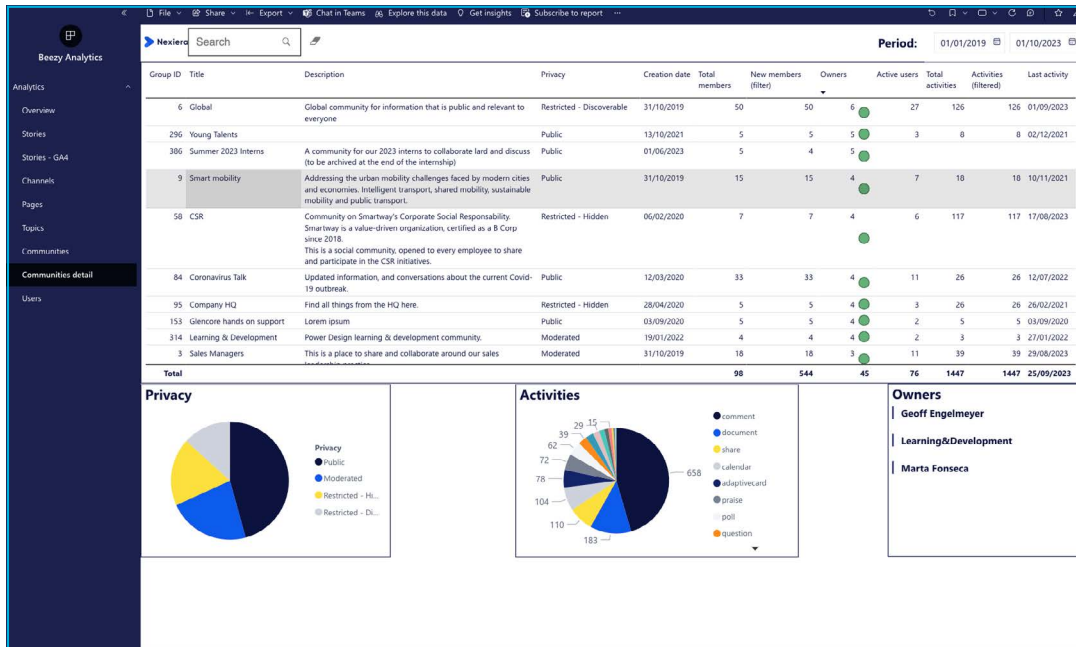
A comprehensive suite of PowerBI dashboards provides detailed insight into intranet usage.

Appspace provides a set of pre-configured Microsoft PowerBI dashboards for every customer (one PowerBI licence required) covering activity in the platform. PowerBI is not the most user-friendly analytics tool, but people with appropriate training would be able to configure additional reports. Customers can use Google Analytics or Adobe Analytics if preferred.

The overview dashboard provides a useful picture of how pages, people, news and communities have changed over a definable time period. Separate dashboards provide more detail for news, reference content, topics, communities and people. Microsoft's Clarity is also available for real-time insights and more detailed behaviour analysis, with tools such as heatmaps. The overall result is a well-structured, and comprehensive set of dashboards..

Comms teams will like the ability to identify the most popular news stories and then refine this information by period and channel. 'Entities' are selectable for all dashboards, for example enabling teams in a specific market to see just their data, although there is no filter for an individual content owner / publisher. Stories show engagement through shares, likes, and comments alongside views. Pages (reference content) get the same measurement, plus helpful details of those recently updated and about to expire.

There is detailed reporting on the community and people-oriented features including most and least active Communities. We particularly like the governance aspect of highlighting Communities that have only one owner, which is a risk if that person leaves. People reporting shows most active users but also information on skills and endorsements of those skills. There is also helpful reporting on profile completion rates and how many have pictures.

Appspace Intranet does not have a mandatory reads capability. The vendor says its 'terms of use' functionality (which is typically shown to new users) could be used and the results stored, but there is no reporting on this as standard.

Appspace's content search is powered by Microsoft Search, so reporting on top search terms, failed searches and related analytics is available from the Microsoft Search & Intelligence centre. We hear that some IT teams can be reluctant to grant access to Microsoft Search tools so it's worth checking this will not be an obstacle.

4

8. MOBILE & FRONTLINE SUPPORT
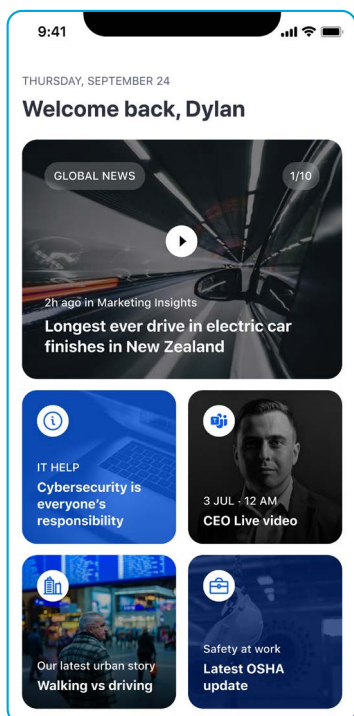
Appspace Intranet mobile app version of the hero web part.
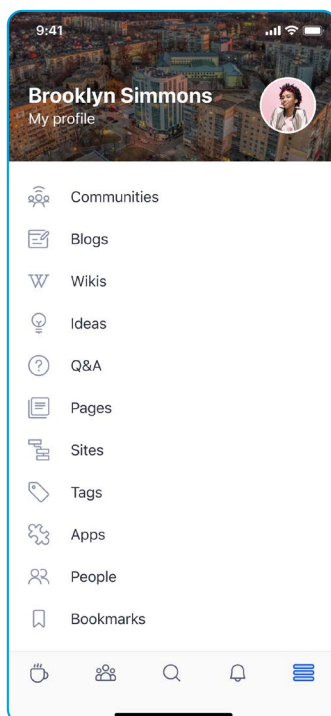
The mobile app gives access to all content and functionality available via desktop.
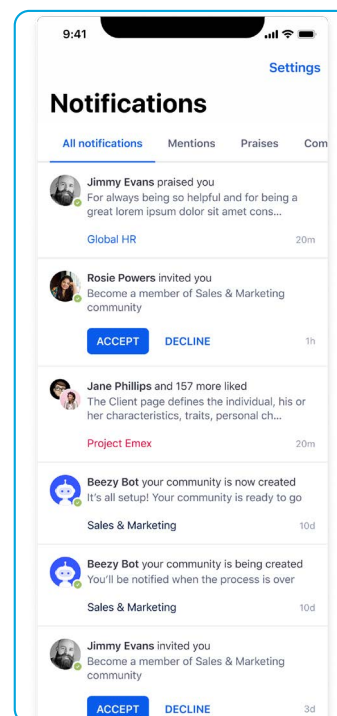
Notifications and associated action buttons in the mobile app.

Employees access Appspace Intranet from a dedicated app, mobile browser (responsive) or via Microsoft's Teams app. The Appspace mobile app can be downloaded from public app stores or distributed via most MDM platforms, with the latter providing the opportunity of custom branding. Most employees will log in using their Microsoft 365 credentials, but Appspace can also support QR code-based enrolment for frontline workers without Microsoft licenses. Device biometrics can be used for access after initial setup.

The mobile user experience feels intuitive and very similar in style to consumer-oriented apps. Icons at the bottom of the screen cover the most used features: news ('Stories' in Appspace Intranet), social newsfeed, search, and notifications. A hamburger menu gives access to the full navigation as would be seen on the desktop.

All content and functionality of the desktop version is available within the app, but access to features such as the social network ('Newsfeed') can be restricted based on the audience if needed. Stories can be commented and liked, and new content posted in the newsfeed along with @mentions and attachments. Content and people search is particularly well-implemented.

For frontline workers and employees that don't have Microsoft licenses, the vendor can provide its 'Employee App' product as a way to access Appspace Intranet content. This can also provide additional workplace management capabilities such as desk booking and wayfinding to complement the intranet functionality.

THINGS TO BEAR IN MIND

Appspace Intranet provides its own end-to-end user experience for employees and admins, replacing and generally improving upon standard SharePoint features. The trade-off is that standard Microsoft SharePoint web parts cannot be used on the same page as those from Appspace. This won't be an issue for organisations that are selecting Appspace Intranet precisely because they prefer, for example, 'Stories' as the news experience instead of communication sites. However, it is different from the approach of some other vendors that simply provide additional or improved web parts that address gaps in SharePoint and can be used next to those from Microsoft. We understand that this is a conscious design choice that has a number of advantages, but it may not appeal to everyone.

To get the full potential from a feature-rich product like Appspace Intranet, some integration work will need to be done. This will be the case to get the most out of the integration framework described in Scenario 4 or to build governance workflows. Appspace says that most of their customers use the product without any customisation. For those that do wish to extend the product, for instance with links into external applications, the ready-made connectors for Power Automate are helpful to speed up the process, and Appspace includes some time from their 'Enhanced Services' team to help.

Finally, note that Appspace Intranet is one of the more expensive SharePoint products in this report, particularly for smaller organisations. However, there is no requirement for partner services that clients will have to factor into the cost of other SharePoint products.

Why choose this product

Appspace Intranet, powered by Beezy, will appeal to complex, global organisations that have sophisticated intranet and digital workplace integration needs. It provides a first-class content publishing experience that customers praise for its ease of use. Organisations that want to integrate communication, community and information delivery across digital signage, intranet and mobile should give Appspace Intranet a closer look.

Vendor roadmap

No roadmap has been supplied by Appspace.

Back to index
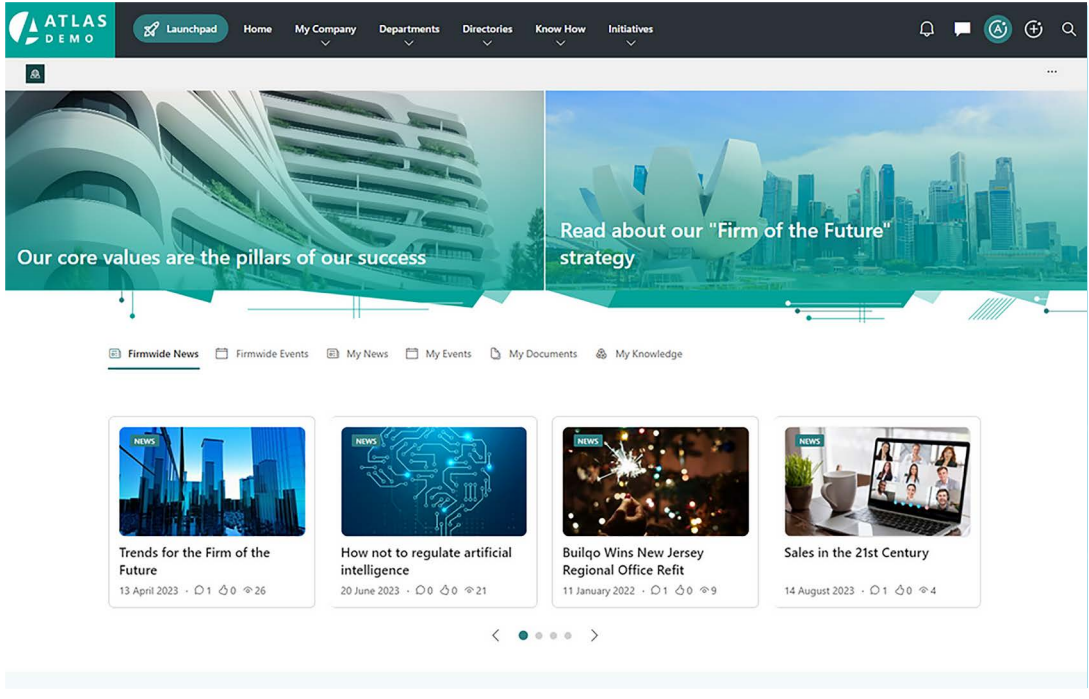
ATLAS

by ClearPeople

FULLY STANDALONE

REQUIRES SHAREPOINT
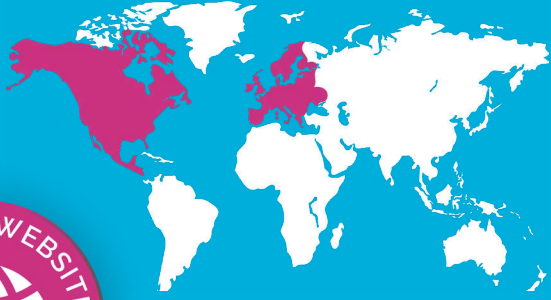
OPTIONALLY WORKS WITH SHAREPOINT

FRONTLINE FOCUS

Typical deployment:

1,000 - 15,000 employees

Company locations:

The product in a nutshell

Atlas brings information, knowledge, and tools together into consistent, branded workspaces making effective use of Microsoft 365 as a foundation.

VISIT THE WEBSITE

SUMMARY

Atlas Intelligent Knowledge Platform owned by ClearPeople

Launched in 2019 by UK-based ClearPeople, the Atlas Intelligent Knowledge Platform (referred to as 'Atlas' from here) combines intranet, collaboration, and knowledge management capabilities to connect people to the information that matters most for their work. Building on Microsoft 365, Atlas plays heavily towards information rich organisations looking to support and mature their knowledge management capabilities.

While Atlas does a good job of enhancing SharePoint's presentation and intranet navigation, its real strength is in how it brings coherence across sites and content that might be scattered over multiple Microsoft 365 tools, in multiple formats. It starts with ConneX, Atlas's governance and provisioning tool, which allows templated workspaces to be seeded with a rich set of metadata. 'Add It', the Atlas content creation tool, then funnels information into the most appropriate workspace and format, ensuring the new content inherits the workspaces metadata. Finally, information, irrespective of where it's stored, can then be aggregated by search-based web parts to create personalised, dynamic, highly targeted pages. This same approach is applied to news and events, allowing communications teams to create highly relevant personalised feeds based on tags and preferences.

Atlas works well in Teams and alongside the Viva suite, and offers integration with Microsoft Topics that we haven't seen elsewhere. There are also options to extend Atlas integration into other line of business systems and index knowledge ordinarily outside of Microsoft's reach, however this will increase the price point. It's also worth noting Atlas uses Viva Engage for community and social features, plus there is no dedicated app, so organisations may find the mobile experience limited. Communicators will find Atlas' offering less rich than other products, too.

While businesses such as law firms and consultancies are typical customers, any organisations facing information sprawl or wanting to make more of their Microsoft 365 investment should consider the Atlas offering. Whether to directly improve knowledge management and collaboration, or to ready your information for the incoming wave of AI features by tightening control and improving the structure of your data.

Pricing

PRICE BAND	
250 users	$ $ $ $
1,000 users	$ $ $ $
5,000 users	$ $ $ $
20,000 users	$ $ $ $

These prices are indicative, offering a comparison of the products featured in this report only. Please contact the vendor for a bespoke quote.

PRICING MODEL

Subscription – price band based on number of users.

COSTS TYPICALLY

Slightly higher at the start of the term, but generally spread.

DISCOUNTS

Charities and non-profit organisations, NHS

PRICE INCLUDES

Project workshops, training for admins, training for end users, customer success services, maintenance & product support, branding / theming services, updates and upgrades

Product type

Ready-to-run, installed in hours

Branding opportunities

Good branding, single choice

Base systems

Fully standalone	Requires SharePoint	Optionally works with SharePoint	Other

Sectors

Accountancy, banking and finance	Business, consulting and management	Engineering and manufacturing	Law, law enforcement and security	Property and construction

You may also be interested in...

omnia   APPSPACE   FRESH

Our core values are the pillars of our success

Read about our "Firm of the Future" strategy

Firmwide News | Firmwide Events | My News | My Events | My Documents | My Knowledge

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NEWS
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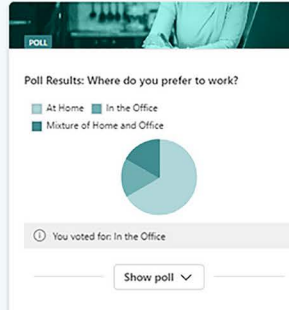Builqo Wins New Jersey Regional Office Refit
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NEWS
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‹ ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ›

Useful Links

Communities	Client Dashboard	Bid Hub
Policies & procedures	Media centre	Knowledge Search
How are you feeling today?	Project Hub	Learning & Development Ce...
Matter Hub	Idea Hub	Lease Hub

Quick Poll

POLL

Poll Results: Where do you prefer to work?

■ At Home ■ In the Office
■ Mixture of Home and Office

ⓘ You voted for: In the Office

Show poll ⌄

explore our values

new starters

know how

wellbeing
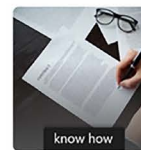
Mandatory Reads

‹ 1 OF 2 ›

ISO 27001 Updates
Expiration date: 31 December 2024
Read and Confirm

Security Incident Reporting Procedure
Expiration date: 31 December 2027
Read and Confirm

Quick introduction to the powerful tools in Atlas
Expiration date: 31 December 2024
Read and Confirm

SPOTLIGHT

Our core values are the pillars of our success
12 April 2023

We are driven by our core values – integrity, excellence in service delivery ,and professionalism – that encourage us to work together with our clients for successful outcomes.

Learn more ›

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COMPANY AND PRODUCT

Company details

Company
ClearPeople

ISO 27001 certified
Yes

Data residency
N/A

Company founded
2003

Product launched
2019

Typical client size
1,000 - 15,000 employees

Largest deployment so far
15,000 employees,
35 offices in 17 countries

Customers
Clients include Alzheimer's Society, Clarke Willmott, Costain, Gowling WLG, Mills & Reeve, Places for People, RNLI, Tokio Marine HCC, Weightmans, ZS Consulting, DAC Beachcroft

Partner locations
Canada, USA

Company locations
London, UK (HQ), USA, Spain

Product and technical details

Name of product
Atlas Intelligent Knowledge Platform

Deployment

Client on-premises	Client private cloud	Microsoft Azure	Amazon Web Services	Vendor-hosted	Microsoft 365 tenant	Other

Client data encrypted

In transit only	In transit and at rest	At rest only

Authentication supported

Entra ID	ADFS	Okta	Open ID	Oauth	G Suite	Other

App deployment

Google Play store	Apple store	MDM	MAM	Other*

*This is based on a 'wrapped app' for the mobile browser made available within client MDM.

Accessibility
WCAG 2.1 compliant

Document library sources integrated

Box	Dropbox	Google Drive	SharePoint	OneDrive	Other*

*All of the above if BA Insight connectors are separately purchased.

Optional integrated enterprise search engines

Coveo	Elastic	IBM	Lucidworks	Microsoft	Mindbreeze	Sinequa	Other*

*If the customer invests in BA Insights then AWS Kendra, AWS OpenSearch Azure Cognitive Search and Solr are also supported.

User interface multi-language

Pre-configured	Editable	Right to left script supported	Other

Content multi-language

Machine translation for publishers	Machine translation for end users	Editable machine translation for publishers	Manual creation for publishers	Right to left script	Other*

*Right to left script supported partially: supported for end users (as is supported in SharePoint) but not supported in the Atlas components used by admins.

Set-up and support

Set-up process for new clients
Installation files are sent to the customer along with a runbook for deployment.

Current version
v5.0

Product updates
Four releases per year, approximately every 3 months.

Product update process
Upon each release customers are provided a deployment package and a runbook. The customer can decide on the timing for the upgrade.

Reverse-out options
As all client data resides within the client's M365 tenant, all data is retained. The client simply loses the licence to use any Atlas components.

Technical support

Email support	Phone support	Chat support	Online portal	24/7 support	Office hours only*

*During UK office hours, with online ticketing systems and a comprehensive knowledge base available 24/7

User community
ClearPeople provide their user community with access to their UserVoice service where clients can share and promote their ideas for product improvements and also vote on others from other clients.

Voice of the vendor

ClearPeople says: "ClearPeople is a world leader in providing enterprise solutions that connect people with knowledge, insights, and expertise. Our flagship product, Atlas, is the first Intelligent Knowledge Platform built specifically for Microsoft 365. Drawing on extensive industry knowledge and a relentless drive for innovation, we've created Atlas, that is trusted by globally recognized brands and forward-thinking organizations to effortlessly make contextual knowledge accessible to workers, so they can focus on work instead of looking for information.

Our commitment to fostering information and knowledge sharing, promoting inclusivity, and ensuring accessibility is not just evident in our software; it's an integral part of our company culture and community involvement. We take pride in delivering products that genuinely serve our customers. That's why our relationships with our clients continue long after the initial engagement, and our referral rates are exceptional. Atlas revolutionizes the way organizations connect, collaborate, and grow, addressing a critical need in today's business environment. Faced with disconnected teams, a burgeoning sprawl of digital tools and information overload, companies count on Atlas to streamline personalized communication, make collaboration easier and smarter, and boost productivity.

By consolidating intranet, collaboration and knowledge management within a single platform, Atlas brings coherence to the thousands of collaboration spaces and content potentially scattered across Microsoft 365 and other systems. It transforms your digital workplace into a highly productive hub, where your entire workforce can seamlessly find, share, and collaborate on information. Atlas achieves this by enhancing Microsoft 365, tapping into its capabilities, and securely harnessing the power of AI to deliver added value.

Atlas' super-power is the way it enables organizations to leverage knowledge and AI. Unlike most knowledge systems that focus on a small subset of highly curated knowledge assets, Atlas provides contextualized and auto-curated knowledge within your existing workflows. Atlas not only helps individuals safely engage with AI, but it also automates data structuring and governance, contributing to the creation of authoritative 'knowledge collections' that incorporate authoritative sources of truth.

With its intuitive interface, robust knowledge, and AI capabilities, as well as comprehensive governance and provisioning features, Atlas optimizes and consolidates your technology investment, for today… and for the future."

Voice of the customer

Customers praise Atlas' close integration with Microsoft 365 and integrated dynamic user experience, which one person described as "buttery smooth". Another customer referenced "increased productivity" through the extensive knowledge management features, which came in for praise from across other responses too. Many are impressed by the additional web parts offered, commenting on their simplicity and flexibility saying they're able to create engaging and personalised experiences. One customer said "the way it can flexibly display related content on a page makes the whole experience for users much more dynamic and engaging". One customer summarised nicely, saying, "I couldn't pick just one as the wide range of features out of the box, has been a real game changer".

In terms of requests for change, a good portion of those who responded said they were happy with the platform or there was nothing specific. One person wanted more options to customise the appearance of the home page, specifically "more focus on the configurability of Atlas web part layouts" so that it could be more news orientated. Another customer mentioned advanced document life cycle management and version control integration could be improved asking for "clearer details on audit trails". Improvements to analytics and greater sharing of use cases from other clients completed the requests. These kinds of high-end requirements demonstrate the already mature state of the Atlas customer base.

There was unanimous praise for ClearPeople as a vendor, with customers calling out their responsiveness, knowledgeable staff, and high levels of support throughout the deployment process and beyond. Many describe the value they get from the partnership; "they look out for our business' best interests, they have a deep understanding of our nuances as a client, and there's a clear commitment from their side to see us succeed with the implementation of Atlas. The team has been responsive, engaging, and receptive". There were also several mentions of Atlas' UserVoice community, saying ClearPeople are responsive to feedback and quick to introduce suggestions into their quarterly product updates.

SCENARIOS & SCORES

Please see the Scenarios below for more detail on each of these.

SCENARIO AND SCORE	KEY BENEFITS	IMPROVEMENTS / CONSIDERATIONS
3.5 **1. User Experience & Visual Appeal**	Range of custom web parts that extend Microsoft capability. Fully compatible with SharePoint, Teams, and Viva.	Duplicates some Microsoft functionality which might be confusing.
3+ **2. Publishing & Communications Management**	Slick and comprehensive 'Add It' tool walks a contributor through content creation.	Relies on SharePoint and Viva for many communication features.
3+ **3. Community & Engagement**	Idea hubs support ideation.	Offers little over out-of-the-box Microsoft capabilities.
3+ **4. Integrations & Services (Including M365)**	Strong integrations with search indexes. Enhances premium Microsoft products like Microsoft Topics and SharePoint Premium.	Few two-way integrations out-of-the-box.
4+ **5. Information Finding & Search**	Metadata is automatically seeded into all content. Powerful capabilities to surface information through search or dynamically in pages.	Search interfaces and filtering options are extensive and, if not carefully planned, risk becoming cluttered or complex.
4 **6. Administrator Experience**	ConneX admin dashboard provides broad overview of all sites and workspaces. Powerful templating features to support site creation.	Administrators may find themselves switching between Atlas and Microsoft admin pages.
3+ **7. Analytics**	A wealth of data and a large set of reports. Great for data-savvy or those comfortable creating custom PowerBI reports.	Reporting provided by TyGraph. The average user might struggle with the complexity of reports. Still some gaps in reporting.
2.5+ **8. Mobile & Frontline Support**	Navigation adapts well for mobile. 'HoverPoint' works well for frontline workers.	Offers little more than adapting to a mobile screen size and mobile Teams app or browser.
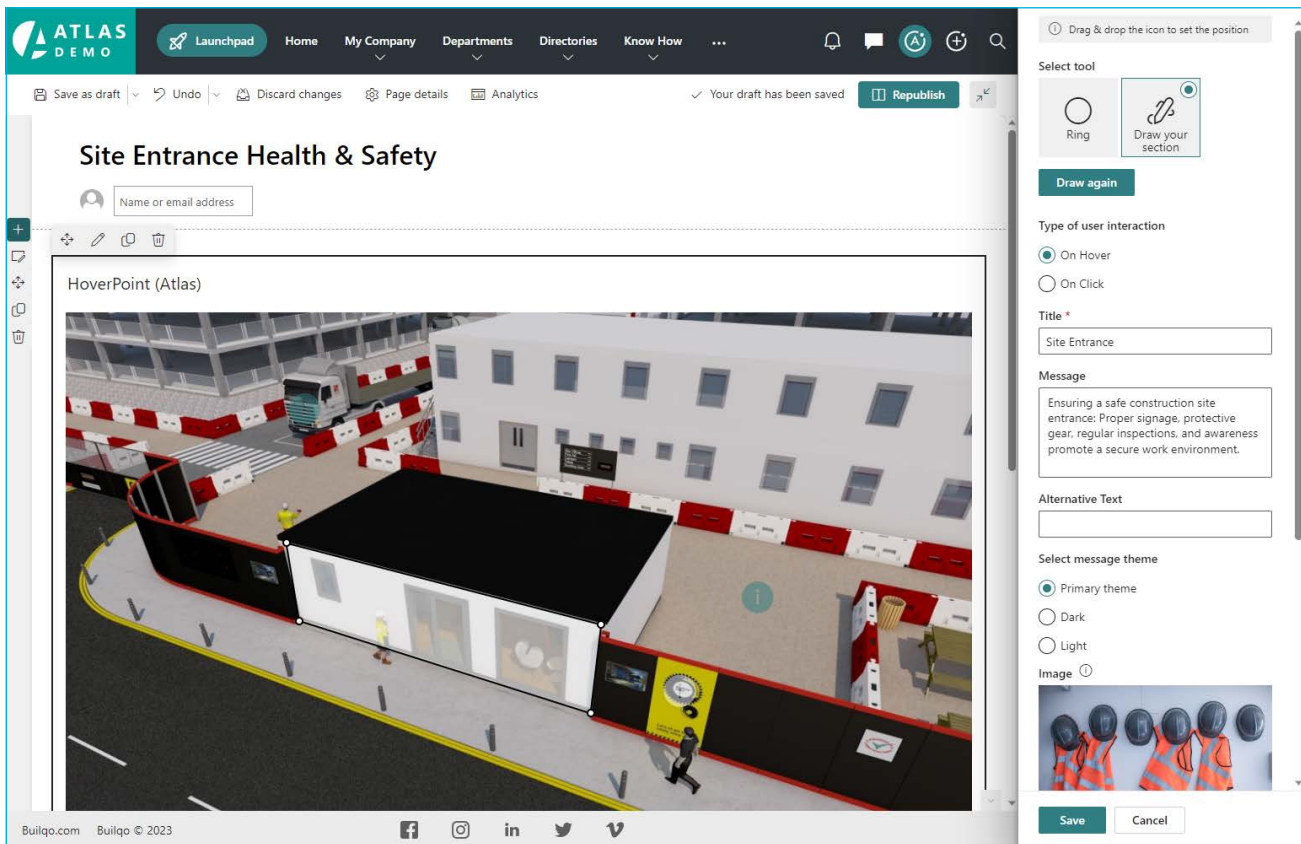
*HoverPoint adds clickable hotspots to an image.*

Building on Microsoft UI, Atlas's interface works well across SharePoint, Teams, and Viva. A good selection of custom web parts maintains a consistent, clean, and modern look while adding a sophisticated and elegant set of features to display almost any content in a dynamic, consistent and visually attractive way. These web parts are based on search and metadata, which are core parts of the Atlas functionality. For employees, a page constructed from well-configured search-based Atlas web parts can result in an interface that is rich, relevant, and grounded in their interests. However, when this underlying metadata and structure is exposed to them, the options could be overwhelming, and the menus and pickers may become complex.

However, ClearPeople have focused on ensuring information is always well structured and organised. This is emphasised through features such as 'HoverPoint' and the 'Useful Links' web part that is based on a search criterion from Atlas's taxonomy. HoverPoint adds navigation onto images, supporting interactive diagrams and process flows. The HoverPoint web part allows images to be marked up with clickable areas. It can be used as an overlay on maps, plans, process diagrams or just to create more visual in-page navigation. It's a versatile feature that's particularly useful in illustrating visual problems, such as by providing an interactive overlay to process flows or 'how to' instructions for a physical product.

Atlas offers a site-wide global navigation with two options: a deep navigation that goes down to five levels, or a mega menu with three levels. The menus are permission-trimmed, support multi- language and are dynamically built based on Microsoft Entra ID groups. Additionally, the site-wide menu contains a feature called launchpad that allows users to search and quickly access applications from anywhere on the platform. Typically used as a menu to place tools and applications, it can contain anything with a URL and every link can be personalised or targeted. There's also an icon menu providing routes to search, feedback, 'Add It' (see Scenario 2), AI Assistant (released in late 2023, so we've not seen it), and 'My Atlas' where users can store their own set of personal bookmarks or links, that will follow them across every tool or device they access Atlas from. Administrators can prefill My Atlas with a set of suggested links too, which is helpful for guiding new starters to pages or for adding links to content that doesn't quite fit into another menu.

The notifications icon is also in the global menu, highlighted with an unread badge / dot. There's an option for notifications to be shown in full under the navigation, in configurable coloured bands. While the home page does need to be refreshed for these to show, this feature can be useful for time sensitive messages. Each message needs to be dismissed by the user to remove it from the navigation bar but remains viewable under the icon. Notifications work well but is a little more limited than other products we've seen.

The navigation overall is clean and flexible, but might cause some minor confusion for M365 users as elements like the Launchpad feel similar to the M365 App launcher menu. Additionally, notifications from within Atlas don't bring in other M365 notifications, which might be confusing for people using Atlas through Teams where the 'Activity' icon looks very similar.
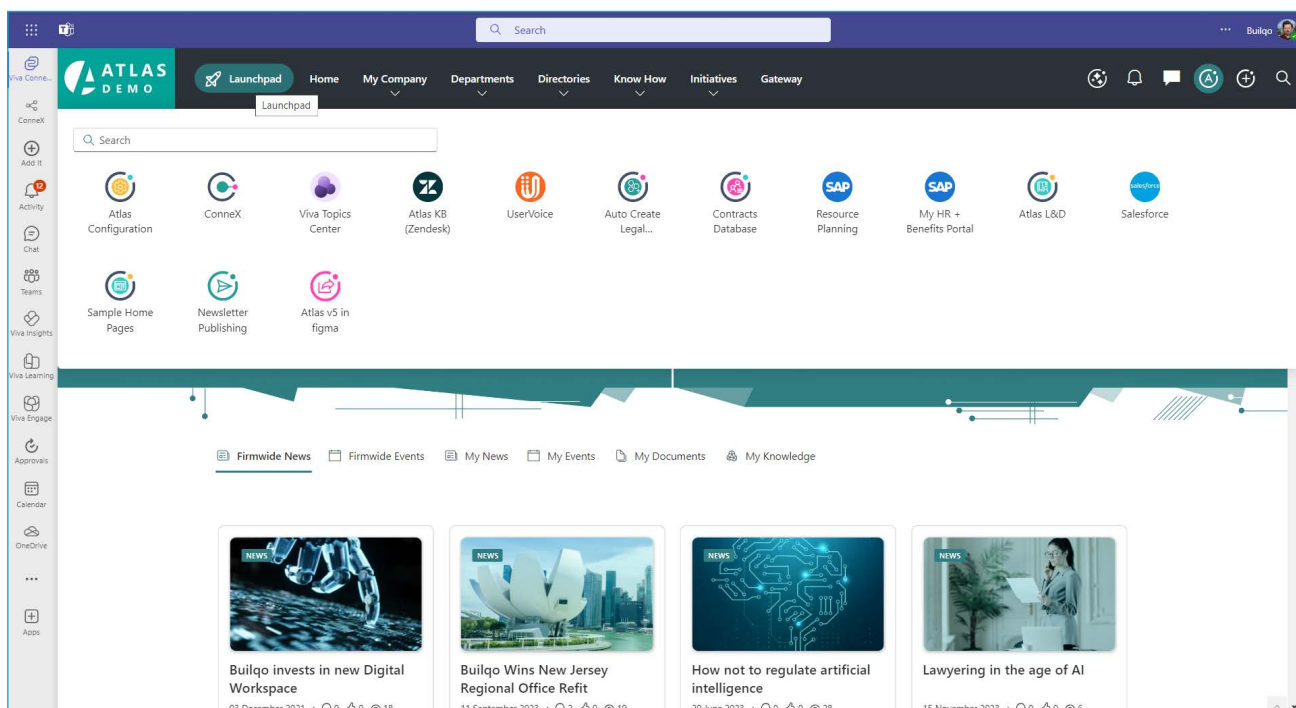
A menu with the launchpad open, showing a selection of targeted application links.

The header navigation is the main way in which Atlas supplies global branding, in the form of logos and colours, but their own web parts offer some additional branding capabilities with accent colours and image gradients to create a consistent look. However, the interface is limited by SharePoint's branding capabilities and the font is fixed as Segoe UI (see the SharePoint review for more). Atlas says this will change with the launch of the SharePoint branding centre.

Overall, the Atlas interface is an improvement over SharePoint's default interface in terms of functionality and aesthetics. It offers more features for navigation, content management, and personalisation. However, it also introduces some challenges for usability and simplicity.
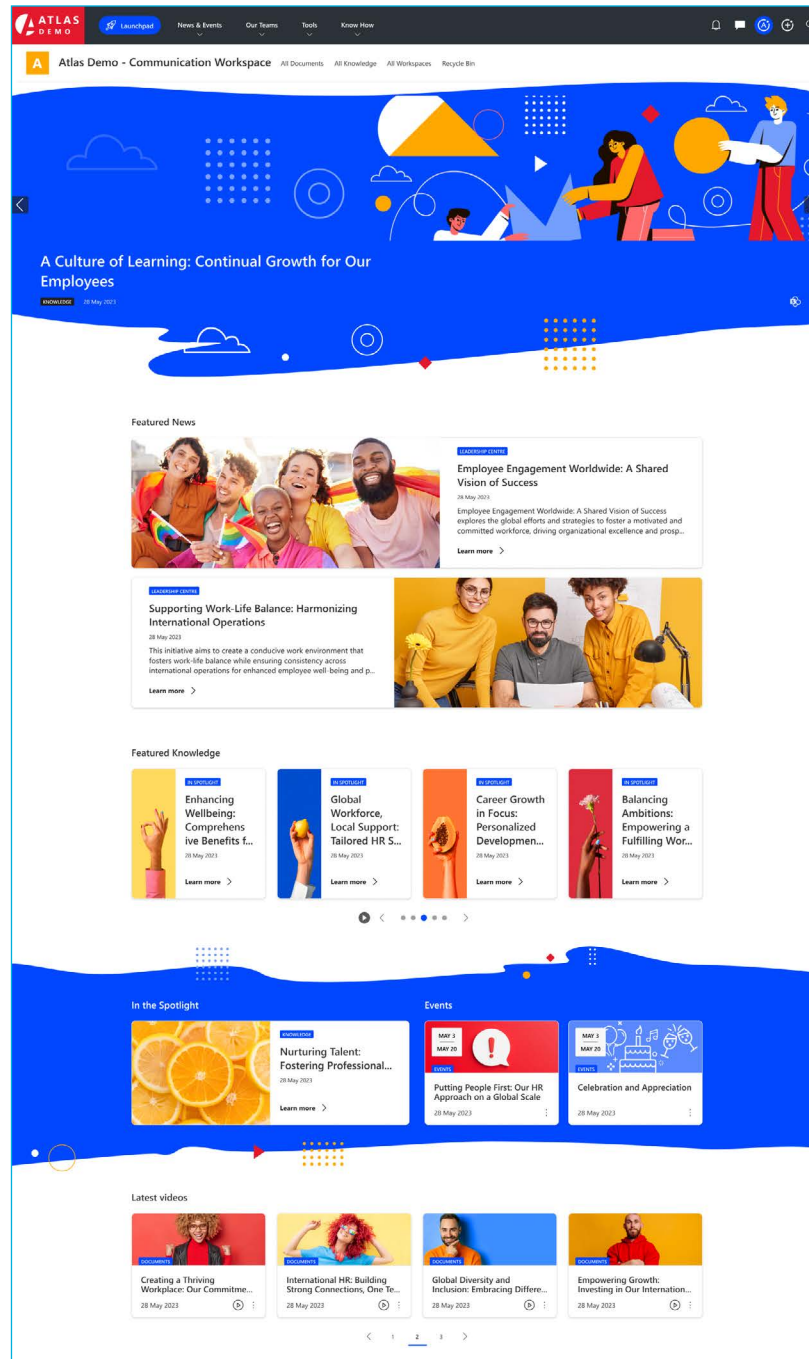
Diverse branding applied to an Atlas page.
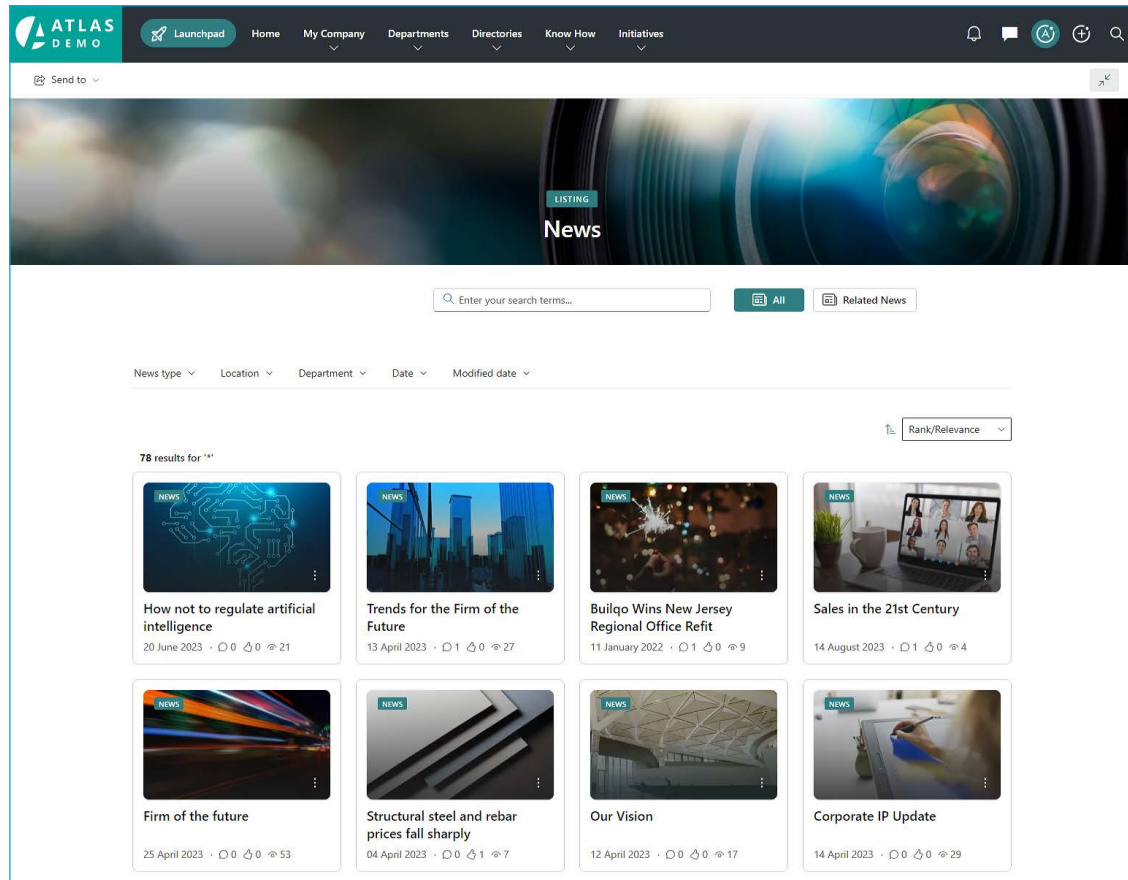
Atlas search web parts bring together news articles.

Atlas allows you to build on Microsoft's communications functionality for news, using its global publishing tool, which is also excellent for knowledge-based content. To create a news article or any type of content, such as documents, pages, links, etc., publishers use the 'Add It' feature. Add It provides a consistent and easy way to create content with a wizard-like workflow. Publishers choose where and what they want to create, select a preconfigured and tagged template, then confirm the metadata and security options for the content. They are then presented with SharePoint controls to add content to the page and customise (where the template has been setup to allow it).

The 'ConneX Studio' (see Scenario 6 for more) makes template creation easy for admins – something that would require coding in native SharePoint. When a new template, workspace or library is created through ConneX there's opportunity to set default metadata that is then inherited by anything created within it. Attributes are all configurable, although Atlas will provide some well-thought-through defaults. Atlas makes good use of the Microsoft term store capabilities, meaning tags are easy to add, with type-ahead or search options.

By using Add It, publishers ensure their content is organised and governed according to the organisation's requirements. This also ensures that it is optimised to be displayed in Atlas's search driven web parts as targeted or personalised content. These benefits stretch well beyond news publishing too and are described in more detail in Scenarios 4 and 5.

To get the best out of these features, ClearPeople will spend time as they onboard clients, working on taxonomy, configuring templates via ConneX and building out workspaces. The complexity of identifying and implementing a complete and useful taxonomy shouldn't be underestimated, but once this structure is in place, classifying, organising, and curating information is near effortless. New content, including news stories, automatically inherits the metadata from the folder and workplace they are added too, contributors only needing to provide document specific details. Atlas's search-based web parts can then instantly surface that new document wherever its related.

Once set up publishers can create a dynamic and personal user experience that goes beyond SharePoint's audience targeting options. Essentially content, whether news or something else, is presented to people based on taxonomy terms and metadata attributes that is matched against user preferences (from 'My Atlas') or Entra ID Groups. Dynamically created groups, such as for new starters, will work with Entra Dynamic Groups; however, this experience will require Entra ID premium features.

There is the possibility to present each user a unique set of content on a page, depending on their preferences and profile, but this can make it harder for communicators to predict what their audiences will see. It is possible to override user preferences, but feedback in the 'Voice of the Customer' section suggests that some organisations would like greater control over home page content.
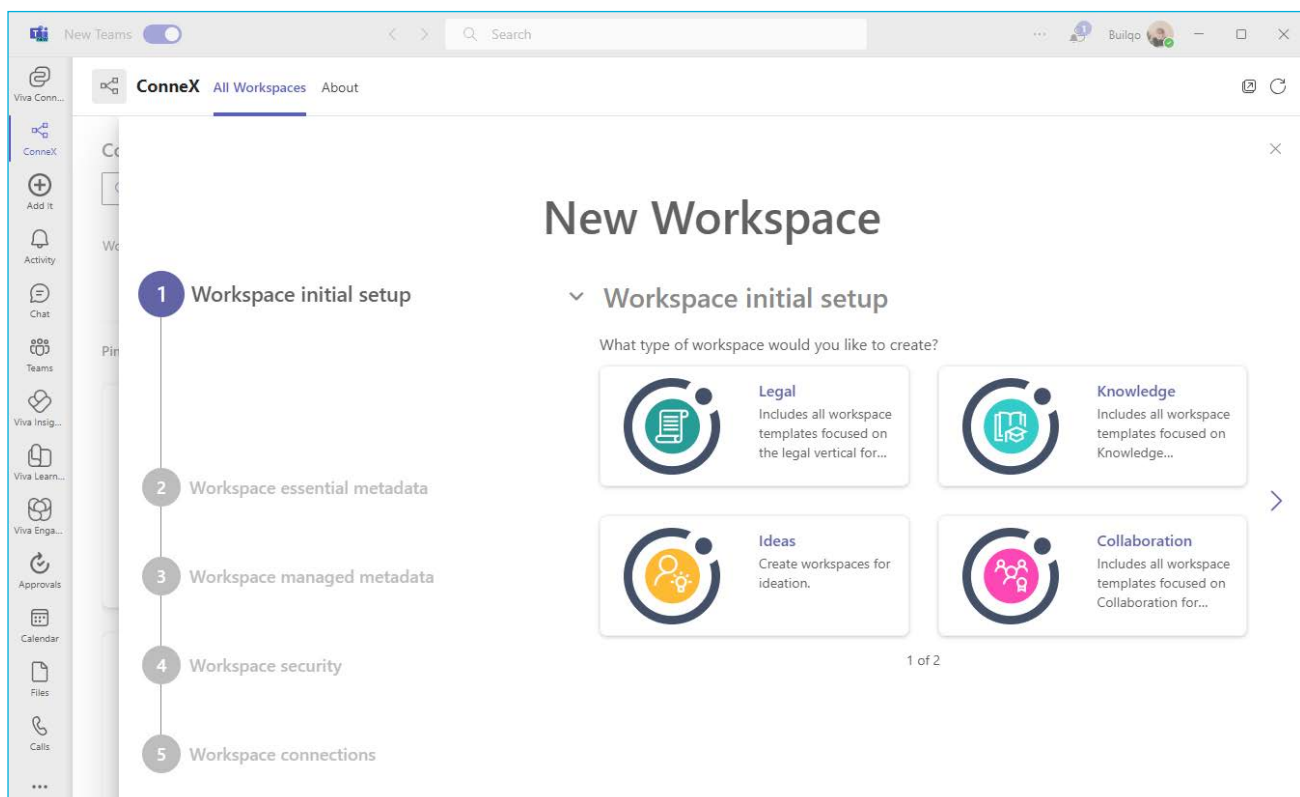
The 'ConneX'' feature has a process flow to create new workspaces or new content, which ensures it's all tagged and added to appropriate templates.
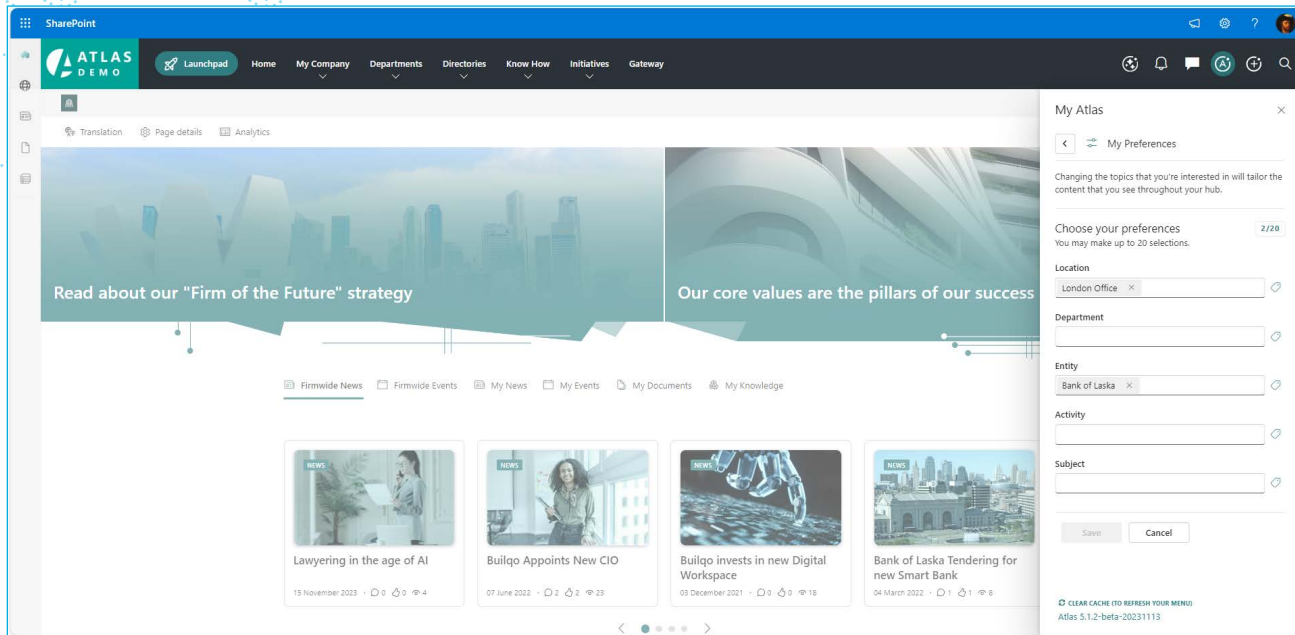
'My Atlas' is where people choose which topics they're interested in.

For campaign management or managing communications across email, social and intranet channels, Atlas leans on Microsoft's premium product Viva Amplify rather than providing its own functionality. Amplify is discussed more in the SharePoint review and organisations should note it is an additional cost.

Atlas's strength is clearly in the handling of knowledge, but for more traditional communication needs there is also a notification feature (see Scenario 1) and a 'Mandatory Read' feature that can meet some crisis / urgent communications use cases. This can be expanded through integration with Power Automate for alerts into email or Teams, or even for editorial workflows. ClearPeople say they've helped organisations create similar Power Platform solutions in the past, but this might not be suitable if you don't already have an established Power Platform skill base in your organisation.
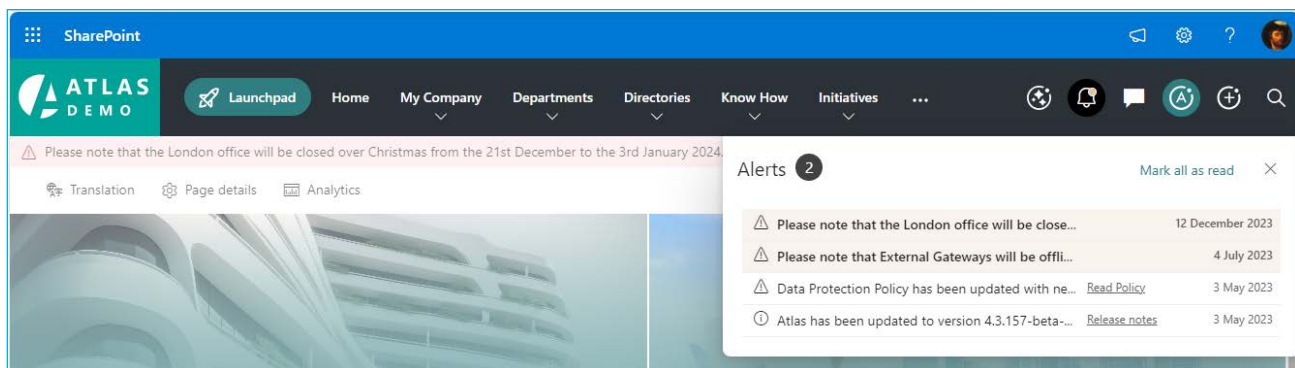
Urgent communications are supported through notification banners.
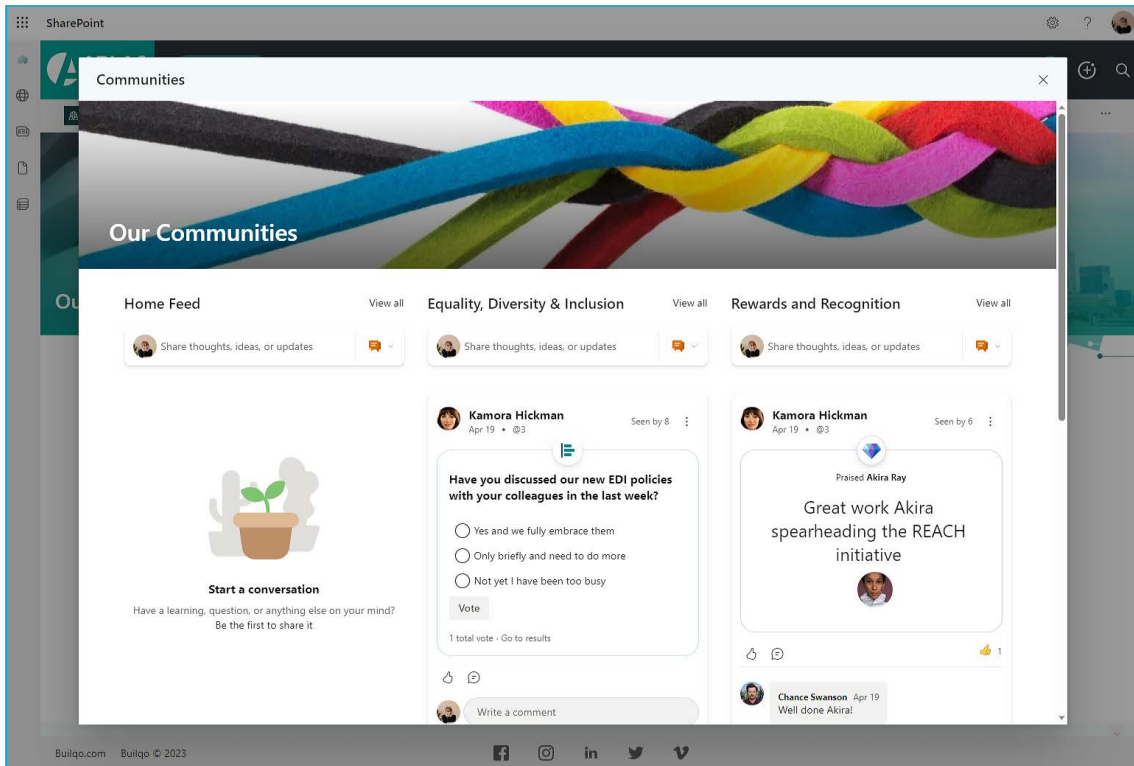
An Atlas modal window containing Viva Engage web parts to highlight communities.

Atlas doesn't compete with Microsoft standard social features in 365 applications and tools. ClearPeople's strategy is to rely on Microsoft's own roadmap for development, particularly around Viva Engage, rather than duplicate features. However, Atlas Workspaces (see Scenario 6) and Knowledge Hubs (see Scenario 4) can be used for projects or potentially in combination with Viva Engage for communities of practice or knowledge sharing.

Atlas Workspaces and Knowledge Hubs don't stop a Viva Engage community from being signposted or linked too, but community generated content is separate from the authoritative content that Atlas focuses so much of its attention on. As a result, aspects such as news commenting feel basic (see the SharePoint and Viva review in this report for details). Atlas web parts will optionally show like, comment and view counts, giving some limited visibility of social reactions. If an organisation places less importance on social content, Atlas's approach likely works well, otherwise any close integration on pages will be limited to the use of the SharePoint Viva Engage community web parts.

There are options for more structured community content such as ideation; an Idea Hub template adds web parts for idea-generating campaigns, with support for commenting and voting on each idea. Out of the box, the design isn't visually strong compared to other products we've seen in this report. However, as may be expected of Atlas, a taxonomy sits underneath that enables re-use across the platform. For example, a carousel on the HR department page could show all ideas submitted for employee wellbeing.
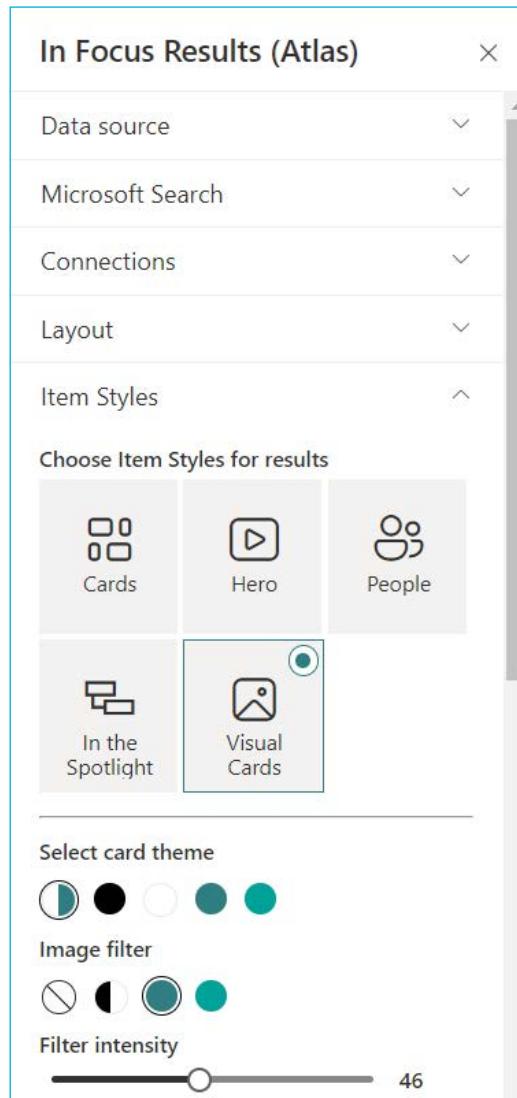
'In Focus' web part configuration allows content from multiple indexes and sources to be presented and laid out onto a page in an attractive, information-rich and consistent way.

In keeping with Atlas's focus on content and search, the most impressive integrations are where this capability can be extended to third-party sources.

Atlas works with both SharePoint search and Microsoft 365 search indexes, including Microsoft search extensions. ClearPeople has also partnered with BA Insight, an enterprise search company, to offer a set of connector services into platforms like SAP, iManage (legal document management) and ServiceNow. The BA Insight extensions can bring documents and information from these connected services directly into Atlas to be displayed alongside and integrated into the Atlas interface. While these connectors are a significant addition to licence costs provided for this report, they can be purchased and added as required, with discounts available for Atlas customers. Also, as the cost model is not 'per item' as it is with Microsoft search connectors, it's likely a more scalable option for information rich organisations.

As Atlas has built their web parts around search, setting up these connectors allows content from the connected sources to be pulled into pages like any other content. For example, a page could contain content from SharePoint, ServiceNow or other systems, where related documents or news is listed in a consistent format and is automatically updated when new related content is available.

To exploit Atlas's ability to collate information, ClearPeople have added the concept of 'Knowledge Hubs'. Knowledge Hubs are a type of Atlas site that highlight the full context and activity around a specific topic or entity. These are ideal for sales opportunities, projects, ideas, or anything else where knowledge might be stored in disparate places.

The example below is a 'Sales Hub', created by a workflow (through an API in ConneX – see Scenario 6), triggered when a sales lead moves to an opportunity in Salesforce. The site template pulls a description and details of the opportunity from Salesforce onto the site's main page, and then brings in related presentations, proposals, and emails from other systems. As every document is pulled into the page through a search query, the information shown is dynamic and personalised. The most recent information is always shown and restricted to only the document the viewer has access to see.

A 'Sales Hub' with content pulled from Salesforce embedded into the page.

The range of interactive two-way integrations is limited, but there is an Atlas script editor which can be used to embed external tools into pages. We saw an example where a Zendesk chatbot appeared as an in-page popup.

When it comes to working with Microsoft 365 there's a clear philosophy to align and integrate broadly. Rather than compete with Microsoft premium offerings, Atlas builds on them further. For example, we were shown an integration with Microsoft SharePoint Premium content assembly – a feature that creates an NDA document by completing a few simple form fields in an Atlas page. Even premium knowledge management in Microsoft Topics is extended further and integrated into Atlas web parts, with the ability to have Topic cards showing for related metadata rather than the default behaviour of only appearing over a mentioned keyword. An example of this is shown in the below screenshot.
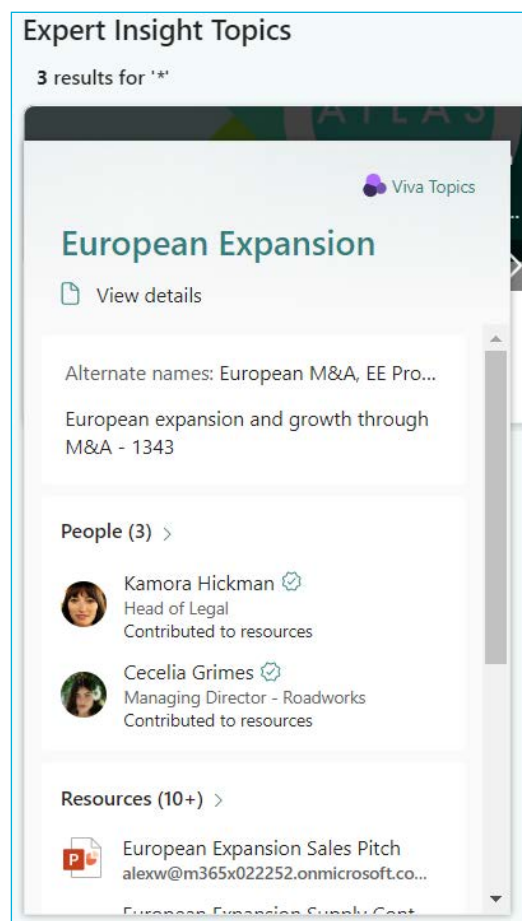
A Microsoft Topics card showing within an Atlas web part.

Where organisations have invested in add-on features such as SharePoint Premium or Microsoft Topics, but need to further embed them into the user experience of the intranet, Atlas is one of the few vendors we've seen that offer this. But there's an appreciation of more everyday work practices in Atlas too. For example, information cards for sites and Workspaces contain default links to associated OneNote, calendars and Teams, even offering options to navigate directly to specific channels. This type of subtle integration is typical of ClearPeople's design choices, ensuring that Atlas enhances rather than distracts from the ways people use Microsoft 365. This will be appreciated by businesses who are already familiar with M365 products and have good adoption of the toolset.

Overall, Atlas compliments Microsoft 365 well and has a clear vision of what it wants to be and where it wants to add value. Its clear product strategy and value proposition will resonate with businesses wanting to exploit their organisational knowledge.
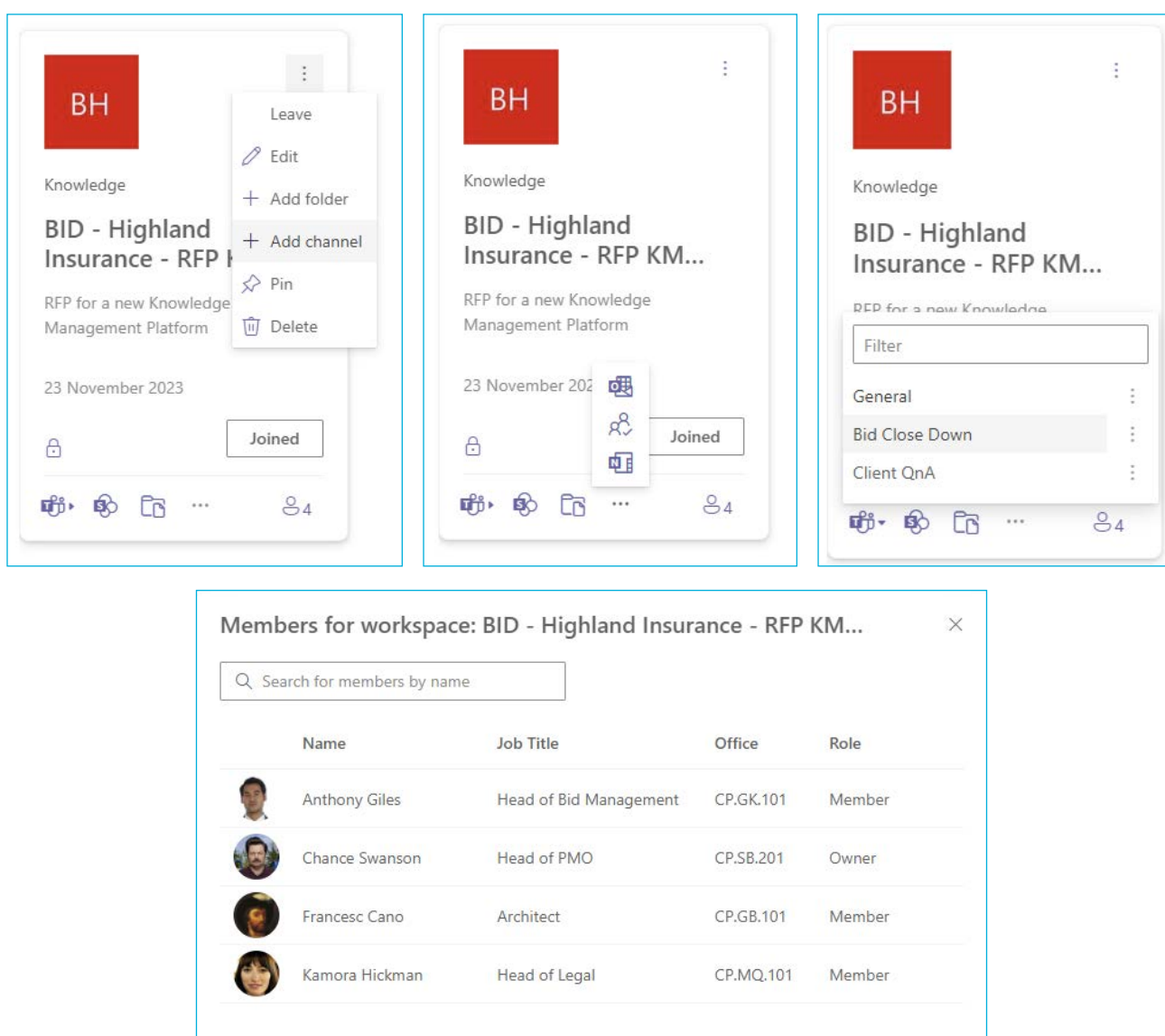
A Workspace card highlighting associated people, sites, OneNote, and highlighted Teams channels.
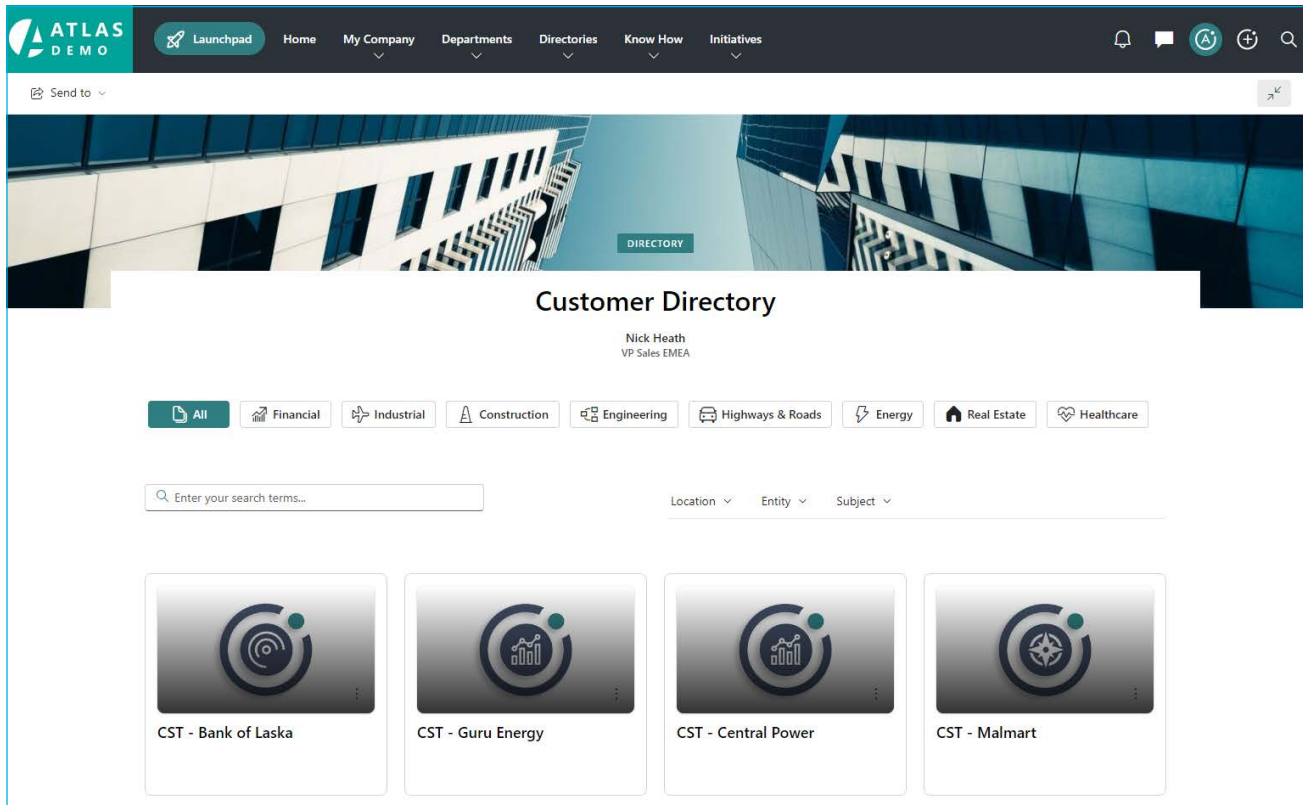
A customer directory created as a search results page.

Tagging, organising, and retrieving information is at the centre of Atlas' functionality, so it's no surprise that search is an area where the product excels. Beyond using search to support seeking out information, it is core to how Atlas builds content pages, and the product adds features to address weaknesses in the standard Microsoft offering at every stage of the information and document life cycle. The volume and variety of metadata that's added into every piece of content (see Scenario 2 for the 'Add It' functionality) means there's a wealth of options to refine and narrow search criteria to find exactly what's needed.

When someone does need to look for something, the global search navigation opens as a list of categorised buttons, offering ways to refine and scope a query. It's a larger and more complex menu than most would expect as an entry point to search, but it's an effective route into the various results pages, each tailored towards its purpose and offering further refinement into specifics of your search need. The default results types include 'all', 'knowledge', 'communication', 'FAQs' and 'People'. Using the strong query-based web parts and refiners means search results pages can be created to cater for any topic or content type, for example the 'customer directory' example above.

Search managers can promote content as 'gold graded' (Atlas' term for promoted results) to ensure they're highlighted as official or most likely content. There are also options to add FAQs which will appear as highlighted content, along with people matches, to the side of the main search results. FAQs are currently added by administrators as promoted answers to questions, but soon to be released AI search functionality will embed these FAQs more centrally and improve its ability to understand and reply in natural language. This means answers to questions could be more nuanced and tailored to the question, not reliant on someone having predicted and prewritten a response.

Results are configurable to be broad and across all the content Atlas has in its indexes, including anything that's been extended into with BA Insights (see Scenario 4). Alternatively, focused results pages scope narrowly on information attributes, target audience and standard metadata like author and modified date. With so many options available the main management challenge is likely to be maintaining simplicity.
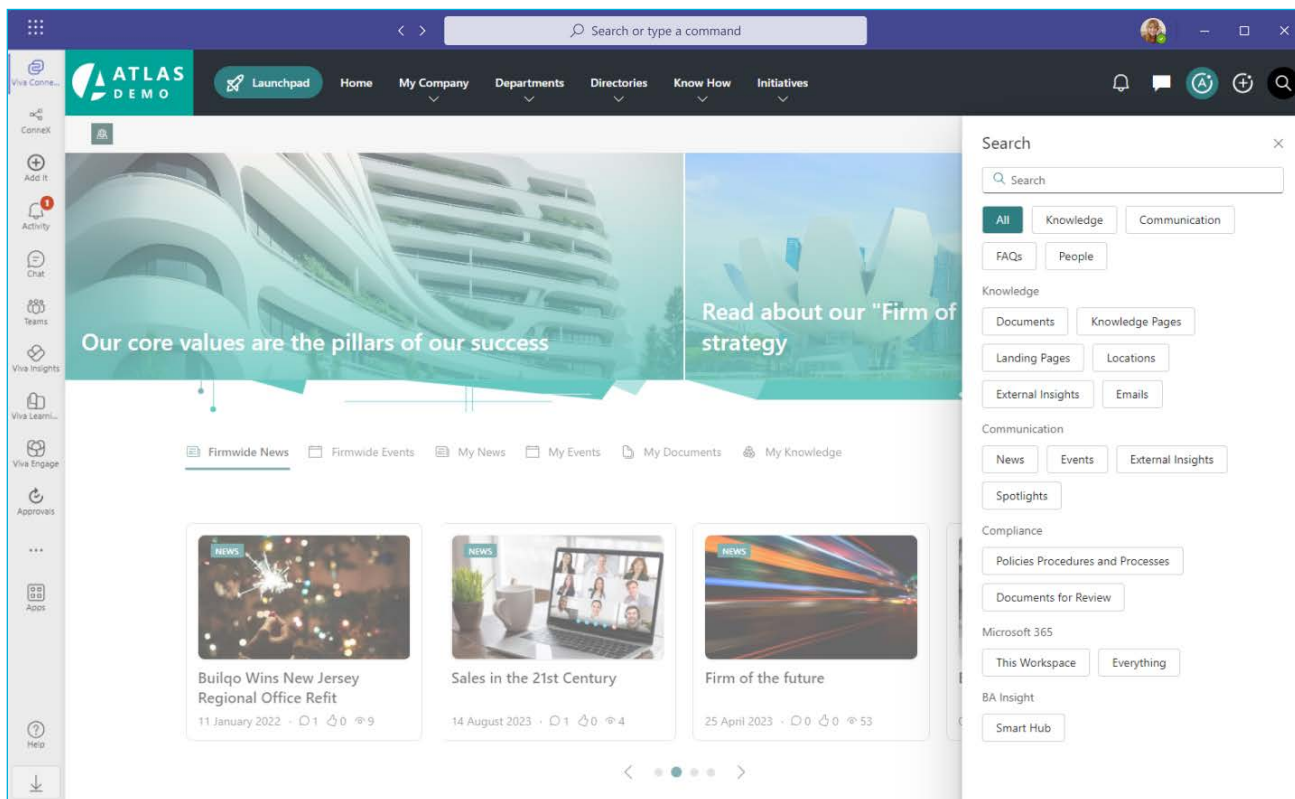
The global search pane showing options to help refine a query.

An exemplar of a good balance between functionality and simplicity is people search. ClearPeople have created an engaging visual interface that takes full advantage of available metadata. Options to filter by department, location and title can be extended to include attributes like specialisms to support expert finding. The search results show as cards that can be kept to simple headline information or extended to include additional profile information, including customisable links that people can use to point to public profiles. Organisation charts and reporting lines are shown using the standard M365 profile card and org chart web parts. A people search web part can also be embedded into pages with preconfigured filters and used to create a 'meet the team' or 'check with an expert' section.

ClearPeople is keen to highlight that a good search, with well-tagged, organised content and confidence that access has been appropriately restricted, is the best way to prepare for the upcoming GenAI revolution. Tools like Microsoft Copilot will only be as good as the content they can index, and Atlas sets the foundations for AI-generated content that is rich, grounded in organisational knowledge and as accurate and secure as possible.

The people search results page displaying a visual directory of people results.
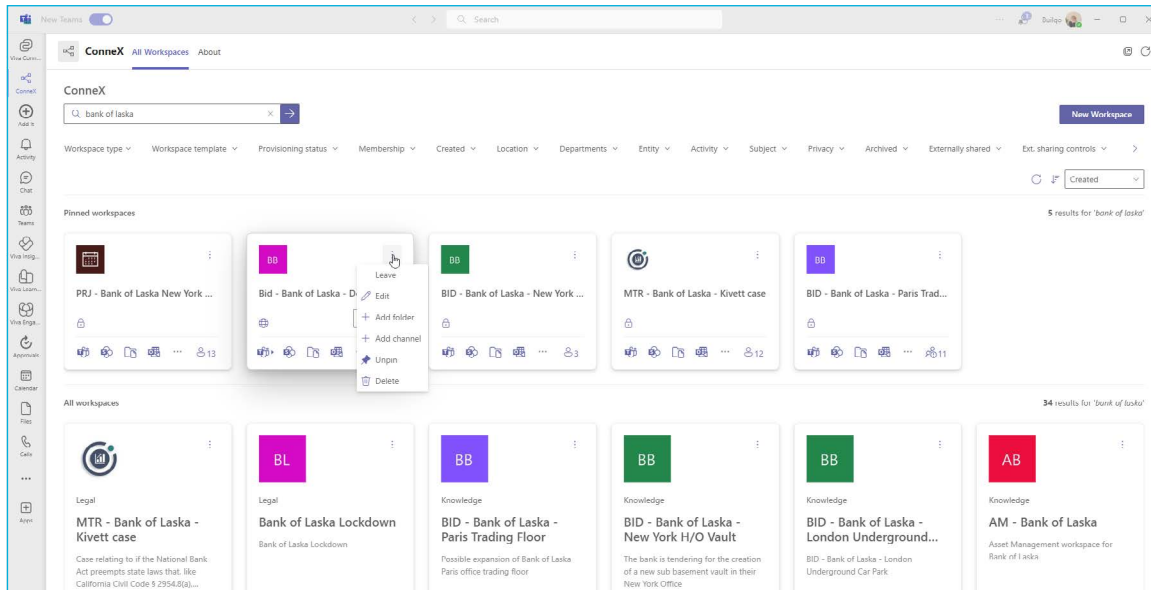
The ConneX dashboard shows a directory of Workspaces.

ConneX is Atlas's management and provisioning tool. Its main page provides a status dashboard of all the 'Workspaces' within a tenant, with options to filter down by any facet, such as status. There's an option to create a new Workspace, although sites created natively through M365 can be 'Atlasified' to bring them inline with the enhanced templating and metadata Workspaces created through ConneX. It's possible to create new Workspaces to be an outcome of another system or process, such as creating a Bid Workspace for each new Salesforce opportunity (see Scenario 4). Note that Viva Engage Communities will appear in ConneX but can't be created there.

Each Workspace can be configured with templated layouts, which is simplified through another tool, Connex Studio, which provides a no-code interface to create SharePoint sites and Microsoft Teams templates. Workspace metadata can be inherited or added at the point of creation. Any data compliance needs, such as data retention or deletion policies, can be achieved through an integration with Microsoft Purview data life cycle management plus the application of retention labels through the Atlas template. There's also an option to set default owners, member, and visitor groups. Visitor groups are especially helpful if you have, for example, legal compliance teams that must have oversight of everything to ensure quality.

SharePoint home sites (including multiples) and / or Viva Connections act as the intranet home page(s), enhanced with Atlas web parts and theming. While there's nothing to prevent use of SharePoint's default web parts, ClearPeople have created a good selection of their own that add Atlas' branding and search functionality. Administration of a SharePoint page with Atlas web parts retains all the simplicity of using Microsoft's own.

The ConneX dashboard, integration with Microsoft underlying security and compliance features, ability to search for content and filter by last modified, plus content metrics and dashboards (see Scenario 7) collectively give content managers good visibility of information's relevancy and value. However, the content management tools would benefit from being brought together into a single dashboard. This fragmentation is exacerbated further, especially for smaller organisations or those without strong operational management of the various M365 admin functions as other admin tasks will also require access to the standard Microsoft 365 admin dashboards. For example, multi-language support is currently limited to what's available through SharePoint natively, with a localised language variation manually created and made available. Administration across Atlas can feel messy as a result, particularly when compared with how strong ConneX is.

7. ANALYTICS
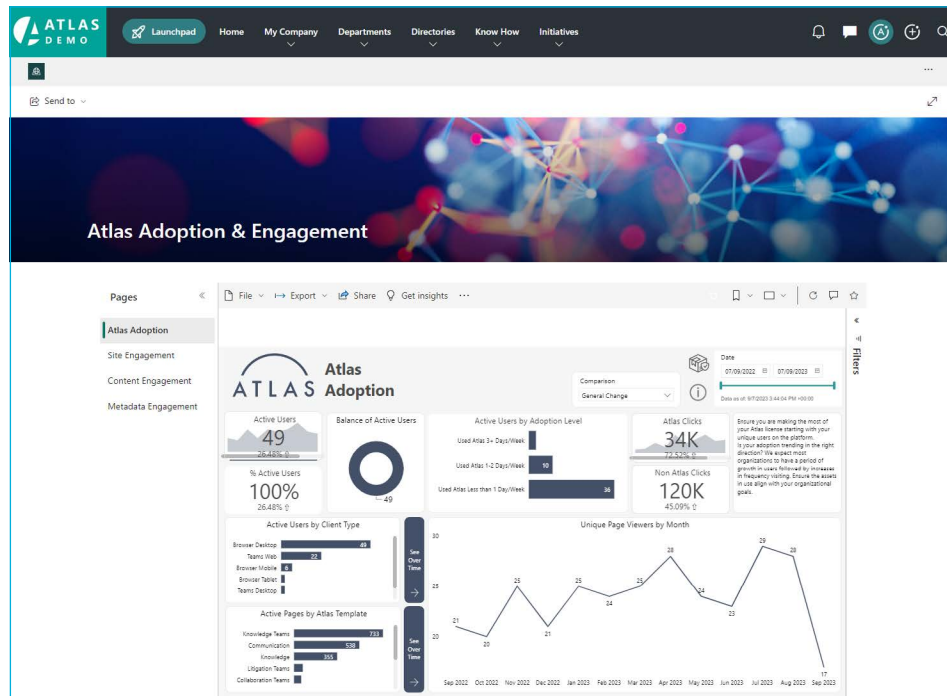
The TyGraph Atlas adoption report; interactive elements allow drilling down into users or pages, then buttons and menus support investigation into changes and trends over time.

Atlas doesn't contain any reporting capabilities within itself but works in a way that won't distort any of the native M365 reporting; see the SharePoint review for more details, as some may find this too basic. Note mandatory read reporting is accessed natively through Atlas. However, we saw a demo of AvePoint's analytics product, 'TyGraph – analytics for Microsoft 365', which has been included in the pricing provided too. This is a SaaS product and involves analytic data being stored in the TyGraph data warehouse, so may require some additional due diligence. Organisations will need a PowerBI Pro licence to access and use TyGraph, but the tool contains an extensive and detailed set of reports designed to highlight adoption, content engagement, content usage and page performance.

Each report is packed with information and options to drill down into more detail. While the interface will take a little time to get used to, we could see the ability to get valuable insights through these dashboards. All the same, we would welcome more simplified views as a start-point. For example, using the reports to understand the effectiveness of navigation will likely need PowerBI skills to customise the TyGraph reports (or build your own using the TyGraph data). Similarly understanding the effectiveness of a communication campaign will require some work, as audience-centric views of data don't appear by default.

TyGraph 'content engagement' reports give a good picture of activity, highlighting the pages, tags and sites that are getting the most visits and attention. Metrics like 'author streaks league' let you see who's regularly contributing, while the 'metadata engagement' reports lets you see the most prevalently used and accessed tags. We like the 'referring page' data that visualises top user journeys. While TyGraph offers a search analytics report it offers little over the SharePoint search analytics, however it does place the data into the TyGraph warehouse.

Overall, if you have PowerBI skills then TyGraph offers a wealth of data to interrogate and combine to reveal insights. Non-technical teams, such as communicators, will be disappointed that simple reports focused on their needs are not available out of the box.

2.5+

8. MOBILE & FRONTLINE SUPPORT
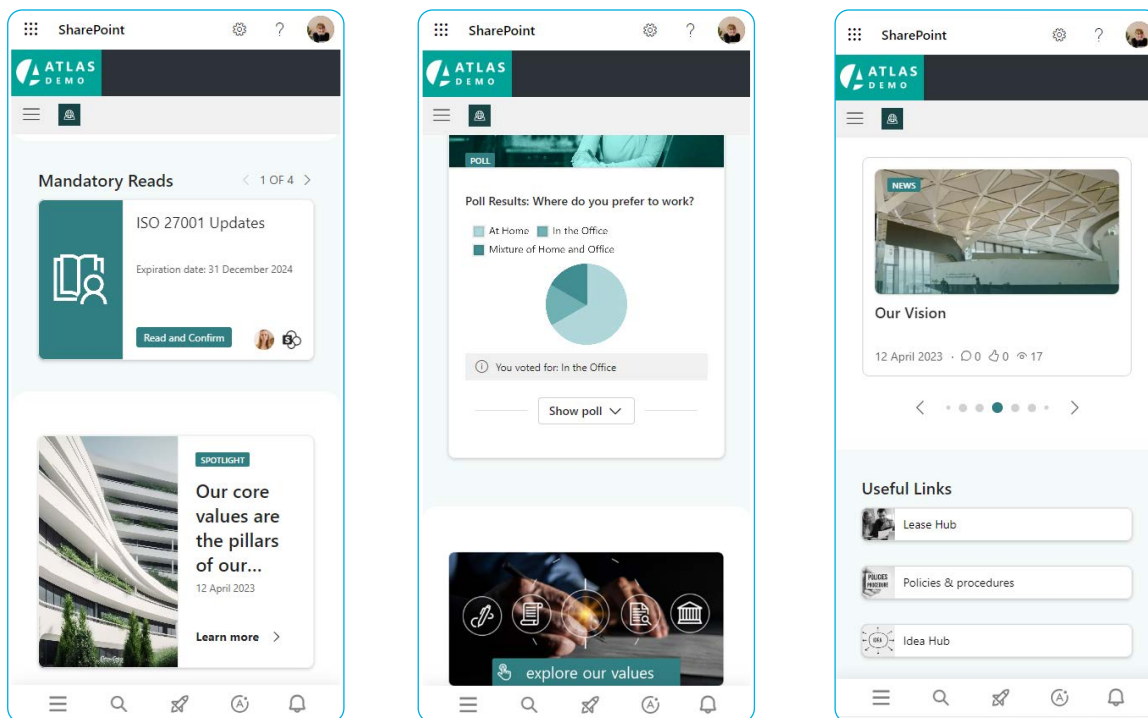
Atlas responsive design shown on a mobile screen; the global menu reorientates itself to appear at the bottom of the screen within easy thumb reach.

Although Atlas works well as a responsive design in a mobile browser, ClearPeople say users mainly access it as part of the Teams or SharePoint mobile app experience, or as a web-app delivered through device management systems such as Intune. This has the advantage of familiarity, but we do find that Microsoft's approach leads to potentially complex interfaces. Those designing rich intranet home pages should note that SharePoint is not adaptive, so all web parts will appear even on the smallest screen.

Atlas improves on SharePoint navigation for mobile users by adding a clear cascading menu system, which works well with touch screens. Items in the Launchpad menu can be set to appear on desktop only, simplifying the mobile navigation where wanted. Unfortunately, this isn't possible with other parts of the menu so could feel overly comprehensive for a mobile environment.

There are some well-thought-through enhancements for mobile workers though. For example, the 'Add It' web part makes it easy to contribute to Workspaces on the go without navigating to them first. Even annotations to a procedure page can be fed back in this way from a mobile device.

ClearPeople says that the HoverPoint web part is often used to augment manuals for field work, which we think would work well. It is also possible to give each user their own Workspace and push content into it based on attributes, such as skills. In this way, operating procedures can be delivered only to qualified engineers, for example.

Note that, being M365 based, all users will require licenses and an Entra ID login to enrol, making it less versatile for frontline workers than some other options in this report.

THINGS TO BEAR IN MIND

Atlas isn't, and doesn't try to be, a traditional communication intranet. In many areas it relies entirely on SharePoint, staying clear of interfering with the default Microsoft functionality, instead focusing its efforts on adding value through information management. None of this should be an issue if you're comfortable with the way M365 provides these capabilities or you're happy to use Microsoft Viva for employee experience features. Likewise, if you've already invested in Power Platform you'll be able to easily address any specific workflow and reporting needs that are not catered for by M365, Atlas or TyGraph.

The quality of, and the way in which people understand, taxonomy will be critical to the success of Atlas in an organisation. While tagging and organising everything will bring value in the ability to filter and personalise, this may be at the expense of simplicity – with page content being dynamically built and multitudes of options to select from in menus (that span Atlas and Microsoft screens). It's likely therefore that technical support, either in-house or from a partner, will be needed to effectively manage an Atlas intranet.

It's also worth noting that Atlas is at the higher end of the pricing in this report. While it only requires the most basic M365 licence to function, some of the features described in this review build on and enhance capabilities that are optional extras in Microsoft 365, such as Microsoft Topics and SharePoint Premium. Potential buyers should check the M365 licensing position when evaluating capabilities for their specific implementation.

Why choose this product

For organisations looking to invest in information management and resolve problems such as site sprawl or multiple poorly organised document repositories, Atlas builds on Microsoft's capabilities to provide a rich and capable solution. The product's features and vendor services take the effort away from users to automate tagging and simplify knowledge curation. Equally, any business with plans to further exploit their collective knowledge, through the implementation of GenAI tools or otherwise, will find a great deal to like about the Atlas solution.

Vendor roadmap

Atlas Roadmap

Short Term

- Additional In Focus layouts
- Enterprise Search improvements
- AI Assistant User Feedback
- AI Assistant Analytics
- Support for multiple Knowledge Collections

Medium Term

- Intelligent Knowledge Studio
  - Self-service Knowledge Collections creation
  - Enhanced capabilities for the AI Assistant
  - Microsoft Copilot plugins
- AI Analytics
- Additional AI integration
  - AI Add It auto-classify
  - AI Image Generation
- Further extensibility with APEX
- Enhance Atlas in Microsoft Teams and Viva Connections

North Star

AI Driven Experiences

- Leveraging MS investments but still utilising client taxonomy

Atlas everywhere

- Delivered via Adaptive Cards through multiple applications
  - Easily consume Atlas features from whichever application users are in

Multi-Tenant IA

- Access to information across MS tenants
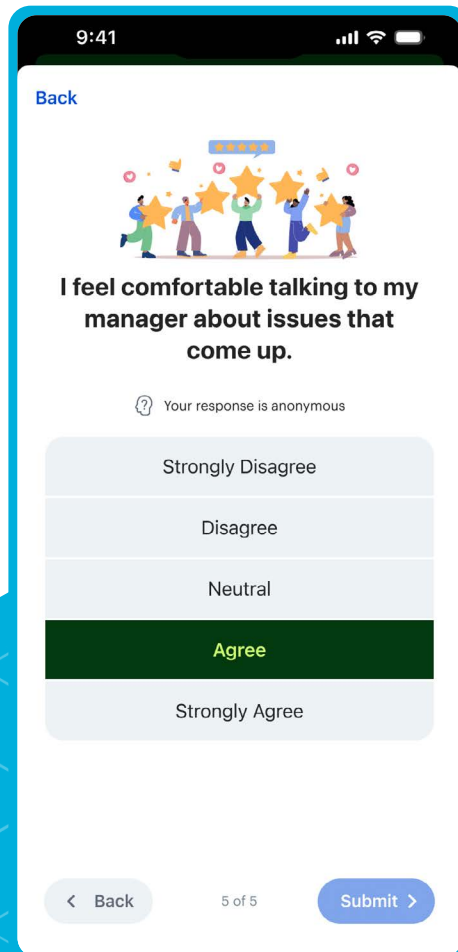
Roadmap image provided by ClearPeople.

Blink.

FULLY STANDALONE

REQUIRES SHAREPOINT

OPTIONALLY WORKS WITH SHAREPOINT

FRONTLINE FOCUS
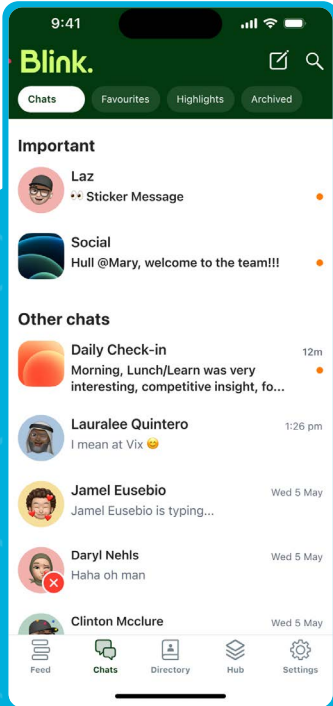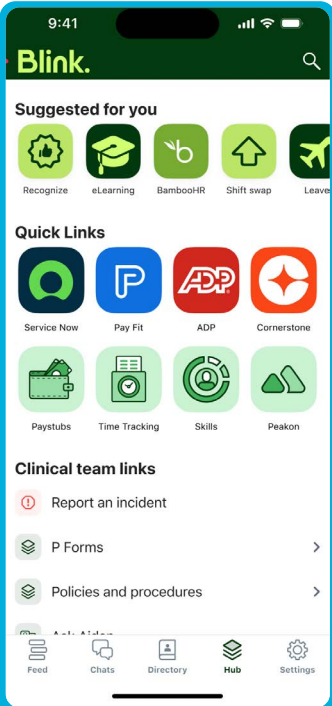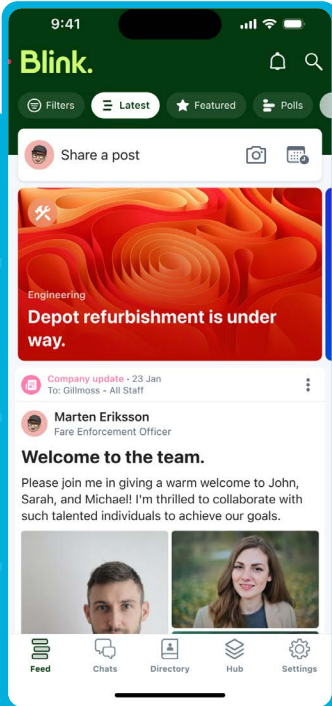
Typical deployment:

2,000 - 20,000 employees

Company locations:

VISIT THE WEBSITE

The product in a nutshell

Blink is a frontline-employee and mobile-first solution, providing excellent communication features and practical tools in an easy-to-use interface on all device types.

SUMMARY

Blink owned by Blink

Blink was launched in 2018 as an employee app, and since then we have watched the product evolve into a highly effective frontline-focused tool. The UK-based vendor, also called Blink, has grown significantly in size and client-base in that time, taking on customer feedback to develop its offering in all the right ways.

The focus Blink places on the deskless audience is among the best we've seen in this report and makes a compelling choice for organisations with a frontline-heavy workforce. While the communications features may not offer the sort of depth that internal communicators desire, it does provide an excellent approach to reach the frontline with attractive content. The community and engagement features are also first-class, meaning two-way communications are easy to encourage.

The approach to practical tools and integrations works very well. There is a helpful read-only integration with SharePoint, giving the frontline access to content stored there without needing a licence; although, additional M365 integrations are lacking. Other platform management features are also somewhat basic, such as content life cycle and search management, so those looking for a comprehensive or all-in-one solution may be disappointed.

However, Blink provides an excellent companion to systems more frequently needed by desk-based employees – such as knowledge management solutions. It's also an effective communications channel, meaning internal communicators could easily add it into their matrix instead of expecting Blink to run them all. Overall, Blink would suit any size organisation that has a significant frontline workforce, although larger organisations should explore the price options with the vendor as it's among the more expensive products in this report.

Pricing

PRICE BAND	
250 users	$ $ $ $
1,000 users	$ $ $ $
5,000 users	$ $ $ $
20,000 users	$ $ $ $

These prices are indicative, offering a comparison of the products featured in this report only. Please contact the vendor for a bespoke quote.

PRICING MODEL

Subscription – price band based on number of users.

COSTS TYPICALLY

Fairly evenly spread across three years.

DISCOUNTS

Charities and non-profit organisations, schools and educational institutes, multi-year commitments.

PRICE INCLUDES

Some Expert Services to help build out bespoke microapps or workflows. Blink will help with the launch of the app, including sites and supporting end users.

Product type

Majority ready-to-run

Branding opportunities

Good branding, complex options

Base systems

Fully standalone	Requires SharePoint	Optionally works with SharePoint	Other

Sectors

Engineering and manufacturing	Healthcare	Property and construction	Retail	Transport & Logistics

You may also be interested in...

Staffbase   **Haiilo**   **workvivo**

COMPANY AND PRODUCT

Company details

Company
Blink

ISO 27001 certified
Yes

Data residency
Blink services hosts customer data across at least three zones, currently Ireland, Australia and America. Offsite, encrypted backups are held in Google Cloud at Google in Belgium, Australia and America. Alternative AWS / GCP regions are considered upon request.

Company founded
2013

Product launched
2018

Typical client size
2,000 - 20,000 employees

Largest deployment so far
Elara Caring, 30,000 employees, US-based

Customers
Clients include: Go North West, Stagecoach, Tonkotsu, Medequip, Salutem, NHS Fife. Please see their website for other case studies.

Partner locations
Most implementations are done in-house, however Blink has implementation partners in the US, EU, UK and Ireland.

Company locations
London, UK (HQ), Australia, USA

Product and technical details

Name of product

Blink

Deployment

Client on-premises	Client private cloud	Microsoft Azure	Amazon Web Services	Vendor-hosted	Microsoft 365 tenant	Other

Client data encrypted

In transit only	In transit and at rest	At rest only

Authentication supported

Entra ID	ADFS	Okta	Open ID	Oauth	G Suite	Other*

*Any other SAML 2.0 compliant identity provider

App deployment

Google Play store	Apple store	MDM	MAM	Other

Accessibility

Contrast can be set by the individual user, individual users can change the font size of what they're seeing and keyboards can be used for navigation.

Document library sources integrated

Box	Dropbox	Google Drive	SharePoint	OneDrive	Other

Optional integrated enterprise search engines

Coveo	Elastic	IBM	Lucidworks	Microsoft	Mindbreeze	Sinequa	Other*

* Blink leverages Elastic Search natively within the application and has federated search capabilities out of the box from Microsoft for SharePoint Search. Additional search engine integrations can be reviewed on request.

User interface multi-language

Pre-configured	Editable	Right to left script supported	Other*

* Blink will work with clients to configure multi-language options for interface text.

Content multi-language

Machine translation for publishers	Machine translation for end users	Editable machine translation for publishers	Manual creation for publishers	Right to left script	Other

Set-up and support

Set-up process for new clients

Blink have an in-house implementation team specialising in the delivery of their product. Depending on customer size and complexity, their rollout process averages between 4-12 weeks. Each customer is assigned an Implementation Manager to coordinate the delivery and provide best practices and tailored support along the way.

Current version

Desktop app version is 2.2.1, released on August 31, 2023; Android app version 2.102.10, released on August 7, 2023; iOS app version 3.134.0, released on August 21, 2023

Product updates

Blink is an evergreen Software-as-a-Service solution. As such, updates are frequently released and all customers receive automatic updates. Mobile end-user apps are updated as per the device's auto-update policy, with desktop app releases either being via auto-updater or via notification of new releases depending on the installation mechanism.

Product update process

This will depend on the feature set. Typically, all updates are automatically released to every customer. A production and test tenant can be provided upon request. Test tenants are hosted within the Blink production environment but allows customers to test Blink features, functionality, and integrations without affecting their primary tenant. Customers can also be invited into their testing program for new features prior to go live.

Reverse-out options

At the customer's request, data will be deleted within 30 days of contract termination, although data will remain within backups for a further 7 days. Access logs are maintained for at least 90 days for security purposes. Upon request customer data will be returned in an open file format.

Technical support

Email support	Phone support	Chat support	Online portal	24/7 support	Office hours only*

* Support requests can be submitted all day, every day. Business hours are Monday to Friday, 08:00 to 23:00 UK time.

User community

Blink run regular customer Industry / Technology / Trends webinars, have a monthly newsletter called 'The Shift' and their Customer Advisory Board brings customers together to share learnings, insights, and impact.

Voice of the vendor

Blink says: "Blink is the employee super-app designed to give all team members — no matter who they are or where they work — equal access to the resources they need to succeed, while feeling connected to a shared purpose. We believe in two essential truths:

• That employee experience is a true competitive advantage (employee experience and customer experience are undoubtedly linked, and the more engaged, loyal, and satisfied your employees are, the better business outcomes will be)

• That businesses with a frontline workforce cannot roll-out the same employee experience tools that work for desk-based employees and expect to see results.

Disconnection is a huge strain on frontline organisations; employees feel isolated, unheard, and unable to communicate with peers or managers. This creates feelings of underappreciation and dissatisfaction. Operationally, employees often struggle to access simple items like handbooks and forms.

Companies have invested in platforms and tools to address these challenges, and improve the employee experience, but not all tools are designed with frontline realities in mind. Many involve complex log-in processes, and add to the burden for frontline workers. This causes myriad, overlapping issues including employee attrition, lost productivity, and wasted company spend.

Blink's mobile-first super-app offers employees a 'digital front door' via frictionless single sign-on. Our 'Identity' / IdP allows seamless handoff to any application from Blink — even if workers don't have a workplace email account — so everyone can access self-service shift swaps, payslips, additional hours, promotion opportunities, and more — plus access to all systems and information. Blink users open the app up to 7 times a day, and the app's capability to connect employees with these resources — sometimes for the very first time — is a major driver for such high, and sustained, adoption.

In Blink, leaders have the analytics required to improve the employee experience over time. And Blink's in-app news Feed, Chats, Survey, and Recognition features help build a positive company culture that's reinforced and supported by highly engaged employees.

Blink's unique onboarding approach delivers industry-leading activation figures. We have a wide variety of activation options available out-of-the-box to suit any organisation or worker, while ensuring secure and low-friction activation.

Blink has transformed frontline life at 300+ organizations across the world, reducing attrition by 26%, boosting software adoption by 5x, and achieving 3x survey response rates. Blink helps create work environments where all employees are engaged, empowered, and can excel in their roles — and organisations get real ROI."

Voice of the customer

We received a high volume of responses from Blink customers and the feedback was very positive, with everyone praising its ease of use and, as one customer highlighted, "its best asset is purely how intuitive it is to pick up". The ease of access for frontline employees was also frequently praised, with one customer saying that Blink is, "invaluable for staff working at multiple locations". The Hub was praised by a handful of customers as it, "makes it easy for employees to access what they need". Another customer added that the Hub, "is a useful alternative to providing staff with individual Office 365 subscriptions". Two-way communication and employee engagement were also frequently flagged as positive, with one customer summarising nicely: "Blink has drastically improved the way we communicate with our team members, in a recent survey they already feel more listened to and this is all down to Blink."

Suggestions for development were mixed, however requests for more detailed analytics was mentioned a handful of times, as one customer says, "it is quite manual and a time-consuming task" at present. Additionally, one customer flagged that the pricing structure is chargeable by total users, not by active users, and combined with the fact it's "difficult to get data reports on who is logging in" means that this is working out more expensive for them. Further personalisation of content was requested by a few customers, particularly around developing the Journeys feature as currently, "the employee doesn't realise the post is for them". Other triggers, beyond onboarding, were requested for Journeys too, such as an employee's "in-app engagement levels to try and encourage engagement". Enhancements to search, a "refinement of the Hub structuring interface" and additional inbuilt integrations were also requested.

The experience of working with the vendor is wholly positive, with one customer summarising nicely: "The vendor is amazing. They partner with us to complete projects or work through any desired improvements as they are able. Great partner to work with!" Customers report that the experience has been positive throughout the project, from initial research, "providing support and training", then into post-launch when, "they are always happy to help and prompt whenever we have questions or issues" and beyond where "we have face-to-face meetings to discuss our ever-changing business needs; location and travel has never been an issue".

SCENARIOS & SCORES

BLINK

Please see the Scenarios below for more detail on each of these.

SCENARIO AND SCORE	KEY BENEFITS	IMPROVEMENTS / CONSIDERATIONS
4+ **1. User Experience & Visual Appeal**	Mobile- and frontline-first approach. Simple to use and attractive.	Number of places to visit for communications may take getting used to. Desktop may not suit those looking for comprehensive design options.
2.5+ **2. Publishing & Communications Management**	Simple but effective approach to communications. Urgent communications particularly well-served.	A communications channel, rather than a tool to manage a suite of channels.
4 **3. Community & Engagement**	People-focused with a good range of features available.	Moderation of Chats is missing. Some features have room for expansion but are still strong.
2+ **4. Integrations & Services (Including M365)**	Inbuilt microapps and deep links work well.	M365 integrations are minimal.
2+ **5. Information Finding & Search**	People finding works well. Federated search has the potential to be effective.	Search experience is basic. There aren't any search management tools.
2.5 **6. Administrator Experience**	Easy to administer without needing technical knowledge.	No life cycle features. Platform overall is simple, so missing comprehensive management some may want.
2.5+ **7. Analytics**	Some helpful features to improve adoption and engagement. Mandatory reads handled well.	Basic charts and data. No search analytics.
5 **8. Mobile & Frontline Support**	Very strong app, particularly for the frontline.	Have to scroll to the top of the screen for the search bar.

4+
1. USER EXPERIENCE & VISUAL APPEAL
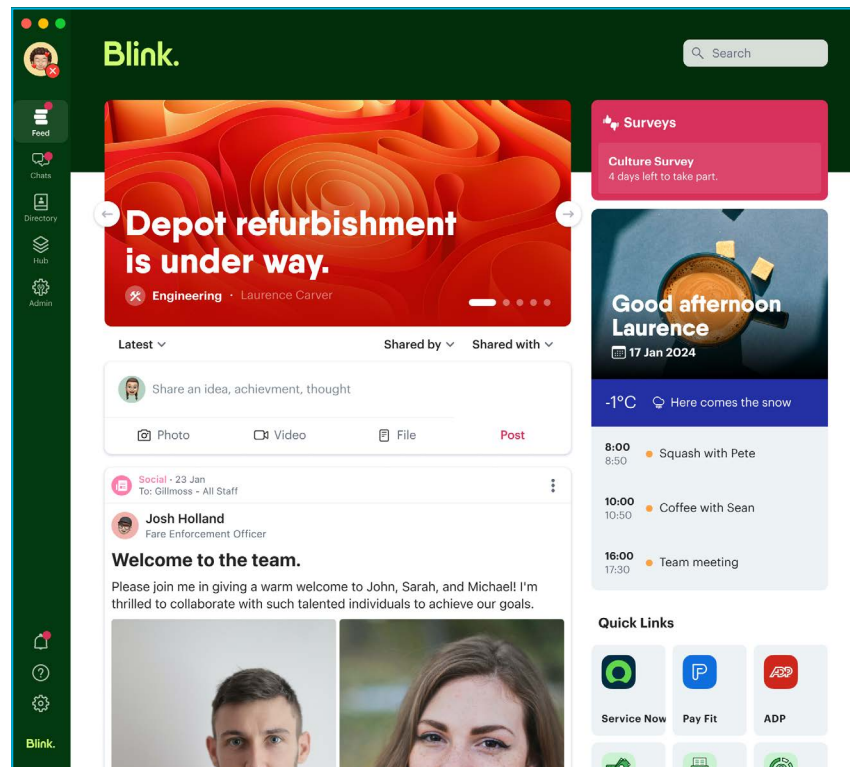
While Blink is designed from a mobile-first perspective, there is a simple desktop environment too.

Blink is designed from a mobile- and frontline-first perspective (please see Scenario 8 for specifics), which means the resulting user experience is simple but highly effective. The desktop environment is consistent with that of the mobile, providing a lightweight but valuable platform. There is a desktop app too, which helpfully means employees don't have to remember to load the browser environment.

Navigation in both environments is straightforward, although there are a few different places to visit for communications that employees will get used to over time. 'Chats' is where conversations take place (see Scenario 3), there is a 'Directory' menu, and the 'Hub' is where links, tools, and reference materials are stored in configurable 'sections' and / or folders. The Blink home page focuses on a 'Feed' menu, which is the home for posts for selected audiences, integrated notifications, and for content shared from elsewhere in Blink – including from within Chats.

Blink does an excellent job of helping people keep on top of tasks. The traditional bell icon is where people find notifications associated with Blink itself, such as someone liking a post you've created. Dots highlight new notifications in the bell and are also used elsewhere in the navigation when there's new content to see. On the mobile home page a 'tasks' bar highlights activities, such as completing a survey or reading something that's mandatory. On desktop, surveys have their own widget, with an associated 'mandatory reads' banner that masks the search bar, an experience we feel could be improved. Please see Scenario 4 for details of integrated notifications.

There is a surprising range of branding and design options available to admins, including those needing complex approaches to reflect multi-brand organisations, for example. The design options are particularly effective on mobile. In comparison, the desktop environment remains simple in appearance, but both reflect a social media-type experience. Blink may not meet the needs of those organisations looking for sophisticated desktop designs, but we think it still works well. Alternatively, Blink offers a design and branding service if desired, although this might be at additional cost depending on what's requested.
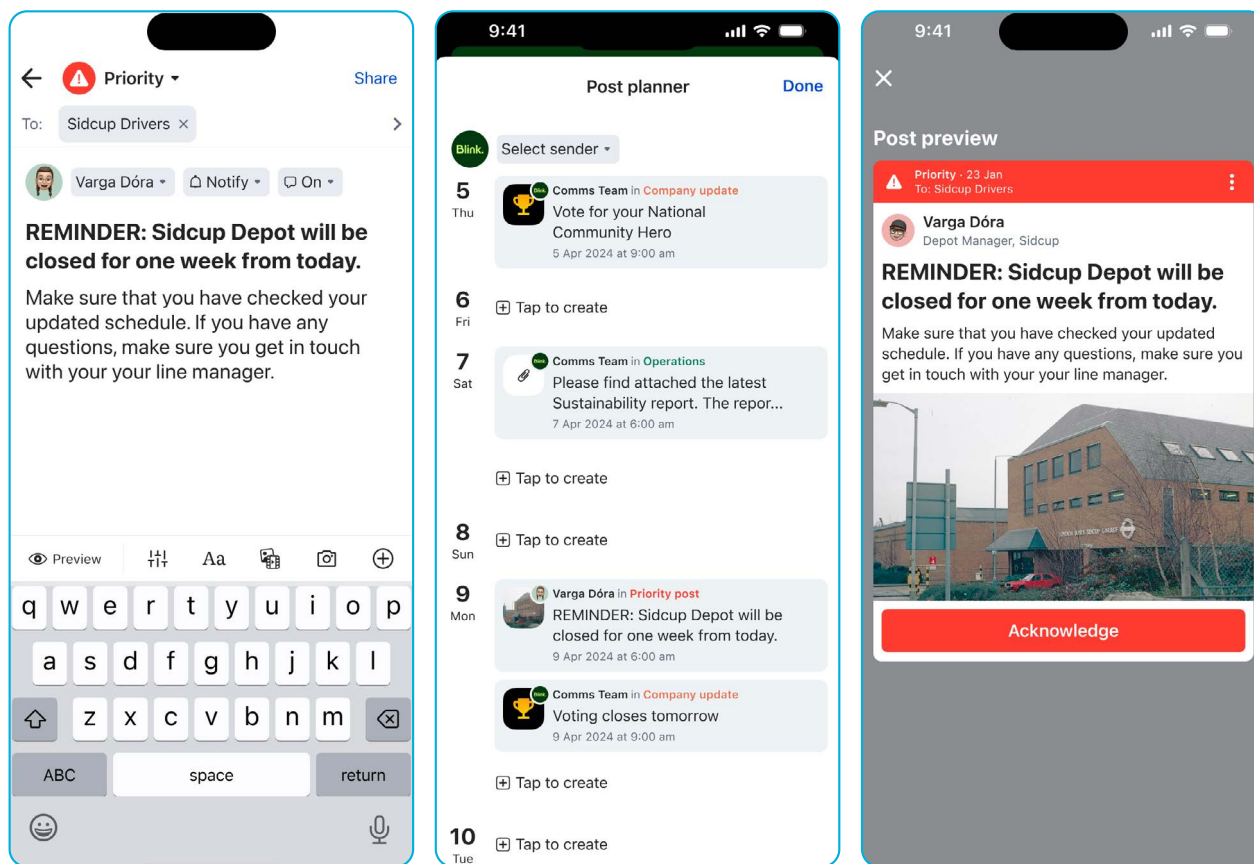
Posts are frequently used by internal communicators and are easy to create on the go.

Blink's approach to publishing and communications management is simple but effective. While it doesn't have the depth of features offered by other products we've reviewed in this report, it works very well given its purpose to reach frontline employees effectively. Those communicators working with a range of channels would do well to consider Blink as a discrete channel in the mix, rather than a platform for managing them. For example, Blink says they have set up integrations with digital signage in the past and there is a Feed API for sharing posts outside of Blink, but this doesn't come as standard.

Posts created directly in the Feed are likely to be the most common starting point for communicators. Feed posts look and feel a lot like posts in familiar social media channels, although surprisingly have more advanced formatting options, such as header types and dividers for more complex posts. Pasted links will embed content in the post where supported, such as videos from Vimeo, making the experience more interactive than a simple link.

A 'Blink Assist' button opens an AI that will help with creating or editing a post as desired. Content is created using natural language prompts, such as "Write a post thanking my team for all their hard work"; publishers then choose from a 'post type' list to complete the action, such as "turn my post into a thank you message". The editing options will change the tone and refine elements such as the length or complexity. The resulting post is provided in quotation marks for the publisher to edit and add optional elements such as attachments.

Publishers apply a category to a post, which helps readers filter their feed, although automatic tagging using the AI would be a helpful development. We think it's a shame that multiple categories can't be applied, as this can be appropriate for some messages. It's also a shame people can't opt into categories to watch a topic and receive relevant posts. Instead, audiences are applied in a simple 'to' field, where publishers select pre-configured user groups called 'teams' and / or individuals to receive the post. It's not possible to opt into or out of user groups, but new employees are automatically assigned to teams based on profile information from Entra ID or a similar tool. This includes 'direct report' teams, which is helpful for line managers to communicate with their colleagues. People may 'dismiss' a post from their Feed to remove anything they don't feel is relevant.

News scheduling is handled via delivery date and time, and publishers can see their own scheduled posts but no one else's. Alternatively, a 'Journeys' feature can help with sharing communications at defined moments (please see Scenario 3 for more). Where communicators feel a post needs more 'engagement' (visibility), there is a 'boost' option. This is effective at reaching additional people by completing actions, such as sending notifications to those who haven't read it or adding new audience members to the post. This is similar to boosting social media posts, so may feel familiar to communicators.
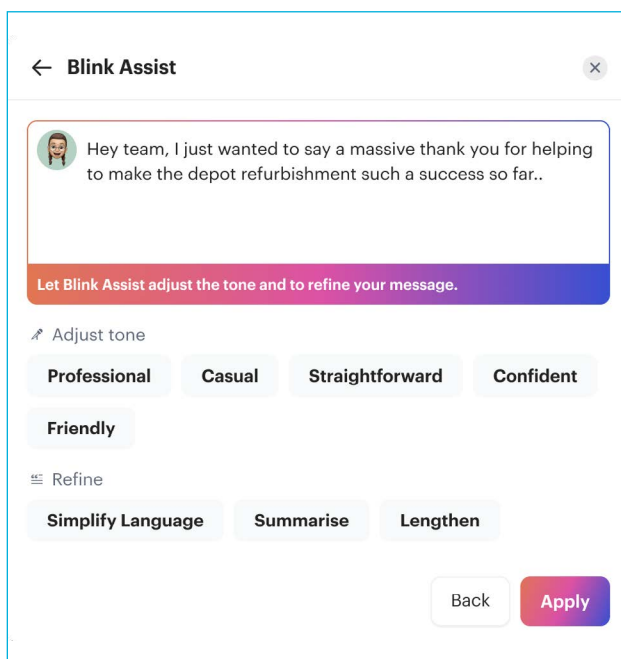
Blink Assist is a simple generative AI tool that will help with post creation and editing.
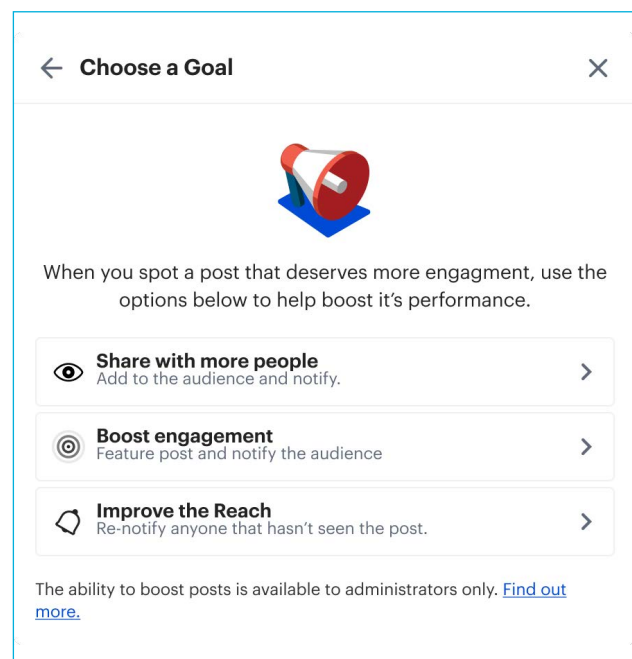
The boost option provides tangible tools to help publishers reach more people.

An alternative to feed posts is 'Pages' that are stored in the Hub but can be shared into the feed on creation. These can be used for longer communications, or those that are helpful to store in the context of folders or sections, although Blink Assist is currently missing from Page creation. Please see Scenario 6 for more on Pages and see Scenario 3 for information about chats and channels, which can also be used for communication.

Crisis and urgent communications are handled very well in Blink. Firstly, priority posts are pinned to the feed so that they aren't pushed down the page by newer and less important posts. A home page carousel, which automatically scrolls on desktop and can be manually browsed on mobile, displays 'featured' posts that are chosen by publishers. Push notifications will reach people even if the app isn't open on their phone and there's the option of an integrated RSS feed, for example from a weather alert website, that will add Feed posts when relevant. Finally, the orange 'your tasks' bar on the home page will display mandatory read content, making it hard to miss.
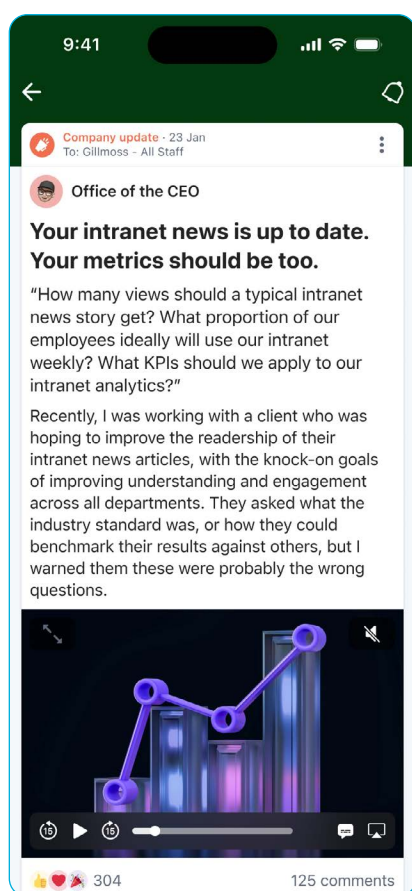
Longer feed posts can be well formatted and include multimedia content, such as embedded videos.
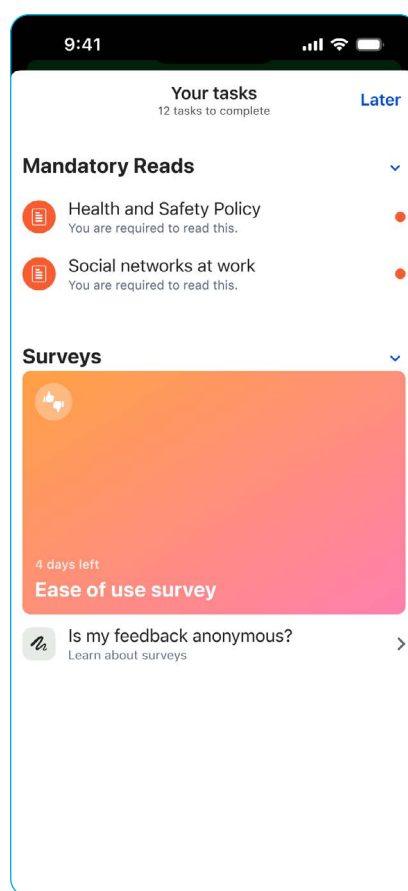
The 'Your tasks' menu collates activities for people to complete, including mandatory reads.
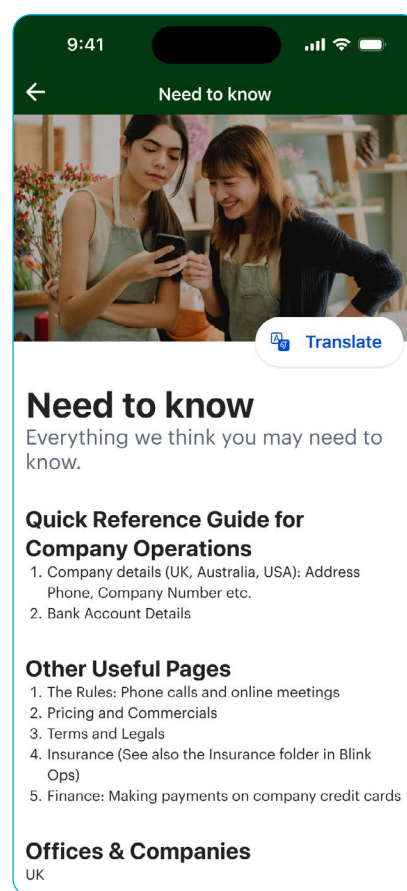
'Pages' found within the Hub menu are a good alternative to feed posts for longer or persistent communications.
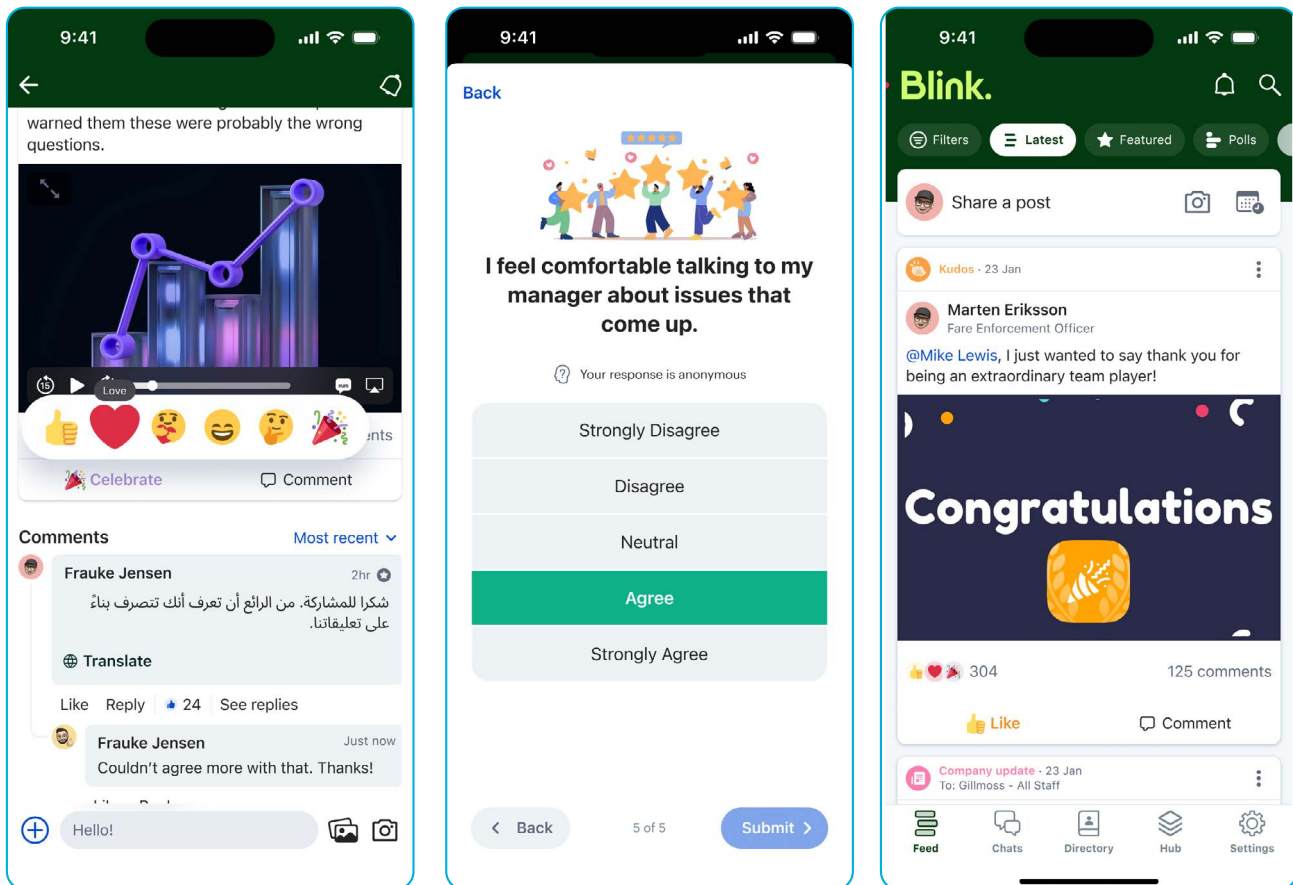
Blink's community features are strong and work particularly well on mobile.

There is a clear focus on community and on people within Blink, although organisations have the choice of how open it is for employee contribution. For example, the Feed could be open to anyone to post to, or it could be restricted to communicators only. Even if the Feed is open, there is the option for people to 'report' so that admins may review the appropriateness of a post.

Commenting can be turned off at the post level, which is helpful, but we think it's a shame there's no way to report a comment for moderation in the same way there is for posts. Emojis and GIFs can be shared into threaded comments, and we like the range of available reactions on posts. Again, it would be good to see multiple reaction types associated with comments too. Automatic translation (see Scenario 6) of comments is possible, which is great for multi-lingual organisations.

Blink includes several effective methods to gather employee feedback. There are polls in the Feed, which work a lot like social media platforms for admins and end users. Within the admin portal there is the option to create pulse surveys that are built with a single question, or longer surveys of multiple questions. Answer types fall into four categories – degree of agreement, opinion number scale, yes / no, and free text – which should serve most needs. Targeting is possible to user groups or individuals and the survey displays as attractive visual cards that flick through as the questions are answered. The results include a good range of data, including sentiment analysis.

For conversation and collaboration, there are 'Chats'. This is where people can send one-to-one or group messages, which might be to their 'team' (user group) or to their broader contacts. Alongside these 'organisation-agnostic' chats are 'Channels', which are associated with a team. For example, in a retail organisation, the 'Oxford Street' and 'Piccadilly' stores would therefore have their own all-store Channels, but there may also be an 'Oxford Street Christmas' Channel for planning a busy time of year. Note there are no restrictions on who can start chats with whom, which we feel would be a useful admin control.

Chat members can post messages to each other, which includes familiar 'reply' and 'forward' options. There aren't any reactions for individual messages, which is a shame and something people are likely to expect. However, there is a range of 'Chat Super Powers' available that make up for the lack of reactions: file, photo, and video attachments are familiar, but there is a 'tea round' power that decides who should brew the next round, 'confetti' to celebrate an event, and 'share address' for those looking to meet a colleague in a new location. Chats are well thought through and would absolutely make a suitable replacement to unauthorised technology, such as WhatsApp.

There is a pleasingly simple 'microapp' in the Hub (see Scenario 4 for more on microapps) that allows people to award 'Kudos' to their colleagues. A simple form begins with types of award being given, followed by recipients and a message field. There's a choice of who to share the Kudos with: for example, a 'happy birthday' message may be best shared with an appropriate team, whereas 'thank you' could be a message that's shared with the whole organisation. Gamification could enhance Kudos, but we really like the simplicity and think this is an excellent feature that many organisations would appreciate.
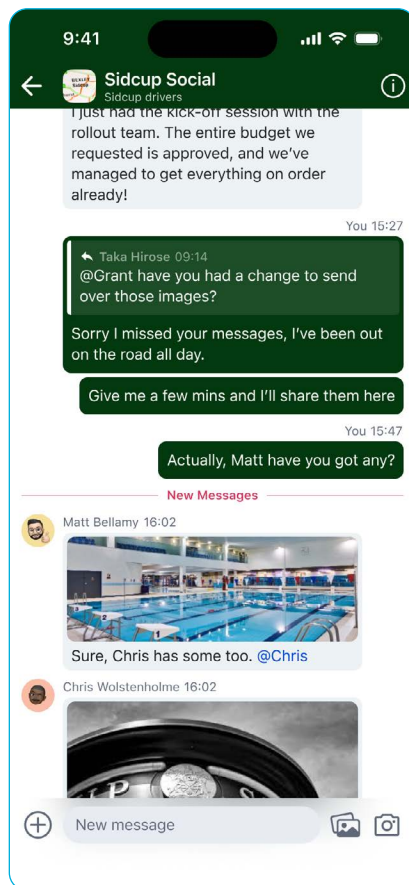
Channels are for specific conversations among a team.
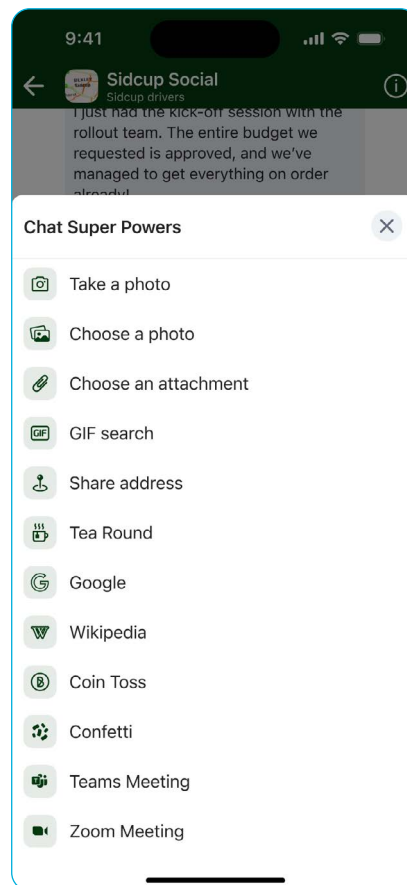
The 'Chat Super Powers'.
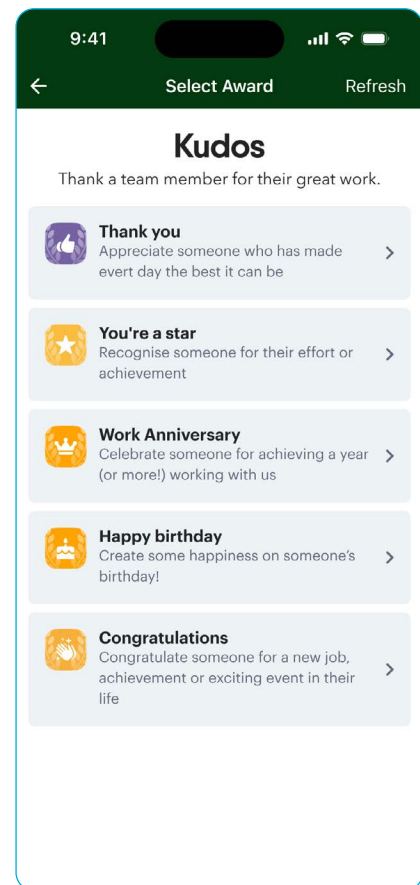
Awarding Kudos is easy via a simple form.

Finally, Blink includes 'Journeys' to aid with communication with new starters. On a given number of days after a trigger date, a prepared post is sent to the individual's Feed, to ask them to order uniform for example. The journey may contain several steps triggered at different times, automating aspects of the onboarding process and introducing people to the app. We think a small but significant improvement to Journeys would be personalising the messaging, so that posts say "Welcome Nick" for example. The Kudos feature mentioned above would also benefit from this development and was an area customers fed back about too. The individual's registration date (on Blink) and start date with the organisation are currently the only two trigger dates. However, Blink are planning to add other profile fields and dates to expand the functionality for additional events, such as annual reviews. We think expanding the range of date triggers would be helpful for organisations to make good use of this tool, but it's a great starting point.

Overall, Blink offers an excellent range of simple community and engagement tools. While some could benefit from expansion to make them more comprehensive, they will still serve organisations well.

Creating onboarding Journeys is simple and will trigger posts into the receiver's feed.

Surveys are easy to create and return a good range of analytics once complete.

Creating surveys is easy and can be used to support an onboarding process.
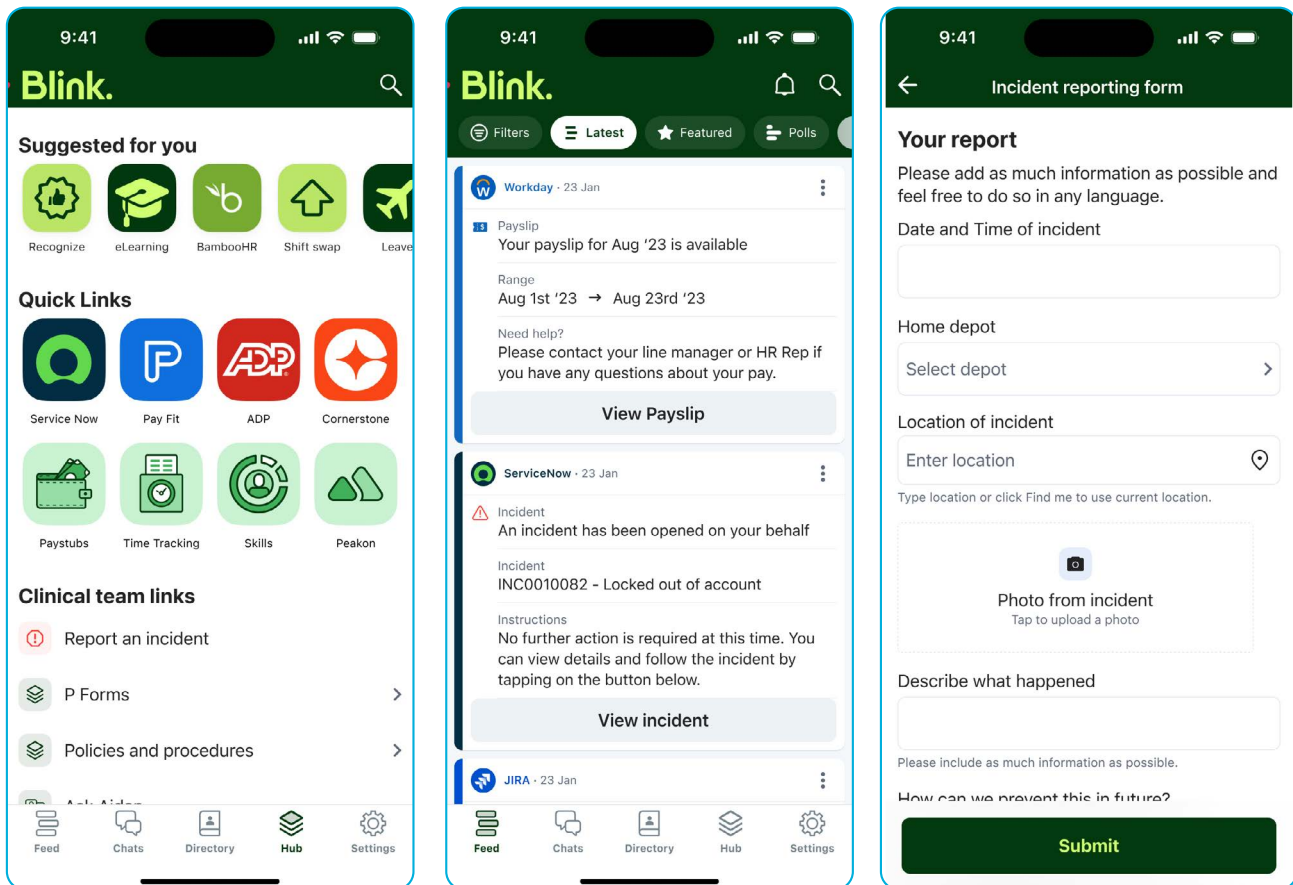
There is a good range of practical features that complement the social and communication tools well.

In the back-end portal there is an app marketplace where admins (likely from IT) are able to add some apps, using simple authentication tokens, or are directed to contact Blink to have others enabled. The majority of integrations rely on contacting Blink to get them set up, which is helpful for those who don't have resource to manage development in-house, but is also a shame for those wanting greater control. The resulting integrations then take a variety of forms.

Firstly, notifications from integrated systems can be posted directly into the feed. For example, a manager could receive a notification from Workday that a time off request has been received from a team member. Alternatively, someone could receive a post from ServiceNow to let them know a ticket has been updated. Clicking on these notifications takes people into the source system via a deep link (where the tool opens within Blink instead of opening a new app) with single sign-on supported where available.

The Hub is where people will find links to business systems, which also supports single sign-on and deep linking. This is particularly helpful for the display of payslips, which can pose a challenge where HR system log-in details often have to be frequently updated and employees are likely to forget their credentials. We like that the Hub's 'suggested for you' quick links use AI to surface genuinely frequently used tools or Pages to the individual. It's also helpful that users can add their own links here too.

Also within the Hub are microapps – simple form-based tools that help with the automation and simplification of tasks. It's possible to connect microapps to third-party systems, such as to pass an incident form into a health & safety monitoring tool, but the vendor says they are often used instead of dedicated business systems. Blink has a range of microapps pre-configured for organisations to choose from, such as awarding Kudos (see Scenario 3), or 'open shifts' to help locations fill shift slots (see Scenario 8), and they say they are happy to develop others on request.

There are two ways people can access external document repositories, such as SharePoint or Google Workspace, via the Hub. The first is through a deep link to a specific file, folder or page, or alternatively a publisher could create a Blink Page with a series of embedded links that subsequently open as deep links. It's worth noting that Blink provides read-only access to SharePoint content, meaning it's possible to surface SharePoint materials to those without licences and at no additional cost. This is very helpful for frontline workers.

Other Microsoft integrations are more limited. It's possible to start a Teams (and Zoom) meeting from a Chat, but there are no other Teams integrations out of the box. Blink says they can use the API to bring SharePoint news, Teams notifications or Teams posts into Blink. They have also said they're currently working with a client to develop a Viva Engage integration so that Blink content could be passed into it, but this is likely to only be available to other clients on request.

Overall, Blink includes some helpful services and simple integrations that will benefit a frontline audience. It's not as fully featured as other products in this report however, and those organisations with sophisticated needs may need to consider an additional tool alongside Blink.

The app marketplace includes a variety of integrations and tools that admins or Blink can add to the platform.
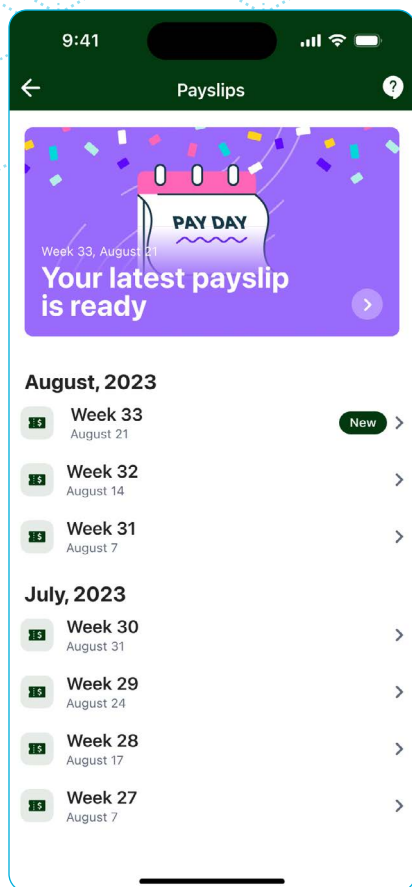
It's helpful for people to access payslips and then be able to easily navigate back to Blink.
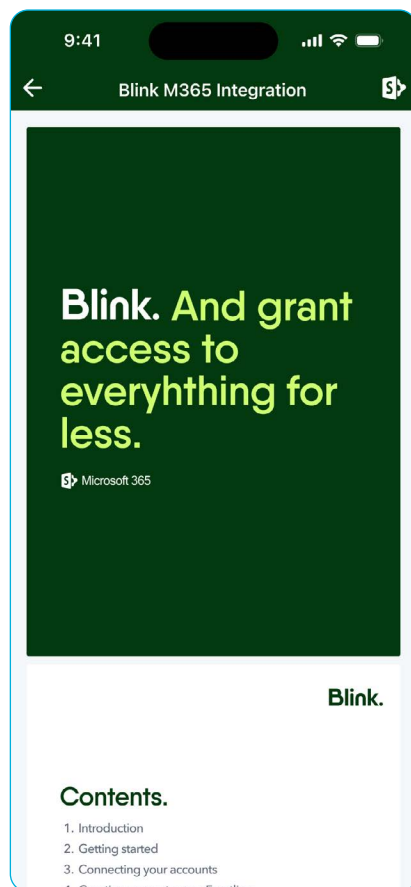
There is a read only integration with SharePoint, so users can view content without a licence.
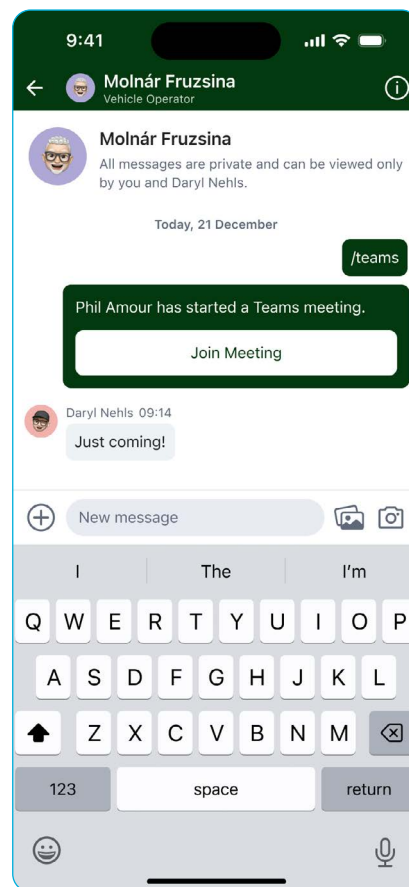
It's easy to start a Zoom or MS Teams call from within a chat.
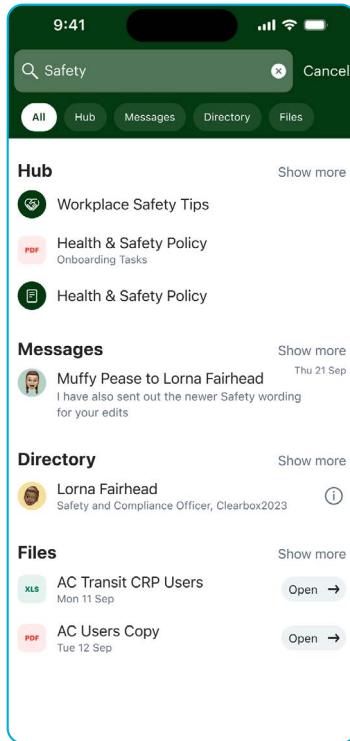
Search results are presented clearly, even on mobile.
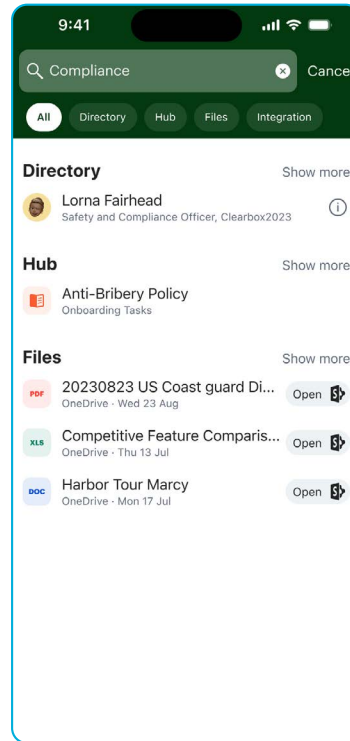
Federated results are presented in separate tabs.
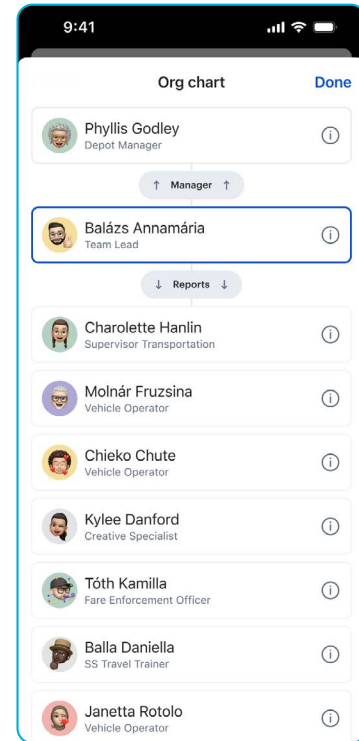
The org chart works well on mobile.

There is a search bar in the desktop environment that's always visible, although it is masked by a mandatory read banner when there is one to action. On mobile, users must be at the top of a page to see and access the search bar. The search remembers recent search terms on mobile, and suggested results are displayed while typing on desktop. Results are shown in tabs grouped by content origin, such as 'Hub' or 'Directory', but there aren't any other filters or refiners. All content is indexed, including the content of attachments, but there is no support for alternative spellings or stemming. Federated search with integrated third-party systems, such as to find ServiceNow tickets, is possible using APIs.

The categories at the top of the Feed refine what's displayed there, but we think it's unusual that categories aren't a search filter (or even a term that's searchable). Publishers may add hashtags to content and this will group posts; however hashtags in comments are not returned in results. There aren't any search management features, such as the option to add topics to posts, sponsored searches, or likely answers.

Results for people are returned in the search, or there is a separate 'Directory' menu. There is a Directory search in the desktop environment, while on mobile the Directory can only be browsed. People may search for their colleagues using terms found in any profile field, although alternative spelling suggestions here would be helpful. Profile pages are simple but useful, displaying the files the two people have shared with each other for example. Organisations may choose to let employees edit profile fields, or these can be fed from source systems. Someone's manager and direct reports display on their profile page, and we like the simple org chart that is easy to explore.

Overall, the search is somewhat basic and we'd like to see more done to improve the experience. For example, the introduction of some search management tools or refiners would improve the search experience greatly. However, given Blink's focus on the frontline and social media-esque user experience, it's worth considering that a browsing-oriented approach may actually suit end users.
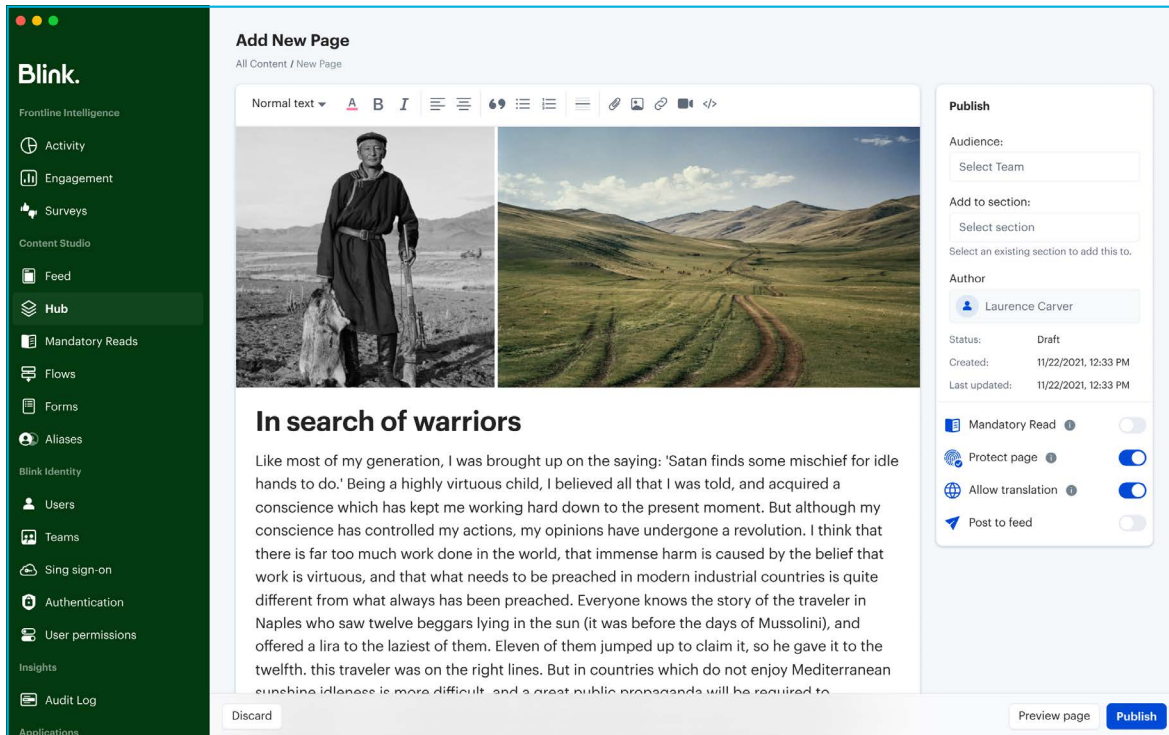
'Pages' are simple, yet can be used to create news articles or reference materials.

Administrative tasks are completed in a separate desktop portal and overall Blink is easy to administer without the need for technical knowledge. It can be tricky to find some settings though. It took us a while to work out where to create a new Channel for example, but there is helpful guidance on Blink's website that's accessible from the portal in some places.

Users aren't automatically assigned permissions, this must be done manually by site admins but is straightforward. Site and app navigation is largely pre-configured, as is the design of the app and desktop home page. As discussed in Scenario 2, there are ways to highlight content and topics, but this lack of home page flexibility may feel restrictive. News categories are configurable, but only by Blink at present.

The Hub is one place where administrators control the structure, by adding categories and folders that links, tools or 'Pages' are placed into. Pages include the same rich text editor from Feed posts and are also associated with audiences, allowing them to then be shared into the Feed where wanted. The Blink Assist AI isn't available here, which we think is a shame as it's more likely to be helpful with these longer-from pages. We like the 'protect page' toggle for sensitive content, which requires the reader to authenticate before it opens. We also think it's helpful that Blink will integrate with Canva or similar to help with Page layouts.

Where someone has selected alternative language settings, they may auto-translate comments, posts, and Pages with an 'allow translation' toggle set by a publisher. In each case the end user must press a button to generate the translation. Alternatively, publishers may upload Pages in different languages with separate audiences, but these versions aren't linked, so changes would need to be noted and manually applied to each version.

There aren't any inbuilt content life cycle tools, beyond publish and unpublish dates that are manually set by the publisher. Blink says they can set up a PowerBI dashboard and reports on request. However, we think it would be helpful for the Hub dashboard to be developed to display simple information, such as last updated and number of hits.
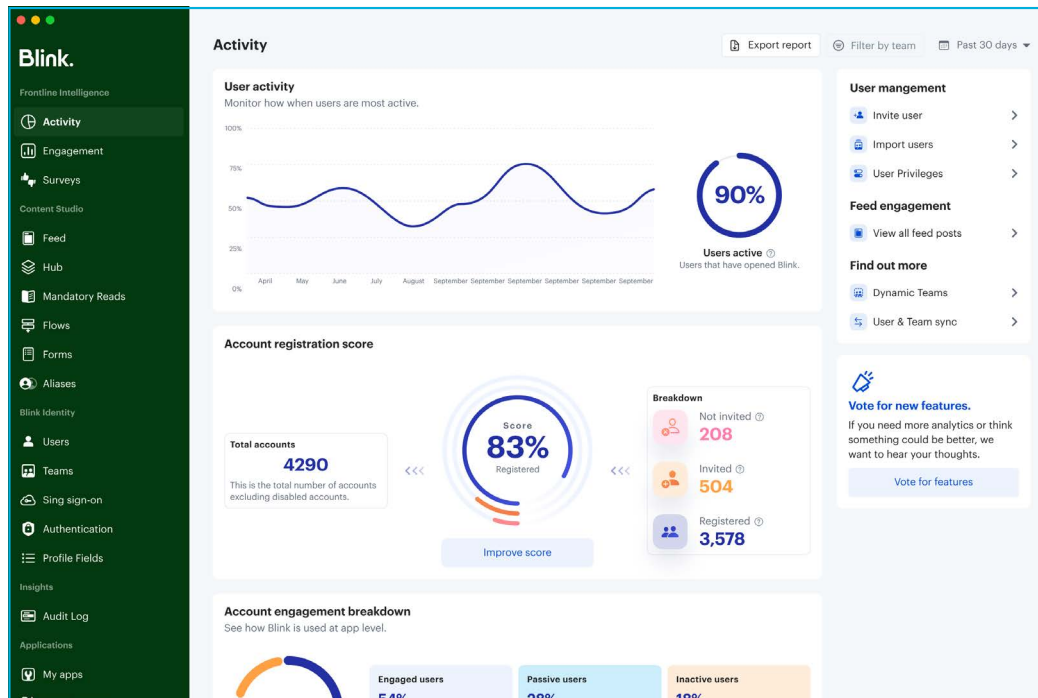
*Analytics dashboards are attractive and include helpful features,
such as triggering download reminders to employees.*

Admins have access to 'Activity' and 'Engagement' dashboards that display a handful of simple charts, with the option to filter by 'Team' and adjust the date range of data. Overall, these are quite basic when compared to other products in this report. For example, the addition of data comparisons would be helpful, such as comparing activity to the same time last month or year. The overview of reach and impressions for each Feed post is helpful though, as is seeing the overall Team engagement with the Feed in a widget on the home page.

The chart displaying the percentage of engaged, passive and inactive users is useful for understanding whether a content strategy needs to change. We also like a button labelled 'improve registration score', which helps with adoption by triggering notifications to those who have previously received invitations but not registered on the app yet. Helpfully, these are sent via app push notification, SMS, and / or email as appropriate for the individual.

Mandatory reads are handled well in Blink, where publishers may choose to make any Page mandatory. By sharing a link to the Page into the Feed at the point of creation, they will boost the visibility beyond the 'Your tasks' notifications. Admins see a progress percentage in the admin portal showing who has read the Page. Where people need reminding, admins can trigger this directly from within the analytics. The results are exportable to CSV, and Blink has said they will integrate with a third-party system if requested.

Overall, there is a good range of simple charts on Blink with some helpful features for admins, although we think there is room for improvement, a sentiment echoed by customers. Hub data, for example, is missing completely although is on the roadmap. There is also no search analytics, although Blink says this hasn't been requested by clients. Blink say they will configure PowerBI dashboards to display more detailed information if wanted, although we think it's a shame these requests aren't subsequently automatically applied to their own dashboards. We like the 'vote for new features' link within the analytics, where Blink customers are able to easily request changes.
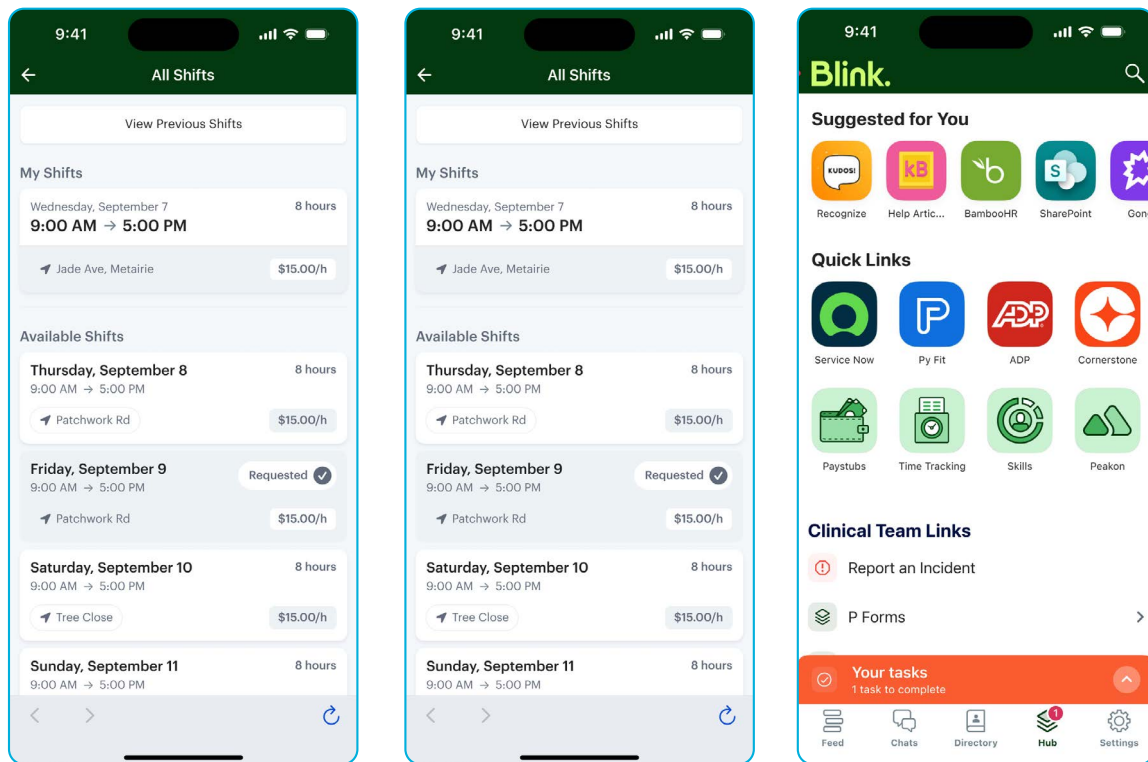
Blink supports frontline workers well, with a variety of features that make things easier.

Blink was designed with the frontline in mind and the focus on a mobile-first experience is clear throughout. Blink is an excellent app product and one of the best we've reviewed in this report. Most of the scenarios also cover the mobile experience, so please do read the whole review to get a full sense of the product.

Firstly, it's very easy for frontline workers to gain access to the app. Blink is available in public app stores, but it's Blink's commitment to visit customers on launch that makes a difference here. They will provide branded materials, such as posters that include QR codes, then visit sites as they launch the app to help people gain access. Once adoption rates for a client hit 70% the rollout team will hand over to the customer success team to refocus on best practice. This is an unusual service from a vendor that is very helpful for admin teams and their often geographically-dispersed frontline workers.

As mentioned in Scenario 7, it's easy for administrators to trigger reminders to people who haven't downloaded Blink. This helps boost adoption, but also takes the burden of finding out about the app away from the employee. Once set up the app will keep people logged in, or authentication can be set up each time as desired. This includes multi-factor authentication if strict security measures are needed, or could be a simpler use of biometrics stored in the device.

The user experience is excellent, with a minor irritation being having to scroll to the top of the Feed to see the search bar. However, the app is very easy to browse so this may not be an issue for some people and Blink says they are working on a fix. To further aid the experience for frontline workers, there is a helpful 'do not disturb' setting that allows people to enter their

working hours to avoid being disturbed at home. This is beneficial for those organisations that face legal or union challenges regarding people's access to business tools in their personal time. This is also useful for those who work outside of 'office hours', such as night shift workers, who want to avoid being disturbed when the app is perhaps at its busiest. Additionally, for those with poor phone signal the Feed and Chats are cached for offline reading; we think it would be helpful to offer people the opportunity to 'save' Hub content for offline reading too.

Blink's features have been set up with the frontline in mind. So deep links, microapps, and other integrations mentioned in Scenario 4 are simple to complete, highly relevant, and effective for this audience. The 'open shifts' microapp is particularly helpful for this audience, both for managers to advertise empty shifts and for employees to volunteer for additional ones. Adding multiple shifts is completed via a csv upload, which can cope with up to 500 shifts at a time but means each must be manually created or uploaded from another workforce management solution (WFMS). Integration with WFMSs is on the roadmap and would simplify things for admins. The experience for employees is a lot smoother, however, and it's easy for them to request a shift plus see their schedule.
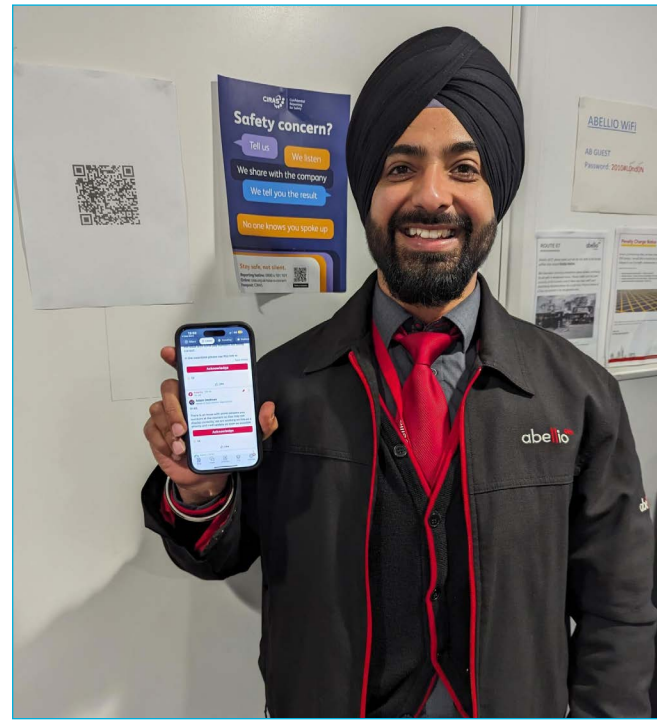
Blink launch teams visit client sites to help people download, log in, and navigate the app (this example is from Abellio's launch day).

The communications and social features (discussed in Scenarios 2 and 3) will help get top-down news out to those who can be physically hard to reach, while also helping to create a sense of community across organisations that might be geographically spread-out. The facility to replace unofficial tools, like text messaging or WhatsApp, with Blink Chats is also very helpful.

Unlike other products in this report, there isn't really a need to provide a pared-down version of Blink for the frontline as that's its starting point. However, where Blink is being used across an organisation, it's the use of audience segmentation that will retain a simpler experience for the frontline. This is particularly important in the Hub, where tools and Pages can be targeted as needed. This not only means a pension policy page for the UK isn't seen by those in France, but also where a business tool is only relevant for electricians their bricklaying colleagues won't see it.

Overall, Blink is very easy to use and allows busy frontline workers to quickly navigate to what they need and complete tasks simply. For organisations with frontline workers, we think there is a lot to like, and this would make an excellent tool for them.
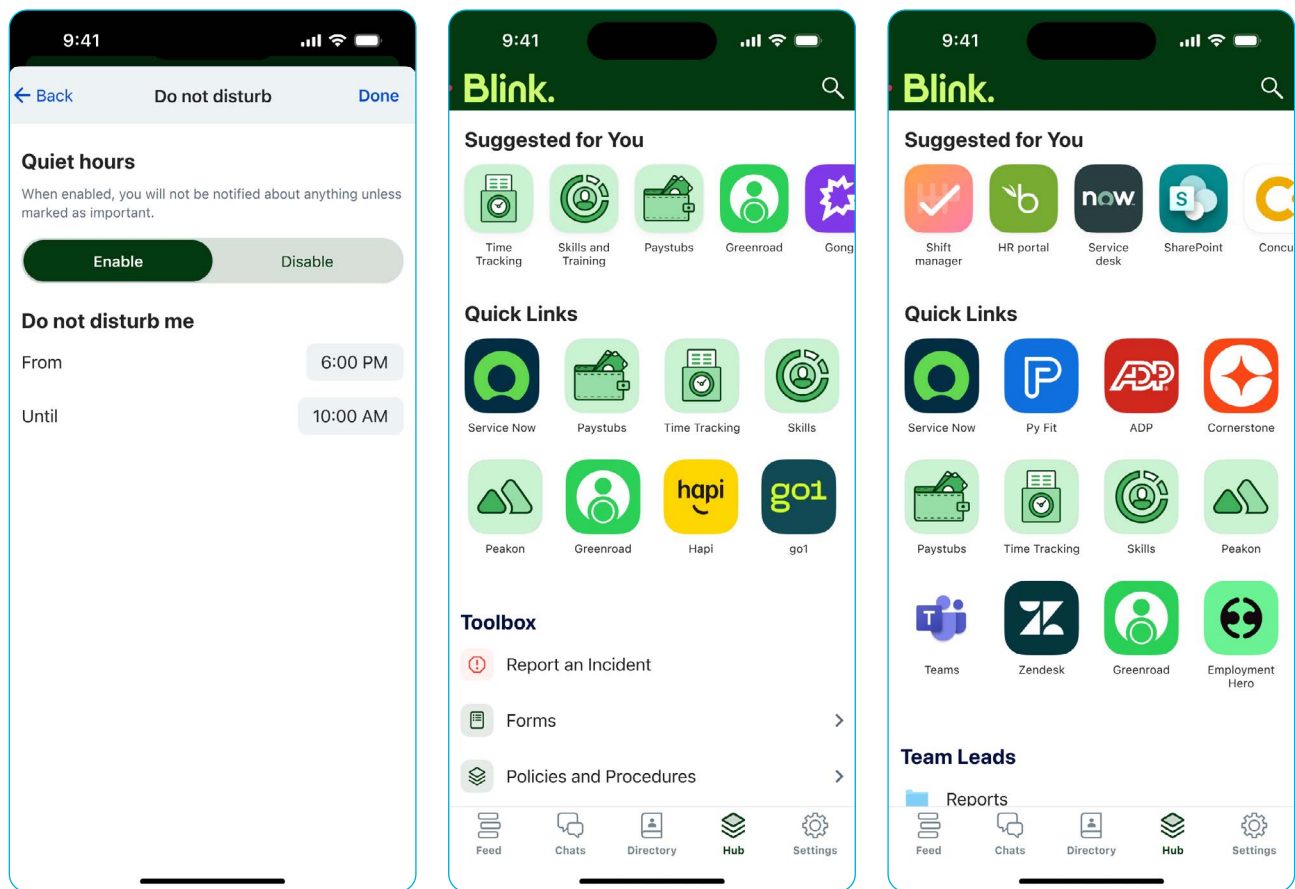
'Do not disturb' is an unusual but very helpful setting.

These screenshots are from the same Blink instance but show how Hub content is tailorable to different audiences.

THINGS TO BEAR IN MIND

Blink is clearly designed with the frontline in mind, with a pleasingly simple user experience as a result. However, this may mean that for those looking for a comprehensive platform that meets desk-based workers' needs, such as knowledge or document management, Blink may be too simple. The Scenarios with lower scores are those often needed by organisations with desk workers, for example. Blink does offer to work with clients to develop or expand on the platform's core features, which may serve desk workers' needs more effectively, but we feel more control could be placed into client's hands without the need to pass requests to the vendor.

Blink is a more fully featured employee app product than many others we've seen, which is what makes it a compelling choice, even in businesses that have desk workers. For example, we like the vendor's position as a communications channel rather than a communications management tool; or even being a frontline accompaniment to a desk-based tool. This means a second product, even from among those we've reviewed in this report, could meet the needs of desk workers while Blink effortlessly meets frontline needs. The fact that Blink offers read-only access to SharePoint content, meaning frontline workers won't need that additional license, makes this approach even more attractive.

It's worth noting, however, that there are quite varied price points for different size organisations. Those under 5,000 users will be pleasantly surprised, while those that are larger will see Blink is among the more expensive products in this report. If it is acting as an alternative to something like SharePoint, then this may not be an issue, and the benefits it brings to the frontline may prove its value beyond the cost. Overall, where there is a more equal split of worker types, or where the frontline dominates, Blink will remain an excellent choice.

Why choose this product

Blink is a frontline-focused, mobile-first product that understands its target audience perfectly. It's easy to use and quick to navigate, making communications, reference materials, and tools easy to find. Blink offers organisations alternatives to shadow technology like WhatsApp, while also providing easy access to business tools without the need for employees to download multiple apps. Organisations of any size that have frontline workers will find something to like about Blink. It offers a good companion to desktop platforms too, meaning desk workers and frontline workers can be served by products that best suit their needs without clashing.

Vendor roadmap

Blink. And see what we're doing next.

Roadmap

2023 H2	2024 H1	2024 H2+

• Custom profile fields
  • Unlock more powerful Journeys, Dynamic Teams, and User Search
	• Actionable insights
	  • Adoption by team
	  • Heatmaps and leader boards
	  • Benchmarking
		• Task Management

• Increased capabilities in Journeys	• Desktop/Web UI/UX upgrades	• Improved Moderation
		  • Machine Learning detection of inappropriate language
		  • Approval and moderation workflows

• Form Builder
  • Self-serve for Blink-native Forms
	• Expanded API capabilities	• Platform Customisation
		  • Interactive widgets in Hub and Feed
		  • Page templates
		  • Personalised, predictive experiences curated by Machine Learning

• More support for multi-lingual organisations	• Support for employees working across multiple organisations	

• Flexible roles and permissions	• Enhanced Shift Management offering	• Culture Booster:
		  • Discoverable communities
		  • Q&A
		  • Company events

• Mobile UI/UX upgrades	• Self-service app and SSO marketplace	
• Enhanced activation support for distributed workforces		

Blink.

Roadmap image provided by Blink.

firstup

FULLY STANDALONE

REQUIRES SHAREPOINT

OPTIONALLY WORKS WITH SHAREPOINT

FRONTLINE FOCUS

Typical deployment:

15,000 - 20,000 employees

Company locations:

VISIT THE WEBSITE

The product in a nutshell

Firstup is an excellent comms platform that has some powerful tools for internal communicators, plus a helpful digital assistant for practical tasks.

Firstup owned by Firstup

Firstup (formerly SocialChorus and Dynamic Signal) are based in San Francisco, USA, and launched their combined Firstup platform in 2021. The company has a lot of experience in the market however, with SocialChorus having been initially founded in 2008, and this experience is evident across the communications-focused Firstup platform.

The features overall are excellent and will appeal strongly to internal communicators looking to optimise how they reach and engage with their audiences. Firstup is a powerful communications platform that delivers strong capabilities around content creation, audience targeting, engagement and multi-channel posting. The Orchestration Engine is particularly noteworthy: it combines behavioural data with AI and applies this to content targeting and scheduling to avoid repetition across channels. The user experience is contemporary across devices, and the digital assistant benefits from this good UX to provide simple but effective access to practical tools.

The focus on communication and engagement features means that there are a few gaps in functionality in other scenarios, particularly for customers that are looking for features associated with a traditional intranet. For example, the search capabilities are limited, and reference material isn't as well served as news-oriented communications. Content governance tools, multi-language capabilities, and gamification features are also less strong compared to other products in this report. Firstup says that improvements in several of these areas are on their roadmap.

Overall, Firstup will likely appeal to large or complex businesses that are looking for ways to address employee communication and engagement needs. Especially those with a significant population of frontline workers will appreciate Firstup's focus on mobile delivery. Note, however, that it is among the more expensive products we've reviewed in this report, particularly for large organisations.

Pricing

PRICE BAND	
250 users	$ $ $ $
1,000 users	$ $ $ $
5,000 users	$ $ $ $
20,000 users	$ $ $ $

These prices are indicative, offering a comparison of the products featured in this report only. Please contact the vendor for a bespoke quote.

PRICING MODEL

Subscription – price per user per month. One-off payment. One-off payment and ongoing maintenance fee.

COSTS TYPICALLY

Slightly higher at the start of the term, but generally spread.

DISCOUNTS

Charities and non-profit organisations, schools and educational institutes, Government / public sector, healthcare, frontline users and multi-year commitments.

PRICE INCLUDES

Nothing on top of installation, configuration and licenses.

Product type

Ready-to-run, installed in days

Branding opportunities

Good branding, single choice

Base systems

Fully standalone	Requires SharePoint	Optionally works with SharePoint	Other*

*Can connect with multiple HR systems, as well as integrating with a variety of apps and tools to aid the user experience.

Sectors

Energy and utilities	Engineering and manufacturing	Healthcare	Retail	Transport & Logistics

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Featured internal

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion company announcement next Tuesday.

Join us Friday at 2:00pm as we explore diversity of thought, background, and perspective as it fuels innovation, enriches our corporate culture, and drives our competitiveness in the global marketplace.

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion

Jamie Summers   523 views • May 26, 2024

👍 13   💬 54   🔖 Bookmark

News Release: Workplace communication is now more important than ever.

Internal Communications   +1 more   322 Views

Brenda Jones   May 02, 2024   👍 36   💬 22   ⋮

Learn our new IT software and hardware process.

IT Initiatives   +2 more   59 Views

Amar Shami   May 06, 2024   👍 18   💬 4   ⋮

Welcome our new hires on the Engineering team

Engineering   198 Views

Jamie Summers   June 26, 2024   👍 49   💬 28   ⋮

Latest

Check out the content from the topics that you are following

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Empowering Engineers: Streamlined compliance training for enhanced performance and ethical excellence.

Compliance Training   +2 more   266 Views

Ryan Sullivan   May 21, 2024   💬 32   👍 15   ⋮

Chicago office announces new floor added for Engineering Team Leads. Plus, special brainstorming pods.

Engineering   166 Views

Jabari Abebe   June 13, 2024   💬 54   👍 18   ⋮

HR announces "Summer Fun Friday" calendar days.

Company Fun   +2 more   425 Views

Linda Jamie   June 1, 2024   💬 25   👍 309   ⋮

Latest employee engagement poll for Q2. Last reminder to make your voice heard.

HR HUB   +2 more   222 Views

Linda Jamie   May 14, 2024   💬 29   👍 201   ⋮

Welcome to our new HR Hub: Find the information you need quickly. Benefits, policies, and more!

HR HUB   +2 more   265 Views

Linda Jamie   June 9, 2024   💬 15   👍 71   ⋮

New Customer Story Series! Our first three stories out of the gate share the value of our platform.

Company News   +2 more   305 Views

Tim Williamson   May 17, 2024   💬 5   👍 302   ⋮

COMPANY AND PRODUCT

Company details

Company
Firstup

ISO 27001 certified
Yes

Data residency
North America and EU

Company founded
Initially 2008, Firstup (merger of Dynamic Signal and SocialChorus) founded in 2021.

Product launched
2008

Typical client size
15,000 - 20,000 employees

Largest deployment so far
Circa 2m users (Amazon, across 100+ countries).

Customers
Clients include: Amazon, Hilton, BBC, Phillips66, AGCO, Swissport, Southern Company Gas, Big Lots, Wawa, Boston Children's Hospital.

Partner locations
Global

Company locations
San Francisco, USA (HQ), UK

Product and technical details

Name of product

Firstup

Deployment

Client on-premises	Client private cloud	Microsoft Azure	Amazon Web Services	Vendor-hosted	Microsoft 365 tenant	Other

Client data encrypted

In transit only	In transit and at rest	At rest only

Authentication supported

Entra ID	ADFS	Okta	Open ID	Oauth	G Suite	Other*

*Firstup supports any IDP that is SAML 2.0 compliant.

App deployment

Google Play store	Apple store	MDM	MAM	Other

Accessibility

Contrast and font size can be set by the individual user, Alt text is in use for images, and keyboards can be used for navigation. Firstup says that they are committed to bring features in alignment with WCAG 2.1 standards and Section 508C guidelines for mobile. The platform currently adheres to most WCAG 2.1 guidelines for web accessibility and most Section 508C guidelines for mobile accessibility.

Document library sources integrated

Box	Dropbox	Google Drive	SharePoint	OneDrive	Other*

*Zendesk

Optional integrated enterprise search engines

Coveo	Elastic	IBM	Lucidworks	Microsoft	Mindbreeze	Sinequa	Other

User interface multi-language

Pre-configured	Editable	Right to left script supported	Other*

*The Creator Studio supports browser translations, Firstup are investigating the ability to add multilingual user interfaces and menus for admins.

Content multi-language

Machine translation for publishers	Machine translation for end users	Editable machine translation for publishers	Manual creation for publishers	Right to left script	Other

Set-up and support

Set-up process for new clients

On average, Firstup programs are launched within 6 to 8 weeks, however some customers have been set up in days. A dedicated technical services team runs a technical planning schedule and ensures that Firstup "does most of the heavy tech lift". The Firstup customer success team includes around 50% ex-customers in the group, bringing first-hand knowledge of the platform with them. Firstup only requires a few key access points into client data, including provisioning, attributes, branding assets, integrations, etc.

Current version

4.9.1 August 2023

Product updates

Major releases are quarterly, with minor releases monthly. Occasionally Firstup will make real time updates to the platform as well. There is no downtime for customers for any product updates.

Product update process

The majority of customers take updates in real-time, though Firstup do allow for those customers that like to determine their mobile release through MDM or MAM. Before any release, all notes and key updates are provided to their customer base.

Reverse-out options

Customer data is retained throughout the lifetime of the customer program. Upon program termination, Firstup can export and purge data if requested by the client. Backups are retained for a 30-day window prior to expiration.

Technical support

Email support	Phone support	Chat support	Online portal	24/7 support	Office hours only

User community

Attune is Firstup's customer community with over 3,000 active members. Through a series of offline and online experiences, customers actively engage around a variety of topics on a monthly basis, including content sharing and best practices, industry trends and benchmarks, peer-to-peer networking, and product / industry / topic virtual roundtable discussions. Every month, Firstup hosts customer-only roundtables on timely and important topics — sharing best practices and keeping attendees on top of the latest trends in internal communication and employee experience. In addition, Firstup send out a monthly package of "thought starters" to encourage customer teams to create inspiring content for employees.

Voice of the vendor

Firstup says: "Firstup is dedicated to revolutionizing organizational communication and employee engagement by harnessing the power of intelligent, personalized, and interactive communications. Traditional communication methods often fall short, leaving employees feeling disconnected, overwhelmed, and disengaged. Firstup steps in to bridge this gap, empowering organizations to build stronger relationships with their workforce, resulting in higher engagement, lower attrition, and increased productivity.

Whether it's onboarding new hires, disseminating crucial information, or nurturing career development, Firstup is designed to streamline and automate the entire employee journey with a focus on the following key areas:

1. Personalization: We recognize that every employee is unique, with varying needs and preferences. Firstup enables organizations to create tailored communication campaigns and journeys for different individuals and groups. This ensures that each employee receives the most relevant information and resources they need to feel connected and perform at their best.

2. Intelligent Delivery and AI Optimization: Timely information delivery without overwhelming employees is crucial. Leveraging AI, Firstup optimizes the timing and delivery channel for each message, maximizing engagement. Priority levels ensure that urgent messages reach the right people first, resulting in up to 3X higher engagement across our customers.

3. Seamless Integration: Firstup excels at seamlessly integrating across an organization's entire ecosystem, from HR management tools to Microsoft Teams. This creates a unified experience for employees both within Firstup and inside their daily work tools. Customized, personalized messages based on each employee's profile are ensured. Moreover, employees can effortlessly access Firstup from within their existing systems, bridging the gap between information sources and engagement platforms.

4. Firstup Journeys: The employee experience is a transformative journey, comprising countless moments that influence an employee's commitment to an organization. From lackluster onboarding to challenges in navigating complex health plans or life events, employees often face hurdles due to inadequate communication and guidance. Firstup Journeys transform this experience into a seamless, personalized journey. Our dynamic message sequences guide employees through critical moments, from onboarding to promotions. Publishers can easily automate and personalize each step based on predefined triggers and audience segmentation, enhancing engagement and ensuring every interaction contributes positively to an employee's journey.

5. Analytics-driven Insights: Data is a powerful tool for understanding and enhancing employee engagement. Firstup's analytics capabilities provide organizations with valuable insights into how employees interact with communications. This enables data-driven decision-making, including predictive analytics that can identify individuals or cohorts at risk of attrition, allowing organizations to address problems before they arise."

Voice of the customer

What customers like the most about Firstup are its flexible and powerful features to create content and target various audiences, including frontline workers, across multiple channels. "The ability to create dynamic audiences based on employee data" is what stands out for one customer, and they continue: "Also, creating content in one place but being able to push it to several locations." According to another customer, "the mobile app is easy to deploy, works well, and has a positive impact on how employees engage with one another". In a similar vein, another customer puts it succinctly: "The product has allowed us to reach employees where they are, wired and unwired."

When asked about product improvements, a few different suggestions were made. One customer wants "more in-depth data around campaigns and user activity" and continues: "For example, we really would like to drill-down on user activity, be able to tie things back to a campaign and view metrics by employee groups." Another customer would also like to see more detailed analytics reports: "We would like the ability to compare audiences, for instance how engaged are one group of employees compared to another. Also the ability to see data over time, i.e. month-to-month and / or year-over-year." Firstup says that this can be achieved in the product following training on how to adjust filters in the reports. Another customer would like more granular permissions on commenting: "I would like to see a read-only option where certain employees lose their commenting privileges." Finally, the current search function is also mentioned as needing improvement: "The search is not quick and easy."

Feedback about working with Firstup is unanimously positive. "Working with Firstup has been a top-notch experience" and "everyone on the team is great to work with" are some of the comments we received. One customer praises the support during the implementation process in particular: "The attention to detail that they gave us during initial onboarding was second to none. We really have appreciated the customer service we have received from them." Another customer appreciates the sense of partnership with Firstup: "I feel that they are more of a strategic business partner than a vendor."

SCENARIOS & SCORES

Please see the Scenarios below for more detail on each of these.

SCENARIO AND SCORE	KEY BENEFITS	IMPROVEMENTS / CONSIDERATIONS
4 **1. User Experience & Visual Appeal**	Simple and clean user interface, consistent across device types.	Limited flexibility to tailor the layout of the home page and the navigation menu.
4.5 **2. Publishing & Communications Management**	Excellent tools for content creation, audience targeting, engagement and multi-channel posting.	Communication tools heavily rely on high quality employee profile data, which may take time and effort to put in place.
3 **3. Community & Engagement**	Topics offer flexible themed spaces with user-generated content to support collaboration and discussion.	Spaces for projects and knowledge management are less well served. No specific functionality to support ideation or gamification.
2.5+ **4. Integrations & Services (Including M365)**	A well-designed digital assistant integrates third-party applications in a user-friendly way.	Most integrations are not out-of-the-box and will require time and effort for Firstup to configure.
2.5 **5. Information Finding & Search**	People search works well with attractive profile cards and a simple org chart.	Search functionality is quite limited, with no features for administrators to influence search results.
3 **6. Administrator Experience**	A well-designed and logically structured admin console groups all configuration and analytics functions together.	Management functions for content life cycle and setting up multi-language support are limited.
4.5 **7. Analytics**	Comprehensive suite of analytics dashboards to track individual posts and communication campaigns.	Search analytics is less strong than the other analytics areas.
4+ **8. Mobile & Frontline Support**	Many flexible options to enrol frontline workers. Well-designed user interface works particularly well on mobile.	Specific features for frontline users rely mainly on integration with external applications.
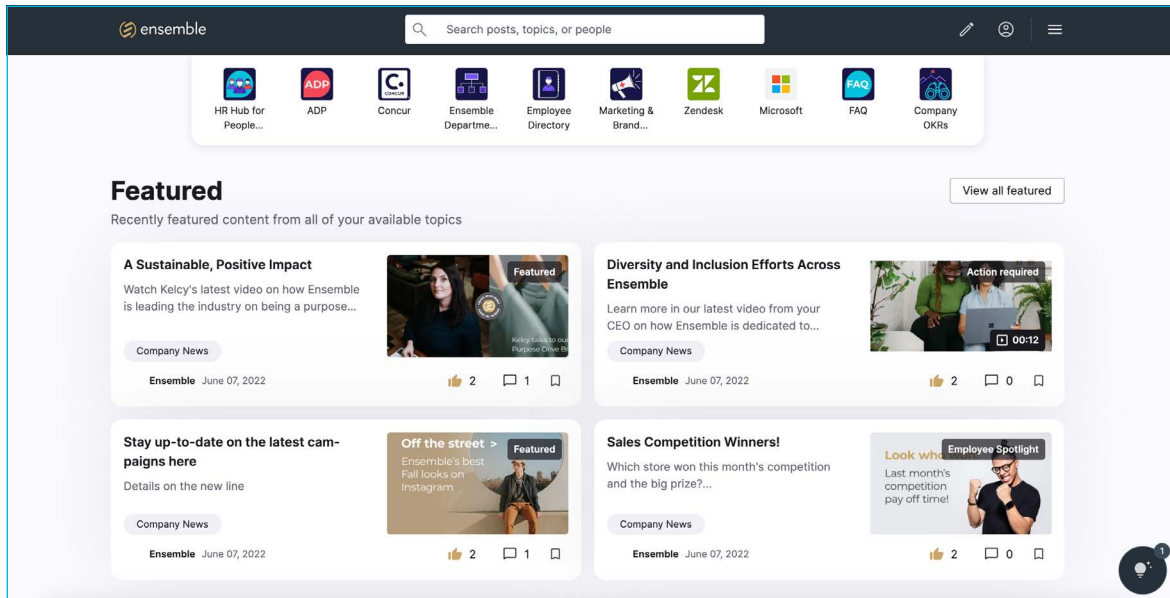
*The home page has a strip of icons with links to content and resources,
followed by various blocks with news articles and content posts.*

Firstup has a simple and clean look-and-feel, is easy to use for end users and content creators alike, and offers an experience that is consistent across device types. The user interface reflects the product's focus on employee communication and engagement, alongside its facilitation of third-party business tools. At the top of the home page sits a strip of icons that offers targeted shortcuts to the content and resources that users need the most. Below these shortcuts are different blocks with post feeds, including a block with shareable content for employee advocacy. Administrators can add and rearrange content blocks, but there is less flexibility to tailor the home page than with other products in this report.

Firstup also has an atypical approach to navigation. A hamburger menu takes people to three different news feeds (latest, trending, and featured), their bookmarked pages, and a resources area. From this menu, users also have access to various 'Topics' which are themed spaces for content, such as an HR space. The approach differs from more traditional intranet products with structured mega menus, but we think it works well for a product with a focus on reaching employees with targeted communication.

A key element in the user interface is Firstup's digital assistant, accessible via a floating lightbulb icon. It groups notifications and social interactions in one place and presents them in order of importance, helping busy employees to stay on top of things. The digital assistant also includes access to shortcuts and integrated systems, so it's an alternative way to reach content and resources. We particularly like the 'Command Center' area, which includes a contextual search box to help employees find the right information. More about Command Center is in Scenario 4.

Branding options are simple but flexible enough to create attractive sites and give subsidiary companies a different appearance if needed. There are no features to go beyond the standard branding capabilities, such as with custom CSS. Firstup say that the focus is to keep the product lean and clean. Overall, we find the platform attractive and reminiscent of social media sites, especially when used on mobile.
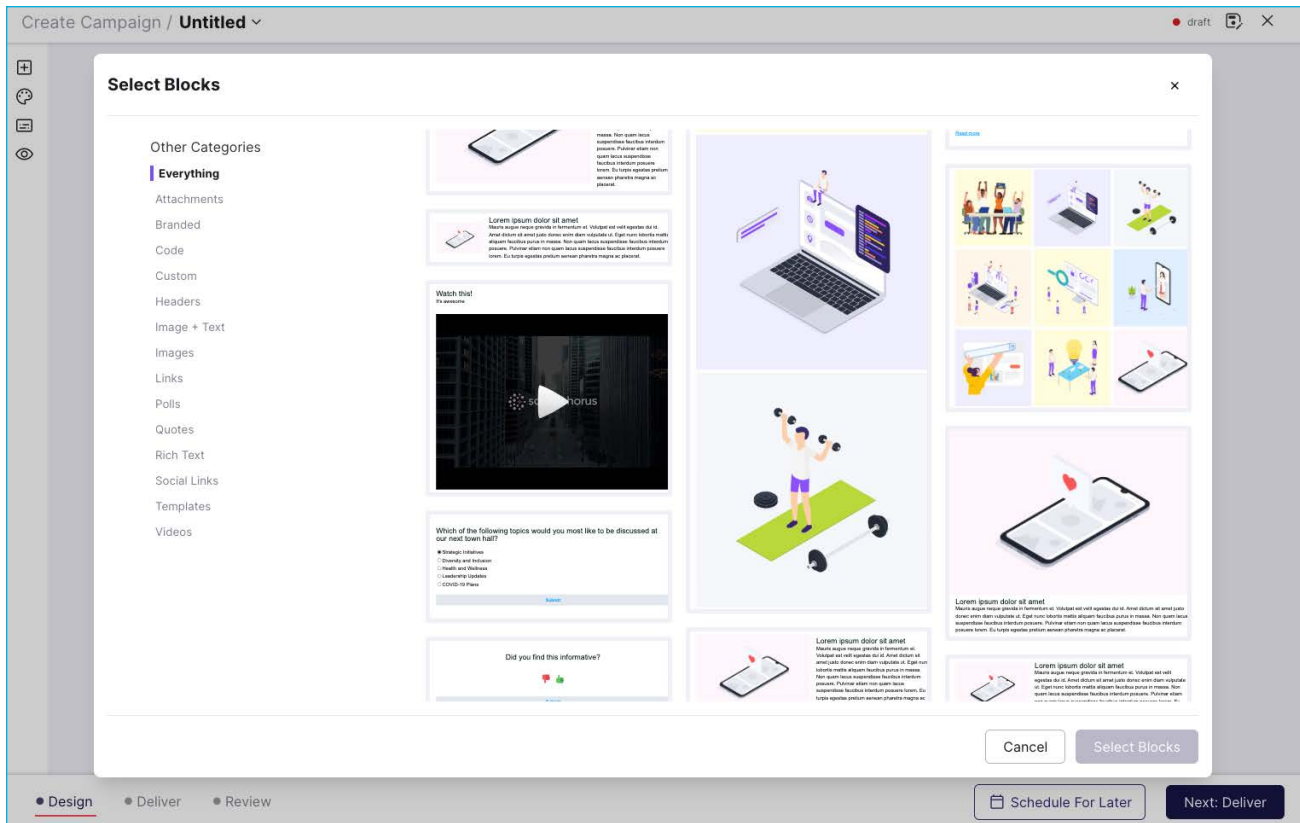
Publishers build their post by adding and configuring content blocks within Content Studio, an intuitive content editor.

Employee communication is a focus area for Firstup, and the associated functionality is excellent. There are a variety of fine-grained, powerful features for internal communicators to create and deliver engaging content such as news articles and newsletters. Content is administered in Content Studio, a module that stands separately from Firstup's front-end, but has an equally user-friendly interface.

When creating a post, publishers can choose to start from a pre-configured template, such as a monthly newsletter. Alternatively, they can start from a blank page or create a simple post such as a dedicated alert. Publishers then build up the article by adding or modifying individual content blocks. These can be selected from a rich library of pre-defined options, such as a video block or a quick poll. Publishers have extensive control over how each block will look and what it will contain; colours and font types can be adapted, and the spacing between blocks can be tweaked to balance the post properly. Publishers can preview the post across device types and send a test message by email, for instance to seek approval from a senior manager if required. It's also possible to combine individual posts into larger campaigns, and analytics are available to track a campaign's success; more on analytics in Scenario 7.
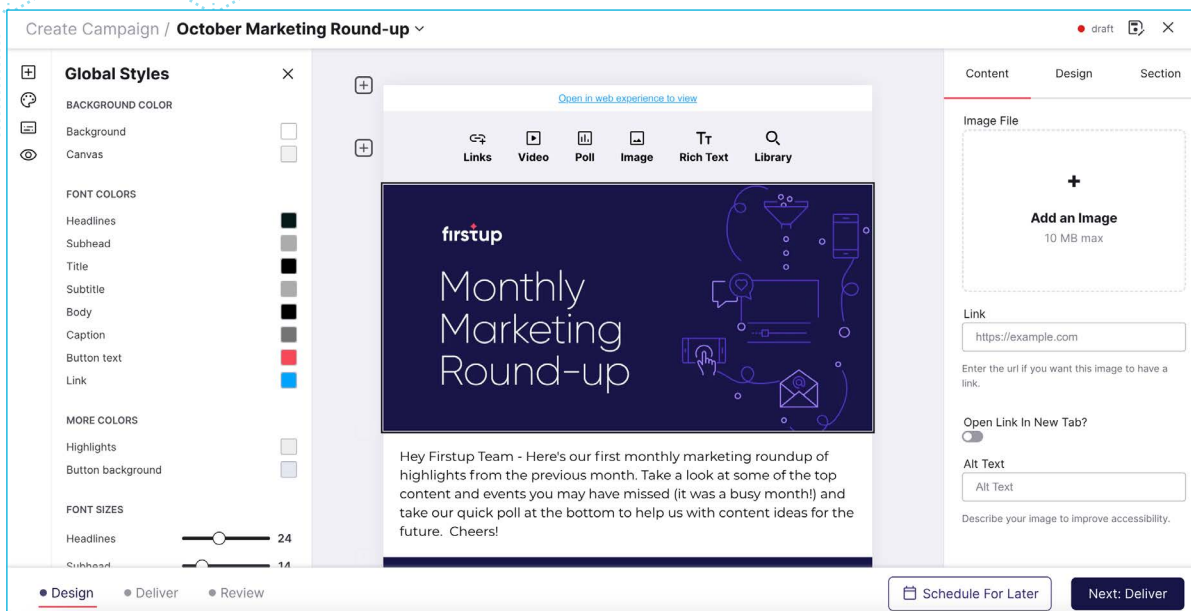
Editing tools are fine-grained, and individual building blocks can be styled as desired.

Once a formal post has been created the publisher must add one or more associated audiences. This is done in Firstup's 'Orchestration Engine', where pre-configured audiences can be used or created on-the-fly by the publisher. Multiple input sources are supported to populate people's profiles, such as Entra ID for department and location attributes, an LMS system for training data, or a payroll system for personal data. Audiences are then built by combining these attributes with Boolean logic.
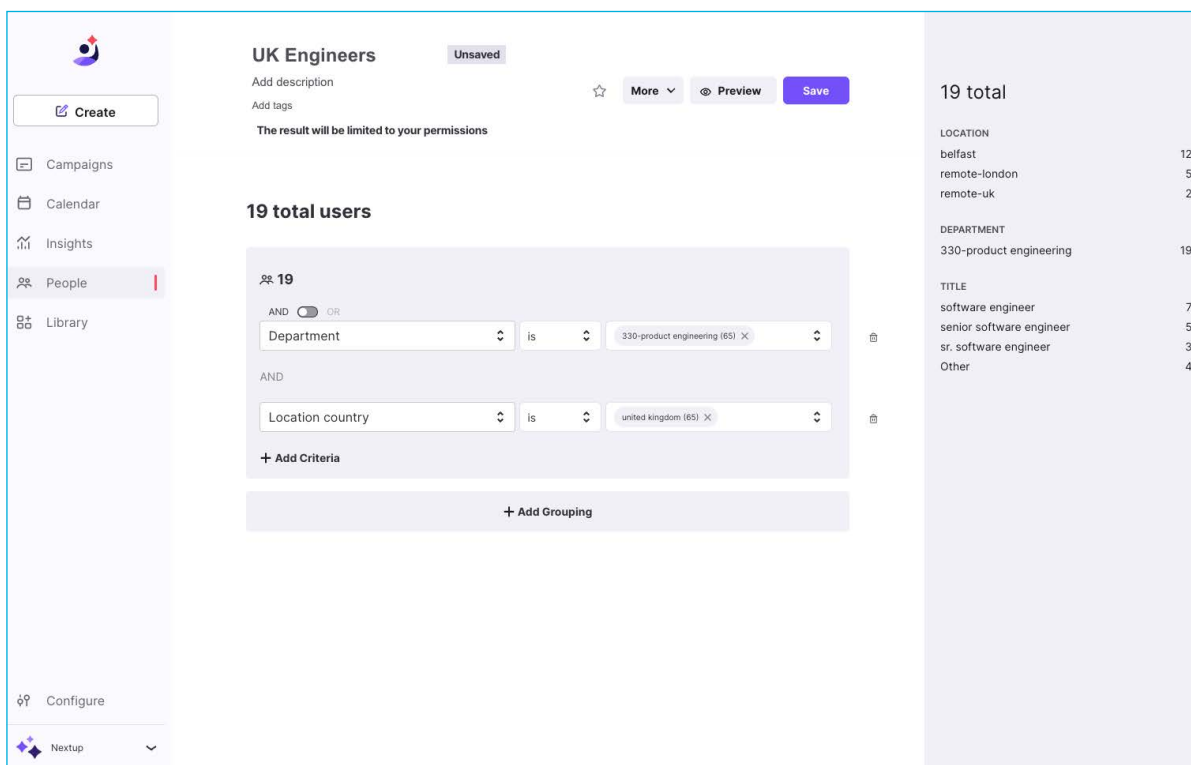
Audiences are created by combining attributes such as department and work location with Boolean logic.

We were particularly impressed by the power of the Orchestration Engine to deliver the prepared communication intelligently to selected audiences. By using behavioural data about how and when employees use the product, the engine will ensure a personalised delivery to individual users. For instance, someone's preferred channel is identified from actual usage, active times of day and length of time on the platform are also taken into consideration to determine the best delivery strategy.

The screenshot below illustrates some of the features of the Orchestration Engine. A dashboard highlights how many people will be targeted, as well as expected performance and audience fatigue. Audience fatigue indicates how much the selected audience have been, or are due to be, overloaded with content. Publishers can then switch on the 'Engagement Boost' feature, to make sure that audiences are targeted at the best possible time of day and through their preferred channel. Switching on automatic retargeting will take care of appropriate reminders.

The Orchestration Engine predicts a campaign's performance and automatically applies an optimised strategy through the Engagement Boost feature.

Studio includes a section called 'Calendar' to gain an overview of posts that have gone out and posts that are due to be published. Filters can be applied based on criteria such as author, status, or Topic. It includes snapshot analytics to see at a glance how a particular communication is performing.

For urgent and crisis communications, simple posts can be formatted to make them stand out. The Orchestration Engine will then assign a 'critical' level of importance, and push notifications on mobile devices can be switched on. Users will be prompted to acknowledge when they have read the post, and the engine will auto-generate reminders, which is a strong feature. Posts can also be 'featured' with an associated label, such as 'From the CEO', which also helps with visibility.

There is good support for communicating outside of Firstup, for instance into MS Teams or into a digital signage solution. This is achieved through 'micro-apps', which are low-code widgets that can be configured and then integrated into other platforms. We were shown a micro-app for digital signage that offers plenty of flexibility and templates to design different screen layouts. Content is then picked up from a Topic within Firstup and displayed externally. More about micro-apps in Scenario 4. Employee advocacy is also supported, see Scenario 8 for more.

Finally, reference material follows the same approach as active communications. Posts are created in the same manner, and attachments can be added. Reference posts are then saved in the 'resources' Topic, or within a specific Topic such as 'HR policies'. Users can subscribe to Topics to opt into associated communications, or they can be automatically subscribed to relevant Topics. Firstup's approach to static content is different from the more traditional intranet products in this report. Content owners that are used to creating structured subsites will have to adapt to Firstup's model.

The Calendar gives an overview of all recent and future posts against a timeline, and includes some quick analytics about each post.
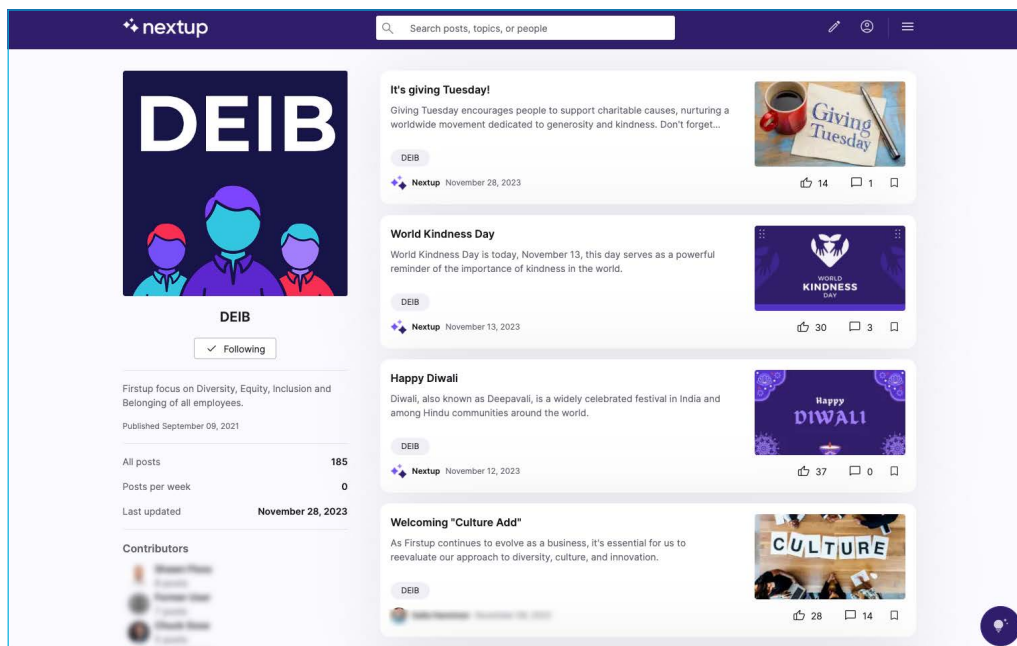
An example of a community created using the Topic functionality.

Firstup's focus as a communications tool extends to all users, not just comms teams, and relies on the functionality offered in Topics. These are themed spaces with user-generated content that support collaboration in communities of practice as well as discussion around relevant themes such as sustainability. Topics can be open or closed for membership and posting, and people will see recommended new Topics in their notifications. The content creation process is much simpler than the full comms tool (see Scenario 2) and is handled directly in the front-end. Users can create posts that include a video or multiple images, post a short note or write a longer article.

Reactions are limited to likes and comments; it would be beneficial to expand the options available. Banned words are automatically blanked in comments and users can report comments for moderation and removal by admins. Admins can 'highlight' comments, potentially to reflect a correct answer, and sort them; sorting by 'most liked' comments will be helpful during a town hall for example. Sentiment analysis and AI-powered review of comments are on the roadmap.

When creating a post, publishers may include a poll, which can be interacted with via email too. This is a very simple approach to opinion gathering, although an integration with MS Forms or SurveyMonkey could be used for something longer. Firstup includes 'multi-step campaigns' to help onboard people, where a series of messages are triggered at set points, such as on the day of joining. A more generic and flexible journey builder tool is on the product roadmap. Topics are a simple solution for employee recognition, wellbeing or ideation, but there aren't any dedicated features to support these activities.

Overall, Firstup's communities and engagement tools work well as an extension of its communication focus. The Topics functionality supports social and discussion-oriented spaces, but project teams that want to add recent documents or a team calendar to the space are less well served. More advanced Topics that can serve as knowledge hub are on Firstup's roadmap. Some social features, such as gamification through points and badges, are missing or are simpler than other products we've reviewed in this report. We hope to see some of these areas develop to make Firstup a more fully featured solution.
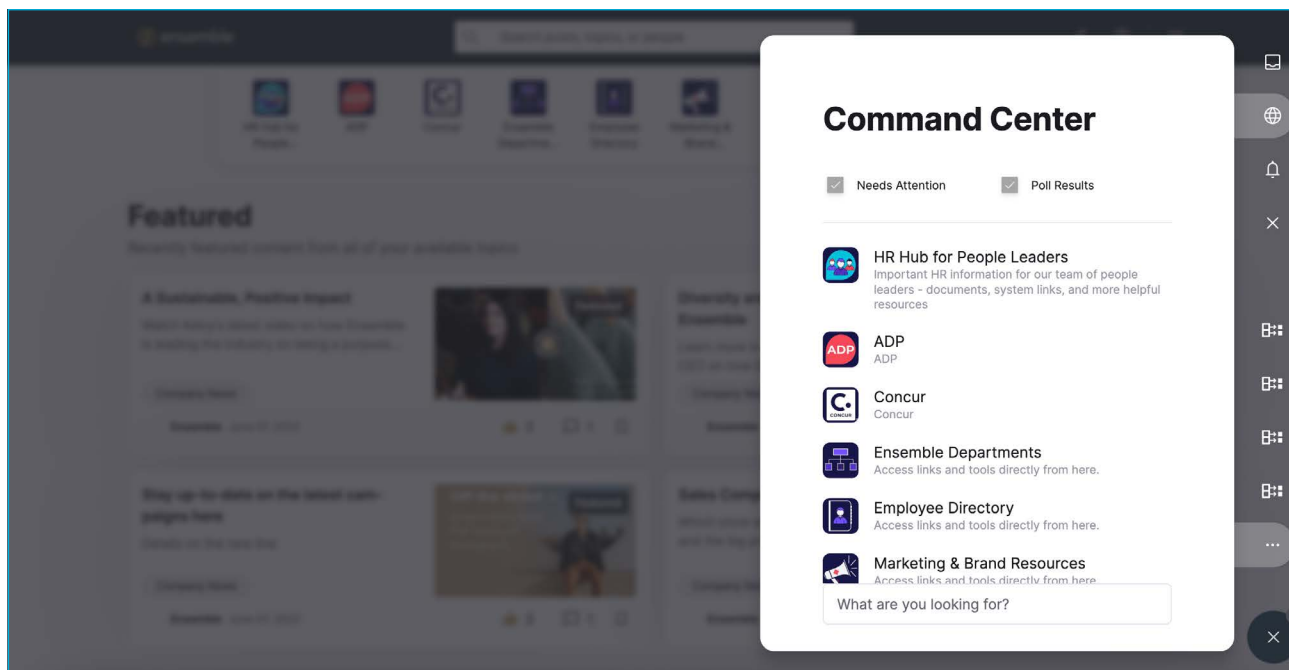
The Command Center is Firstup's primary location to access integrated tools.

Integrated applications are presented in the strip of targeted shortcuts at the top of the home page. These will either open third-party systems or launch integrated tools, such as submitting an IT helpdesk ticket. However, the 'Command Center' within the digital assistant is the main location for integrated tools. Information is displayed (such as a latest payslip) or workflows completed (such as requesting a new laptop), including two-way integrations with source systems. We saw examples of Concur, ServiceNow, Zendesk, and ADP. Firstup will add others for customers on request, which may incur additional cost, and note that Firstup will complete the initial configuration of the Command Center too. Notifications from third-party tools are currently not integrated; this would be a helpful addition.

The Command Center provides an excellent user experience, through a series of simple button requests within a chatbot-style interface. We really like this simple but effective approach, which removes the need for users to remember which tool does what.

File storage platforms such as Box, Dropbox, Google Drive or Microsoft's OneDrive and SharePoint can be integrated into the search experience of Firstup, so that content appears within a separate tab on the search results page. This works well, and we like the possibility to restrict federated search to a single folder rather than an entire library. However, there are no filters to refine the search results; see Scenario 5 for more on search.

Another interesting approach to integration is the micro-apps that are also mentioned in Scenario 2. These low-code widgets can contain any type of Firstup content and be placed onto any system that accepts these, such as on a ServiceNow home page or on pages in Google Sites or Microsoft SharePoint. This is an interesting way to enrich other tools and platforms with Firstup content. Conversely, news articles posted into SharePoint sites can be brought through into Firstup Topics.
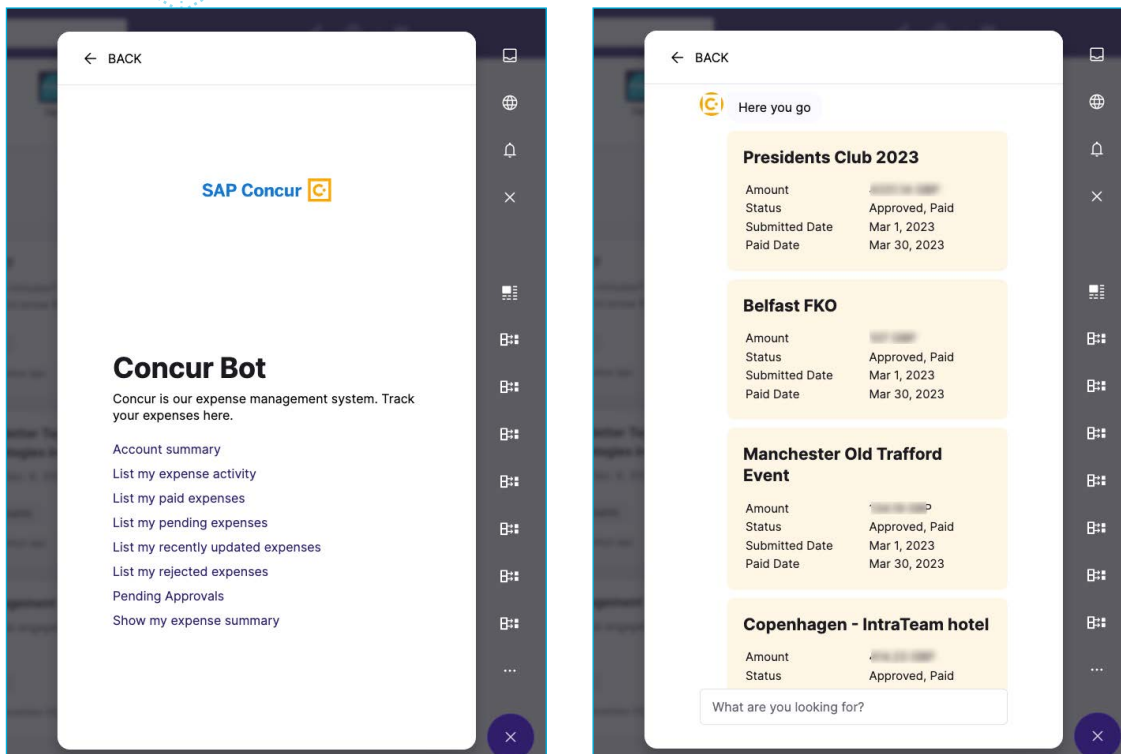
Access to external tools such as Concur is presented as a chatbot-style interface.
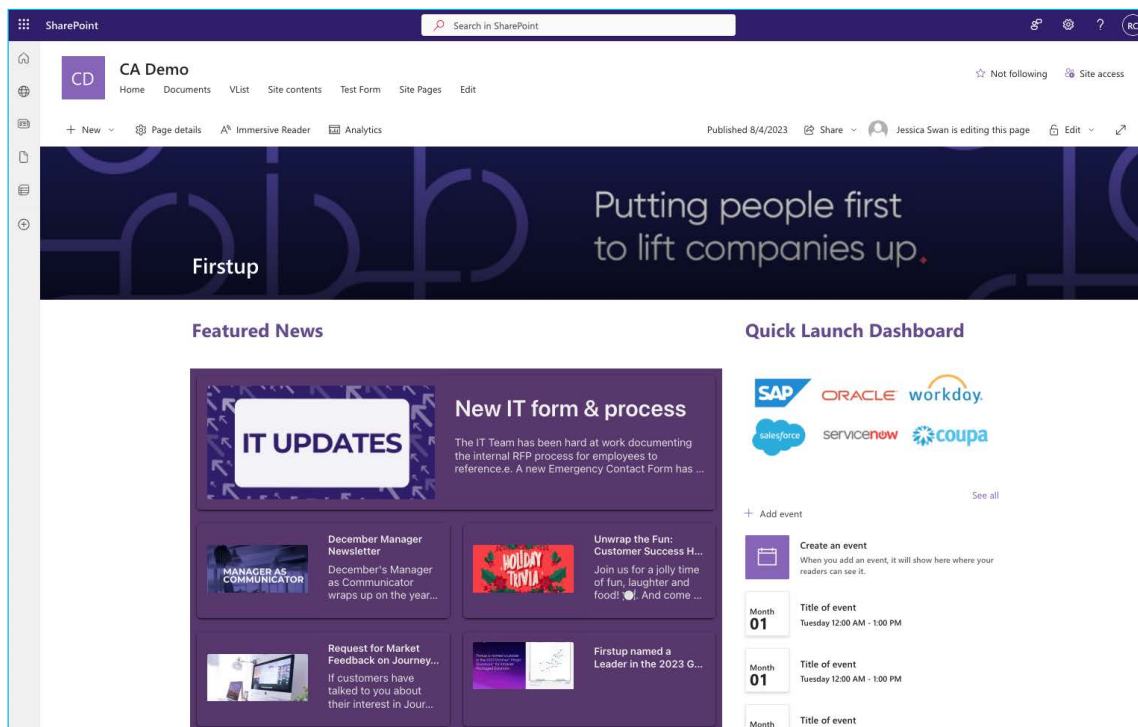
Firstup content such as latest news can be integrated into a SharePoint page.

A Firstup Topic can be added as a tab to an MS Teams channel. We think this is helpful, as Firstup focuses on communication and this will allow project teams to collaborate within MS Teams while keeping the Firstup content at their fingertips. The entire Firstup application can also be added as an app into MS Teams, making it available in the left-hand navigation. Integration of Firstup notifications into the MS Teams alert bell is also possible.

For Viva Engage, there is an API workflow available that will cross-post in a Topic and a Viva Engage community, although customers will have to ask Firstup to set this up. Other Microsoft content, such as a video in Stream or SharePoint, or a survey in MS Forms, can be embedded.

Overall, we like the approach that Firstup takes to integration of external platforms. The chatbot-style user interface in the Command Center is innovative and different compared to other products in this report, and we found it intuitive to use. However, many of the integrations require an initial setup and some configuration work to be done by Firstup, so there is time and effort required to get going. The same is true for implementing the micro-apps and the Viva Engage integration. The various approaches to integration are interesting and powerful though, and Firstup is available to offer help where needed.
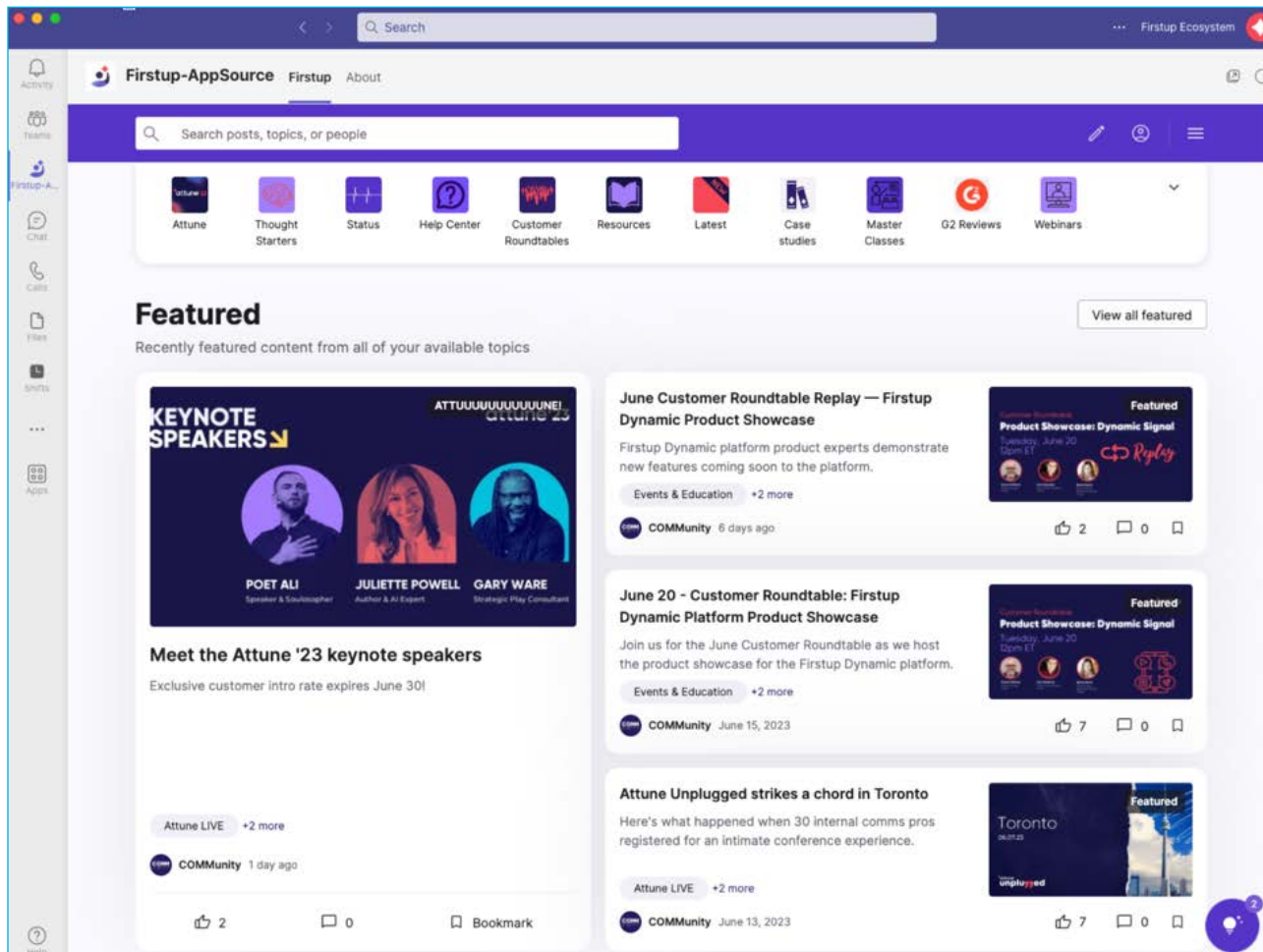
Firstup can be added as an app into Teams.
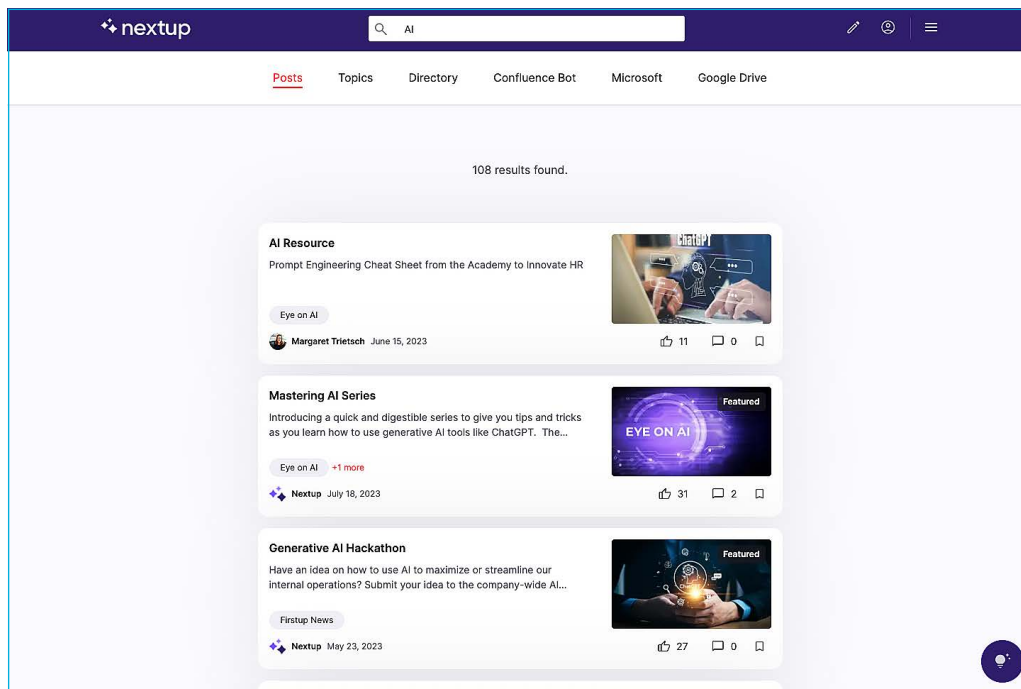
Search results from posts, Topics and the people directory are grouped under separate tabs, as are the results from other content sources.

The starting point of Firstup's search is a global search window in the top navigation bar. Search results cover posts, Topics, and the people directory, presented under separate tabs on the search results page. The body and headline of posts are indexed, then results are returned in date order with the most recent first. There are no refiners or filters available, so users must manually explore the results to find what they're looking for. The search results page cannot be configured, and there are no features to help publishers improve the findability of their content (such as sponsored results).

There are a number of areas where contextual search is available, such as in the Command Center (see Scenario 4) and in the calendar view of the Studio module (see Scenario 2). A contextual search within Topic pages is on the product roadmap. Some useful reports are available, for instance to see the most popular search terms (see Scenario 7). The product does include a federated search capability with content from external platforms such as Google Drive, Microsoft OneDrive and SharePoint, and Confluence. This works well, see Scenario 4 for details.

Users search for colleagues via the main search window, where the returned people cards are attractive and offer a good deal of information about the employee. Employees can update their information, for instance to add personal pronouns. People see a timeline of their colleague's posts (where they have the same permissions), and a list of the Topics they are a member of. There is a simple but useful org chart too, which displays a few steps either side of the user on their profile card. People may search for colleagues using any profile field, such as department or skills.

Overall, the current search functionality is not as strong as in other products in this report. Firstup say that they are overhauling the search experience and are introducing AI-based search. Natural language processing will be applied to analyse the search query and bring the most relevant posts, documents, and people to the front. We believe that this will be a very welcome enhancement.

6. ADMINISTRATOR EXPERIENCE
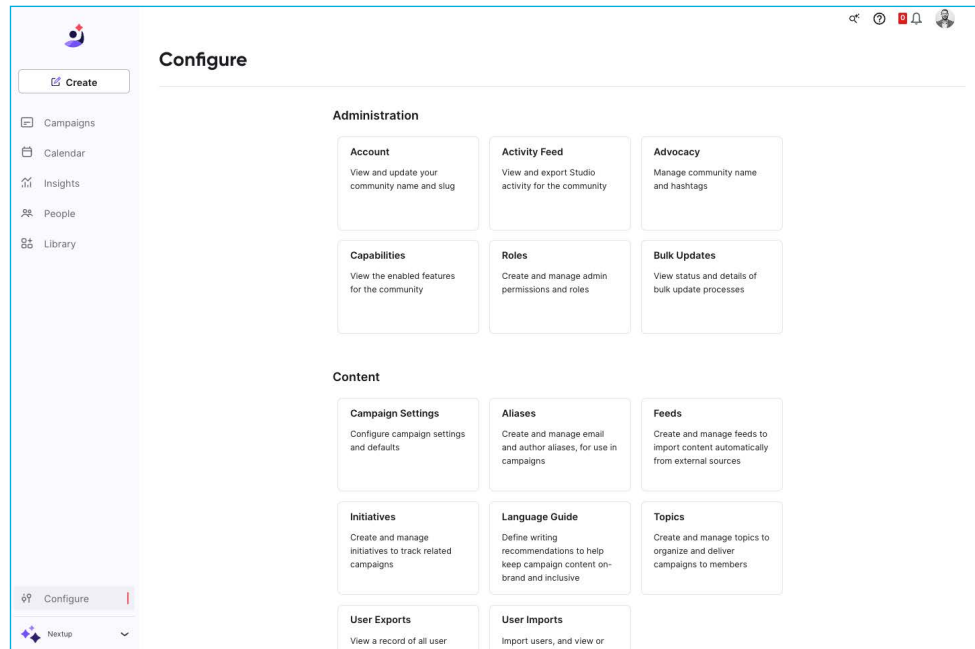
Studio is Firstup's admin console where configuration options are logically grouped together.

Site administration is handled in an admin console called Studio, which is separate from the Firstup front-end. It's intuitive with a simple navigation and a logical structure. A key area is 'roles management', where administrators can set up user roles for the organisation. A set of standard roles, such as Community Admin or Content Publisher, are part of the product, but there is flexibility to define custom roles thanks to fine-grained permission settings.

Studio is also where the home page is configured and Topics are set up. The shortcuts that appear at the top of the home page can be selected and audience targeted. The ordering of the widgets, and the Topics that feed into them, are also managed here. Options for designing the home page are more limited than with traditional intranets but work well for Firstup's communications-led approach.

Studio also includes features to manage the content life cycle and to moderate user comments. Content created through the design tool have settings associated with review and archiving, but user-generated posts don't. There is reporting on content that hasn't been viewed in a while, and it's easy to manually archive individual posts or entire Topics. Notifications for publishers about expired or archived pages would be a helpful addition. Overall, we feel tools for life cycle management can be improved, especially considering that Firstup will potentially contain large volumes of user-generated content from across the organisation.

Firstup relies mainly on automated translation, which is achieved through Amazon Translate and by supporting native browser settings for Chrome, Safari, Firefox, and Edge. Support for formal, manual translation is limited, but there is a workflow that makes it possible to link Topics in local languages together. When a post is created in one of the Topics, the workflow will automatically copy the content in draft status into the other Topic and send a notification to a local language publisher. This feature will meet the need of some organisations, but more refined multi-language features will make the product more attractive to large and multinational companies.

The Community Overview report gives a content funnel view of how many users have viewed, opened, and engaged with content. Filters allow users to drill down further.

The suite of analytics available on Firstup is comprehensive, although it's also an area where some customers are asking for more detailed reports in the 'Voice of the Customer' section. We found the available reports rich and insightful, but also noted a few areas where further improvements are possible.

All reports are grouped under the 'Insights' tab in the Studio module. At the top of the main Insights page is an overview of activity within the last 30 days detailing who the most prolific publisher is, and the most active Topic, for example. Those with permissions can then dig down into a wide range of detailed reports. These are displayed in a series of attractive graphs or tables and can be manipulated on-screen, exported to CSV, or exported via an API into PowerBI, for example.

Firstup configures reports for customers during set up and will create custom reports if areas aren't immediately available. A further improvement would be to provide comparison reports, whereby one employee group is compared to another, or last month's data is compared to the month before. This is also echoed by customer feedback in the 'Voice of the Customer' section.

A particularly useful report is the Community Overview report, where authorised users can view data about all the content in Firstup and break it down by content type, Topic, device / platform viewed on, and by date range. Information is presented as a content funnel, showing how many targeted users have viewed the content, opened it, and engaged with it. Filters are available at the top of the report to slice and dice the information in many ways. There is also a list of top posts that shows details about how users have engaged with individual posts (likes, comments, sharing, and bookmarking).

Firstup comes with several other reports out of the box. One example is an interesting video performance report, with data on view duration, and there are good analytics on employee advocacy posts. An equally powerful report is the Campaign Performance report. Publishers can tie individual posts into a larger campaign by tagging them with a specific label, such as 'Leadership summit Boston' or 'Sustainability 2024'. Publishers may then review the success of individual elements of the campaign, plus the success of the communication campaign overall.

What we especially like about the Firstup approach is that they not only give users analytics on past performance of campaigns, but also before and during a campaign. At the time of content creation, the Orchestration Engine predicts a post's expected performance and audience fatigue (see Scenario 2). During an ongoing campaign, content owners can track progress and take corrective action if the campaign is not on target, by manually creating a new push notification for example. After the fact, the Campaign Performance report gives actionable insights for future initiatives, such as which devices / platforms were the most successful at reaching people.
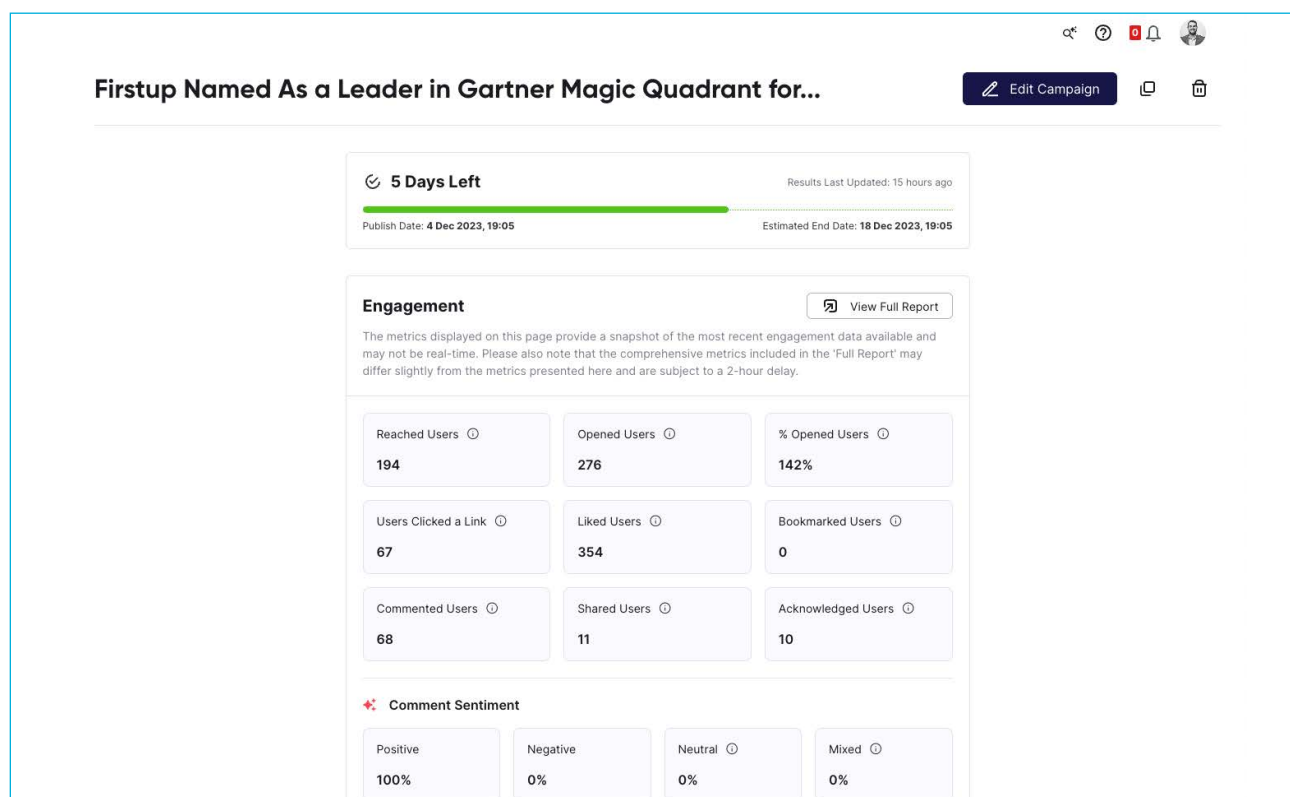
Also for ongoing campaigns, reporting is available to track progress and take corrective action if needed.

Firstup includes good functionality to support mandatory reads. Content can be marked to 'require acknowledgement' from users, and those who don't acknowledge will continue to receive prompts about the post until they do. Who has or hasn't acknowledged content is tracked and available as part of the reporting.

Although the search isn't one of the strongest areas of Firstup, the search reporting is good. The analytics include details of popular keyword searches, unique search terms, and average searches by user. However, we would like to see 'failure to find' and similar analytics that highlight where users may be frustrated or gave up looking for content. We would also like to see the search analytics evolve further so that they can provide useful insights to adapt the search experience in the new AI-powered search that is on Firstup's roadmap (see Scenario 5). The combination of this upgraded search experience combined with insightful search reporting will give Firstup a compelling set of information-finding features.

Firstup's roadmap for reporting also includes an employee retention forecast, as illustrated in the screenshot below. Based on people analytics around interaction and engagement with the platform, this report identifies areas within the organisation with high risk of employee attrition.
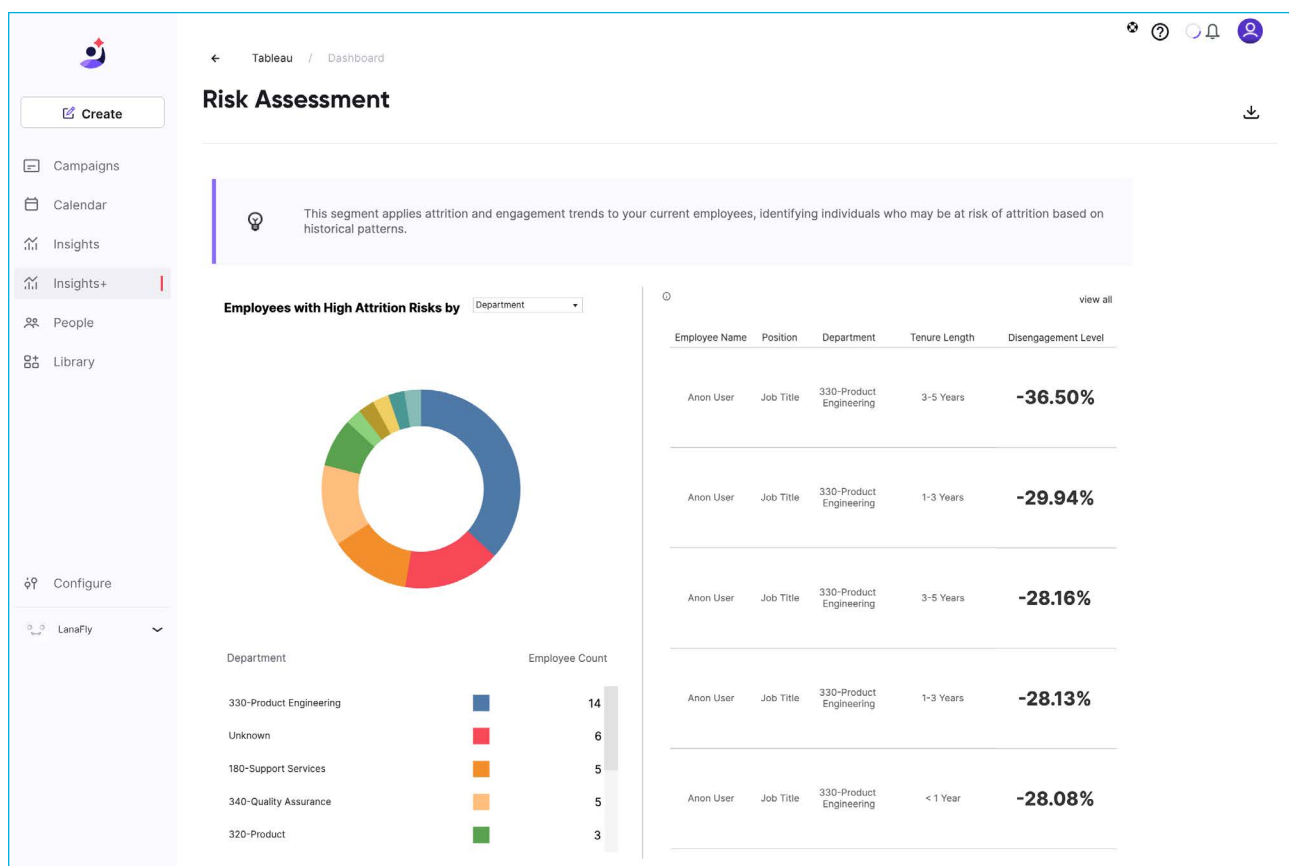
On Firstup's roadmap is an Employee Retention report that forecasts the risk of employee attrition.
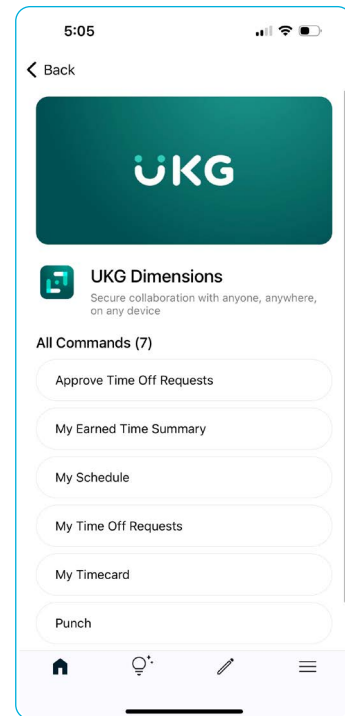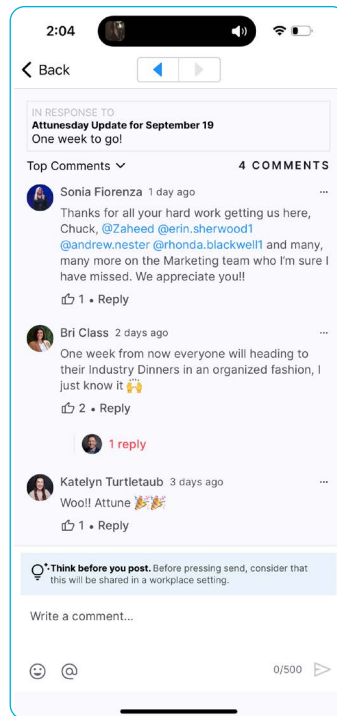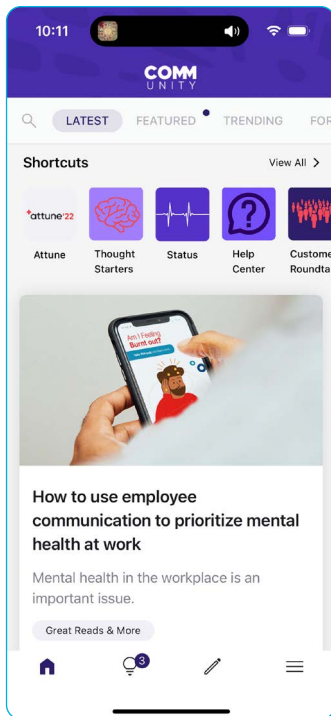
Different views of the mobile app: the home page, the commenting feature, and the integration with UKG in the digital assistant.

Given Firstup's focus on being a communications platform that serves all employees including frontline workers, this Scenario is an area of strength. This is immediately reflected in the multitude of options that are available to access the mobile app. Users must exist in a database somewhere in order to get access, but a corporate or personal email address is optional.

Employees can be prompted to download the app via a paper QR code, a text message, or a registration email. Enrolled users can generate and share a QR code with their colleagues. They can then download the app from the relevant app store and set up their account. MDM is supported, as well as the Apple and Google public app stores. For customers in China Firstup also supports alternative Android suppliers to give users access to the app. Single sign-on is available and admins choose what identifying details someone must enter, such as a payroll number as an alternative to an email address. Biometrics are available to gain access in the future, and admins define how long it will be before the app prompts a user to log in.

The mobile app offers a very pleasant user experience that's reminiscent of a consumer-oriented app. News is separated into tabs for latest, trending, featured, and 'for you', which are the same categories the desktop uses. The digital assistant is accessible via a lightbulb icon on the bottom bar and includes the same content from the desktop experience. Posts can also be created from that bar, and the content in the hamburger menu accessed.

Search also works the same as on the desktop, with the limitations as described in Scenario 5. We found that the search is most useful on mobile when looking for colleagues; people cards and the org chart feature display well, so this traditional mobile use case is served well. It's also possible for people to edit their profile on mobile; the same functionality is available as on desktop.

Registered users can share a QR code with colleagues to give them quick access to the app.
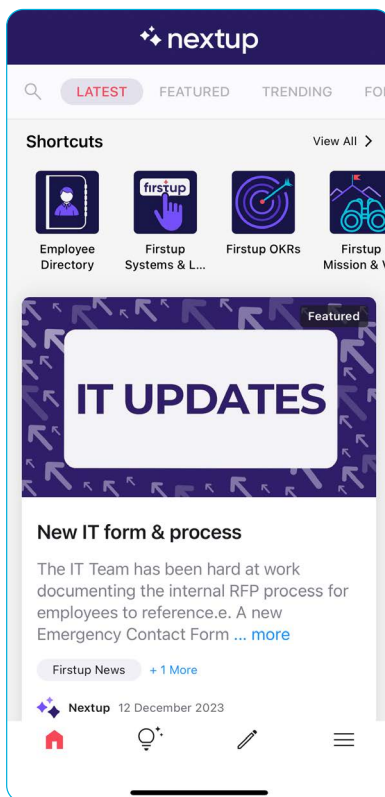
The home screen gives access to shortcuts and to latest posts.
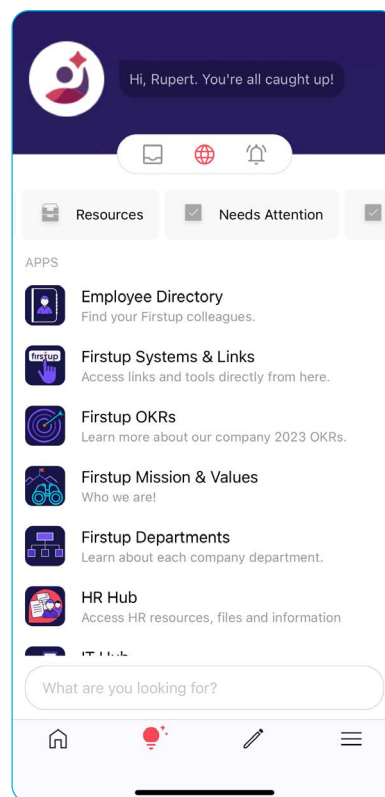
The digital assistant works particularly well on mobile.
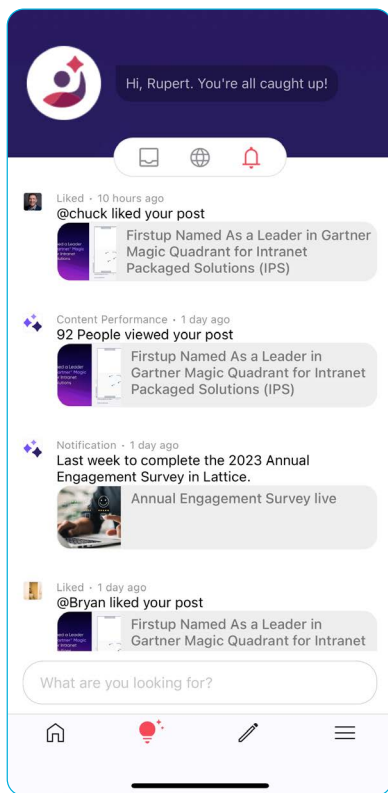
Notifications are found in the Command Center.
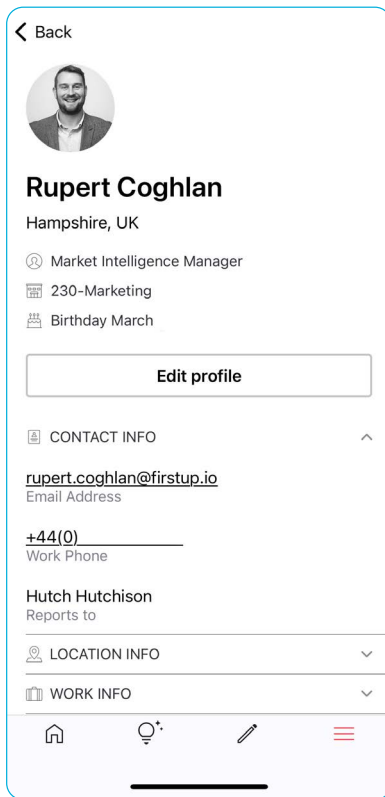
People profiles display well on mobile and are editable.
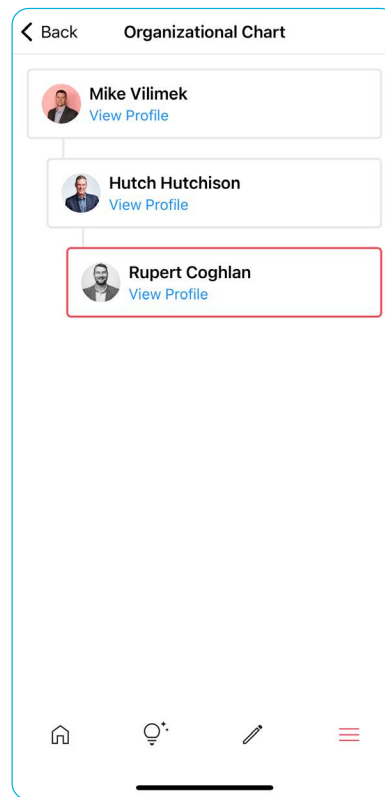
A simple org chart is available.

For frontline features, Firstup says that advocacy capabilities work particularly well on mobile. Shareable news posts are identified with an external share icon, and employees can easily share them on their social networks of choice, adding their own comments in the process. Reports are available to track which articles get posted most, on which social media, and who are the most active advocates.

We can also see that the digital assistant and associated integrations (see Scenario 4) can be used flexibly to meet the needs of frontline workers. For instance, integrations with ADP and UKG make it possible for them to retrieve shift patterns and request shift swaps. Note however that these integrations need to be set up and configured by Firstup as part of the implementation process.

There is no dedicated admin functionality to manage the mobile app; desktop and mobile versions are managed in a single place in the Studio module. The benefit of this approach is the consistency across all versions on desktop, tablet and mobile. The structure and content of the desktop site is brought across to the app, with the addition of 'helpful links' to frequently used Topics. By controlling the audiences for Topics or posts, publishers can influence what mobile users see. Overall, we find that the product works well on mobile; the layout and the overall user interface have been thoughtfully designed with mobile users in mind. This means that there is less of a need in Firstup to simplify or hide certain elements compared to other products in this report.
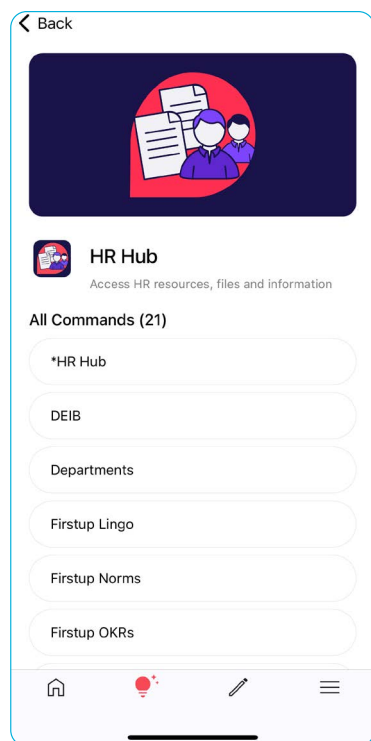
Content in Topics such as an HR Hub is easily accessed.
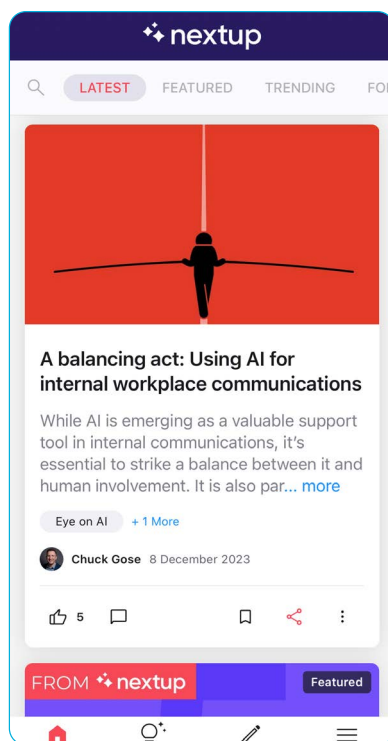
News posts can be shared from the feed on the home screen.
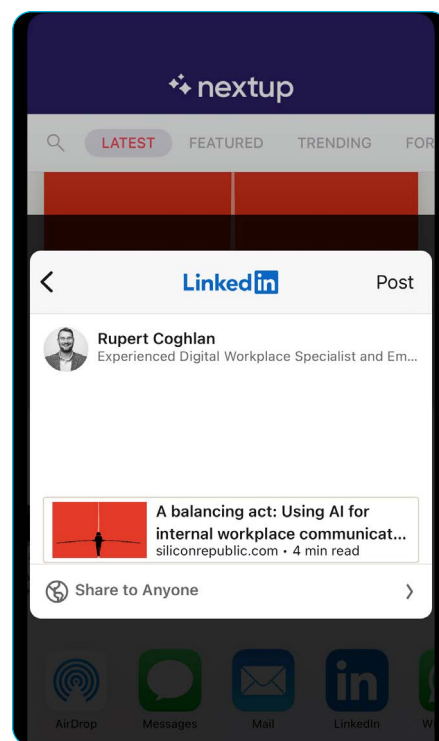
A personal note can be added before posting.

Firstup is an excellent communications platform that has some of the best tools for internal communicators that we've seen. The assistant adds a layer of practicality to it too, helping people to get tasks done across a variety of tools. However, Firstup takes a different approach compared to more traditional intranet products in this report, meaning that some scenarios are less well served. Those looking for a way to present reference materials, in the form of document libraries or even just static pages of information, may struggle. Improvements, such as a Knowledge Hub, are on the roadmap and will address some of these gaps in functionality. Organisations will have to consider whether they use Firstup exclusively as their digital workplace tool, or in conjunction with a reference tool such as SharePoint or Google Workspace. Given that it's possible for the search in Firstup to federate external document libraries, the latter may be an attractive proposition.

The Orchestration Engine has been well-developed and introduces an exciting and relevant element of behavioural data to internal communications. Using simple profile information and behavioural data collected by the platform, many organisations will be able to get good results. However, reliable and more extensive user profile data will be needed for publishers to really make the best of it. While that sounds like a simple prerequisite, our experience with clients suggests that poor data is a common issue, and it can be a large project in its own right to get it to a good level.

We believe that large and complex businesses will benefit the most from the strong features around audience building and behavioural analysis. The price point for large organisations is high though, so this will be a consideration. Multinational organisations may also be disappointed by the basic features for content life cycle management and by the limited multi-language support, which relies mainly on automated translation.

Why choose this product

Firstup is an excellent communications-focused platform that delivers strong capabilities around content creation, audience targeting, engagement and multi-channel posting (including employee advocacy tools). The Orchestration Engine uses machine learning superbly and helps publishers deliver communications to the right people, at the best time. An assistant also adds a practical layer that helps people complete tasks from across the digital workplace but all within Firstup. Overall, Firstup will suit large or complex businesses that are looking for ways to address employee communication and engagement needs. Especially organisations with a significant population of frontline workers will appreciate Firstup's focus on mobile delivery.

Vendor roadmap

No roadmap has been supplied by Firstup.

FRESH

FULLY STANDALONE

REQUIRES SHAREPOINT

OPTIONALLY WORKS WITH SHAREPOINT

FRONTLINE FOCUS

Typical deployment:

1,000+ employees

Company locations:

VISIT THE WEBSITE
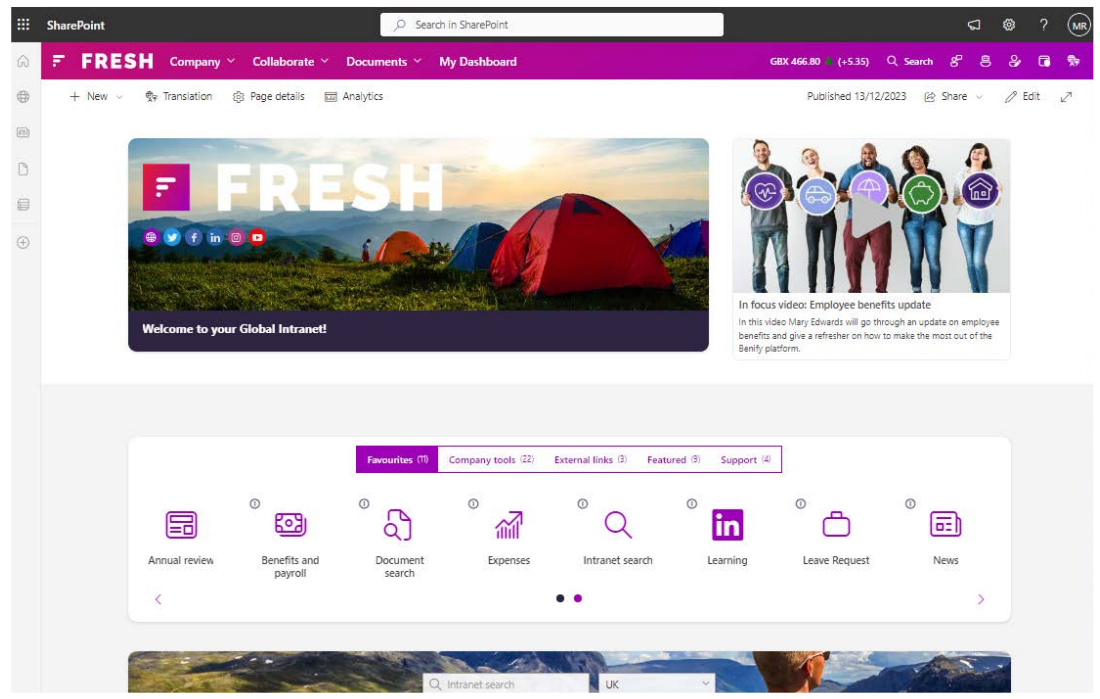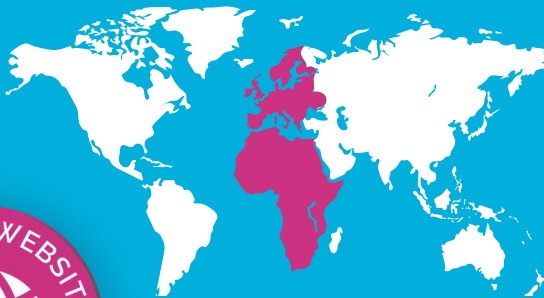
The product in a nutshell

Fresh offers a clean interface for communicators in medium to large organisations to create and manage an attractive intranet which brings the best of M365 to users.

Fresh owned by Advania

Fresh, from Advania (formerly known as Content+Cloud) is a thoughtfully designed product that integrates well with SharePoint and M365. It offers plenty of flexibility to create a visually attractive and feature-rich employee experience that helps bring social content into the intranet.

Communicators will appreciate the engagement analytics now available on the platform, along with the options to create and deliver news content, which can be surfaced in Viva Connections. End users will appreciate the features which bring their M365 content into the intranet, the enhanced search experience and employee recognition features.

Advania's strategy is not to recreate any functionality that can be offered by Microsoft and doesn't offer a separate mobile app; however, it works well in the browser and there are features to make the most of Microsoft Teams and Viva Connections. Fresh offers a framework to connect with third-party systems but does not currently provide any custom development of applications that go beyond the scope of features supported in Fresh.

Fresh will particularly appeal to medium and large organisations that already have Microsoft 365 and want to maximise their investment.

Pricing

PRICE BAND

250 users	$ $ $ $
1,000 users	$ $ $ $
5,000 users	$ $ $ $
20,000 users	$ $ $ $

These prices are indicative, offering a comparison of the products featured in this report only. Please contact the vendor for a bespoke quote.

PRICING MODEL

Subscription – price band based on number of users.

COSTS TYPICALLY

Slightly higher at the start of the term, but generally spread.

DISCOUNTS

Charities and non-profit organisations, schools and educational institutes, Government / public sector, multi-year commitments and businesses over 10,000 users.

PRICE INCLUDES

Nothing included on top of installation, configuration and licenses. Additional services from implementation partners are available if required.

Product type

Ready-to-run, installed in days

Branding opportunities

Good branding, complex options

Base systems

Fully standalone	Requires SharePoint	Optionally works with SharePoint	Other

Sectors

Accountancy, banking and finance	Information technology	Law, law enforcement and security	Public services, government and administration	Science and pharmaceuticals

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BUILT ON MICROSOFT 365

LiveTiles

Powell Intranet

☰ **F FRESH** Company ⌄ Collaborate ⌄ Documents ⌄ My Dashboard

GBX 466.80 ● (+5.35)   🔍 Search   👥 🖨 👤 📁 📢

\+ New ⌄   🌐 Translation   ⚙ Page details   📊 Analytics

Published 13/12/2023   🔗 Share ⌄   ✏ Edit   ⤢

F FRESH

🌐 🐦 f in ◉ ▶

Welcome to your Global Intranet!

In focus video: Employee benefits update
In this video Mary Edwards will go through an update on employee benefits and give a refresher on how to make the most out of the Benify platform.

| Favourites (11) | Company tools (22) | External links (3) | Featured (9) | Support (4) |

ⓘ 📰 **Annual review**   ⓘ 💵 **Benefits and payroll**   ⓘ 🗎 **Document search**   ⓘ 📈 **Expenses**   ⓘ 🔍 **Intranet search**   ⓘ **in** **Learning**   ⓘ 💼 **Leave Request**   ⓘ 📰 **News**

‹   ● ●   ›

🔍 Intranet search   UK ⌄

🗂 **Department sites**

F Sales & Operations
Access to the Business Management System and operations information

F Internal Systems
Welcome to the Internal Systems site where you can find information such as guidance and training material.

F Human Resources
Welcome to the HR site where you can find information such as policies, induction material....

F Marketing
Welcome to the Marketing Hub where you can find all shared company brand assets and templates. If...

F B&B
This is a test site for Leon

F Customer Service
The customer service department plays an important role in the survival and continued functioning of an...

‹ **1** 2 ›

🗋 **Branding documents**

📄 **Quick Quote Template**
Template
David Bowman   Fri, 17 Jul 2020

📄 **Branding presentation**
David Bowman   Tue, 5 May 2020

📄 **Brand guidelines**
David Bowman   Mon, 9 Dec 2019

📄 **Brand colours**
David Bowman   Mon, 9 Dec 2019

📄 **Company Word template**
Template
David Bowman   Fri, 22 Jun 2018

‹ **1** 2 ›

🖼 **Latest news**   👁 More

The Importance of Workplace Equality for Business Success
Equality in the workplace is a fundamental principle that resonates deeply within the fabric of a modern...
Jarbas Horst   Wed, 3 Jan 2024

Introducing Chatty: Revolutionizing Communication with Our New AI-Based...
We're excited to introduce "Chatty," our innovative AI-based chatbot, designed to seamlessly integrate...
Jarbas Horst   Tue, 19 Dec 2023

Latest news - October
Latest news - October We hope this newsletter finds you in good health and high spirits. As always, we'r...
Madeleine Ryderheim   Thu, 12 Oct 2023

Engage for a Sustainable Future: Our Journey into ESG
Our company is taking a further step to become a responsible corporate citizen by introducing ESG...
David Bowman   Thu, 12 Oct 2023

‹ **1** 2 3 4 5 6 7 ⋯ ›

⭐ **Around me**

📌 **5** Pinned items   📄 **9+** Recent documents   👁 **9+** Viewed and modified   ☁ **1** OneDrive items   🕐 **0** Trending items   📅 **9+** Upcoming events

🏢 **3** Pending tasks   📇 **9+** Groups   🌐 **9+** Frequent sites   📱 **5** MS Teams   ✉ **9+** Unread email   ↗ **0** Trending sites

🚆 **3** TFL disruptions   🖼 **9+** Guardian   🚀 **9+** Space news

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💬 **Highlighted Conversations**

We're getting ready to launch our lovely re-brand!!! Watch this space for the latest and greatest

David Bowman
Chief sales executive
Sales

🏷 Fresh Branding   📅 Thu, 28 Jul 2022   👍 0   ↩ 0

Compliance
Terms of use
Privacy

Helpdesk
Provide feedback
helpdesk@company.com
07812 456789

Resources
Training center
Document templates

Useful links
Internal job board

🐦 ▶ in Y⋮

COMPANY AND PRODUCT

Company details

Company
Advania (formerly Content+Cloud)

ISO 27001 certified
Yes

Data residency
Depends on the M365 tenant location.

Company founded
2000

Product launched
2015

Typical client size
1,000+ employees

Largest deployment so far
140,000 employees, 15 countries

Customers
Clients include: SNC Lavelin, BP, Bristol Airport, CIPD, DLA Piper, Ensono, Hays, KPMG, McCann WorldGroup, M&G, Nomad Foods, Phoenix Group, Tysers, Wawa, TD Bank. Please see their website for more details.

Partner locations
Scandinavian region (through parent company, the Advania Group) and USA via Klarinet Solutions. More to come in 2024.

Company locations
London and Manchester, UK (HQ), South Africa

Product and technical details

Name of product

Fresh

Deployment

Client on-premises	Client private cloud	**Microsoft Azure**	Amazon Web Services	Vendor-hosted	**Microsoft 365 tenant**	Other

Client data encrypted

In transit only	**In transit and at rest**	At rest only

Authentication supported

Entra ID	**ADFS**	Okta	Open ID	Oauth	G Suite	Other

App deployment

Google Play store	Apple store	MDM	MAM	**Other***

*No native mobile app, but the Teams and Viva Connections app can be used instead

Accessibility

WCAG 2.1 AA compliant

Document library sources integrated

Box	Dropbox	Google Drive	SharePoint	OneDrive	Other

Optional integrated enterprise search engines

Coveo	Elastic	IBM	Lucidworks	Microsoft	Mindbreeze	Sinequa	Other

User interface multi-language

Pre-configured	Editable	Right to left script supported	Other*

*Any supported by Microsoft.

Content multi-language

Machine translation for publishers	Machine translation for end users	Editable machine translation for publishers	Manual creation for publishers	Right to left script	Other*

*Any supported by Microsoft (+ on-demand translation via Azure Cognitive Search and page translation powered by Azure OpenAI).

Set-up and support

Set-up process for new clients
There are three approaches for Fresh implementations:

1. Fresh Ready. Installation of pre-set configuration and training for the client's core team. Fresh Ready projects are typically 1 – 4 weeks in duration.

2. Fresh Go. A fixed scope implementation which provides customers with core workshops and activities typically required to setup an intranet in Microsoft 365. Following a deployment into the client's tenant Fresh Go projects are typically 2 – 8 weeks in duration.

3. Fresh Explore. A short discovery phase focused on stakeholder and end-user engagement to tweak and adjust a standard implementation model. Fresh Explore projects can include extensive business change and adoption, additional customisations, content migration or Microsoft 365 service enablement. Typically, these projects are upwards from 8 weeks.

Current version
V5.1

Product updates
Quarterly

Product update process
Along with supporting documentation (release notes, build guide), updates are made available for clients to download and either install themselves, or supported by a delivery partner.

Reverse-out options
Nothing, all data resides in the client's M365 tenant (in SharePoint lists and libraries).

Technical support

Email support	Phone support	Chat support	Online portal	24/7 support	Office hours only

User community
Advania hosts quarterly client events called 'Fresh Perspectives'.

Voice of the vendor

The Advania Group says: "Fresh is an enterprise-class intranet solution designed not just around features but based on real intranet usage scenarios. Built on the power of Microsoft 365, SharePoint, Teams and Viva, Fresh runs on the customer's Microsoft environment, complying with their business requirements. Fresh's focus on user experience, accessibility and Microsoft 365 ensures a seamless, inclusive and efficient experience for people in the hybrid work landscape.

Everything we do is about building an intranet that's more useful, more beautiful, and more efficient each day. Working as an extension of our clients' team, our mission is to help clients build personalised intranets that empower their people to do their best work.

We create one-stop-shops for company info, comms, and M365 channels where our clients' end users can personalise content to their goals and interests. Comms teams can publish targeted comms with on-brand content that's always up to date. HR teams can connect people and skills and share events that make everyone feel included.

Our product road map aligns with Microsoft and connects to the M365 ecosystem, benefitting from all the security Microsoft brings, with an added layer of Fresh innovation, giving IT teams peace of mind. Fresh transforms SharePoint, providing clients with an intranet fit for the new world of hybrid work."

Voice of the customer

Customers commented on how easy it is to integrate Fresh with SharePoint, specifically around creating content on the platform. The web parts are seen to be well thought-through, offering "greater functionality over SharePoint out of the box, overcoming many of the niggles and missing options". One customer also complimented how the product "surfaces familiar tools" while another praised the "online site provisioning" template as "brilliant".

A few comments were made about improvements to search that customers would like to see; we suspect some of these may be solved in the latest version that was demonstrated to us. However, one person requested "a separate search field… just for Fresh content"; this does actually exist already, but it may mean that this user has missed it as the search icon might be too small for some users. One customer would like to see more options "to add user generated content", while another would like to see developments with events.

Customers praised the customer service from the product team, citing their ability to quickly understand pain points and their willingness to listen, help and solve problems. Their customer success team is "second to none" according to one customer, who also called out how useful the knowledge articles in the Fresh portal are. Compared to Microsoft (who were described as "a headache"), Advania was described as "wonderful" by one customer.

SCENARIOS & SCORES

Please see the Scenarios below for more detail on each of these.

SCENARIO AND SCORE	KEY BENEFITS	IMPROVEMENTS / CONSIDERATIONS
3.5+ **1. User Experience & Visual Appeal**	Range of branding, navigation and style options which create an attractive user-interface.	Notifications need additional configuration in Power Automate.
3+ **2. Publishing & Communications Management**	Filterable web parts help create an enhanced, targeted, and unified news experience.	News scheduling relies on standard SharePoint features. Power Automate / API configuration needed for crisis and cross-channel communications.
3.5 **3. Community & Engagement**	Good integrations draw community content into the intranet. Inbuilt tools, like Kudos, are well implemented.	Relies on Viva Engage and standard SharePoint tools for much of this scenario.
3+ **4. Integrations & Services (Including M365)**	Fresh integrates well with M365.	Third-party integrations rely on open APIs.
4+ **5. Information Finding & Search**	Helpful additions to Microsoft search, including filterable web parts, to improve findability.	Search icon can be missed. Some training may be required to drive desired user behaviours.
3.5+ **6. Administrator Experience**	Admin experience makes it easier for content owners to manage their content.	Search-based nature of web parts means some SharePoint expertise is required to configure appropriately.
3+ **7. Analytics**	Clean intranet and engagement analytics are a big improvement on standard SharePoint.	No additional search analytics. More comparison metrics and broader timelines would be valuable.
2.5+ **8. Mobile & Frontline Support**	A clean, attractive mobile experience.	No native app, uses the browser or via Viva Connections and MS Teams. Requires Microsoft F1 licences to access.
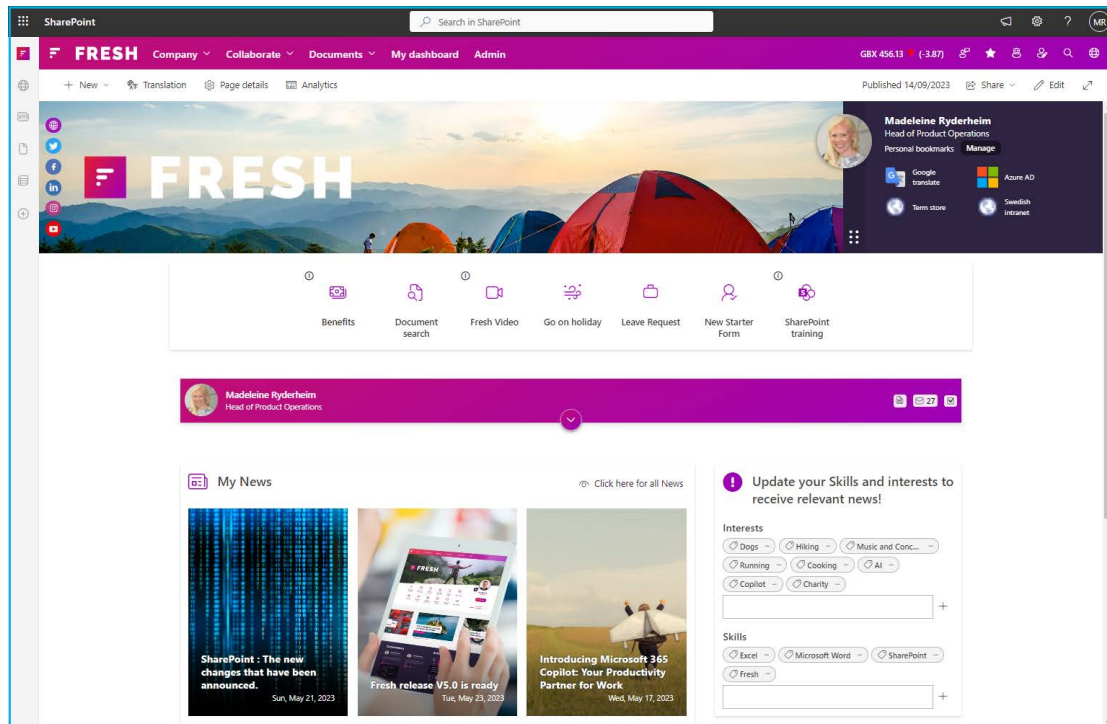
The home page offers an attractive layout which feels personalised to the user.

Fresh offers an attractive, personalised user experience which feels familiar enough for those used to SharePoint, while offering some additional well-thought-out display and global navigation options. Three types of navigation are offered: horizontal, cascading, and traditional mega menus, all with multiple styles available. For example, a card-style navigation display shows images alongside text while a clean-looking option offers plenty of white space around icons. You can add content to the navigation based on search, for example displaying the latest news articles. Audience targeting can also be applied, so users only see what they have access to.

A helpful, optional, global footer provides an additional way to signpost key information, which, unlike SharePoint, doesn't need to be re-configured throughout the intranet. Additional apps are available in the top bar, which could be displayed as solo icons or with text, and include share price, search, feedback, AI tool 'FreshMind', plus the profile panel. This means Delve profiles can be updated straight from the intranet. We found the intranet search icon quite small, so it may be overlooked without training. Search web parts have however been provided so the home page could be a dedicated search-based experience.

Fresh doesn't currently offer built-in notifications but provides options to configure them through Power Automate. The default format of these is a basic email, which could be improved with some HTML knowledge. Although there are some useful web parts which help bring the latest information into one place for employees. An 'alert' web part can be configured using Power Automate to display notifications coming from other systems, and a 'What's New' web part gives users a personalised overview of what has happened since their previous visit.

Fresh offers a range of branding options with their own distinct look and feel, which can be set globally; different brand identities can be applied on the same tenant. These options are straightforward to set up; touches like offering rounded corners or shading both across the site and at web-part level may fit well with customer brand guidelines. While ultimately Fresh sits on top of SharePoint, the additional branding options and range of clean web parts make it attractive for companies who require a clean user experience.
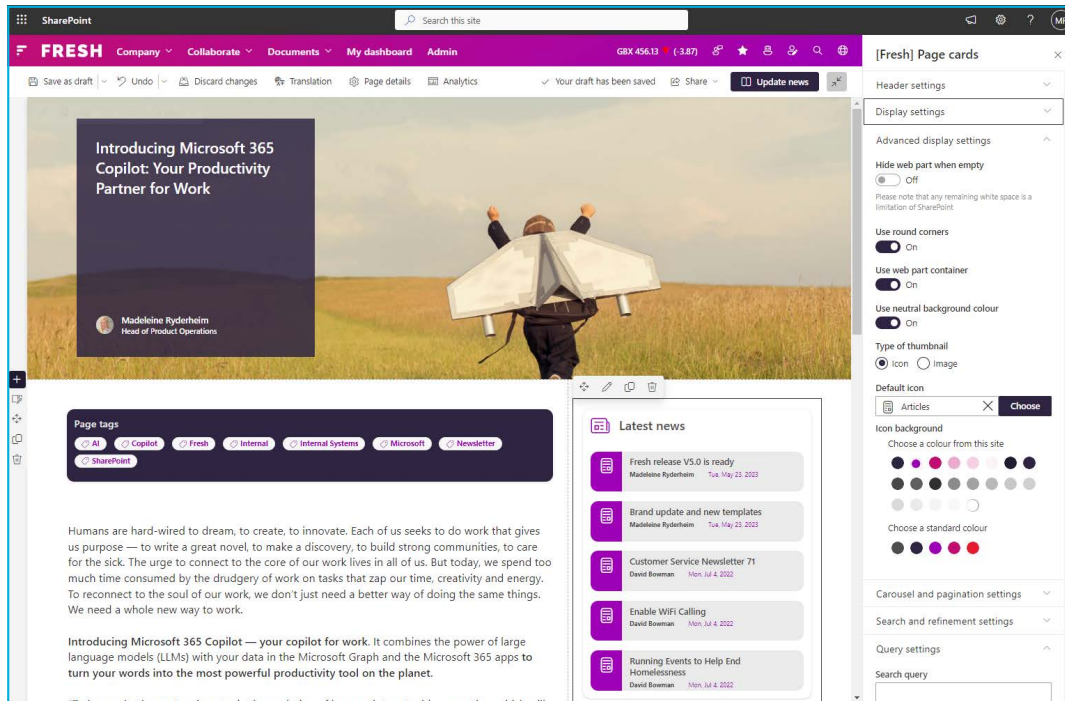
Creating news is straightforward, with available tags clearly displayed.

Fresh offers a range of options to give communications professionals an enhanced experience on top of SharePoint, while most Microsoft functionality remains, which the Advania Group says is a deliberate choice so Fresh works with features like Viva Amplify. News can be published centrally via a news site, or teams can locally publish. News publishing is not currently available via the 'Admin Panel' (see Scenario 6), although it is on the roadmap to be available soon.

Fresh makes use of standard SharePoint functionality for scheduling and approval of news articles. However, it adds properties such as review date or expiration date to help with content review. This enables editors to view their content within governance reports (see more in Scenario 6).

A range of tags are set up in the SharePoint term store and applied to a page to make sure the right information is displayed to the right people, based on their Entra Group, profile properties and device (mobile / desktop). Employees can subscribe to news based on the skills and interests set in their profile. Additionally, the 'Hero' web part can display different tiles of content to employees, based on their profile properties, which is a nice addition to standard SharePoint functionality.

Fresh web parts offer extended functionality that display news from wherever it was initially created. The 'Scope' component offers administrators a way to set the relevant sources of information, and apply appropriate filters to display content, whether that's by topic, department, or source. This works without needing to write code, although it does rely on an above average level of knowledge to be able to build the appropriate search query.

An AI tool, 'FreshMind', provides suggestions for engaging page titles and descriptions, as well as translations and thumbnail images. These suggestions are made during creation and afterwards, aiming to help publishers improve the performance of a page. The AI feature is optional and can be turned on when the client is ready to do so; we understand not all customers have yet enabled this.
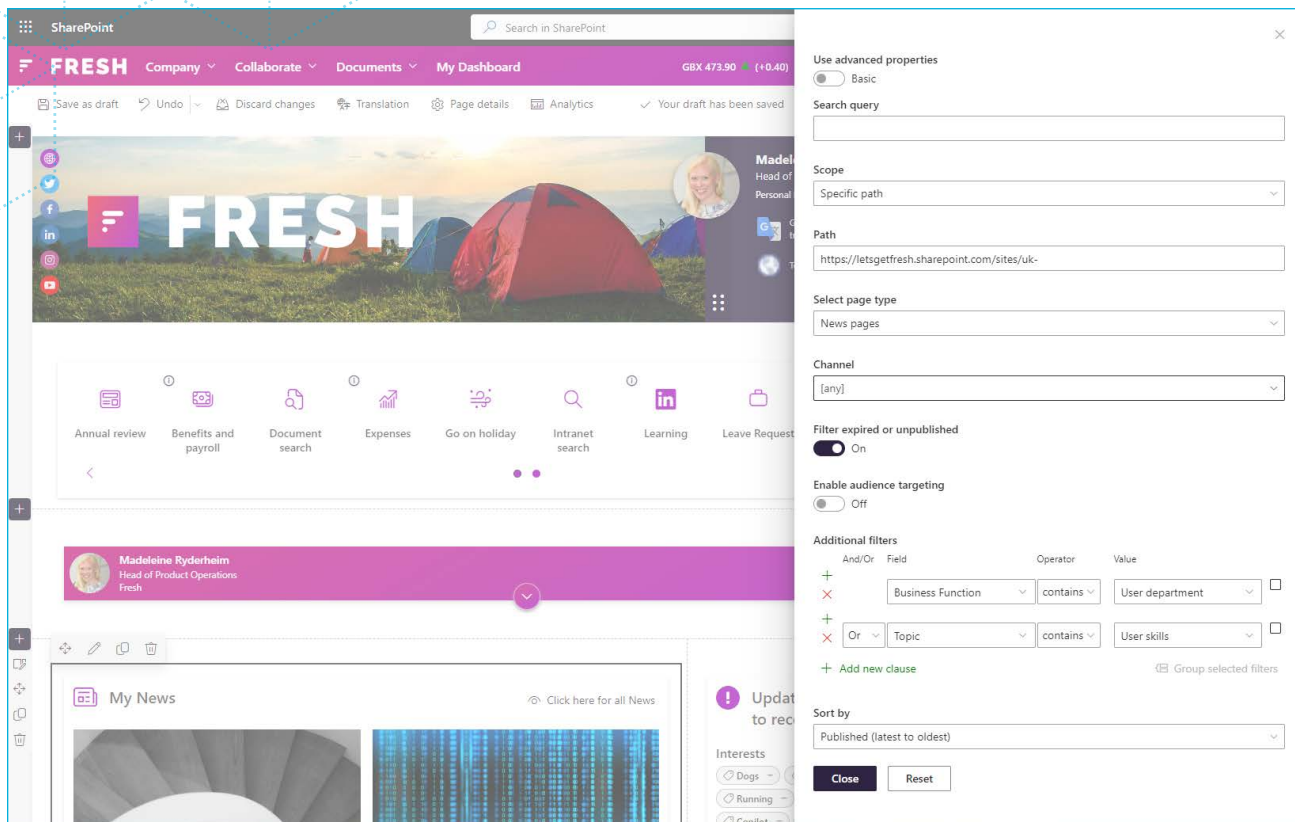
The Scope query builder allows administrators to set up filters and audience targeting.
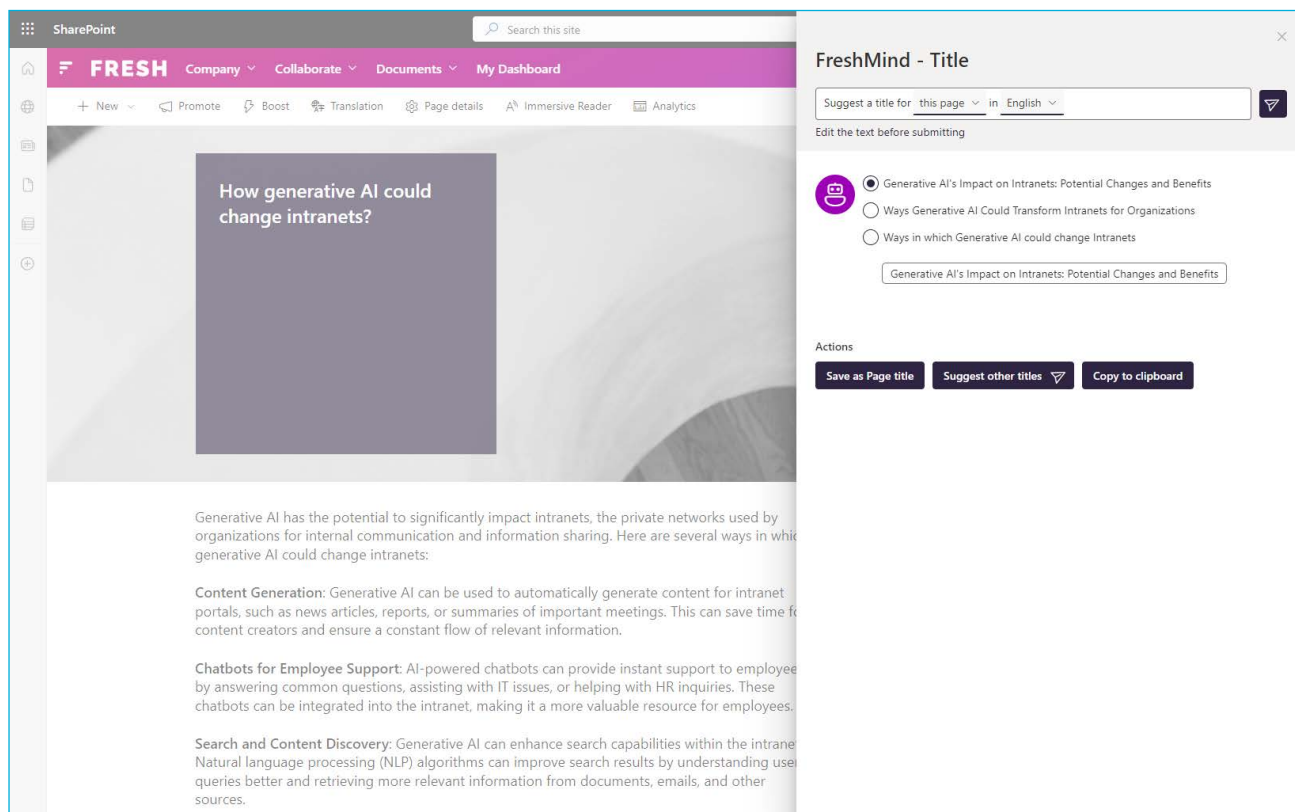
FreshMind provides editors some helpful suggestions to update page content.

Crisis and urgent communications are handled in a few different ways. There is a static but colourful alert banner that persists at the top of a page and an 'alert' web part; alerts can also be published within adaptive cards (ACE cards) in Viva Connections, or sent via email configured in Power Automate. We like that if an external system has an API to enable content to be published to a SharePoint list, this can be displayed within a web part. For example, alerts about system outages could be generated from a tool like ServiceNow.

Fresh has been configured to work with Viva Amplify campaigns – see more about Viva Amplify in the SharePoint review. This can be useful for organisations who have the appropriate licence, both for crisis comms and cross-channel posting. News posts created by Viva Amplify sit within Fresh, which can then be pushed to email, Teams and SharePoint. Once published, news stories can be shared into a Teams channel, in Viva Engage and can also be sent via email.

Finally, Fresh uses Microsoft APIs to facilitate digital signage. Fresh provides the framework for tagging to enable content to be displayed elsewhere. A 'channel property' tag is used to push content to a specific location; for example, it's possible to display content on a selected screen, like the reception area, from a SharePoint site.
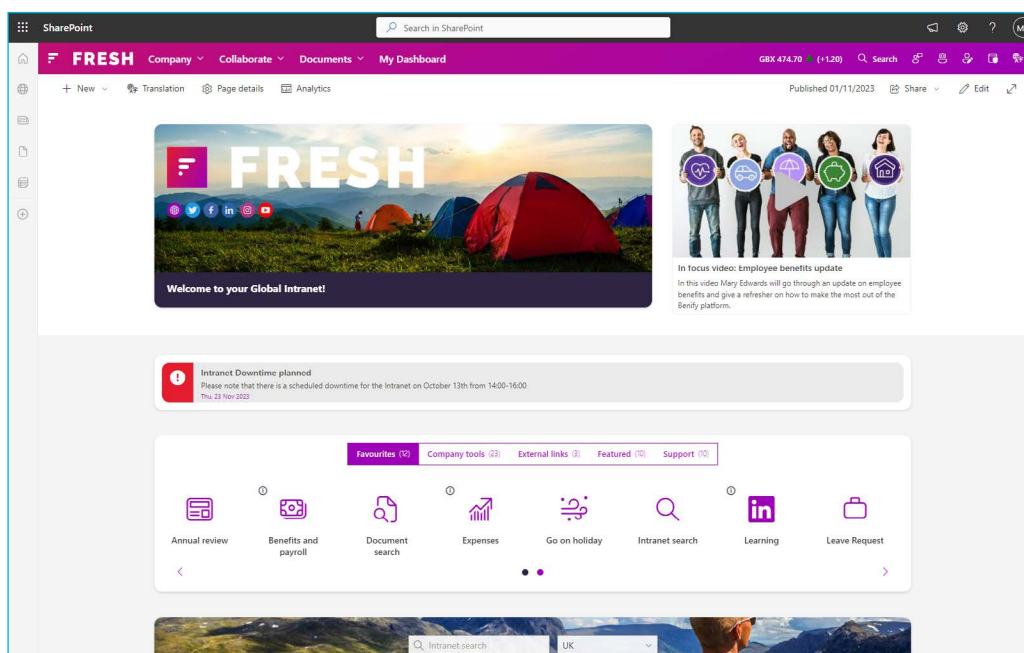
Alerts can be displayed as a coloured banner.
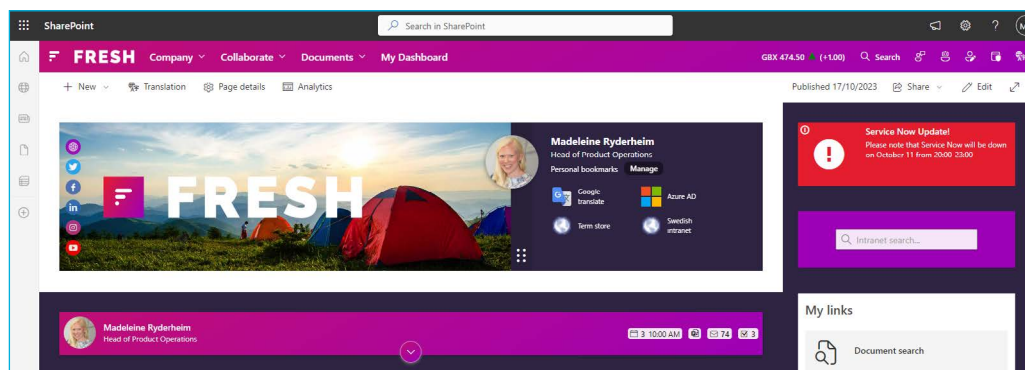
Alerts can be displayed in web parts that only show if there's an alert from an external system like ServiceNow.
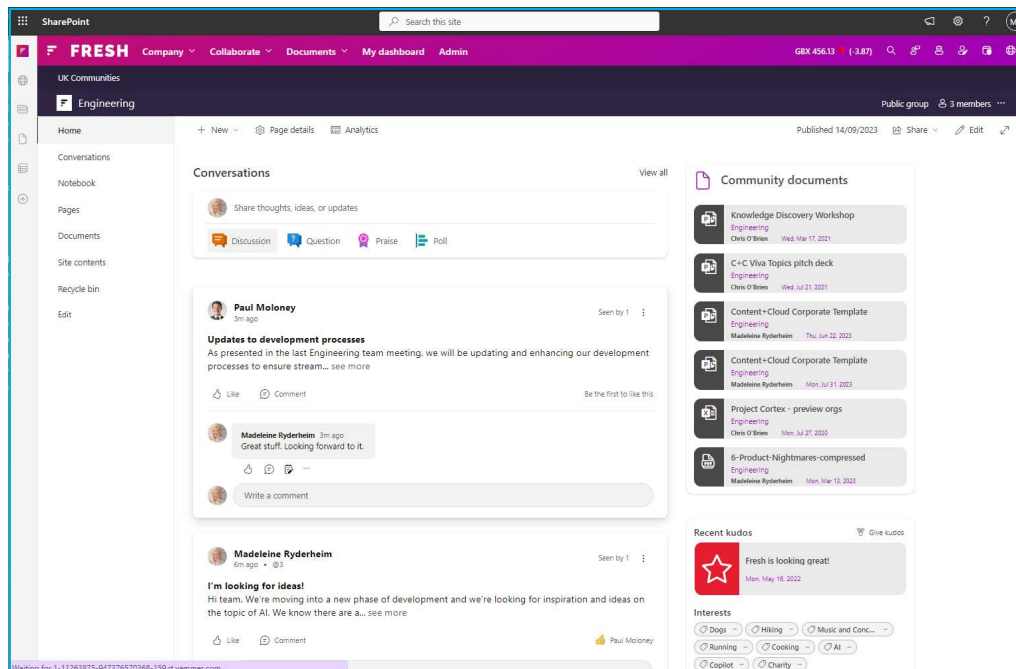
Fresh displays Viva Engage communities attractively within the intranet.

Fresh mostly relies on standard SharePoint features plus Viva Engage for this scenario. However, it offers some nice community features which bring content together via sites, topics and web parts from Viva Engage as well as Workplace from Meta; there are opportunities to share content and announcements out into in Viva Engage too. There's a web part which signposts important community conversations from Viva Engage, which could be used for leadership communications. Additionally, 'curated Workplace (Meta)' and 'curated Viva Engage' web parts allow employees to see all relevant conversations in one place.

Content likes and comments use standard SharePoint functionality and there's no additional functionality to report or moderate content. Content editors see how many likes and comments their pages have in the content governance dashboard (see Scenario 7). For surveys, admins will need to use MS Forms embedded within the intranet. However, there's a specific 'feedback' feature available from the global navigation where users can provide feedback to content owners and include a link to the source page. Feedback ends up in a SharePoint list, where it is consulted manually or processed through Power Automate, although an optional notification mechanism is available.

Fresh includes well-executed features for recognition and praise. 'Kudos' is a peer-to-peer recognition feature that lets employees nominate one another, with configurable icons which are displayed on user profiles. 'Most nominated employees' are displayed in a 'star of the month' web part. 'Badges' are manually assigned rewards, recognition, or a specific role to an individual (see more in Scenario 5).

 Onboarding is supported through a 'checklist' web part, offering users a list of actions they need to take, and managers the option to check progress. An administrator sets up the list and monitors overall progress, and there's an exportable report available. 'Events' functionality is useful for company and community events, as well as webinars users can join. It's easy for people to add an event to their personal calendar. There's no specific functionality around wellbeing, but the community features offer space for employees to connect as well as within Viva Engage.
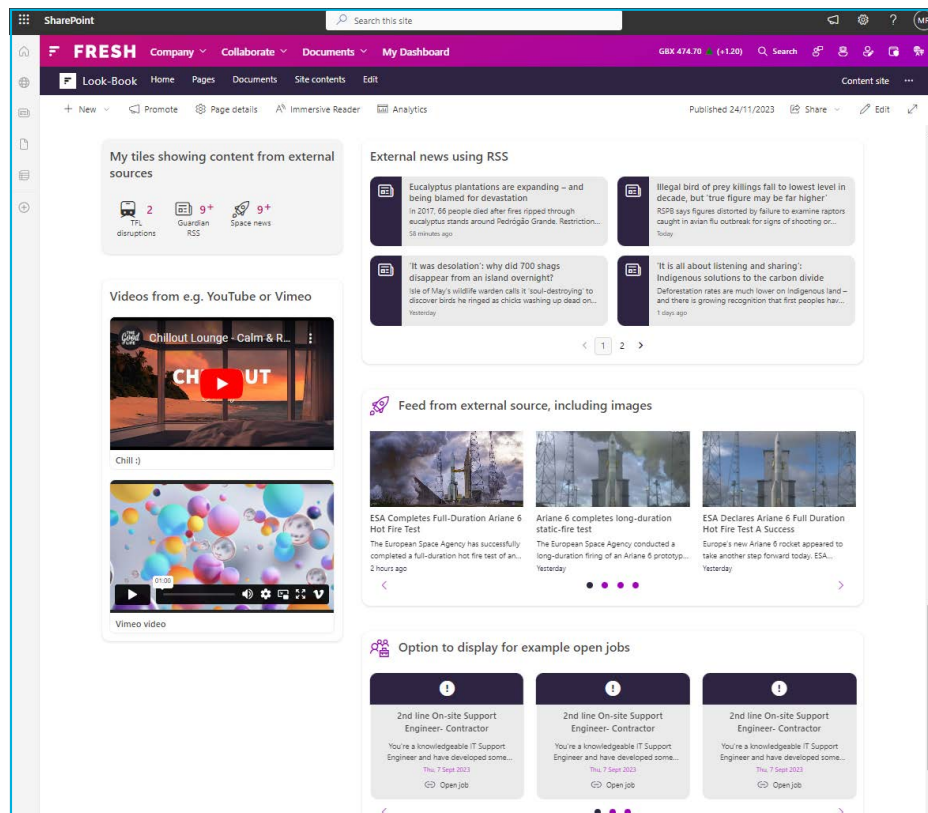
Web parts display content from external systems in a variety of ways.

Out-of-the-box integration with external business systems is not an area of focus in Fresh. Advania says that Fresh offers the flexibility to easily set up additional integrations based on an open API upon request and that it is a strategic choice not to implement bespoke solutions, but rather stay aligned with Microsoft's integration mechanisms, such as third-party connectors in Power Platform and adaptive cards in Viva. The integrations framework and web parts to display content are well thought through and we see the benefits of leveraging these new but promising technologies, although additional costs and effort may be involved. Additionally, the integrations they offer with M365 are well executed and provide some nice, personalised touches to make it easier for users to see their information within the intranet.

Some integrations are possible if they have an open API, such as integration with Transport for London or an RSS feed from The Guardian, to display information. Users can set up their own personal bookmark links to external sites, which display the appropriate favicon from the Google favicon API. On top of the targeted personalisation options available within 'my tiles', this is a nice touch. We saw an example of using the open API available for Workable to show a list of open positions on the intranet, which highlights what can be possible with a little work.

We like the simple 'share price' ticker in the global navigation, which will appeal to corporate teams. The standard integration is set up using Investis, but Fresh supports any share price information that is added to the SharePoint list which stores and displays the information. A 'tools' carousel web part offers an attractive carousel of external links and can be configured to fit the space available. Three types of video web part offering communicators a range of display options for videos from Stream, YouTube, Vimeo, and other external sources. This helps bring sometimes distributed video content together in an attractive layout.

When it comes to other collaboration tools, Fresh provides an integration with Workplace by Meta, in a way that is similar to the Viva Engage integration. Selected conversations happening in a Workplace group can be highlighted on a news article or any other content page within Fresh. Clicking on the post will lead users into Workplace to participate in the discussion. No other integrations with platforms such as Slack or Box are provided.

Fresh offers a broad range of integrations with the various applications in the Microsoft 365 ecosystem. Being built on SharePoint, the product makes extensive use of lists and document libraries for storing content. It's straightforward to pull news from other SharePoint sites into Fresh, or to reuse Fresh web parts on standard communication sites. Security in Fresh is fully based on SharePoint site permissions, and there is also a feature in Fresh to show end users an overview of all SharePoint sites to which they have access.

Integration with MS Teams is also extensive. When Viva Connections is enabled, Fresh is accessed directly as an app within MS Teams. Sharing a news article into a Teams channel is straightforward, using the share button below each story in the news hub. The same button also allows users to post the article in a Viva Engage group. Just like for SharePoint sites, there is also a feature to show users an overview of all their Teams groups. This all works well, and a nice addition would be to bring notifications from Teams into Fresh, in some sensible place like this overview web part.

Viva Engage is integrated thoughtfully in a number of ways, as described earlier in Scenario 3. The integration with Viva Connections is further discussed in Scenario 8. Other elements in the Viva family such as Learning or Topics are not integrated into Fresh at present. The Advania Group has said there's site provisioning functionality which can be used to set up Viva Engage communities with associated sites and Teams, as well as new SharePoint sites on the intranet.

The 'launchpad' offers a simple overview of information from Outlook, tasks and documents.

Fresh also has a number of useful overview web parts that combine information coming from different applications across Microsoft 365. A web part called 'My Workplace' aggregates information such as upcoming events, pending tasks and unread emails. The 'Launchpad' web part is another well-executed feature that brings together recent documents, email, and tasks from Planner.

Fresh has a well-thought-out integration with Bing maps, which we can see being particularly useful for companies with multiple offices and hard-to-find locations. It's possible to manually set the pointer to ensure that the correct locations are displayed, as well as being able to set up a contact for that location. Location-specific content can also be displayed along with the map using appropriately filtered web parts.
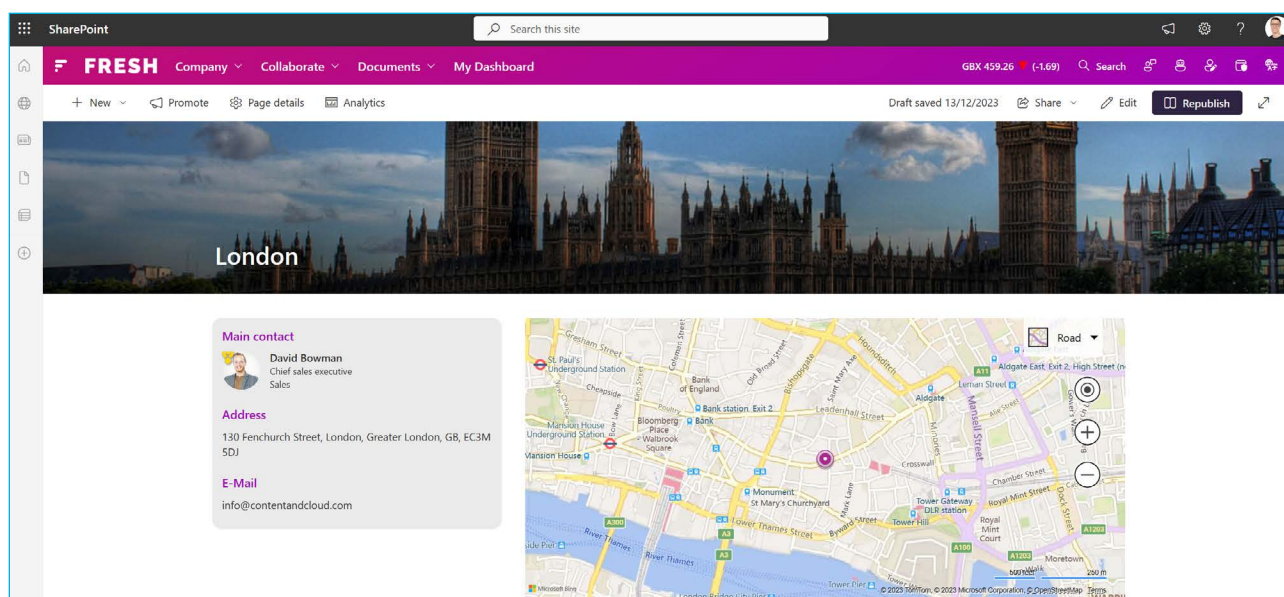
The 'Maps' web part integrates with Bing maps to display the address point.
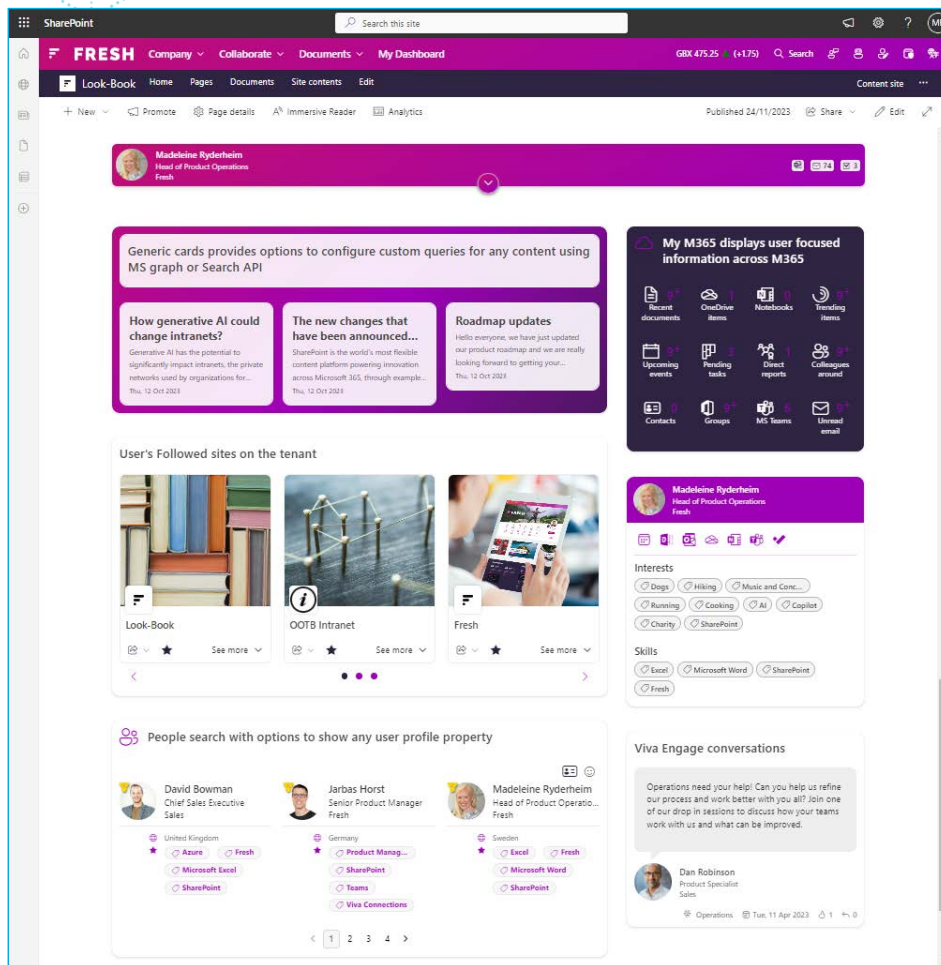
'My tiles' provides a set of M365 icons and a summary of personalised content.
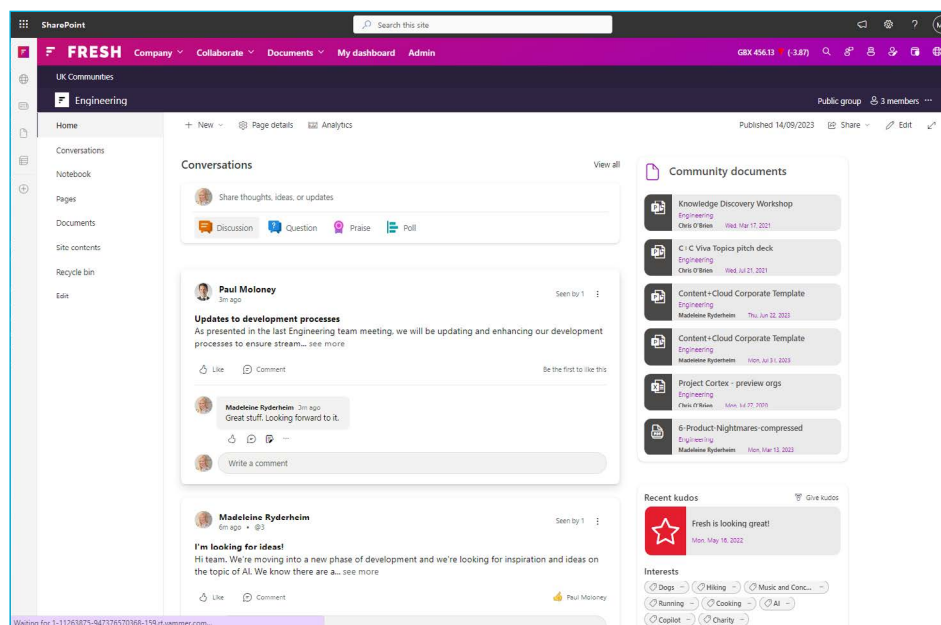
Community documents and conversation thread integrated from Viva Engage.
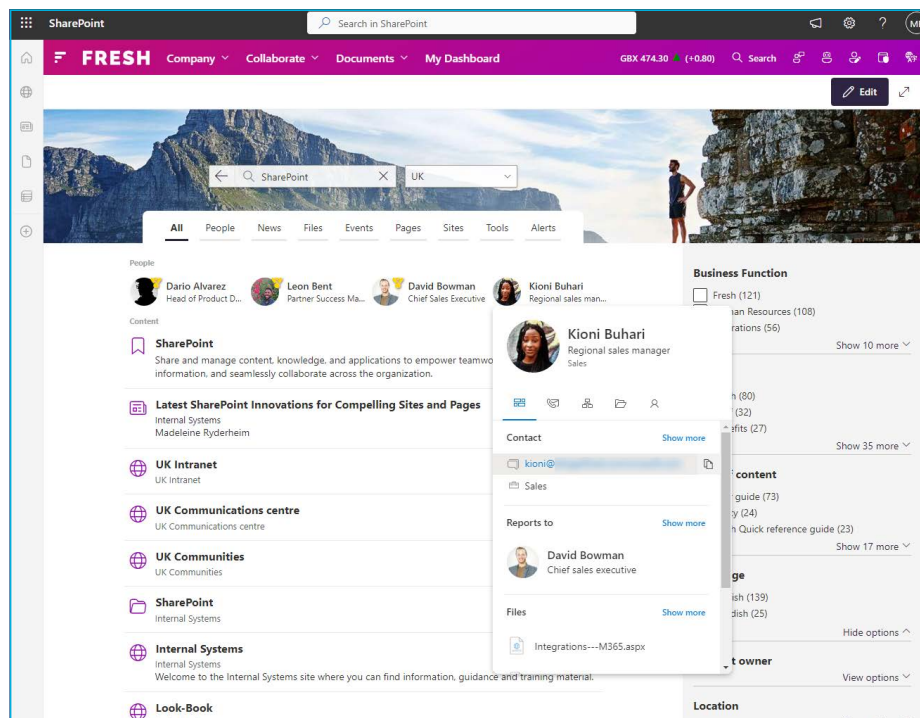
The custom search page offers a range of tabs and filters to help findability.

Fresh offers several findability options besides SharePoint's standard functionality, which remains freely available in the background if people prefer it. There's a type-ahead panel that appears when using the intranet search, and the custom search results page offers additional tabs and filters. It's possible to search and filter content at web-part level, which is also used to drive a useful 'people directory' feature or to make search more prominent on the home page. We could see this being particularly useful for users as, despite a recent update to add a label to the search icon, we feel the icon styling is subtle and could still be overlooked, particularly where clients choose to also display the MS search.

When using the intranet search, users are presented with a personalised search history which would help find frequently accessed content. A panel starts showing relevant results as a user begins typing, too. Initial results are conveniently presented in a clean summary format; where the items displayed are relevant it means users might not ever make it to the results page.

The search results page offers some helpful styling options, including a range of horizontal tabs as well as more traditional filters. Tabs rely on users being aware of the different types of content, which might require a little training, although we can see this being useful on top of the expected filter types. Fresh supports Microsoft's native 'bookmarks' (for promoted results) and 'FAQ' functionality, which can both be used to signpost users to the right information. Refiners can be set to display on the search results landing page, and search scopes set up to only show content from a particular site. As with all search engines, tagging content appropriately is key to success.

We particularly like Fresh's ability to search for information at web-part level. Finding news, documents or people can be a challenge but web parts offer a defined scope of content to search. Whilst some users may still default to using the main SharePoint search, this feels like a strong benefit of the intranet to communicate to people so they can find the information they need.
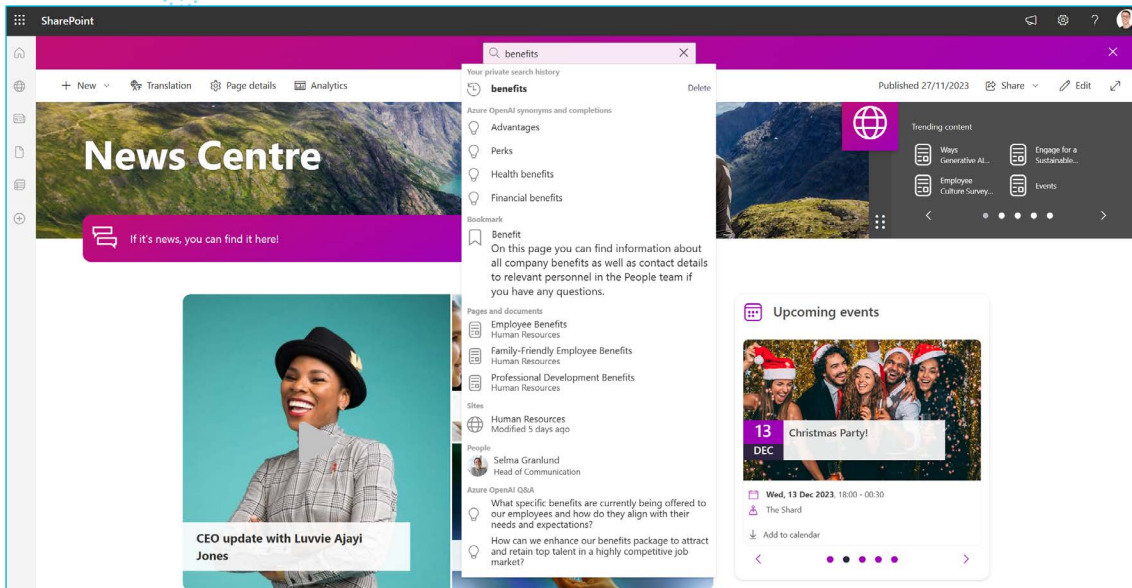
The search panel presents some suggested results as someone starts typing.
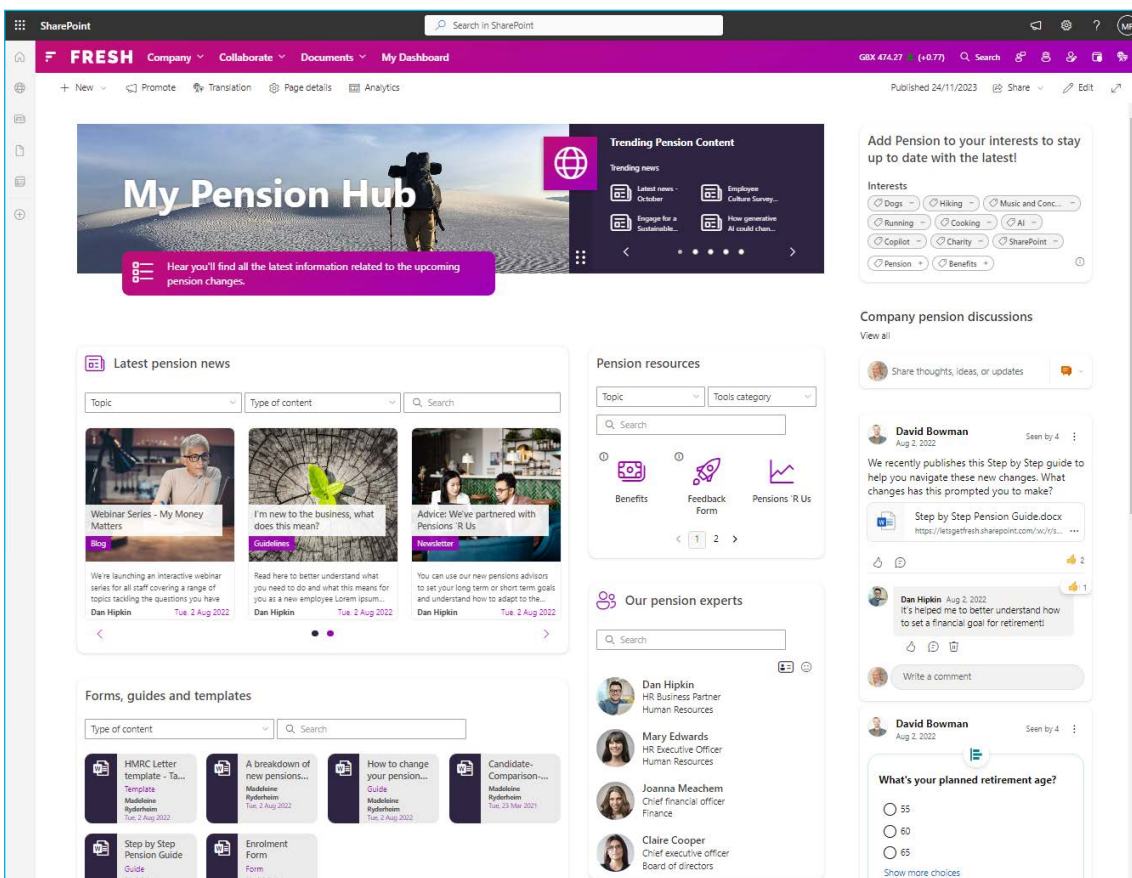
Fresh provides filters and search options at web part level.

We like the 'topics explorer' functionality, which allows intranet owners to create information around a tagged topic, displaying a panel of results for users to get the right information. A description of the team responsible for managing that information can be added, along with a description of the topic and a link. It could also be used for content related to an informal role, for example, those with some responsibility for managing intranet content. By using promoted interests and skills in the 'my profile' web part, content can be promoted to those who have subscribed to a particular topic. This could provide an alternative to Viva Topics for organisations that don't have the budget to pay for it.

The 'topics explorer' functionality allows intranet owners to add a description, link and topic owner.

Fresh doesn't provide any additional specific federated search on top of Microsoft functionality, although content that has been surfaced from external sources within SharePoint lists is indexable. See Scenario 4 for more on integrations.

Fresh offers ways to help find people on top of Delve functionality, including an attractive 'people directory' site template which uses a search-driven web part to offer a filterable people list. 'Badges' provide a way to find specific people who have been assigned with roles like 'First Aider'; these features could be useful to show intranet champions or content editors. While the people search doesn't offer fuzzy search as it uses SharePoint functionality, it does display results based on profile content, and the results start to appear as a user types. As with native Microsoft functionality, it's possible to get around common misspellings or nicknames by including them in a user's Delve profile.

The 'query builder' functionality offers a way to pre-filter users to be displayed within a web part, for example by department, or a user's department. It's also possible to provide a curated list of people, for example, members of a community site. It's worth noting that the Delve profile doesn't display Fresh content such as badges if someone inadvertently clicks through.

Overall, the Fresh search experience works well. It adds complementary functionality on top of native Microsoft features, so organisations can still make use of the powerful search, while benefitting from some helpful additions.

The 'people directory' offers an attractive, filterable list to find people.
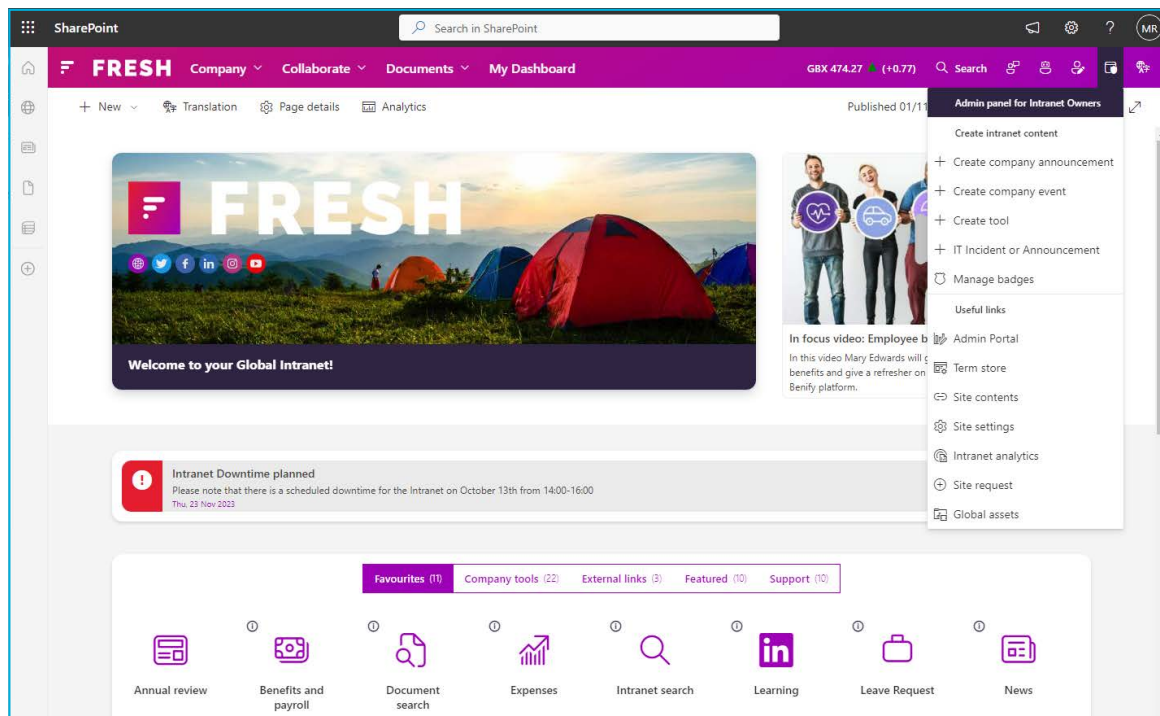
The admin panel, available in the navigation, gives users access to create content if they have permission.

Fresh offers administrators some useful features to manage intranet content, on top of standard SharePoint tools. An 'admin panel' gives editors with permission the ability to add 'alerts', 'events' and 'useful links' from the navigation ('news' is not currently available here but is on the roadmap). The 'Admin Portal' gives intranet owners access to manage terms, navigation and settings. As mentioned in Scenario 4, there's a site provisioning engine which can be used to set up intranet sites, and Viva Engage communities with associated sites and Teams.

The Admin Portal also offers a user-friendly view for content owners to see their content in one place, along with how well it's performing (see Scenario 7). Display options include most viewed pages, most liked and commented, and a personalised 'my dashboard' which shows when content is due to be reviewed. 'Publish date', 'review date' and 'expiration date' can be set for all pages, and web parts configured to display only current, not expired content. However, expired content would still be findable in search, so it's important to reinforce a good content governance process to ensure expired content is removed completely where appropriate. Associated lifecycle notifications can be set up via Power Automate, but this is something we'd like to see available out of the box.

Fresh supports all languages that Microsoft supports, which can be applied to the 'global navigation'. Auto translation and on-demand translation services are available using Azure Services. Employees set their own default language within their profile, or it is set by an administrator. Fresh supports using standard SharePoint multi-language functionality where one intranet can be translated into all Microsoft languages, as well as offering the ability to create multiple intranets per tenant set up with different languages as required.

Finally, managing pages is based on standard SharePoint functionality, with the option to add additional web parts provided by Fresh. There are some thoughtful touches that have been included with the Fresh web parts, and the interface has been simplified where possible, although it will need to be managed by someone who has SharePoint experience.
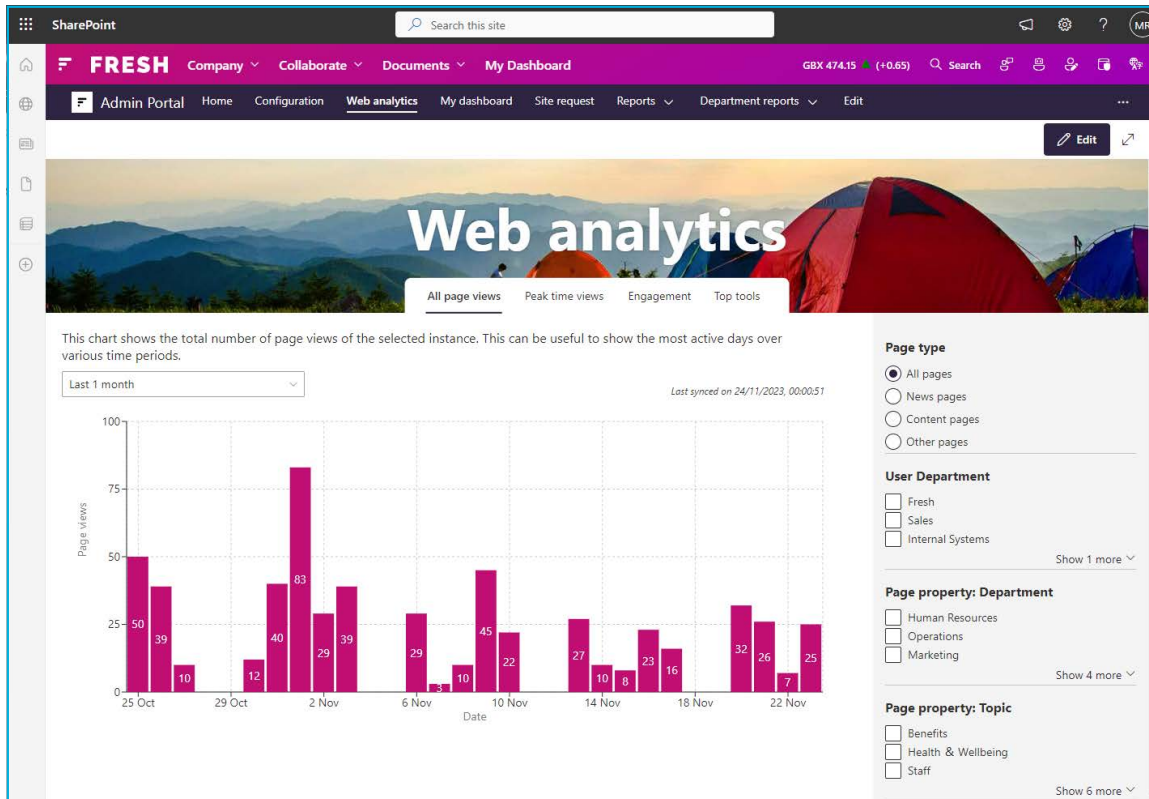
Web analytics provide a range of filterable stats for content owners.

During 2023, Fresh revamped their analytics offering, introducing more detailed reports for communicators and intranet managers looking to monitor the effectiveness of their content. The 'Admin Portal' (mentioned in Scenario 6) provides access to a range of filterable analytics. We like the 'peak time views' graph which shows what time of day is most popular, an engagement chart that shows the top ten pages based on views, and a 'top tools' view that shows which quick links are most clicked on. Statistics are displayed in simple, clean, bar and line graphs, and can be filtered by page and content type, topic, the department a user is in, as well as the section that content originates from. There aren't any specific platform adoption statistics provided, but the graphs provide some useful information. Date ranges available are currently limited to 'yesterday', 'last 7 days', 'last month' or 'all time' – we'd like to see an option to select a specific date range, as well as being able to compare against previous time periods.

We particularly like the 'sites audit' overview, which provides intranet owners a useful summary of analytics from across intranet sites. As with many Fresh web parts, it's filterable and searchable, plus can be pre-filtered to only show relevant content for users. We can see this providing a useful snapshot of individual site performance in one place, something that SharePoint is yet to provide.

The 'content report' web part will be useful for teams wanting to run a content audit, as it covers both pages and documents. The administrator can decide which site(s) to display, with views available for documents and pages, documents only, and pages only, and can be drilled down via filters to properties such as content owner. The 'content report' web part allows intranet owners and content editors to see data in a web part on a page, but also export the data to csv for further analysis if they have permission.

The 'site audit' in the 'admin portal' shows an overview of stats across intranet sites.

The 'Content' report can be filtered to display content per site.

A 'content engagement' web part shows the most viewed, liked and commented news posts and pages, which is useful for monthly reporting, as well as providing a snapshot of what resonates most with employees. There's also a specific, downloadable report to show content performance on news items, which we can see being particularly useful for communications teams.

There isn't an explicit 'mandatory reads' function, although the previously mentioned 'action checklist' web part feature can be used anywhere on the intranet to provide users with a list of tasks to complete. This could be as simple as confirming they've read the content in question. Reporting is available for a content owner to follow up, although it's not integrated with any of the other analytics options. Fresh also doesn't provide any additional search analytics on top of what is already available from Microsoft, although this is planned for 2024.

Admins may choose to use Google Analytics and Google Tag Manager for additional reporting. Fresh can send page information and user metadata to Google Analytics, and this can be transformed into reports and dashboards. Fresh also supports data capture for Microsoft Clarity (including heatmaps), and Azure App insights (AAI), where data can be analysed in AAI or stored in an SQL database, which some clients may find useful if they have the skills to build reports in PowerBI.
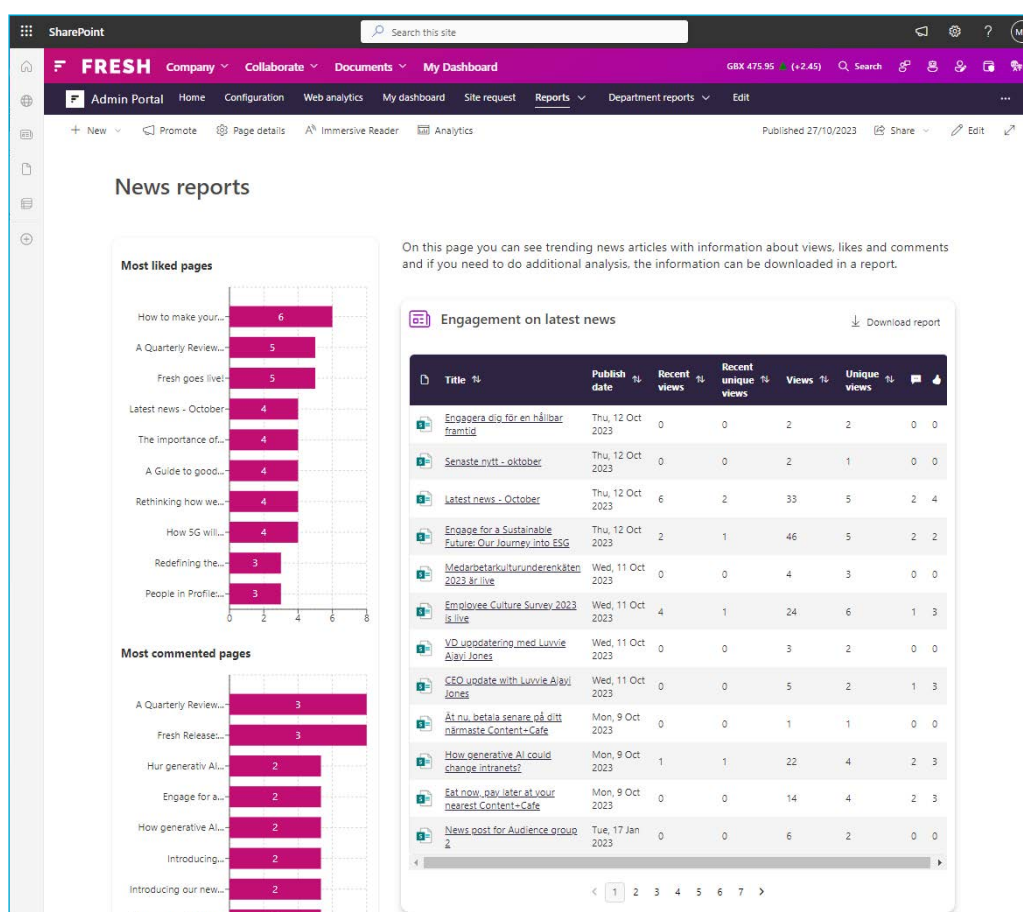
The 'content report' web part shows engagement on news posts.
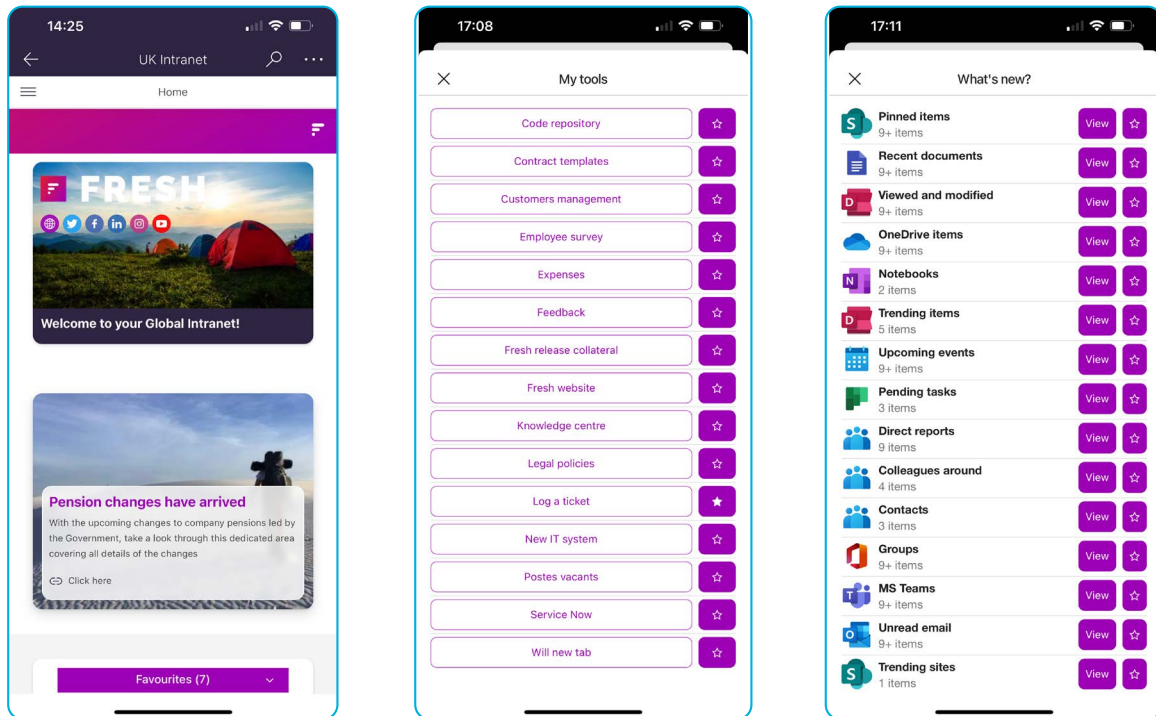
Fresh offers a clean and clear mobile-friendly layout with personalised content.

There isn't a native Fresh app, Advania's strategy for mobile usage is that the intranet can be accessed via mobile browser, or via Viva Connections in the MS Teams app. This means that all users need a Microsoft license to be able to access the platform, which may be a significant cost to larger organisations, although is available via the cheaper F1 licenses.

The mobile experience, once accessed, is generally attractive and easy to use. All end-user features are available and are responsive. Navigation works well; it's possible to choose whether the 'F' shaped hamburger menu displays on the left or the right, and we can see particular value in the global footer on mobile. The Azure OpenAI options in the search results currently dominate results in the search preview panel, but that's something that can be configured as part of the set-up if a customer wants to enable it. Some admin features, like the ability to download usage reports, are not available on mobile although this isn't that out of the ordinary.

It's possible to set which internal and external links added to the 'tools' web parts (see Scenario 4) are available on mobile and which are for desktop. This may be useful if there are systems that can only be accessed at a desktop or are more appropriate for mobile-only, such as Kronos or other workforce management tools.

The product does not include any specific features for frontline workers, but it delivers the existing intranet content in an innovative way using custom-built adaptive cards within the Viva Connections dashboard. For instance, there is a card that gives an overview of relevant news stories, and another card that shows status information coming from various Microsoft 365 applications. The product also includes various ways to segment content and to target it to specific audiences – more about this in Scenario 2 – which makes it possible to create a tailored experience for mobile users.

THINGS TO BEAR IN MIND

Fresh offers an appealing product for customers who have already invested in the Microsoft 365 ecosystem, offering a framework to provide integrations to other services. The product addresses some, but not all, of the gaps in Microsoft's intranet offering and in some areas, such as integration with third-party enterprise systems, the product is not so strong.

It's possible to build on Fresh's functionality, like notifications using Power Automate, although that may incur additional costs and requires expertise to build. Advania say they've made a conscious decision not to duplicate functionality that Microsoft provides or is due to launch soon, which is a sensible strategy, although may mean that certain features take a little longer to launch while they wait for Microsoft. Recent improvements to both the admin experience and available analytics show that they're open to feedback and are continually improving the product.

Mobile users are served through the Teams app and the responsive site, supporting users with at least an F1 license. The lack of a dedicated mobile app will be an issue for some organisations, but Fresh compensates for that by offering some innovative functionality in the Viva Connections dashboard within the Teams app. This works well but is only useful in organisations that have Viva Connections enabled and where the Teams app is widely deployed.

Why choose this product

Fresh provides an attractive intranet which integrates well with M365 tools, including SharePoint, Viva Engage and Delve. It offers some nice, centralised branding options and thoughtful touches which can be localised to suit even large and complex organisations with exacting requirements. The opportunities to integrate community content brings Viva Engage into the intranet with additional functionality to create an engaging intranet. There are ambitious plans to build on the AI tools they've launched, along with enhancements to integrations with Viva Connections coming soon. We can see Fresh being particularly appealing to customers who have already invested in Microsoft 365.

Vendor roadmap

Fresh Intranet

Planning & Build

Extending Viva Connections

A Viva Connections intranet with Fresh enhanced adaptive cards and features for running solutions in this context.

Generative AI feature infusions

Deep integrations into Azure OpenAI services across all Fresh features enabling automation, natural language queries and bots.

3rd Party Integrations

Scenario based integrations into common 3rd party solutions, showcasing M365 integration options and more.

Firstline worker and unlicensed users

Options for digital signage, simplification and mobility of content and dedicated mobile solutions for unlicensed workers.

Scoping & Design

Page Creation & Management

Brand Centre & Brand Kits

Content Notifications

Intranet feature enhancements

freshintranet.com

Roadmap image provided by Advania.

Haiilo

FULLY STANDALONE

REQUIRES SHAREPOINT

OPTIONALLY WORKS WITH SHAREPOINT

FRONTLINE FOCUS
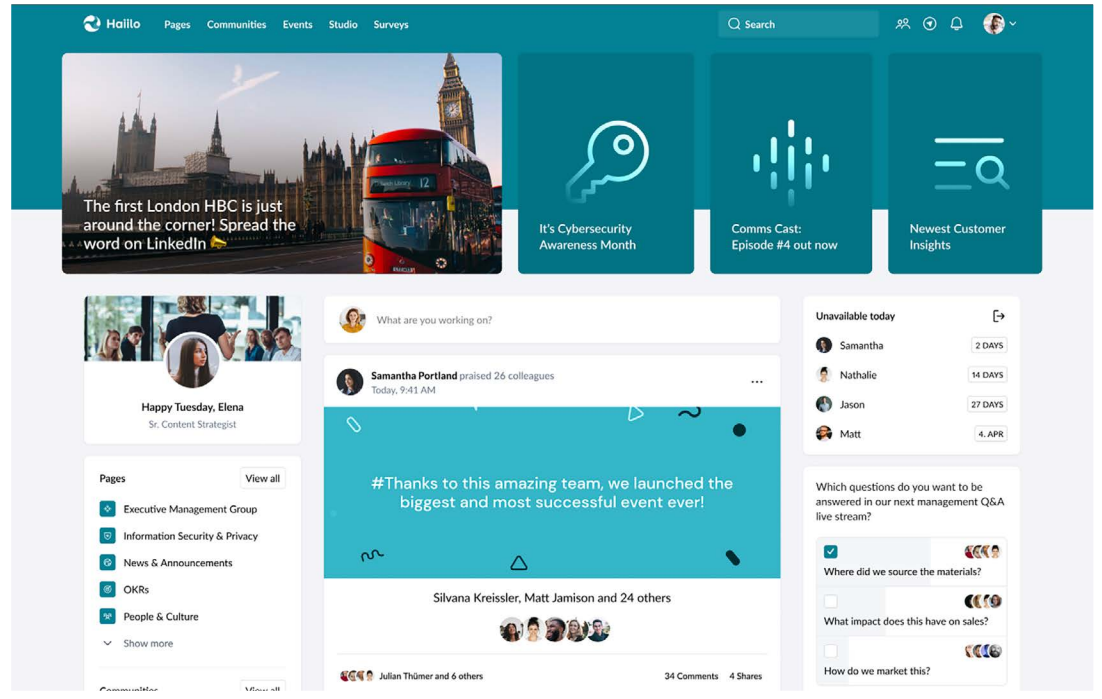
Typical deployment:

1,000 - 10,000 employees

Company locations:
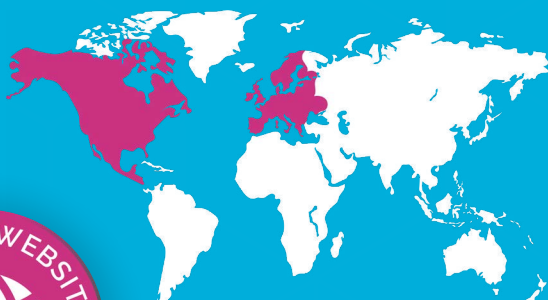
The product in a nutshell

Haiilo works well on desktop and mobile, providing great support for internal communicators while also giving employees a voice.

VISIT THE WEBSITE

SUMMARY

Haiilo owned by Haiilo

Haiilo was launched in 2012 under the product name COYO and the Germany-based vendor, also called Haiilo, has made consistent and significant developments in that time. We like that Haiilo conducts research with existing customers specifically to identify areas for improvement, making choices to meet their needs rather than to only win new clients.

Internal communicators will like the range of channels they can manage from within Haiilo, including an effective employee advocacy feature that was improved during 2023. Social and community features are excellent, with a particularly good pulse survey tool to help gather employee sentiment. The overall employee experience is strong too, both on desktop and mobile, with a familiar social media approach that is likely to aid adoption.

There is room for improvement across the platform generally, however. Site administration and the back end of many features would particularly benefit from development: multi-language, content life cycle, and employee services are examples where more could be done to make these areas more fully featured. Haiilo does have a sensible roadmap, so organisations should note the current gaps as well as what's planned. Additionally, it's worth noting that all features we've reviewed are included in the pricing provided, which means there is room to discuss budget requirements if they aren't all required within an organisation.

Overall, organisations with sophisticated needs around design, governance, and employee services may find Haiilo limited in places. The vendor has experience of working with large clients though, so it can still meet communication and community needs for organisations of all sizes.

Pricing

PRICE BAND	
250 users	$ $ $ $
1,000 users	$ $ $ $
5,000 users	$ $ $ $
20,000 users	$ $ $ $

These prices are indicative, offering a comparison of the products featured in this report only. Please contact the vendor for a bespoke quote.

PRICING MODEL

Subscription – price band based on number of users.

SPREAD OF COSTS

Fairly evenly spread across three years.

DISCOUNTS

Charities and non-profit organisations, schools and educational institutes, frontline users and multi-year commitments

PRICE INCLUDES

Basic onboarding package, 24/7 customer support and dedicated Customer Success Manager. Price also includes the optional Employee Advocacy and Engagement Surveys modules.

Product type

Ready-to-run, installed in days

Branding opportunities

All branding, complex options

Base systems

Fully standalone	Requires SharePoint	Optionally works with SharePoint	Other

Sectors

Accountancy, banking and finance	Engineering and manufacturing	Healthcare	Information technology	Public services, government and administration

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Blink.

Search

The first London HBC is just around the corner! Spread the word on LinkedIn 📢

It's Cybersecurity Awareness Month

Comms Cast: Episode #4 out now

Newest Customer Insights

Happy Tuesday, Elena
Sr. Content Strategist

What are you working on?

Samantha Portland praised 26 colleagues
Today, 9:41 AM

#Thanks to this amazing team, we launched the biggest and most successful event ever!

Silvana Kreissler, Matt Jamison and 24 others

Julian Thümer and 6 others   34 Comments   4 Shares

Like   Comment   Share

Pages   View all
- Executive Management Group
- Information Security & Privacy
- News & Announcements
- OKRs
- People & Culture
- Show more

Communities   View all
- Diversity & Inclusion
- Design System
- Product Discovery
- Budget Planning 25/Q1
- Show more

Mental Health Being Program

Employee

Jeffrey Eseigbe
47 Min.

Hey everyone,
I would like to inform you that tomorrow is my last working day at Haiilo. At least for the next year, because my sabbatical is finally starting 😎🏖️

First of all, I would like to thank Haiilo for the opportunity of this sabbatical and everyone who made it possible :-) I really really really appreciate it :-)

As you probably can imagine, I'm super hyped about the sabbatical, but I'm also a bit sad that I won't be able to experience the upcoming exciting time here at Haiilo.
But I'm really looking forward to seeing what's going to...

Translate   Read more

Unavailable today
Samantha	2 DAYS
Nathalie	14 DAYS
Jason	27 DAYS
Matt	4. APR

Which questions do you want to be answered in our next management Q&A live stream?

☑ Where did we source the materials?

☐ What impact does this have on sales?

☐ How do we market this?

COMPANY AND PRODUCT

Company details

Company
Haiilo

ISO 27001 certified
Yes

Data residency
N/A

Company founded
2010

Product launched
2012

Typical client size
1,000 - 10,000 employees

Largest deployment so far
300,000 employees
across 130 countries

Customers
Clients include: Salesforce, Deutsche Telekom, E.ON, Swarovski, Vodafone, Deutsche Bahn, KPMG, preh, asana, Vorwerk.
Please see their website for more details.

Partner locations
Germany, Switzerland, Austria, UK, USA, Finland, France

Company locations
Hamburg, Germany (HQ), UK, USA, France, Finland

Product and technical details

Name of product

Haiilo

Deployment

Client on-premises	Client private cloud	Microsoft Azure	Amazon Web Services	Vendor-hosted	Microsoft 365 tenant	Other*

*Sovereign Cloud, Google Cloud Platform

Client data encrypted

In transit only	In transit and at rest	At rest only

Authentication supported

Entra ID	ADFS	Okta	Open ID	Oauth	G Suite	Other

App deployment

Google Play store	Apple store	MDM	MAM	Other

Accessibility

WCAG 2.1 compliant

Document library sources integrated

Box	Dropbox	Google Drive	SharePoint	OneDrive	Other

Optional integrated enterprise search engines

Coveo	Elastic	IBM	Lucidworks	Microsoft	Mindbreeze	Sinequa	Other

User interface multi-language

Pre-configured	Editable	Right to left script supported	Other

Content multi-language

Machine translation for publishers	Machine translation for end users	Editable machine translation for publishers	Manual creation for publishers	Right to left script	Other

Set-up and support

Set-up process for new clients

Deployment of the out-of-the-box product in client's instances within hours; user sync together with the client and / or partner; standard configuration set-up within a few weeks (design, information architecture, rights and roles, contents); further individualisation depends on integrations / plug-ins and company size.

Current version

Continuous Deployment (since V45)

Product updates

Continuous Deployment

Product update process

Haiilo Cloud: Automatically, all customers are updated at once. Private Cloud: The customer decides the timing and can opt out.

Reverse-out options

For cloud customers, Haiilo can provide their data as an export at the end of the term if they wish. If they do not want to export their data, Haiilo will completely delete their instance with all data after 30 days.

Technical support

Email support	Phone support	Chat support	Online portal	24/7 support	Office hours only*

*Office hours cover CET, GMT, ET and PST time zones

User community

Online Community in a Haiilo environment including Roadmap Ideation; Client Community Summit (event for customers in the Haiilo office); Haiilo Support Centre (incl. online knowledge base); Digital Hours (webinars for news and new products); Haiilo Breakfast Club as a community event for clients and prospects in USA, Germany, Austria, Switzerland and the UK.

Voice of the vendor

Haiilo says: "At Haiilo, we know that employee communication is so much more than top-down and bottom-up. That's why Haiilo's SaaS platform combines multi-channel comms, modern intranet and employee advocacy with an engaging experience and analytics engine that both content creators and end users love. More than 1,000 of the world's largest organizations like Salesforce, Deutsche Telekom, KPMG and many more trust Haiilo to help them better reach, engage, and understand more than 3.5 million employees every day.

As the working world continues to adapt to external macroeconomic and geopolitical factors your workforce is increasingly distributed and potentially more detached. This is magnified by information overload, silos and continuous change. Bring all your employees together in one digital home, providing stability and connection. Haiilo will transform how you reach, engage and understand your workforce. Create, distribute and manage all employee communications from one secure platform everyone loves to use.

From content planning and co-creation to targeted multi-channel distribution and helpful analytics, Haiilo covers everything internal communicators need to do a great job. As an additional feature, Haiilo offers automated surveys to continuously measure and improve employee engagement. Thanks to actionable insights, communicators, HR and management always know what's on top of their employees' minds.

As employee communications is not only an internal topic, Haiilo also covers all relevant employee advocacy features. This means that selected content can also be shared externally on social media by all or a selected group of employees. Communicators can therefore build scalable corporate influencer programs to use the voice of their employees as the most authentic voice of the company and increase reach on social media tremendously.

Haiilo is based in Hamburg with further offices in Helsinki, London, Atlanta and Paris. More than 300 passionate employees work together on Haiilo's mission to change the world of work for the better."

Voice of the customer

All customers who responded, praised the overall approach taken by Haiilo, where one customer said this meant that "everyone has a voice" because of the collaboration that's possible "independent of hierarchy, time and location". One customer even went so far to say that "employees have motivation to adopt the intranet as an internal communication platform". Communicators also praised the "reduction of email traffic" they had seen and the easy way they can "inform employees in a very timely manner" with company news. Customers also said they like Haiilo's overall "user friendliness and clean look".

There was a range of requests for changes to Haiilo, with the most common being additional multi-language features. For example, one customer said it would be helpful "to be able to apply the multi-language function to wikis. If you want to provide content in different languages, it requires considerable additional effort". Multiple customers asked for greater admin controls, including bulk activities with content, for example, "upload multiple images at the same time". Other admin improvements included being able to "deactivate the Event module" and "make the home page design cooler" without the need for help from an agency or Haiilo themselves. Inviting external people into chat, adding wikis to the new "custom app", and "better, more attractively designed integration of videos into timelines" were other requests.

Customers highlighted that typically "the product works stably and without any problems". Technical needs are often provided by a partner, although if a customer has to contact Haiilo they are "very uncomplicated and open". Customer support was praised, "especially in phases of onboarding" with "solution-oriented action" where help is needed, even beyond launch. One customer said that since "the company has scaled up [in recent years] the contact has become much less". Another customer requested "more active communication with releases or new possibilities on how to further develop our platform", mentioning that "support from a customer advisor" would be particularly welcome here.

Note all feedback was gathered in German and translated into English using an auto translation tool.

SCENARIOS & SCORES

Please see the Scenarios below for more detail on each of these.

SCENARIO AND SCORE	KEY BENEFITS	IMPROVEMENTS / CONSIDERATIONS
4.5 **1. User Experience & Visual Appeal**	Intuitive and pleasant to use overall. Good approach to notifications.	Navigation may lack flexibility for some.
4 **2. Publishing & Communications Management**	Excellent range of features to support communicators. Easy to use generative AI tool. Strong approvals process.	Some inconsistencies in admin screens. More could be done to support urgent comms.
4 **3. Community & Engagement**	Effectively gives employees a voice. Excellent community spaces. Admins can easily gather opinions.	Missing reactions beyond likes.
1.5+ **4. Integrations & Services (Including M365)**	Helpful, configurable launchpad to tools.	Limited business system integrations but done well. Few M365 integrations.
3.5 **5. Information Finding & Search**	Excellent search experience, including 'likely answers' via AI. People search also works well.	Would benefit from more robust search management tools.
3.5 **6. Administrator Experience**	Good range of controls for technical and non-technical admins.	Roadmap life cycle features will be beneficial. Greater control over home page design might be desirable.
3 **7. Analytics**	Well-presented platform and content statistics, with helpful tooltips.	Limited depth of detail around search and content analytics.
4 **8. Mobile & Frontline Support**	Excellent user experience that translates well to smaller screen.	Lacking frontline-focused features.
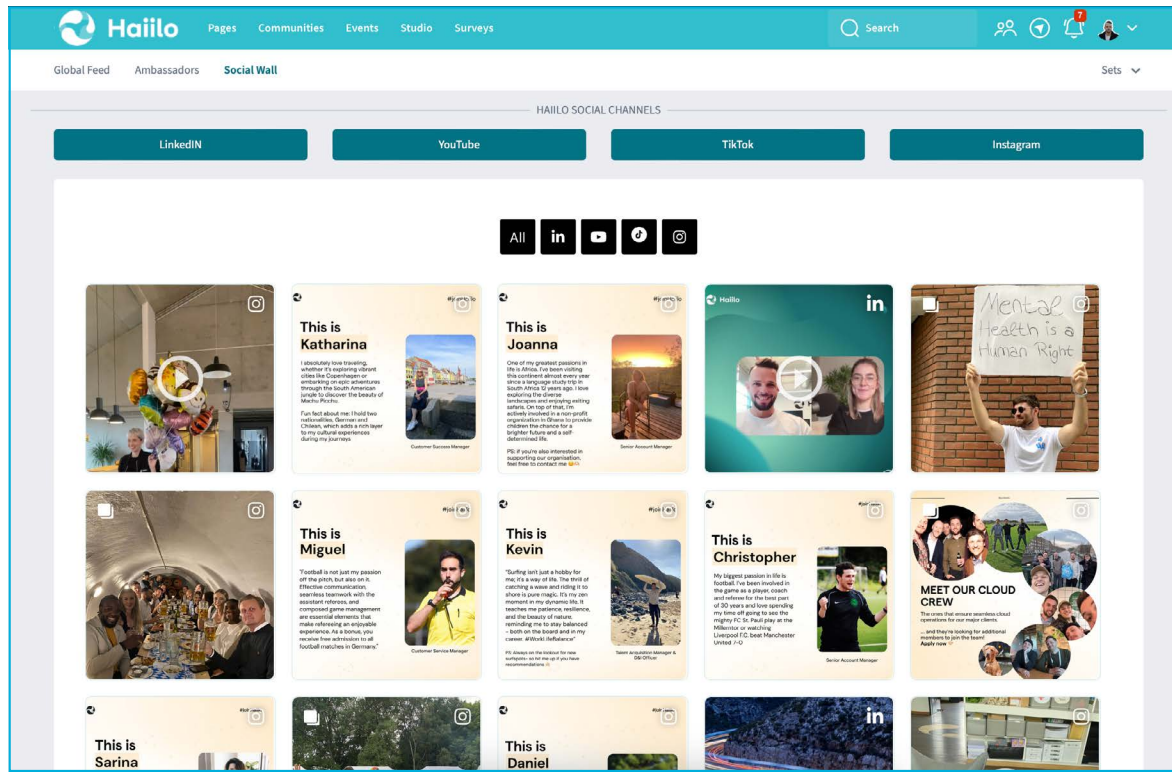
The 'social wall' displays posts from across integrated social media sites.

Haiilo provides a great experience for users via a simple, yet attractive, interface. A helpful walkthrough is presented when an employee first logs in, reflecting Haiilo's philosophy to keep everything easy. The site is reminiscent of a social media platform, with a contemporary interface and a truly intuitive ease of use. Employees will appreciate the limited number of clicks that are needed to complete activities, while also being presented with targeted content.

The top bar navigation revolves around 'Pages', which are typically used for reference materials or information spaces, 'Communities' where group activities typically take place, and 'Events' for a company events calendar (see Scenario 3). Although admins may miss the ability to configure the navigation to give certain topics more prominence, the Pages and Communities approach to content works well. The home page typically features a global activity feed but it is configurable; for example, an optional 'social wall' tab (see the above screenshot) shows tiles of integrated social media feeds but could instead be the default home page.

Notifications are found in a bell menu via the top bar and work well. After feedback from clients suggested too much was showing here, Haiilo have removed some notification use cases by default but allowed administrators to configure additional notification triggers. We like that when individuals subscribe to Pages and Communities, they will receive associated notifications and can unsubscribe from within the notifications menu too. There are fewer notification settings in employee's hands than other tools we've seen, but don't think that's an issue.

Simple 'theme' menu controls the background colour, top menu, and more across the site, allowing them to be configured appropriately and in flexible ways. There is space for a company or intranet logo / name and CSS is available should admins wish to add effects, like snow during Christmas. Complex branding is supported, so a child organisation could see a different design to the parent. Overall, admins have a good deal of control over home page design and the flexible theming and branding options can make the overall appearance quite distinct.
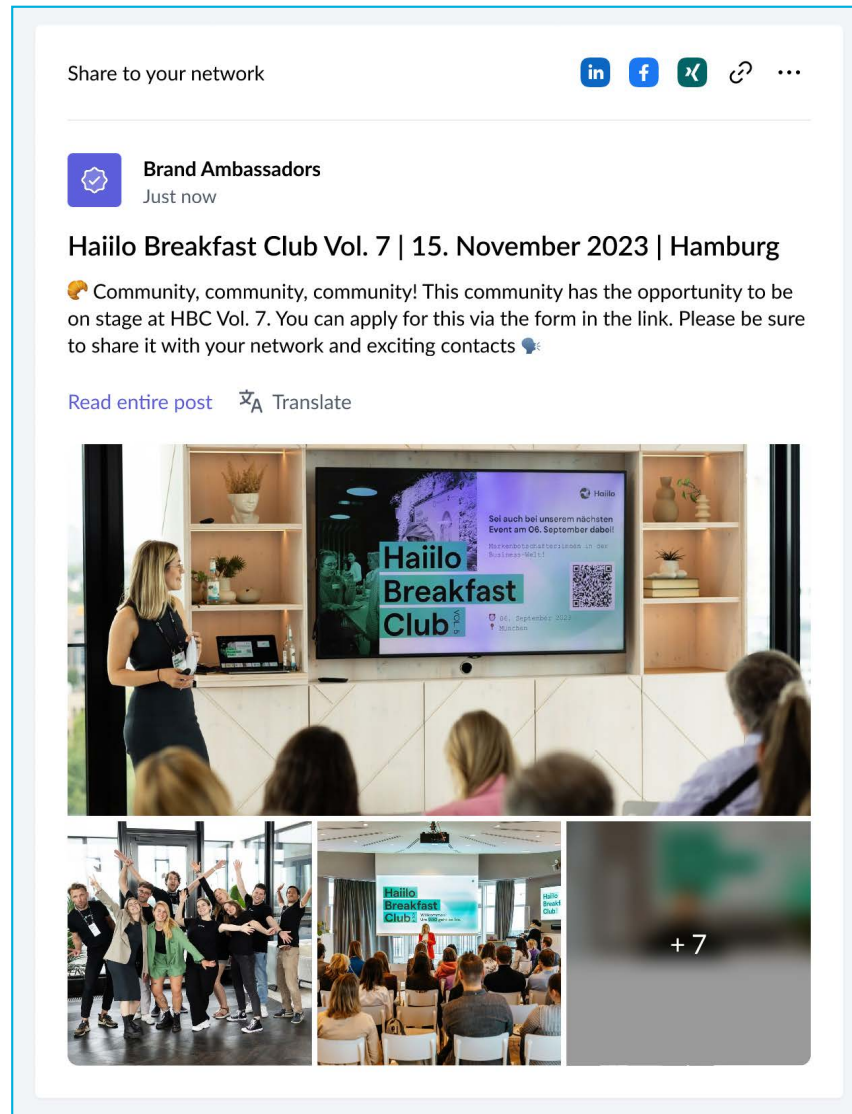
It's easy for employees to share content into their personal social media feeds.

Internal communicators will find much to like among Haiilo's features and this is an area that has seen a lot of development throughout 2023. There's more to come on the roadmap, such as a campaigns feature, and we're looking forward to the results.

Approved publishers are granted access to the comprehensive 'Studio' menu. The landing page includes a dashboard displaying an overview of posts that are in an approval workflow. A second dashboard provides an overview of all the publisher's articles, while a calendar tab shows publishers all the published and scheduled content they have permission to see in a card format (including advocacy items), with filters to simplify the view. Dragging and dropping article cards from one day to another changes the publication date. Clicking on a card shows who is responsible for it, and takes a publisher to the article to edit. After publication, the card displays top-level analytics. The calendar works very well, although we think being able to add events outside of Haiilo, such as indicating when quarterly financial results are announced, would be a helpful addition.

For news article creation, Haiilo includes a helpful ChatGPT-based tool called AVA. This allows publishers to drop in a few prompts and AVA will generate associated content, or a publisher can use AVA to edit something they have drafted. AVA helps with the tonality, length, and simplification of an article, or will summarise it altogether. Title and summary text will also be generated by AVA or where publishers want to write these themselves, there are helpful tooltips to guide them. There are additional manual content tools too, such as text formatting or video insertion, that are basic but work well. We think the addition of an accordion or similar layout would be helpful to present complex information simply. Articles have an image associated with them and we like that publishers can easily select a focal point, so it displays well on different devices.

AVA is the Haiilo generative AI tool for article creation.

Audience targeting relies on Microsoft Entra groups or similar integrated systems, or membership of Pages and Communities, where membership is mandated or optional. People or groups can also be easily manually added into audiences on-the-fly, but there is no way to make exceptions, for example "share with everyone in Finance except those based in the UK".

Where appropriate, a drafted article is automatically entered into an approval flow and the publisher receives notifications about its progress. An article can pass between the writer and approver until it's ready, with an in-line commenting function to assist. The progress of approvals and a summary of all a publisher's articles is shown in the Studio dashboard. Overall, this is a robust and unusual approach when compared to other products we've seen.

Note, however, that there is a less comprehensive 'blog' approach still available (see Scenario 3) which doesn't include AVA or access to the broader Studio features. Haiilo have said they are going to standardise the experience, which we think will be a great help for inexperienced publishers who may value AI assistance more than experienced communicators.

Once an article is published, communicators can share it across multiple channels. There is a simple digital signage solution that displays the title, summary, associated image, and a QR code so people can read more; Haiilo says they have plans to develop this further during 2024.

Employees choose whether to receive regular email digests, but there's no way for publishers to influence what's included here. Alternatively, there is an effective drag-and-drop newsletter builder that will provide links to Haiilo content as well as giving publishers manual content blocks, such as to write an appropriate introduction.

The publishing calendar provides an overview of everything that a publisher has permission to see, for published and scheduled articles, and advocacy posts.

A simple tick box shares the entire content of the article into a dedicated email, Slack and / or Teams channel. However, employees cannot share into these channels yet, only publishers. Reactions to these posts are captured as part of analytics, but sentiment is not. We like that people can 'confirm as read' from the channel post though. Similar sharing functionality is available for 'employee advocates', who can amend a post before sharing to their social channels. The employee advocacy module (at additional cost but included in the pricing provided) was updated in late 2023 and works well. For example, we like that publishers can use a post from social media to create intranet content with more context.

For urgent messages, Haiilo recommends sharing across all device types including generating email and push notifications. Stories can be pinned at the top of a timeline, which employees can unpin once read, and it's easy for administrators to temporarily add a widget to the home page to act as a banner. Although crisis communications can be supported, we would like to see a more elegant approach introduced that would allow for better analytics and tracking.
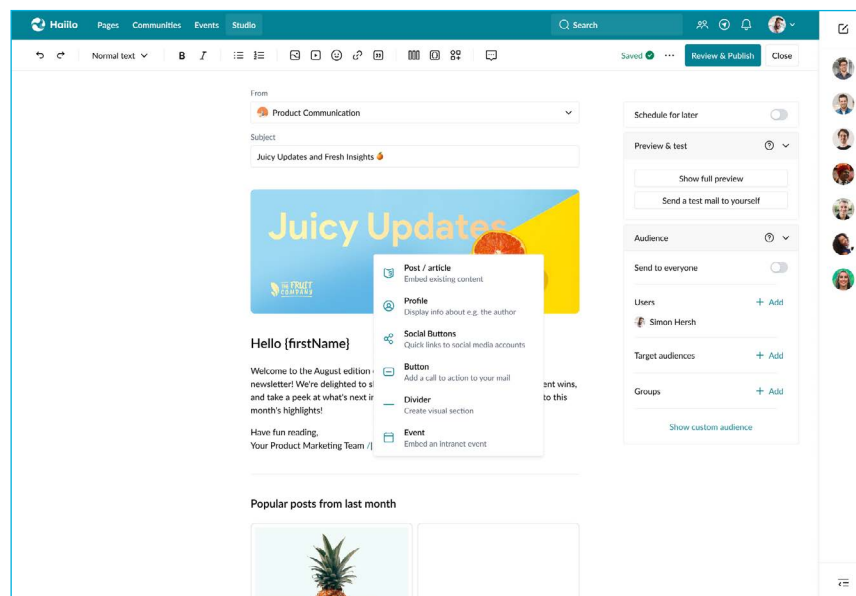
The drag-and-drop newsletter helps publishers create effective email communications.
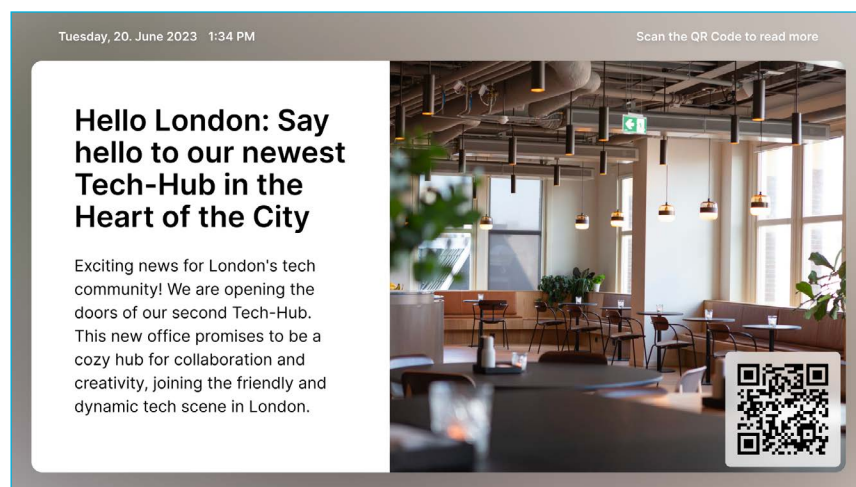
An article title, summary and image displays on digital signage with a QR code for people to find out more via the app.
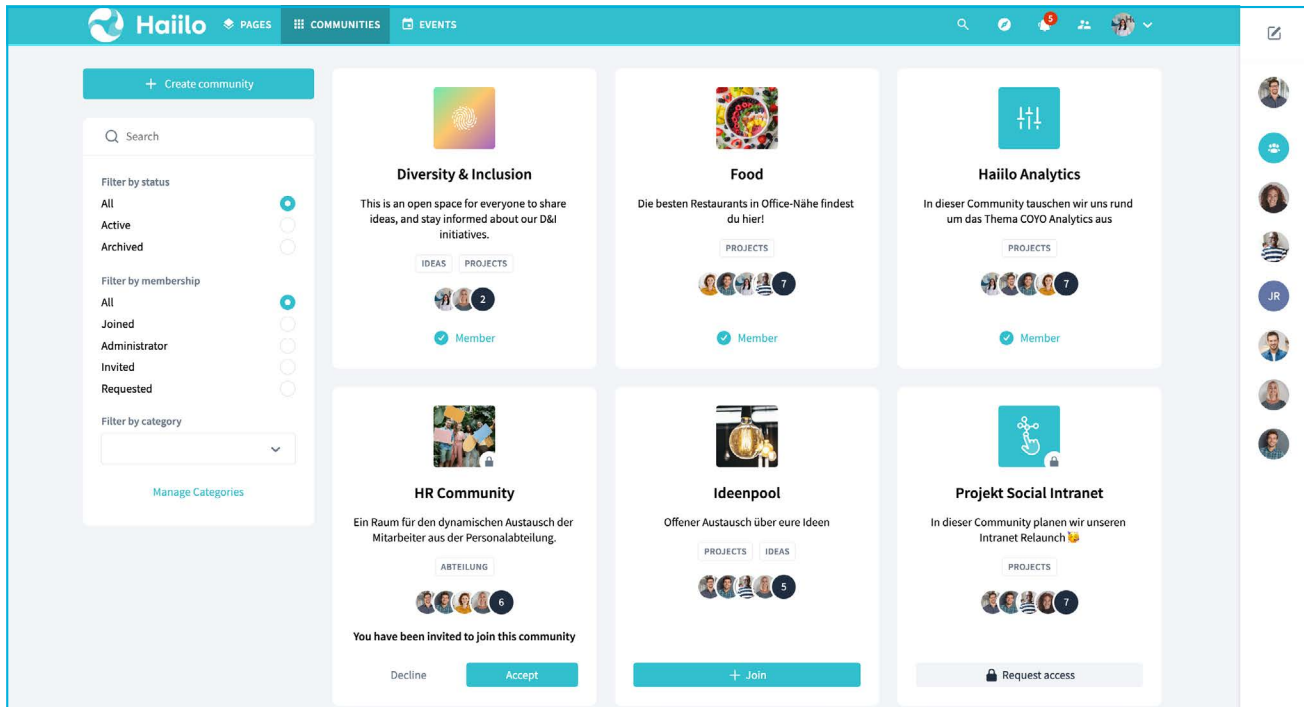
Haiilo's 'Communities' is where social activities typically take place.

Social activities are a core feature of the Haiilo platform and can help to build a sense of community for the organisation. The home page design includes a prominent timeline that showcases formally published communication, as well as news, information, and conversations from across the site. Each Page, Event and Community space includes a timeline too, and the home page aggregates all posts into this single location.

Those who own a Page or Community space may choose to add a variety of community content types, including forums and wikis. Collaboration activities can be further encouraged by adding customisable lists and tasks. Haiilo is therefore well suited to facilitate social activities and communities of practice. Employee timeline posts are an important part of this and they are easy to add, mirroring experiences on social media. Helpfully, preconfigured banned words are blocked automatically and there is a simple but effective 'report' feature for moderation purposes.

The social nature of Haiilo lends itself to informal praise-giving through posts, however there isn't a formal recognition scheme / 'Kudos' which we think is a shame. We do like that people can add their own pronouns to their profiles though, which is a small feature but contributes to the overall culture being presented on the intranet. 'Blogs' allow infrequent publishers that don't have access to the Studio to share longer-form messages, although see Scenario 2 for our thoughts on this experience versus the Studio. The only social aspect we feel is missing is the variety of reaction types, such as 'love' or 'insightful', which people are familiar with from social media platforms.

'Events' works very well, firstly as a central place for people to view upcoming company events that are created within the Events centre itself or via a Page or a Community. The Events landing page includes useful filters, for example a date range picker, and accepting an event from this page will add it to an integrated calendar such as Outlook. Admins may create an event from here, or within another Page or Community. We like that when creating an event, admins have the choice to force a definite answer rather than receiving dozens of "maybe" replies; limiting the number of places is helpful too. There's a simple participants list, and events automatically include their own timeline to help with communications to those who are coming, or yet to be tempted to sign up.

Publishers have a couple of strong approaches to choose from to gather employee opinions. The first is a simple polling option, while a second 'Survey' feature works very well as a pulse survey tool to gather regular feedback across employees, but not for more operational needs. Note that surveys are an additional cost but included in the pricing provided.

Building a survey is easy, with a library of questions from Haiilo for publishers to choose from, or they may add their own instead, via a drag-and-drop interface. Publishers can easily share pulse surveys into other channels, such as Teams or Slack, to encourage completion. Survey results are excellent, displaying as attractive charts on screen for admins, including word clouds and even sentiment analysis on free-text fields. Those with direct reports can optionally see anonymised results from their team, allowing them to address any issues as needed. We particularly like the 'PDF export' option that presents the results of a question per page in an attractive format, which will help admins share results with leaders.

Wikis are among a variety of applications that can be added to create Communities of Practice.
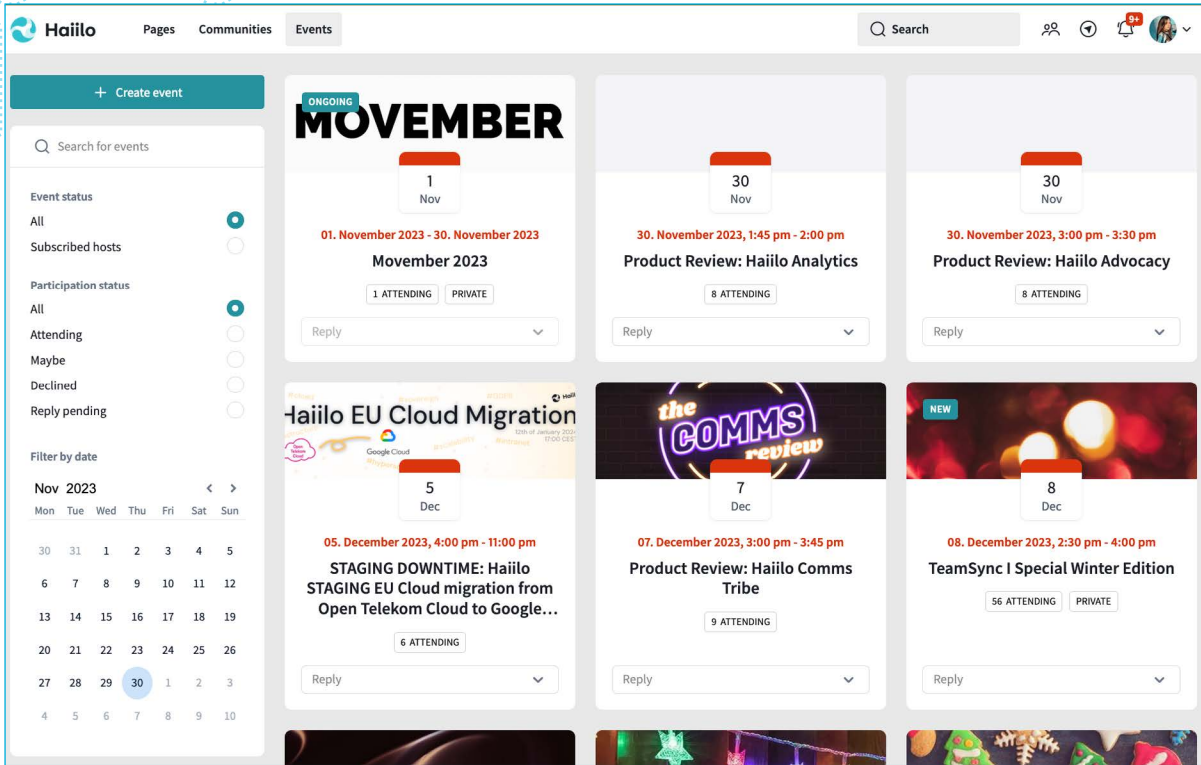
The Events menu gathers all events together, no matter where they were created,
which helps people keep on top of what's available.
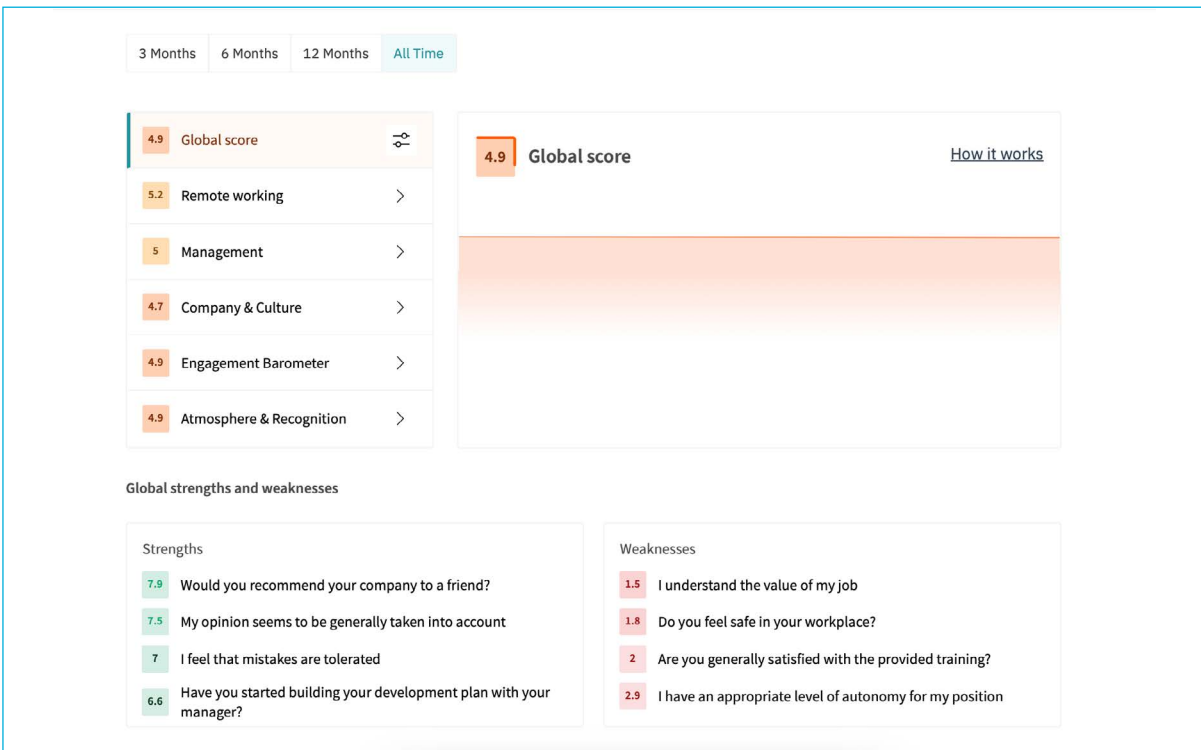
Survey building is flexible, while the results are detailed.
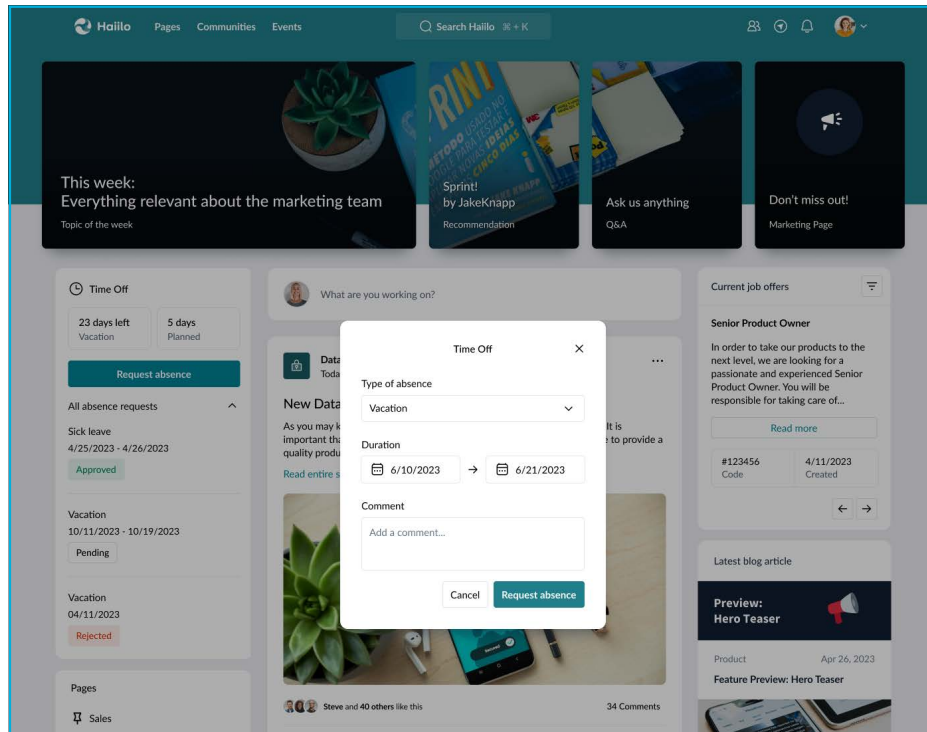
An integration with SuccessFactors makes it easy for someone to request time off.

Historically, Haiilo had focused on communications and community features, meaning digital workplace services were not a focus. During 2023 Haiilo worked to develop new integrations that are slowly being released. So, while the depth and range may currently be limited compared to some other products, Haiilo have shown that this is an area getting their attention.

Introduced during 2023 was an integration with SuccessFactors to view available leave and 'request absence', a Concur integration to log expenses, and a ServiceNow widget that displays recent tickets. Further activities in these tools take place in the source system. Other integrations with third-party tools are limited to iframes that display relevant content. There is also a plug-in API available that clients can use to explore integration options, although may come at additional cost.

There is a simple form building tool with exportable results for use elsewhere and a helpful notification feature for those in the relevant workflow. The 'launchpad' in the top menu shows admin configured, targeted links to key company tools and Microsoft 365 apps. We like that employees can add their own choices to 'your links'. One slightly disorientating aspect of the launchpad is that it is a full screen overlay that substitutes intranet branding for a plain white background, but it's a minor complaint.

Haiilo is available as an application within Teams; however, people will be taken into a browser away from Teams if they wish to read more. It's helpful that Haiilo notifications can be integrated into Teams and into Viva Connections adaptive cards, and that targeted content can be shared into a Teams chat by publishers. Haiilo say their clients are typically using their platform instead of the Viva suite, so they will only develop those integrations further if there are customer requests.

An optional widget showcases the latest files the individual has interacted with from within SharePoint and / or Google. Chats and calls, such as into Teams, can be started from colleague profile pages, although this will take the employee to the external tool to complete the action. Further integrations with Microsoft applications, including SharePoint, are on the 2024 roadmap.
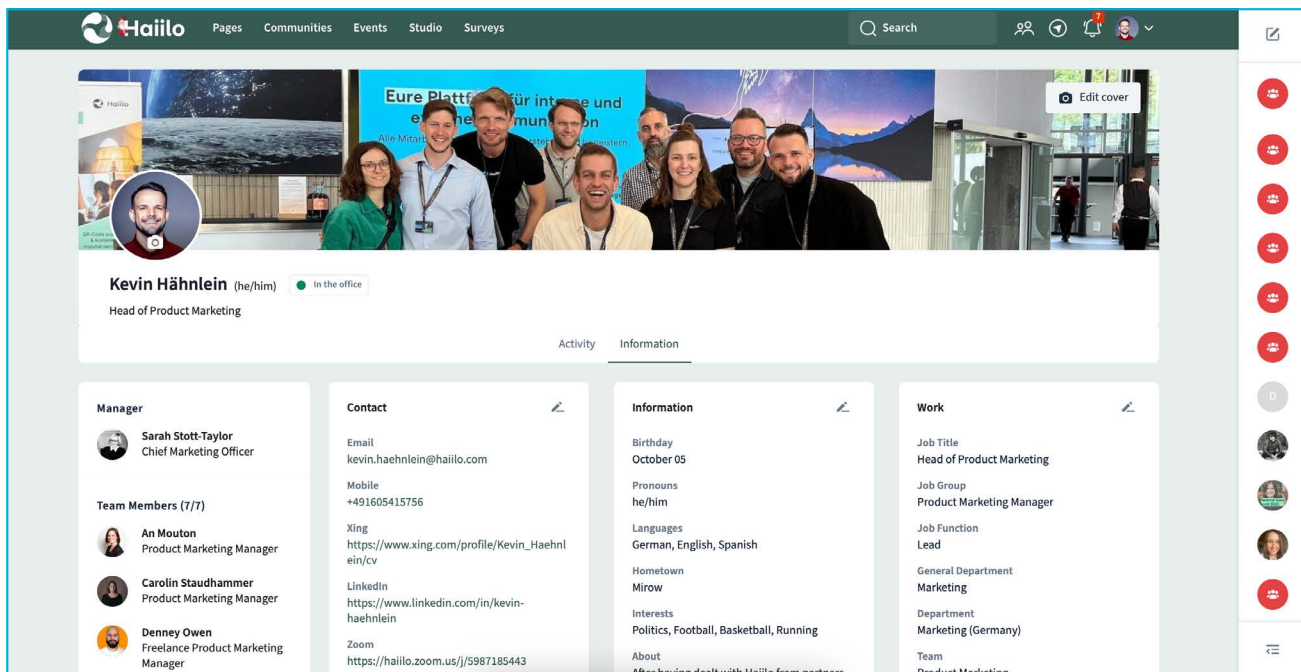
Profile pages are clean and simple in appearance, but the range of profile data is good.

The search experience in Haiilo is simple but effective, with features on the roadmap for 2024 that will make it more sophisticated for end users and admins. Currently, a single type-ahead search box displays recently accessed content and offers contextual search, restricting search results to the 'Page' site the person is currently inside. Typing a new search term and pressing enter takes the user through to a results page.

Results are presented well, with abstracts for native content and thumbnail images along with published dates. Results from Google Drive, OneDrive and SharePoint are included if these are connected, although no other third-party system is available for federation out-of-the-box. Helpfully there are alternative spelling options presented where no results are returned, or where there are results with similar spellings. Where a lot of results are presented, there is a good range of filtering options.

Documents preview immediately from the search results page, with a nice summary of version control and other governance data. We particularly like that publishers can update files from within the search results, which we can see being a time saver for those with a lot of content to maintain.

There is a helpful 'likely answer' feature that uses an AI assistant to present results. Users type a natural language question such as "where can I find my time sheet" and the AI will scour the intranet to present the answer. In this example the AI won't include the file as part of the answer, but it is presented within the 'files' results below. This places the responsibility on the end user to discern the correct result, however, and we think that surfacing files in the answer would be helpful. There's also no way for people to tell the AI if an answer is incorrect, or for an admin to teach it a correct answer. Haiilo say they are going to address this during 2024.

There isn't a facility for sponsored results or topic tags, but hashtags can be applied to content and are then searchable. There is a simple search feedback mechanism, asking "how easily" people found what they were looking for, but the results are not presented to admins anywhere, which is a shame. Overall, the search management features for admins have room for improvement. If this was done in combination with developing search analytics (see Scenario 7) then this could be a very powerful experience for admins and end users alike.
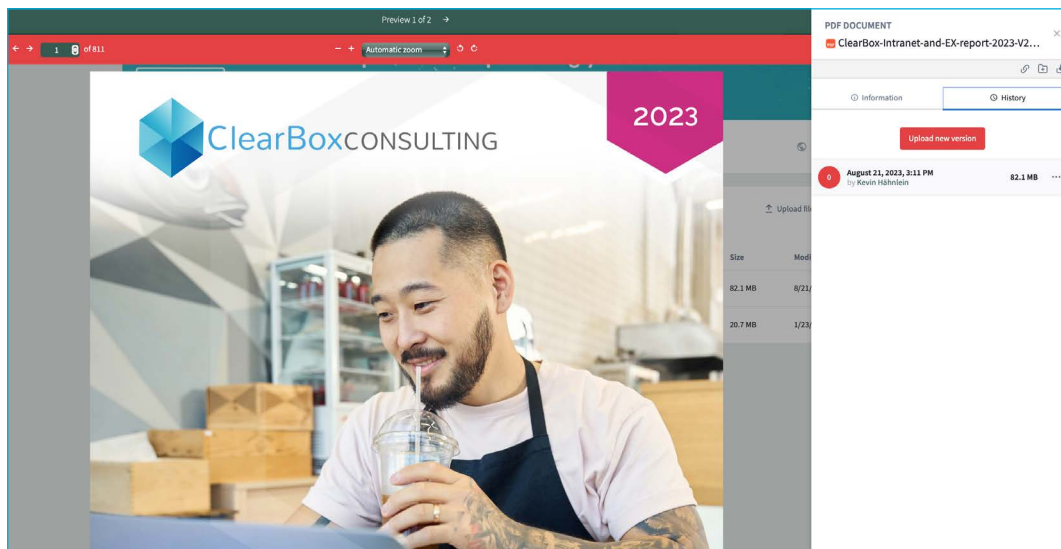
It's easy for publishers to update uploaded files from within search results.
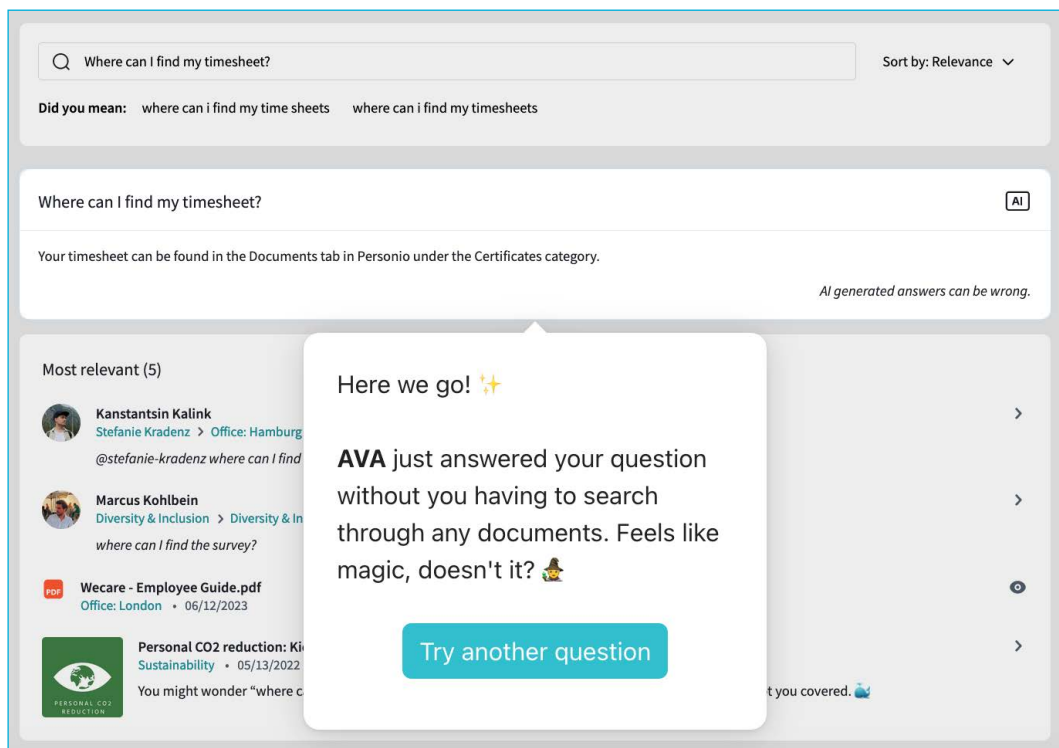
The AI generates a suggested answer, with files and associated results presented below.

People finding works very well, with colleagues able to search for each other using any profile field. Searching for people is possible via the main search but there is also a separate attractive directory. Both experiences take people through to profile pages that look clean but simple. There is a good range of profile fields, with a variety of optional fields for admins to choose from, some of which can be edited by the employee if wanted. There is a simple listing of someone's line manager and their direct reports, which is navigable and works well. A more detailed native org chart is on the roadmap. The employee's latest activity is visible on a separate tab to their information, which is a nice touch. People can 'follow' colleagues from profile pages, bringing relevant content from them into the activity feed, and it's easy to see who's being followed in search results.

While the search is effective, we think there could be more tools made available for administrators to fine-tune the experience where wanted. The range of repositories for federated search is a little limited too, although the API mentioned in Scenario 4 indicates that more might be possible with development.
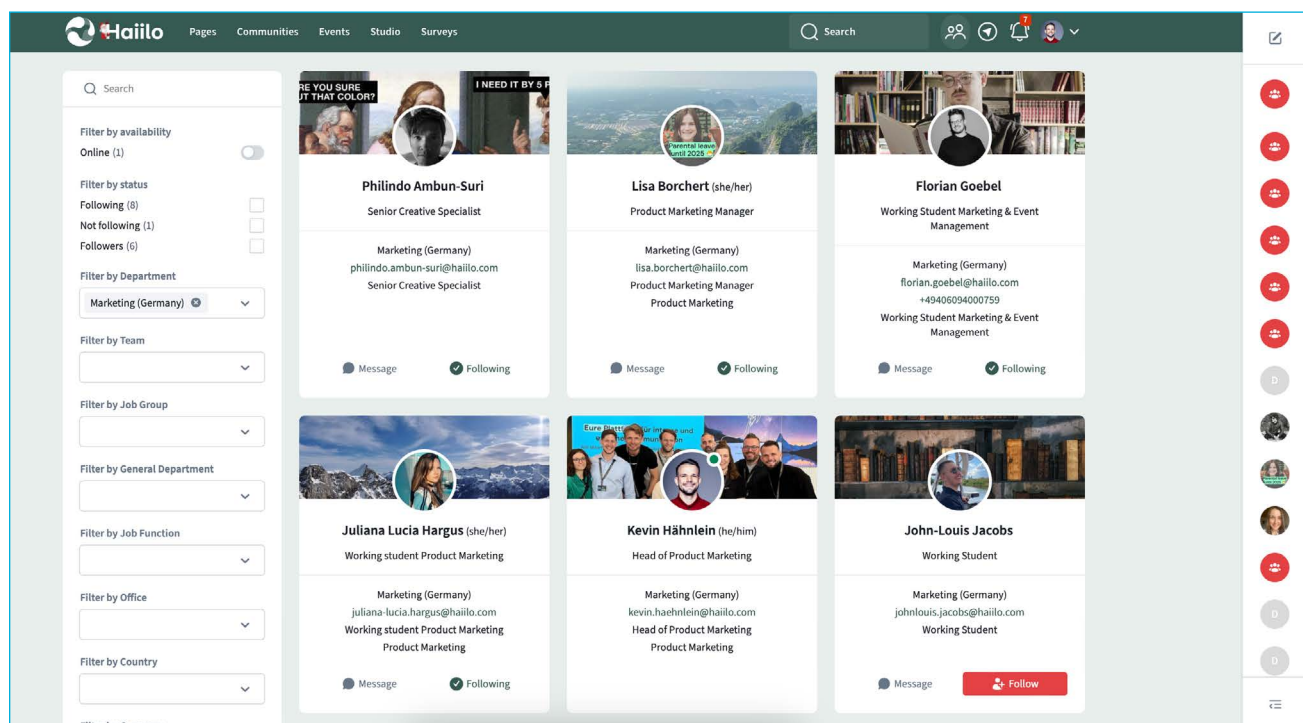
The people directory provides a clean and effective experience.
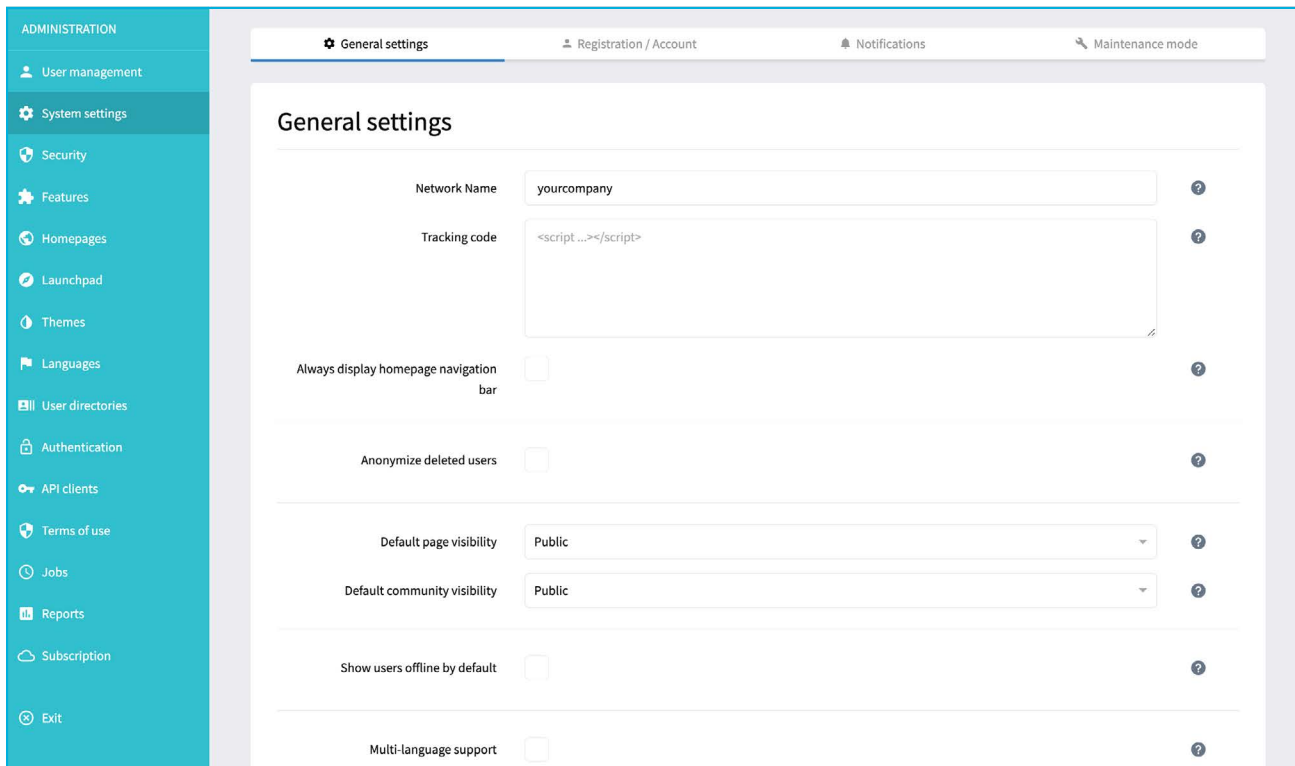
Haiilo is easy for admins to configure, with many controls based on simple toggles and dropdowns, plus there are plenty of tooltips to guide people.

The tools for administrators are easy to use and there is a good range of permissions to control who can do what. Site management controls are separated from more technical controls, such as authentication settings. This allows technical colleagues to administer parts of the site, while the other controls are simple enough that the intranet could be managed by anyone within the organisation. The separate Studio and other publishing approaches means that content management can easily be decentralised too. Customer feedback implies that certain core elements of the product are harder to control however, such as the removal of the Events menu, so we would advise clients discuss structural changes with Haiilo early in the relationship.

The home page and Community and Page landing pages are built using drag-and-drop widgets. There aren't any templates for pages or articles to guide publishers, but the admin screens offer a flexible approach for people to build what they want. Widgets can include static content such as an individual blog post, dynamic content like the timeline, personalised content such as latest accessed documents, and plug-ins from integrated systems. It's also possible to build different home pages for different audiences, which could give priority to widgets or simplify layouts as appropriate. As available integrations grow (see Scenario 4) and widgets become more sophisticated (see below), we think Haiilo home pages could become highly personalised and relevant for all employees.
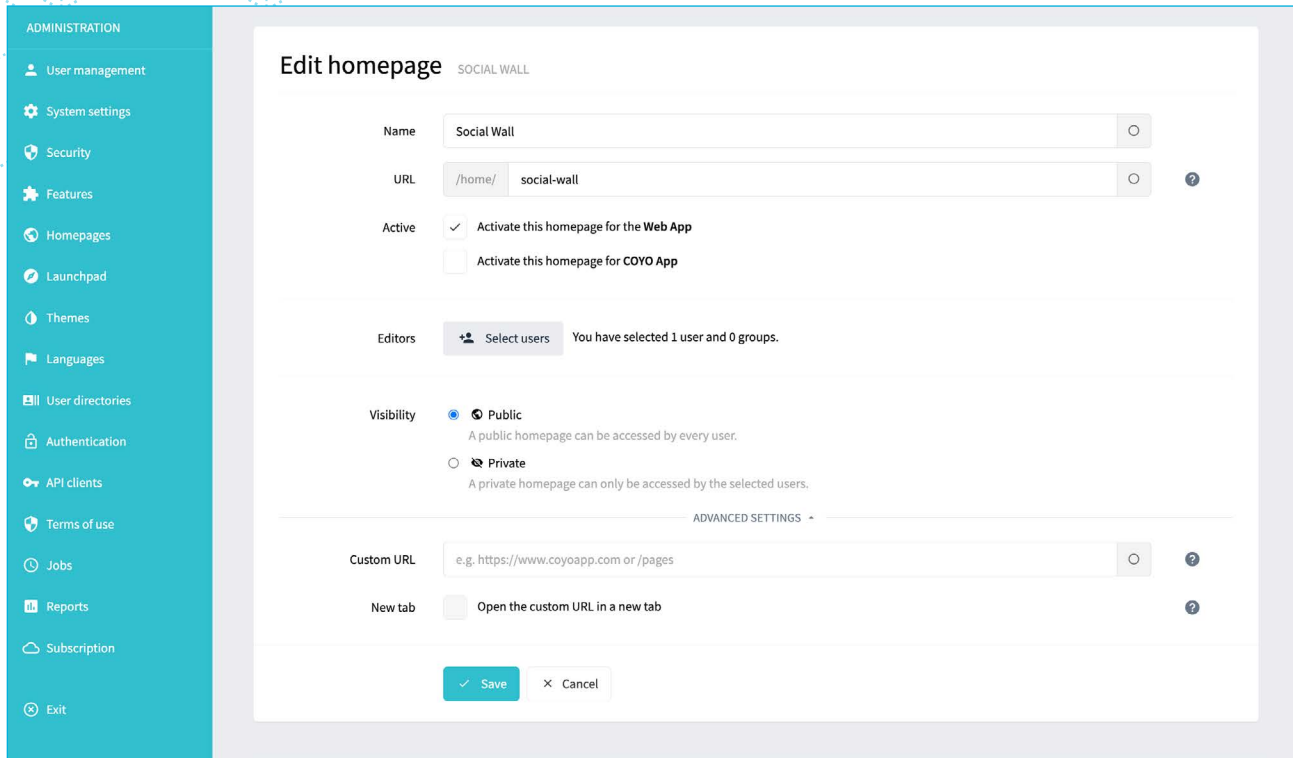
Home page creation begins in the back end, before moving to an on-page editor using widgets.
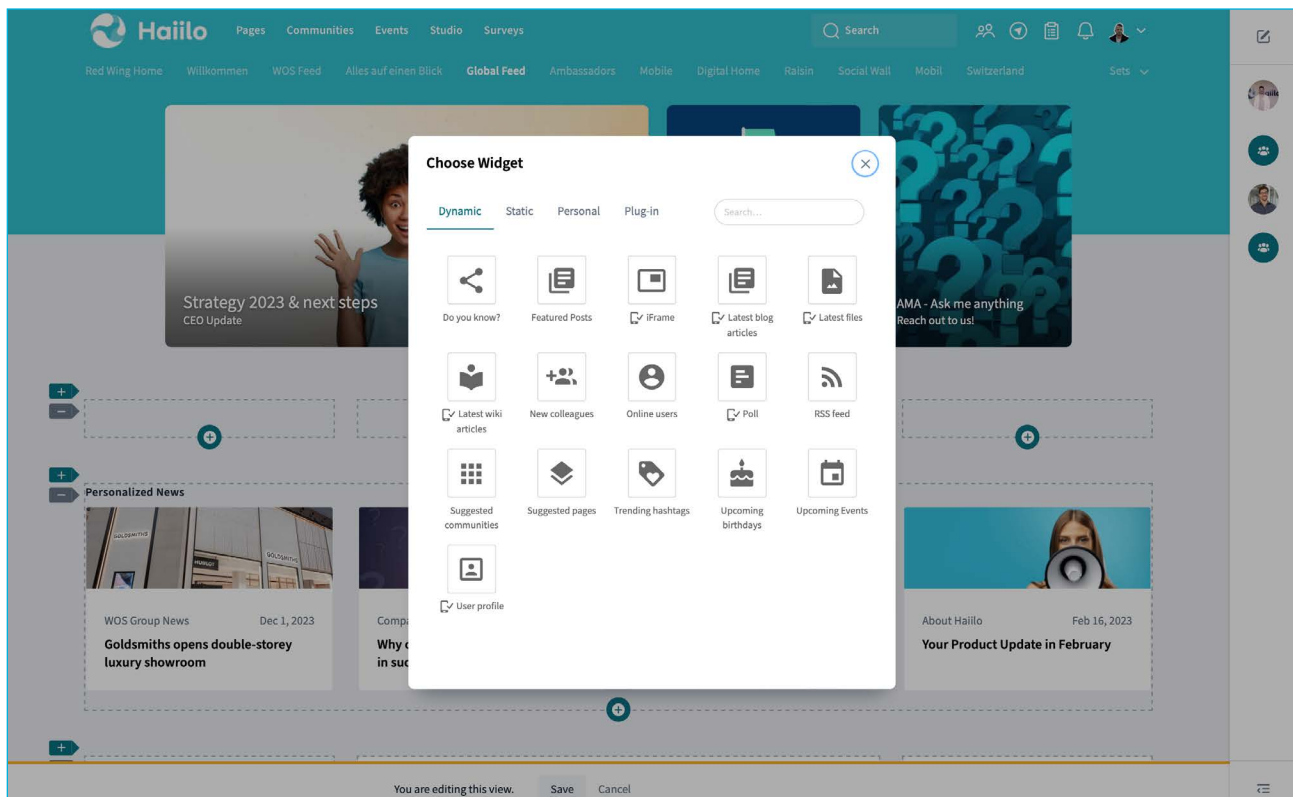
There are a variety of widgets available so admins can create pages as wanted.

In 2023 Haiilo introduced tabs to the home page to give people easier access to communication channels. This includes a 'social wall' that shows all social media content from the organisation, and an 'ambassadors' tab for those who have been selected to help with employee advocacy. Another recent addition is a widget that surfaces content from the whole platform or a single / group of Pages, then displays the top content based on views, likes, comments or a mix. This helps promote important content that may otherwise get lost, which we think is an excellent addition. Interestingly, this widget was introduced following client feedback that Haiilo shared with us. Clients with well-established platforms found content could be hard to find, given the volume of formal and informal communication (see below).

The navigation within each Page and Community is built using 'apps' that add content types into the space. There are auto-archive dates in an 'archiving assistant' for each app content type that can be overridden for single items too. There are no global archive settings, but this is on the roadmap. Alternatively, Page and Community owners see all their content within the assistant and may choose to manually archive if desired, including an option to bulk archive. On the roadmap is some built-in engagement rates to help define what should be archived or not.

Uploaded documents include version history and basic document management data; there are improvements coming for this too. We would like to see overall improvements to life cycle management to help control site sprawl, including notifications for owners, tools to swap ownership when someone leaves, and somewhere for people to easily see all content they manage. Improvements to content life cycle are requested by clients in the 'Voice of the Customer' section, too.

While auto archiving removes much of the burden, it's easy to manually bulk archive content that's grown out of date.

There are some effective multi-language features available, but it's a shame these don't apply to all content types, a sentiment echoed by customers. When creating an article, publishers indicate which languages (from a list configured by admins) they would like an article to be available in. This creates an auto-translated copy that is available for editing, which will then be displayed to people with the relevant language in their profile. If the original is updated, a new copy will need to be made and there are no notifications to alert translation authors that a change has been made.

Alternatively, people will see an auto-translate button for content that hasn't been officially translated and for user-generated content. Although the navigation is flat and translation of the architecture therefore modest, there are fine-grained controls to replace alternative language navigation titles where wanted.

Overall, the admin features work well but there is room for improvement. Haiilo have introduced helpful features into the platform in recent years that give admins greater control over their site. More is on the roadmap that will make Haiilo even more robust and we're looking forward to seeing these developments.

Creating multiple language versions of content is simple.
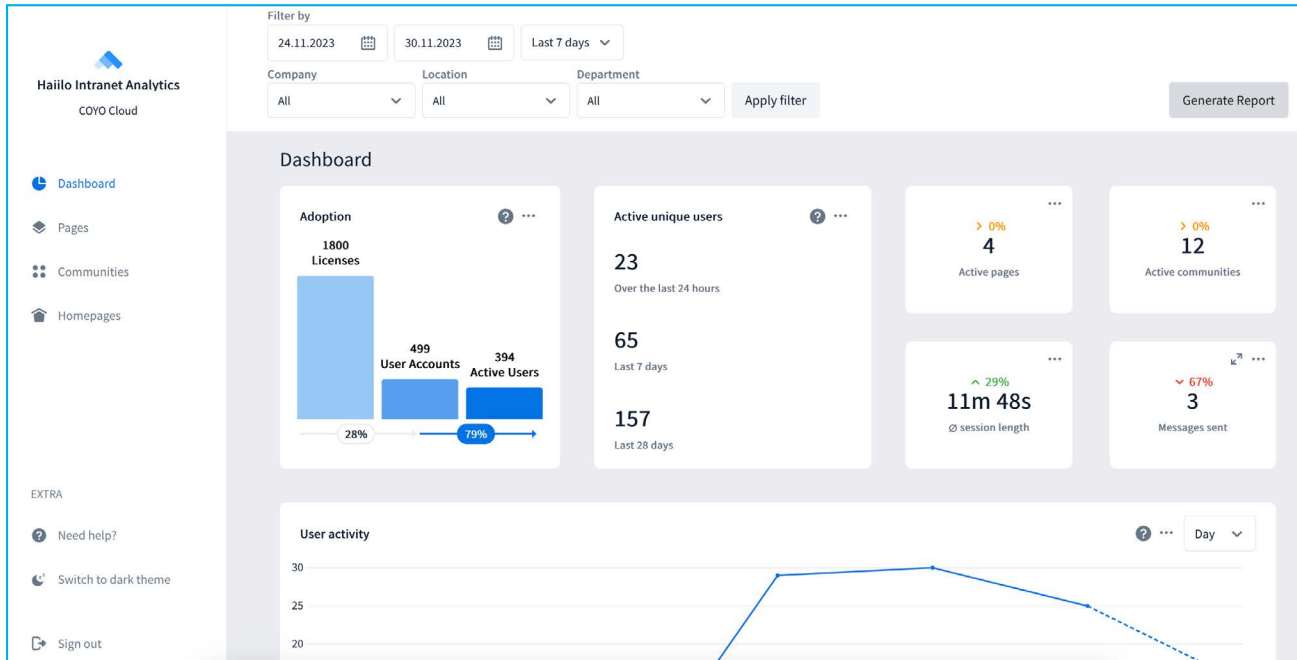
The analytics dashboards present useful data for admins and content owners.

In the back end there is a useful analytics dashboard, with data including an active times heat map and graphs that distinguish between users who only consume content versus those that interact in some way. There are also helpful graphs for device type and audience members. There are master filters, such as to define timeframes, and many of the charts include further filters to drill down into the results. The tooltips to help people understand what's being presented are helpful, but the statistics are simpler than some other products in this report. We do like the simple home page analytics that allow for some top-level A/B testing.

The dashboard contains some basic search analytics that only show the most searched for terms and so there is room for improvement; to show failed searches for example. As mentioned in Scenario 5, if the search analytics and search management features were developed together then this would be a powerful set of tools for intranet managers. It would also be beneficial to allow the results of mandatory read items to be exported or for more information to be given about the percentage of people who have acknowledged.

Pages and Communities have analytics presented in the dashboard or via their associated space. These include overall statistics, so the relevant owners can decide whether to make changes to apps or even archive the space entirely. The dashboard presents statistics for all content published across the site. Anything created in the Studio is also visible in the Studio's own analytics, or via the communication calendar pop-out cards. These analytics show publishers helpful information such as the reach of their content plus any engagement from readers. A campaign feature is coming soon, providing even more valuable analytics.

Overall, the analytics experience in Haiilo is somewhat disparate, with some information presented in the Studio and others in a separate analytics dashboard. Haiilo are aware that this experience isn't ideal and plan to consolidate soon, plus introduce analytics to support internal communicators more directly. Note, too, that these 'premium analytics' are at additional cost, but included in the pricing provided.
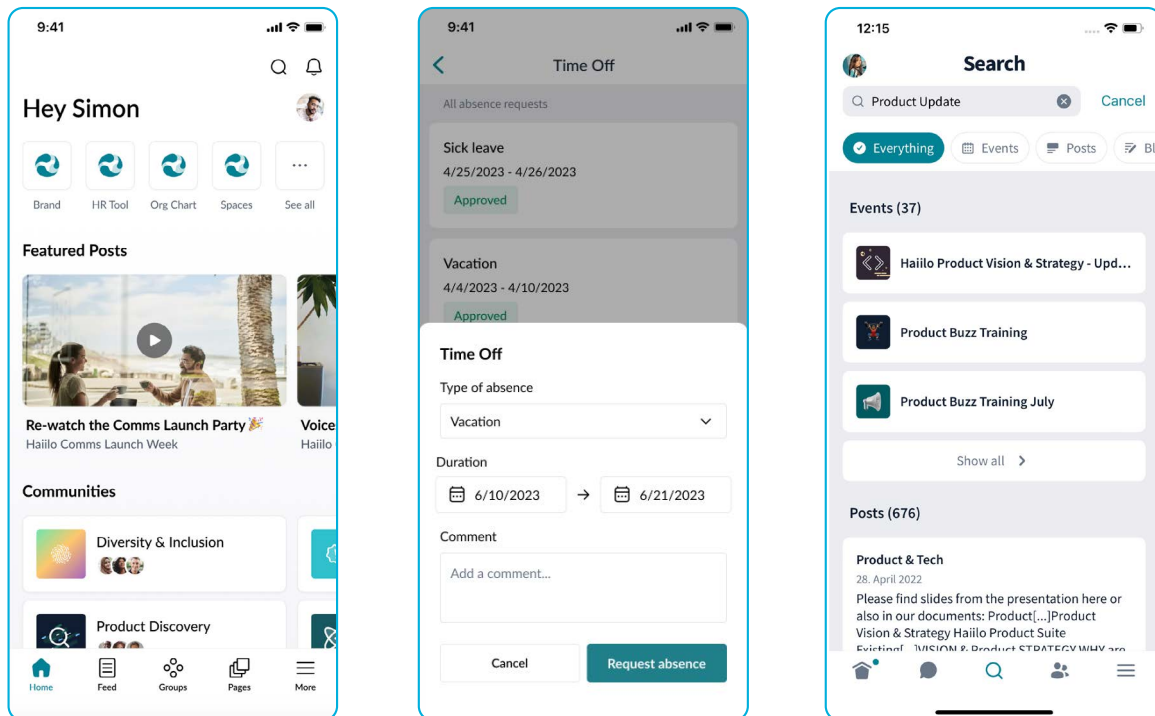
Haiilo works very well on mobile – the flexible design helps present a strong user experience, which is backed up by inbuilt features such as time off requests and search.

The Haiilo app is available from public stores, while a white-labelled version is available via MDM or MAM at additional cost (although this has been included in the pricing provided). Initial access is granted via single sign-on, while those without a company email may use any unique identifier (such as an employee / payroll number) to log on. To encourage people to download the app, Haiilo provides QR codes for posters and the white-labelled app will support biometrics for easy re-entry.

Haiilo's social approach on desktop lends itself very well to a mobile environment for consuming content. Posting into the timeline works well too, but creating longer content is best suited to the desktop, which is typical of most products in this report. The mobile home page collates personalised information relevant to the individual (such as upcoming events or recent posts in the Pages they follow), which we think works successfully. The feed, Pages and Communities are available via the bottom menu and display effectively. The search results page is simplified but also effective on a small screen.

Haiilo's social media–esque interface makes it an easy tool for frontline employees to adopt. There is a chat feature that would be helpful for organisations with frontline workers currently using unofficial and unsecured communications channels. The features are somewhat basic though, when compared to other messaging tools. The integrations covered in Scenario 4 provide some helpful services for the frontline, but more could be done to address this group's needs. Therefore, features to appeal to the frontline are limited in comparison to some other tools.

There are settings available to tailor what is shown in the app environment. This includes page layouts to streamline the number of tabbed menus along app pages, including the home page. The content of the timeline can also be simplified through audience targeting. Overall, however, Haiilo's desktop environment doesn't need much tailoring to translate well to the smaller screen.

THINGS TO BEAR IN MIND

Haiilo has developed the platform significantly since 2022, listening to customer feedback to introduce new features and make improvements. Internal communication features are of particular note, with early signs of improvements to employee services too. There is still room for enhancements, particularly around administrative aids and controls for features. For example, governance, search management, multi-language features, and platform controls could all benefit from development.

However, Haiilo has a healthy roadmap with a lot of sensible plans, and we look forward to seeing these new features being released. With Haiilo's growth has come the addition of partners working with clients and, considering feedback in the 'Voice of the Customer' section, we hope the vendor doesn't dilute the working relationship with their customers too much. Additionally, with the introduction of new modules, Haiilo is now in the upper end of our pricing brackets when all the optional modules are included. For organisations that want a simpler experience or where budget is a concern, we would recommend discussing your needs with the vendor.

Overall, we think Haiilo is a compelling product that's worth exploring for organisations of different sizes that want to address communication and community needs.

Why choose this product

Haiilo provides a great employee experience that's reminiscent of social media platforms, while also giving communicators the tools they need to effectively reach people with business news. Social features are excellent for both communities of knowledge and engagement purposes. The experience translates very well to mobile too. Haiilo would suit organisations of any size who are looking to improve internal communication, while also giving employees a voice.

Vendor roadmap

Please see their website for details.

Back to index

interact

FULLY STANDALONE

REQUIRES SHAREPOINT

OPTIONALLY WORKS WITH SHAREPOINT

FRONTLINE FOCUS

Typical deployment:

2500+ employees

Company locations:

VISIT THE WEBSITE
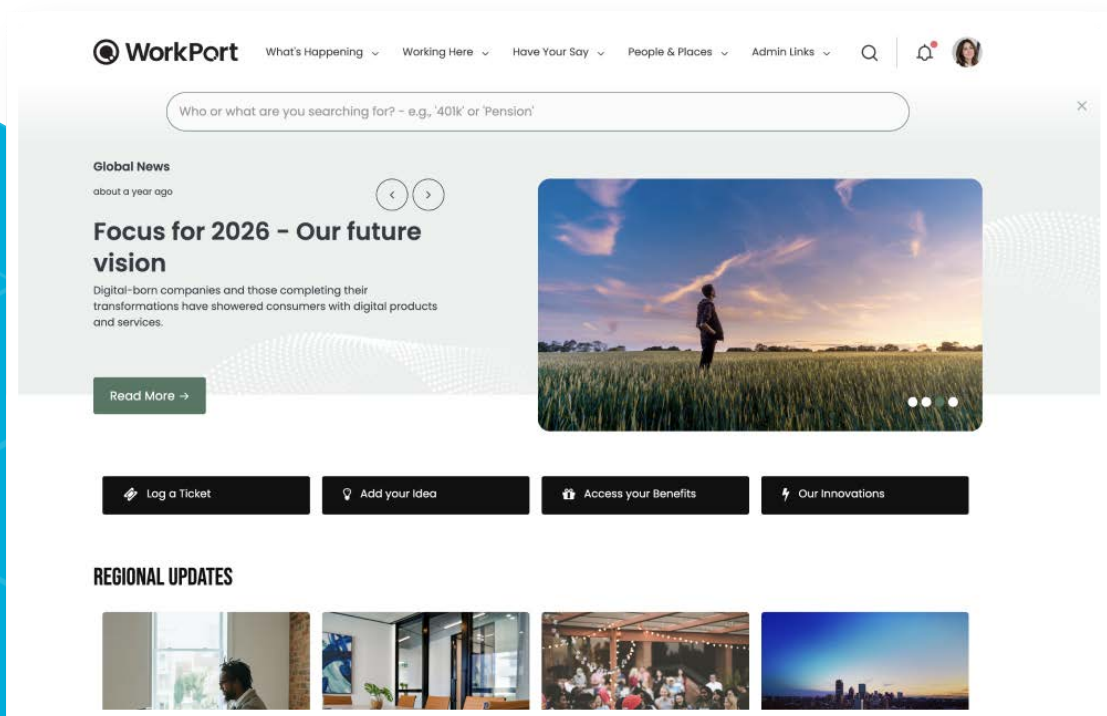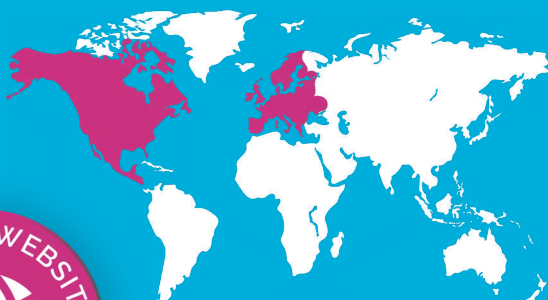
The product in a nutshell

Interact from Interact Software is an attractive, well-established product, packed with powerful features to meet the needs of a diverse workforce.

SUMMARY

Interact owned by Interact Software

Interact is owned by UK-based Interact Software, founded in 1996, and their experience in the intranet market is clear to see in this feature-rich, user-friendly platform. Interact is an attractive standalone intranet product that offers strong functionality across the board. There are powerful news and content creation tools, including a user-friendly 'Block Editor' that will appeal to content authors and internal communicators. Its social and community tools are good and the approach to digital signage is simple, but very effective. The product comes with a fully featured mobile app and multiple options to enrol frontline workers. These features, combined with effective cross-channel content promotion and employee advocacy tools, provide a solution that will appeal to many organisations.

While there are no glaring gaps in functionality, there are a couple of areas where improvements can be made. There is currently no editorial calendar or similar tool in the product to support news editors and internal comms managers, although Interact says that this is on the product roadmap. Integrations with business systems are basic out of the box, but there is a developer framework available to extend the product further. Analytics is strong but can still be improved, for instance by adding sentiment analysis. There is significant innovation in the product though, which shows that Interact is committed to evolving it further. We particularly like the thoughtful usage of generative AI which we found stronger than in other products in this report.

Overall, Interact is a mature product with excellent and varied features that will meet the needs of most businesses. Large and complex organisations with a diverse workforce will be attracted by the advanced features for content creation and audience targeting, including frontline workers. While the product is in the higher price bracket, there are a number of optional modules included in the pricing provided to us. Where features aren't needed, businesses will see a drop in cost.

Pricing

PRICE BAND	
250 users	$ $ $ $
1,000 users	$ $ $ $
5,000 users	$ $ $ $
20,000 users	$ $ $ $

These prices are indicative, offering a comparison of the products featured in this report only. Please contact the vendor for a bespoke quote.

PRICING MODEL

Subscription – price per user per month.

COSTS TYPICALLY

Fairly evenly spread across three years.

DISCOUNTS

Charities and non-profit organisations and multi-year commitments.

PRICE INCLUDES

Services are costed according to the level of support each customer is likely to require. Support is included as part of the subscription cost.

Product type

Ready-to-run, installed in days

Branding opportunities

All branding, complex options

Base systems

Fully standalone	Requires SharePoint	Optionally works with SharePoint	Other

Sectors

Accountancy, banking and finance	Business, consulting and management	Healthcare	Information technology	Retail

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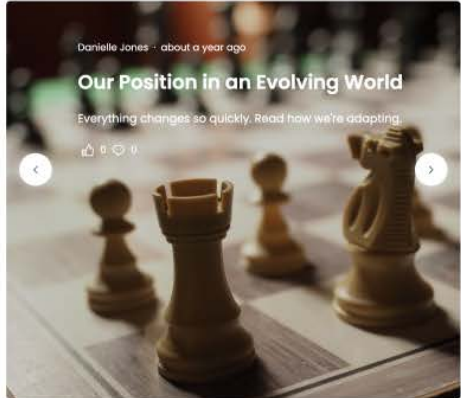
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Our Position in an Evolving World

Everything changes so quickly. Read how we're adapting.

👍 6 💬 0

WHAT'S HAPPENING

YOUR FEED

Mandatory Read   ⟳Show More ✕

⚠ Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at our company
Our employees have joined forces to form a D...

What are you working on?

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2 days ago

Endorse Helen Sharp's **expertise** ⓘ   ✕

✕ Outlook   ✕ Training   ✕ Salesforce   ✕ Word
✕ Negotiation Skills

Can you endorse Helen's expertise?   Endorse

LATEST NEWSLETTERS

Julia Ford
· 8 months ago

Newsletter – Q1 Edition

Welcome to your Monthly email newsletter! Make ME Laugh is a live comedy event to be hosted in our very own office space!

👍 0 💬 0

Communications
· about a year ago

Newsletter – Q4 Edition

Our Q4 quarterly newsletter highlights everything you may have missed.

👍 0 💬 0

COMPANY AND PRODUCT

Company details

Company
Interact Software

ISO 27001 certified
Yes

Data residency
N/A

Company founded
1996

Product launched
2014

Typical client size
Upper midmarket (1,500-10,000 employees) to enterprise (10,000+ employees). Interact Software are focused on 2,500+ employee enterprises, mostly in the USA.

Largest deployment so far
333,000 employees,
100 countries

Customers
Clients include: Domino's, Levi Strauss & Co., Teva Pharmaceuticals, Indeed, Burlington Stores, Baptist Health, New York Life, American Red Cross, Subway, Rivian Automotive

Partner locations
Australia, Germany, USA

Company locations
Manchester, UK (HQ), USA, Poland

Product and technical details

Name of product

Interact

Deployment

Client on-premises	Client private cloud	Microsoft Azure	Amazon Web Services	Vendor-hosted	Microsoft 365 tenant	Other

Client data encrypted

In transit only	In transit and at rest	At rest only

Authentication supported

Entra ID	ADFS	Okta	Open ID	Oauth	G Suite	Other

App deployment

Google Play store	Apple store	MDM	MAM	Other

Accessibility

WCAG 2.1 compliant

Document library sources integrated

Box	Dropbox	Google Drive	SharePoint	OneDrive	Other

Optional integrated enterprise search engines

Coveo	Elastic	IBM	Lucidworks	Microsoft	Mindbreeze	Sinequa	Other*

*Apache Lucene/Elastic

User interface multi-language

Pre-configured	Editable	Right to left script supported	Other*

*Language Packs support over 100 languages.

Content multi-language

Machine translation for publishers	Machine translation for end users	Editable machine translation for publishers	Manual creation for publishers	Right to left script	Other

Set-up and support

Set-up process for new clients
Each implementation is delivered by a multi-disciplinary, in-house team consisting of strategists, project managers, UX designers, trainers, and more. Interact Software's onboarding experts help new customers solve engagement and productivity challenges. Deployment times are typically between six to ten weeks for initial go-live in a phased MVP approach. Those phases are discovery, implementation, and optimisation.

Current version
Version R102

Product updates
Interact releases are deployed on average every 2 weeks.

Product update process
Updates are applied automatically with no downtime. All documentation is provided ahead of each release within the customer community and communicated to the Customer Success Team. In many cases, new functionality is enabled in an "off" state.

Reverse-out options
Interact will provide all data in a human-readable format. All uploaded content, including PDFs and images, will be returned in a simple folder structure along with a CSV export of data contained with the service (including profiles, HMTL pages, and category structures). In addition, Interact will provide an unencrypted SQL backup of the customer database. Customer data will be returned by secure transfer.

Technical support

Email support	Phone support	Chat support	Online portal	24/7 support	Office hours only

User community
Interact offers an online community with 1,000+ active customers and more than 8,000 individual members. It provides information on product updates, forums, idea sharing, feature enhancement discussions and voting, events, engagement / adoption ideas, launch ideas, training documentation, guides, videos, and more. Interact hosts regular online and in-person events and webinars that highlight product features and customers use cases and provide in-person networking opportunities.

Voice of the vendor

Interact Software says: "Interact is a UK-based intranet packaged service provider with a strong presence in the United States, United Kingdom and EMEA. Interact offers robust, enterprise-grade intranet functionality to meet a variety of customer needs.

The nature of work, the places where work is done, and the technologies used to connect people are changing fast. With more dispersed workers spread across global locations, enterprises are experiencing two main problems: a hindered ability to share the right information with the right audience to foster greater independence and productivity, and a difficulty in connecting staff with internal culture and community. These trends lead to declining levels of employee engagement and an increased rate of staff turnover, which is problematic across many business sectors.

One way to fix the weakening of the relationships between employers, managers, and staff – and one which Interact has recognised and incorporated in the past 12 months – is to create a frictionless employee experience (EX) across the entire lifecycle, from recruitment to offboarding.

Among all the platforms available within the digital workplace, an intranet is uniquely positioned to create a smooth and enjoyable EX because it is the platform where organisational knowledge, resources, and contacts live. If new starters need to know how to book a vacation or who to contact about their 401k (pension), it will be on the intranet. Removing the barriers to knowledge makes it easier to get things done quickly and reduces frustration.

Interact's best-of-breed technology primarily serves the needs of internal communications, employee experience, DE&I, human resources, marketing, and IT teams. While Interact has a broad customer base across company sizes and verticals, the sectors with the most benefit are financial services, business services, healthcare, retail, and technology companies with more than 500 employees.

Interact can be customised to help organisations meet their own unique challenges, ultimately driving a better employee experience for both frontline and desk-based workers. An Interact intranet includes personalised experiences (tailoring for different cohorts of employees), supporting employee wellbeing and work-life balance programs, providing data-driven insights (e.g., Pulse survey sentiment), streamlined communications (targeting), increasing productivity (e.g., making content find the right people - policies, etc), and business critical, out-of-the-box integrations with existing systems for productivity gains."

Voice of the customer

What customers appreciate the most about Interact are its ease of use, richness in features, and its flexibility to support the changing needs of organisations. "The product is incredibly user friendly and very intuitive. It's so easy to get new team members onboarded." says one customer, and another adds it's "easy to use for both users and editors alike". When it comes to functionality, one customer is "extremely happy with the overall functionality. There are many features within the platform that enable us to build an intranet that meets the needs of our various employee groups". Another customer puts it concisely: "Flexible, open platform. Tons of functionality." This flexibility helps organisations grow with the product, as this customer explains: "The flexibility it offers has allowed us to create an intranet that's uniquely ours. Over the past four years we've developed the tool to meet our growing needs, and the adaptability of Interact has been a fundamental part of this."

A few improvement suggestions were made, covering different areas of the product. One customer wants "the permission capability to be improved, for instance to permission out the editing of home pages" while another one requests "a mandatory read dashboard - we can run reports but seeing things on a dashboard would make life much easier!". There are a few requests to further improve the 'Block Editor': "Quicker updates to the new editor" and "I would like to see more widgets added to the Block Editor to continue to make the content more dynamic." Another customer has a specific feature in mind: "The only thing that I would love to see is a chatbot that can help a user find content they are looking for to self-serve themselves." Note also that several customers said that they don't have any enhancement suggestions: "We don't have any changes at the moment. All requests are handled efficiently by the vendor."

Customers unanimously praise the experience of working together with Interact: "Excellent working relationship and really supportive, both during implementation and in BAU." The people of Interact are especially praised for their responsiveness and professionalism: "Our account manager goes above and beyond to help our platform be successful." says one customer, and another gives praise across the board: "Everyone from the Customer Success Manager to the Service Desk and the technical support has been very professional and timely."

SCENARIOS & SCORES

Please see the Scenarios below for more detail on each of these.

SCENARIO AND SCORE	KEY BENEFITS	IMPROVEMENTS / CONSIDERATIONS
4.5 **1. User Experience & Visual Appeal**	A range of visually appealing widgets are available. Flexible design and branding options.	Mega menu can be improved to include visually attractive elements.
4.5 **2. Publishing & Communications Management**	'Block Editor' comes with powerful features to create content. Strong support for multi-channel delivery.	No editorial calendar to help editors streamline the publication process.
4 **3. Community & Engagement**	Various options for collaboration in communities, forums, and discussion groups.	No specific functionality targeted at employee wellbeing.
3+ **4. Integrations & Services (Including M365)**	Marketplace of widgets that bring content from integrated systems onto any page.	No integration with Microsoft Viva products, other than a Viva Engage widget.
4 **5. Information Finding & Search**	Well-designed search results page with rich filtering options. Strong people search and profile page.	No spelling correction. No feature to promote 'likely answers'.
4.5 **6. Administrator Experience**	User-friendly design tools to build home page and landing pages. Comprehensive life cycle management of content.	Wide range of tools, meaning a considerable learning curve for admins.
4+ **7. Analytics**	Rich set of site-level and page-level analytics. Reports on search and on content expiry are included.	No reports on broader communication campaigns; no sentiment analysis except on pulse surveys.
4 **8. Mobile & Frontline Support**	Multiple options to enrol frontline workers. Content can be targeted specifically to different mobile audiences through personas.	No built-in services in the app specifically targeted at frontline workers.
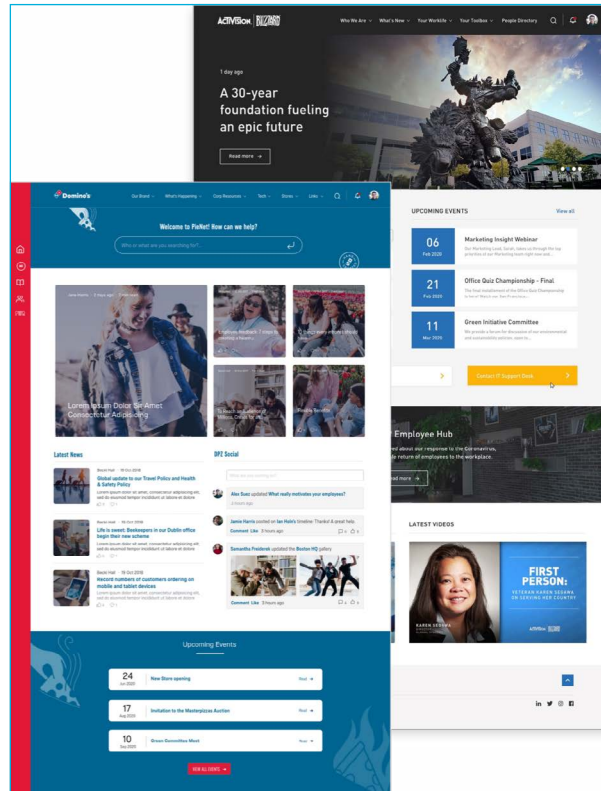
Home page design is flexible and the overall user experience is strong.

Interact is a visually appealing product with an excellent end-user experience. An extensive range of widgets are available to build attractive pages with targeted and personalised content. An example is the 'Your recommendations' button that displays content based on the user's past activity, as well as popular content. The user interface has a few subtle touches that we particularly like, such as a progress indicator icon that shows the reader how far they have scrolled down a particular article or page. Some areas of the product, such as the 'Block Editor' for content creation (see Scenario 2), come with a guided tour feature; it would be useful to extend this guided tour to other parts of the product.

A persistent top menu contains site navigation, which can be a mega- or simple menu and is audience targeted and automatically translated (see Scenario 6). Other menu layout options, such as those that feature an image or promoted content, would be a nice addition. Also within the top menu bar is a user profile icon, which displays a summary of the user's activities or settings. A persistent app bar on the left of the screen gives access to practical tools and integrated applications.

Notifications are particularly well handled within Interact. Users will find all notifications under a bell icon in the top menu, including those coming from integrated third-party systems such as Workday and SAP Concur. New notifications are coloured, with mandatory reads highlighted in red, and they show a thumbnail image relating to the activity. Users can filter notifications based on type and origin and mark selected items as read; users have detailed control over the type of notifications they want to receive in a configuration screen.

Branding options are flexible and varied, making it possible to create attractive sites. There are some useful features to meet the needs of organisations that consist of multiple sub-brands. Within a single instance of Interact it's possible to set up multiple sub-companies and assign a different branding theme to each. Separate home pages for each brand can be created, or audience targeting used within a single home page to display different content and / or navigation for each business.

Various attractive widgets are available to build visually appealing pages.

Publishers can promote their content across a variety of channels, including via email.

Powerful features are available to content creators, making this scenario an area of strength for Interact. Publishers create news and other content either from the relevant intranet site, or from a central 'Manage Pages' dashboard. This brings them into a 'Block Editor' tool where publishers drop blocks of content onto a page, then drag to reorder. Templates are available to start from, and there is a simple tour for new publishers so they can familiarise themselves with the extensive features. Overall, we found the 'Block Editor' publishing experience rich in functionality and yet intuitive to use, with several powerful features that deserve to be highlighted.

There is a lightweight but useful digital asset manager, allowing images and video to be categorised, searched, and manipulated. Blocks on a page can be grouped together in 'snippets' and then saved; future articles can reuse snippets, which will save content creators time and effort. There is an extensive preview, allowing authors to check how the content will look on various devices and channels, including when sent as an email. There is also an option to generate a temporary link to the draft content, so that people with no authoring role in Interact can view the page and provide comments or approve.
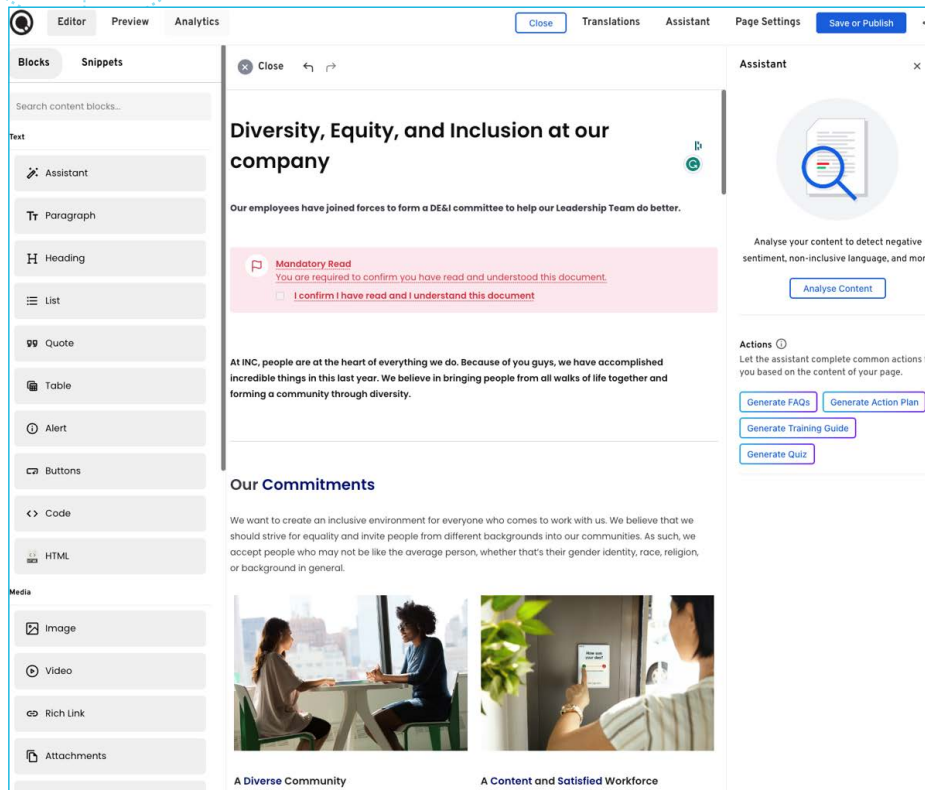
Interact's 'Block Editor' makes it easy to build attractive layouts by dragging and dropping blocks and snippets from the left-hand column into the page.
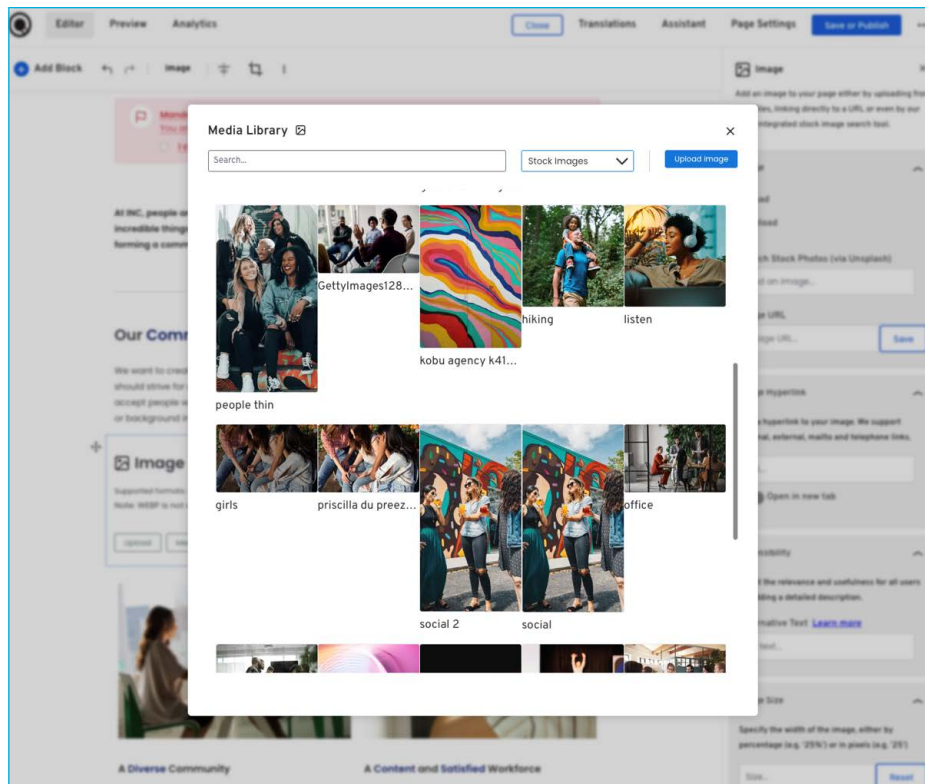
Images from an integrated media library are easily searched and inserted into a news article or content page.

Several AI-powered features have been added to the product during 2023 and are among the most advanced we've seen. Interact integrates with Microsoft's Azure OpenAI service to embed a range of helpful 'assistants' into the content creation process. ChatGPT is used to review and improve existing text or to create new content, such as a summary of a news article. The digital asset manager integrates with DALL-E to generate images according to a predefined style. We particularly like the powerful features to automatically create an FAQ, a training guide, or a quiz based on the content on a page. We can see how this will be a big time-saver for content owners, especially if the feature were extended to cover multiple pages and documents within a library. There are also features to auto-suggest keywords and other metadata for a page, and to detect negative sentiment or non-inclusive language.

Target audiences can be brought across from integrated systems, such as Entra ID, or are created through a model of dynamic 'Personas'. These are built by applying Boolean logic to rules based on employee profile information such as department, location, and hire date. Targeting based on geofencing is also supported, making it possible to restrict access to people physically present on a particular site. Personas will determine to whom content is delivered; the mechanism is fine-grained and can be applied at the level of blocks within an article too.
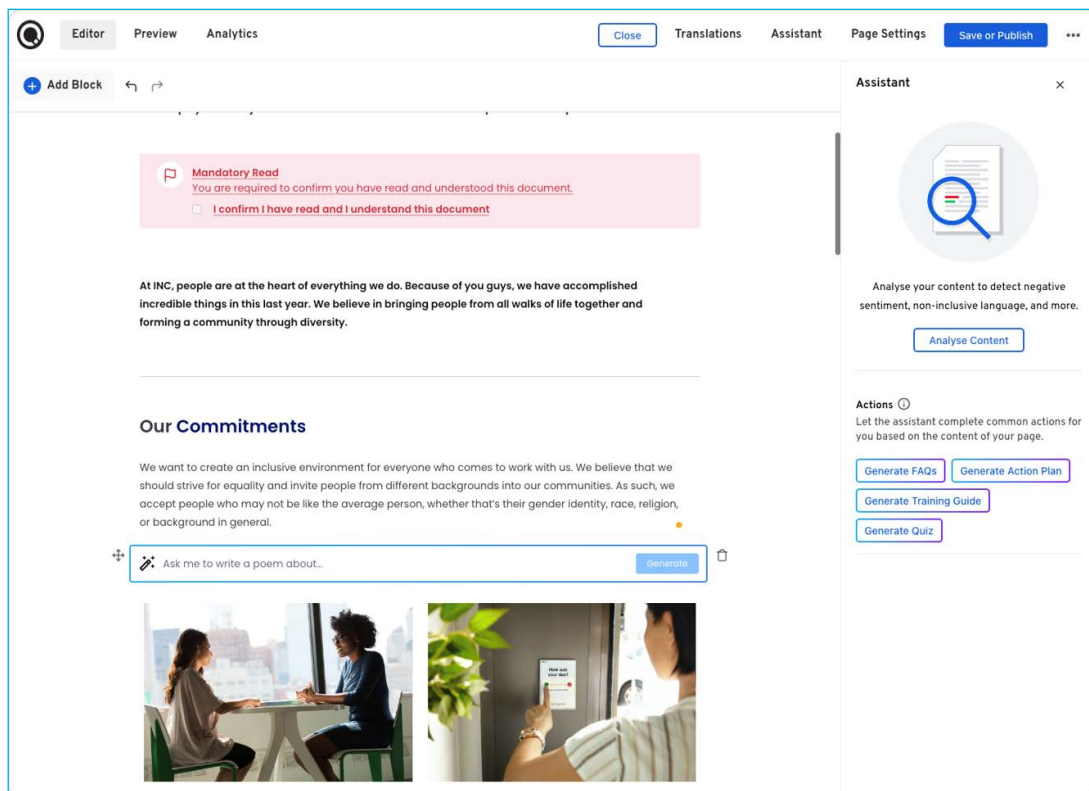
Generative AI is used to generate an FAQ, a training guide, or a quiz from the content of the page.

There is an option for content authors to set up a promotion campaign about a new or updated policy document, for example. Notification messages are sent to people, potentially across multiple channels, to alert them to the newly available content, as shown in the screenshot at the start of the Scenario. Additionally, users can subscribe to 'topics', which are keywords associated with the content, so it's possible to create a personalised feed.

As part of the content creation process, publication dates and times are set, along with expiry and review dates. Authors can post on behalf of someone else, such as a senior manager. Approval workflows are available, including for the approval of translated versions of an article (see Scenario 6). There is a comprehensive 'Manage pages' dashboard to manage the content life cycle, but there is currently no calendar or similar tool to help communicators with their editorial planning; Interact says that this is on the roadmap.

Crisis and urgent communications are handled well through broadcast messages. These are short, simple messages created outside of the Block Editor experience but can be targeted at the same audiences. Broadcasts are pushed out as a banner or a blocking notification window within Interact, via email, or via SMS. They can include a link to a page with more information, and there is a tracking feature to ask employees to acknowledge the message.

Publishers can decide whether to distribute content outside of the intranet, such as into email inboxes, in MS Teams or Slack channels, or SMS; sharing via WhatsApp is on the roadmap. A digital signage module enables admins to set up different 'channels', for instance 'UK warehouse', and allows content creators to push appropriately curated and formatted content to these channels (see Scenario 6 for more). Finally, an employee advocacy feature has recently been integrated into the product, with extensive reports to track most shared articles, shares and click-throughs by channel, and strongest advocates by department and location.

Employees can easily share approved content such as job openings onto their social media channels.
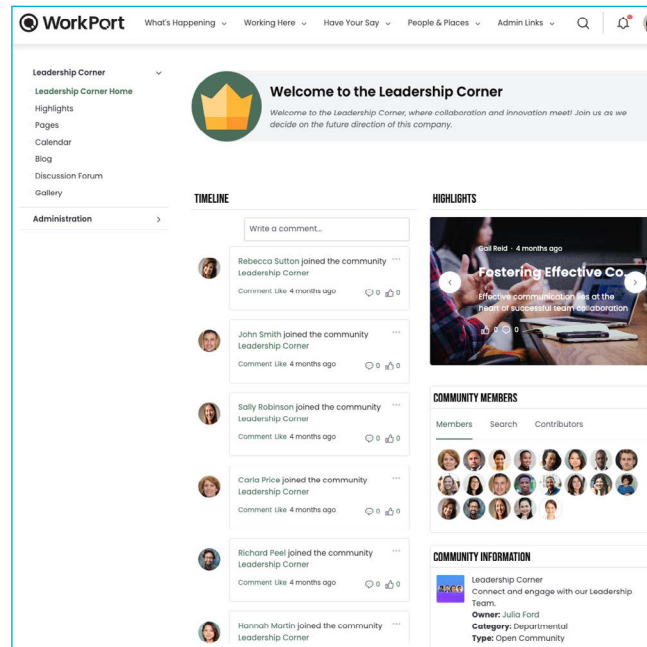
Example of a community landing page within Interact,
showing the navigation, timeline, and additional widgets.

Interact offers a strong set of built-in community and engagement features. Collaboration takes place in Communities which are either open, private (approval needed), or hidden (invitation only). These contain documents, calendars, and a feed specific for the Community. Discussions and social interactions are also supported through forums, where users can post a discussion topic, ask a question, or share an idea. Blogging is another way to share ideas, best practices, or opinions.

During 2023 Interact acquired Sideways6 and are in the process of integrating its idea management features, so it currently works well but functionality is spread over both products. Ideation campaigns are set up in Sideways6 and surfaced in Interact, where employees can contribute their ideas and like, comment and upvote others. The best ideas are progressed through the tool for senior leaders to select for taking forward.

Social reactions are available throughout the product. Users can comment on (text only but including emojis) and share content. We would like to see the range of reactions expanded beyond 'like', in line with today's social media platforms. Interactions are managed via a comprehensive moderation dashboard with extensive filters and an option to hook up to external security management tools, such as Exabeam, to scan for inappropriate content.

There are several options for requesting and giving feedback. Quick polls are easily added to widgets or pages, and more in-depth pulse surveys can be created. The product includes a rich survey building tool to set up the questions, manage the target audience, and analyse the results.

We like the gamification features within Interact: users have a configurable number of points to give colleagues as recognition, and these points can be set up to match real value so that employees may redeem against prizes. Badges visualise the type of recognition people have received and are shown on profile pages.

Overall, there is significant breadth and depth in the features on offer. There is no dedicated functionality targeted at onboarding or wellbeing, but the product's features can be combined to support various use cases. For instance, a pulse survey, in combination with a customised home page, can be used to welcome new starters and ask them about their onboarding experience.
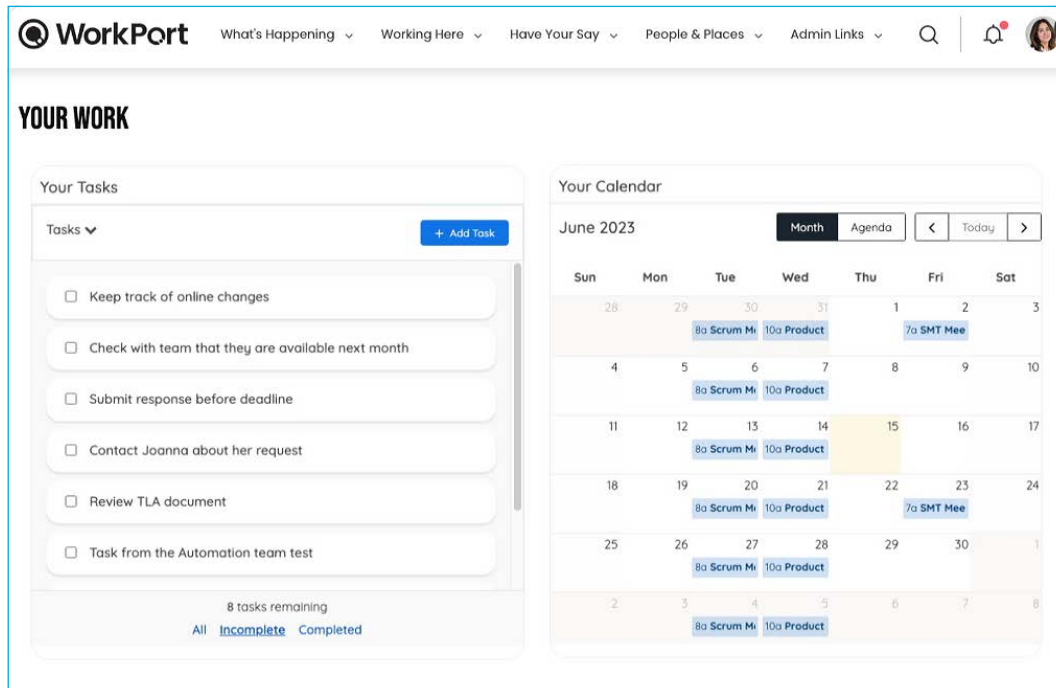
Integrations are primarily handled via widgets, such as a list of tasks or a calendar.

Interact's primary approach to integration is to pull content from various applications into widgets, where users interact with the content. These widgets are grouped into a marketplace and are easily accessible for publishers to add to any page. Simple examples include a Google Calendar or a task list from Outlook, but there are also integrations available with business applications such as ServiceNow or Salesforce. In the ServiceNow widget, users can create tickets and view the latest status of any that have been submitted, although clicking on the case will take a user out of the intranet. The Salesforce widget allows a view-only access to leads, accounts, and campaigns. Links to key systems can be added to the persistent left-hand menu, and notifications from systems, such as Concur and Workday, feed into intranet notifications too. Interact also offers the opportunity for developers to create custom integrations through a documented API and a developer support site, which looks comprehensive although we haven't tested it.

Interact offers a good range and depth of Microsoft integrations, particularly for an independent intranet that doesn't have SharePoint in its foundations. SharePoint libraries and OneDrive folders can be synchronised with Interact, making their content available for rendering within an Interact page. When a user views a file from SharePoint they see a document embedded in a page, with all relevant Interact page features included. SharePoint news, however, cannot be brought across into Interact, but SharePoint and OneDrive content can be federated into the search results (see in Scenario 5).

Integration with MS Teams is handled well. There is a widget to display a feed of latest activities in channels, and another that shows a list of available teams. Teams chats can be started from people profile fields, and links to intranet content posted into channels, with reporting on click-throughs available (see Scenario 7). Also, a complete Interact intranet can be added as an app into Teams. Notifications, however, are not passed from Teams to Interact or vice versa, so in this setup employees will have to check two sets of notifications, which is not ideal. More widgets are available to cover other Microsoft products, such as a PowerBI and a Viva Engage widget. Other products in the Viva suite are not integrated.
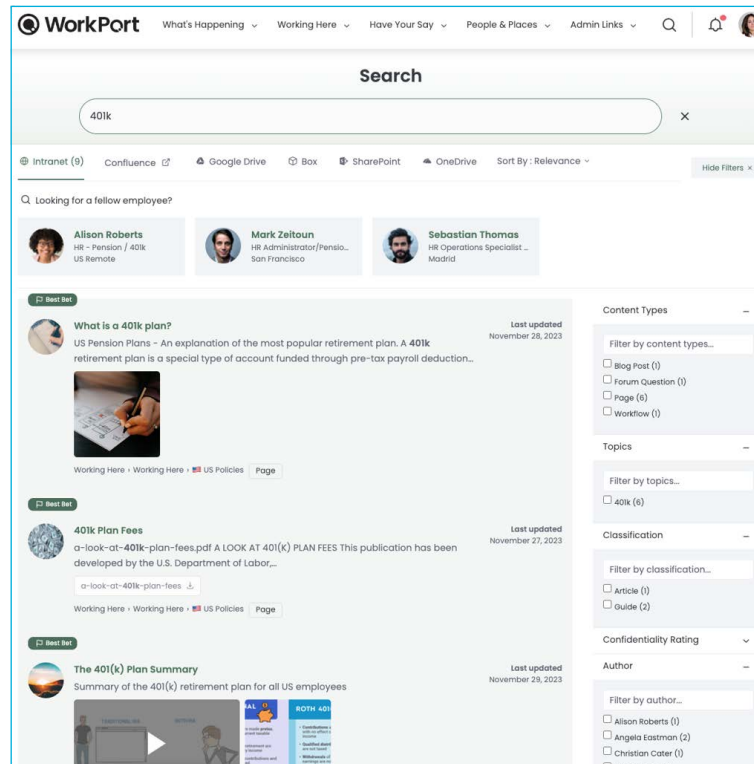
Search results can be enhanced by adding images, video, or a document to the search results.

Like in other areas of the platform, Interact's search is packed with features and works well overall. There is a single type-ahead search box across the whole site. All content is indexed, including content of attached documents and PDFs, and results are displayed with thumbnails on an attractive search results page. There is no search assistance, such as spelling correction, which would be a nice addition to make the experience even more user-friendly. Interact says that Natural Language Processing for search is on their roadmap and will address this.

Search results can be filtered, and filters will only appear where there are relevant results. Filters are available for a range of metadata such as author, topic, and classification, and have recently been extended with additional people profile fields to show first aiders, fire marshals or any other field that captures a specific qualification. We particularly like the feature whereby content creators can mark images, video, or a document on their page to be available within the search results. They appear just under the main title on the search results page, and when clicked, bring the user directly to the image or video within the page.

'Best bets' are Interact's version of promoted results, which highlight relevant content when a search is performed. These are simple to maintain, even across multiple languages. There are no 'likely answers', which we think is a gap that Interact should address, possibly by extending its AI integration, to make the search experience top-notch. A nice feature is the option to include page summaries that help people tell the difference between similarly titled content in search results. We like that the Block Editor (see Scenario 2) automatically generates these page summaries for publishers who are unsure what to write. Users can provide feedback when they don't find what they are looking for, and there is also a useful possibility for users to suggest keywords for a particular page; this will help their colleagues find the page more easily in the future.

Users can provide feedback if the search returns no results.

Users may suggest keywords to be added to a particular content page,
improving its ranking within the search results.

The federated search capability within Interact supports a range of content sources including Box, OneDrive, Google Drive and Confluence. Results are presented in source tabs, so users need to know under which tab to go and look. Interact says there is no 'all' tab as metadata from integrated solutions varies so filters would be inconsistent and confusing for end users. The product also comes with a documented search API that allows further integration with additional systems if needed.

The people directory offers rich profiles and extensive search capabilities. Users can find colleagues either through the main search, or via a dedicated search within the people directory. Search results are presented in an attractive layout, with the option to expand a person's profile into a card. There aren't any variant suggestions (Jon / John), but users can be searched by and filtered based on information provided in their profile. Profiles are extensive and they can be fed with information coming from various systems of record such as an LMS system to include training and certificates. Profile pages are presented in an attractive layout and show someone's personal pronouns and badges among other information. There is also a basic org chart that expands to show managers and direct reports, but a full view across multiple levels is not included.

People search presents results in an attractive layout, with an option to open a card view.

Example of a detailed profile page, including badges and personal pronouns.

For each channel, a global admin will configure the feed of content that is displayed on the assigned devices.

Site-wide management in Interact is built around a model of roles and permissions that is flexible enough to meet the needs of large and complex organisations. At the top level, one or more global admins have full control over the back-end, where they will manage a wide range of platform settings within the 'Application settings' area. Configuration options are logically grouped together and presented through a simple card-based user interface. Each card has an editable short description of what to expect in this area.

Interact is a feature-rich product and the options to configure and fine-tune the platform are vast, so there will be a learning curve for admins to fully master the platform. We like that it's possible to add often-used admin tools into the top menu and that admin functions are returned in the search results; this will make life of a global admin somewhat easier. Interact says that all settings are given sensible defaults, and that they will assist customers who have specific requirements to adapt some of the features to their needs.

An example of what can be managed by global admins is the setup for digital signage. Physical devices such as TV screens must be assigned to a 'channel' in Interact, such as 'UK warehouse' or 'Reception Areas USA' as in the screenshot. Admins will then configure which content will be fed into the respective channels. Channels can surface content that's already on the intranet, or publishers may create new content specifically for the digital signage channel. A useful feature is that channels are cached, so if a TV screen loses internet connectivity it still displays something rather than just a blank screen.

Interact has a decentralised management and publishing model, meaning that global admins can delegate responsibility for sites and communities to local admins, who will manage the editing and publishing permissions for their areas. Local admins decide who will have standard user access, who will be an author, and who will be an 'approved author', the latter able to create and publish content themselves and approve content created by regular authors. There are no workflow processes to request a new site or a new community - we believe this would be a useful addition.

Designing the home page and landing pages is straightforward and intuitive. Pages are divided into horizontal zones, and each zone contains one or more widgets that can easily be dragged and dropped. Some zones can be 'restricted', meaning that they are audience targeted and only visible by a particular group or persona. This makes it possible to place country-specific content on a common page, or to add a content block with information only for managers. Alternatively, Interact also supports different home pages for different sub-companies, each with their own branding applied (see also Scenario 1). A wide range of highly configurable widgets are available to create engaging pages.

Behind the scenes home pages are split into configurable and targeted zones, each containing one or more widgets.

Widgets are highly configurable, including their appearance in web view and on mobile.

Configuration options are logically grouped together and presented in a card-based layout.

The content life cycle is managed through publication, expiry, and review dates. Publishers find all content they have permissions for via their profile button in the top navigation bar, which brings them to a comprehensive 'Manage Pages' overview. Content pages are shown as a list, and for each item there is information available such as author, publication date and status. The small blue 'Details' icon (see screenshot) gives access to further information, such as when the page was last edited and the version number. There is a filter to show inactive content, and anything due to expire also generates notifications to authors and displays a warning on the associated page. Helpfully, editors can bulk edit content via this table, such as substituting inactive authors or changing review dates. Page level analytics are also available from this overview page; see Scenario 7 for more.

Users can manually choose their preferred language, or it will be pulled from profile data, which will update the user interface and display content appropriately. All elements of the product's user interface are available in over one hundred supported languages, and items in the top navigation menu are automatically translated using Azure translation services. During the content creation process, authors may add pages in different languages and use Azure translation services to create a draft translation, which can then be edited and approved by someone who speaks the language. Forum posts and comments are machine translatable on-the-fly.

The 'Manage Pages' screen gives an overview of all content that an author has permissions for.
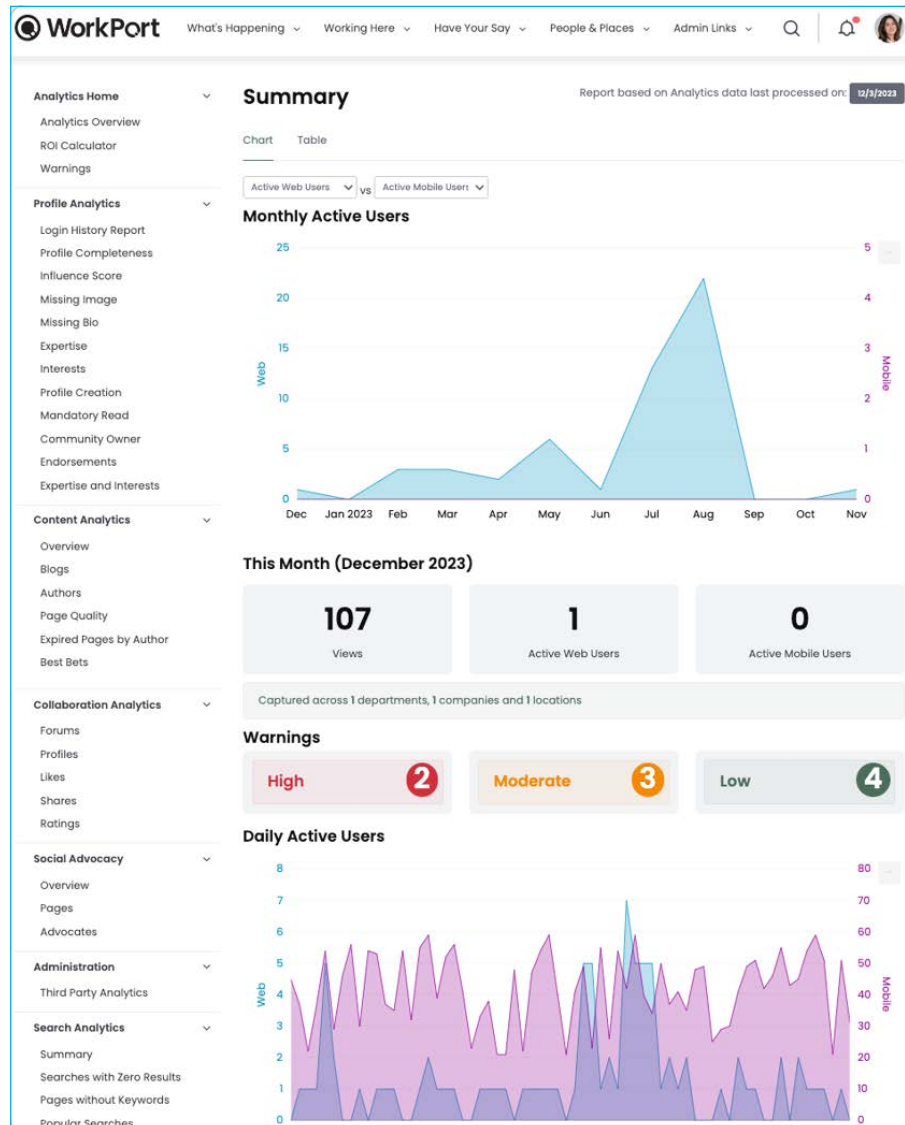
The analytics summary page gives global admins an overview of active users and warnings about content quality.

Interact comes with a range of adoption and content analytics reports that allow admins to measure the effectiveness of their site. A set of predefined reports cover information about general site usage, content performance, profile information, content quality and much more. The analytics are available as tables and charts, and all data is exportable. A nice feature is the possibility to compare dimensions on a single chart, for example a chart with daily views could be overlaid with the number of 'likes' on content across the site. A useful addition would be to have a similar feature for time ranges, for instance to directly compare this month's performance to last month.

At the global site level, the site analytics summary page is a good starting point for a global admin or intranet owner. It includes an overview of monthly and daily active users, as well as various content warnings about quality of the content and expired pages.

Another useful report is the 'login history report', which contains rich data about users connecting to the platform, and offers handy filtering options, for instance to search for a particular user or to drill down by location. There are also a number of reports around social advocacy, which Interact has introduced since our last review. These show the number of shares over time, which content has been shared most often, and on which social networks. There is also an overview of the biggest advocates across the organisation.

Content owners and internal comms managers will be mostly interested in Interact's content-level analytics reports. Analytics about a single page are available to anyone who has content authoring rights on that page. There is a wealth of information available about how and when people have accessed the content. We particularly like the insights that the report brings about the path that users have followed to arrive at the page. For instance, the report will show how many people have navigated to the page from within Interact, which search terms have been used, or from which external source they have arrived, such as from MS Teams, from an email, or by scanning a QR code on a digital signage screen.

Reports are available to show how often content has been shared by employees on external social media.
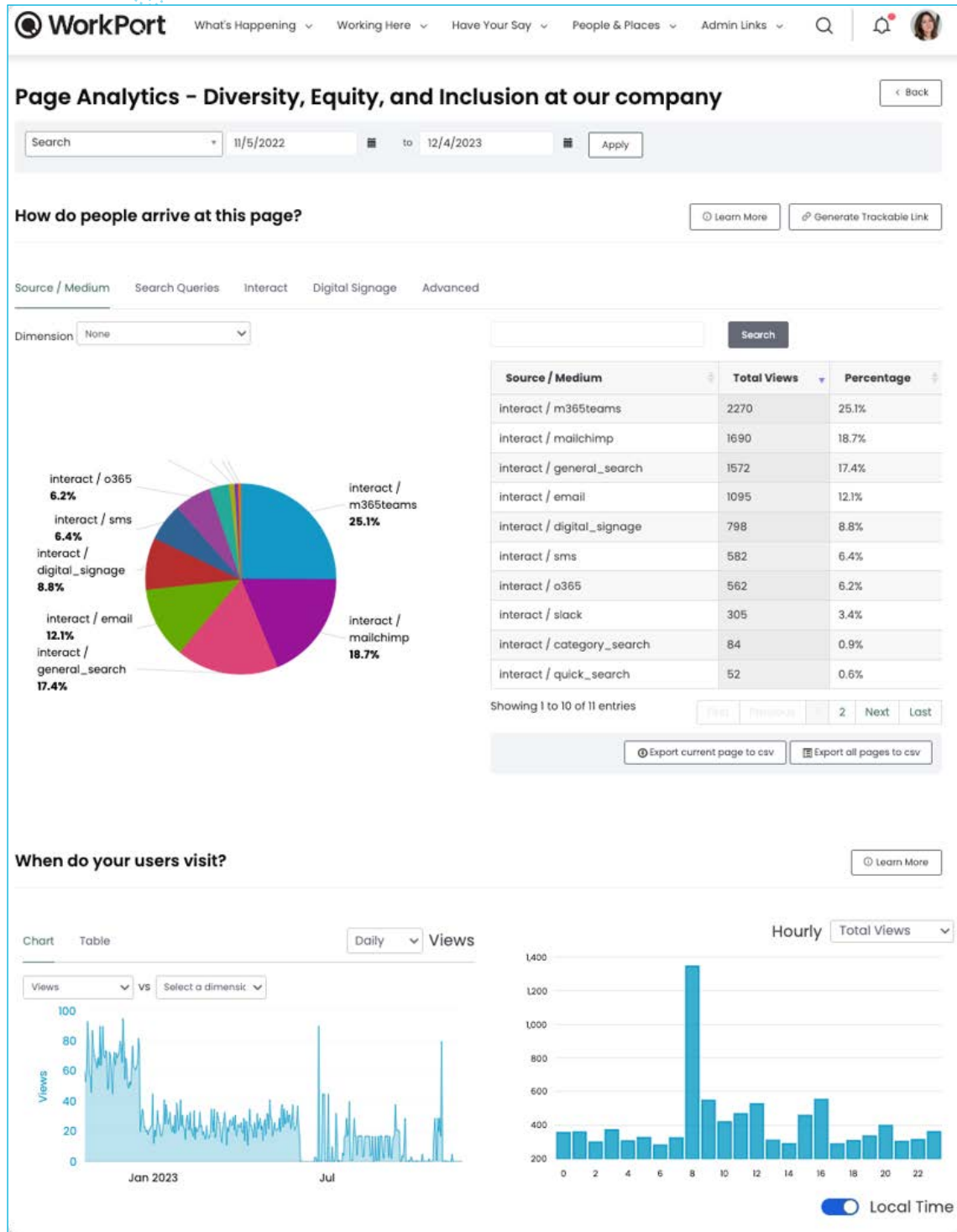
The page analytics report gives valuable insights into how employees have arrived at a particular page.

At the level of a departmental site or area such as 'all company news', content analytics are available to analyse which pages are the most popular over time, and there are filters to drill down by sub-company, department, or location. This is useful for internal comms professionals to analyse the success of their news stories, but we'd like to see additional features such as analytics surrounding campaigns (topics made up of multiple news articles for example).

For customers who want to go beyond the predefined reports included in the base product, Interact also offers an Advanced Analytics option. Customers are given access to a database in AWS, from where they can take data into the Business Intelligence tool of their choice, such as Power BI or Tableau, to create custom reports. Included in the service is a library of pre-configured report options for customers to start from. This approach is useful for large organisations with in-house business intelligence experts that prefer to build dashboards themselves, rather than rely on the fixed reports built into Interact. This is a powerful option but requires a certain level of technical knowledge and the help of BI experts to put in place; additionally, we believe that most customers will be happy to use the standard Intranet reports.

Mandatory reads can be applied to any page and reporting is available, although some customers are asking for better dashboards in the 'Voice of the Customer' section. A report shows who has read or not read a particular page, with the option to send email reminders, although triggering reminders to other channel types would be a nice addition.

Search analytics are strong; they include data on popular search terms, pages without keywords, best bet performance, and searches with zero results. User-reported 'failure to find' results (see Scenario 5) and suggested keywords for a page are also available here for an admin to review.

The presentation of analytics is mostly consistent, with site-wide reports accessible via admin screens and page-level data via the page itself. However, pulse survey results are returned separately and include analytics such as sentiment analysis which isn't available for other intranet analytics. Overall, Interact's analytics work well but there is opportunity to evolve them yet further.

A simple list is available with an overview of who has read or not read a particular page.
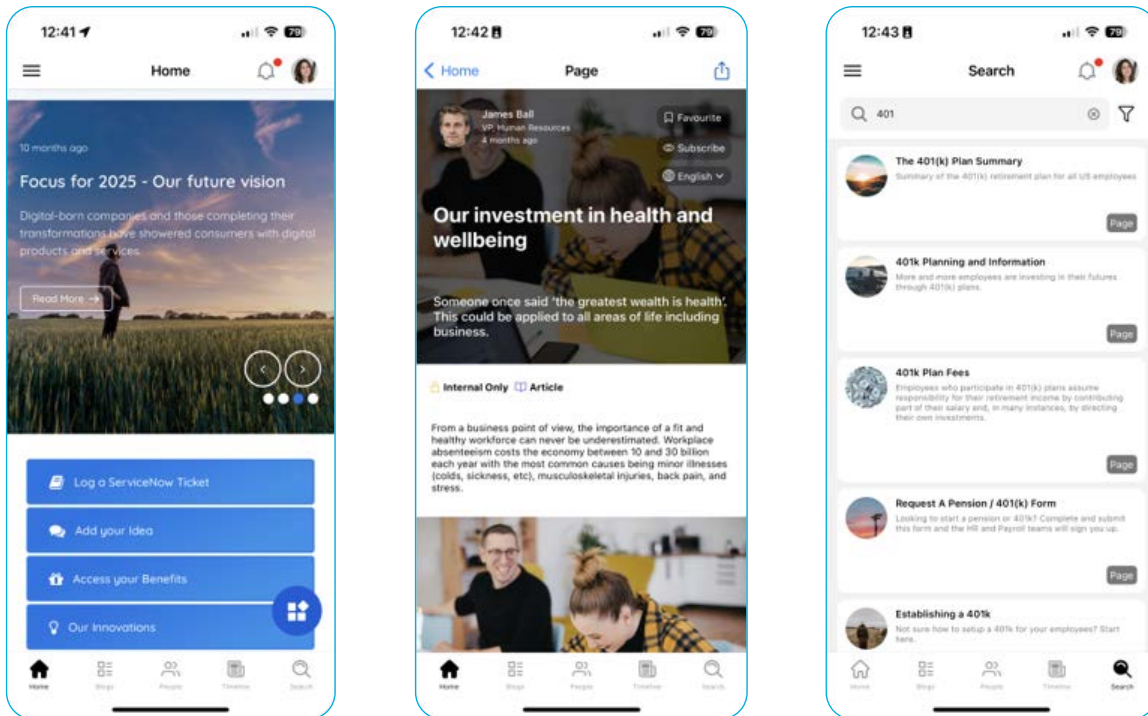
The home page, a news article, and the search results page via the app.

Interact's standard features support mobile users and frontline workers well, and the overall experience is pleasantly contemporary. In addition to the responsive web version, a native mobile app is available for iOS and Android. A generic version of the app called 'my intranet by Interact' is available via the public app stores, while a branded app is available at extra cost (but included in the price for this report) which can be deployed through MDM and MAM. Different options exist to enrol mobile users, such as through QR codes on digital signage. We especially like the 'magic links' that are sent out via email or SMS and contain a one-time token to get into the app without initial password; this is a clever way to overcome a potential barrier to enrolment.

Once inside, the experience in the app is intuitive and consistent with the desktop. The primary navigation at the bottom has a 'home' icon that can be replaced by the company logo. Other icons give access to blogs, people directory, timeline, and search. They can be reordered or removed, for instance if blogs are not used, but they cannot be swapped for others nor audience targeted. Push notifications, broadcasts (see Scenario 2), and content Personas (so frontline workers will see suitable content) all work well.

There are no built-in services in the app that are specifically targeted at frontline workers, other than standard mobile features such as push notifications and camera access. Interact says that their customers typically use third-party solutions for functionality such as shift management. Some integrations don't work, such as the ServiceNow widgets, as they have been designed for a web interface, although notifications will still pull through to the bell icon, which is useful. Content pages and reference material display well though in the app, which is useful for staff needing mobile access to manuals and procedures.

Administration of the app is straightforward, as much of the settings are inherited from the web version of the product. Zones and widgets on a page can be audience or device targeted, so mobile users can see a simplified experience. Admins will mainly have to consider how to setup the target Personas, and decide which content is relevant for their mobile audiences.

THINGS TO BEAR IN MIND

Interact has been in the intranet marketplace for a long time, and this shows in the quality and range of features in the product. While there are no glaring gaps in functionality, we did come across areas where further improvements are desirable, and this was also echoed by customers in the 'Voice of the Customer' section.

The 'Block Editor' to create news articles works well, but customers are asking for quicker updates and more dynamic widgets. News editors and internal communicators also miss functionality to create and track campaigns consisting of multiple news stories, or to manage news publishing through an editorial calendar, although Interact says that the latter is on the product roadmap. Other areas where functionality can be improved include analytics and richer commenting and liking. We also noted that in some product areas, such as the Communities, the user interface looks slightly dated compared to contemporary solutions like Viva Engage.

There is significant innovation in the product though, such as the generative AI features and the audience targeting based on geofencing, which will bring value especially to larger organisations. We believe that Interact will have to carefully balance its internal efforts and resources between bringing new innovative features to market, while still enhancing existing functionality.

Inevitably for a feature-rich product like Interact, there is some complexity in managing the platform in the back end. While the admin interface is less attractive than the user experience in the front-end, Interact has made some efforts to structure content logically and to guide admins in the right direction. Still, the back end is vast and detailed, and will require a significant effort from a global admin to master. This will be an especially important consideration for smaller organisations.

Finally, note that Interact is among the more expensive products in this report, for all sizes of organisations. Buyers will get a lot of functionality in return though, and there are a number of optional modules included in the pricing provided to us. Where certain features aren't needed, such as the digital signage solution or the branded mobile app, businesses will see a drop in cost.

Why choose this product

Interact is a fully featured product, where the years of experience from the vendor are evident. Business of all sizes will find plenty of functionality to meet their needs, but large and complex organisations will especially appreciate the advanced features for content creation and the flexible options for targeting a variety of audiences, including frontline workers. As a standalone intranet product, it does not depend on SharePoint or M365 but integrates well with it. Overall, we think it is a strong intranet product with rich functionality across the board, and well worth further exploration.

Vendor roadmap
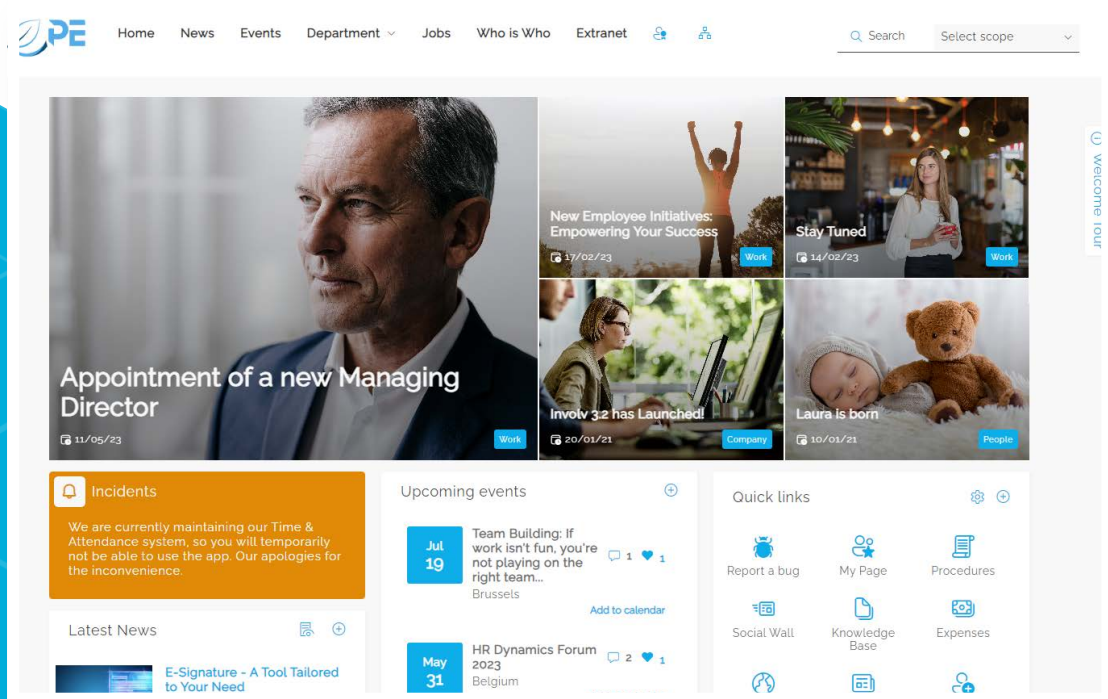
No roadmap has been supplied by Interact Software.

involv
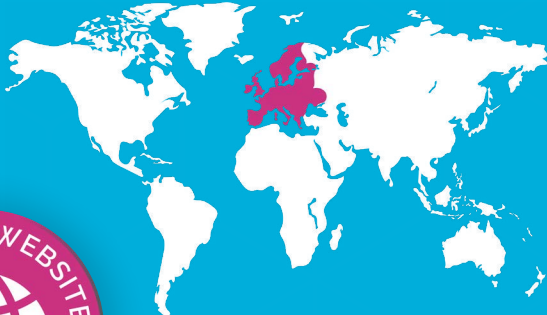## BUILT ON MICROSOFT 365

FULLY STANDALONE

REQUIRES SHAREPOINT

OPTIONALLY WORKS WITH SHAREPOINT

FRONTLINE FOCUS

Typical deployment:

100 - 20,000+ employees

Company locations:

The product in a nutshell

Involv brings powerful publishing and communication capabilities with easy-to-use tools that will engage employees.

VISIT THE WEBSITE

SUMMARY

Involv Intranet owned by Cognit BV

Involv is owned by Cognit BV, an experienced Microsoft and SharePoint consultancy which was founded in 2007 and is based in Brussels, Belgium. The product was launched in 2017 and is a very capable intranet that runs on SharePoint. Cognit has a lot of Microsoft and SharePoint industry experience and has used this to good effect to build on the core capabilities of the Microsoft 365 suite.

Content publishing and communications is a key strength of the product. Content editors are supported with an improved workflow that will speed up the creation and publishing of news articles, such as through the integration of templates, metadata and promotion options, including multi-channel distribution and digital signage. Publishing and administration tools are intuitive, easy to use and supported with contextual help. Search is an impressive component that powers many of the products' innovative features, along with tight integration with Microsoft 365. There is also a capable mobile app that includes many of the desktop elements.

Features for communities and engagement rely on standard Microsoft tools, and are somewhat limited on the mobile app, leaving the social experience a little inconsistent overall. Cognit has extensive examples of integrations with third-party enterprise applications, but few are bundled with the product and some big names such as Workday and Salesforce are missing from the list.

Overall, Involv offers an attractive SharePoint-based intranet-in-a-box that will appeal to organisations looking for an easy-to-use product from a vendor that customers love working with. The price point is very competitive as well, particularly for medium to enterprise size organisations.

Pricing

PRICE BAND	
250 users	$ $ $ $
1,000 users	$ $ $ $
5,000 users	$ $ $ $
20,000 users	$ $ $ $

These prices are indicative, offering a comparison of the products featured in this report only. Please contact the vendor for a bespoke quote.

PRICING MODEL

Subscription – price band based on number of users. One-off payment and ongoing maintenance fee.

COSTS TYPICALLY

Fairly evenly spread across three years.

DISCOUNTS

Charities and non-profit organisations, schools and educational institutes and multi-year commitments.

PRICE INCLUDES

Customer Success services, maintenance, support, branding, updates & upgrades, hosting and access to community.

Product type

Ready-to-run, installed in days

Branding opportunities

All branding, complex options

Base systems

Fully standalone	Requires SharePoint	Optionally works with SharePoint	Other

Sectors

Accountancy, banking and finance	Charity and voluntary work	Healthcare	Law, law enforcement and security	Public services, government and administration

You may also be interested in...

FRESH   LiveTiles   omnia

Welcome Tour

Appointment of a new Managing Director
11/05/23 — Work

New Employee Initiatives: Empowering Your Success
17/02/23 — Work

Stay Tuned
14/02/23 — Work

Involv 3.2 has Launched!
20/01/21 — Company

Laura is born
10/01/21 — People

Incidents
We are currently maintaining our Time & Attendance system, so you will temporarily not be able to use the app. Our apologies for the inconvenience.

Upcoming events

Jul 19 — Team Building: If work isn't fun, you're not playing on the right team...
Brussels
💬 1 ❤️ 1
Add to calendar

May 31 — HR Dynamics Forum 2023
Belgium
💬 2 ❤️ 1
Add to calendar

Jan 26 — Afterwork Drink
Office
💬 1 ❤️ 1
Add to calendar

Dec 22 — Christmas drinks
Office
💬 1 ❤️ 1
Add to calendar

Show more

Quick links
- Report a bug
- My Page
- Procedures
- Social Wall
- Knowledge Base
- Expenses
- New Default Link
- Newsletter
- Officient
- Leave Request
- Involv website
- BPost

Must-reads!
Onboarding guidelines ⟩
Updated wfh policy ⟩

Latest News

E-Signature - A Tool Tailored to Your Need
Work
The HR team is excited to introduce a powerful new tool designed specifically to enhance the way our...
❤️ 21/09/23

Save the Date: Employees' Annual Innovation Summit
Culture
We're all about innovation and collaboration. It's what fuels our success and sets us apart in the t...
❤️ 21/09/23

Company Expands Global Presence with New Office in the UK
Work
We are excited to announce a significant milestone in our global expansion journey—we are opening a ...
❤️ 11/05/23

Homework: new regulations
Work | Culture
Many jobs cannot be done from home, for example in production, logistics or trade. In other areas, t...
💬 6 ❤️ 2 04/02/23

Show more

Birthdays | Recent Hires

30 June — Jane Wood
19 January — Tim Bogemans

Jobs
IT — Senior Developer
HR — Business HR Partner
Show more

FAQ
? Welcome to the team!
? Change Personal Info
? How many holidays am I entitled to?
? Campagne Become
? R21.3 - Changes tools & procedures
Show more

Conversations
View all

Share thoughts, ideas, or updates
Discussion | Question | Praise | Poll

All conversations ⌄ | Recent posts ⌄

Announcement
Ken Bellemans 5m ago
Hey, everyone! Happy Thursday! Who's ready for some padel action today?

👍 Like 💬 Comment ⤴ Share
Be the first to like this

Jane Wood 5m ago Collapse
Me, me, me! I've been looking forward to this all week.

Jessica Keen 4m ago
Hi, everyone! Excited to give this a shot.

Ken Bellemans 4m ago
Welcome, Mark! You're in for a treat.

Ken Bellemans 4m ago
Let's hit the courts, everyone. Remember, it's all about enjoying the game and each other's company. Who's serving first?

Jane Wood Just now
Yaaaaaaaaaay!!!!!!!

Write a reply

Ken Bellemans Just now
Who's up for some post-game refreshments and a little chat at the clubhouse?

Write a comment

Learning & development
Go to HERO
Check our L&D resources

Contact us!
📄 HR
IT Helpdesk
EHS

We ❤️ our workplace

COMPANY AND PRODUCT

Company details

Company
Cognit BV

ISO 27001 certified
No

Data residency
N/A

Company founded
2007

Product launched
2017

Typical client size
100 - 20,000+ employees

Largest deployment so far
20,000 employees
and 15 countries

Customers
Clients include: NatureScot,
Houthalen, Kingswood School, Lecot

Partner locations
UK, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, USA,
India, France, The Netherlands

Company locations
Brussels, Belgium (HQ), UK

Product and technical details

Name of product
Involv Intranet

Deployment

Client on-premises	Client private cloud	Microsoft Azure	Amazon Web Services	Vendor-hosted	Microsoft 365 tenant	Other
					Microsoft 365 tenant	

Client data encrypted

In transit only	In transit and at rest	At rest only
	In transit and at rest	

Authentication supported

Entra ID	ADFS	Okta	Open ID	Oauth	G Suite	Other
Entra ID	**ADFS**	**Okta**	**Open ID**	**Oauth**		

App deployment

Google Play store	Apple store	MDM	MAM	Other
Google Play store	**Apple store**	**MDM**	**MAM**	

Accessibility
WCAG 2.1 compliant

Document library sources integrated

Box	Dropbox	Google Drive	SharePoint	OneDrive	Other

Optional integrated enterprise search engines

Coveo	Elastic	IBM	Lucidworks	Microsoft	Mindbreeze	Sinequa	Other*

* Zenya

User interface multi-language

Pre-configured	Editable	Right to left script supported	Other

Content multi-language

Machine translation for publishers	Machine translation for end users	Editable machine translation for publishers	Manual creation for publishers	Right to left script	Other

Set-up and support

Set-up process for new clients
Automated remote installation for the product. Project roll-out & workshops, configuration, training and Hypercare & Go-Live services are offered through 'Success Packages'.

Current version
Involv 4.3

Product updates
4 to 5 updates per year. Hotfixes are offered in between if needed.

Product update process
Customers choose if they want to receive updates automatically or on a different timing. Customers are always notified upfront on the availability of an update. Updates are done with a one-click remote installation.

Reverse-out options
Involv intranet is installed on the customer's M365 tenant. All data remains in the customer's tenant, also when the contract ends.

Technical support

Email support	Phone support	Chat support	Online portal	24/7 support	Office hours only*

* CEST

User community
There is an online community where customers can post questions, share best practices and ideas.

Voice of the vendor

Cognit BV says: "Involv – Where Expertise Meets Excellence. Welcome to Involv — not just your next intranet solution, but the heart of your vibrant, interconnected workforce, built on the robust foundation of Microsoft 365.

At Involv, we're more than a software provider; we're a team of friends and experts in the field of internal communications and intranets, standing by to guide you from the initial hello to the celebratory launch and even beyond. We keep things simple and stress-free, promising you an intranet journey that's easy and full of nice little surprises.

Imagine a place where every member of your team, whether they're in the office next door or halfway across the world, finds a virtual home. A place to collaborate and connect, where every individual feels seen and heard. Where great ideas can grow and productivity thrives.

Involv is an accelerator; it comes ready-to-use so you can get your intranet up-and-running fast. But that does not mean you're limited; it retains the flexibility to accommodate enhancements and customizations tailored to your evolving needs, offering a dynamic tool that grows with you.

200+ organizations all over the world can't be wrong. Let's embark on this journey together, merging your vision with our expertise to create a workplace that's not just efficient but alive and truly extraordinary.

Ready to get to know Involv? We can't wait to meet you!"

Voice of the customer

Customers praised Involv for being intuitive and easy to use, with some also describing how it makes SharePoint more attractive. One customer said, "the Intranet is now easy to use for our colleagues and easy to maintain and update" while another added "the platform is incredibly user-friendly and intuitive for an administrator". One customer even enthused, "Involv makes Microsoft SharePoint more user friendly and more beautiful". Other respondents appreciated the improved structure Involv brought to their intranet as well as the additional web components. One customer particularly appreciated the mobile app saying it is, "a real bonus for employees with only a smartphone".

Changes customers would like to see are a bit more varied although an underlying theme is for admins to have a little more control over the product, to be less reliant on the vendor. One said they would like some admin features improved to, "empower administrators with greater autonomy and efficiency in managing some basic technical aspects independently" while another wanted "more custom options for the mobile version".

Customers' experience of working with Cognit are overwhelmingly positive with comments such as "a delight to work with", "very positive experience" and "outstanding". Cognit particularly come in for praise for their flexibility, responsiveness, and knowledge. Several customers described them in these terms including comments such as they are, "highly competent and responsive and happy to solve problems together" and, "we felt very supported throughout the process". One customer who described how they are still working with the vendor on further refinements said, "we are very pleased with how Cognit gave support to our project from the early beginning till the aftercare period of the whole project".

SCENARIOS & SCORES

Please see the Scenarios below for more detail on each of these.

SCENARIO AND SCORE	KEY BENEFITS	IMPROVEMENTS / CONSIDERATIONS
4 — **1. User Experience & Visual Appeal**	Improvements to the SharePoint user experience overall. Nice 'welcome tour' feature to help orient employees.	No notifications indicator in the desktop browser.
3.5+ — **2. Publishing & Communications Management**	Involv improves the overall page creation and publishing process.	Page editing is standard SharePoint.
3+ — **3. Community & Engagement**	There is a basic ideation system.	The social experience is somewhat fragmented overall.
2.5+ — **4. Integrations & Services (Including M365)**	Microsoft 365 elements are integrated well, particularly in the personalised 'My Page'.	Third-party apps can be integrated with extra work. There are no bundled connectors.
4 — **5. Information Finding & Search**	Good use of search to power components. Content and people search deliver a service configured to client needs.	Some useful Microsoft Search capabilities are missing.
3.5+ — **6. Administrator Experience**	The administrator panel and tools are well laid out with contextual support.	Some tasks are quite technical and will likely need support from the vendor.
3.5 — **7. Analytics**	Involv comes with a basic but broad range of analytics.	Dashboards are not client configurable.
3+ — **8. Mobile & Frontline Support**	The mobile app is easy to use and can access all published content.	Configuration must be done by the vendor. There are no community features.
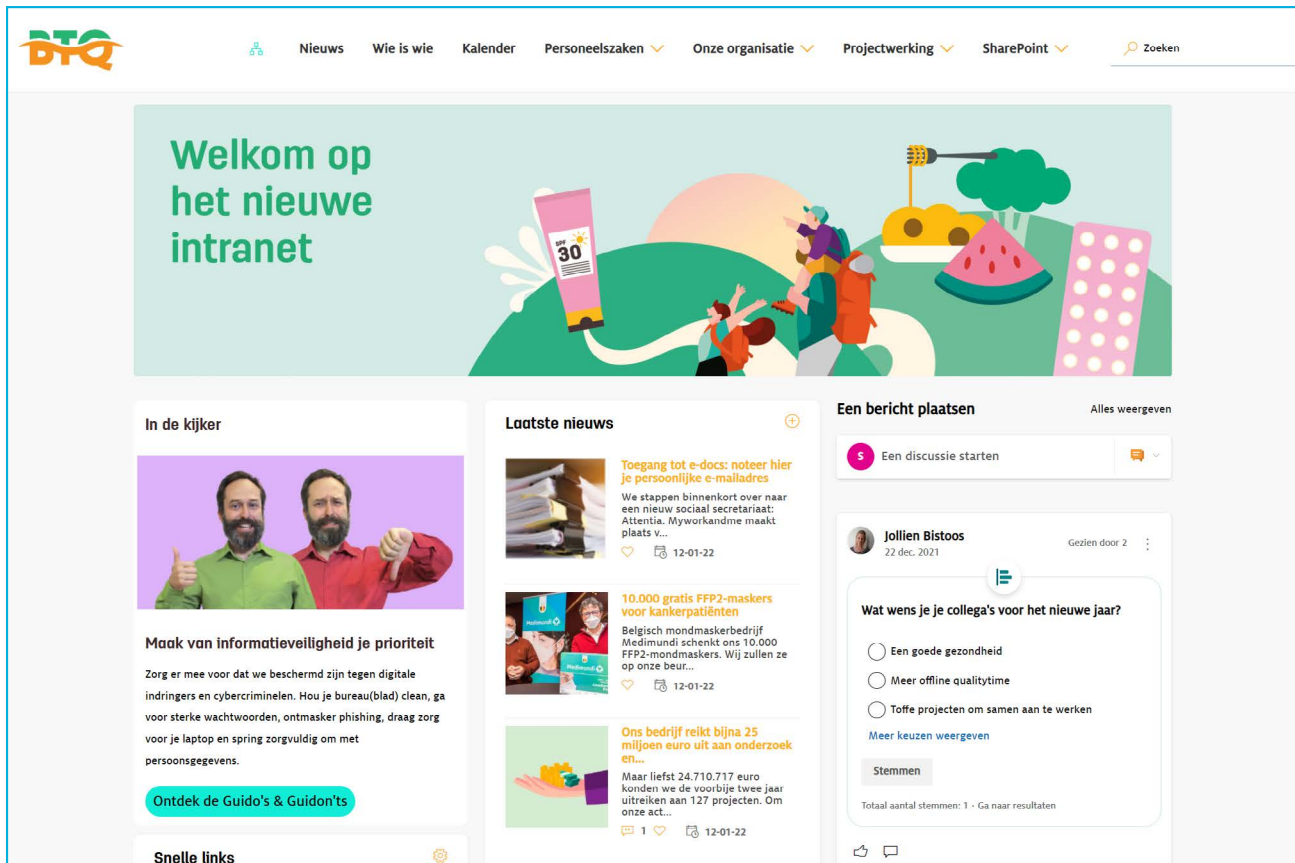
Involv can look quite different with some careful design.

Involv makes some welcome improvements to the SharePoint user experience, providing clean, modern layouts and avoiding the cluttered appearance that is common with many SharePoint setups. The employee experience is consistent across different parts of the product and there are some nice touches, like a prominent 'accessibility mode' switch and an easy way for employees to change the font size.

We really like the welcome tour of the intranet's features for employees. Welcome tours are getting more common in standalone intranet products but are still fairly unusual in SharePoint in-a-box products. When employees first visit the site, home page web parts are highlighted in turn while explanatory text describes their function. Employees are able to step forward or back through the tour, with each highlighted part having its own description. What is particularly powerful about this feature is that clients have complete control over the tour, allowing them to use language specific and appropriate for their employees. The interface for building tours is straightforward for admins to do this activity themselves, although Cognit are happy to help. The tour feature can be deployed on any page of the intranet, so this can be used not only for the initial launch of the intranet but also for launching a new feature to employees.
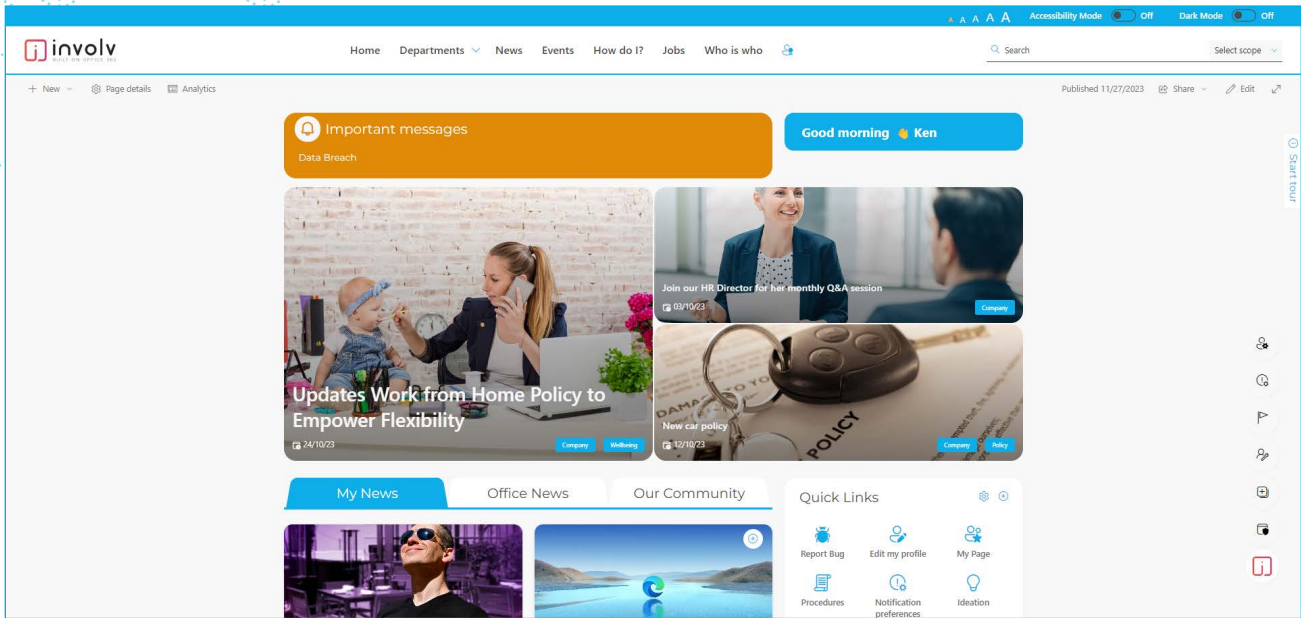
Involv improves the user experience for employees, including an easy way to change the font size and an accessibility mode (top). Also notice the 'start tour' tab on the right-hand side.
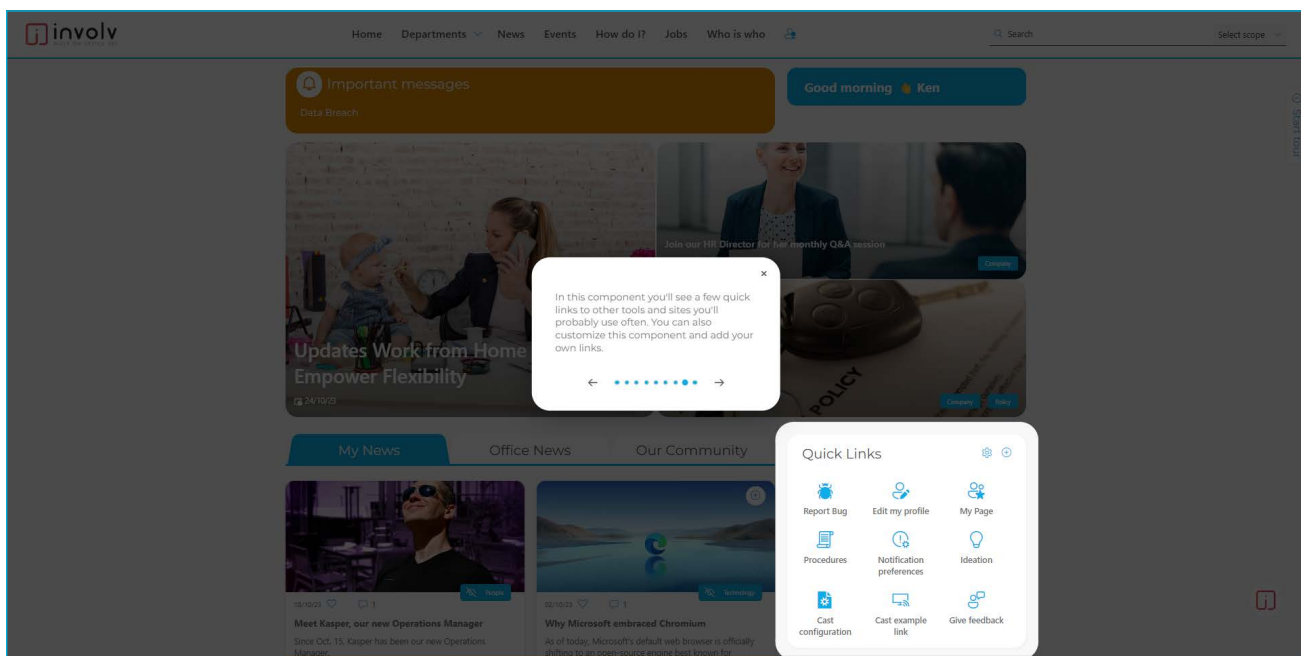
The welcome tour steps employees through the main features of Involv and is fully configurable by clients.

Involv has done plenty to improve on the navigation options that come with standard SharePoint. The global navigation supports audience targeting and multilingual options. It can be styled as a mega menu with custom headings, or as a simple drop-down menu. At site level there is a configurable site navigation component that adds a breadcrumb trail and page context-sensitive links. This improves upon the standard site navigation by removing irrelevant options as people drill down the hierarchy. Admins configure how many levels are shown and whether these are collapsed or expanded by default. The settings are maintained in a SharePoint list, but Involv provides a nice UI for admins.

A recent addition is a 'tabbed menu' that can be added to any web part and makes it easy to switch between different kinds of related content, such as global and local news, for example, while retaining visibility. Another page navigation innovation we like is 'dynamic tiles'. These enable people to explore a hierarchy through a set of tile links that change levels as people click on them, showing a new subset of tiles until they reach their end destination. Cognit says this component has performed well in user testing, but we'd recommend trying it with a few employees to check they understand what's going on before rolling it out.

Involv's breadcrumb and site navigation component help orient employees within site pages. Admins / editors get a simple interface to maintain this.

Involv supports notifications relating to published content and we like that employees may configure their own notification preferences in some detail, choosing content topics and channels they prefer. There is no 'notification bell' or similar in the product, which we think would be a helpful addition, and Cognit is working on this. Currently, employees choose to be notified via browser (if enabled), mobile push, email and Teams chat. Cognit is planning to add support for SMS as well.

Involv adds considerably to the visual appeal of SharePoint for employees without completely replacing the user experience. The product comes with a number of 'skins' which are predefined sets of custom styling that change elements like making corners rounded instead of square. These add a fair bit of variety to the default look of Involv and provide a good starting point for organisations to achieve the design they want. Customers may change site themes, which include logos and custom colour palettes, and there is some flexibility with these. Themes are distinct for different sub-brands, divisions, or regions by creating different instances within the same intranet environment and tenant. Each instance could look different, with targeted components and branding. During the demo, Cognit showed some attractive client designs that looked significantly different from standard SharePoint.

Employees have a good level of control over how they are notified and about which topics.
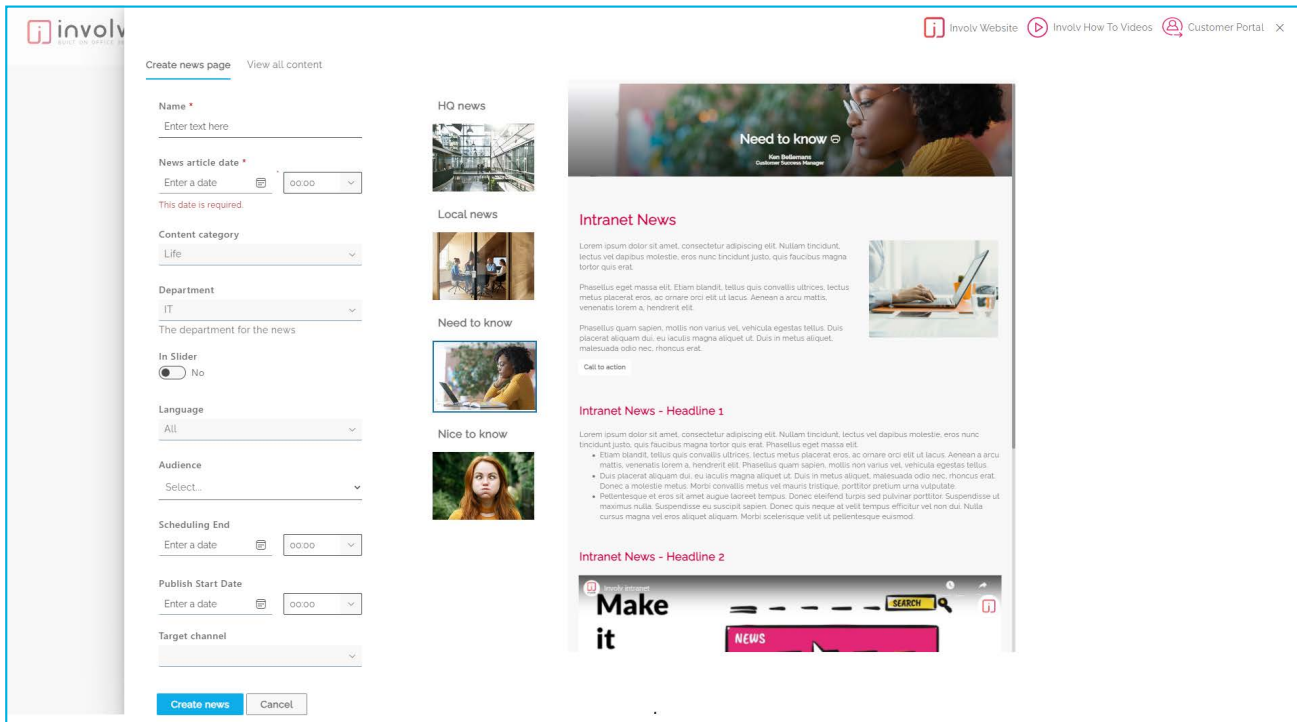
Involv improves the news creation and promotion workflow for communicators.

Involv builds on SharePoint's standard content creation tools by adding some useful features to help communicators. For example, news publishers can simply click a 'plus' icon in the newsfeed to create a new article. Involv's overlay then prompts for relevant information (such as publishing date) as well as metadata to apply (such as company categories or department). We like that publishers can choose to promote the story and 'pin' it in the hero from here as well, rather than having to do this afterwards in a separate web part. It would be nice if pinned articles had some sort of visual cue to show their status and Cognit says this is in the works.

Cognit provides templates for news and other content types as part of the implementation, publishers then work with standard SharePoint components to add images and video. Involv offers some others too, such as a call to action and a document properties component. Involv's hero web part also includes support for video, so people can view this content directly on the home page in an overlay.

Audience targeting for content and other web parts is well supported. Entra groups are used to target many of the components, including news and navigation. There is no way of building audiences in Involv but employee profile properties can be used to show content dynamically; if you are in sales you will see content tagged with sales, and so on. Employees can also opt-in and out of news topics easily and can further personalise their experience by showing and hiding whole web parts. See Scenario 4 for more on this.

There is some support for news scheduling and management activities. In addition to supporting future publishing dates, Involv uses standard SharePoint or Power Automate for approval workflows. There is no calendar view showing articles that are due to be published but the 'view all content' dashboard can be filtered easily to show draft or published content for one or more sites or authors, including a handy 'my content' setting.
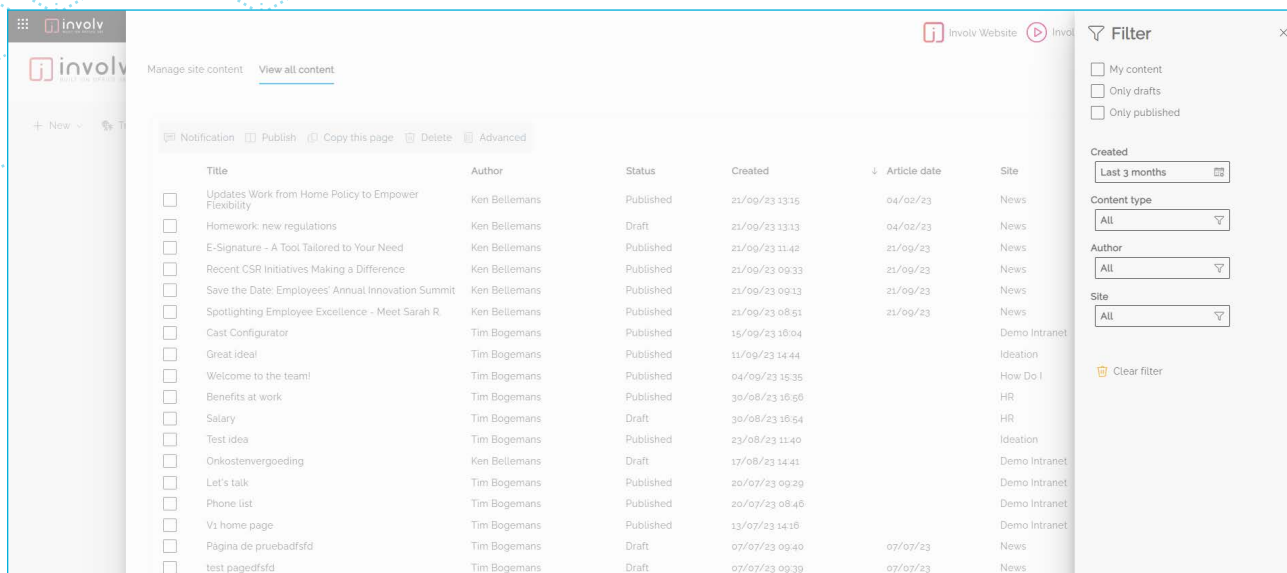
The 'view all content' dashboard has simple but powerful filters to show the items needed.

Urgent and priority messages are handled well with a dedicated 'Incident' capability. Admins easily add an incident message that shows prominently in a banner at the top of the page on desktop and mobile. It also optionally triggers a pop up on that page that must be dismissed before the user can continue. The banner can be styled in different ways with colours or icons. This component includes scheduling for future events and supports audience targeting.

Important messages can also be highlighted via the 'notification centre'. Publishers easily select a piece of content, the target audience, and which channels they wish to use for notification (browser, email, mobile and Teams) and when the notification will be sent. We particularly like the useful sense check from the 'notification audience' feature that calculates how many people will be notified based on the channel and audience settings chosen.
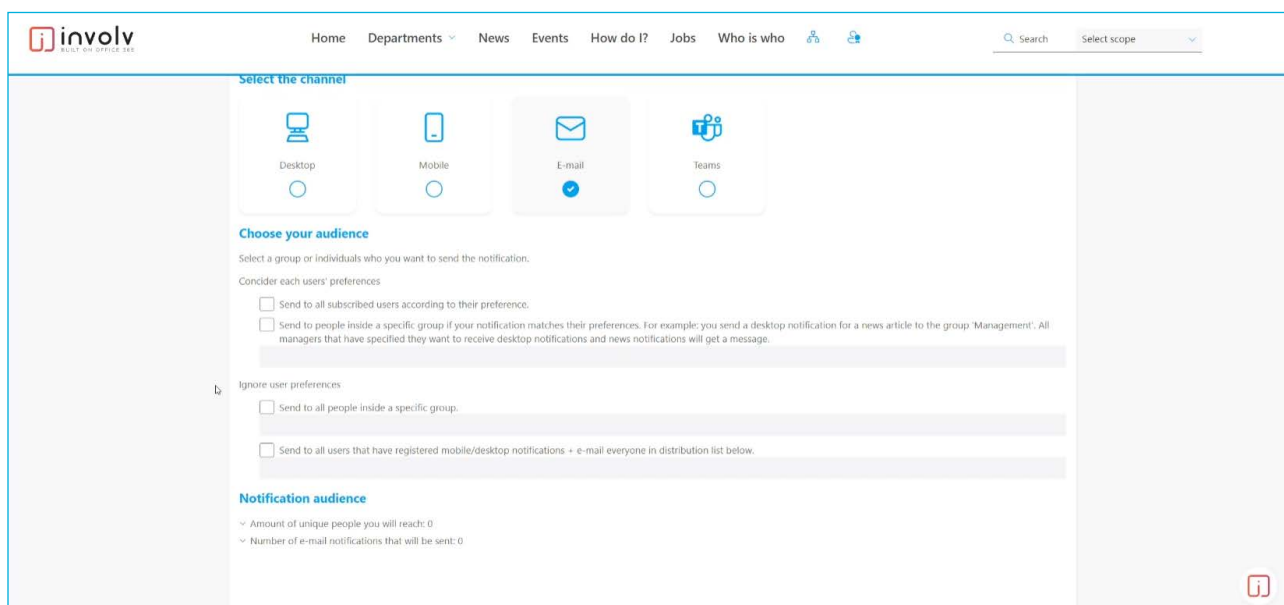
The notification centre enables publishers to send notifications to specific audiences and channels.

The capable newsletter feature significantly improves on the standard SharePoint news digest builder, with greater content flexibility and templating options. It enables editors to build an email newsletter from a wide range of SharePoint content from any site in the tenant including events, jobs, FAQs, not just news as with standard SharePoint. The newsletter creation tool has clearly laid out steps to build the message from selected content, select the audience and provide information such as the subject line, title and introductory text for the message. Editors use simple drag and drop to reorder the articles before sending.

Involv's newsletter tool makes it easy to create a branded email digest from any site content.

Digital signage is well supported via Cognit's InvolvCast add-on, which is an optional component included in the pricing of this review. This component makes it possible for admins to set up multiple digital signage configurations to show different content at different locations. InvolvCast includes a configuration builder tool that clients use themselves (or get Cognit to help) to create queries that automatically select and display content from the intranet, including news, incidents and other content types. This content is then displayed in a number of attractive configurable templates. We like how this option provides an automated, dynamically updated showcase of intranet content as well as being able to show important messages directly; although for most content, employees will need to go to the intranet for the full article.
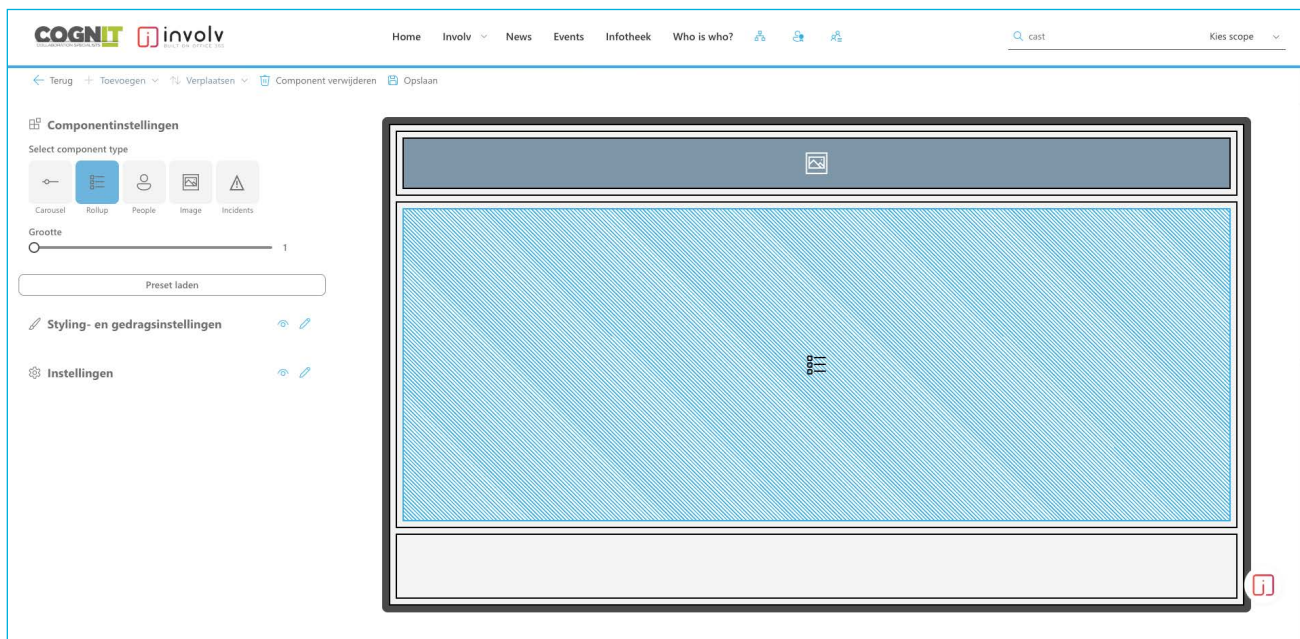
InvolvCast's digital signage configuration screen makes it straightforward for admins to set content and display template options.
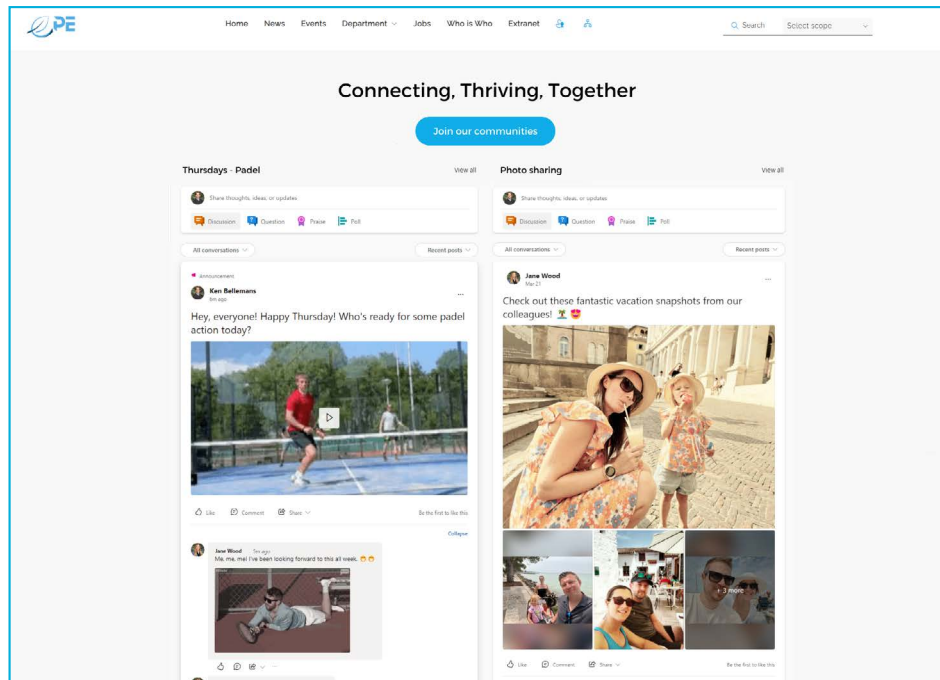
Cognit provides good support for several common community use cases.

Involv's community and engagement features are a mix of Microsoft and Cognit components so the overall experience is a little fragmented compared with other products. However, the product does support several common scenarios quite well. Blogs use standard SharePoint pages with a simplified template and an optional approval process; however, some may find SharePoint's content management system complicated. The template structure and associated training would need to be carefully considered. Communities of practice are supported with news sites that aggregate content around tags, so are basic.

Involv's ideation capability is simple but has enough features for Cognit to use themselves with their customers; we think it would allow organisations to test employee appetite for this kind of functionality. Employees submit an idea using a simple form with a title and brief description, ideas are tagged with metadata such as a campaign or theme. People with SharePoint knowledge can further edit the idea's page to add images or documents. Ideas show in a list where they are commented and liked by colleagues, employees can filter ideas relating to specific campaigns and order by most popular or recent submissions, but there is no further functionality to judge and progress ideas.

Standard SharePoint likes and comments are used for social reactions to published content, Cognit has added 'report this comment' functionality. Optionally, Cognit use the standard Viva Engage web part to show conversations. A 'Give feedback' link in a page makes use of a MS Form for employees to provide more structured feedback about the intranet. Polls are supported with a dedicated web part that is simple for publishers to configure. When people vote they can see how everyone has voted and can change their response.

There are no dedicated onboarding features currently, but targeted mandatory reads can support onboarding if profile information includes a start date. Cognit is working on developing onboarding capabilities that will extend the intranet to new employees after signing their contract onwards. Company service milestones, including new joiners, can also be celebrated if these dates are added. There are some simple components to build a sense of community, such as events management and a birthdays web part. Pages and lists can be used for 'job boards' that provides a basic career development tool.
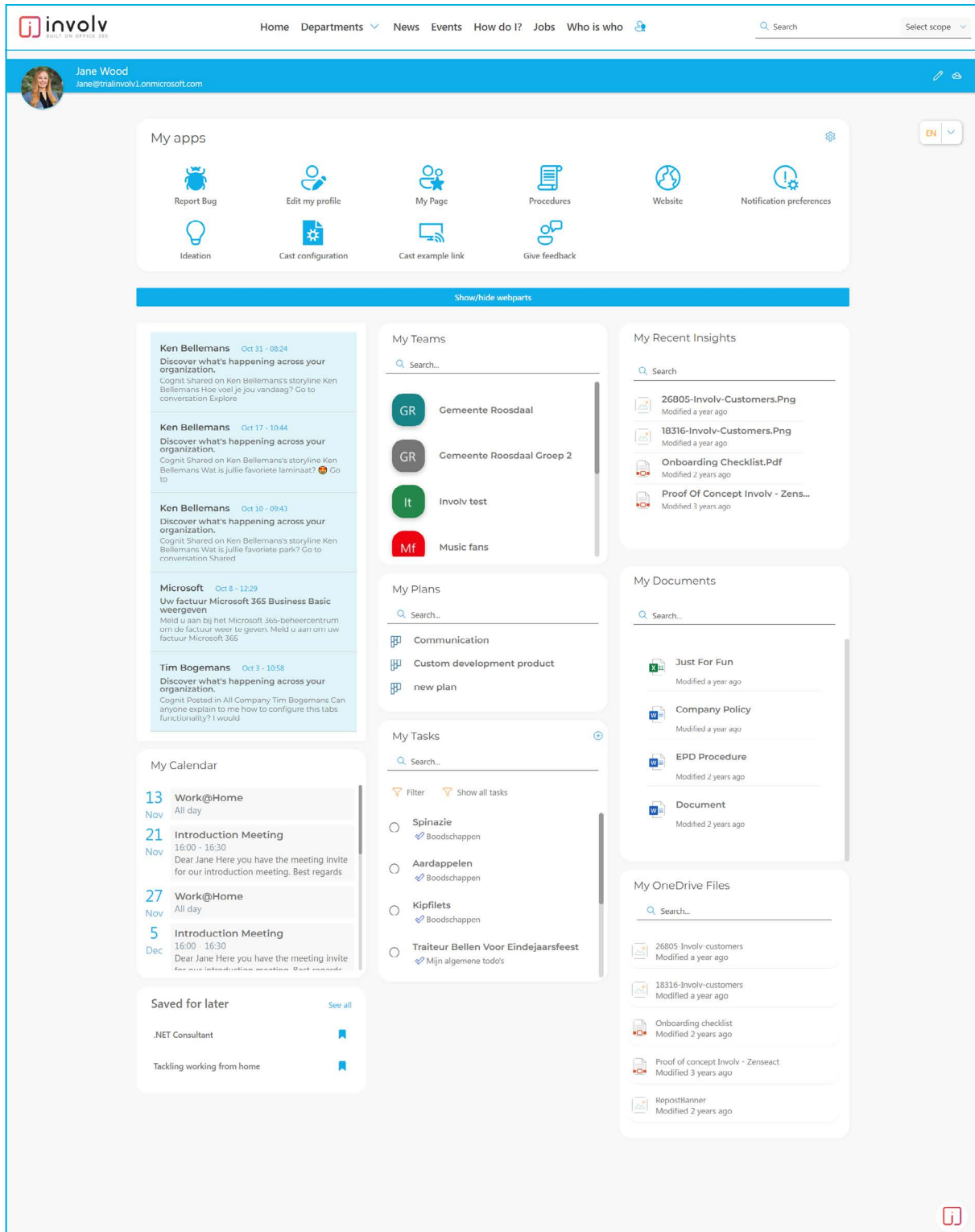
'My Page' provides a personalised experience for employees.

Cognit has developed various third-party application integrations based on requests from existing clients, but the product does not come with any as standard. Examples of previous work includes Infoland Zenya, CV Warehouse job listings, SAP SuccessFactors and Bynder digital asset management.

Bynder can be used as a source of digital image and video assets within the publishing system. Authors add the Bynder component to a page like any other web part, which allows them to browse content from the Digital Asset Management platform and embed in the page in the same way as the standard image picker. Cognit has also developed a Microsoft Search connector for Infoland Zenya, a quality management system used in hospitals.

There is a read-only integration from CV Warehouse, a jobsite platform. This enables vacancies from the platform to be presented on an intranet page, which inherits the branding from the intranet and creates a more attractive page. To apply for a job, users will be taken to the company's jobsite. Cognit has developed a similar integration for SuccessFactors that pulls in job vacancies and training opportunities. As with CV Warehouse, applying for the job or training opportunity is handled via SuccessFactors.

Microsoft 365 integrations are fairly extensive, as you might expect, and this is an area of strength for the product. We particularly like 'My Page' which provides a personalised page of content including a feed of emails, Teams activity, Outlook calendar appointments, application links, tasks from Planner and To Do, recent documents from OneDrive and followed SharePoint sites. The information on this page is clearly laid out and there is an added personalisation feature so that employees can easily show or hide these individual components to curate a page that really works for them, based on the apps they use most.
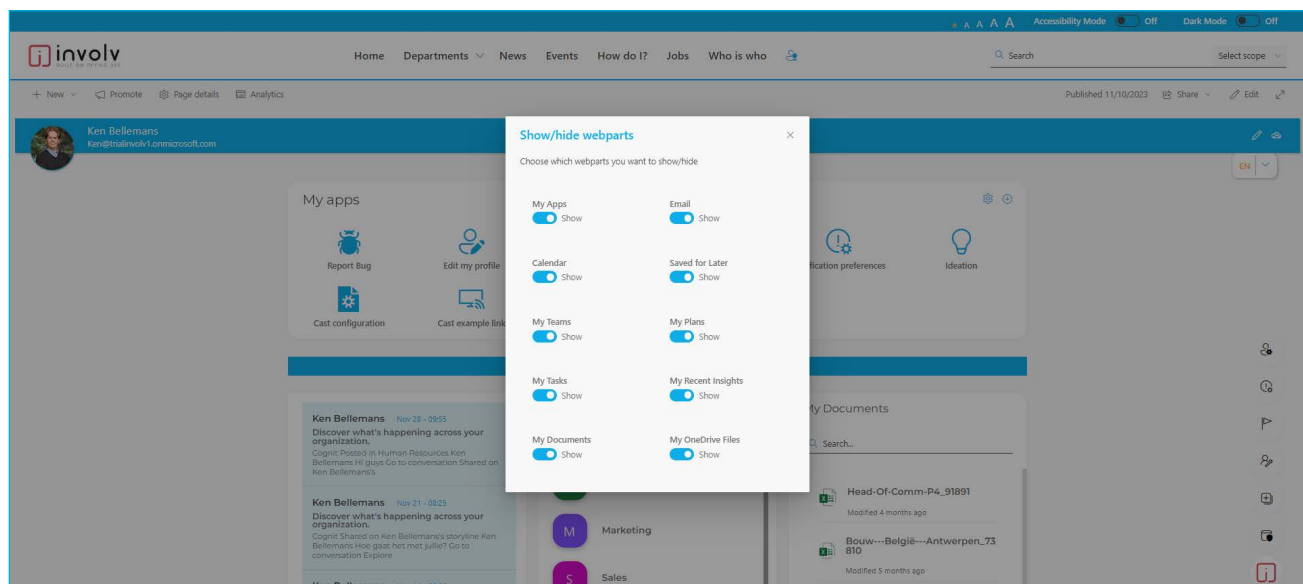
Employees can very easily choose which My Page components they want to show or hide to curate a personalised experience.

One of the most richly featured components in this page is 'My Tasks' which aggregates tasks from Planner and To Do. People filter this view to show all tasks they have access to, or only tasks allocated to themselves. People mark a task as complete directly from this panel. It's also straightforward to add a task directly from this component. As with other components, clicking the 'plus' icon opens a panel where people choose to add a task in Planner or To Do then assign it to a plan and / or colleagues. For organisations or individuals who make good use of these tools we can see this being a valuable and time-saving feature.

Any content in SharePoint can be shown on Involv, whether that's a news post in a news feed component or a document library for a department. 'Followed sites' and 'recent documents' could also be presented on a user's 'My Page', which consolidates activity across M365.

As well as the Microsoft Teams notification integration in Scenario 2, there is a custom Teams app for Involv which gives the full intranet experience, or customers can use Viva Connections to access Involv from Teams. Content within SharePoint, MS Teams, and OneDrive is federated within Involv's search, which uses the SharePoint search behind the scenes as described in Scenario 5.

Overall, it's a mixed picture for integrations in Involv. Microsoft 365 services are well represented with deep and richly featured integrations. Cognit has the skills and experience with plenty of third-party applications completed for existing clients and it would be nice to see some of these offered as ready-to-go for new clients. However, we do understand that some third-party integrations are quite client-specific and maybe less portable than M365 services.

My Tasks is a powerful and time saving feature for people that work with Planner and To do.
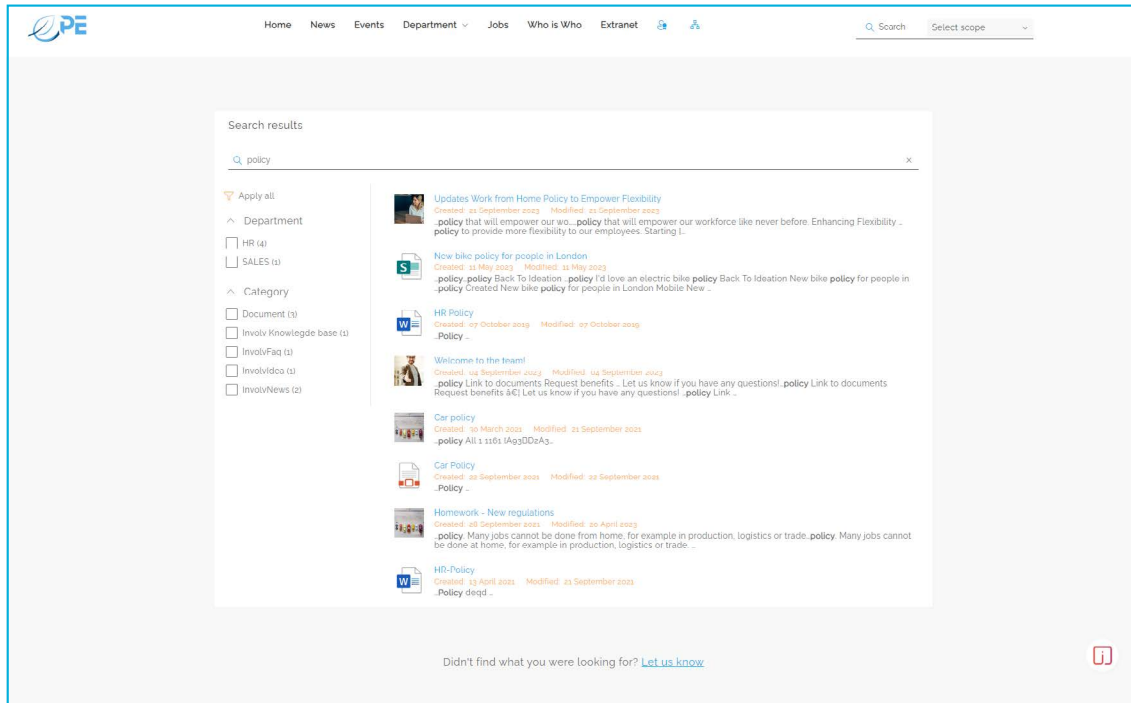
Search results in Involv are presented clearly with useful filters.

Involv has its own search interface and experience that is different from standard SharePoint, although the results are provided by Microsoft Search in the back end. This has a number of benefits but there are some compromises as well. Federated search leverages Microsoft Search and, as mentioned in Scenario 4, Cognit has developed some custom connectors for clients.

The main search in the top right-hand corner of the screen has a simple 'scope' dropdown next to it that certainly makes it easier to understand which repositories you are searching (for example current site, global, intranet only). Cognit will configure these to client needs. Results are then nicely separated into 'colleagues' and 'pages and documents', with appropriate filters (such as department, document type) to help narrow results. There are icons or thumbnails to differentiate content types. We like the way search term misspellings are picked up with the 'did you mean' suggestion as well.

Contextual search can be added to content areas and various components use search to present grouped content to users. For example, Involv can include a knowledge base that features a local search and tick-list refiners for specific document types and topics.

There is no 'promoted results' facility as such but Involv offers a couple of ways for clients to influence search results. The first is 'search boost' page metadata that allows authors to add keywords that will raise the result ranking in search. The second is a centralised synonym list in the admin centre that the search engine refers to when returning results. Whether these synonyms are used or not is easily configured via a switch in the search web part, so one search could include synonyms, while another one does not. Both of these features are less intimidating than the Microsoft alternatives and are more accessible to intranet managers. However, Involv's approach to search means that customers miss out on some Microsoft Search features such as Q&A, Locations and Bookmarks. These would still be accessible from the Microsoft navigation bar search, but it might be confusing for employees to have both searches available.

We really like Involv's glossary feature. This is an easily maintained centralised list of key terms that can be associated with a link or description. When the term is shown in a page it is automatically highlighted and the term explained when hovered over.

In the image above, the terms 'HR' and 'Pikachu' are in the glossary,
so they are automatically underlined and explained when hovered over.

Glossary management is simple and the results are effective.

People finding is well supported; in addition to colleagues being shown in the search results, 'Who is who' is a browsable search-powered people directory. What people information is shown is configurable to client needs but typically results show a photo, name, role and contact details, with this information taken from Entra ID. The Teams presence indicator can also be shown if available. Filters enable people to show results from a particular department or location. Clicking on a person brings up their detailed profile page that includes skills and an organisation chart. Where wanted, employees can update their own profiles and all profile fields are indexed during search.
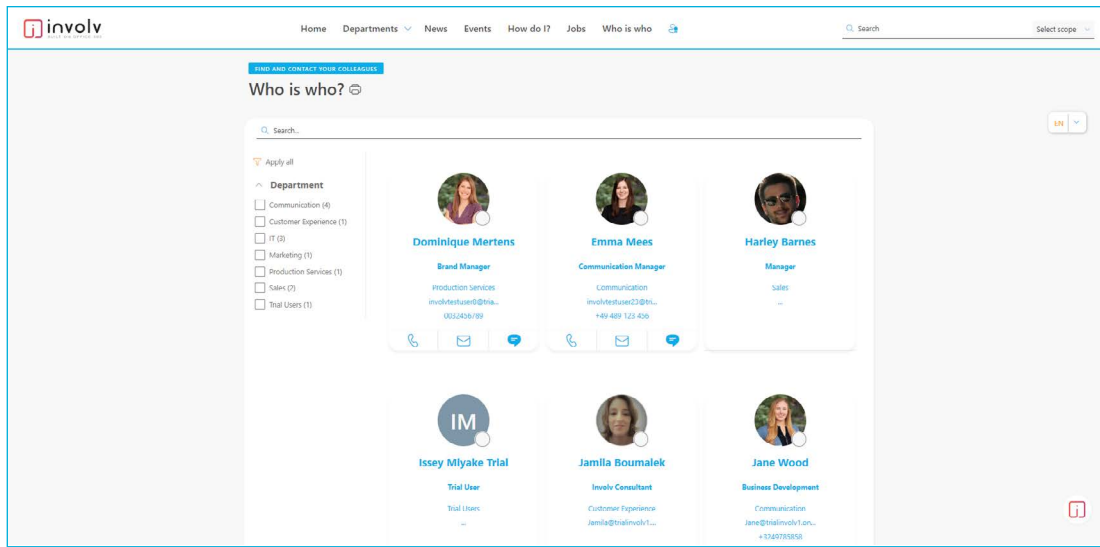
'Who is who' is a browsable and searchable people directory.
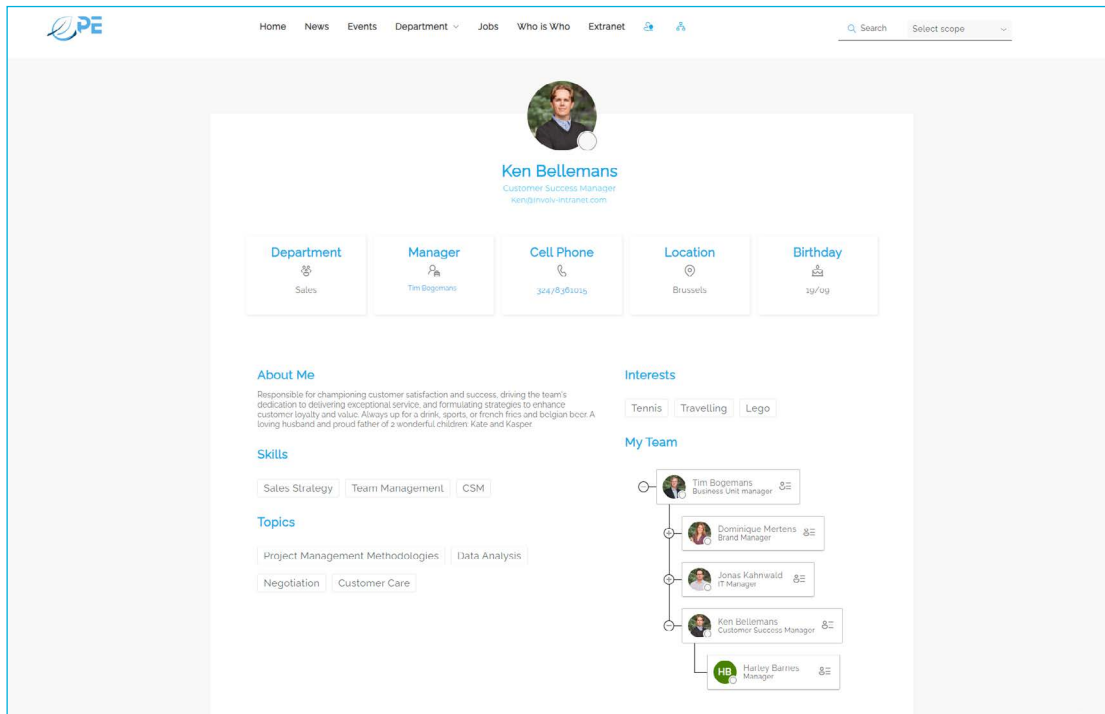
A person's profile page has rich information on organisation, skills and organisation structure.
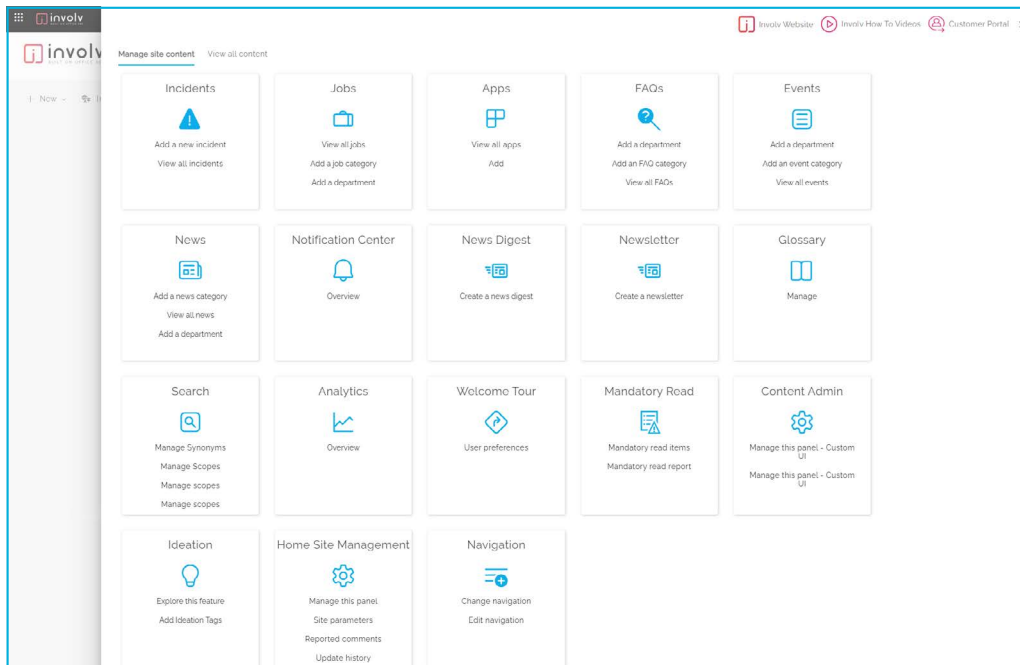
Involv provides a suite of easy-to-use tools for admins and publishers.

The Involv menu (accessed from a floating 'i' icon) gives access to site administration, content admin, and multi-language options in a clearly laid out panel. Administrators access different functions based on their permissions, which are straightforward to configure. The 'manage site content' screen is configurable, so people get quick access to the tools in use rather than a generic set of features.

Involv does not include workflow to request new sites as standard, but these could be easily added with Forms and Power Automate. Global navigation, site navigation, and breadcrumb trail items are easily managed via SharePoint lists, for which Involv has its own UI, simplifying and improving the experience. We really like the contextual support video tutorials that are embedded in admin screens across the product.

Home page design is flexible, making use of Microsoft and Involv components. The layout and display is configurable for user groups, and you can store and use different designs for different audiences. Many of the content features use Cognit's powerful search-based component that aggregates and styles content in numerous ways.

All content has publish and expiry options, although unusually, 'expired' content is not unpublished but hidden from search. Cognit will configure Power Automate to handle publishing workflows, but it would be nice to see some options included as standard. 'View all content' shows everything from across the tenant, but can be filtered easily. From this page it's straightforward to carry out bulk content actions, such as publish and delete.

Multi-language options are well handled; publishers select the language of an article at the point of creation then automatically create a copy that is translated into selected site languages using Azure Cognitive Services. These language versions are then editable before publishing. Employees select the version they want to see via an on-page toggle, with the language in their settings the default.

Involv's administration capabilities are well thought out and put a lot of power in the hands of clients. However, some of the features will likely need assistance from the vendor to set up, particularly those that use queries, such as the search-based component that powers news, and digital signage (Scenario 2).
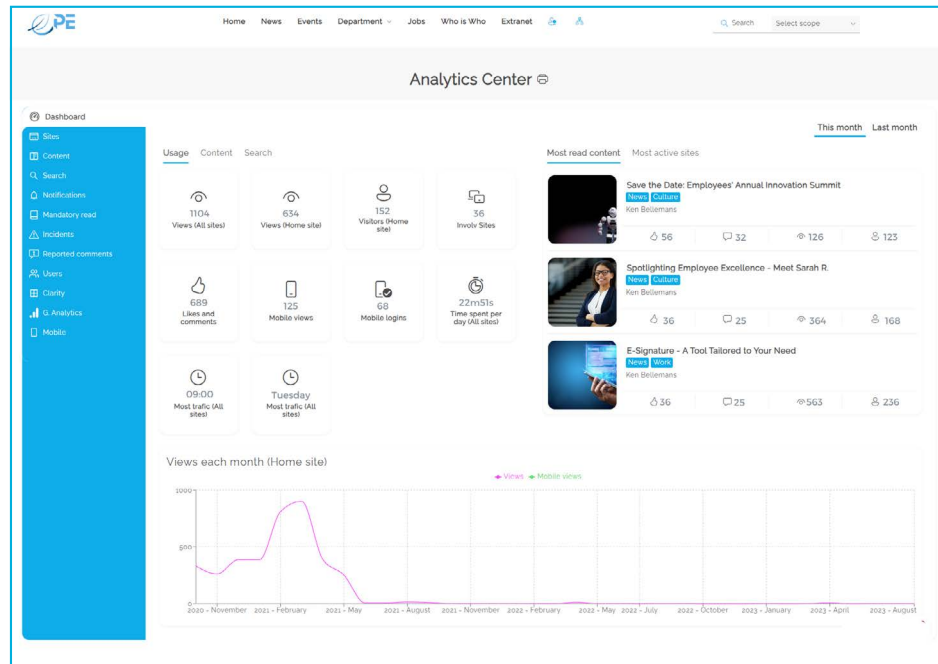
Involv analytics are clearly laid out and provide valuable insights into usage.

There is a comprehensive suite of dashboards that provide a lot of information for both intranet managers and content owners. We particularly like how the analytics are laid out so that the major functions of the platform have their own sections, then within these the information is presented clearly and logically. We also like how each page shows KPIs for each section, with the ability to drill into more detail. Clients can't currently change dashboards themselves but we think most needs are covered and Cognit can make changes if needed. Involv integrates with Google Analytics and has a simple integration link with Microsoft Clarity too.

Adoption and usage measurement is comprehensive, showing top-level KPIs for visits, time spent, users and more, along with peak times and days. Mobile usage is broken down by department; it would be nice to see this segmentation available for desktop as well. Content KPIs aggregate at site level how many different types of content there are, including multilingual articles and engagements. This also shows top performing pages and we particularly like the thumbnail views for these alongside their metrics. Tabs make it easy to switch between most views, likes, and comments etc. with the table of information adapting accordingly.

Mandatory reads are implemented in a flexible way that will appeal to customers that want to direct employees to intranet and external content. Content title, description and URL are added and these links appear in a web part on the home page. Clicking the 'read' button displays the content and records it as being read. In the analytics centre the mandatory reads section shows each one, who the audience is, and who has read them.

Search analytics reports on the top searched terms and breaks these out by successful (green dot) and unsuccessful / no results (red dot) searches. Involv supports multiple search configurations within the platform (e.g. for contextual document repositories, please see Scenario 5), so the reports also show which of these was used for the search. However, we think it would be helpful to understand which result employees click from a 'successful' search as well.
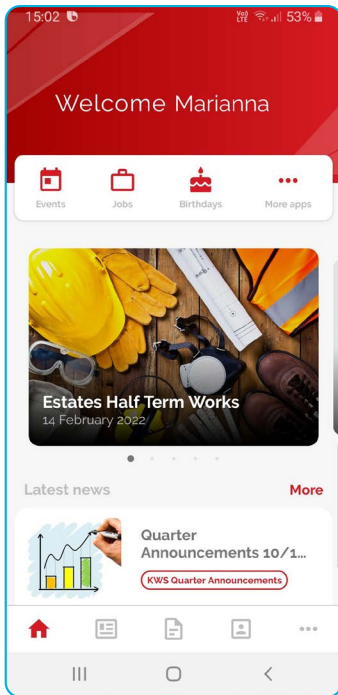
The mobile app home screen provides quick access to available functions.
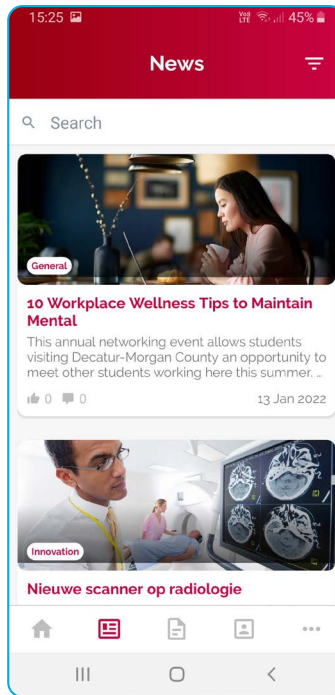
The news feed supports likes and comments in line with the desktop experience.
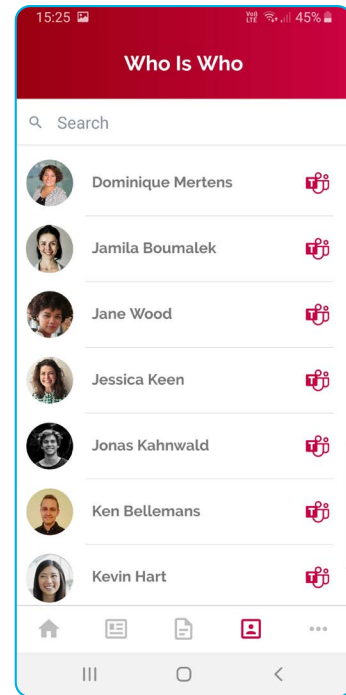
The people directory is richly featured and makes it easy to contact colleagues.

Mobile access to Involv is supported via responsive web and a native mobile app for Android and iOS. To access the app, all users must have a M365 license and log-in with those credentials, although Cognit are exploring alternative options for frontline workers. There is no support for biometric authentication.

The app has primary navigation buttons at the bottom of the screen and vertical scrolling for content. The design and branding are inherited from the desktop for a consistent experience; Cognit offers white labelling as well. All content and features are available but some areas, such as news, are mobile responsive content 'wrapped' by the app; we don't see a problem with this approach as it means mobile users get the same features as desktop. News does include tag filters to make it easier to see content you are interested in. Content and people search work well, with the same experience as desktop, including scope and filter settings. All employee profile information is searchable and from people's profiles you can call, text, email, and WhatsApp.

One frontline worker feature is included to encourage contributions from the field. A 'News Board' has been created specifically for non-desk workers to quickly add simple news stories. The creation page has a title, body and supports pictures. The template includes pre-defined metadata so it can have its own news channel on desktop and mobile. We can see this being helpful for designated 'employee journalists' to report from the frontline or to help cover company events, but it's probably not a tool with mass appeal. Admins may add other frontline specific tools (e.g. forms) or PowerApps from the 'more apps' menu if needed.

Configuration of the app and whether features / content types are included is all handled by Cognit, rather than the client. Some clients may find this arrangement restrictive, but it will probably work for most organisations to decide the setup and not need to change it often. Clients use publishing 'channels' to decide whether content is shown in the app or not. The primary and secondary navigation items are fully configurable to client needs.

THINGS TO BEAR IN MIND

Cognit has made a lot of improvements to smooth the content creation and publishing workflow in SharePoint, including templates, content metadata, multilingual support and targeting. However, when it comes to editing content and layouts the experience is still standard SharePoint, which does not suit everyone. There is also a degree of freedom for page creators with layouts and styling that some organisations will welcome, but others that desire page consistency will not.

The mobile app has good support for formal communication and engagement, even including a lightweight publishing feature for contributions from the field. However, social communities are missing along with chat, and these can both be significant use cases for mobile access.

Involv search and findability improvements have many great features and make capabilities such as synonyms, glossary, and search keywords much more accessible for intranet managers compared with the Microsoft Search & Intelligence Centre. This does come with a compromise of missing out on the latter's powerful Q&A, Location and Bookmarks features, however.

Finally, Involv is one of the best value products in this report. It offers a broad range of well-executed features that continue to develop and improve with every release. The vendor is universally praised by a happy customer base, too.

Why choose this product

Involv offers a compelling, ready-to-use communications-focused intranet solution at an attractive price-point. It has many valuable, intuitive features, and helps admins and employees use these by providing simple adoption tools. We think Involv will particularly appeal to medium-sized organisations but also enterprise customers that are looking for excellent ongoing support from the supplier.

Vendor roadmap

Please see their website for details.

LiveTiles

FULLY STANDALONE

REQUIRES SHAREPOINT

OPTIONALLY WORKS WITH SHAREPOINT

FRONTLINE FOCUS
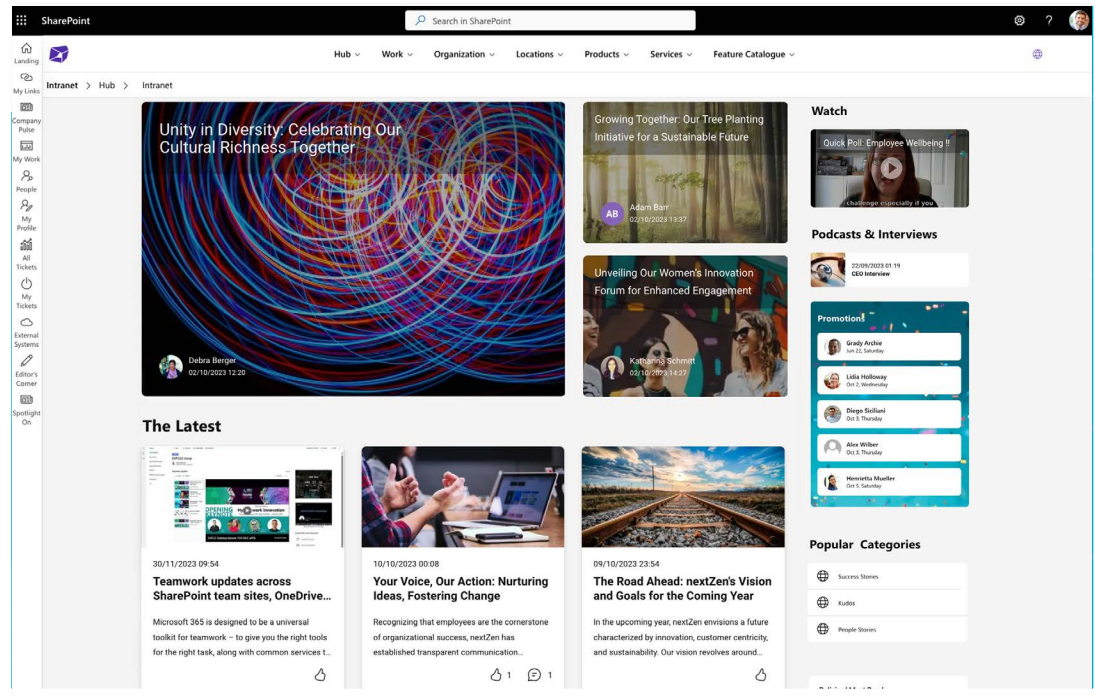
Typical deployment:

1,000 – 10,000 employees

Company locations:
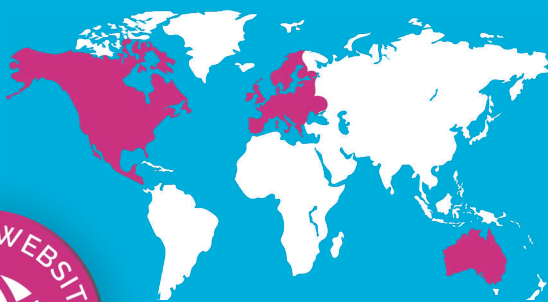
The product in a nutshell

The LiveTiles platform combines a well-designed SharePoint intranet with a separate module that offers extensive mobile features to reach and engage frontline staff.

VISIT THE WEBSITE

SUMMARY

LiveTiles Intranet owned by LiveTiles

LiveTiles Intranet, owned by LiveTiles (Melbourne, Australia), consists of a range of mature, feature-rich modules that have evolved since the company was established in 2014. The LiveTiles platform consists mainly of a core SharePoint-based module and an independent module called 'Reach', which is optimised for mobile use. These are complemented by other modules, such as a powerful people directory and an integration with an external provider of employee recognition software. LiveTiles says that enterprise businesses often combine all these modules to address different requirements, which is what we have reviewed for this report.

The SharePoint module adds some well-designed web parts and features for navigation on top of the standard SharePoint offering. Search relies on Microsoft Search functionality, and there are integrations with enterprise search solutions from Coveo and BA Insight. The Reach module provides an easy way for frontline workers to get connected, even those without a Microsoft licence. Both modules integrate well with Microsoft Teams, and there are a few out-of-the-box integrations with third-party business applications such as ServiceNow and Salesforce. For more integrations, the product can be extended through a documented API and plug-in framework, or through Microsoft's Power Automate connectors.

Overall, LiveTiles offers a good modular approach with a smooth user experience across the product. Inevitably, there are some differences in the user interface between various modules. There are also certain areas where integration can be improved and where there are overlaps between what the modules offer. We recommend that customers take the time to work with LiveTiles or a partner to select the right services for their organisation. The full enterprise solution presented here will appeal to larger or more complex organisations with a broad range of needs and is offered at an attractive price point.

Pricing

PRICE BAND

250 users	$ $ $ $
1,000 users	$ $ $ $
5,000 users	$ $ $ $
20,000 users	$ $ $ $

These prices are indicative, offering a comparison of the products featured in this report only. Please contact the vendor for a bespoke quote.

PRICING MODEL

Subscription – price band based on number of users.

COSTS TYPICALLY

Slightly higher at the start of the term, but generally spread.

DISCOUNTS

Charities and non-profit organisations, schools and educational institutes, frontline users, multi-year commitments and negotiated pricing always an option for valued customers.

PRICE INCLUDES

Customer Support and Customer Success Management - Dedicated Account Managers for Enterprise Accounts.

Product type

Ready-to-run, installed in days

Branding opportunities

All branding, complex options

Base systems

Fully standalone	Requires SharePoint	Optionally works with SharePoint	Other*

*If customers purchase the Reach module as a standalone platform then this doesn't require SharePoint.

Sectors

Accountancy, banking and finance	Engineering and manufacturing	Healthcare	Public services, government and administration	Retail

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FRESH

MangoApps

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Intranet > Hub > Intranet

Landing
My Links
Company Pulse
My Work
People
My Profile
All Tickets
My Tickets
External Systems
Editor's Corner
Spotlight On

Unity in Diversity: Celebrating Our Cultural Richness Together

Debra Berger
02/10/2023 12:20

Growing Together: Our Tree Planting Initiative for a Sustainable Future

Adam Barr
02/10/2023 13:37

Unveiling Our Women's Innovation Forum for Enhanced Engagement

Katharina Schmitt
02/10/2023 14:27

Watch

Quick Poll: Employee Wellbeing !!
challenge especially if you

Podcasts & Interviews

22/09/2023 01:19
CEO Interview

Promotions

Grady Archie
Jun 22, Saturday

Lidia Holloway
Oct 2, Wednesday

Diego Siciliani
Oct 3, Thursday

Alex Wilber
Oct 3, Thursday

Henrietta Mueller
Oct 5, Saturday

The Latest

30/11/2023 09:54
Teamwork updates across SharePoint team sites, OneDrive...
Microsoft 365 is designed to be a universal toolkit for teamwork – to give you the right tools for the right task, along with common services t...

10/10/2023 00:08
Your Voice, Our Action: Nurturing Ideas, Fostering Change
Recognizing that employees are the cornerstone of organizational success, nextZen has established transparent communication...
👍 1   💬 1

09/10/2023 23:54
The Road Ahead: nextZen's Vision and Goals for the Coming Year
In the upcoming year, nextZen envisions a future characterized by innovation, customer centricity, and sustainability. Our vision revolves around...

Popular Categories

Success Stories

Kudos

People Stories

Spotlight on!

Next Birthdays

Alex Wilber
Oct 14, Monday

Isaiah Langer
Nov 4, Monday

Megan Bowen
Dec 4, Wednesday

New Joiners

Henrietta Mueller
Sep 22, Sunday

Diego Siciliani
Sep 23, Monday

Phillip Moore
Oct 14, Monday

Goodbyes

Grady Archie
Jul 7, Sunday

Lidia Holloway
Sep 22, Sunday

Lee Gu
Oct 1, Tuesday

Policies I Must Read

Please read and confirm

Privacy Policy.docx
Workplace Security Policies.pdf
Health and Safety Policy.pdf
Contoso 2019 Medical Benefits.pdf
Privacy Policy.docx

Corporate

Enterprise Search   IT Security   My Targets

Leave Request   Submit Idea   Travel Request

Webmail   Service Desk

Apps

Workday   Frontline Worker...   Asana

Expensify   Microsoft Dynamics...   DocuSign

Keep in the loop

Workplace Initiatives

Mention a @person or a #topic (Hit CTRL + Enter

Olivier Fontana
10/10/2023 21:46

I wanted to take a moment to address an important aspect of our workplace...
Show more

LIFE WORK
Created by myhq.in

Uniting for Volunteering

Mention a @person or a #topic (Hit CTRL +

Allison Brown
10/10/2023 22:37
(edited)

🙌Team Volunteer Days
Hi there! On these days, we come togethe...
Show more

DREAM TEAM

Mentorships

Mention a @person or a #topic (Hit CTRL + Enter

Joe Black
10/10/2023 22:07

I wanted to share an inspiring idea that could profoundly impact our professional growth an...
Show more

THE MORE

👍 1

More >

Reminder

PREPARE INTERVIEW
FINALIZE QUESTIONS FOR EMPLOYEE SURVEY
PUBLICATION DUE FOR CEO ARTICLE
INTRANET SURVEY

COMPANY AND PRODUCT

Company details

Company
LiveTiles

ISO 27001 certified
Yes

Data residency
Western Europe (Dublin and Amsterdam), Switzerland, USA, Australia; any other Microsoft data centre region upon request.

Company founded
2014

Product launched
2014

Typical client size
1,000 – 10,000 employees

Largest deployment so far
325,000 employees, dozens of countries

Customers
Clients include: Pepsico, Virgin, Engie, Entain, Creditsafe, Deakin University, BDO, Canton of Zürich, Galenica, Ascencia. Please see their website for details.

Partner locations
Please see their website for details.

Company locations
Melbourne, Australia (HQ), Denmark, Ireland, Portugal, Romania, Switzerland, USA

Product and technical details

Name of product
LiveTiles Intranet

Deployment

Client on-premises	Client private cloud	Microsoft Azure	Amazon Web Services	Vendor-hosted	Microsoft 365 tenant	Other

Client data encrypted

In transit only	In transit and at rest	At rest only

Authentication supported

Entra ID	ADFS	Okta	Open ID	Oauth	G Suite	Other*

*Azure AD B2C

App deployment

Google Play store	Apple store	MDM	MAM	Other

Accessibility
WCAG 2.1 compliant

Document library sources integrated

Box	Dropbox	Google Drive	SharePoint	OneDrive	Other

Optional integrated enterprise search engines

Coveo	Elastic	IBM	Lucidworks	Microsoft	Mindbreeze	Sinequa	Other

User interface multi-language

Pre-configured	Editable	Right to left script supported	Other

Content multi-language

Machine translation for publishers	Machine translation for end users	Editable machine translation for publishers	Manual creation for publishers	Right to left script	Other

Set-up and support

Set-up process for new clients
Depending on the modules chosen, the setup can be anywhere from a one-click installation for a standalone deployment or up to three months for comprehensive platforms, including Microsoft Teams and SharePoint integration with consulting engagements. Typical deployments leveraging the LiveTiles standard features (without customisation but including integration with Microsoft 365) can be done within 2-4 weeks.

Current version
June 2023

Product updates
Three times per year

Product update process
The majority of the LiveTiles Customers are using the LiveTiles SaaS option, where all customers are updated at once and automatically. On-prem / private cloud customers decide on timing for their update.

Reverse-out options
A database export of the client data is transferred to the client upon request and before all client data is deleted.

Technical support

Email support	Phone support	Chat support	Online portal	24/7 support	Office hours only

User community
LiveTiles has a customer community and knowledge base, and runs a Customer Advisory Board (CAB) for select customers, as well as user conferences such as 'LiveTilesX, Love Your Work' and the 'Let's Connect Conference'.

Voice of the vendor

LiveTiles says: "LiveTiles believes that the world can be a better place when people are freed up to do their greatest work. Our employee-centric approach embraces our entire approach from how we collaborate together with our customers and partners to how we design our solutions to be simple to use, people-centred and innovative.

These principles also influence and guide how we support our customers through partnership on their digital workplace journey, futureproofing their internal communications and collaboration with a flexibility and adaptability tailored to their needs, capacities, and budgets.

The LiveTiles platform solves some of the key strategic problems facing organisations today as they adapt to a new and more flexible way of working, namely:

1. Attracting and retaining great talent and inspiring them while they work
2. Fostering greater bonds between colleagues through both collaboration and social connection in a more digital and distributed workforce
3. Enabling organisations to be flexible, agile and adaptable as they evolve their digital workplace
4. Increasing the creation, sharing and consumption of corporate communication in a way that can be measured and targeted
5. Promoting greater inclusion in company communications and social networks of non-desk workers, regardless of their role, location or device while amplifying a more inclusive and authentic employee voice
6. Empowering communications, technology and HR leaders to analyse employee engagement in real-time with easy to use, actionable data."

Voice of the customer

What customers appreciate most about the product is how it adds value on top of SharePoint in those areas where standard SharePoint falls short. "The product sits well on top of SharePoint Online, providing additional functionality where there are gaps in the out-of-the-box SharePoint product" says one customer, while another likes "the number of additional web parts available". Another customer praises one feature in particular: "The left menu, called Everywhere Panel, is quite powerful and a much more polished solution than the Microsoft app bar." For another customer, the add-on functionality is critical to the success of their intranet: "Our company has built our intranet around specific features that LiveTiles provides, such as the notice board, employee handbooks, and governance tools."

When asked about changes or improvements to the product, a few customers ask for specific features such as "better analytics", but most comment on the overall evolution of the product. One customer requests "a smooth migration path for us, when new versions arrive". Some other customers express concern about how LiveTiles is adapting to the fast-evolving Microsoft offering. "Microsoft almost closed the gap in features and LiveTiles has a tough time keeping up with the changes in modern SharePoint", according to one customer. Another customer suggests to "maybe de-customise things where possible, considering the advances that Microsoft makes". LiveTiles says that their roadmap is aligned with Microsoft's, and that they continue to provide added value, as evidenced in the recently added Viva Connections cards discussed in Scenario 4.

Feedback about working together with LiveTiles is mainly positive, although a few customers expressed some concerns. One customer describes the relationship as "good initially but not as great since the Wizdom / LiveTiles merger" and another comments that "while the support for issues has been OK, the client team has been difficult to reach after we signed the deal, and we had to rely on the partner". LiveTiles says that it is standard practice to handle implementations through their partner network. The majority of clients who replied are happy with the levels of support, however, and one client praises the strategic guidance they received from LiveTiles: "Great support function, and outstanding help and guidance on more advanced and strategic matters."

SCENARIOS & SCORES

Please see the Scenarios below for more detail on each of these.

SCENARIO AND SCORE	KEY BENEFITS	IMPROVEMENTS / CONSIDERATIONS
3.5 **1. User Experience & Visual Appeal**	Well-designed 'Everywhere Panel' available across the product and in MS Teams.	Different experience between the Reach module and the SharePoint-based module.
3.5 **2. Publishing & Communications Management**	Simple but effective content editor. Flexible audience targeting.	Limited functionality for managing the editorial process and creating newsletters. Integration between the Reach and SharePoint modules can be further improved.
3 **3. Community & Engagement**	Good integration with external provider of employee recognition software (included in the price).	Built-in functionality for polls and surveys is basic.
2.5+ **4. Integrations & Services (Including M365)**	Out-of-the-box integration with many third-party applications. Different options to build additional integrations.	M365 integrations are mainly with the SharePoint-based module and not with Reach.
3+ **5. Information Finding & Search**	Strong functionality for people finding and profile management.	Options for search in the Reach module are less intuitive.
3.5 **6. Administrator Experience**	Unified 'Operation Center' with user-friendly interface.	Some admin functionality is still separate from the 'Operation Center'.
3+ **7. Analytics**	Helpful reports for communicators to track news articles and campaigns.	SharePoint-based content is only partially integrated into the analytics reports.
3.5 **8. Mobile & Frontline Support**	Many options to onboard and support frontline workers, including those without M365 licence.	Admin functions are managed separately.
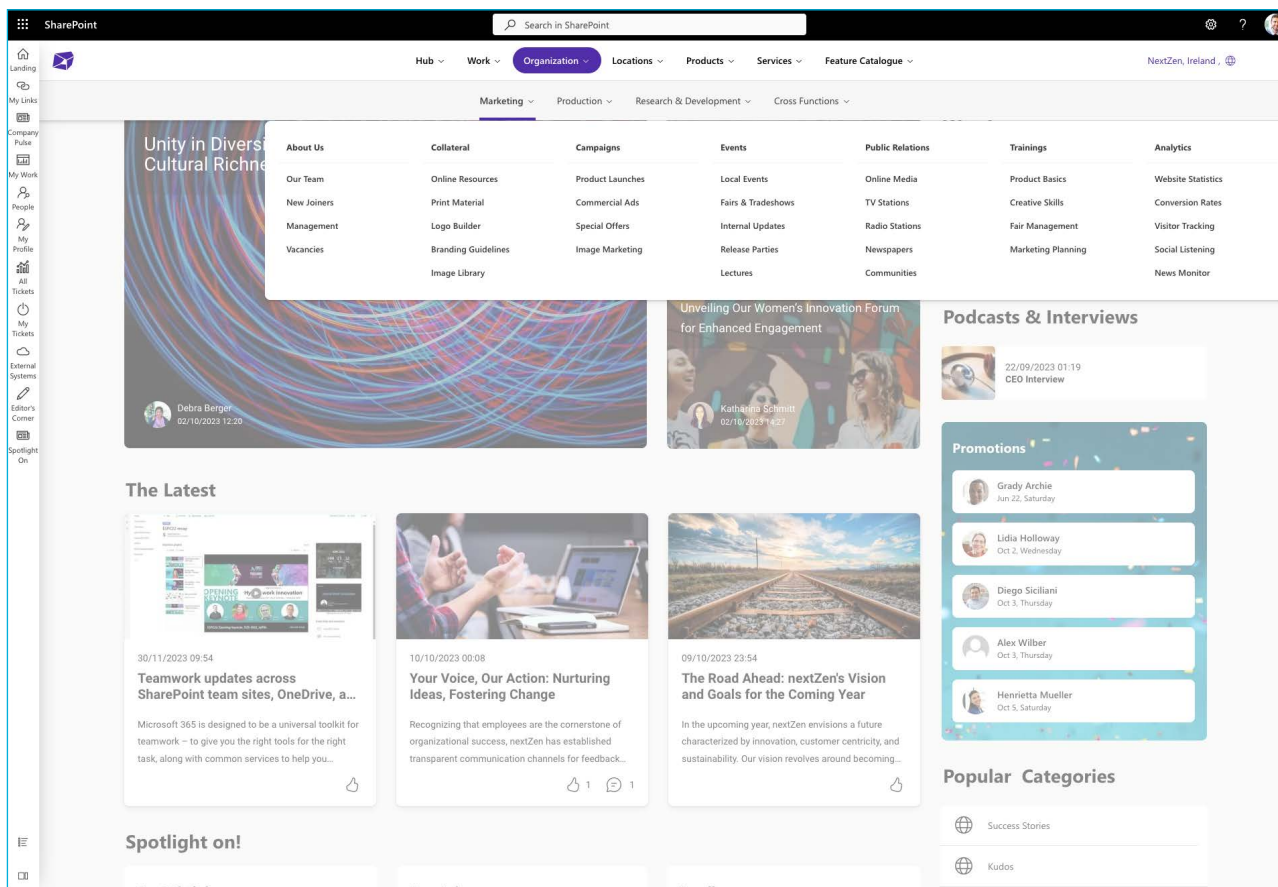
Mega menus offer flexibility to support complex multinational corporations.

The LiveTiles platform encompasses two different intranet experiences: Reach, an independent module optimised for mobile, and a SharePoint-based module. Inevitably, the user interface will be slightly different in the two modules, but LiveTiles does an excellent job of integrating both and offering a consistent user experience. For example, news articles are created once and are presented in a consistent way in the SharePoint desktop experience, in the Reach app, and in MS Teams. Please note that while there is a desktop environment for Reach, much of this scenario covers the SharePoint experience. Please see Scenario 8 for more details of the Reach experience.

Navigation is especially strong in the SharePoint intranet module. Customers have a choice between a traditional mega menu or a more uncommon matrix-type menu. We believe that large and complex organisations will appreciate the matrix menu, which displays items in different layers. This can be combined, as shown in the screenshot above, with a top-level menu where users can select a company or a market - based on this selection, the matrix menu will show different content, so this mechanism supports even the most complex multinational corporations. Audience targeting of menu items is available. All aspects of the menus are managed through an intuitive user interface in the 'Operation Center' (see Scenario 6).

Another interesting feature in the SharePoint module is the 'Everywhere Panel', which is an additional navigation bar, similar in look and feel to the SharePoint app bar. It is customisable with shortcuts to content and intranet functionality such as an overview of 'My links', recent news, or information coming from external systems. The Panel will appear on any page within the intranet, so users always have access to the content they need most. It can be placed in different areas of the site, including as a floating element anywhere on the page. In the screenshot below, it sits on the left-hand side of the page and replaces SharePoint's own app bar, so there is no conflict between the two.

The platform includes many options for users to personalise their experience. An example in the SharePoint module is 'My Links', which can appear as a web part in a regular SharePoint page or as an icon in the 'Everywhere panel' as shown below. Users can customise this area to fit their needs. In a configuration panel, they see a list of relevant links for their role and can pick from the list which ones are useful to add. Another example worth mentioning is an integrated accessibility panel within the SharePoint module, where users can configure options for improved contrast, font size, and screen reader settings.

Notifications are available in both the Reach and SharePoint modules, but accessed in different menu areas and handled separately. In the Reach app, notifications are highly configurable, and employees decide on which topics and in which format they want to be informed. For each content type, such as news or events, users select if they wish to receive notifications by email, as a push notification on their mobile device, or within MS Teams (see Scenario 4 for more about the integration with MS Teams). The SharePoint module uses standard Microsoft functionality.
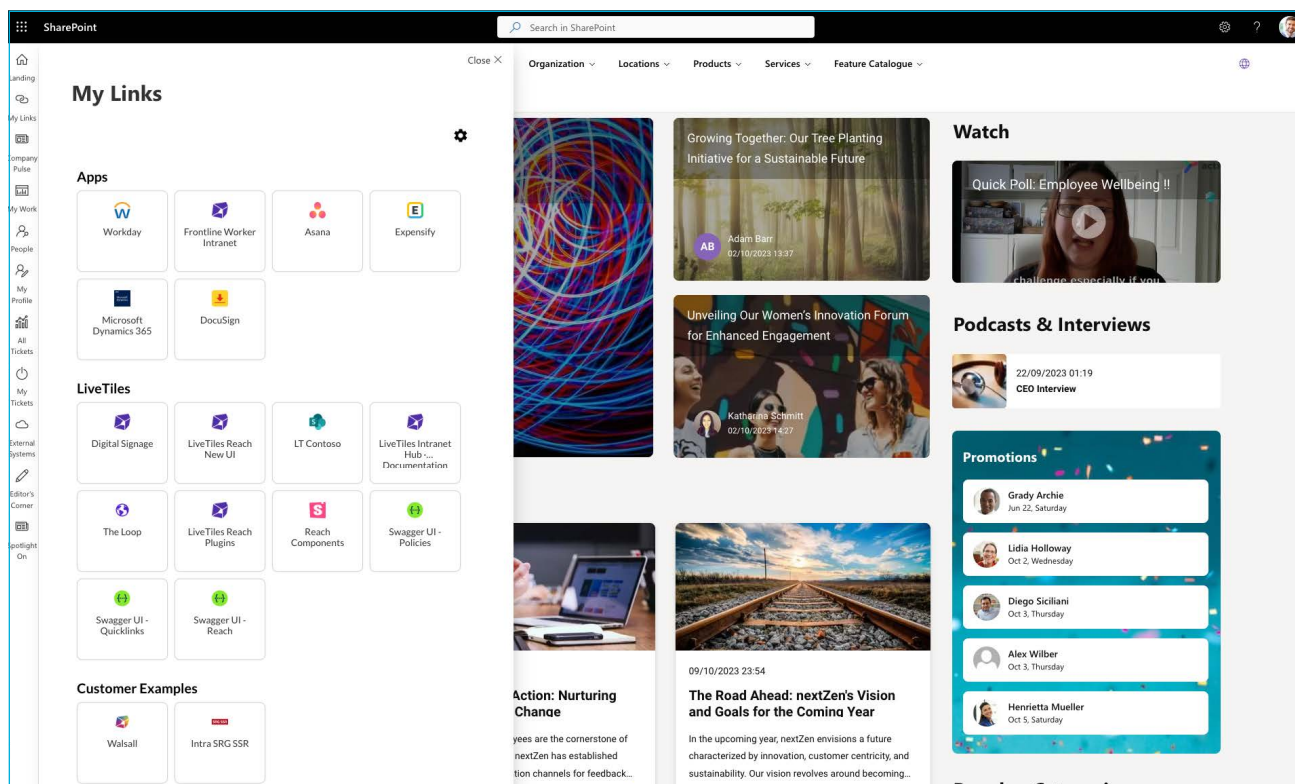
The 'Everywhere Panel' replaces the SharePoint app bar and gives access to various areas such as 'My Links'.
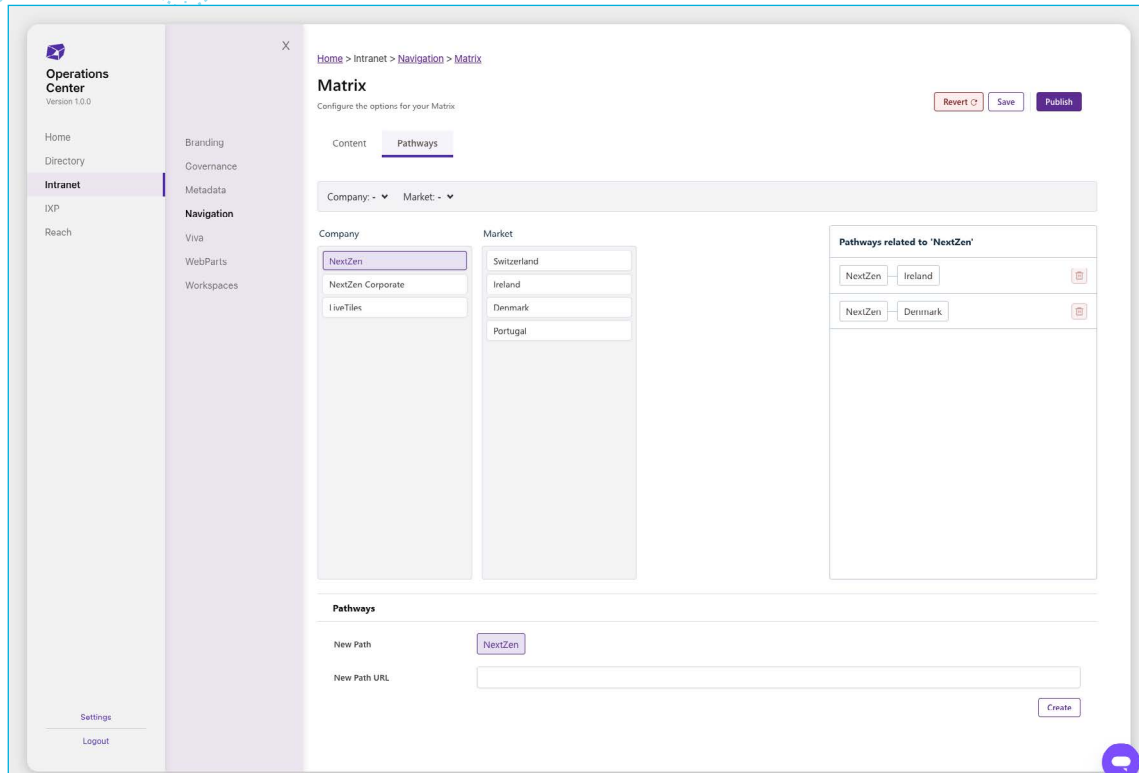
Managing the menus is done in the back-end through an intuitive user interface.
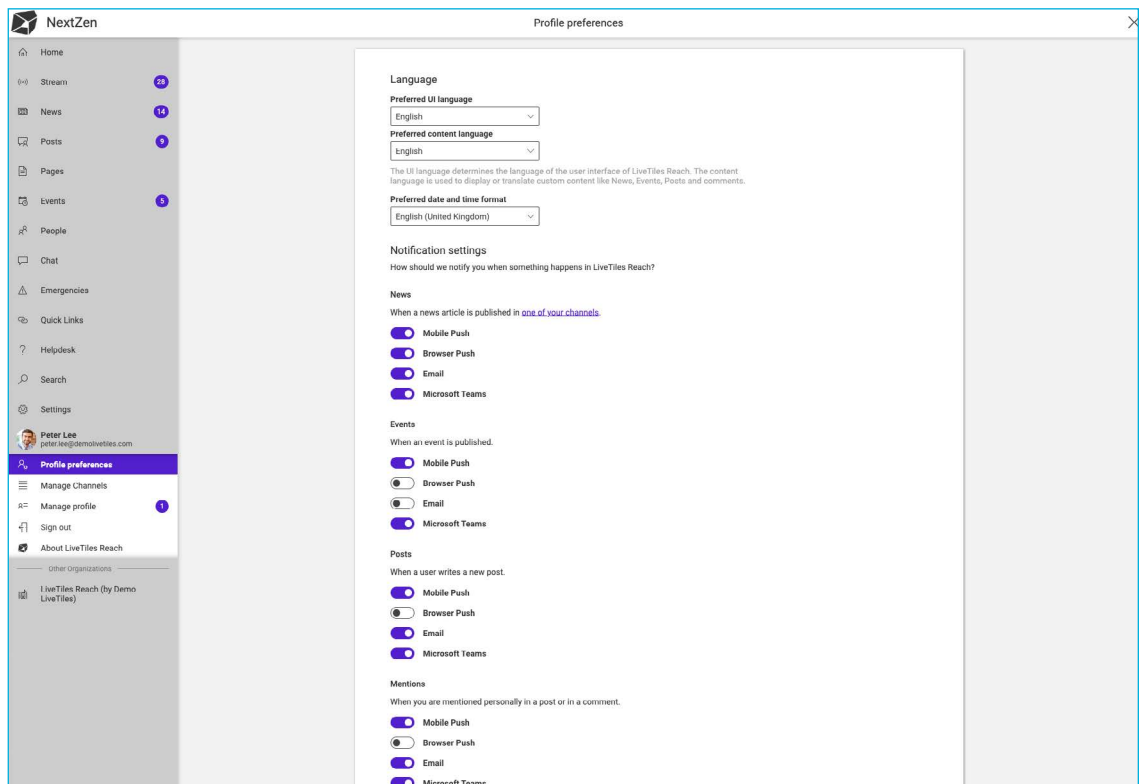
Users select if and how they wish to receive notifications for various types of content within Reach.

The options to apply branding and visual identity elements in the Reach module are currently fairly basic, but a new release with an improved user interface is on LiveTiles' roadmap. In the SharePoint-based module branding functionality is more extensive. The SharePoint module goes well beyond the standard SharePoint themes and includes a large collection of predefined designs to choose from. These are then adapted to specific needs within an integrated theme editor. There is plenty of flexibility to create sub-brands by applying different styles to different areas. If desired, LiveTiles or their partners will work with clients to design and configure the site. We were shown some appealing examples from a selection of customers to illustrate what can be achieved.
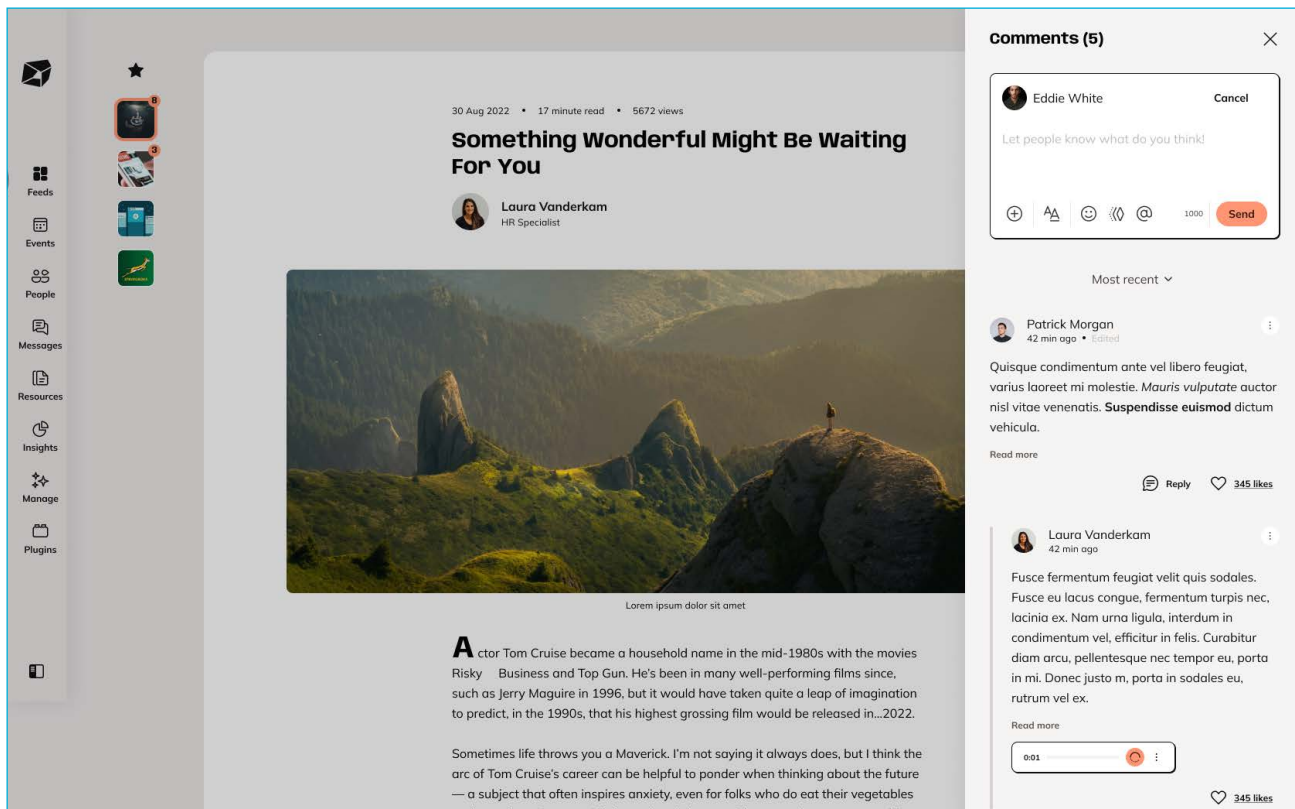
On LiveTiles' roadmap is a new release of the Reach module with an improved user interface that has a contemporary look and feel.
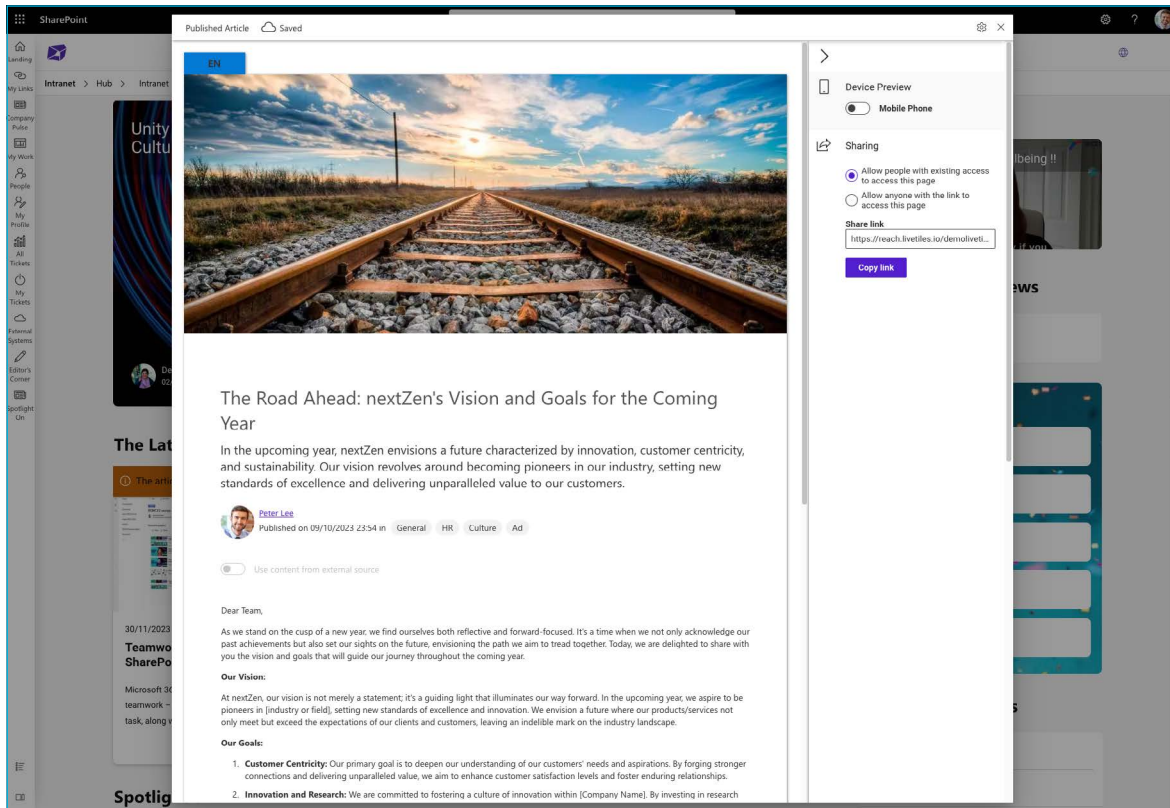
Content authors work in the Reach editor to create news articles, preview them, and share a link with anyone in the organisation.

There are two approaches for publishing news and other content within the LiveTiles platform. While the standard modern SharePoint interface can be used for news creation, the vendor recommends using the Reach news editor instead, which is integrated with SharePoint. Content created within Reach is stored in the module's own CMS but can be displayed in standard SharePoint pages and MS Teams.

The Reach module editor presents content authors with a clean and straightforward template, which is simpler than using the standard SharePoint interface. Elements such as images, video and quick polls are easily added during the creation process. A useful preview feature checks the layout on different device types, and provides an option to share a link to the draft article with anyone within the organisation. The link will give read-only access with no option to edit or comment. Content authors can combine multiple news articles into campaigns, with performance statistics on campaigns available as part of the analytics reports (see Scenario 7).

As part of the news creation process, the Reach editor offers a simple integration with ChatGPT. There is a standard prompt window to provide input, and a feature to rewrite and improve text. Compared to other OpenAI integrations that we've seen, it's quite basic. We would like more options to specify a tone of voice, length, or a predefined context for the article. This will reduce the burden on content creators to produce detailed prompts and will enhance the quality of output.

Reference pages are handled the same way as news: content can be created within the Reach editor or directly in SharePoint. In its SharePoint module, LiveTiles offers a range of web parts that allow content authors to build rich and visually attractive pages. Reach pages are available inside the SharePoint solution, but SharePoint content is only available in Reach if the user has a license. Communicators and content owners will need to take this into account, for instance by using the audience targeting functionality to ensure that frontline workers have access to relevant content.

Targeting is handled through a mechanism of group membership and publication channels. Content authors can target a news article to one or more groups of users, for instance only to frontline workers. Target audiences can also be built dynamically, based on user profile properties; a group can be set up to include all employees with a particular skill added to their profile. In parallel, publication channels offer users a mechanism to subscribe to news that is of interest to them. From a list of available channels, people can easily select or deselect as desired, although some channels may be fixed and not available for deselection (for instance the 'Marketing' channel for someone who works in Marketing).

An integration with ChatGPT allows content creators to automatically rewrite draft content.

An approval workflow is available, for instance to let channel owners authorise content. Other features that support the editorial process include integrated chat to have conversations about the content of an article, as well as a simple overview available to authors and editors of articles in draft status. However, there is no consolidated overview for the entire organisation or any tools such as an editorial calendar.

Crisis and urgent communication are well supported, a news article can be set as an alert message and displayed in different ways in the two modules. In Reach, users may prefer to receive alerts as a banner at the top of their news feed, or as a push notification on their mobile device. For desktop users of the SharePoint module, there is an option to display these alerts in a dedicated web part that appears prominently on the home page, or as a modal popup window. When creating the alert, there is an option to ask readers for a confirmation.

Reach has features to allow people to share content externally, for instance to share content on social media channels, or into Teams (see Scenario 4). Content from Reach is easy to share in multiple Microsoft tenants, which will be of interest to complex organisations or in case of a merger. There is no newsletter functionality, other than the standard SharePoint digest. Digital signage is supported through a simple but effective solution whereby TV screens can connect to the platform with a one-time passcode, and then display the preconfigured content in Reach for that screen.

Overall, we find that LiveTiles' approach to content creation and management works well but can be further improved. There is good integration between the Reach module editor and the SharePoint module, but more could be done to help internal comms teams manage the editorial funnel or build attractive newsletters. Also, the integration is mainly one way (from Reach into SharePoint); there are no mechanisms to make SharePoint-based content available inside the Reach module. We believe that the product would benefit from further integration to simplify and streamline the overall experience.
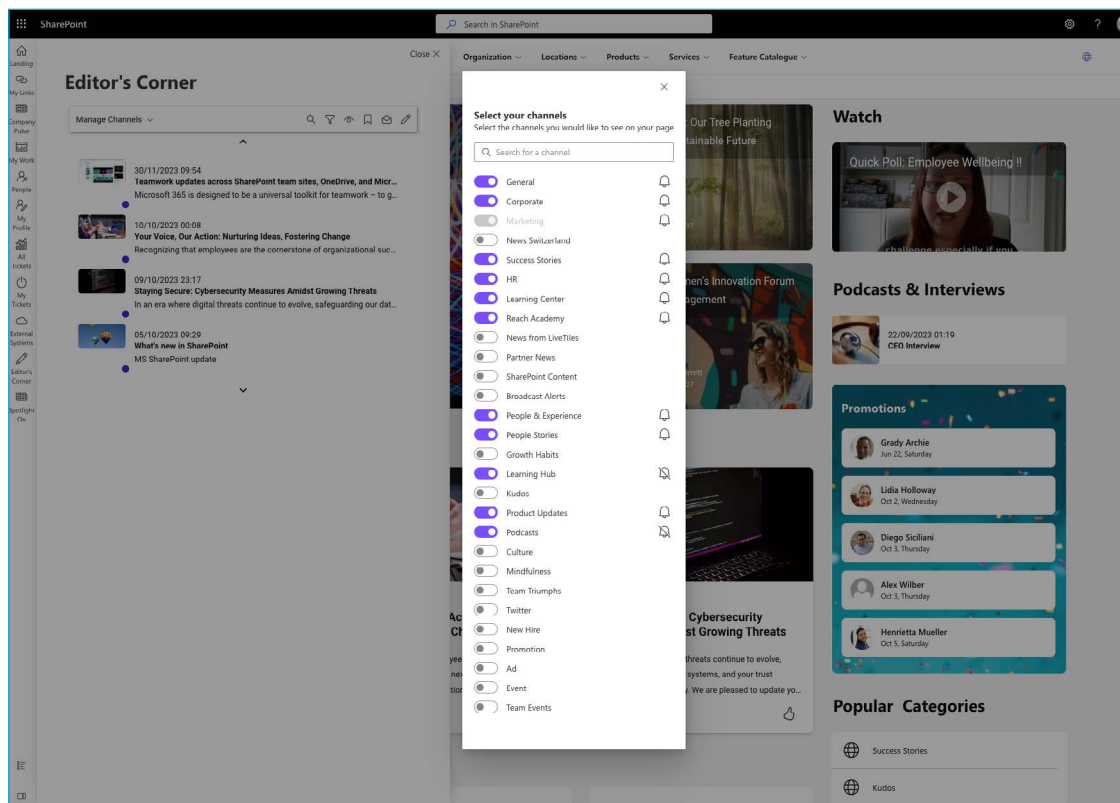
Employees can decide which news channels are of interest to them.

3. COMMUNITY & ENGAGEMENT

3
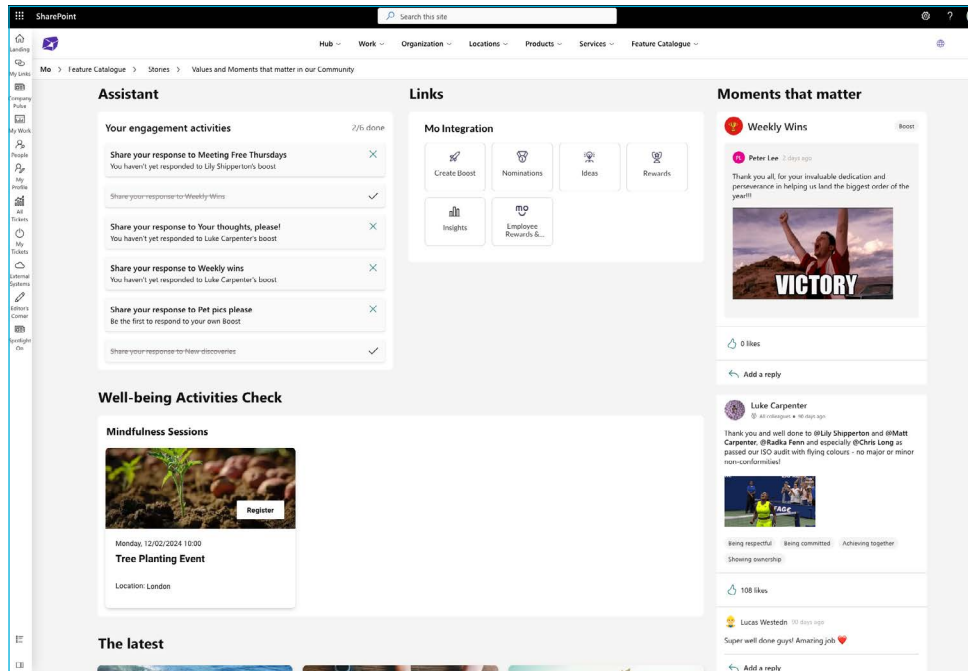
*The integration with Mo gives managers access to a dashboard
with a list of engagement activities, links, and shared 'boosts'.*

The Reach module offers a range of community and social features that are oriented towards mobile use, but are also available in SharePoint web parts. At the core is the Reach 'posts' component, which allows everyone to create short pieces of information, ideas, and knowledge sharing. Other users can like, comment, add rich reactions such as emojis and Gifs, and use @mentions in threads.

Posts can be used within Reach Groups for community collaboration or discussion. In the SharePoint module, a community template is available where content from a Reach Group can be surfaced. Reach Groups are comparable to Viva Engage communities; they have the advantage that they are also available to frontline users without a Microsoft licence, but miss the richer functionality around gamification.

The same mechanism of social reactions is available for commenting on news articles, although these features can be turned off by publishers. There is a content moderation feature based on Azure Cognitive Services, flagging potentially inappropriate posts for the attention of an admin. The admin can then trigger a workflow, for instance to delete the post and send a notification to the author.

Reach also has an event feature, where publishers complete a simple event template and share it into relevant channels. Users may register attendance in advance and access a moderated chat before, during and after the event.

Quick polls are easy to add to a news article, but there is no functionality to build larger pulse surveys. Several features around feedback and engagement are available through an integration with Mo, an external provider of employee recognition software (the cost is included in the pricing provided for this review). Details of this integration are in Scenario 4. We like the functionality on offer in Mo, although some of it is quite basic and currently not integrated with other areas such as Reach posts.

Also worth mentioning is an innovative tool called 'MyReachZero', which allows organisations to engage with their employees about climate change. Employees enter their personal efforts and commitments into the tool, and a climate engagement tracker will show the impact of all individual contributions towards the company's net zero targets.
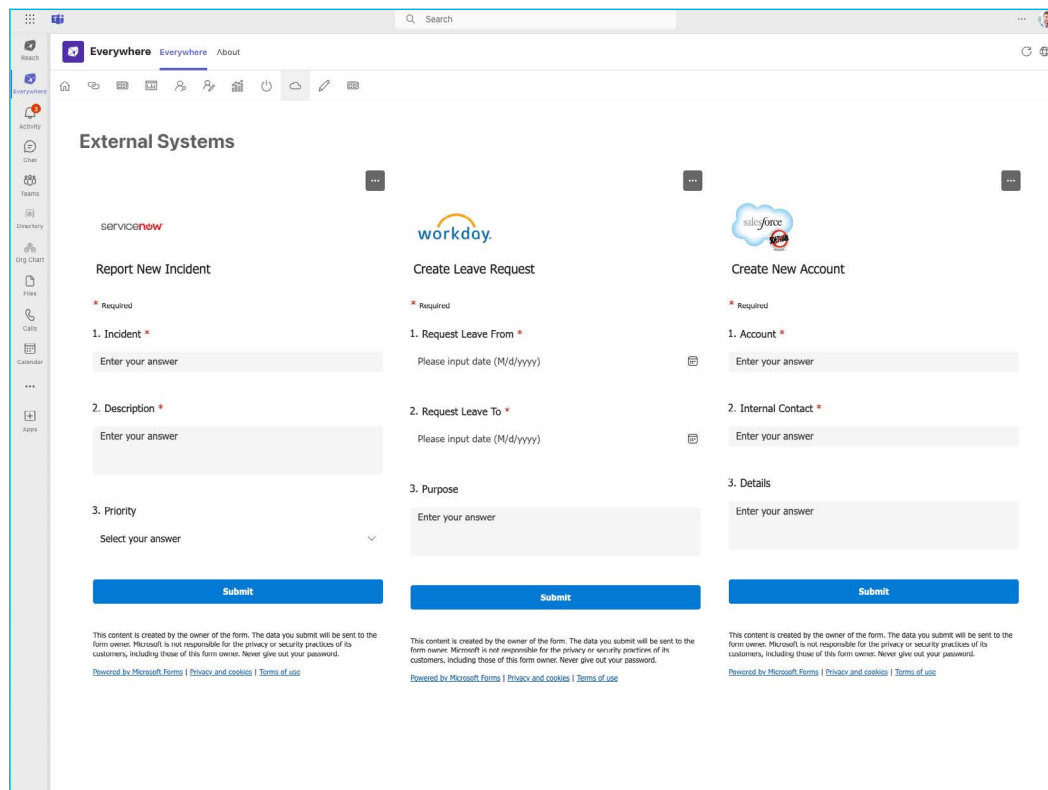
*The Everywhere Panel, here shown as an app in Teams, is capable
of presenting various integrations with external systems.*

LiveTiles includes a number of integrations out of the box, and comes with an API and an integration platform for customers and partners to build their own. Some integration options are available through the Reach module, while others are specific to the SharePoint-based module. Overall, the functionality is rich but may require additional work to integrate applications that are not included as standard, especially in the Reach module.

Integrations with enterprise business applications are available for ServiceNow, Workday and Salesforce. These are accessed through the Everywhere Panel (see Scenario 1) which can host several integrated applications in different widgets; helpfully the Everywhere Panel is also available as an app in Teams. We were shown the ServiceNow integration in more detail, where people see a list of their open tickets and can create a new ticket. The experience works well both on mobile and in the SharePoint platform. Although the user can see progress made on open tickets, responses come via email and links take users into the ServiceNow platform.

Integrations with popular collaboration and communication tools are available in the SharePoint module. A simple integration with Slack and Workplace by Meta displays content within a web part and the Everywhere Panel; there is a 'Social' web part which displays content from various public social media channels. The SharePoint module integrates with Box, Dropbox and Google Drive, displaying content within dedicated web parts. Other useful out-of-the-box integrations include a configurable RSS feed, integration with video platforms such as Vimeo, with stock photography sites like Getty Images, plus an integration with Google Maps and OpenStreetMap to insert maps into SharePoint pages.

Another integration to highlight is with Mo, an external provider of employee recognition software (see also Scenario 3 for a screenshot). The functionality from Mo is accessed through web parts in the SharePoint module. These enable employees at all levels to share and celebrate moments that matter; employees can give feedback to colleagues or nominate them for a reward, which they can then turn into actual value in an online gift shop. A 'manager assistant' helps them with insights about their team. Managers can set up regular 'boosts', for instance a weekly message to appreciate a team member. We like the functionality on offer but would like to see more integration with other areas within LiveTiles to reach its full potential.

For customers and partners who want to go beyond what's available out of the box, LiveTiles includes a powerful connector framework with a drag-and-drop interface. There is also a fully documented API that allows developers to build plugins for the Reach module. Alternatively, LiveTiles also supports Power Automate connectors as a means to integrate with additional applications through standard Microsoft functionality.

The integration with ServiceNow gives users an overview of their tickets and an option to create a new ticket from within the Everywhere Panel.

The depth of integrations with Microsoft applications varies between the SharePoint and Reach modules. The SharePoint module makes full use of the underlying SharePoint features, and a rich collection of web parts makes it possible to display content such as standard SharePoint news articles alongside content created anywhere in LiveTiles. This also includes a web part to make Viva Engage content available in a community in the SharePoint intranet.

The Microsoft 365 integrations in Reach aren't quite as deep, however; they are limited to the integrations with MS Teams as discussed below. For organisations only using Reach, this means that they will have to rely on the built-in integration platform or on additional configuration using Power Automate.

LiveTiles includes many web parts to build attractive intranet pages in SharePoint.

The LiveTiles platform offers different ways to work with Teams. Both SharePoint and Reach modules are available as apps within Teams, and the 'Everywhere Panel' can be accessed there. The Reach chat feature (see Scenario 8) and notifications are also accessible from Teams, bringing all company chat together in a single place.

Notifications from LiveTiles are integrated within the Activity Feed in MS Teams.

Viva Connections is supported through a set of simple but useful dashboard cards. There are cards to launch a people search directly from the dashboard, to view office locations, and to access content such as news articles and events from the Reach app. This is yet another way to bring content from LiveTiles to the end user, and will be appreciated by organisations that are using the Viva Connections dashboard as a primary entry point, especially on mobile devices through the MS Teams app. Other products in the Viva suite are not integrated.

Overall, the M365 integrations work well in the SharePoint module but are limited in Reach. There is flexibility to surface content in different places however; as an example, Reach news articles can be made available in the Reach app, in a web part within the SharePoint module, directly into Teams or in the Viva Connections dashboard. Organisations will have to think ahead about which approach works best for their various audiences, before jumping into implementation.
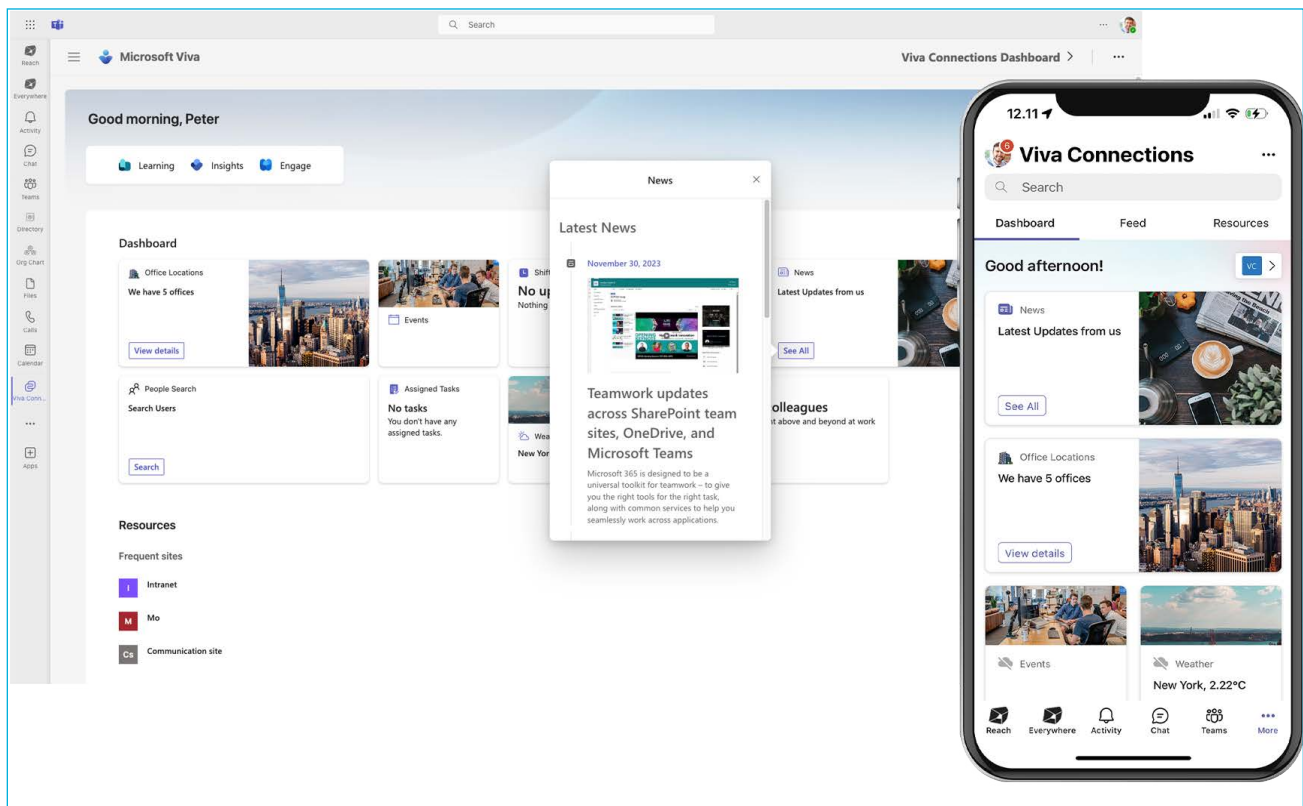
Cards in the Viva Connections dashboard give access to content from the Reach module, such as latest news.
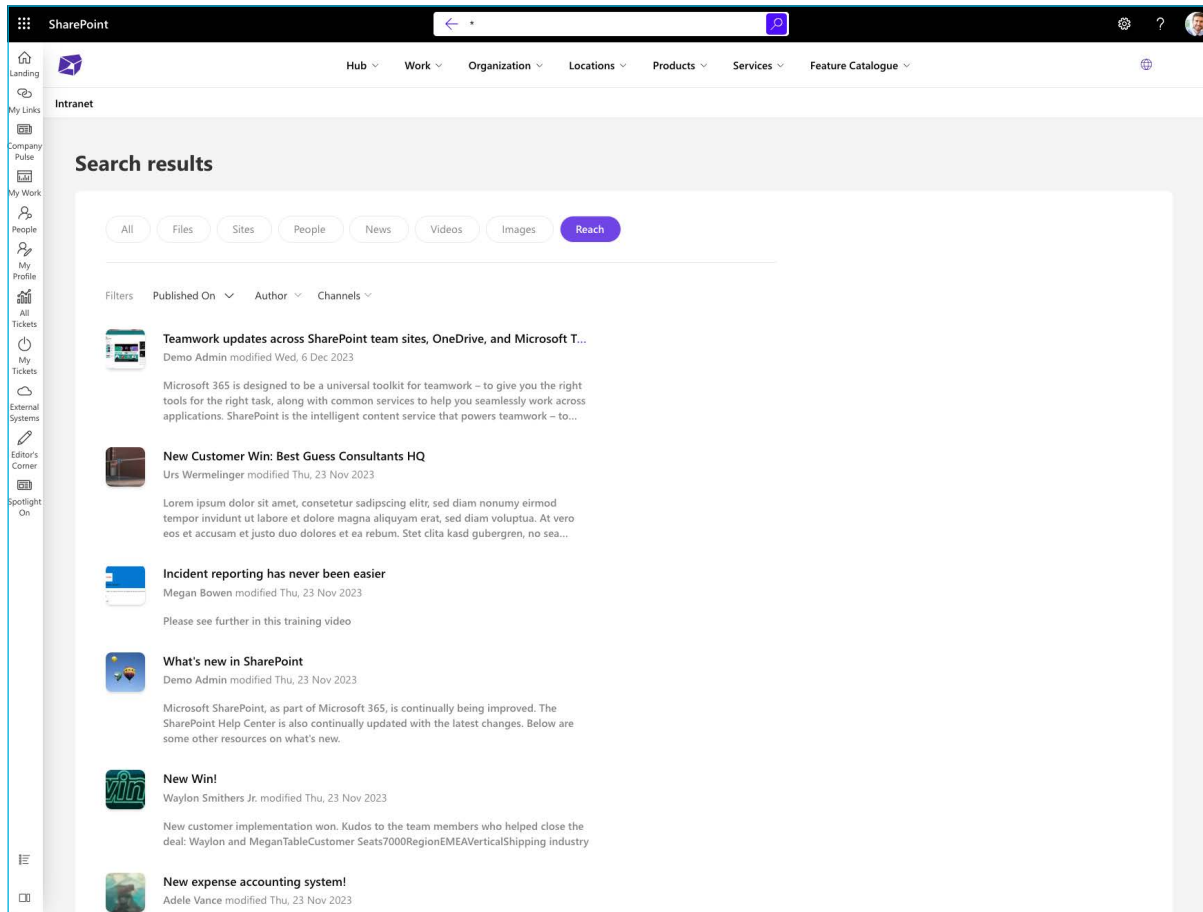
*The SharePoint module of LiveTiles uses standard Microsoft Search
with some limited branding and customisation of filters.*

The search experience in LiveTiles is different in the SharePoint module compared to Reach. In the SharePoint module, LiveTiles have chosen to use the standard Microsoft Search experience, which is a change from previous versions of this report. Some limited branding is applied to the search results page, but the functionality relies entirely on Microsoft's implementation. The same applies to the management of all search-related features such as bookmarks and keywords in the SharePoint term store. Some of the templates within LiveTiles include a contextual search box, which is useful to limit the scope of a search to a predefined area such as a knowledge base or a policy library.

The search experience for mobile users in Reach is different. Search results are presented in a card-based layout, with a number of filtering options to drill down further. We like the integration of the SharePoint term store within Reach, which means that keywords and taxonomies stored in SharePoint can be managed from within Reach and applied to Reach content, to influence the search results. Accessing the search window is not consistent across the module though; there is a search menu item to access the global search, and in some places there is a search box or a search icon to access a contextual search. We found the different search options on mobile less intuitive than in the SharePoint desktop module.

Federated search is achieved using the standard Microsoft approach through Graph connectors. LiveTiles uses this technology to add content from Reach as a tab onto the search results page in the SharePoint module. There is no federation in the other direction though; search results in Reach do not include SharePoint-based content. The Microsoft approach can be taken to federate other content sources in the SharePoint module using third-party connectors. LiveTiles also integrates with enterprise search providers Coveo and BA Insight, which will be of interest to large and complex organisations who have invested in enterprise search.

People search and user profile management are areas of strength and the focus of LiveTiles Directory, a separate module but included in the pricing submitted for this review. It's a feature-rich module for organisations that value extensive and accurate profile data. By encouraging users to update their profiles, colleagues can be confident that they will find the right people when they search. The tool includes a powerful profile search, with an intelligent type-ahead search box, filtering and sorting capabilities, and an attractive presentation of search results. There is also a feature to export search results into a CSV format.
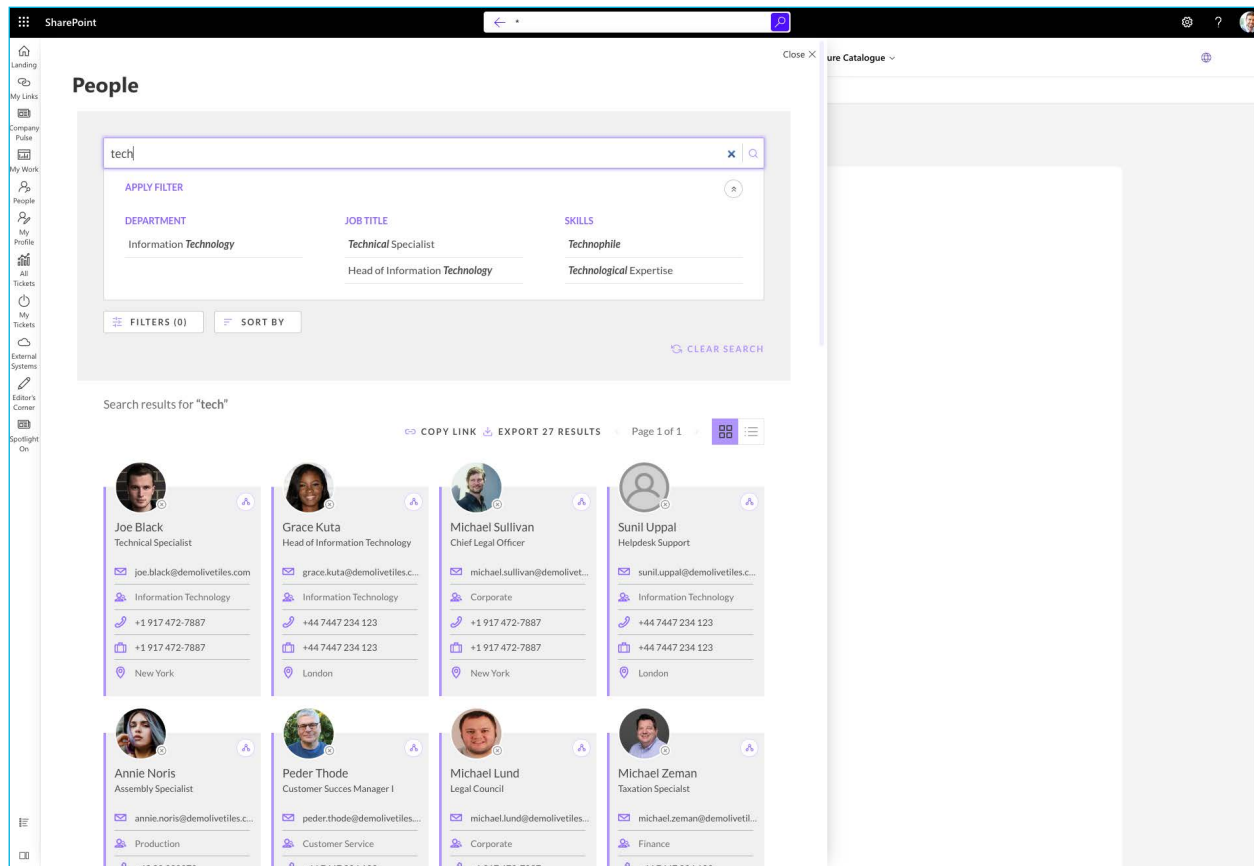
A well-designed and powerful people search function with filtering and sorting capabilities.

Individual profiles show a completeness rating and a link to add further content. Clicking the link will open a dialogue box where the missing fields are presented and where inline help explains why data needs to be added or updated. Data fields are structured, for example to add a location from a dropdown, and this structure can vary based on country and location, which is useful for telephone numbers and addresses. Field content can also vary based on department, for instance presenting marketing employees with 'InDesign' as a skill, while IT colleagues would see 'Jira' instead.

We like the usage of bot technology to help with keeping profiles up to date. 'Hyperbot' will send email notifications to users, reminding them to complete their profile or to regularly review it. The frequency and tone of the bot's messages can be configured. It's also possible to select users who should not receive automated updates, which we can see would be useful to protect senior stakeholders. Email content is editable and tailorable. Users are able to confirm their details via the link or reply by email to say that details are correct. A health checker dashboard is available to an HR or line manager to follow up on progress.

Finally, the product also includes a fully featured org chart with drill-down and zoom possibilities. A noteworthy feature is the ability to track additional relationships between people other than the formal manager. This allows organisations to track and visualise dotted lines, for example.

In conclusion, we find the search experience in LiveTiles solid but somewhat disjointed. The people search functionality in LiveTiles Directory is clearly an area of strength, and the choice to use standard Microsoft Search in the SharePoint module is defendable. In contrast, the search experience in Reach is less strong and inconsistent with the other modules.

On their profile page, users see a completeness percentage and are guided to add the missing information.
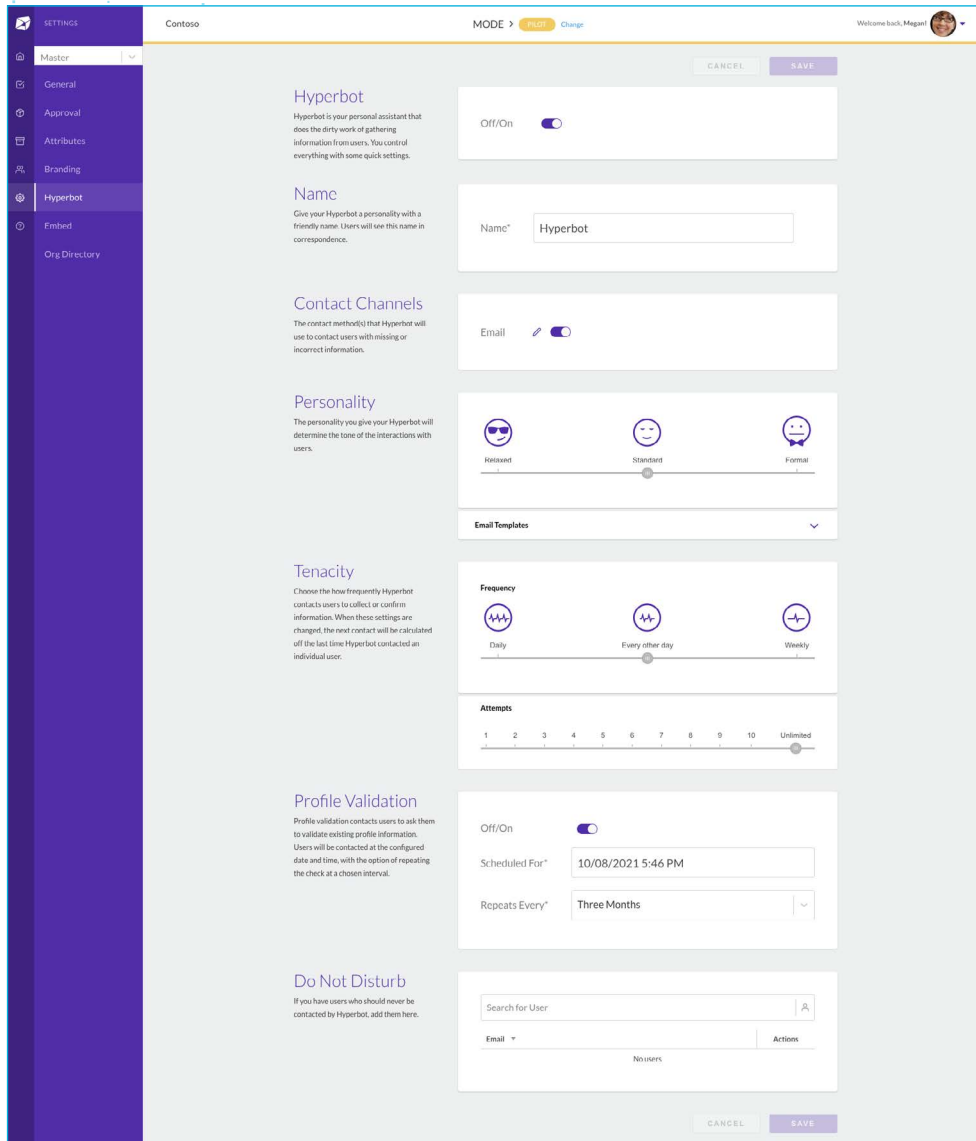
*LiveTiles' 'Hyperbot' is highly configurable, including its personality
(tone of voice) and tenacity (frequency of reminders).*
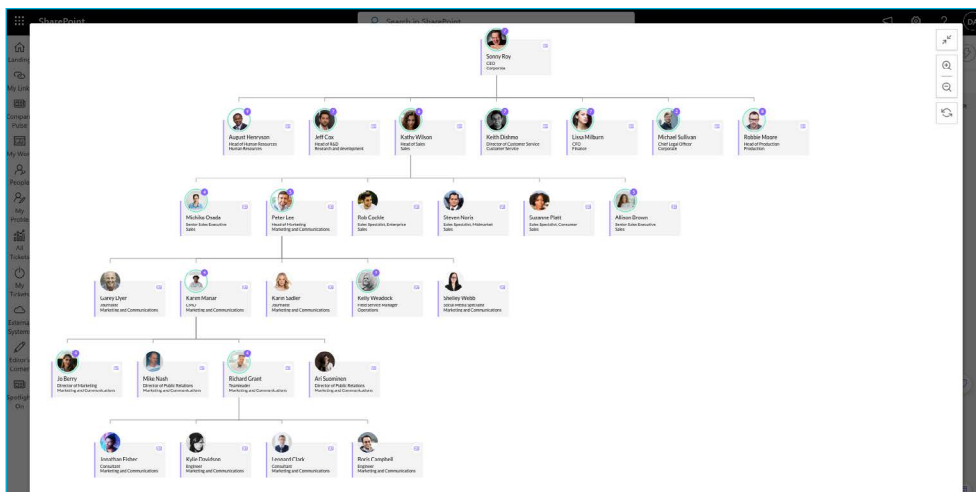
*LiveTiles' org chart displays the complete hierarchy of an organisation,
with an option to zoom in on a particular area.*

3.5

6. ADMINISTRATOR EXPERIENCE
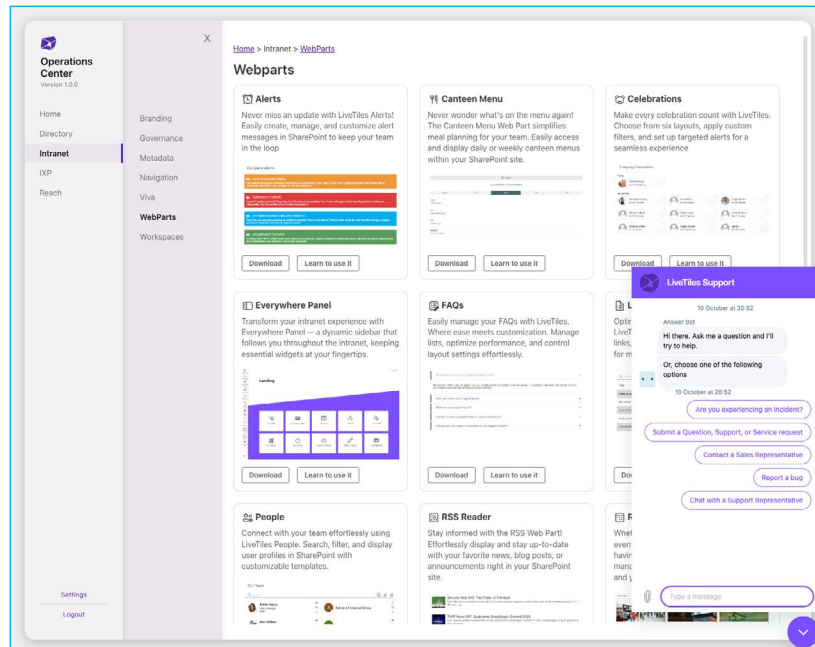
The 'Operation Center' unifies the management of the different LiveTiles modules and has an integrated chat with the Support desk.

A centralised 'Operation Center' manage users, permissions and audiences through a single user interface for both Reach and SharePoint modules. Not all admin functionality is integrated yet; for instance, settings that control the activation of certain features in Reach are handled within a separate Reach Admin tool. We would like to see all admin functionality available within a unified Operation Center.

The Operation Center allows admins to access all the LiveTiles-specific web parts and make them available to content creators for building content pages. Admins don't have to be a technical expert to use the site or page-level admin functionality; however, training will be needed to make sure they get the best out of the product.

Managing page layouts in the SharePoint module uses the standard modern SharePoint experience. A range of additional web parts are available to help present information in an engaging way. Intranet managers can see built-in heatmaps that show which web parts are popular, and use the tool to intelligently rearrange web parts based on usage statistics. Admins also have a straightforward interface to edit elements such as the mega menu and Everywhere Panel. See Scenario 2 for creating pages in Reach.

A governance dashboard provides content owners with a simple interface to manage their content in Reach and SharePoint; expiry dates can be checked, and content unpublished if it has become outdated. Reminders are sent to content owners when their content is due to expire, but additional features around the transfer of ownership of content would be useful.

Multilingual functionality is comprehensive, assuming publishers follow the recommended approach of using Reach functionality for creating content. Publishers can choose to manually add translations that are then saved alongside the original language version, and automated translation based on the Azure translation service is used to generate a draft version. Based on the user's preferred language settings, content will be presented in their preferred language where available. Automated translation is available, for instance to translate social content on the fly. A workflow to notify a translator if the original is updated is easy to set up.
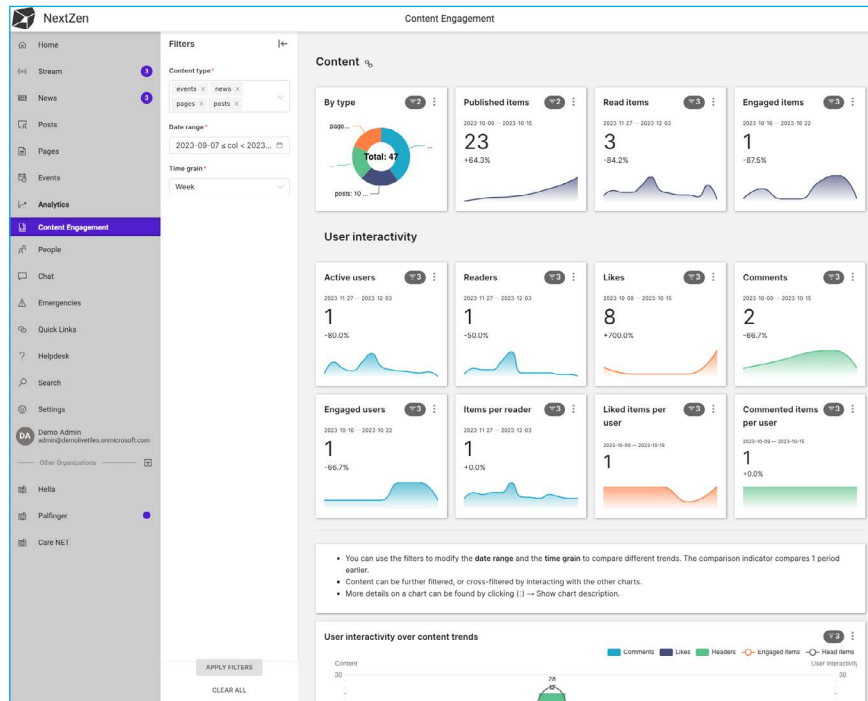
Example of one of several reports and dashboards available within LiveTiles.

LiveTiles includes a comprehensive analytics module that has much potential for content authors and communicators. It currently provides detailed dashboards only for content stored in the Reach CMS. Some reports covering content residing in SharePoint have recently been added, but the depth of these reports is still limited. LiveTiles says that this will be further enhanced in future releases.

Two dashboards are available out of the box; optionally admins can create their own custom reports. The first dashboard focuses on adoption of the platform and engagement with its content. The adoption section shows how many users are invited, registered, and active on the platform. The engagement section has more details on number of likes, shares and posts created over different time periods.

A second dashboard provides detailed insights into news articles and will be of particular interest to internal communicators. An overview section shows statistics on the most successful news articles and engagement metrics over a given period. Communicators can also filter by campaign, to show the performance of larger initiatives. Drilling down into an individual article gives insights into how users have interacted with the content, whether they scrolled down to the end, and how they responded to an integrated poll. There are no reports on activity or employee sentiment in groups and communities though; this would be a useful addition.

Mandatory reads are supported in two different ways. A 'confirm' option is available on news articles and content pages, with a downloadable list of users who have confirmed they've read the content. It's also possible to make certain policies or procedures mandatory to read for a particular group of users. There are some useful features to track who has acknowledged reading the document, and send reminders to those that haven't, but this functionality is in a different area of the product, not integrated with the other analytics.

In the Reach module there is a report where communicators see a list of popular search terms used within Reach. For searches within the SharePoint module, LiveTiles relies on the standard reports available from Microsoft in the M365 admin centre.

3.5

8. MOBILE & FRONTLINE SUPPORT
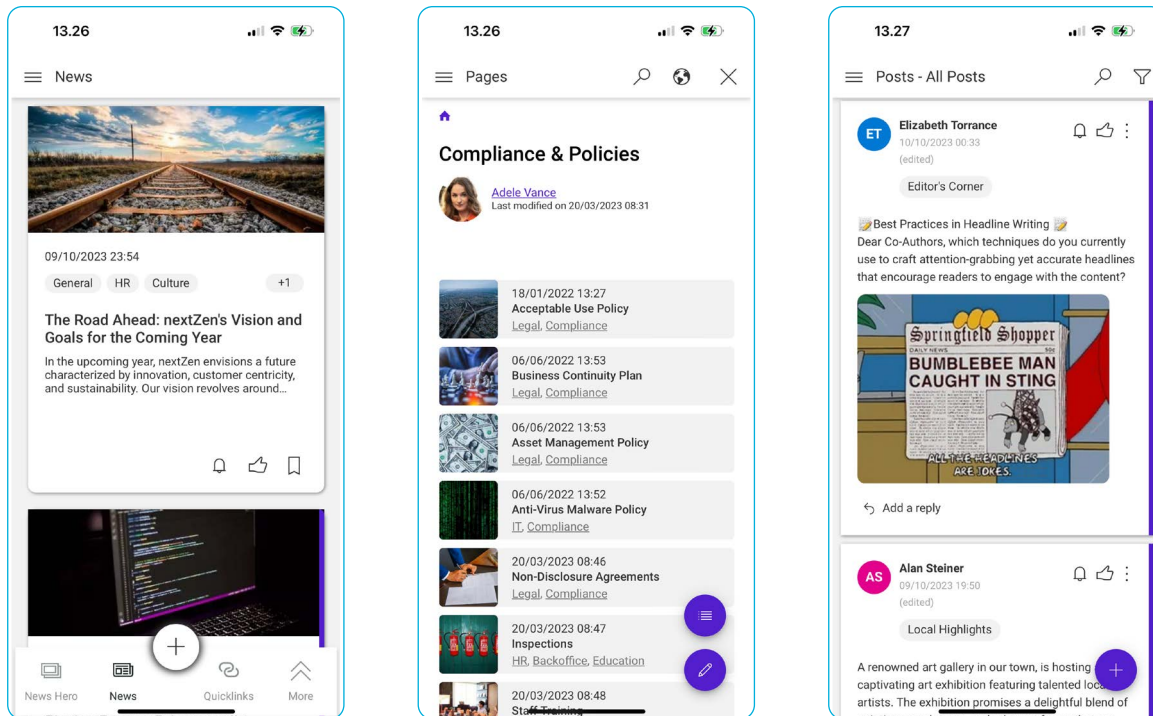
Different views of the LiveTiles mobile app: news articles, content pages, and social posts.

This scenario broadly covers Reach functionality, which is what LiveTiles recommends for mobile and frontline requirements. For those wanting the SharePoint intranet module on mobile there is no native app, but the site is fully responsive and can also be accessed through the Teams app.

Reach has been optimised for mobile, although it is also available on desktop. A comprehensive range of options are supported to give users access. The product can work together with Microsoft 365 and Entra ID if desired, but a Microsoft licence is not required, and many other identity management systems are supported. It's also possible to upload a list of users, or users can be invited or self-register via a link or QR code.

Reach has an intuitive, card-based user interface with a single-column layout. Icons at the bottom of the screen give access to often used areas, such as 'my news' or 'my apps'. Other functionality is reached through a clear left-hand side navigation menu. Central to the app is the 'Stream' which brings news, events and social content together in a single feed. Reference content is targeted to specific profiles, so frontline workers see what is relevant to them. LiveTiles says that Reach performs well in low-bandwidth situations often faced by frontline workers. We found the current user interface slightly dated, but were shown a new and more contemporary upgrade of the Reach look and feel, which is due for imminent release (see the screenshot in Scenario 1).

Reach offers a basic chat feature, which works well on mobile and is also available via Teams. This will be valuable to organisations where those working in Teams need to communicate with colleagues without a Microsoft licence. The Groups feature (see Scenario 3) will be attractive for frontline staff who need to discuss and share within a group of colleagues; it's a useful alternative to shadow IT such as WhatsApp.

The layout can be configured within the Reach admin pane, where admins control what content is displayed in the navigation, and what functionality is available. This is also where content targeting is managed. The Reach admin functionality is not yet fully integrated into LiveTiles' Operation Center', making the admin experience slightly disjointed from other management areas.

THINGS TO BEAR IN MIND

The LiveTiles platform is primarily made up of two modules, but also includes other modules that do different things and perform in different ways. Overall, the user experience is good, the modules do work well together, and there are a lot of features to like across the platform. However, there are still differences that people, especially administrators, will need to get used to. LiveTiles is addressing this; a unified admin interface is now available for some, but not for all areas. Customers will also need to consider their needs and objectives carefully to make sure they select the right combination of modules, although LiveTiles and partners will offer advice.

There is a strong analytics platform which has the potential to provide communicators with in-depth, granular insights into adoption and campaign performance. A first step towards integration with the SharePoint part of the offering has been made since our last review, which is a positive evolution, but more will be needed to realise its full potential. LiveTiles says that this will be further addressed in future releases.

LiveTiles is an experienced vendor with a mature product that has grown in features over the years. Alongside LiveTiles, the market is changing rapidly as Microsoft keeps adding new functionality into its M365 and Azure ecosystem. We are pleased to see that the product continues to evolve compared to our previous review, and that new features, such as the Viva Connections cards, are being introduced. In other areas, such as search, LiveTiles has decided to retire its existing functionality in favour of Microsoft's own. We believe that LiveTiles will have to continue to make tough decisions about streamlining their offering in light of Microsoft's roadmap.

Overall, the LiveTiles platform offers a flexible set of modules that can be configured to offer businesses a suite of tools to match their needs. Given the breadth of functionality in the different modules presented to us, the price point is attractive to customers of all sizes.

Why choose this product

Although LiveTiles is making efforts to package the product attractively for smaller customers, we believe that the natural target market for the product are large and complex organisations with a diverse employee base and a broad range of needs for their digital workplace. LiveTiles and their partners have the experience of working with large global companies and will provide advice, customisation and additional integration work when required. Large organisations with a significant population of frontline workers will be interested in the mobile features in the Reach module and the attractive price point.

Vendor roadmap

Product Roadmap

Exciting focus areas for FY24 and beyond

Assistant & Notifications

Be where the users are. Leverage AI to create Hyper personalized notifications and triggers from various systems. Encouraging employees to take action in the moment. Synthesis all employee engagement and experience elements.

VIVA Connections

Access the most important features of your intranet via the VIVA Connections dashboard or without leaving Microsoft Teams. This personalized experience will save you time and improve productivity.

Everywhere Widget

The first iteration of the LiveTiles Everywhere Widget will center around a Hyper personalized user experience designed to fit all portals and pages. Placing the employee at the center.

Real-Time Analytics

Intranet data telemetry for user adoption and engagement. Help organisations drive deeper and more effective digital adoption and culture.

Search

Enhancing content discoverability with SharePoint Graph Connectors for Reach News, Posts, and Events, enabling content from these sources can be included in search results

Operations Center

The first iteration of the new intuitive admin center for all LiveTiles solutions and features. Highly scalable full-service hub hosting all our innovative employee experience features.

Integrate HR Information Systems (HRIS)

Support HRIS's as both a source and destination for profile data. This expands upon current AD options. Profile data is key to hyper personalization and talent management marketplaces.

UX / UI Update

All new UI/UX creating the most modern and engaging experiences for all workers. Increasing engagement, adoption and usability. Putting the employee experience at the center.

LiveTiles
Experiences

Product Roadmap - AI: Beyond the Hype

LiveTiles is delving deeper and going beyond just the buzzword, working on multiple interconnected initiatives, and implementing AI in our products that offer tangible benefits and robust ROI to our customers for FY24 and beyond.

Reach
Enhancing Internal Communications through AI

- **Content Enhancement:**
  AI-powered features for content generation, sentiment analysis, keyword generation, and more.

- **Engagement Analytics:**
  Post-publication insights on engagement metrics, keyword resonance, and audience demographics.

Intranet
Boosting Operational Efficiency and ROI

- **Governance & Automation:**
  AI to automate content management, categorize content, and handle duplications.

- **Content Personalization:**
  Suggestions based on user preferences, enhanced language translations with contextual understanding.

- **Enhanced Search:**
  State-of-the-art NLP models for improved content discovery, semantic search, and cross-product feature integration.

Analytics
Harnessing Data for Actionable Insights

- **Data Management:**
  Harnessing user-generated data across all products to fuel AI exploration and machine learning.

- **Behavioral Insights:**
  AI analytics for understanding user behavior, forecasting trends, and real-time reporting.

Assistant
Personalized AI Assistant with Smart Notifications

- **Smart Notifications:**
  Personalized AI assistant offering hyper personalized notifications and triggers from various systems.

- **Insights:**
  The assistant uses AI for sentiment analysis, content prioritization and filtering, providing a tailored view of user suggested activities.

- **Resource Prioritization:**
  Assistant employs AI to highlight learning resources and ensures timely policy reviews.

LiveTiles

Roadmap images provided by LiveTiles.

lumapps

FULLY STANDALONE

REQUIRES SHAREPOINT

OPTIONALLY WORKS WITH SHAREPOINT

FRONTLINE FOCUS

Typical deployment:

1,000+ employees

Company locations:

VISIT THE WEBSITE

The product in a nutshell

LumApps is a flexible, user-friendly solution that offers integration with both Google Workspace and M365 to unify your digital employee experience.

LumApps owned by LumApps

LumApps was launched in 2015. Headquartered in France, they are supported by a global implementation partner network. The vendor is both a Microsoft and Google partner, which is evident in the good integration options within the platform, and they are often a leading choice for Google Workspace clients looking to add intranet capabilities.

LumApps is a very flexible, feature-rich solution, which delivers an excellent user experience with a consumer-grade flair at times and a decent mobile app. Publishers and admins will also find much to like, as news and other content creation is simple, with good templates and publication workflows. Search is also a highlight as it can index external sources or use a third-party search engine such as Microsoft's. There are versatile branding / theming options without the need to code CSS, and LumApps supports multi-brand needs well. A core feature is fully integrated community

'Spaces', where individuals can work together on any topic, and we feel offer a great solution to organisations looking to support mature communities of practice. LumApps Play is also worthy of note, providing a capable corporate video management feature.

Some other aspects of LumApps have improved in the past few years but still have a way to go. The analytics were given a makeover in 2023, with a new content-oriented dashboard that shows how different content types are performing across the site, but search reporting is lacking. Integrations with third-party tools for transactions are also patchy – the new 'Companion' app and micro-services model provide a good foundation, but it is not yet fully exploited.

Overall, LumApps would work for any mid-sized or large organisation seeking a flexible, feature-rich solution that can unify a digital workplace ecosystem into one branded user experience.

Pricing

PRICE BAND

250 users	$ $ $ $
1,000 users	$ $ $ $
5,000 users	$ $ $ $
20,000 users	$ $ $ $

These prices are indicative, offering a comparison of the products featured in this report only. Please contact the vendor for a bespoke quote.

PRICING MODEL

Subscription – price band based on number of users.

COSTS TYPICALLY

Weighted towards the start (during the 'project phase'), then much lower for the remaining term.

DISCOUNTS

Multi-year commitments

PRICE INCLUDES

Services are not automatically included and are scoped per individual customer.

Product type

Majority ready-to-run

Branding opportunities

All branding, complex options

Base systems

Fully standalone	Requires SharePoint	Optionally works with SharePoint	Other*

* Also works with Google Workspace

Sectors

Accountancy, banking and finance	Business, consulting and management	Healthcare	Information technology	Retail

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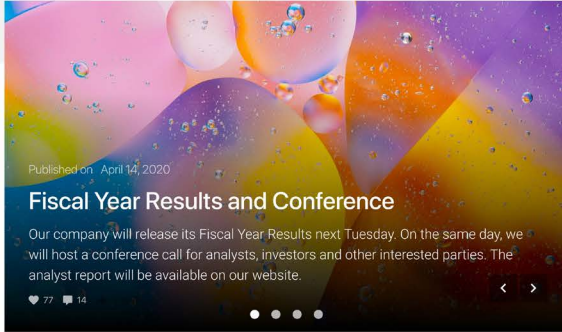
Welcome Back Jenny!

April 16, 2020 • +3,4%

Live Stream In Progress - April 2020 - Global All Hands

Published on April 14, 2020
Fiscal Year Results and Conference
Our company will release its Fiscal Year Results next Tuesday. On the same day, we will host a conference call for analysts, investors and other interested parties. The analyst report will be available on our website.

77   14

CEO Message

Published On April 10, 2020
Acme's 2020 Sustainability Strategy
Andrew Gardner discusses Acme's goals for becoming greener and more sustainable than ever before. Acme has undergone a remarkable evolution in the past five years...

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Published On April 15, 2020
Acme Banner Challenge
You've seen Amélie, right? The garden gnome disappears, only to start sending pictures from different places in the world. We want you to do the same, but instead of the gnome, it's the Acme banner!

37   8

Published On April 10, 2020
CFO And Co-Founder Adele Bissett Retiring
After 8 years serving Acme, Adele Bissett decided to retire to spend time with her husband and 4 kids. We will not forget all the things she did to help Acme grow accross all the regions and countries.

74   13

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My Workspace

Quick Access

Request Time Off | Report Travel Expenses | Employee Suggestion Box | Policies & Procedures

My Inbox

Mark Dry via LumApps
First Quarter Results and Q2 Objectives

Luca Benedetti
Dashboard Competition

Kristin Bennnet
Sync before Catch Up

Chloe Chevalier
Trip to Paris

Jasmin Reed
URGENT - UK Sales Coverage

Brooklyn Cooper
Planning next Open House

More

My Calendar

April

Thu 16
Follow Up
09:00am - 10:00am

Thu 16
Weekly Team Meeting
05:00pm - 06:00pm

Fri 17
Lunch with John
12:00pm - 01:30pm

Fri 17
Book Travel to Paris
02:00pm - 2:30pm

Mon 20
Catch Up Jenny / Kristin
08:00am - 09:30am
Let's have a breakfast at Leo's

More

My Tasks

☐ Book Paris Flight		04/17/20
☐ Check Hotel Paris		04/17/20
☐ Intro Email Georges		04/20/20
☐ Pick-up Print Shop		04/20/20
☐ Lunch Propos. Emily		04/20/20
☐ Slides Sales Cover		04/22/20
☐ Book Diner at The Dutch		04/23/20
☐ Expense Report March		04/23/20
☐ Slides Office Pres.		04/24/20
☑ Post Results article		04/14/20
☑ Send Report to Louis		04/13/20
☑ Plan WE in Paris		04/12/20

About Us
About
Careers
Sustainability

Privacy
Privacy Policy
Terms of Sale
Terms of Use

Security
Cyber Security Policy
Contact Security Policy
Store Safety

Contact Us
Phone
Email
Acme.com

COMPANY AND PRODUCT

Company details

Company
LumApps

ISO 27001 certified
Yes

Data residency
USA, Europe, Japan

Company founded
2015

Product launched
2015

Typical client size
1,000+ employees

Largest deployment so far
100,000+ employees
across the globe

Customers
Please see their website for details.

Partner locations
Please see their website for details.

Company locations
Lyon, France (HQ), USA,
France, UK, Japan

Product and technical details

Name of product
LumApps

Deployment

Client on-premises	Client private cloud	**Microsoft Azure**	Amazon Web Services	Vendor-hosted	Microsoft 365 tenant	**Other***

*GCP

Client data encrypted

In transit only	**In transit and at rest**	At rest only

Authentication supported

Entra ID	**ADFS**	**Okta**	Open ID	**Oauth**	**G Suite**	Other

App deployment

Google Play store	**Apple store**	**MDM**	**MAM**	Other

Accessibility
WCAG 2.1 compliant

Document library sources integrated

Box	Dropbox	Google Drive	SharePoint	OneDrive	Other

Optional integrated enterprise search engines

Coveo	Elastic	IBM	Lucidworks	Microsoft	Mindbreeze	Sinequa	Other*

* GCS

User interface multi-language

Pre-configured	Editable	Right to left script supported	Other*

*Translated on-the-fly in browser. Please [see their website](#) for a list of supported languages.

Content multi-language

Machine translation for publishers	Machine translation for end users	Editable machine translation for publishers	Manual creation for publishers	Right to left script	Other

Set-up and support

Set-up process for new clients

A new client is set up usually with a 3 month or so implementation, using LumApps 'DREAM' methodology. LumApps say they will: Define your current state communications landscape, understand your vision for success, focus on your persona and your main use cases, and identify any pain points and gaps. Recommend design and user journey, content strategy, and governance based on our best practices, that support your vision, goals, and objectives. Execute the orderly deployment of your new digital workplace with your team, along with your chosen deployment plan. Train, enable, and partner with your team to gain comfort in Administering and Maturing your digital workplace.

Current version

Sixth release of 2023

Product updates

Every 6 weeks.

Product update process

All customers are updated at once. On very few occasions, some customers choose to not activate features. All feature activations are controlled by customers in the Features Management section (admins only).

Reverse-out options

Client contacts legal and receives an export of all their data.

Technical support

Email support	Phone support	Chat support	Online portal	24/7 support	Office hours only

User community

LumApps' online Customer Community (The Hive). The vendor says this "provides a community where customers and LumApps experts can learn, share, network, grow, and find purpose - together with empathy and without judgment. This community is set up to empower all customers to learn tips and tricks and get updates on upcoming and new features".

Voice of the vendor

LumApps says: "LumApps is the only scalable intranet platform that enables your organization to thrive, engages every employee with ultra-personalized communications, and helps them be more efficient throughout their workday.

We accomplish this by delivering a Digital Headquarters that allows your Internal Communications team to execute their engagement and productivity strategies and an Employee Headquarters that empowers your employees to design and own an efficient work experience that works for them, regardless of their device.

The pixel-perfect LumApps employee intranet:

- Orchestrates effective media-rich communications across your employees' preferred tools (email, Microsoft Teams, Google Chat, or Slack), ensuring employee alignment and engagement, measuring and improving impact over time.
- Delivers a modern, smart, secure, and scalable fully branded intranet for all employees to engage, share, and collaborate, regardless of device (desktop, tablet, or smartphone), language, location, and role.
- Creates a unified workforce via consistent onboarding and a sense of company culture no matter where or how employees work.
- Boosts your workforce productivity and satisfaction by offering an environment where employees get their work done with guided experiences and streamlined access to mission-critical data, apps, and resources.

Leveraging deep integrations with Microsoft 365 and Google Workspace, LumApps can be fully connected to the organization's technology environment with 50+ integrations with AODocs, Box, Comeen (digital signage), DocuSign, Jira, SAP SuccessFactors, ServiceNow, Trello, Workday, Zendesk, and more."

Voice of the customer

Multiple customers praised LumApps for the quality of the editor experience. "It's easy to create content, and the widgets are well thought through" said one. Another added "It's so easy for our employees to use that I am able to support 24K of them as the sole community manager and system administrator". Those managing more complex intranets also seemed to feel at ease with the features. One customer highlighted the way they could use metadata to create a customised user experience for each region, adding "I was even able to get a bit more granular and create a custom UX based upon market, so that…teams get content that is not only applicable to their region, but the market in which they serve".

LumApps' track record in working with Google Workspace was picked up by several customers too, though a shortfall in other integrations such as Workday was also mentioned. The community features, though praised, were also on customer wish lists to go further. For example, one asked for "backend tools for administrators and community managers, so we can work more efficiently and effectively (e.g., better bulk change / updates management)". Other improvement requests often centred on governance and analytics. "Better analytics, as the current ones are very basic" said one. Another echoed this, wishing they could dispense with Google Analytics.

As a vendor, customers appreciated that "the LumApps platform is consistently adding new features that enhance the employee experience and make communications easier and more effective". Most reports about support from LumApps were positive. "The vendor has been easy to work with in addressing our needs and questions" said one. "Excellent. We feel heard and understood when we express our needs. It's a reliable, stable platform that continues to evolve in innovative and valuable ways. The LumApps product team is very attuned to both customer needs now and what they will be in the future", said another. And a third said "the entire LumApps team has been fantastic. The customer success team to sales, to the technical support team, they have been supportive and adaptable".

SCENARIOS & SCORES

Please see the Scenarios below for more detail on each of these.

SCENARIO AND SCORE	KEY BENEFITS	IMPROVEMENTS / CONSIDERATIONS
4 **1. User Experience & Visual Appeal**	An attractive, contemporary look with multiple branding options.	No support for mega menus. Numerous small icons may make the interface look fiddly, though can be removed.
3.5+ **2. Publishing & Communications Management**	Easy but powerful publishing options and rich audience targeting.	More could be done to help distributed teams co-ordinate news.
3+ **3. Community & Engagement**	Very strong community 'Spaces' capability, well suited to communities of practice.	Some employee engagement features are configurations of the Spaces tool and lack depth.
2.5+ **4. Integrations & Services (Including M365)**	Multiple integration options, with versatile card-based interfaces. Strong integration with Google Workspace.	The multiple options for integration need careful consideration – not all connectors are available via all routes.
3+ **5. Information Finding & Search**	Good people and information finding options. Plays nicely with Microsoft.	Few search management features.
4 **6. Administrator Experience**	Good range of controls. Easy to administer without needing technical knowledge.	Adding page widgets can feel fiddly at times. No workflows to support manual translation.
3+ **7. Analytics**	Clear, well-presented analytics.	Those with advanced needs will have to export data into another package.
3.5 **8. Mobile & Frontline Support**	An attractive mobile app with good on-boarding support. Potential to use micro-apps with the digital assistant to connect to frontline services.	No specific frontline services and the digital assistant is an extra cost. Some elements of the mobile navigation are hidden.
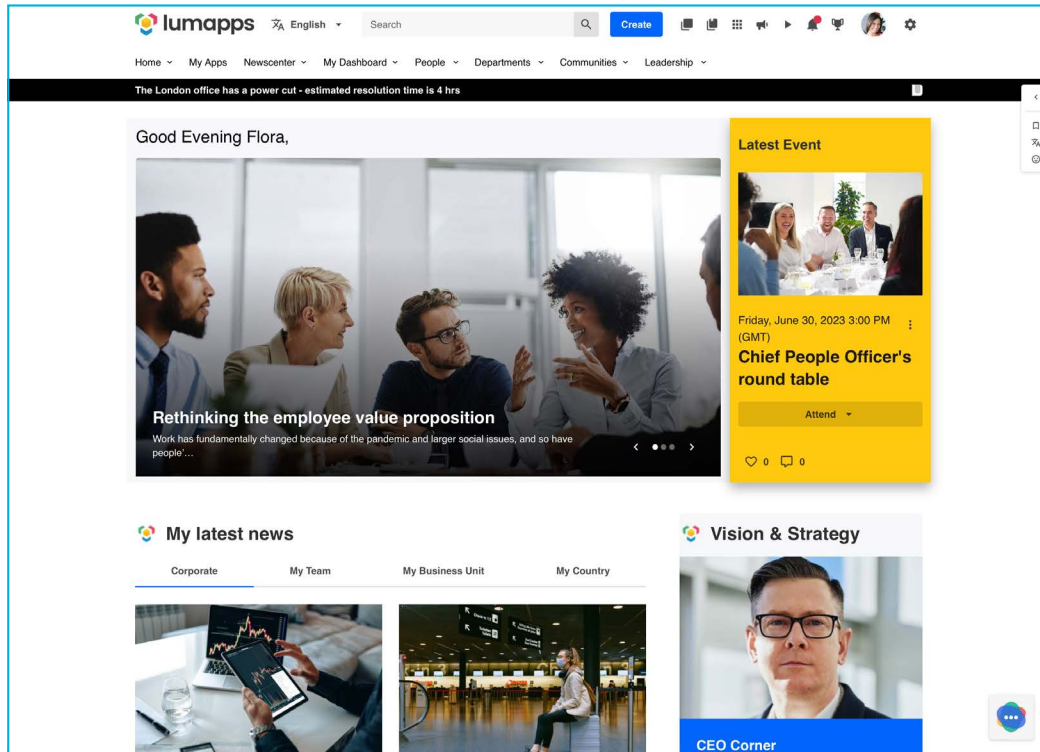
An example home page in LumApps.

LumApps has an appealing user interface with a modern feel and excellent options for configuration. We really like the tooltips that explain important icons and the help guides that give end users more details on how to use LumApps. We are less keen on the small app buttons on the top row and an additional side-panel for more controls as these add clutter and are likely to be overlooked. Customers can elect to remove these, however.

Content and navigation menus can be targeted to end users, for example by location or department, based on user profile properties and defined groups from Entra ID, Okta, Google or an HR system. Dynamic targeting groups can also be created based on defined user profile property rules, giving plenty of flexibility. The navigation supports icons and sub-navigation items are shown, cascading with a mouse-over. A mega menu is not available, and although LumApps works well without one we do feel customers would appreciate a choice. Breadcrumb navigation can be added via a widget. Within the content, navigation is supported with call-to-action widgets or quick link lists.

Notifications are a highlight, with an extensive set of controls for each user. This included the ability to set "do not disturb" times, and switch between the notification bell and emails for different types of activity, such as comments and mentions. Notifications are neatly aggregated into a notification centre, and this includes integrated third-party applications, such as Microsoft 365 (see Scenario 4 for more).

We were shown a range of branding styles that LumApps have created for customers, highlighting the platform's versatility to cover everything from very formal to fun and friendly. We like the fact that LumApps supports multi-brand scenarios, using profile-based targeting to give users the most appropriate brand experience. The branding options encompass logo, colours, borders, spacing, shadows etc. and can be applied per site or targeted based on the user profile. We were impressed at just how much can be done via the admin controls, without resorting to CSS coding.
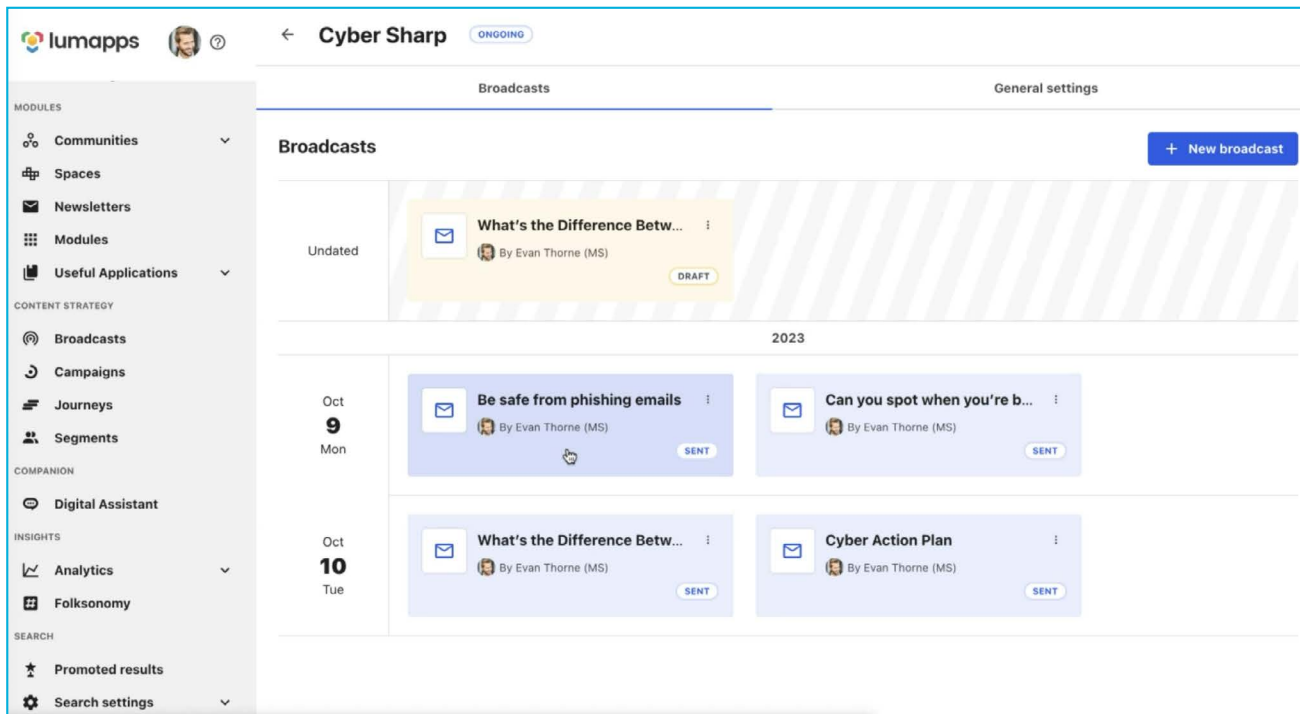
Campaigns can be created as a series of broadcasts shown in a calendar.

LumApps generally supports publishers well with a good combination of quick-publishing and more sophisticated options to meet the needs of occasional and full-time communicators. Targeting is very flexible, and video support is a highlight, but the news management features are not so strong.

We like that authors have the choice to switch edit UX modes as they work, from a simple toolbar to sophisticated editing controls. Creating a news item is template-driven to help with consistency of layout and metadata. These defaults can all be overridden if desired, and the full complement of widgets is available to add to news stories, including videos, surveys and files.

Targeting for news is comprehensive. News articles show up on the home page or landing pages for those specific user groups. News articles can be categorised by metadata such as topics and topics can be followed by end users, as well as by communities or sites. The same capabilities extend to reference pages too, with very flexible options to make content visible only to selected audiences, and to push out notifications when a page changes.

Crisis communications use 'alerts', a specific content type that has a predefined template and can be audience targeted. Alerts appear on the home page as a banner, which we feel are quite subtle so could be overlooked, however push notifications into the app would help support these messages.

A content overview dashboard shows publishers all their published, unpublished, and expired news articles, but LumApps lacks the kind of tools found in similar products to support distributed comms teams, such as calendars and kanban boards. Publication start and end dates, and approval workflows are available to support content life cycle management.

Publishing in LumApps is flexible with many options for metadata and audience targeting.

A communication campaign feature helps plan and execute a series of broadcasts across multiple channels, including email, the dedicated app, Google chat and Teams. They are all supported with goal setting and analytics. A simple form allows editors to create the message, choose audiences from a pick list and select when the message should be sent. One nice feature we like is that AND / OR rules can be set up to dynamically create an audience segment, and the tool will calculate how many people will receive the message. You can even include or exclude people based on a CSV file, which gives interesting potential for lightweight integration with other systems. Broadcasts can be scheduled in an attractive calendar view, and in time LumApps see broadcasts also replacing their current newsletter tool.

Social advocacy functionality allows 'ambassadors' (defined end users) to share specific content to their personal social network on social media platforms, reaching news beyond the intranet. We like that LumApps has cleverly taken care of firewall issues by making selected content available for sharing.

Campaigns can use a combination of channels.

Video-based content is also well supported by the optional add-on LumApps Play, which provides a secure corporate alternative to YouTube or Vimeo . We were impressed with the range of controls in place; videos can only be viewed through LumApps and can't be shared externally though a way to securely surface videos in other web applications is on the roadmap. Results can also be hidden from search or certain audiences, and even downloads can be optionally blocked.

The video gallery provides thumbnail previews of videos in the platform along with title, duration, and number of views. There is also a search to help find specific content. The video gallery can be configured to show in the main menu of LumApps' mobile app as well. Videos can be embedded in published content or shared via a community post as you would expect. When viewed on mobile, an overlay feature means people can complete other tasks in the background while the video is playing.

Video details can be edited and subtitles added via the video manager.

Admins upload videos via the video manager and then edit options for title, description and who can see the content. As with other content types, multiple languages are supported for text related to the video and this extends to subtitles as well (auto-translate is on the roadmap). Subtitles can be automatically generated (using Google or Azure services) or manually added via SRT / VTT files. Chapters can be added to help people navigate through longer videos. Calls to action enable links to other content to be overlayed on the video too.

Play comes with some analytics that shows the number of views over time where people dropped off while playing the video. The latter includes a neat animation synchronised to the video so you can see exactly what was happening in the clip when people turned off.
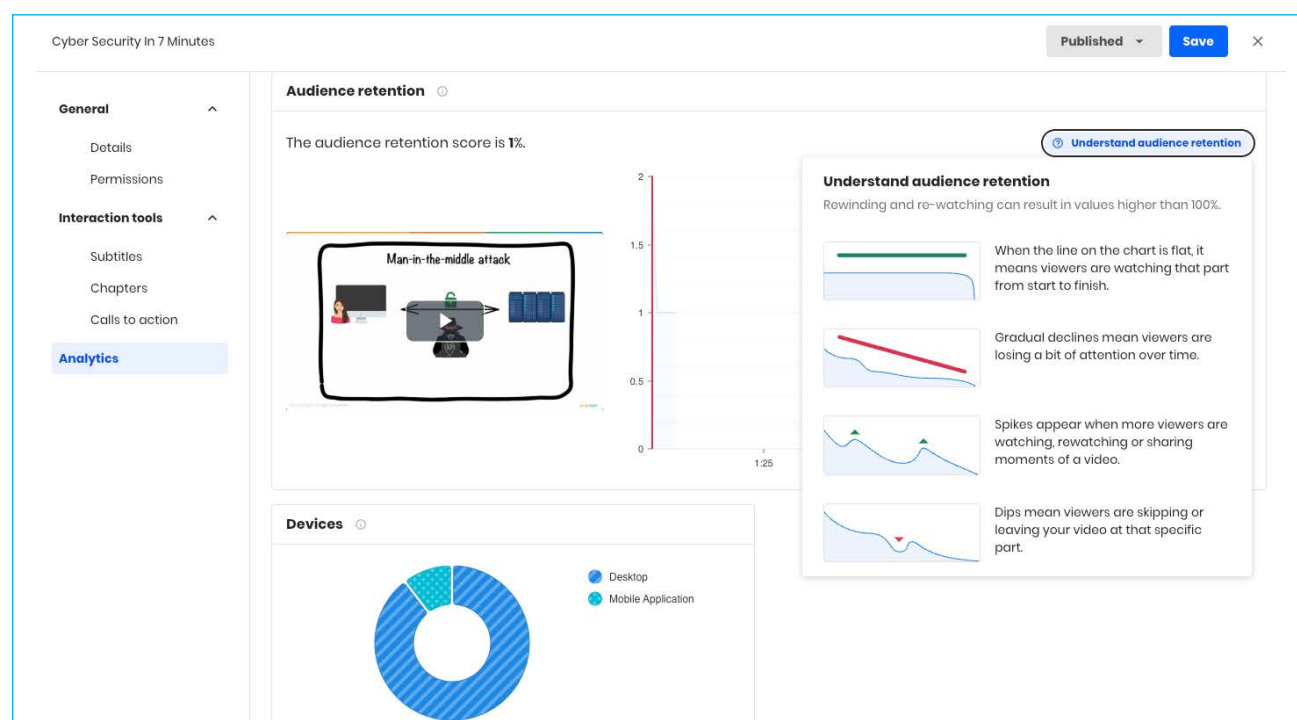
Analytics show views over time and where in the clip people stopped watching.
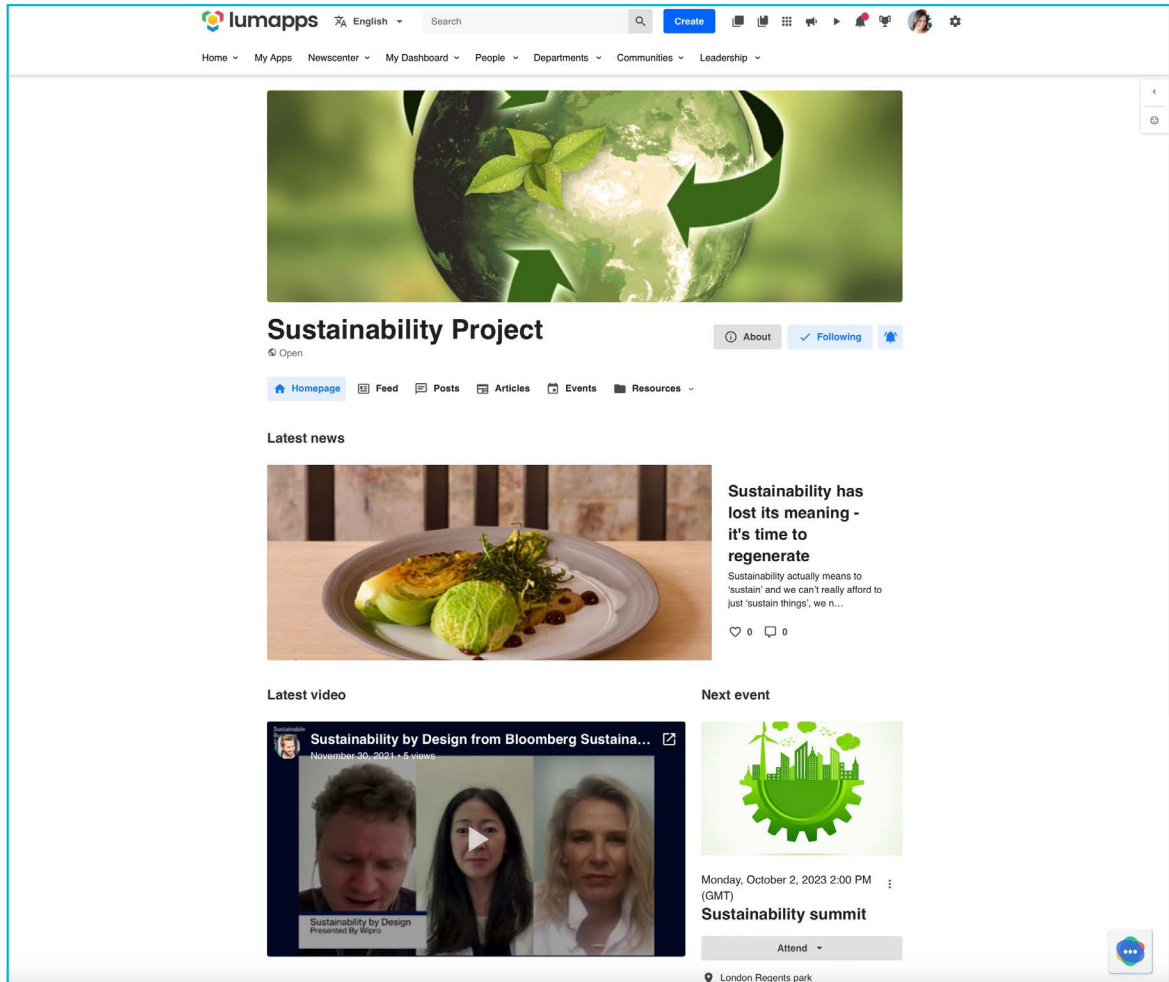
LumApps Spaces provide a rich destination for communities.

Communities have always been a big part of LumApps' approach, both for small private groups and large, company-wide conversations. LumApps have evolved these into a feature called 'Spaces' and these are fully integrated into the overall user experience, including the native mobile app.

In contrast to the social experience on other platforms, Spaces in LumApps can have a well-structured entry page and in effect work like a sub-site on other platforms. Visitors don't just see threaded discussions, but also structured content such as documents, quick links and expert articles. This gives the potential for the platform to more strongly support the original concept of 'Communities of Practice', where contributors curate and showcase a body of knowledge.

Several content types are available in Spaces. Simple posts can be created for information, an event, idea, and question, and posts can include tags and @mentions. More advanced features are included too, such as on-the-fly translation and the ability to attach videos. Events are also nicely presented and can be added to personal calendars.

'Discussions' within spaces can be set to be moderated, meaning that only specific users can create posts and everyone else can just comment or like. Any end user can report a post, however, which is helpful where Spaces are open for anyone to contribute to. Prohibited words

can also be configured to block content in posts from being published and pattern-matching algorithms will intercept sensitive posts, for example if a credit card number is shared.

The interface for posts, articles and the feed timeline look very similar to consumer social media platforms so should be familiar to users, although the range of reactions is limited to a 'like' button, which is a little disappointing. Interactions in communities (and elsewhere) trigger notifications that show up in the end user's notification centre, and employees have a good level of control over how these are managed.

A community Space can have an associated knowledge base of curated content.

For employee feedback, a lightweight survey widget is available along with a 'snap polls' widget that can be added to any page. More complex forms can be integrated, for example by embedding Microsoft Forms or Google Forms. For idea management and employee suggestions, the Spaces toolset is versatile enough to do a reasonably good job, for example with the ability to upvote and downvote ideas as well as comment on them. However, we missed the behind-the-scenes workflow found in more sophisticated offerings.

There are no dedicated features to engage new joiners or other specific user groups of an organisation; although much of this need can be addressed with existing tools and suitable content, such as dedicated onboarding Spaces and the 'Journeys' feature (see Scenario 4). However, we feel that individual blogging or a personal timeline could be better supported.

We liked the way that a community page can be designed to highlight high-quality resources too. For example, it can include a 'knowledge base' of best practice articles, a list of subject matter experts, and a Q&A area where the best answer can be highlighted.

LumApps spaces are versatile enough to be configured into a basic idea management centre.

The MyApps area is a user-configurable page of integration widgets.

The list of off-the-shelf integrations for LumApps is decent, including Salesforce, ServiceNow, Jira, Workday and Zendesk. As well as specific integration widgets, basic integration methods such as iframes and embed codes are supported. LumApps also offer access to API's so that developers can pull / push information when integrating with third-party systems. There are pre-built API connectors to ChatGPT, Google Workplace, Microsoft Azure, SAP SuccessFactors, Salesforce and others.

Similarly, there are integrations with collaboration tools that cover Awesome Table, box, Monday, Slack and Zoom. Integration with Google Workspace is well supported, as LumApps has a long track record of working with the Google (formerly G Suite) platform.

Digital workplace services can be nicely integrated into a personal 'dashboard' view for users, with content from all the integrated applications shown on one page. Behind the scenes, LumApps uses an array of different integration approaches (such as widgets, connectors and APIs) and if a specific system integration is required, it's always worth checking if it can be fully supported before purchasing the platform.

The available native widgets or custom developed widgets all support authorisation, user synchronisation, and styling / theming. Most widgets are one-way, but multiple widgets are available for the same system. For example, a widget exists to see ServiceNow tickets, and another is available for submitting tickets into ServiceNow. Widget-based integrations also work on the native mobile app in a web container, although may take users into the third-party system to complete the action.

There is a 'Companion' chatbot capability as an optional add-on. It has many pre-built connectors to other systems, including Slack, Jira, Lucca HR, Workday and Salesforce. This takes an 'adaptive cards' approach which works well on mobile, and also supports interactions via chats in other interfaces such as Microsoft Teams. We certainly see potential in this kind of unified approach, though our experience in the demo environment was that the conversational capabilities of the bot are disappointing compared to the experience of using ChatGPT.

LumApps isn't comprehensively integrated into Microsoft 365, but it does some worthwhile things very well. SharePoint and OneDrive folders and documents can be surfaced in widgets within LumApps, and SharePoint search can appear as a tab on the search results page (see Scenario 5 for more details). It's also possible to upload new documents from LumApps directly into the respective SharePoint site. However, SharePoint pages aren't integrated into LumApps, and there's no consideration for SharePoint news content.

The 'Companion' bot provides a single interface to employee-self-service requests.

For Microsoft Teams, a whole LumApps intranet can be accessed from within Teams as an app. Sharing into Teams is also facilitated – for example, employees can click on a news story and choose to share it directly into multiple Teams channels (not a capability SharePoint can brag about).

LumApps also provides some lightweight integration with Viva Engage (Yammer), by showing defined content as a feed within a widget. Furthermore, Microsoft Planner plans or Stream videos can be embedded within a widget. Microsoft applications can also be opened via the LumApps app launcher that is accessible through an icon in the header.
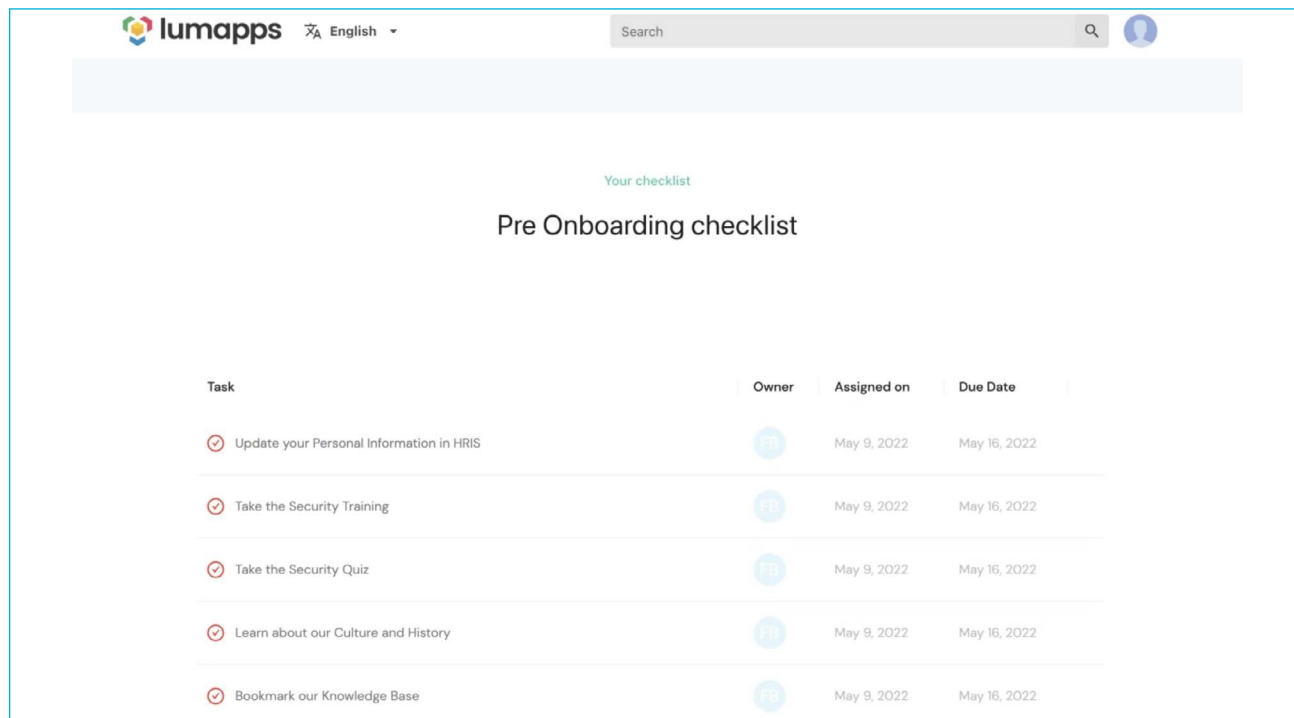
LumApps Journeys is another optional add-on for the platform and provides a helpful tool to step an employee through a series of tasks. Although onboarding new employees is the obvious use case, it can be used for any multi-step activity, such as planning a trip to an overseas office, where visas, flights, airport transfers etc. need to be orchestrated. In the onboarding example demonstrated, the Journey begins with a manager filling in basic details about the new hire and selecting a suitable Journey template to apply to them. Each step can be sequenced and timed relative to other events, for example a laptop can be ordered 20 days before the start date. Journeys then generates a personalised email and a link for the new employee to see a to-do list. This highlights another uncommon capability of LumApps – some content can be set to be accessible outside the intranet for external users, partners and soon-to-be employees.
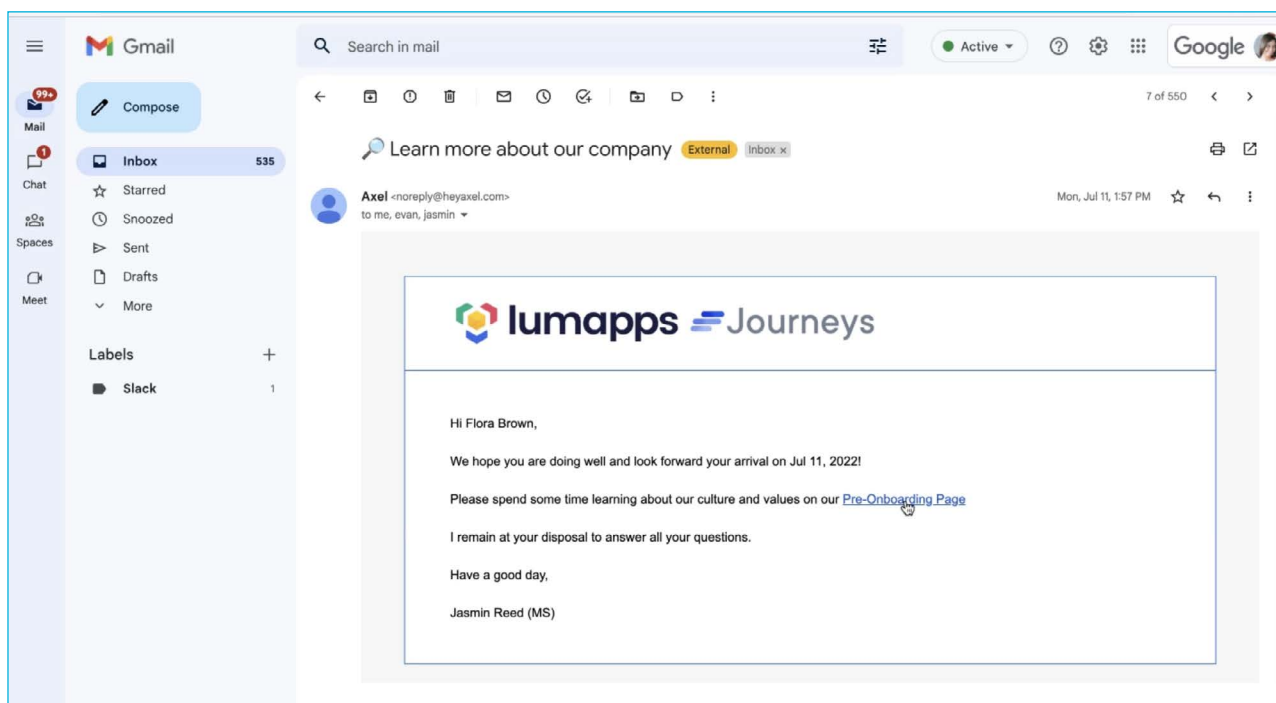
Journeys can be configured to start with an email that is personalised using a template.

LumApps Journeys includes other neat features. For example, induction meetings can be automatically created and entered into both the employee and manager's calendars. Quizzes too can be set up or used as a feedback survey. And finally, the hiring manager gets a dashboard to track progress against the whole plan.
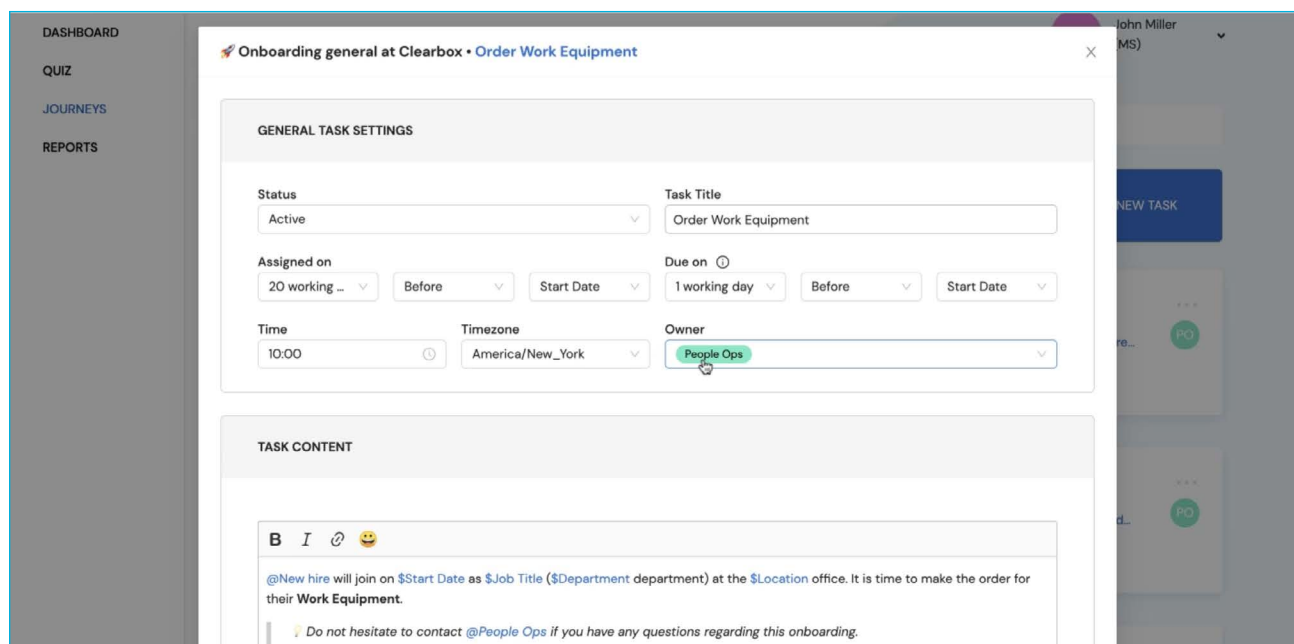
Overall, LumApps offers a good few options for integration, particularly outside of Microsoft. However, buyers should study carefully which integration scenario is supported if they have a particular use case in mind.

Users can be presented with a checklist to work though.

Tasks can be sequenced relative to a specific date, such as when the new hire starts.

LumApps search results page, showing federated results from Microsoft Search.

The LumApps information finding experience is good, starting with a global search box at the top-centre. A search history (previous searches and results) is shown before typing a new search query and type-ahead suggestions are effective. Natural language processing checks spelling while someone is typing a search query.

LumApps native search is powered by Elasticsearch. All native LumApps content is indexed and searchable, along with Google Drive and OneDrive content. However, the Elasticsearch only indexes the metadata of .pdfs, but not the content itself. It's also possible to use alternatives such as Microsoft Search, Coveo or Google Cloud Search. In these cases the respective third-party licenses are needed and although the front-end experience will remain the same, the way results are presented will depend on the chosen search engine. Customers on Microsoft 365 will also enjoy the ability to show Microsoft search results as a federated tab within LumApps.

On the search results page, filters are available by content type and within a content type vertical by the respective metadata. Metadata is created and managed in the settings by global admins (on the platform level) and by site admins (on the site level) with a simple user interface. Refiners (filters) on the search result page are dynamic, based on the search results. Refiners can be managed in the settings by global admins. Configured promoted results are shown at the top in the search results, and these can be a range of content types such as videos, events, or directory entries. Other desired changes to the search results page will require CSS skills.

For managing and structuring knowledge there is a specific 'knowledge base' content type; but there are no specific features such as FAQ or accordion widgets available. LumApps can define content-type search experiences for documents, such as policies, with the results display and filtering options configured accordingly. Through this it's possible to create something quite advanced, but this will take some configuration and time.
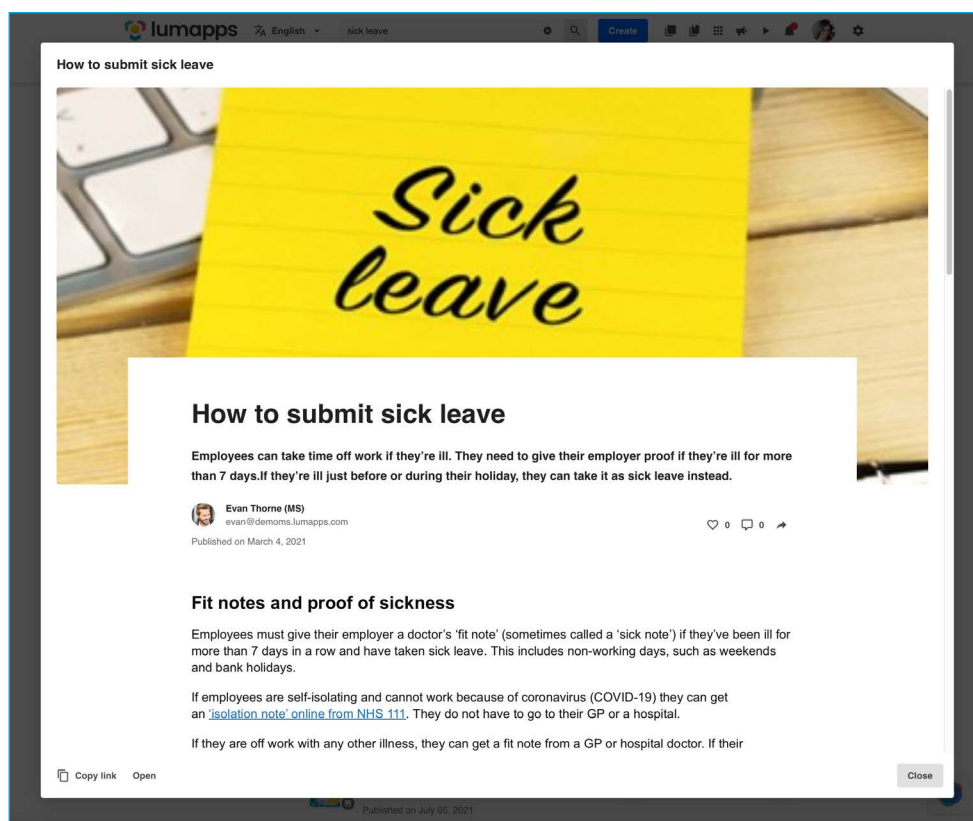
On the search results page, there is a useful ability to preview a result without navigating away to it.

The people directory within LumApps is a well-designed, user-friendly application. Key information is presented in an attractive card-based interface, with a powerful search and filtering window to the right of the screen. Here users can drill down further and search for colleagues based on department, location, or skills. The detailed profile of a user integrates well with an organisation chart showing the place of that person in the hierarchy. Unusually, fields in a person's profile can be permission trimmed, for instance to hide the mobile phone number of an executive. Note also that a chat in MS Teams or Slack can directly be launched from the details card.

Finding users in the employee directory.

The user profile also shows an overview of recent activities.
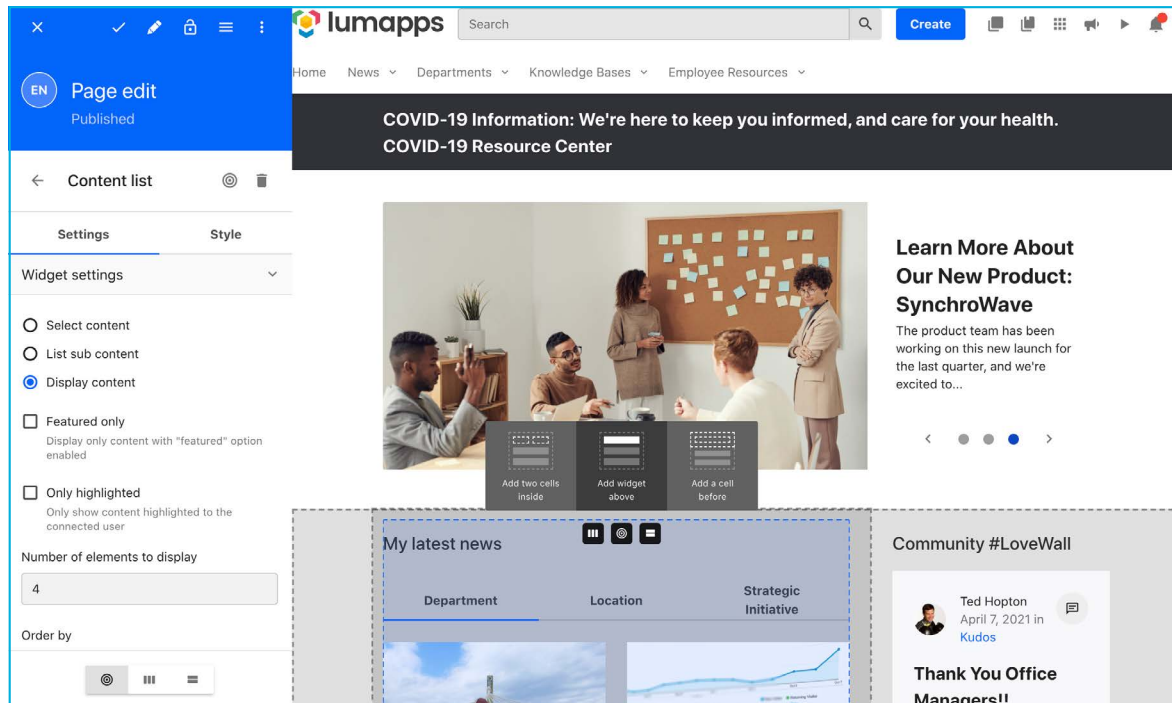
Designing a page with widgets.

LumApps offers multiple layers of admin rights, making it possible to manage multi-site and multi-brand intranet experiences with granular governance controls. The admin controls are clear and logical; for example, setting roles and permissions follow the logic of "who (user groups) can do what (content types) for which target audience (user groups)". However, we would like to see the inclusion of workflows to manage elements such as site requests.

The layout of the home page and other pages is split into different sections that can be populated by widgets to give a broad range of functionality. The widget library is extensive and includes an alert banner, hero carousel, 'my news', highlighted communities, feed with latest community posts etc. Widgets can be moved around into different sections with drag and drop, but we would have liked an easier way to preview each widget from the gallery selector as adding widgets can feel fiddly at times.

For producing content, a neat feature is that articles can be created in Google Docs or Microsoft Word Online and published directly to native LumApps pages. This approach means that teams can take advantage of Docs and Word collaboration features such as version control.

Content life cycle management for pages is supported by expiration date, publication status (draft, published, archived, expired) and content editors receive notifications about expired pages. A content editor can go to the administration area to find a list of all their created content by content type. Here they complete actions such as checking the page status or copy / reuse content. Although this is helpful, we feel that the presentation could be improved so that it was more than a simple list, potentially by being evolved into a dashboard.

Multi-language for content, navigation, web user interface and mobile user interface can be defined at the site level. The structure of the navigation can be different by language too, and both content and metadata can be translated. Multilingual content can be published either via machine translation or manually translated, however there is no specific workflow that supports the latter.
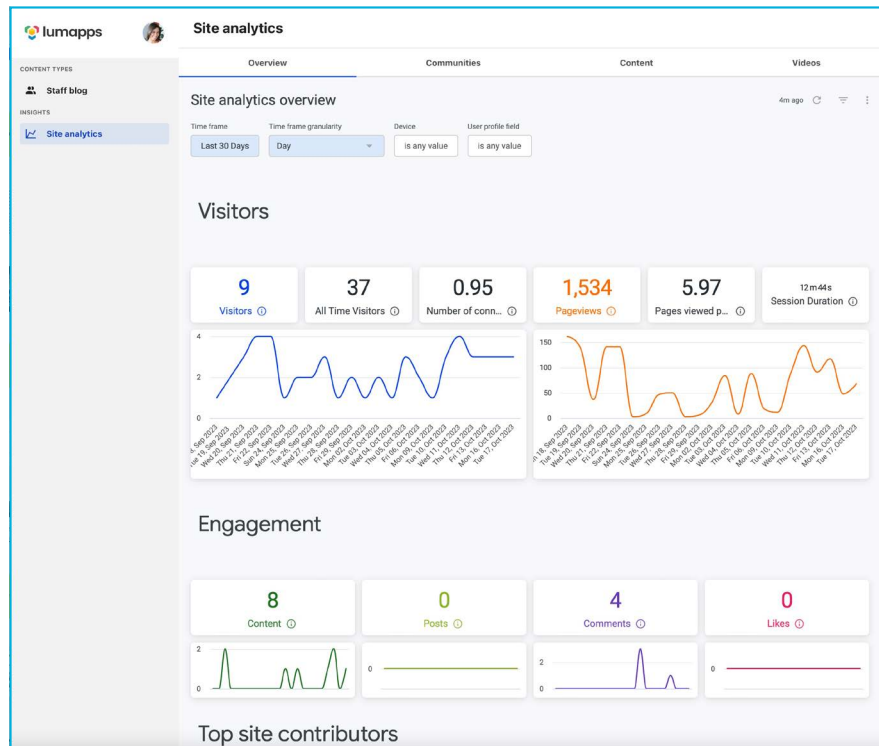
Analytics can be easily sliced by time, audience and content types.

LumApps provides attractive and simple analytics for different levels (platform, sites, content, video, and communities) that are visible depending on the user role (global admin, site admin, community manager, content editor). The analytics offer drilldowns for definable time frames and filters for user group properties. However, other kinds of reporting need to be done via an exported dataset, rather than by configuring the tool, which seems a shame. The option to use other visualisation tools such as PowerBI and QlikSense are supported.

Content analytics provide aggregated traffic for sites in addition to the existing per page data. Filters can be used to select a time period, publication time and content type. The content type filter enables admins to focus on specific content such as news, knowledge articles or blogs. The reports cover views, visitors, likes and comments. There is also a 'Top Content' table that shows most popular content and can be sorted by metrics such as views, visits, comments and likes.

We liked a 'Notification funnel' report, that tracks user journeys through to actions such as playing a video. Otherwise, there are no specific analytics for news such as reporting for a communication campaign, however, and we didn't feel that internal communicators would see the reporting as intuitively actionable.

Community analytics are available for Spaces and cover active members, participating members, onboarded members, followers, new posts, new reactions, average connection time, user connection frequency, devices per community. Furthermore, there are site analytics and platform analytics available that cover active users, contributing users, new content, new posts, new reactions, average connection time, user connection frequency, and devices.

Analytics include mandatory reads, which shows a list of all the users who have acknowledged reading the content, but not who hasn't. When a piece of content includes a mandatory read action there is no built-in notification, this has to be created separately by the publisher which we feel is a missed opportunity. Finally, search analytics are basic, showing only the most popular search terms.
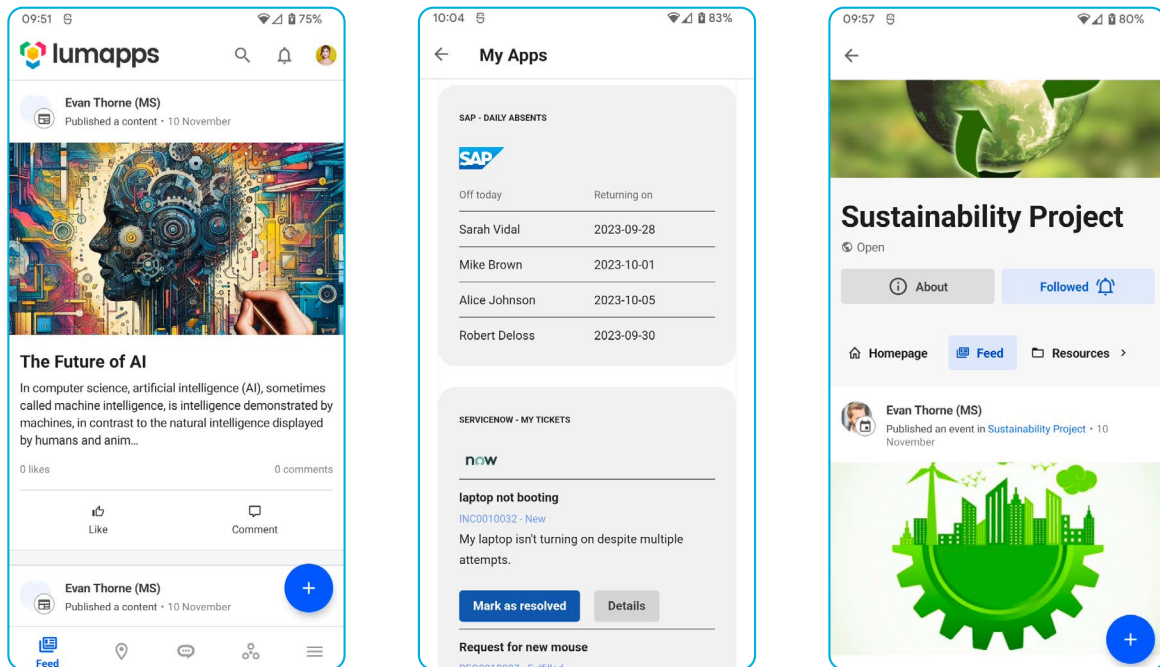
The mobile app for LumApps has been re-engineered.

LumApps has a stronger track record in supporting mobile and frontline use cases than many other desktop-first platforms. The enrolment for new users (potentially without an email address) is well thought through, with neat touches such as a help section on the login screen called "Don't know how to sign in?". A manager can even generate a QR code from within the app to invite a colleague to join. LumApps supports third-party identity providers like Okta, Entra ID, or Google Cloud ID. Alternatively LumApps' own identity management can be used. Accessing the native mobile app with biometrics is currently not possible without respective third-party identity providers.

LumApps is fully responsive and can be used with any mobile browser, but it also comes with a native mobile app. The experience was re-architected in 2023 for a lighter, quicker experience and a contemporary unified news and update feed which works well. Features and navigation can be the same as the desktop or have a specific navigation to better support mobile use cases. Changing the app buttons is a simple drag-and-drop operation for an admin. Search within the app impresses for the inclusion of all the refiners available with the desktop experience, though we missed type-ahead suggestions, which only work with people search.

We also like the fact that the configuration can be personalised for different user groups – so that, depending on roles for example, employees can have a different user experience including navigation items and content. However, reference content and links to external apps are bundled under a generic 'Explore' button, and whilst this is compact, it lacks the slick visual appeal of other sections.

In-app branding of the mobile app is possible and encompasses logo, main and secondary colours, and the branding can also be personalised for different user groups to support multi-brand scenarios. Organisations with MDM can give the app their preferred name. Be aware that widget-based third-party integrations also work in the mobile app – but in a web view, rather than native.

THINGS TO BEAR IN MIND

LumApps offers a very broad set of features and functionalities with lots of flexibility, although there are some gaps. The community features work well but features such as polls and personal timelines are lightweight. The analytics too, are not as well rounded as some of the competition. There are multiple options for creating a search experience, and LumApps has progressed on this front in 2023, but we would welcome more options for getting under the hood and managing the search experience more proactively.

LumApps is relatively expensive for larger organisations, though it looks to be good value for smaller enterprises. Some features like LumApps Play, Digital Assistant and Journeys are optional extras for an additional cost.

A final consideration is LumApps' pace of change. Their releases happen every six weeks, and their desire to improve the product is commendable. However, this does mean that companies deploying LumApps will need to actively communicate changes to their publisher community, and at times there may be some functional overlap as new features run in parallel to legacy ones.

Why choose this product

LumApps will appeal to organisations looking for a versatile digital workplace hub with an attractive UX that works well across both desktop and mobile. Its configuration options, advanced content targeting, and granular governance controls make it very well suited to more complex customers that need to serve a diverse set of audiences from a single platform. LumApps shows that it's perfectly possible to deliver a highly capable digital employee experience that is compatible with the Microsoft world, but which works equally well alongside other platforms, as well as offering a much more coherent social / community solution.

Vendor roadmap
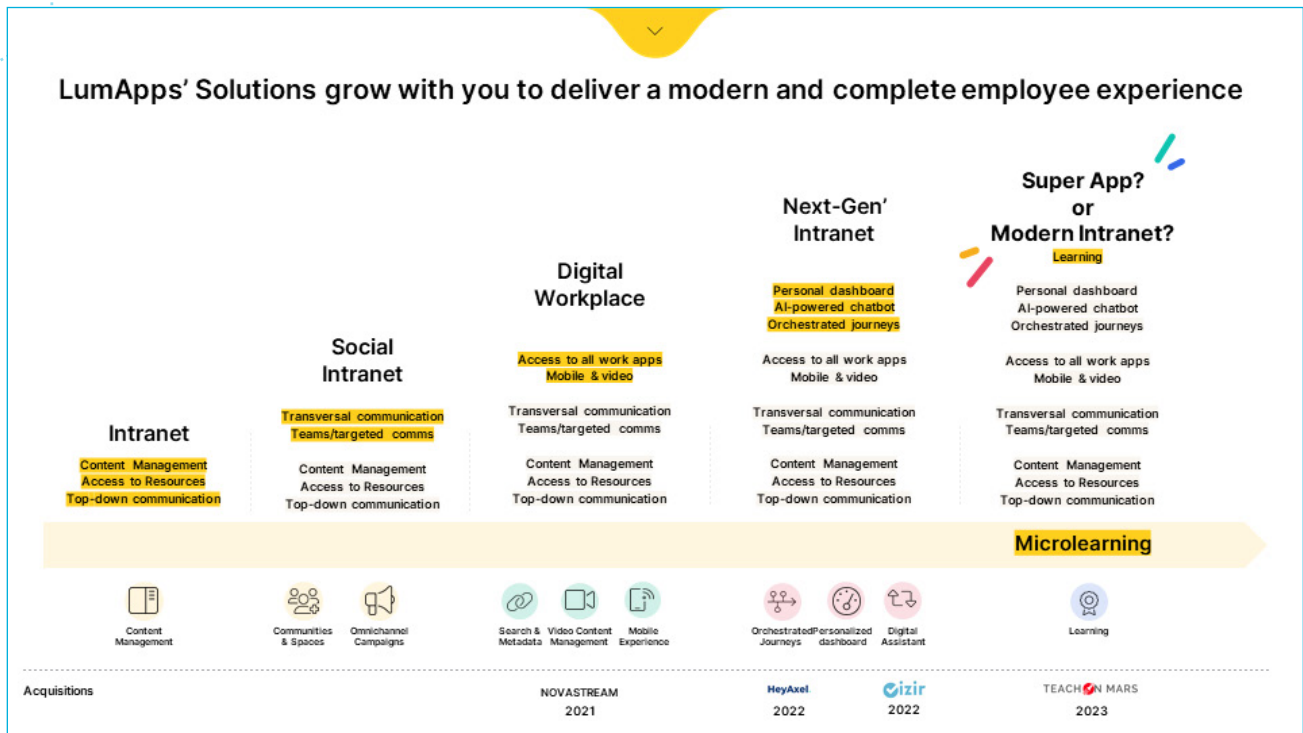
Roadmap image provided by LumApps.

MangoApps

FULLY STANDALONE

REQUIRES SHAREPOINT

OPTIONALLY WORKS WITH SHAREPOINT

FRONTLINE FOCUS
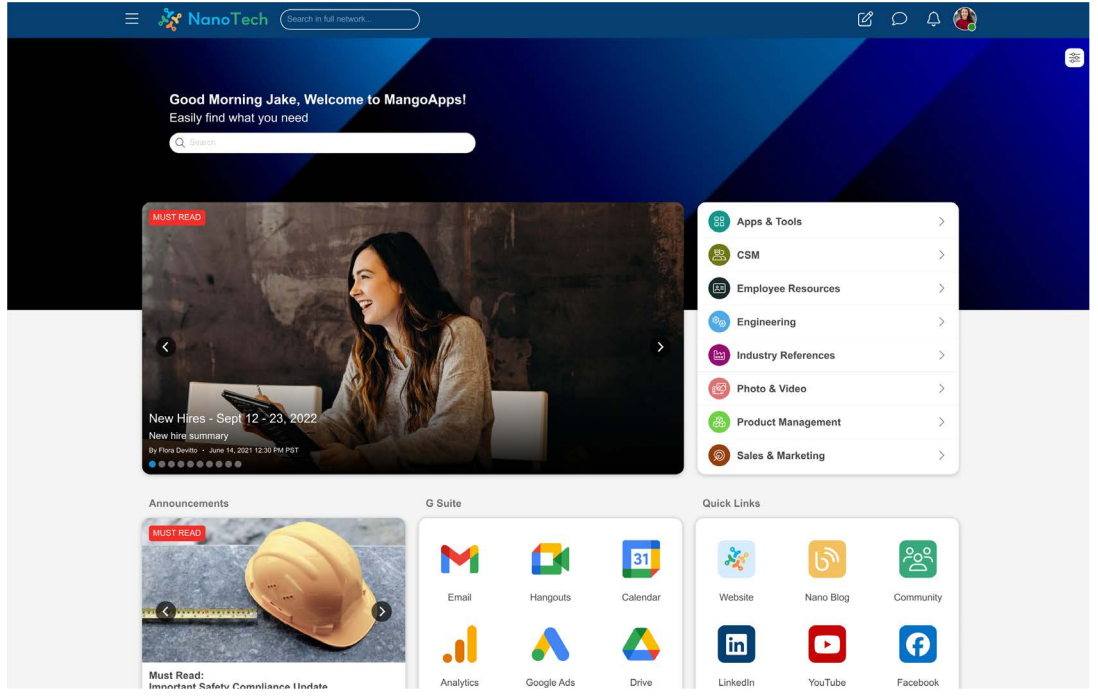
Typical deployment:

6,000 employees

Company locations:

VISIT THE WEBSITE

The product in a nutshell

MangoApps' range of applications, well-executed mobile app and administration toolset will appeal to medium to large businesses looking to build a feature-rich intranet.

MangoApps owned by MangoApps

MangoApps was founded in 2008 and is headquartered in USA, but with presences in India and the UK, plus partners in Germany and Australia the vendor is capable of working with global clients.

MangoApps provides a broad set of features for creating and managing content and communications, but it's in the many smaller features, such as search term translation that MangoApps distinguishes itself from competitors. There are comprehensive configuration options throughout, including some good audience targeting tools. Its community elements are strong, and the mobile app works particularly well with a widget-driven approach to landing page design. As another example, users are given a degree of control over elements such as notifications and navigation that are not common in intranet products.

However, there are limitations to be aware of too. Customers in complex organisations may find that some features lack the sophistication they require. For instance, out-of-the-box integrations with M365 are more limited than we've seen in other products. Aspects of the user interface are showing their age and would benefit from being upgraded, with social features such as the ideas tool lacking a contemporary, consumer-app style. Additionally, the reliance on widget-based content can create a 'boxy' feel on desktop and imagery plays a significant part in lifting the design overall.

MangoApps is likely to suit medium to large businesses looking for an extensive out-of-the-box toolset for delivering communications and engagement, both for desk-based and frontline workers. Prospective customers will want to note the cost, which is towards the higher end of the scale.

Pricing

PRICE BAND

250 users	$ $ $ $
1,000 users	$ $ $ $
5,000 users	$ $ $ $
20,000 users	$ $ $ $

These prices are indicative, offering a comparison of the products featured in this report only. Please contact the vendor for a bespoke quote.

PRICING MODEL

Subscription – price per user per month.
Subscription – price band based on number of users.
Store and location-based pricing

COSTS TYPICALLY

Fairly evenly spread across three years.

DISCOUNTS

Charities and non-profit organisations, schools and educational institutes, multi-year commitments, customers only pay for active users and large enterprises.

PRICE INCLUDES

Support, training, and upgrade services are all included at no additional charge.

Product type

Ready-to-run, installed in hours

Branding opportunities

All branding, complex options

Base systems

Fully standalone	Requires SharePoint	Optionally works with SharePoint	Other

Sectors

Accountancy, banking and finance	Energy and utilities	Engineering and manufacturing	Healthcare	Retail

You may also be interested in...

workvivo
a ZOOM company

Haiilo

ahead

Good Morning Jake, Welcome to MangoApps!
Easily find what you need

Search

MUST READ

New Hires - Sept 12 - 23, 2022
New hire summary
By Flora Devitto • June 14, 2021 12:30 PM PST

Apps & Tools	>
CSM	>
Employee Resources	>
Engineering	>
Industry References	>
Photo & Video	>
Product Management	>
Sales & Marketing	>

Announcements

MUST READ

Must Read:
Important Safety Compliance Update
New hire summary
By Lisa Wilson • 04/18/2023 7:37 AM PDT

Weather

Issaquah
Clear Sky

53.8°F

Temp Min: **48.2°F**   Temp Max: **57.4°F**

Ideas Campaigns

Sales & Customer Service Tools Implementation	
Total ideas shared	10
AI and Machine Learning Initiative - Future lies here!!	
Total ideas shared	7
Current employees do the hard work – SALESFORCE	
Total ideas shared	3

Stock

Apple Inc
NASDAQ Stock Exchange

$ **149.95** USD

+0.24 (0.16%)↑

G Suite

| Email | Hangouts | Calendar |
| Analytics | Google Ads | Drive |

Team Calendar

November 2023

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
26	27	28	29	30 Weekly Complia...	31	1
2	3 All Hands - Q&A	4 Customer Month...	5 Annual Healthca...	6	7 Staff Meeting	8 Jamie's...
9 Easter	10	11 Training -...	12	13	14 Office Lunch	15
16 Weekly Complia...	17 Performance...	18 New Joinee...	19	20	21 Anthony's...	22 Earth Day
23	24 Weekly...	25	26	27 Weekly Complia... uDemy Learning...	28	29

Teams

Launch & Deployments 2 Hours ago	Join
Global Offices 4 Hours ago	Join
Customer Reported Issues Worksp... 12 Hours ago	Join
Design Studio 12 Hours ago	Join
Marketing Team Workspace 14 Hours ago	Join

Quick Links

| Website | Nano Blog | Community |
| LinkedIn | YouTube | Facebook |

Recent Awardees

| Esther Howard
10 Years of Service Award |
| Wade Warren
Advertising Sales Representative
Golden Quality Award |
| Leslie Alexander
Customer Care Representative
Gracefully Handled Award |
| Cameron Williamson
Big Catcher Award |

COMPANY AND PRODUCT

Company details

Company
MangoApps

ISO 27001 certified
Yes

Data residency
N/A

Company founded
2008

Product launched
2010

Typical client size
6,000 employees

Largest deployment so far
100,000 employees
across 20 countries

Customers
Clients include: PetSmart, TeamHealth, OU Health, Superdrug, A.S. Watson, Great Western Bank, Kansas City Chiefs, OPW, symplr, Alorica. Please see their website for details.

Partner locations
USA, UK, Germany, Australia

Company locations
Issaquah, USA (HQ), UK and India

Product and technical details

Name of product
MangoApps

Deployment

Client on-premises	Client private cloud	Microsoft Azure	Amazon Web Services	Vendor-hosted	Microsoft 365 tenant	Other*

*Google Cloud

Client data encrypted

In transit only	In transit and at rest	At rest only

Authentication supported

Entra ID	ADFS	Okta	Open ID	Oauth	G Suite	Other*

*All SAML Providers

App deployment

Google Play store	Apple store	MDM	MAM	Other

Accessibility
WCAG 2.1 compliant

Document library sources integrated

Box	Dropbox	Google Drive	SharePoint	OneDrive	Other*

*O365, AWS, SAN, Windows Servers

Optional integrated enterprise search engines

Coveo	Elastic	IBM	Lucidworks	Microsoft	Mindbreeze	Sinequa	Other

User interface multi-language

Pre-configured	Editable	Right to left script supported	Other

Content multi-language

Machine translation for publishers	Machine translation for end users	Editable machine translation for publishers	Manual creation for publishers	Right to left script	Other

Set-up and support

Set-up process for new clients

Typical setup and onboarding for a new client in MangoApps is about 6 weeks. It includes strategic consulting, content seeding, company branding of templates, configuring workflows & automation, setup of user provisioning & sync with HCM system, setting up integrations and SSO. Please see their website for more details.

Current version

MangoApps Release 17.2

Product updates

On average, 4 times a year

Product update process

For the multi-tenant cloud option, all product updates are automatically applied to customer accounts as they are released. Single-tenant cloud and on premises customers have some additional control when product updates are deployed to their environment (typically 2 to 3 months).

Reverse-out options

In MangoApps the client owns 100% of their data. Clients have an option to get a full exported copy of their full data. Within 30 days of contract ending MangoApps permanently deletes all copies of the customer data from its data centre.

Technical support

Email support	Phone support	Chat support	Online portal	24/7 support	Office hours only

User community

MangoApps has used its community management suite to power the online user community of its customers. MangoApps online user community enables customer connections, personalised engagement, support at scale and much more. Key activities in the MangoApps customer community include:

• Sharing company and product updates

• Sharing product release information

• Sharing best practices

• Voice of customer using ideas campaigns & surveys

• Learning about upcoming events

• Participating in customer training

• Customer advocacy & customer case studies.

Voice of the vendor

MangoApps says: "Make a positive difference in how billions of employees experience work!

At MangoApps, our goal is a world where all employees, whether office-based or frontline, are engaged, efficient, and fulfilled. We aim to redefine the work experience, nurturing innovation and productivity, for a prosperous society.

Every action we take, every decision we make, is rooted in our steadfast commitment to our brand values. We believe in providing a Unified Platform – an all-in-one solution that simplifies your everyday tasks. We strive for Ease of Use, creating an effortless experience that feels second nature. We champion Customizability, crafting solutions that fit like a glove to your unique needs.

We're passionate about Innovation, always pushing the envelope to keep you ahead of the curve. We prioritise Security, offering you the peace of mind that your data is always protected. But at the heart of it all, what we value the most is genuine Care – the human connection that reminds you, in every interaction, that we're not just a provider, but a partner.

The top-line and bottom-line business outcomes that our customers get using MangoApps are outlined below.

Top-line business outcomes:
- Improve customer satisfaction
- Boost upselling opportunities
- Foster innovation
- Enable community knowledge transfer.

Bottom-line business outcomes:
- Improve operational excellence
- Increase employee productivity
- Boost cost efficiency
- Strengthen employee retention."

Voice of the customer

MangoApps customers were positive about the "flexibility and amount of features available", where one customer said it allowed them to be "infinitely creative". The ease of use for end users and admins was also consistently highlighted as a positive. The opportunities it provides for employee engagement was also praised, with "lots of customisation options" across a range of features. One customer summarised well, saying "I love that it is a one-stop shop for everything in the realm of employee experience – internal comms, recognition, engagement, team building, onboarding, etc. and it makes our processes super efficient with all of the integration and automation tools!"

Suggestions for improvement largely focused on specific features, such as the lack of a photo gallery widget, though several mentioned they would like to see more automation. One respondent simply said "more AI, more automation", while another gave a specific example of "automation of reports – emailed to my inbox". Notifications were pinpointed as an area for improvement, with one customer saying they found notifications "too siloed" and another asking for "all notifications [to be] in HTML format". Another customer said they would like to see an "updated design" too.

Respondents were very happy with the service from and relationship with MangoApps. Comments included "First rate. The service is the main reason we have been a customer for four years now." while another stated "Second to none. Uniquely engaged with us and provides a high level of support." A typically expressed sentiment was: "Great! The team is very hands-on and always open to talk through solutions to the challenges our business faces from an internal communications perspective." Others commented that they were "extremely satisfied" and had received "nothing but quality and professional, high-level customer service".

SCENARIOS & SCORES

Please see the Scenarios below for more detail on each of these.

SCENARIO AND SCORE	KEY BENEFITS	IMPROVEMENTS / CONSIDERATIONS
3.5 **1. User Experience & Visual Appeal**	Easy to provide configured landing pages using targeted widgets.	Widget-driven style can feel 'boxy' on desktop. Navigation options are simple.
3.5+ **2. Publishing & Communications Management**	Easy to creative tailored content journeys. Good crisis communication support.	Audience targeting function in editing interface is unusual. Communications planner has room for improvement.
4 **3. Community & Engagement**	Good range of options for encouraging and sustaining employee engagement.	Look and feel of social features needs updating.
2.5+ **4. Integrations & Services (Including M365)**	Two-way newsfeed integration with Teams provides consistency of employee conversations.	Two-way integrations rely on API rather than being out of the box. M365 integration is limited overall.
4+ **5. Information Finding & Search**	A good end user search experience. Admins can configure ranking elements.	No fuzzy search.
3.5 **6. Administrator Experience**	A broad toolset for admins including flexibility for creating different admin roles.	Admin UI design lacks consistency. Desktop landing pages very widget-focused.
3 **7. Analytics**	Good range of insight available.	Report formats are inconsistent. Some data is only provided in exports rather than in on-screen reports.
3.5+ **8. Mobile & Frontline Support**	A well-executed and usable mobile experience.	Features specifically for frontline workers rely on integrations.
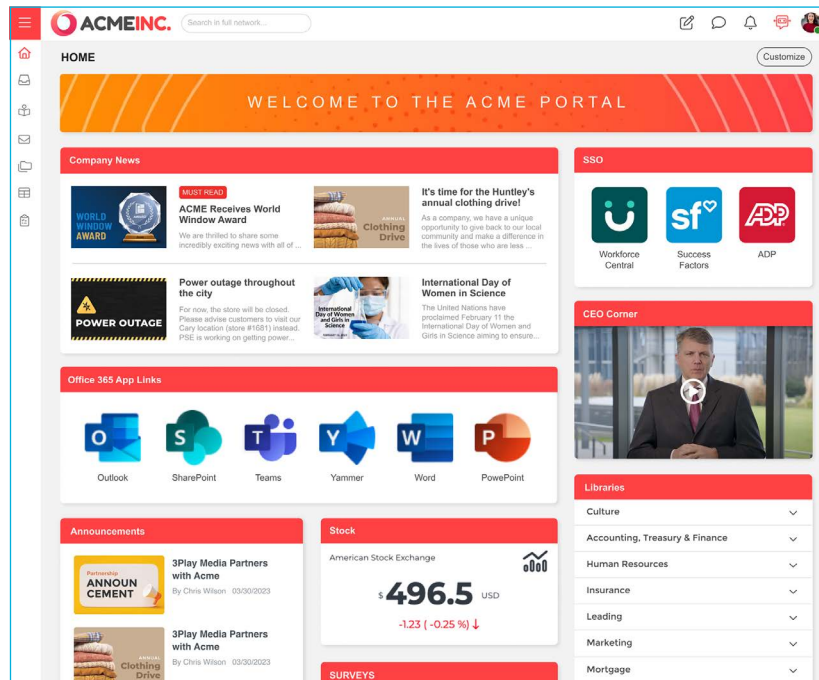
MangoApps takes a widget-driven approach to structure content and services in dashboard-style layouts.

MangoApps offers communications, knowledge sharing, collaboration tools and applications in a straightforward, user-friendly format.

There is a widget-driven approach to home and landing page 'dashboards'; widgets can be audience targeted, delivering content and services from within the intranet and third-party sources. It's therefore easy to set up customised dashboards, but while layout is generally clear, pages using a lot of widgets can lose their focus.

Navigation is customisable and targetable based on employee profile attributes. A navigation panel runs across the top of the page or can be accessed via a burger icon. We like 'Navigation history' that allows a prior navigation set-up to be reinstated. Unusually, MangoApps allows 'power user' employees to tailor navigation to their personal preference; this ability can be conferred automatically or manually assigned by admins. We like the possibilities it offers for creating a personalised experience. While there is flexibility for managing navigation, the default menus are quite application focused and overall, we don't think the product is particularly suited to building out a deep structure. However, the 'Group' function can be used to create page-driven sections (see Scenario 3).

The product's notification function is sophisticated and offers employees a wide range of options for configuring notices they want to receive, though admins can limit the options available. Notifications are assigned a priority based on their type, for instance whether they are actionable, and higher priority items appear towards the top of the list. Users can clear their whole list, or just view unread items.

In terms of design: colours, fonts, logos and other elements are all customisable and assignable to sub-brands. However, while a lot can be achieved with colour and imagery, there are restrictions on how much of the default design can be changed without altering the site CSS and it can feel 'boxy'. Additionally, the messaging interface lacks the consumer app feel that we've come to expect from this type of product. We also think some of the social features feel somewhat functional, more akin to older discussion forum styles, and would benefit from an upgrade. Improvements to the design were also requested by customers.
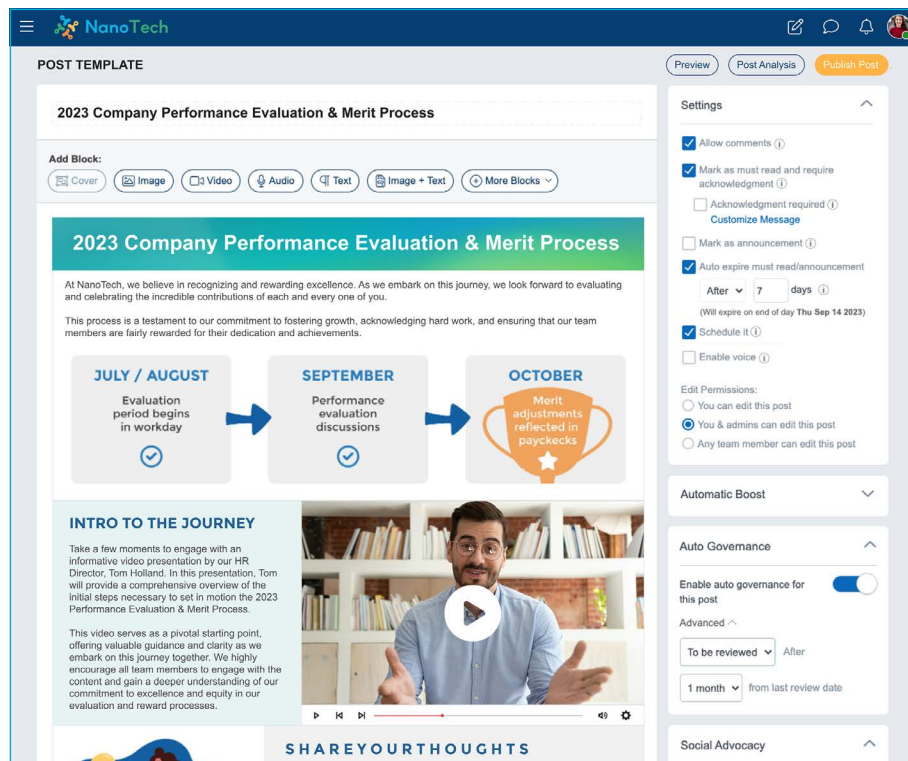
Pages in MangoApps are constructed using templates and content blocks.
Metadata and publishing settings are provided in context next to the editing interface.

MangoApps has a clearly laid out interface for content creation, providing comprehensive options for publishers and communications teams. Editors can quickly set up and publish content through a wizard-like process, which includes some useful quality assurance steps. Once selected for use, a template can easily be reconfigured using content 'blocks', which are formatted elements used for adding content into a page, such as text or multimedia. Template options include 'email', allowing publishers to create newsletters in a consistent interface. Note that pages created from a blank template aren't split into blocks in the same way as preformatted templates, and overall is a more difficult publishing experience. Tooltips are provided throughout the editing interface to assist editors, however.

An AI-based writing assistant is included with the licence and is hosted by the vendor. It's set in the context of the page editor and can be used to generate summaries or whole articles based on natural language requests. We see the capacity for these tools to assist editors, but also anticipate some caution for reasons of accuracy and authenticity. To that end, we'd like to see a label which indicates to users that content has been AI-generated. Editors can also enable an auto-generated audio version of the content. We think this is a great accessibility feature and one we haven't seen elsewhere.

Audience targeting draws on the email experience of selecting the primary audience in a 'to' field, and any secondary audiences in a 'cc' field. This distinction determines the notification priority for the different users and could generate a lot of notifications in busy organisations. There are flexible options for creating audiences based on 'user segments' and 'team segments'. User segments are either created dynamically, based on profile attribute rules, or are manually compiled of specific users. Team segments are made up of pre-defined groups of users. Admins select

which teams make up a segment by selecting from a list of all teams in the system, or enable dynamic profile-based rules. While all this is configured within MangoApps, teams can be created which correspond to groups synced, such as from Entra.

Key metadata elements, such as permitting comments, marking a page as a must read, or scheduling options are managed from a panel in the editing interface. Hashtags can be provided on articles for users to follow; they receive a notification when content containing the tag is published. There's an option to send a post for review to a colleague prior to publication, with some useful features such as asking for a read receipt, however, this isn't an automated workflow. We liked the handy metadata summary provided prior to the final publication step.
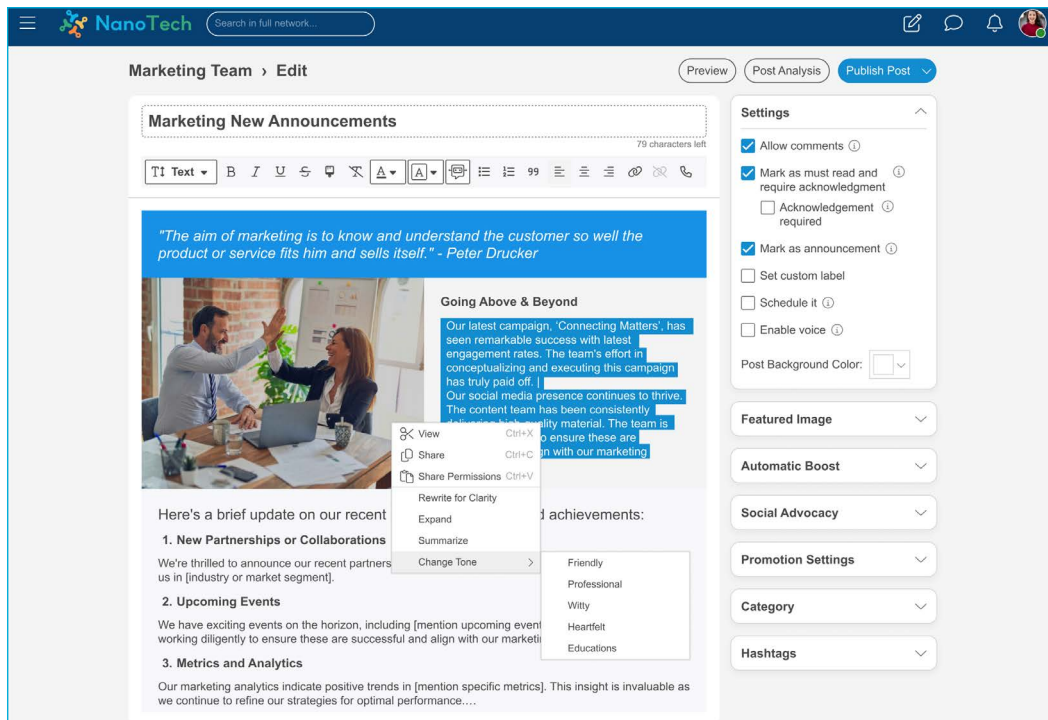
The AI-based writing assistant is designed to help editors with aspects of creating and content, such as producing a summary or amending the overall tone of an article.
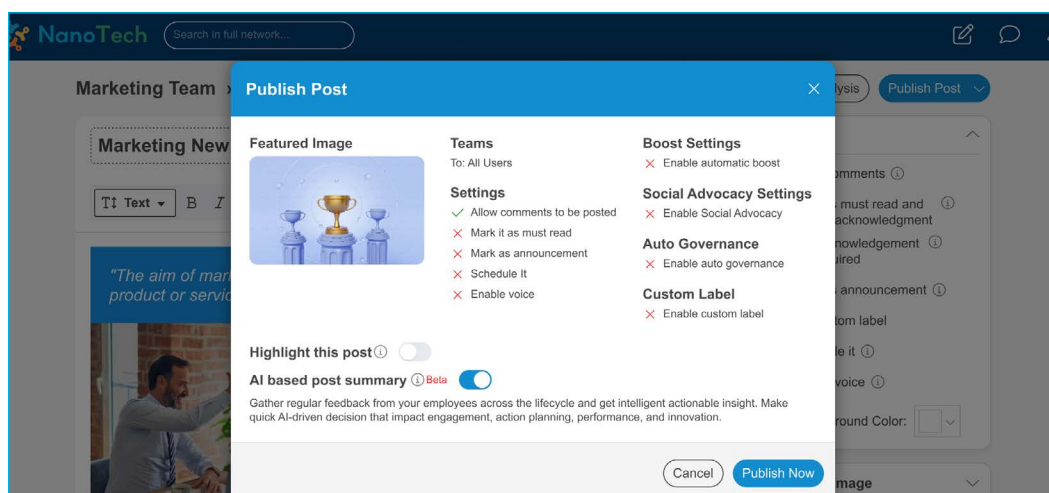
Prior to final publishing, MangoApps provides a helpful quality assurance step which summarises the key settings and metadata for the post.

A communications planner sets out a schedule of articles for publication. A tabular view lists elements such as status and audience. There's an option to view the entries in a calendar, though default filtering options are limited and configuration would be needed to provide custom calendar views such as a departmental view. Aside from the planner, editors can view separate lists of all items in draft and scheduled, and can filter these to view their own items.

A 'campaigns' function allows publishers to create a communications 'Journey' where content is pushed to an audience in stages where specific conditions are met, such as acknowledging a mandatory read item. Note there's no branching logic but content can be distributed via a variety of channels including email, SMS, the user's feed, or messaging within MangoApps. We liked the simplicity with which the Journey can be compiled and can envisage it being used for both campaign purposes and scenarios such as employee onboarding.

There is a good variety of features for providing urgent communications and alerts. Content labelled as an 'Announcement' can be combined with the mandatory read function and will appear as a high priority item in notifications. Mandatory reads display as banners, editors have control over the acknowledgement text and duration. Announcements are audience targeted by using the 'to' and 'cc' elements in the editing interface. A further option is to create a configurable 'Alert', which is a pop-up notice that requires a user acknowledgment where admins can track the volume of acknowledgements.

MangoApps supports publishing to a wide range of channels from a single content source, including email newsletters, text messages and can provide notifications to third-party tools such as Teams and Slack. Those with 'advocacy' permissions have the option to publish to their personal social feeds. MangoApps also integrates with digital signage products; admins can configure what information is displayed and a QR code is provided to encourage people back into MangoApps.

Overall, MangoApps meets communication needs well although approaches some aspects, such as audience targeting, in an atypical manner. There is room for improvement, but there are some effective tools such as the employee advocacy feature.
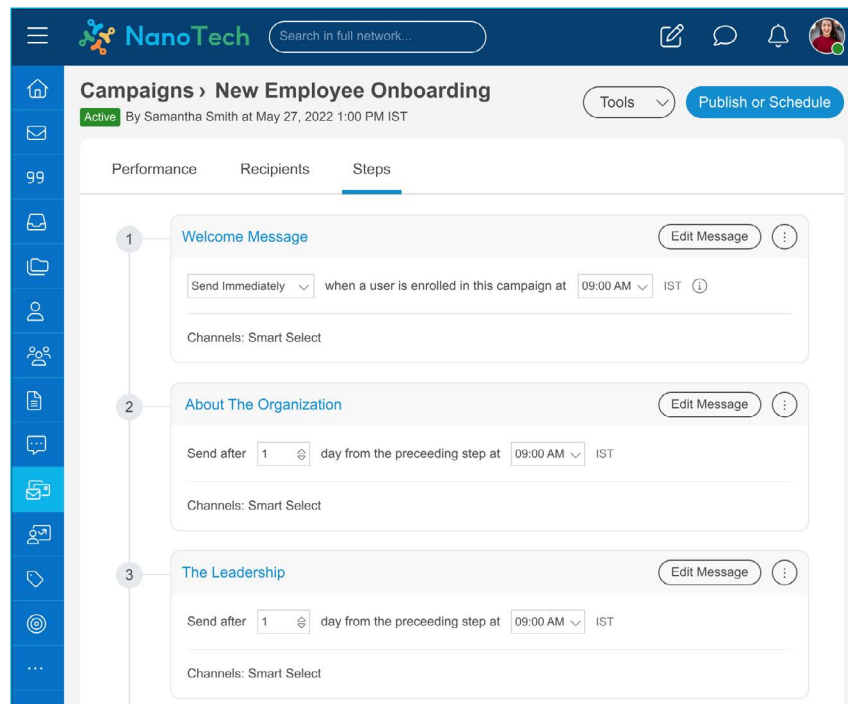
Campaigns offer a way to deliver a curated body of content to an audience over a defined period using a set of rules to initiate each subsequent step.
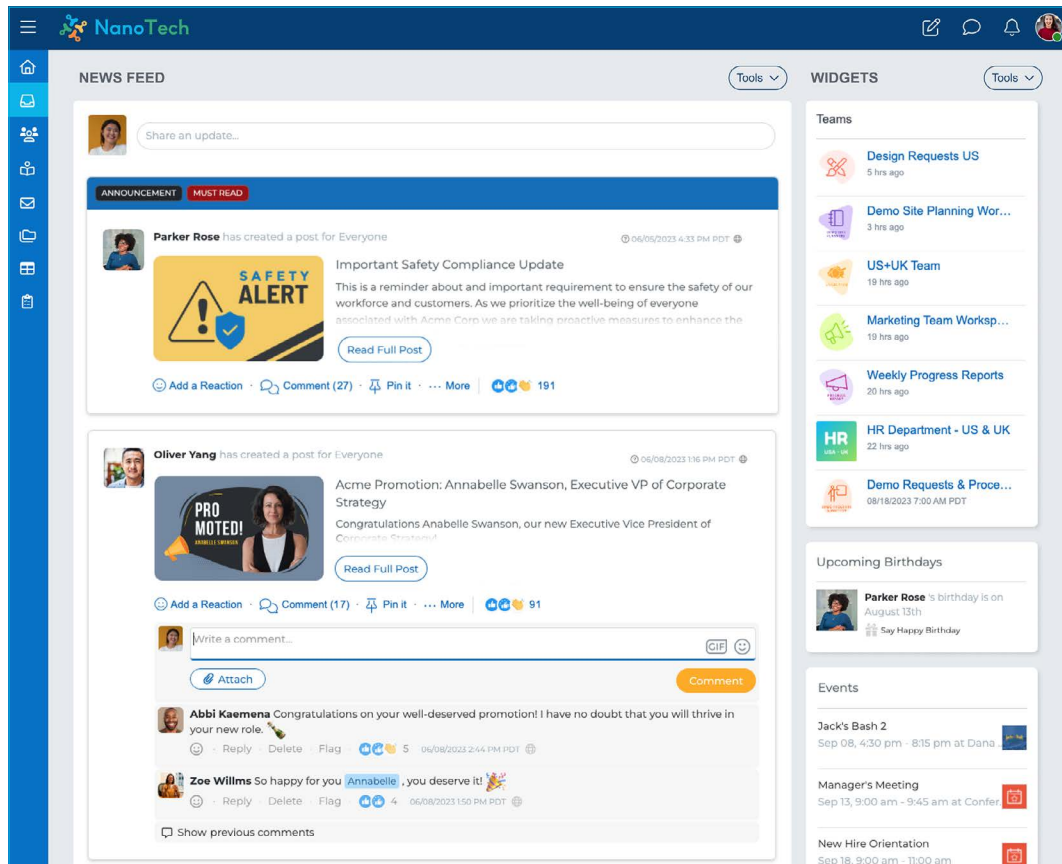
The 'news feed' shows employees a digest of activity taking place within the site and offers plenty of opportunities for engaging with content through comments and reactions.

MangoApps offers a good range of social features from basic comments and emoji reactions to more functionally rich features such as 'Groups', which are used to create communities. A messaging tool lets employees chat one to one or with multiple colleagues, and users can participate in polls and surveys.

'Groups' is a feature rich aspect of the product, providing configurable content types such as pages, documents, a wiki, and 'posts' (a blog-like feature). Groups can be used for departmental or team spaces as well as more socially focused community sites that include social feeds. There's the option to automate community membership based on user profiles, though employees can choose to leave if they wish.

Helpful management features include 'auto-governance' - an automated review feature available for content pages, posts and documents. Admins set a review date and who is responsible for verifying that content is current. If the review date is missed, content is deemed unverified and is archived until it has been reviewed again. Pages and posts are labelled to highlight that they are being governed. We also like the 'document upload selector' that provides access to external content sources such as SharePoint or Dropbox, if integrated.

Users can add comments and reactions (reaction types are configurable by admins) to posted content and manage which notifications they want to receive from Groups. There are several modes of moderation available, ranging from pre-moderating all user generated content to specifying specific teams or individual users for moderation, or being exemption from moderation. Admins can create a list of words or phrases that will automatically send an item for review. Any content passed for moderation is flagged to the moderator who can approve or decline the item. Employees can also report comments for moderation, where admins receive a notification to then take appropriate action.

The 'ideas' function lets employees post ideas to a company-wide list, or could be used within a specific community Group. We like that the Campaigns feature can be used to solicit ideas on a specific topic and that ideas are tagged for search purposes. There's a list of top contributors and top ten ideas – we think these would benefit from recognition functionality such as badges or promotional panels to generate further engagement. Users can vote on an idea and add comments as well as react with emojis or gifs. We liked the manually applied status indicator to show whether an idea is being implemented. This is a helpful feature but it would benefit from a more engaging design to increase engagement.

Groups are a versatile way to create communities in MangoApps. Different content types such as wikis, chats and a social feed can be added to create a customised experience.

Polls are created as a content block within the context of a page or article; response choices can be customised, or the editor can choose from predetermined sentiment options or a star rating. Additional controls include setting poll duration, whether results show as a pie or bar chart and permitting anonymous submission. Surveys are more sophisticated and set up via a dedicated admin function. There's a dashboard showing draft, scheduled and published surveys, along with labels indicating whether a survey is mandatory or anonymous. New surveys can be set up from scratch, or by selecting from a broad set of templates. Editors are taken through a step-by-step compilation wizard, including a preview stage, and rules can be used to trigger branching in the survey. Results are compiled into a detailed report which can drill down to individual responses and the reports are exportable in formats such as CSV. We think this is a very good example of a built in survey tool.

Surveys are set up via a step-by-step process, this example illustrates the 'design' step where the body of the survey is compiled.

We like the module for sending recognition; there's a predefined set of awards and users can add an accompanying message. We liked the option to associate the reward with a company value. Awards appear in the recipient's notifications panel as well as in the Awards feed. There's some gamification here, with a leaderboard displaying top recognised colleagues and teams. We also like that training courses can be created and distributed in MangoApps. These can comprise of content from within the intranet or from integrated LMS content presented within the MangoApps context. Training modules are self-service or instructor led and employees are awarded a certificate for a completed course, which appears on their profile.

Overall, we think elements of the interface, such as the social feeds and comment threads, would benefit from an upgrade to a more contemporary design and layout. This is echoed in customer feedback, where there is a request for user-generated image galleries. However, with a wide variety of engagement functions for end users and configuration options for administrators, this scenario is an area of strength for MangoApps.
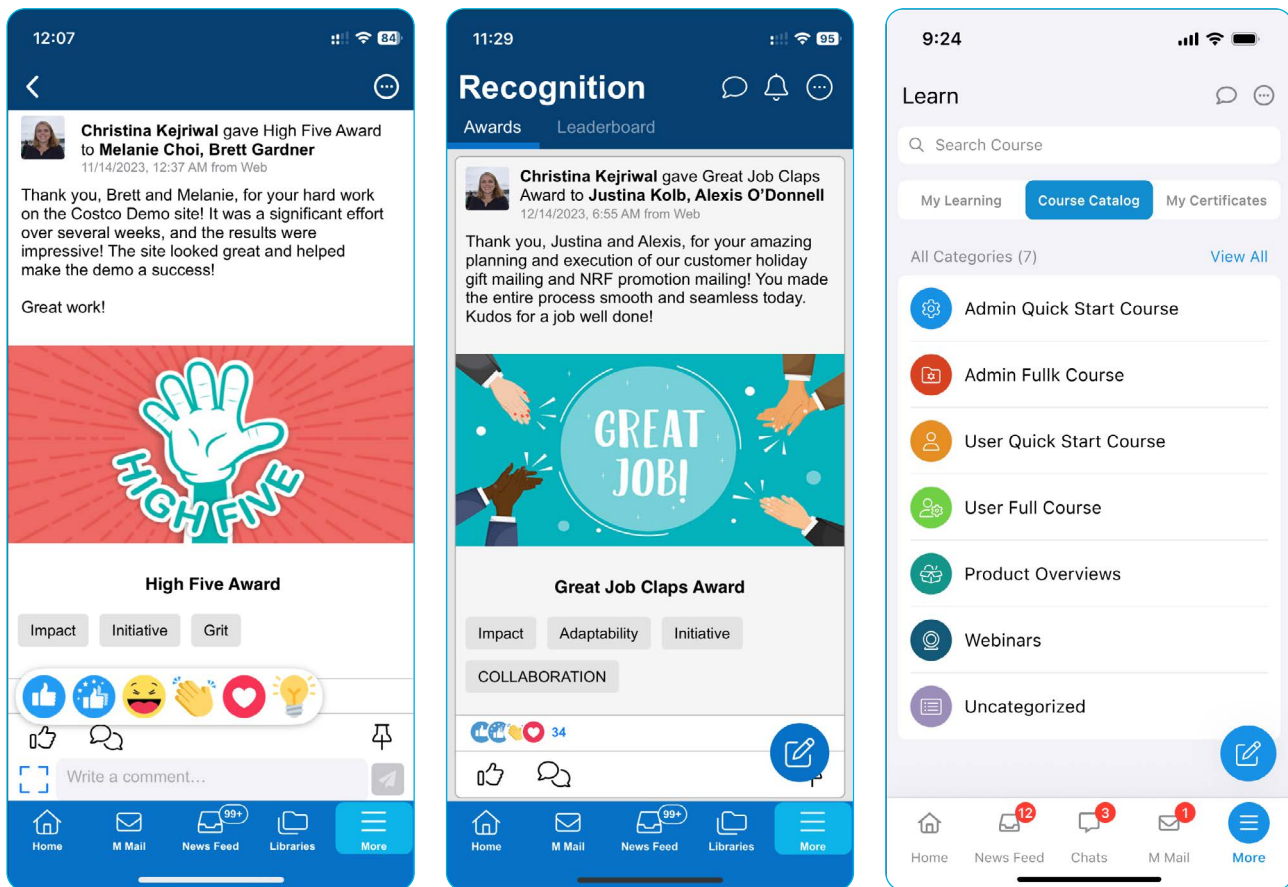
Examples of social reactions, sending recognition and training modules provided on mobile.
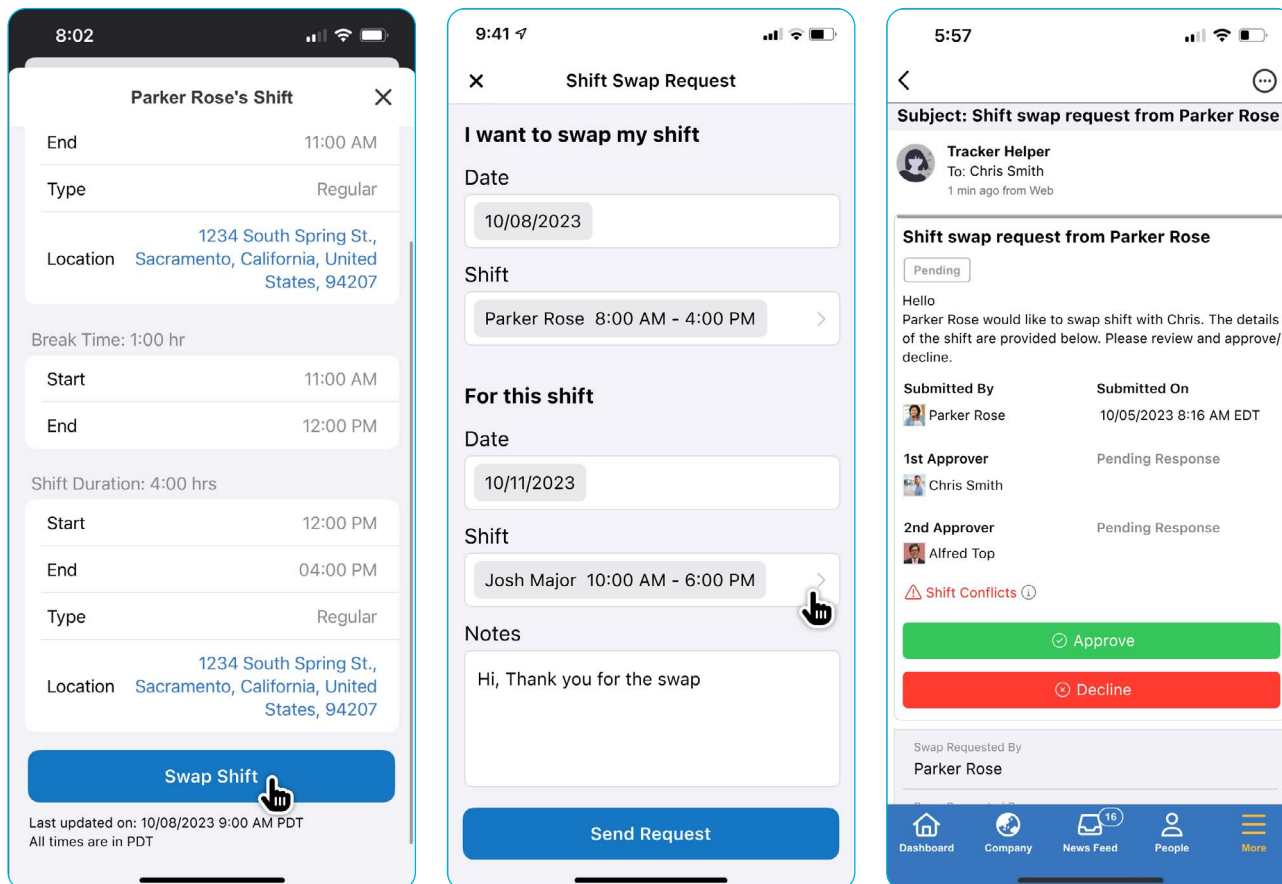
An example of an integrated system allowing employees to view their scheduled shifts and request a shift change on a mobile device.

MangoApps offers a variety of options for integration through a wide range of out-of-the-box connectors (the vendor stated there are over fifty available) as well as via API. Third-party integrations are generally focused on pulling data into the intranet and presenting it in a dashboard layout, or for providing personalised information for employees through targeted widgets. For example, an integration with a system such as Workday or UKG could be used to display an employee's payslip, or time-off allocations.

While users are generally required to leave MangoApps and use the relevant app if they want to perform an action other than read information, the vendor highlighted that some two-way integration via API is possible; we were shown an example of integration with a third-party tool which allowed users to review a shift rota and submit a shift swap request to a manager. The manager was able to view store-wide shift schedules and approve or decline swap requests accordingly. We'd like to see more out-of-the-box connections which facilitate this type of interaction.

There are out-of-the-box integrations with document repositories such as Box, OneDrive and SharePoint. Users can browse and search libraries in these sources and select a file to use in a page or post. Permissions are set in the source application and the file stays in the source – it's not copied into MangoApps. Further options include integration with Google to set up a Workspace dashboard, which displays the user's Google calendar, drive, and app launcher. If a file or Google app is selected it will open within Google in a new browser tab and no re-authentication is required.

MangoApps has the capability to build out simple integrations using a 'Tracker' app, which aggregates information from third-party sources. A data uploader tool takes admins through steps for setting up the integration and information is mapped from the API into the product. Once the Tracker is in place, custom flows and dashboards can be created using widgets. We were shown an example of a 'resource dashboard' which pulled data from third-party tools such as GitHub, ZenDesk, Slack and Airbrake and presented them in widgets in a dashboard layout. This is a useful way to aggregate a view of content and data from multiple sources but as it is read only, users would still need to visit the native application to conduct any actions required. While we see the potential for working with third-party data, admins will need to be comfortable working with APIs and be mindful of the time overhead for configuration.

An example of a 'resource dashboard' - data is pulled from third-party tools such as GitHub, ZenDesk and Slack, and presented via widgets in a dashboard layout.

MangoApps' integration with M365 is relatively limited. Information from M365 can be presented using the dashboard approach outlined above, with windows into Outlook, a list of SharePoint sites, Outlook calendar, an app launcher and Teams channels. There are widgets for embedding Stream videos and information from Delve. A new browser tab opens with the relevant M365 application when a file or application is selected but no additional authentication is required. See Scenario 3 for details of integration with SharePoint for file selection.

M365 resources can be represented in MangoApps using widgets in a dashboard layout.

A MangoApps app in Teams shows the 'News Feed'; users are able to interact with the content from the feed by adding comments or reacting to posts. This will in turn be displayed back in the MangoApps context, which we think provides helpful continuity to conversations. Users see a notification icon on the Teams menu when a new item is available in the feed. 'Alerts' also show in the feed, and as a notification in a selected Teams channel, with a link back to MangoApps.

Other minor points of integration include being able to use M365 apps to edit documents stored within MangoApps and save the file directly back to MangoApps. Additionally, when creating a calendar event in the product, users can add a Teams meeting link without needing to set the item up in Teams first.

There are no specific connections with Viva Engage or the wider M365 suite and, overall, integration with M365 is more limited than we've seen in other products.
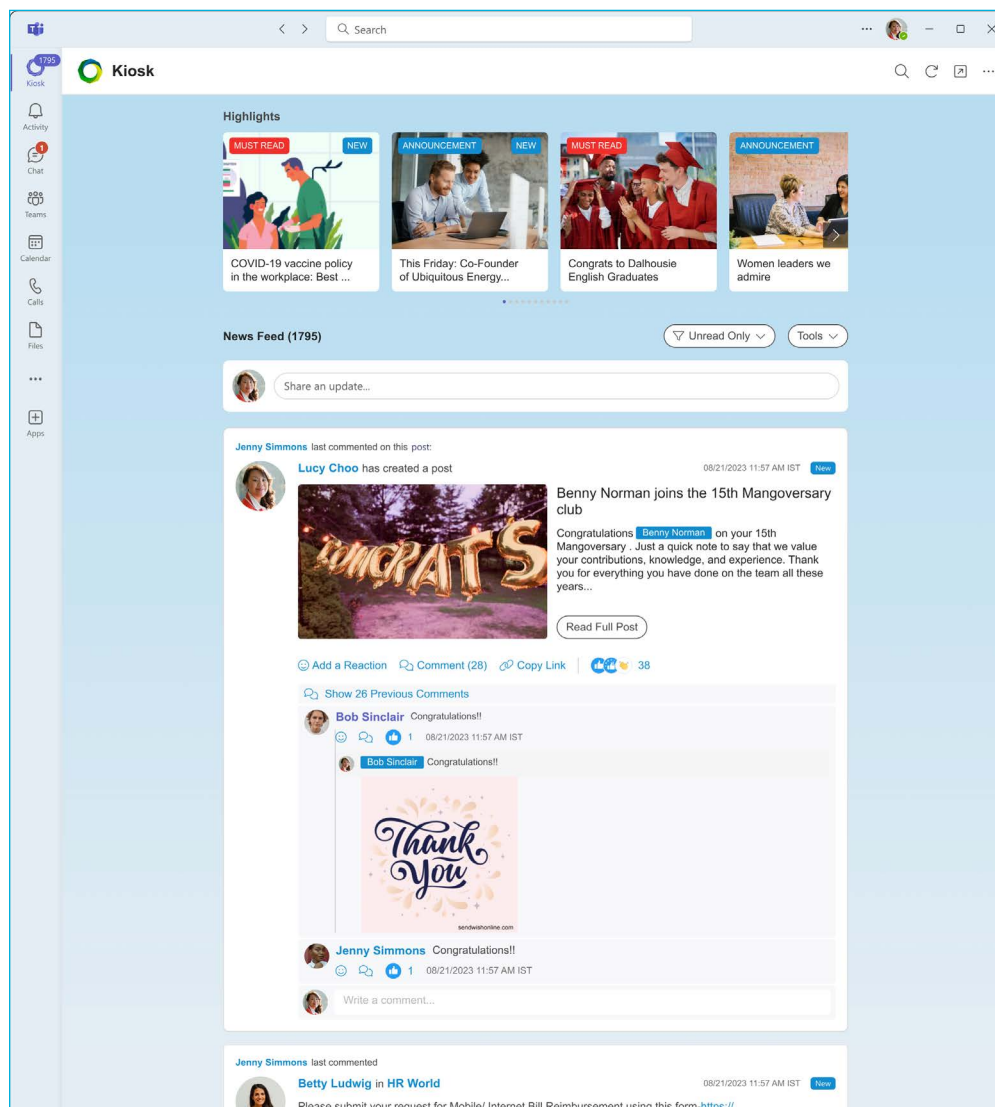
The News Feed is displayed inside Teams.
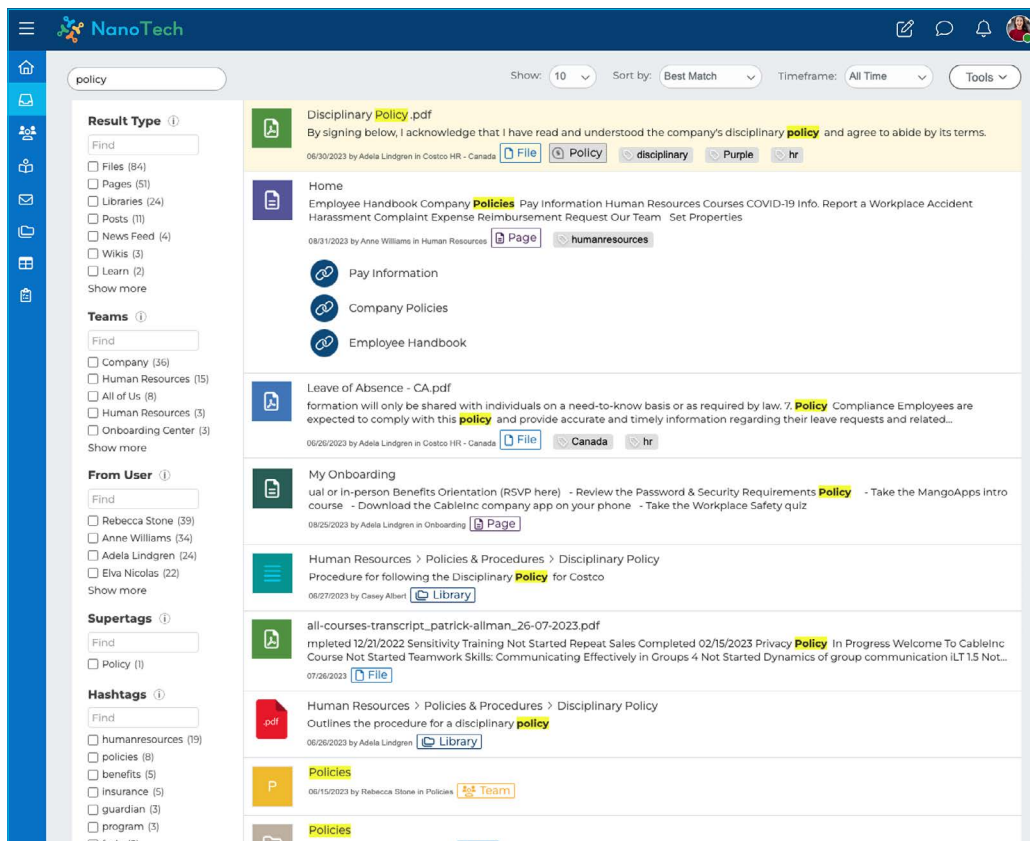
The full search return list contains plenty of information to help users understand the nature of each return such as content types, associated tags and the context of the search term in the returned item.

Search in MangoApps works well and helpfully also integrates with third-party sources to provide an effective federated search experience.

In the search bar, a drop-down displays a personalised list of recent searches, along with 'saved' searches – these are admin-chosen results which we think could be labelled more explicitly to indicate they are promoted, but are helpful regardless. Predictive search is in place; as a user types in the search bar it shows a categorised list of results, including items from integrated sources such as SharePoint, Teams and Google Drive. There's no fuzzy search to cater for mistyping or misspellings, however.

The full returns page presents the user with a range of details per item, including content tags and a publication date, with the content type shown as both text and icon. The search term is helpfully highlighted to give additional context. There is a lot of useful information provided, though we think the overall appearance could be neater – for instance making the content type tag and the topic tag consistent. A wide range of filters is available and results can be segmented by any integrated content source, with the segments provided on separate tabs.

Users can give feedback on their search experience through a like / dislike indicator at the foot of the page. Downvotes are registered in search analytics (see Scenario 7); this is an unusual feature and we liked the analytics connection. Admins can subsequently tune search easily by toggling configurable elements in the admin console to give greater weight to attributes such as the title, body content, location metadata or a hashtag. This isn't something we often see in other products and is effective.

An AI-driven 'Answer' feature provides users with a 'best bet' return based on their search query, which can be a natural language question, or a word or phrase. The content source deemed most relevant to the query is listed along with a text extract from the source. Suggestions for further questions are provided – these anticipate potential additional queries relating to the content source.

A MangoApps 'Helper' also offers search capability through a chatbot interface, giving a natural language answer along with a link to the source. However, the Helper only returns content from an admin-defined knowledge base and in the search context, we feel the Answer tool looks more effective.

The 'Answer' feature, driven by AI, extracts a 'best bet' response to a search term, displaying the text the AI deems best related to the query, and which sources the answer derives from.

Search can be configured to be 'location-aware'. For example, a policy for US employees will be lower ranked than the Canadian version for a user based in Canada. There is also multilingual provision - search will look at a term entered in one language and provide a return containing a translated version of the term from within MangoApps or a connected system. For example, searching for 'maternité' in French would return items with 'maternity' in English. This isn't a feature we've seen elsewhere and is perhaps a niche use case, but in a multilingual environment is potentially powerful. Users can also filter search returns by source language.

The MangoApps employee directory has its own search function. Employees can enter search terms and / or use nested filtering to narrow down results. Note there's no predictive or fuzzy search available here, which would make this even more powerful. Clicking on a profile card opens the full profile which can hold additional details such as the employee's social activity and awards. Profiles are clearly laid out, though a little functional in appearance. Users can select an org chart view within the employee directory, which is laid out intelligibly in a horizontal format, with team members listed in columns. We think this is a useful way to display an organisational structure, especially for larger companies. Additionally, a People widget is available to display department or team structures in a page or dashboard context.

Profile cards use tabs to present additional information relating to a user beyond their contact details, such as groups they belong to or recognition they have received.
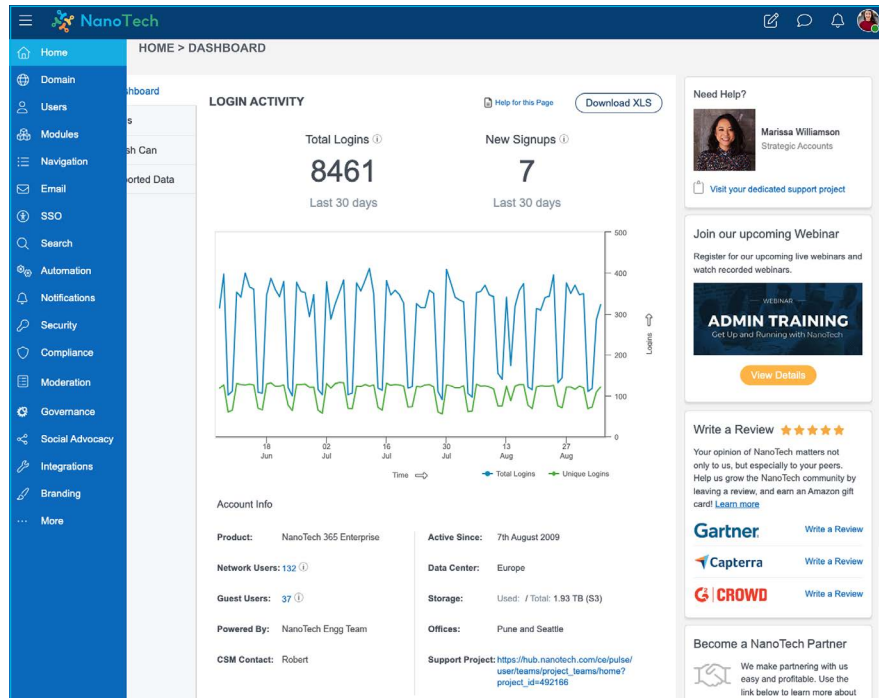
Admins have access to manage all elements of the site.
The administration console is well presented and easy to navigate.

Given the range of functions within MangoApps there is a comprehensive back end administration interface, which is generally well laid out and there are helpful tooltips. However, there is a lack of stylistic consistency across the screens that could be updated to improve the overall admin experience.

Top level ('Network') administrators have access to all aspects of site administration, where they see a list of all the active features and groups in the system and can manage some of them here. Any number of sub-administrator roles can be created, for example, a dedicated moderation administrator, or one solely with governance responsibilities. We liked the versatility this affords to site management.

Home pages are called 'dashboards' in MangoApps and there are over fifty widgets available for creating layouts. Each widget can be individually targeted, presenting the opportunity for creating a tailored experience, however, admins should be mindful of using a high volume of widgets on a single desktop page as this could be disorientating for users. Separate layouts can be set up for mobile, where the widget-driven approach is very effective (see Scenario 8).

MangoApps uses the term 'governance' as a catch-all for whether content has been verified as current or not. The 'governance dashboard' displays metrics relating to content 'health', such as volume of currently verified content and what is due for archiving. A full list of content 'under governance' shows attributes such as designated reviewer, review period, and verification status. Rules can be used to determine governance requirements for specific content types, or publishers can adjust individual items. Content life cycle and governance settings for individual content areas can be configured independently of the main site controls, see Scenario 3 for more.

The product uses the location associated with an employee profile to determine the system language and what machine translated content, including user generated content, they see. MangoApps also has an unusual multilingual provision in site search which we cover in Scenario 5. Overall, we feel the multilingual options are more limited than we've seen in other products.

MangoApps provides a range of reports to help understand user activity across the site, such as the 'user engagement report' that tracks levels of engagement over a given period.

MangoApps analytics provides a combination of on-site dashboards and spreadsheet reports. Both sets are needed to effectively assess the performance of the intranet, which we think is a little confusing.

An 'overview' dashboard shows logins and new users over the preceding period. The 'user engagement' dashboard breaks activity down into four categories from 'highly engaged' to 'not yet engaged'. In the 'content' dashboard, information includes how much has been created over a period, total views, likes and comments. The datasets are comparable to help gauge performance over time. All dashboards include helpful tooltips and the reports are exportable. The export contains information not presented on the web page though, such as department or location - we'd like to see those details in the dashboard too.

A wide range of spreadsheet-based reports is available for content, home page activity, questions and answers, and hashtags. Reports contain a graph / pie chart summary, along with a tab containing the entire dataset. The reports can be created instantly or be scheduled, which is a useful shortcut for admins.

Campaigns include a report showing each individual step of each campaign, split by employee profile attributes, such as location or job title, allowing admins to understand activity at each stage. We think this offers a depth of insight for understanding campaign performance that provides real value to communicators. A further screen compares the overall performance of each campaign.

Acknowledgements are tracked with individual reports showing the volume for each post, as well as who has acknowledged. Admins can 'boost' these articles to nudge the audience to acknowledge the article.

Search analytics tracks volume of searches over a period, along with most popular search terms, and 'low quality' results, which are searches that yielded no results. The 'low quality' element also takes into account any negative user feedback received about a given search return (see Scenario 5). These are all helpful insights, although we'd like to see more granularity, such as a breakdown by department or location.

Overall, there's a good range of insight available, although the design is a little inconsistent and reports tend to focus on content metrics rather than overall site performance.
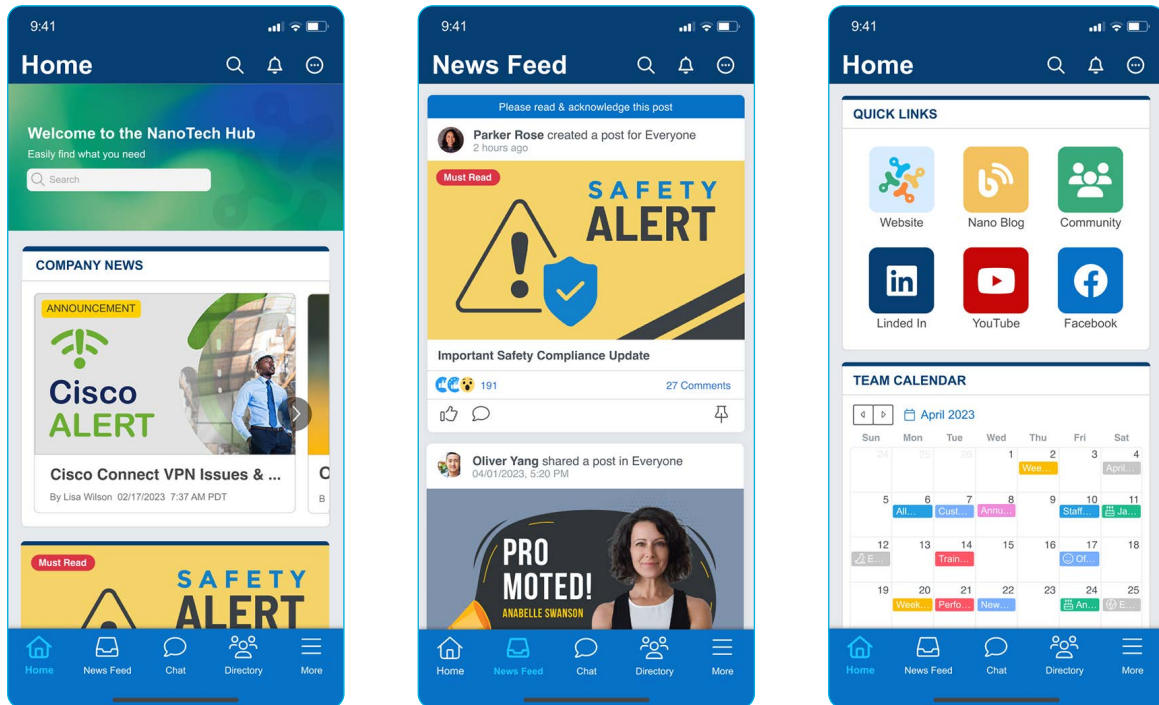
MangoApps' widget-driven functionality is well suited to mobile; admins can provide a highly customised experience.

MangoApps' native mobile app has an engaging and contemporary feel. The app is fully brandable, including the name and logo appearing on the device icon. Employees can download MangoApps from app stores by scanning a QR code and there are multiple ways to provide user access; any unique identifier could be used, such as a phone number. Alternatively, access can be managed using credentials from Entra ID, or an import from a third-party system. There is no biometric support for ease of repeat access though.

The app is functionally identical to desktop and the widget-driven approach works particularly well here. Layout is clear, with buttons easy to use and expanded menus simple to navigate; main navigation is at the foot of the screen and deeper navigation flies in from the side. Notifications and chat buttons are at the top of the screen. The Newsfeed is a familiar, social media-style experience, and users can share updates and post content. All content and services can be permissioned and audience targeted to give a high degree of customisation. Search is identical to the desktop experience and straightforward to use. The AI Helper is also available.

Content accessed from mobile opens directly in the device, meaning users don't need to leave the app in order to consume it. However, we think the way documents are presented in the native reader could be better. Where users do need to use other applications, SSO is enabled to open the application directly. The app offers good options to make provision for frontline workers, though there's nothing specifically out of the box for that purpose. See Scenario 4 for options around integrations, including training modules that work particularly well on mobile.

All mobile configuration takes place in the main administration system, including audience settings, user access and determining the content and services available. There's a clear separation of desktop and mobile settings, which is helpful, although admins should be mindful of the degree of configuration required to set up and maintain a customised mobile experience.

Overall, there are good native features to create a compelling mobile environment and this is an area of strength for MangoApps.

THINGS TO BEAR IN MIND

MangoApps has a great deal of built-in functionality and is highly configurable. However, while there is a wide range of features they may lack the degree of sophistication sought by organisations with complex needs.

The look and feel is one area that may not meet sophisticated needs. For example, there are areas where the user interface impacts the overall performance of a feature, such as the lack of a consumer app look and feel in some of its social features. Additionally, there can be a lot of 'noise' on pages in terms of labels, tags and metadata, which we think could be tidied up through design developments. Plus, while the flexibility for customisation afforded through widgets is a positive, the 'boxy' widget-driven format on desktop is somewhat prescriptive and pages can feel a little unbalanced if too many widgets are in place.

There are some good features for building and managing navigation, but we don't think MangoApps lends itself to creating highly structured content. With a variety of approaches to on-page navigation and giving 'power users' control over their own navigation set up, navigation could become incoherent without tight management in place. Content workflow may also be too simple for businesses who have specific requirements in this area.

Businesses who have a well-established M365 set up may find the integration options too limited where this is a specific requirement. Furthermore, there's little two-way integration provided as standard; MangoApps relies on the API and time / effort to develop more in-depth integrations.

Why choose this product

MangoApps offers a broad range of out-of-the-box functionality and applications for building and managing an intranet. The community and social features are a particular strength, as is the well-executed mobile app that would appeal to frontline workers. With good configuration and targeting features, it will appeal to businesses who want to provide a largely stand-alone intranet product to help support and engage multiple audiences.

Vendor roadmap

2022-2023 ROADMAP SUMMARY

	2022 - Q2	2022 - Q4	2023 - Q2	2023 - Q4
EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATIONS	User persona based communication	Multichannel campaigns & sequences	Digital signage, teams integration	Live video-based events
	Native tools for visual communication	AI-based video transcripts	Top voted employee communication items from MangoApps Community Portal	
EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT	Employee social advocacy	Built-In catalog for employee rewards	Conditional surveys & forms	R&R: Custom catalogues, External catalogue
	AI-based sentiment analysis	DEI features (reactions, pronouns etc)	Top voted employee engagement items from MangoApps Community	
SITES & KNOWLEDGE MGMT	Cloud folders for sharepoint & teams	AI-based auto tagging for media	Marketplace for ready-to-use starter sites and templates	
	Revamped search with insights & built-in federation engine (sharepoint, freshdesk)		Top voted content management items from MangoApps Community	
OPERATIONS & SELF-SERVICE	Intelligent prioritization of news feed	Messenger experience upgrade	Calendar scheduling	Frontline inspection, tasks & corrective actions
	Integration with UKG's Kronos, ADP, Google Identity, Blue Fetch & TC-21 devices		Top voted work collaboration items from MangoApps Community	
TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT	Personalized recommendations to drive adoption & engagement		VILT via Microsoft Team & Zoom — Peer-to-peer training	
	Mobile employee app onboarding & customization		Top voted training & learning items from MangoApps Community	
PLATFORM	HITRUST & SOC 2 Type-2 certification	Windows passwordless SSO	ISO 27001 certification	Reports scheduling
	Personalized navigation & branding (based on user profile)		Personalization of home & widgets (based on user profile)	

2024 ROADMAP SUMMARY (TENTATIVE)

	2024 - Q1	2024 - Q2	2024 - Q3	2024 - Q4
EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATIONS	AI Content Assistance: 2.0	Text to Image AI	Voice dubbing AI	Text to Video AI
	Top voted employee communication items from MangoApps Community			
EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT	Employee Mood App, Confidence App	AI-Based 3D Avatars for Gamification	Sentiment Analysis AI 2.0	
	Top voted employee engagement items from MangoApps Community			
SITES & KNOWLEDGE MGMT	Content Categorization AI	Content Moderation AI 2.0	Governance AI	
	Top voted content management items from MangoApps Community			
OPERATIONS & SELF-SERVICE	Frontline inspection & follow on actions	Attendance Management	Universal Search 3.0: AI Helper & Federated Search integration	
	Top voted work collaboration items from MangoApps Community			
TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT	AI based Course Authoring		AI based Skill Graph & Recommendations	Integration with Course Vendors
	Top voted training & learning items from MangoApps Community			
PLATFORM	AI Helper - 2.0	Developer Marketplace for Apps and Content	Maintain Security Certifications & Compliances (HiTrust, ISO-27001, SOC2-TYPE 2, Fedramp ATO)	
	Top voted administrative items from MangoApps Community			

Roadmap images provided by MangoApps.
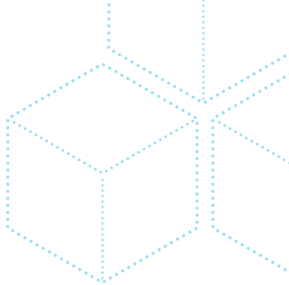
oakengage

FULLY STANDALONE

REQUIRES SHAREPOINT

OPTIONALLY WORKS WITH SHAREPOINT

FRONTLINE FOCUS
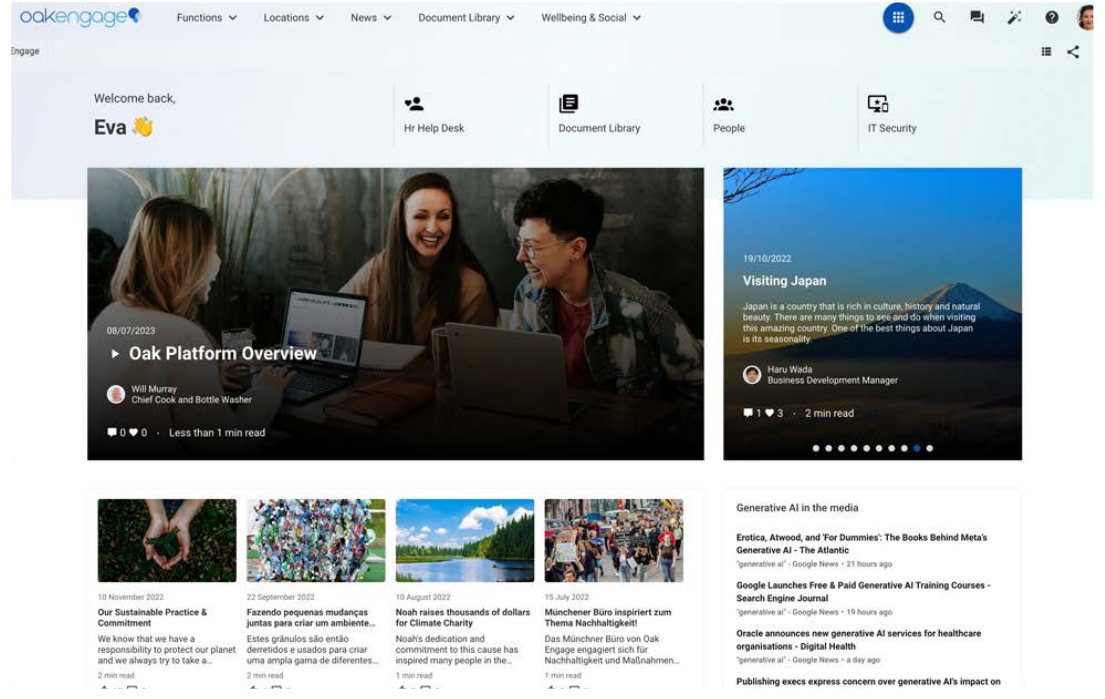
Typical deployment:

1,000 - 5,000 employees

Company locations:

The product in a nutshell

Oak is simple yet flexible, delivering a great employee experience in a way that also meets business needs.

VISIT THE WEBSITE

SUMMARY

Oak Engage owned by Oak Engage

LEADING PRODUCT
ClearBox **CHOICE** 2024

Oak Engage (referred to as 'Oak' from here onwards) was released in 2017, although the vendor has been active in the intranet market since the late 1990s. This maturity is clear in the product, which offers a simple yet flexible platform that delivers a strong user experience. Page and home page creation is particularly pleasant, using 'applets' to build content as required. Community features are also strong, using Hubs to collate activity together to serve informal conversational groups, or even effective communities of knowledge.

There is a good range of inbuilt tools and features, such as HR service desk, expenses management and facilitating time off requests, however this comes at the price of sophistication in places. For admins in particular there are some interfaces that could benefit from restyling and reorganisation, while features such as search management would benefit from a more comprehensive approach. It's also worth noting there are few integrations out of the box. However the API framework is robust, and the vendor has evidence of previous customers' technical teams building integrations to meet their needs.

Overall, Oak is offered at an appealing price for a good range of helpful features. Oak would suit organisations looking for a simpler intranet for employees while still seeking flexibility to create what they need. Organisations with multiple employee types, such as frontline workers or multiple locations, will appreciate the audience targeting and content tailoring options.

Pricing

PRICE BAND	
250 users	$ $ $ $
1,000 users	$ $ $ $
5,000 users	$ $ $ $
20,000 users	$ $ $ $

These prices are indicative, offering a comparison of the products featured in this report only. Please contact the vendor for a bespoke quote.

PRICING MODEL

Subscription – price per user per month. Subscription – price band based on number of users.

DISCOUNTS

Charities and non-profit organisations, frontline users, and multi-year commitments. Customers with seasonal employees or volunteers pay for active users. Different pricing modules available.

COSTS TYPICALLY

Fairly evenly spread across three years.

PRICE INCLUDES

A variety of services during the implementation / onboarding process (including project workshops, training for admins and end users, design, content migration); customer success, consulting and site review services; choice of modules / add-ons; technical assistance and advice.

Product type

Ready-to-run, installed in days

Branding opportunities

All branding, complex options

Base systems

Fully standalone	Requires SharePoint	Optionally works with SharePoint	Other

Sectors

Accountancy, banking and finance	Engineering and manufacturing	Hospitality and events management	Property and construction	Retail

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Chief Cook and Bottle Washer

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Haru Wada
Business Development Manager

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🅱 Google Drive	📖 Staff Directory	✏ Training Academy
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📅 Birthdays & Anniversaries

Janet Jackson has been with the company 20 years today

Congratulate

Global CEO Updates

Get the latest from Jack Roberts

Oak Engage was victorious at the 18th annual intranet awards last night, taking home the trophy for Intranet of the Year. More than 700 guests from across the internal communications industry were in attendance to congratulate the 12 winners.

Trending Hubs

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The main goal here is to try and beat the last weeks running distance as a shared effort!

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Working with Procurement: A Comprehensive Guide

Procurement is a critical function in any organisation, responsible for acquiring goods, services, and works from an external source, often through a tendering or competitive bidding process.

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UNLIMITED SPACES

Management Conference - Q3
Tue, 10 Oct 2023 10:00
📍 New York

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Employee Privacy Notice

Communications
Guidance on media communications

Support
SHEQ Guidance

Contact
Registered company address

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COMPANY AND PRODUCT

Company details

Company
Oak Engage

ISO 27001 certified
Yes (also Cyber Essentials Plus accreditation)

Data residency
In addition to the data stores in the US, UK and Australia, Oak Engage also provide data stores within the EU. For those data stores hosted within the EU, data will not be replicated elsewhere.

Company founded
1999

Product launched
2017

Typical client size
1,000 - 5,000 employees

Largest deployment so far
Largest deployment has in excess of 85,000 users.

Customers
Clients include: Aldi, Five Guys, Halfords, ITV, Miller Homes, NatWest (Best Intranet, IoIC Awards 2022), NEP, Severfield, Sevita.

Partner locations
None

Company locations
Newcastle Upon Tyne, UK (HQ), Durham, UK

Product and technical details

Name of product
Oak Engage

Deployment

Client on-premises	Client private cloud	**Microsoft Azure**	Amazon Web Services	Vendor-hosted	Microsoft 365 tenant	**Other***

*MS Azure Dedicated Instance, Virtual Private Cloud.

Client data encrypted

In transit only	**In transit and at rest**	At rest only

Authentication supported

Entra ID	**ADFS**	**Okta**	**Open ID**	**Oauth**	**G Suite**	**Other***

*Authentication also supported through PING, or any SAML 2.0 connection as well as the ability to deliver custom authentication routes if required.

App deployment

Google Play store	**Apple store**	**MDM**	MAM	Other

Accessibility
Individual users can change the font size of what they're seeing, Alt text is in use for images and keyboards can be used for navigation. Oak Engage are working towards the WCAG 2.1 standard. Some legacy features are not fully compliant yet. They have a partnership with an accessibility consultant who carries out yearly audits of the product. In between these audits they carry out spot tests of certain areas of Oak. In addition, all engineers and QA staff are web accessibility trained and they ensure all new features are tested to WCAG 2.1 AA standards before release. The product has an accessibility backlog which is ordered using the WCAG success criterion severity level. Oak Engage ensure each of their development teams tackle accessibility issues in each of their sprint cycles to ensure our accessibility quality is improving.

Document library sources integrated

Box	Dropbox	Google Drive	SharePoint	OneDrive	Other

Optional integrated enterprise search engines

Coveo	Elastic	IBM	Lucidworks	Microsoft	Mindbreeze	Sinequa	Other*

*If there was a requirement to integrate with other search engines this could be discussed on a case-by-case basis (charges may apply).

User interface multi-language

Pre-configured	Editable	Right to left script supported	Other

Content multi-language

Machine translation for publishers	Machine translation for end users	Editable machine translation for publishers	Manual creation for publishers	Right to left script	Other

Set-up and support

Set-up process for new clients

The set-up process is based on a consultative approach. The professional services team take an 'outcome-based approach' delivered in an agile manner focused on the customers key outcomes. Their agile approach enables deployments to take place in as little as 48hrs. The Implementation Consultants guide customers through planning, creation and launch. Supported by a CSM and wider team they'll ensure a close productive relationship for the duration of the partnership.

Current version

4.3.52.4 (September 2023)

Product updates

Updates are released approximately every four weeks, with larger changes communicated well in advance. Oak Engage handle all the product testing as part of the normal development and release process.

Product update process

As a SaaS solution, there is no technical maintenance required by customers; the platform is fully managed by Oak Engage. The specialist DevOps team perform 'out of hours' upgrades within each region. Oak is designed to run 24/7 and doesn't go offline for updates or maintenance. Customers can not opt-out of updates as Oak Engage run a consistent version of Oak across their platform. Customers can have early access to and can also opt to turn off new features.

Reverse-out options

Once the customer contract ends, Oak will provide the customer with an export of relevant data for migration purposes (where required). All data will be deleted within 30 days of the subscription end date.

Technical support

Email support	Phone support	Chat support	Online portal	24/7 support	Office hours only

User community

Oak Engage encourage collaboration across their customer base, regularly introducing customers to discuss best practice as well as holding user workshops at their HQ.

Voice of the vendor

Oak Engage says: "Oak Engage is an award-winning employee engagement and intranet solution. We deliver AI personalised content across a modern intranet and employee engagement app.

It's harder than ever trying to engage employees and focus on their wellbeing. Whilst also navigating hybrid working, addressing burnout and external factors, it makes communicating with people a huge challenge. This means more content is sent across multiple channels and platforms, creating too much noise. People are left feeling overwhelmed with information. Additionally, internal communicators are overworked and under-resourced.

We're breaking away from the content graveyard intranets we've all come to know and hate. Our research led approach has highlighted the common challenges that internal communicators face every day. But how do you cut through the noise? How do you manage the overwhelmed? Using the right technology is key to overcoming these issues and Oak has the answer.

We wanted to create something that is more organic, self-organising and timeless. We wanted to create something that is outcomes focussed and build a platform that helps HR and Internal Comms teams work together to make sure the right content reaches the right people at the right time.

We offer a solution that takes away the stress. We believe intranets should be working a whole lot harder for businesses. We empower internal communicators to be more strategic in their approach and allow them to focus their already limited resources on the things that truly matter. We believe there is a better way to use technology to engage employees, cut through the noise, and inspire action that puts people at the heart of organisations.

People are the driving force behind businesses. They are an organisation's most valuable asset. It's too easy for employees to become disconnected, disengaged and unreachable. That's why we want to give everyone a voice at work and make them feel empowered and motivated to do more.

The result of poor communication? High levels of attrition, frustration, isolation and scepticism. That's why workplaces need a solution to retain talent, enhance productivity and increase engagement. One that puts people at the forefront with targeted communication that is personalised and relevant to them.

That's what Oak Engage does. Our solution is innovative, beautiful and collaborative. It supports meaningful two-way conversations and fosters a sense of belonging. We want to take away the complexity of communication. And that's why we've made it our mission to make communication simple."

Voice of the customer

Many customers highlighted Oak's ease of use as a big positive, with one person saying, "I find the product very intuitive with a smart design". The ability to, "make effective comms and pages to suit all business needs" was another sentiment echoed by multiple customers: one person commented, "there are lots of great features that enable us to truly achieve two-way communication with our colleagues across the business". Recent developments with analytics were praised and one person said the Awards applet is "a game changer for our employee recognition program".

Customers observed that Oak would benefit from some client-accessible customisation and configuration options, so that, "more controls are handed back" to admin teams, with search given as an example. Another customer said, "I would like to see the mobile app be more customisable", furthering the request for greater admin controls. Another customer added, "I think some aspects could be simplified: the back end can get a little messy and complicated". Another customer mentioned bugs associated with a new release but added "other than that, I am very pleased".

Customers describe working with Oak as "excellent" and "amazing", with one person saying, "we can't speak highly enough of the team at Oak". A common sentiment was that Oak "put the customer first" with excellent communication to back it up. In fact, one customer said the experience was, "AMAZING! A main reason why I recommend Oak to industry connections is because of their customer service. The product is great, but the staff at Oak is a main reason why I recommend them". Going on to add, "they care about their relationships with customers and it shows".

SCENARIOS & SCORES

Please see the Scenarios below for more detail on each of these.

SCENARIO AND SCORE	KEY BENEFITS	IMPROVEMENTS / CONSIDERATIONS
4 — **1. User Experience & Visual Appeal**	Highly flexible and provides a great user experience. Option for multiple home pages works well.	Styling of features could be improved in places.
3+ — **2. Publishing & Communications Management**	Pleasant publishing via applets. 'Smart delivery' effectively releases news as appropriate for audiences.	Advanced audience targeting has to be set up by the vendor. Communicating outside the intranet somewhat limited.
4+ — **3. Community & Engagement**	Communities well handed through Hubs. Excellent employee / peer recognition feature.	Surveying is fairly basic. Reactions limited to 'likes'.
1.5+ — **4. Integrations & Services (Including M365)**	Robust 'Developer Centre' for admins or the vendor to build integrations.	Limited integrations out of the box.
4 — **5. Information Finding & Search**	Federated search and people directory strong. Novel but helpful search interface.	Few filters and search management tools.
3.5 — **6. Administrator Experience**	Pleasant page and home page creation. Good multi-language tools.	Can feel complex in places. Additional life cycle tools would be beneficial.
3 — **7. Analytics**	Charts are attractive. Some helpful data points for admins and publishers.	Good foundation for further development. Greater range and depth of reporting needed, particularly for search.
3.5+ — **8. Mobile & Frontline Support**	Intelligent audience targeting works well for this audience. App experience can be tailored to the frontline. Helpful inbuilt tools.	Home page tabs might be confusing. Dedicated frontline worker features could be expanded.

4

1. USER EXPERIENCE & VISUAL APPEAL

OAK ENGAGE
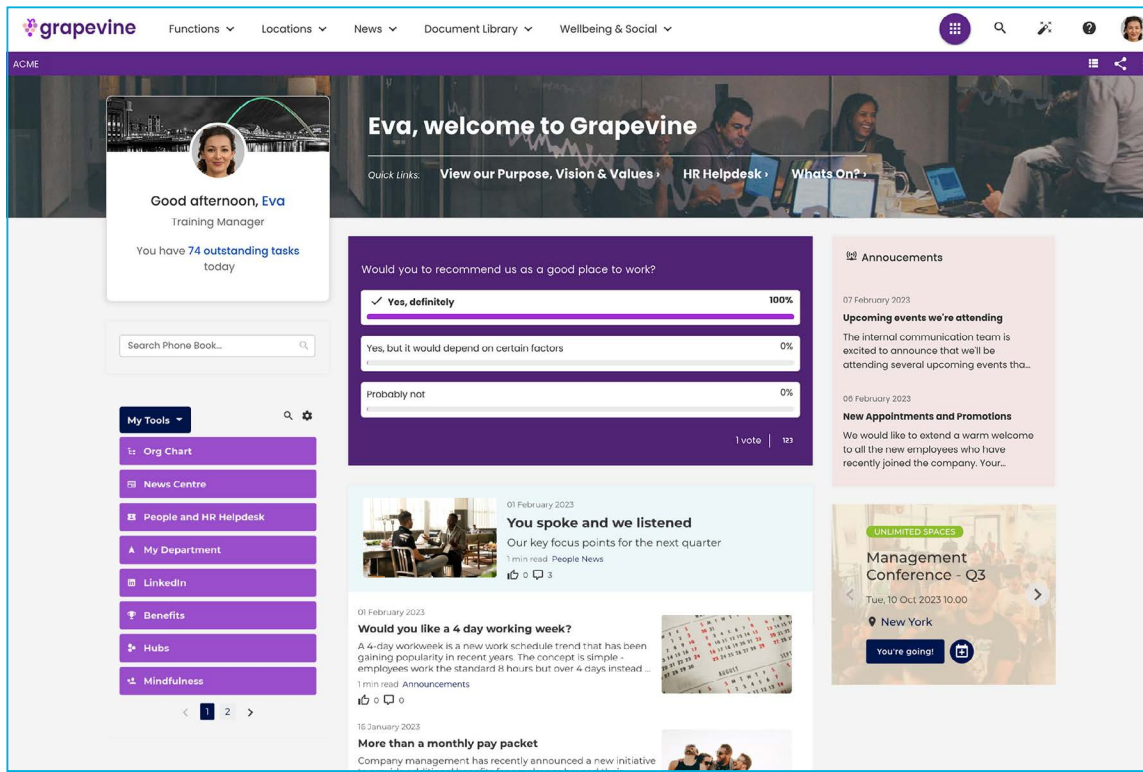
Oak is highly configurable, so one home page can look very different from another.

Overall Oak is easy to use with a smooth user interface. It is highly flexible and configurable when it comes to design, with administrators able to control much of the user experience. We particularly like the welcome tour which can be configured to reflect the organisations intranet and, which showcases the excellent experience for employees as well as the flexibility for admins.

There are a few approaches to navigation. The first is a site-wide mega menu, which Oak will help set up initially, but then admins may tweak as the site evolves over time. These are fairly traditionally styled, it would be nice to see an option to add images for example. We like the breadcrumb trails that help people see their whereabouts on the intranet. Left-hand sub-menus are provided where desired, or alternatively navigation buttons are served by page 'applets'. (Applets are Oak's version of widgets / web parts that are found across the site in all pages.)

As well as the mega menu, Oak provides a site-wide footer and will help with the initial configuration of this. Alongside the mega menu in the top bar are 'Chats' (see Scenario 8), search (see Scenario 5), 'Support' (see Scenario 6), 'Aria AI' (see Scenario 6), and a profile button displaying the employee's photo. Behind the profile button are the individual's notifications and tasks, with a helpful count to show new activities and which can be explored even after they have been marked as complete. There are also applets for notifications, tasks, and broadcasts (see Scenario 2), plus mobile push notifications that go beyond the intranet onto mobile lock screens.

Admins will find the branding and overall design options in Oak flexible, with complex branding available – for example, where one location may want different branding to another. Organisations can even offer distinct home page and intranet configurations for different audiences, appropriately meeting employee and business needs, which may even include an extranet. The styling of some elements could look more contemporary, such as the appearance of the like and comment icons, although in most places Oak looks and behaves like a modern employee experience platform.

clearbox.co.uk

Intranet and Employee Experience Platforms | 495

Creating a page in Oak is simple, with an effective 'smart delivery' AI for dissemination.

The approach to news is flexible, meeting different organisation's needs. For example, Oak says that some customers choose to share company news via a timeline applet (see Scenario 3) on the home page; customers find this encourages two-way communication, particularly as it mirrors people's experiences of social media. Alternatively, published pages offer greater flexibility and content choice for articles, starting with templates for different news types. Oak will create templates during set up, although admins can then add more or adjust templates later. We like that applying a template doesn't lose any content already added.

Publishers drag, drop, and resize applets as desired to build attractive pages. There is a smaller selection of applets available in pages compared to home page design (see Scenario 6), however the range works well. Applets include 'page content' with a rich text editor, 'accordion' to present complex information simply, and 'meet the team' for a contact block. We like the 'latest news' applet that presents related news to the reader, themed around topics.

Copying and pasting from Word or other sources works very well, with Oak respecting formatting and embedded links. Pasting also brings across images, which are automatically saved in Oak's media manager, and added into the 'content' applet with simple resizing options. There is a 'banner' applet but we think a separate 'image' applet within the page body would be a helpful addition. Videos are embedded in pages using links from YouTube, Vimeo and others. Please see Scenario 6 for details on Aria AI, which helps generate content.

Once an article is ready, the publisher can inherit the audience from the section the page is being published to or tweak as wanted. Audiences are imported, such as from Entra groups, or can be created within Oak. The vendor can create audiences dynamically using rules on behalf of clients, such as 'people on vacation'; the ability for admins to do this is on the roadmap. Additionally, people can opt into topics to expand what's presented to them, although security permissions are always respected.

To ensure news reaches the right people at the right time, Oak uses a 'smart delivery' system. On creation, the publisher chooses which audiences 'should' or 'must' read the article and by what date. The AI then inspects the individuals – such as when they're active on the site – and the communications need – for example an article with a short promotional period will result in more tenacious activities – and releases the article appropriately. Anything that's missed is resurfaced in applets and individuals receive reminder notifications too. Articles are also published into a news centre for browsing.

Oak's 'campaigns' feature also makes good use of smart delivery, but allows for the batch management of articles in one place. Articles are set in a flow to communicate a given topic, with a promotional period based on 'must' and 'should' read rules as above. On the roadmap is a facility to measure a baseline and incremental improvements to people's understanding or changes in behaviour. While this lacks the sophistication we've seen in other products, it is a helpful tool for communicators.

While smart delivery is effective, there are no manual news flow management tools beyond selecting a publication date. There also aren't any ways to see what has or is due to be communicated across the intranet, other than the news centre. A dashboard to help manage news and its flow would be beneficial.

A schedule of posts in a wellbeing campaign.

Crisis communications are handled via 'Notices' and / or push notifications. We like that when creating a push notification, publishers have a choice of adding 'Breaking News'. This displays as a thin banner at the bottom of the screen, mimicking what you'd see on TV. Notices are built using a simple form that steps a publisher through choices including when the Notice should begin and if it's recurring. Mandatory Notices are pushed via all notification routes and there is an optional applet that collates them. Articles associated with a mandatory Notice will display an acknowledgement button. Responses are recorded and it's easy to manually issue prompts to those who haven't acknowledged yet.

Tools for helping communicators reach audiences outside of Oak are limited. Admins can set up an automated news roundup email that helpfully shows readers anything they've missed or is trending, but a newsletter builder would be a welcome addition. Sharing Oak links into MS Teams channels is available out of the box, while Oak say that could develop this for Slack or similar tools on request. Digital signage support is basic, via integrations with third-party platforms or by displaying dedicated home pages on a browser.

Overall, Oak offers a range of approaches for communicators to effectively reach their colleagues. We would like to see a handful of additional features to give internal communicators more visibility or control, to better aid planning and assessment of success. However, many internal communications teams will find a lot to like.

A completed article showcasing a variety of flexible applets.

Setting up a new Notice, including the selection of "how important" it is that people see the Notice.

Socialising and collaboration mainly takes place in Hubs.

Oak has some excellent community features, starting with 'Hubs' where social and collaborative groups are found. Each Hub can be private, membership on request, or completely open, and is configurable so that appropriate applets are presented to members, for example to share 'blogs'. A timeline applet is always included (although can be removed) and replicates the experience of social media sites. Hub members receive notifications when someone posts, and posts will display in a timeline on the home page if the applet has been added there. The vendor says some customers adopt the home page timeline approach and share all news in the shorter form that it encourages.

Posts include simple formatting options, as you would expect, plus links will display a preview and emojis add an element of fun. Admins have the option of including a profanity filter, which will flag a post to moderators for action as required. Alternatively, people can report a post for moderation if they feel it is inappropriate. Comments can also be reported, or conversely an admin can mark a comment as 'expert' to highlight it as the best answer. Comments and content can be liked only, although Oak says a range of reactions should be available soon.

Hubs can be used for communities of knowledge, by allowing anyone to edit or contribute to the space such as through dedicated blogs. The 'expert' comments, mentioned above, and associated 'feedback' applet work well here. The 'feedback' applet allows people to rate the page and send feedback to the author. This will help capture and expand on expert knowledge that may otherwise be lost.

Oak includes a couple of features to help gather employee thoughts and opinions. There is a 'quick poll' applet that echoes the experience from social media. The vendor says that one of their customers fills a home page with these applets at certain times of the year to encourage quick, dip-in-and-out surveying. This works well as their users primarily access Oak via the app (see Scenario 8). Alternatively, 'forms' can be used for longer surveys, with the potential to add banners and images to make them look engaging. Results are only presented as an exported Excel file at the end of the survey however, which isn't as dynamic as other products we've seen.

The 'feedback' applet allows people to pass comments directly to a page author, while 'expert' comments highlight the best responses from those given.

We really like the 'Quick Thanks' feature that gives people 'stars' to recognise the work of their colleagues. Anyone can choose any individual or group to award a star to, with frequent contacts appearing towards the top of the search list. The star can be branded as desired, so could be associated with company values or areas associated with KPIs, and the awarder may write a message to those they're sending stars to. The stars will display as a notification to those involved but may also display in a dedicated applet and / or in a timeline. The number of sent and received stars is tracked, with the potential to integrate with a rewards platform to award physical prizes based on stars received or sent.

There is also an 'Awards' feature that allows people to formally nominate individuals or groups for internal awards, with a STAR format form to gather relevant information. Nominees receive an associated notification and there's an Employee Awards dashboard that shows all received nominations for people to browse. The results are exportable for the HR team to work on, but we'd like to see a way for people to cast votes or for the HR team to manage the results within Oak. In fact, the Quick Thanks and Awards features are two examples where a little more styling would be helpful, to make it look more contemporary. The functionality, however, is excellent.
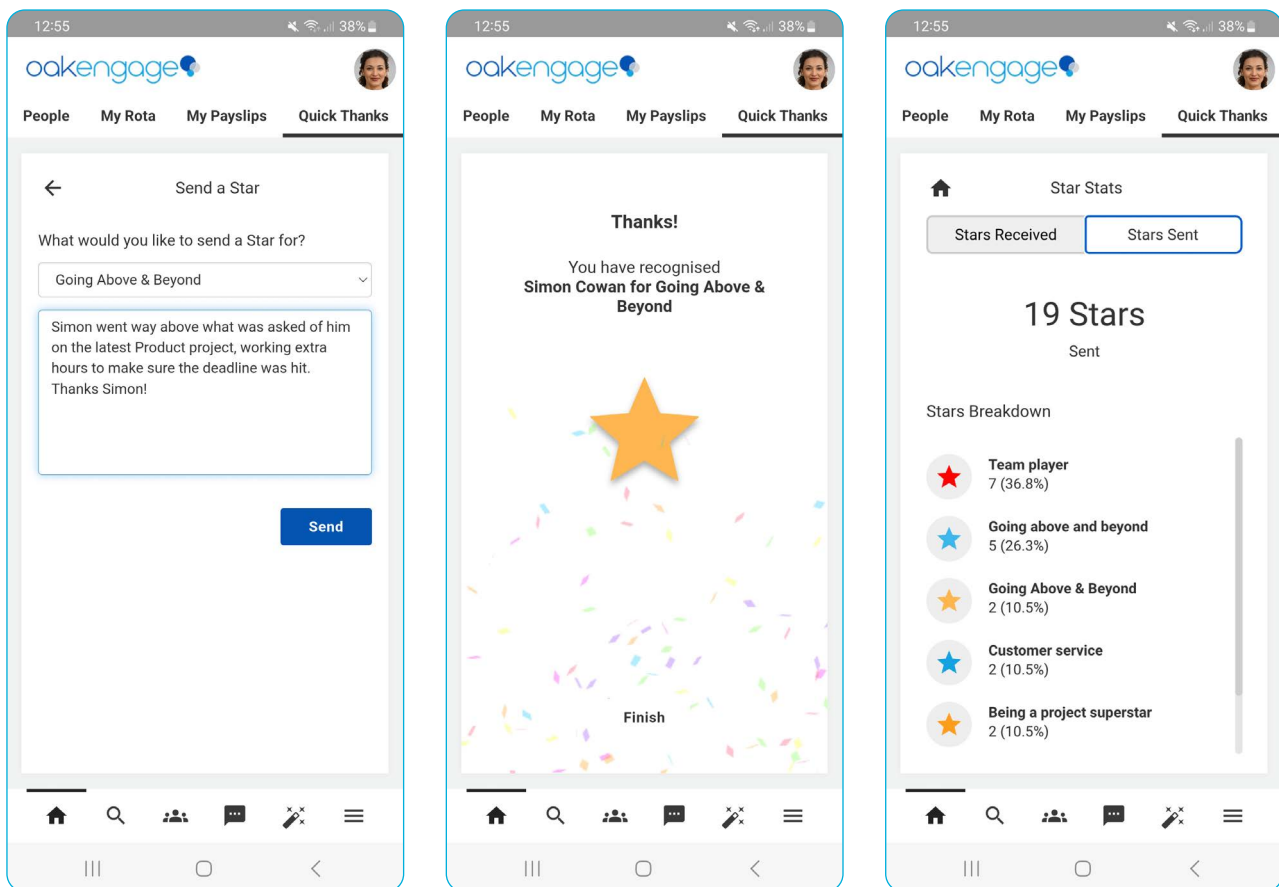
Awarding stars via 'Quick Thanks' is simple and fun, and we like the integration option with rewards platforms to offer tangible prizes.

There is an effective 'Events' feature to help organisers promote activities and manage attendance. Each event has its own page, where organisers may choose to limit attendance numbers or ask for information around allergens. There is a browsable Events landing page and dedicated applets to surface relevant events to people. Once accepted, the event will be added to an integrated calendar such as Outlook.

Finally, new employees can be supported with Oak dedicated home pages. Employees would see these home pages for a defined period post start date, before switching automatically to another home page. Admins may build the pre-boarding and onboarding home pages as desired, to cover common tasks, questions, and to reduce the chance of overwhelming new starters.

Overall, Oak includes some effective features to encourage engagement and engender a sense of community. In places some of the styling could be improved, or additional functionality introduced to make the features more robust, however the range of options will certainly meet a lot of business needs.

New employees could see a dedicated, simplified home page for a given period after joining the organisation.
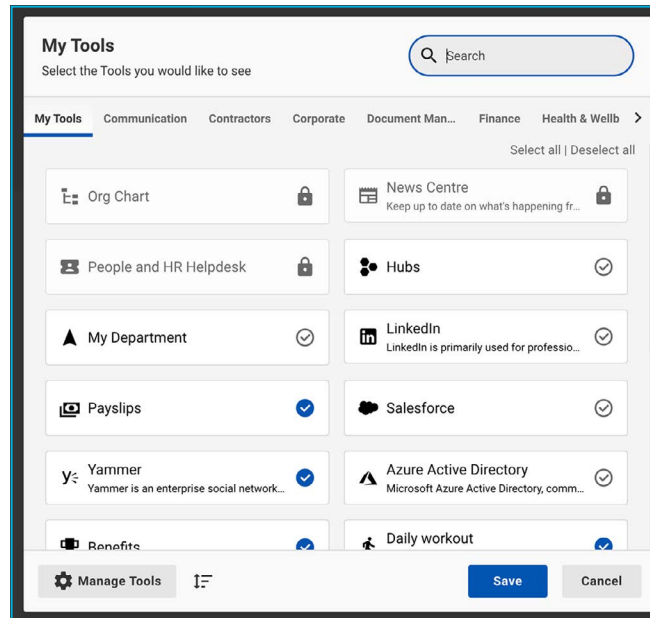
'My Tools' is configurable by employees and takes them through to source systems using single sign on.

The vendor says a variety of integration options are possible using their API and robust Developer Centre; this is supported with customer case studies although not via a demonstration to us. For example, Oak says there is an integration with an LMS they use themselves that shows people what training they are yet to take.

Using the API it's possible to create deep, two-way integrations or a simpler feed of notifications from a third-party tool into the platform. This could include something like MS Teams where notifications from channels are passed into an Oak applet. Oak will help with this development, otherwise clients will be able to do it themselves.

The vendor has created feeds from Workplace (Meta) and content from Viva Engage into Oak for people to browse; these respect permissions. Publishers can browse some third-party file storage (Google Drive, Dropbox, SharePoint and OneDrive) for page attachments but there aren't ways to display integrated document libraries. Similarly, external libraries can be federated in search (see Scenario 5) but only where the user has a license for the third-party system. However, documents within SharePoint can be published into Oak, where changes in SharePoint are synched and version control captured. These documents can be viewed by employees who don't have SharePoint licenses - SharePoint permissions aren't carried across here but are respected in federated search.

There is a helpful 'My Tools' applet, which is audience targeted, customisable by employees, and provides single sign on. It's possible to 'lock' tools so that they can't be removed, but we like that the order will change to automatically display more commonly used links first.

In-built forms can be used for surveys or for simple processes such as ordering uniform. Forms are easy to build, with simple layout options and a variety of question types. A workflow will pass the form onto relevant colleagues as it's completed. There are optional modules for organisations without an expenses system or vacation booking solution (at additional cost but included in the pricing here), which are simple but helpful.

Overall, the vendor provides the framework for integration development but there's little out of the box. There are helpful in-built employee services however, which will serve businesses that may not have dedicated systems or wish to simplify processes for their employees.

The search panel opens on the right of the screen while results can be browsed and opened on the left.

Oak takes a novel approach to search; while the prevalent search icon will be familiar, results are loaded in a slide-out panel on the right of the screen with the content on the left reacting to the new space available. What's helpful about this approach is that people are able to check the results by clicking on them and the screen to the left loads the content, leaving the list of results unchanged to the right. Where there are popular topics or a few similar looking pages, this will allow people to find the right thing without the frustration of having to backtrack.

Results display icons and thumbnails to help people browse for the correct answer. There is a results refinement list of checkboxes to help filter results, but this list is static rather than being dynamically generated based on the results. There is an 'advanced search' option that includes a query builder for more precise searching, but this may not be appealing for average users. 'Promoted results' allow admins to prioritise content associated with a search term, although there aren't other search management features which we think is a shame. Fuzzy matches and 'did you mean' results are supported though, which helps people locate the right content. Page 'Topics' help define the content of a page and will be returned in associated search results.

The content of integrated third-party systems will be federated as part of the search. For Microsoft this means the content of SharePoint teams sites and OneDrive; Google Workspace can also be federated out of the box. Other integrations are set up on request, the vendor mentioned previous experience with federating document management tools, Gmail, and tickets in a project management tool. Federated results are presented on separate tabs as well as part of an 'all' tab and will respect any associated permissions in the third-party tool; if someone doesn't have a license for the business tool then they will receive no results in the search.

Where there is only a single result for a search term, a person's name for example, this is shown as a large format card in the search panel. Most people finding is completed via the main search box, although there is a 'phone book' applet that lists appropriate people on pages. Organisations may customise people profile fields as desired, choosing whether to integrate data from appropriate systems, allow people to add their own information, or both. We like that it's possible to control which fields are visible to others and which fields can be searched for, meaning the results of any approved fields will be searchable.

Profile pages are simple in appearance but work well. One tab displays profile fields, alongside an applet displaying 'suggested people' (such as those in the same department or with similar skills), which we think is helpful. A sharable QR code is a nice feature to help people connect quickly. A second tab displays a timeline associated with the individual, so those browsing can see what they've posted or what blogs have been shared.

Profile pages include a good range of configurable data.

Also on profile pages is a button to open an organisation chart, which is among the best we've seen in this report. The chart opens with the original individual on the furthest left and any direct reports lead from them as tabs, with subsequent direct reports opening in a new column. A breadcrumb trail shows branches further up the tree and this is also explorable. Clicking on an individual provides a summary of their information plus a button to their profile.

Overall, the search in Oak is effective but there are areas where there could be user experience and management improvements, which is a sentiment echoed by customers. However, the people search aspect is unusually configurable and gives individuals, as well as organisations, more control than we typically see. Additionally, the interface approach to search might not appeal to everyone, but we feel it will serve end users well.

The org chart works particularly well, opening like the branches of a tree as it's explored.
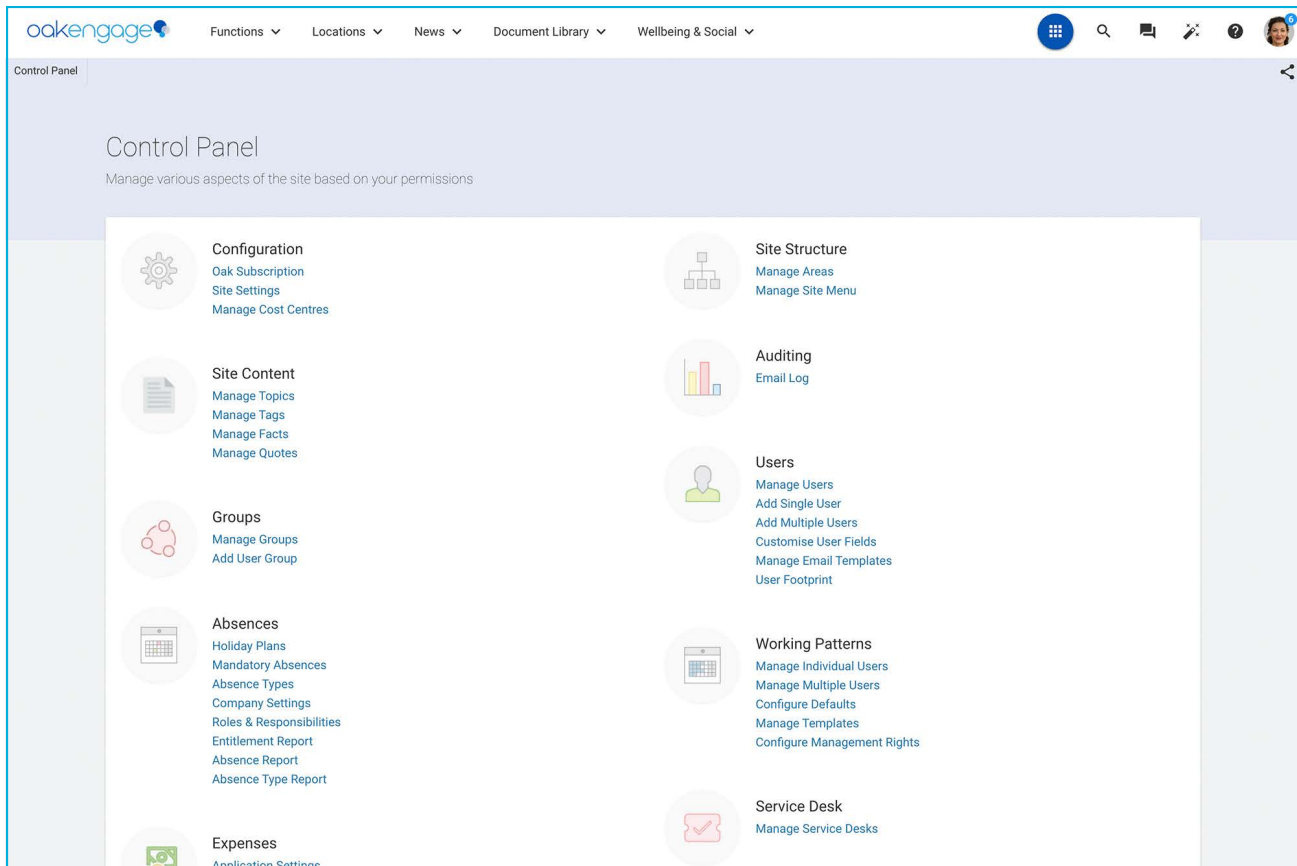
The 'Control Panel' is where much of Oak's administration takes place.

Oak is a very flexible platform with a pleasant approach to creating content pages and home pages. Other administrative menus can feel clunky by comparison, although Oak says they have made improvements since we saw a demo and more is on their roadmap. Access to a 'knowledge base' via the top menu that opens as a side-panel is excellent. This allows any user, not just admins, to explore Oak help pages, log a support ticket with Oak, and submit feedback.

The 'Control Panel' is where site management takes place and it feels somewhat unwieldy when compared to the front-end of Oak. For example, 'manage tags' includes a long list of tags used across the intranet so would benefit from a search or filter of some kind to simplify the task. Overall, the simplicity of the home page applet approach isn't mirrored in admin screens and we think that's a shame and is a sentiment shared by customers. However, the flexibility seen elsewhere in Oak is certainly still present and once administrators are used to the screens, they will be able to create the intranet as they desire.

Home pages are audience targeted, allowing organisations to have multiple home pages to meet different employee needs. Home pages are created using applets, which admins drag and drop into appropriate places with the applets resizing as they're moved. There is a good range of applets too, including those that will display content from within Oak's features, such as employee recognition or events, and also from external sources such as news feeds. Additionally, we like the confetti, snow, and bats animations that add a moment of movement to the home page, and introduces an element of fun to a business tool.

Home page creation is simple using applets, although where an admin has a question about Oak, they can easily find an answer via the knowledge base too.

As referenced in Scenario 2, the applet approach works well on pages, where complex information such as FAQs may be presented in an accordion applet rather than in long-form articles. For those who aren't comfortable writing, the 'Aria' AI tool will help generate content using a series of natural language prompts. This will generate a draft page, news article, or policy for the publisher to review and edit. The policy draft is written in a standard format, which is helpful for consistency, but some may feel it is overly comprehensive. On the roadmap is a facility for Aria to assist with editing, such as changing length and tone, which we feel is a more helpful approach by AI as there are fewer risks of content accuracy errors. Also on the roadmap is a text to video feature, which we're looking forward to seeing.

AI generation takes the form of a chatbot-esque prompt and will generate draft policies.

Content life cycle is managed in a couple of places. The first is via Oak's legacy reporting area (Oak says they plan to migrate to the new experience) where admins find reporting tables split into topics such as 'expiry', and 'comments'. A 'Your Footprint' space presents information in a more user-friendly dashboard style, although it is somewhat hidden in menu options and the depth of data isn't so strong. Notifications are triggered to help people manage content expiry, which is helpful, however we think a single, detailed and attractive dashboard approach would be better.

Publishers can create pages in different languages which includes optional machine translation and applies to home pages as well as individual pages. Content (including the interface) is displayed to employees based on their default language, or they may choose to view in an alternative if one is provided. Oak says this is helpful where a manager has direct reports in multiple countries that have their own policies, as they can easily translate the content.

Where multi-language support is needed, Oak compares the language on a page with the language choice an employee has made, then displays a tab for employees to choose to auto-translate content. This will apply to all pages, including those with custom content like polls or even custom development using APIs. This is an unusual approach, which may not appeal to some. We think it would be useful to highlight to the end user that it has been created using auto translation, which is on the roadmap. Also on the roadmap is the facility to automatically generate translated video captions, which we think will be helpful.

Articles published in other languages automatically include a tab that employees may use to auto-translate the content.
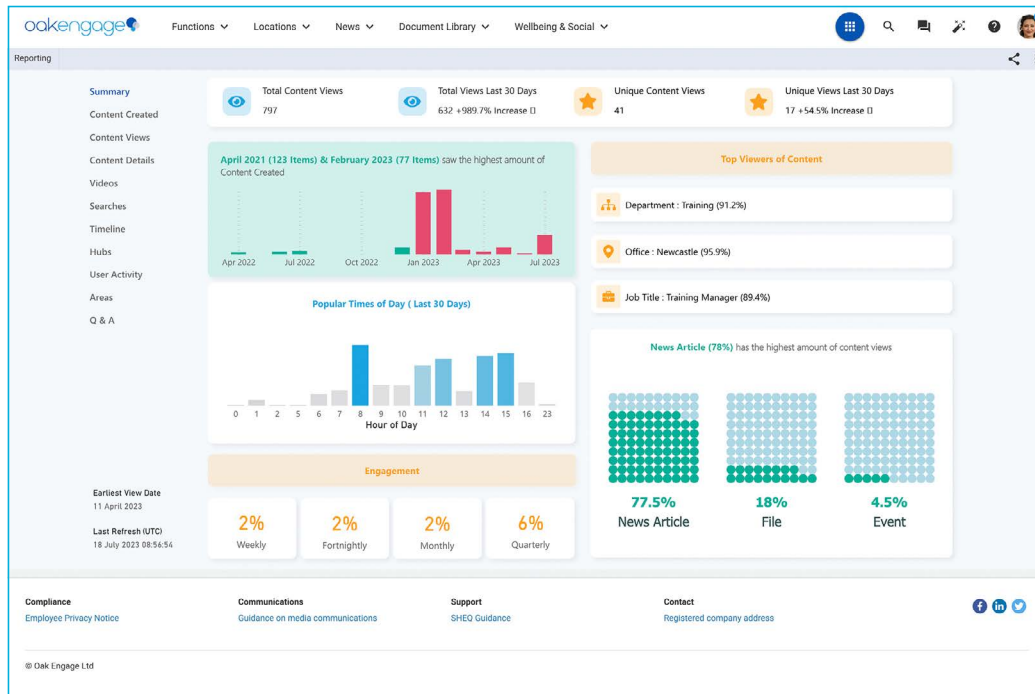
Oak includes attractive charts and tables of analytics.

Oak's 'Reporting' screens include data on a range of content and activities; using PowerBI in the background (with licensing covered by Oak) means Oak will easily be able to extend the range on request or for all customers. A 'Summary' screen provides an overview of data such as top viewers or popular times of day; it's unclear what timeframe some of this information applies to, while others are clearly labelled, making the experience somewhat inconsistent. There's no way to adjust the date range or apply filters in the Summary, which would be helpful.

Most reporting categories are associated with content, but 'User Activity' includes helpful heat map charts and 'logged-in percentages' by location; 'Searches' includes basic data about the number of daily searches and search terms. Platform and search statistics would benefit from additional charts with a greater range of information, 'failure to find' results are on the roadmap for example, but filters can be applied and data exported which is helpful.

Content analytics includes useful information relating to views, creation, video plays, usage of Hubs and usage of the timeline. Data is presented as tables and charts, some of which are simple while others are more sophisticated. For example, a 'Content Views' table includes a 'total views trend' column displaying a line going up or down. Helpfully, each page includes a view count with an option to open a more detailed report showing its performance, but a dashboard of tailored analytics for each publisher would be a welcome addition.

Similarly, each Oak feature, such as an individual campaign or the expenses module, has its own analytics, which would benefit from restyling and to be linked to from the Reporting menu for ease of finding. Mandatory reads are well handled through 'notices' (see Scenario 2) where it's easy to re-prompt those who haven't acknowledged a notice and export the results.

Overall, Oak has spent a lot of time developing the analytics during 2023 and we can see an improvement. There is still a way to go before the suite is as comprehensive as we've seen elsewhere, but what's there is helpful and an excellent foundation for the future developments they have planned.
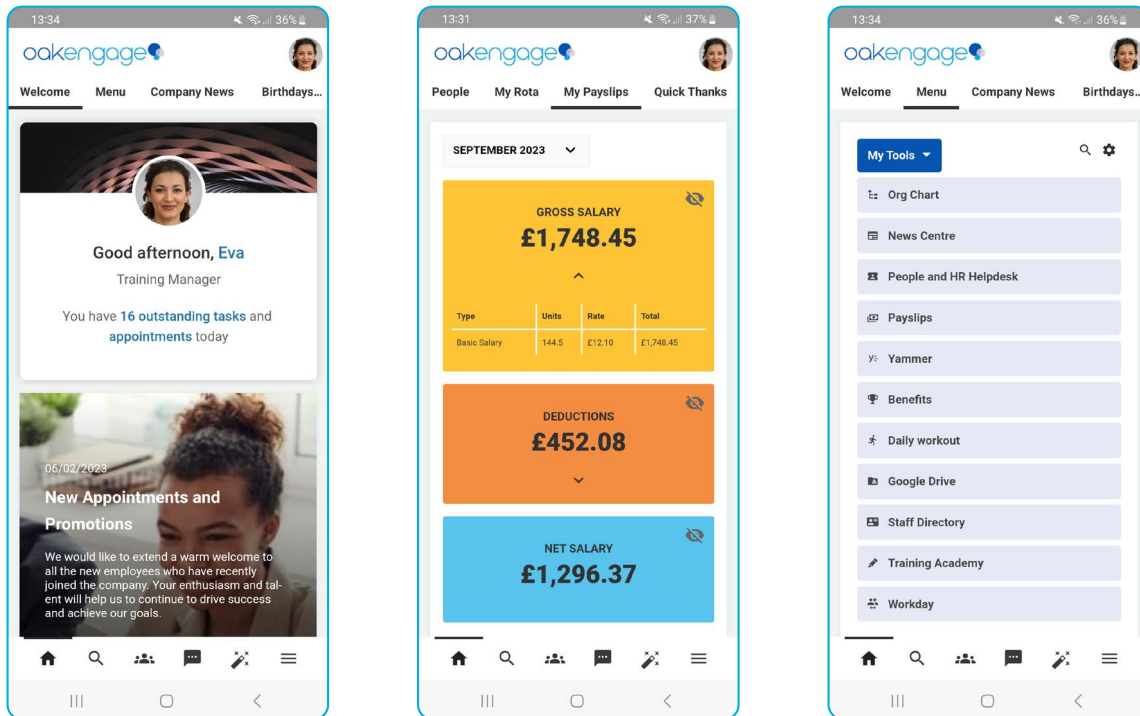
Oak translates well to a small screen environment.

Oak provides a variety of methods to encourage people to download the app and to help them gain access. For example, Oak has provided clients with physical QR codes, while emails include bespoke links. Access can be associated with single sign-on accounts like Entra ID, with multi-factor authentication if wanted; or users could use unique identifiers to log in, with biometrics for ease of subsequent access.

The app home page displays 'stacks' of applets grouped into tabs, which is a different approach to the desktop and might be confusing. The desktop mega menu is found in the burger menu, while the bottom app navigation includes the Aria AI tool which feels superfluous here. Finding a way to elegantly surface appropriate third-party tools would be more helpful. A messaging feature is found in the bottom navigation though, and this is particularly useful for frontline teams.

While there are no frontline features found solely on the app, the 'Quick Thanks' recognition tool works very well. The vendor says their integration with rotas and scheduling tools is popular for frontline teams, where notifications of shift changes are easy to find. An integration with payslip systems is also robust, requiring biometric or similar authentication before it'll be displayed. Inbuilt 'time off' and 'service desk' features are useful here, simplifying the suite of tools employees need to access.

It's worth highlighting that the 'smart delivery' approach to content dissemination works well for frontline workers, as it recognises working patterns. This means shift workers are less likely to be disturbed outside of their working hours. There aren't any manual controls over 'do not disturb' hours though, or any offline reading / save for later tools for content, which would be helpful additions here.

Admins have a good deal of control over the design of Oak, including on mobile, with a custom branding option for the app at additional cost. Dedicated home pages work well, where the frontline could be presented only with timeline and notices applets. Alternatively, everyone in the organisation could share the same home page, but with settings on individual applets to display to specified audiences or device types.

THINGS TO BEAR IN MIND

While Oak may lack sophistication in some places, such as integrations, there is flexibility behind the scenes that means it can be developed to meet different organisational needs. There is a good range of optional features too, such as expenses and service desk, that we've included in the pricing here but could be removed. This means that an already attractive price-point could be even lower.

The lack of sophistication isn't just associated with the comprehensiveness of features, however. There are also interface styling issues and clunky admin processes that impact user experience across the platform, which was raised by customers too. We feel these should be ironed-out rather than new features introduced, although there is evidence of this happening already with the analytics that was launched in 2023.

Overall, Oak is an excellent option for organisations that want to offer employees a simple yet flexible intranet. For example, it's easy for infrequent publishers to update their content spaces, while employees will appreciate the innovative 'smart delivery' approach to content delivery. The simple in-built tools, like forms and expenses, could be a good alternative to third-party tools where services are missing or overly complex for employees. Finally, Oak has said that they want to remove manual tasks, replacing with AI and automation, and we've seen good evidence of these plans so far, although there is room for improvement.

Why choose this product

Oak is a simple but effective product that provides excellent publishing and community features for employees and admins alike. Deskless workers are well served with an excellent app, while desktop employees will appreciate the strong user experience. Oak is also highly flexible, which means admins can easily configure the site to deliver an intranet that meets all employee needs. The flexibility extends to in-built tools, such as for expenses, as well as a comprehensive developer framework for those who wish to build deeper two-way integrations. At an attractive price point, Oak offers a lot while delivering a good employee experience.

Vendor roadmap
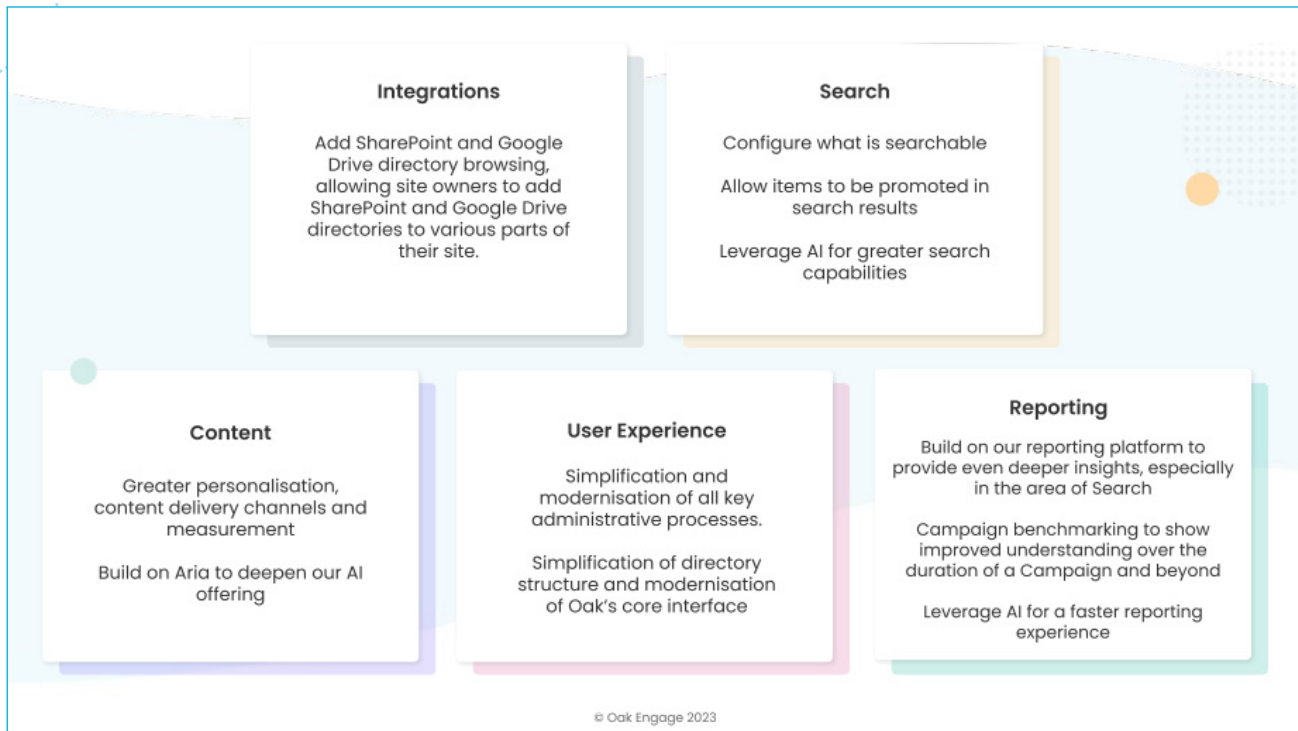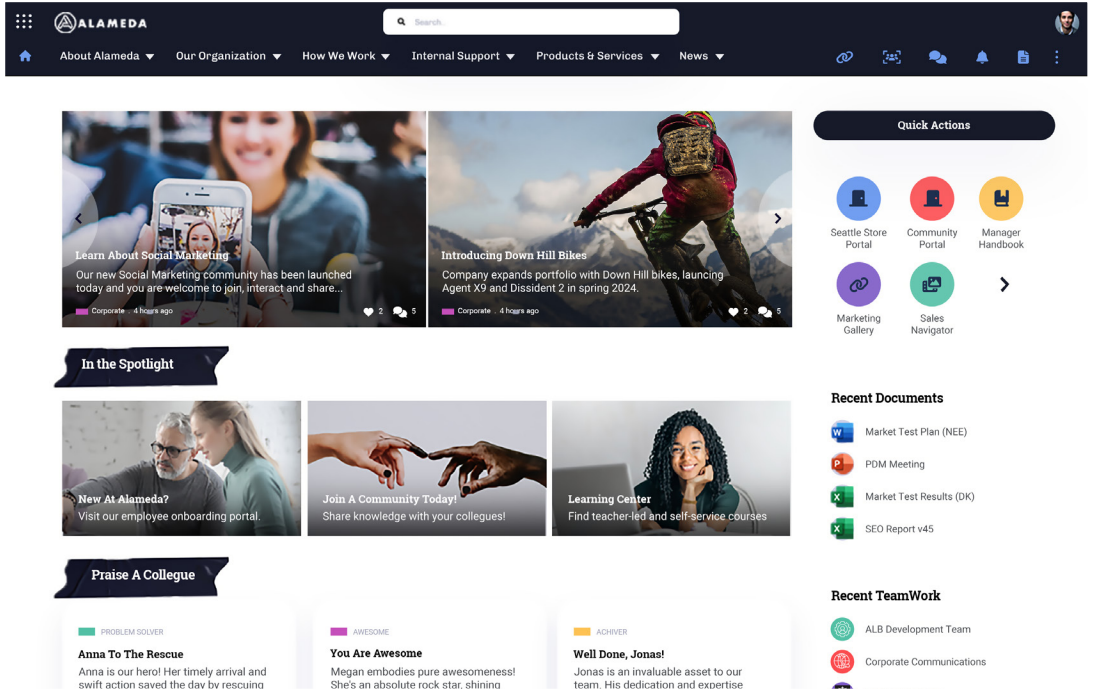
Roadmap image provided by Oak Engage.
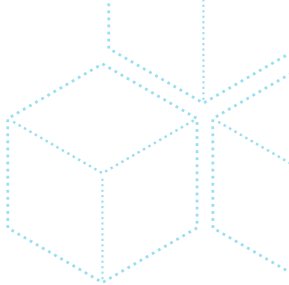
omnia

FULLY STANDALONE

REQUIRES SHAREPOINT

OPTIONALLY WORKS WITH SHAREPOINT

FRONTLINE FOCUS

Typical deployment:

2,000 - 5,000 employees

Company locations:

The product in a nutshell

Omnia's high quality desktop, mobile and administration experiences will appeal to medium to large businesses looking to create a compelling intranet for a diverse workforce.

VISIT THE WEBSITE

SUMMARY

Omnia owned by Omnia Digital Workplace

Omnia is a SharePoint intranet in-a-box product that was launched in 2015 by Sweden-based Omnia Digital Workplace, who have partner locations throughout Europe, Australia and North America. It is a highly flexible and feature-rich platform from a company with a wealth of experience in the market. SharePoint is required for master data and content storage, but the product has its own enhanced user interface in many areas. Additionally, the vendor has spent a lot of time optimising the page load and it's one of the fastest intranets we've seen.

Omnia's strengths are in the features and controls available for building and managing a compelling site, offering admins a wide range of configuration controls to deliver tailored experiences for employees. The end user experience is slick and contemporary, with a very good mobile app that can be set up to cater for frontline workers or other specific roles. Employees can engage with each other easily through native community features and Viva Engage. Its close alignment with M365 – Teams in particular – provides opportunities for creating innovative integrated features.

There are areas for improvement, however. The analytics function has some good data but is somewhat disjointed in how it is presented. Translation features for multilingual users are less advanced than we've seen in other products and out-of-the-box integrations with third-party tools are a little limited. Additionally, customer feedback highlights that there are functions in the extensive administration system that could be simplified.

Overall, this is a powerful, mature and rich-featured tool. It has an attractive price point, regardless of size of company, and is likely to appeal to large, complex organisations due to its capabilities for creating and managing large, multi-faceted intranets.

Pricing

PRICE BAND

250 users	$ $ $ $
1,000 users	$ $ $ $
5,000 users	$ $ $ $
20,000 users	$ $ $ $

These prices are indicative, offering a comparison of the products featured in this report only. Please contact the vendor for a bespoke quote.

PRICING MODEL

Subscription – price band based on number of users. One-off payment and ongoing maintenance fee.

COSTS TYPICALLY

Slightly higher at the start of the term, but generally spread.

DISCOUNTS

Charities and non-profit organisations, schools and educational institutes.

PRICE INCLUDES

Installation, basic configuration of product capabilities and branding, introduction for admins and editors, product maintenance and support, product updates, back-end hosting, online training, product documentation, and knowledge sharing conferences and community.

Product type

Ready-to-run, installed in days

Branding opportunities

All branding, complex options

Base systems

Fully standalone	Requires SharePoint	Optionally works with SharePoint	Other

Sectors

Business, consulting and management	Engineering and manufacturing	Property and construction	Public services, government and administration	Retail

You may also be interested in...

APPSPACE

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Powell Intranet

Learn About Social Marketing
Our new Social Marketing community has been launched today and you are welcome to join, interact and share...

Corporate · 4 hours ago · ♥ 2 · 💬 5

Introducing Down Hill Bikes
Company expands portfolio with Down Hill bikes, launching Agent X9 and Dissident 2 in spring 2024.

Corporate · 4 hours ago · ♥ 2 · 💬 5

Quick Actions

- Seattle Store Portal
- Community Portal
- Manager Handbook
- Marketing Gallery
- Sales Navigator

›

Recent Documents
- 📄 Market Test Plan (NEE)
- 📄 PDM Meeting
- 📄 Market Test Results (DK)
- 📄 SEO Report v45

Recent TeamWork
- ALB Development Team
- Corporate Communications
- Stockholm Office
- Web Analytics

In the Spotlight

New At Alameda?
Visit our employee onboarding portal.

Join A Community Today!
Share knowledge with your collegues!

Learning Center
Find teacher-led and self-service courses

Praise A Collegue

PROBLEM SOLVER

Anna To The Rescue
Anna is our hero! Her timely arrival and swift action saved the day by rescuing the report when we needed it the most. Her commitment to excellence and readiness to go the extra mile make her an invaluable asset to our team. Thank you, Anna, for your incredible rescue and unwavering support!

Stina Andersson · 2 hours ago · ♥ 2 · 💬 5

AWESOME

You Are Awesome
Megan embodies pure awesomeness! She's an absolute rock star, shining brightly in everything she does! She effortlessly combines creativity with precision, setting an outstanding example for everyone around her.

Thomas Mann · 4 hours ago · ♥ 1 · 💬 2

ACHIEVER

Well Done, Jonas!
Jonas is an invaluable asset to our team. His dedication and expertise consistently elevate our work to new heights. His remarkable problem-solving skills make him a true standout. Jonas also brings a positive energy that uplifts everyone around him.

Christina Karlsson · 2 days ago · ♥ 4 · 💬 4

My News

Alameda Growing In The UK

STO · 5 minutes ago

New US Marketing Manager Starts In October
STO · 4 hours ago

Looking For Hockey Tickets?
STO · 1 day ago

Pro Rider Lars Blixt Retires And Joins Marketing Team
STO · 1 day ago

The New S/S Campaign Ready For Launch
STO · 3 days ago

Alameda Gasell Company Of The Year
STO · 4 days ago

Weekly Poll

Where should we hold The Marketing Forum next year?

- ☐ Manchester
- ☐ Leeds
- ☐ London
- ☐ Glasgow

Upcoming Events

8 JAN — Strategy Session 1
📍 Stockholm · 12:00 - 14:00

15 JAN — Excel For Budgeting
📍 Berlin · 8:30 - 9:30

16 JAN — Develop Your Leadership [Online]
📍 Teams Meeting · 14:00 - 16:00

23 JAN — Strategy Session 2
📍 Stockholm · 12:00 - 14:00

27 JAN — Virtual Townhall Meeting
📍 Copenhagen · 8:30 - 9:30

27 JAN — Develop Your Leadership [Online]
📍 Teams Meeting · 14:00 - 16:00

1 FEB — Alameda Virtual Crash Course
📍 Teams Meeting · 10:00 - 11:30

New Employees

Erich Brichta
- Head Of Legal
- Legal
- Berlin
📞 ✉ 💬

Christina Karlsson
- Sales
- Sales
- Stockholm
📞 ✉ 💬

Emlployee OTM

Employee Of The Month: November
Engineer, mountain biker and a leader in costomer service. Denise Miller is a vital part of the Alameda family.

My Profile
75 % Done

[Strengthen Profile]

The Weather Forecast
Stockholm, Sweden

Rain
+1⁰c | 34⁰F

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
1⁰c	0⁰c	1⁰c	0⁰c	0⁰c
34⁰F	32⁰F	34⁰F	32⁰F	32⁰F

More on Weather.com

Projects

Agent X9: Redefining Downhill Racing Standards with New Revolutionary Technology
The highly anticipated Agent X9 project is set to redefine standards with its groundbreaking technological advancements. Spearheaded by a team of visionary experts, Agent X9 aims to revolutionize the way we perceive biking. Stay tuned for the unveiling of this game-changing project, set to transform the landscape of downhill racing.

Development · 5 days ago

Campaigns

"Where Are You Heading?"
Our winter campaign, "Where Are You Heading?" has officially launched in the US.

In The Media

New Gears And A Winner
Mountainbiking.com

Blixt retires at 26, joins Alameda
Riders Magzine

Berl...

COMPANY AND PRODUCT

Company details

Company
Omnia Digital Workplace AB

ISO 27001 certified
Yes

Data residency
Client's data always resides in the same Azure region as the customer's Microsoft 365 tenant.

Company founded
2001

Product launched
2015

Typical client size
2,000 - 5,000 employees

Largest deployment so far
180,000 employees and 34 countries.

Customers
Clients include: Electrolux, City of Malmö, MAN Energy Solutions , World Wildlife Fund (WWF), RSA Insurance, Signify, Koenigsegg, Arriva Trains, ICA

Partner locations
Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, UK, Finland, Germany, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and USA.

Company locations
Stockholm, Sweden (HQ), UK, Germany, Canada, Vietnam, Denmark, and Sweden.

Product and technical details

Name of product

Omnia

Deployment

Client on-premises	Client private cloud	Microsoft Azure	Amazon Web Services	Vendor-hosted	Microsoft 365 tenant	Other

Client data encrypted

In transit only	In transit and at rest	At rest only

Authentication supported

Entra ID	ADFS	Okta	Open ID	Oauth	G Suite	Other*

*Omnia account, Facebook account.

App deployment

Google Play store	Apple store	MDM	MAM	Other

Accessibility

WCAG 2.1 compliant

Document library sources integrated

Box	Dropbox	Google Drive	SharePoint	OneDrive	Other

Optional integrated enterprise search engines

Coveo	Elastic	IBM	Lucidworks	Microsoft	Mindbreeze	Sinequa	Other*

*Meilisearch

User interface multi-language

Pre-configured	Editable	Right to left script supported	Other*

*System Labels are available in ten languages, any other language can be translated upon request or translated manually in the admin UI.

Content multi-language

Machine translation for publishers	Machine translation for end users	Editable machine translation for publishers	Manual creation for publishers	Right to left script	Other

Set-up and support

Set-up process for new clients

Installation is typically done in a few hours, basic configuration in a few days, and consulting for customising the solution to business needs in a few weeks. After launch, a rich set of product capabilities, recurring product updates, online training, and knowledge sharing, events, and more will support customers in developing their solution.

Current version

7.5 (Oct 2023)

Product updates

2-3 major releases per year (including new and updated features) and 2-3 releases focusing on performance and platform improvements.

Product update process

Roll-out of new releases are included in the license fee and customers can choose between being in the first, second or last release cycle. Customers can also request to have a customised release cycle with the possibility to schedule releases.

Reverse-out options

All master data (and content) is stored in the customer's Microsoft 365 tenant. Any data stored in Omnia will be provided to the customer on request and deleted when the Omnia environment is taken down.

Technical support

Email support	Phone support	Chat support	Online portal	24/7 support	Office hours only

User community

The Omnia User Group is part of a customer success programme that has over 800 members. Members are regularly invited to knowledge sharing activities such as online training, product information webinars, customer stories, online community for knowledge sharing, and two annual conferences (Omnia Online Conference via Teams and the live event Omnia User Group Conference).

Voice of the vendor

Omnia Digital Workplace says: "At Omnia, we're dedicated to helping each customer get the most from their intranet, boosting communication, productivity, and employee engagement long-term. We do this through four key pillars:

1. Effective communication - Omnia is chosen by organisations to improve communication practices and results. Customers use it for content governance, planning and coordinating communication activities, user-friendly publishing, and insightful analytics to measure and improve their impact.

2. Employee development - Customers use Omnia as a catalyst for continuous employee growth and improved daily operations. They utilise their intranet to ensure smooth onboarding, provide learning resources, visualise business processes, celebrate achievements, gather feedback, and drive employee engagement.

3. A digital workplace hub - Customers use Omnia to make their intranet work as a digital workplace hub. Product capabilities as leading Microsoft 365 integration, built-in connectors to business systems, and a framework for customisations support them in unifying the employee experience.

4. Great user experience - Omnia empowers customers to provide a personalised and intuitive user experience across all devices. Leveraging solutions with world-class performance and great look and feel on all devices, they drive adoption and ensure long-term user buy-in."

Voice of the customer

We received a large volume of feedback from Omnia's customers, who particularly like its ease of use and flexibility where "anyone within our organisation can design beautiful web pages with minimal effort". Customers also liked Omnia's audience targeting capabilities: "Personalisation opportunities way beyond OOTB Microsoft SharePoint" said one. The close integration with M365 was cited by numerous respondents as a benefit, summed up by one user commenting "M365 seamless integration is a core feature". The search experience and the "loading the pages real fast" were also complimented.

The customers who replied would like to see more clarity around the product roadmap and for this to include client suggestions. "More focus on change requests rather than new features," commented one and another similarly suggested: "A schedule of planned improvements and how our needs and requests are handled." Analytics was called out as an area in need of improvement too; one customer asked for "improved insight and analytics about platform usage and user behaviour". The vendor says the new analytics, which began rolling out in November 2023, will address some of these concerns. Some customers would also like to see the publishing set up simplified, one person said "make the CMS a bit less technical" and another added "easier administration management". Some customers asked for the mobile app, events, and newsletter creator to be developed, too.

Overall, customers were very satisfied with their experience of working with Omnia Digital Workplace, calling out the vendor's collaborative and solutions-oriented approach. "Great – very service-minded and competent" said one. Customers were also keen to point out the vendor going 'above and beyond', with one stating: "Very good, my expectations were high…the supplier has delivered above expectations." However, we did receive a small number of comments expressing frustration at unanticipated development costs for specific functionality, with one customer commenting they would like greater clarity on "what is covered by the support agreement or is seen as a development project. This is not clear or transparent enough."

SCENARIOS & SCORES

Please see the Scenarios below for more detail on each of these.

SCENARIO AND SCORE	KEY BENEFITS	IMPROVEMENTS / CONSIDERATIONS
4.5 **1. User Experience & Visual Appeal**	Excellent overall user experience.	Notifications panel contains a lot of detail and could become 'noisy' for users.
4 **2. Publishing & Communications Management**	Wide range of options for targeting communications across users and devices.	Experience for editors has room for improvement. Multi-channel options are comparatively limited.
4.5 **3. Community & Engagement**	Variety of good out-of-the-box features, such as 'Community' templates, praise, and a learning centre.	Comment moderation could be improved. Styling of survey results simple.
3+ **4. Integrations & Services (Including M365)**	Close integration with M365 applications.	Out of the box, limited integrations with both third-party tools and for two-way transactions.
4+ **5. Information Finding & Search**	Suggested search and fuzzy search provided. Admins have detailed control over search configuration.	Profile card design is lacklustre and could be improved.
4 **6. Administrator Experience**	Comprehensive administrative system providing control over all aspects of the site.	Range of configuration options could be overwhelming for some admins.
3.5 **7. Analytics**	Dashboard approach provides useful at-a-glance understanding of activity.	Some key reports are not obvious to find. Styling could be improved.
4 **8. Mobile & Frontline Support**	Admins can configure role-specific experiences on mobile, such as for frontline workers.	Out-of-the-box features for frontline workers are limited.

4.5

1. USER EXPERIENCE & VISUAL APPEAL
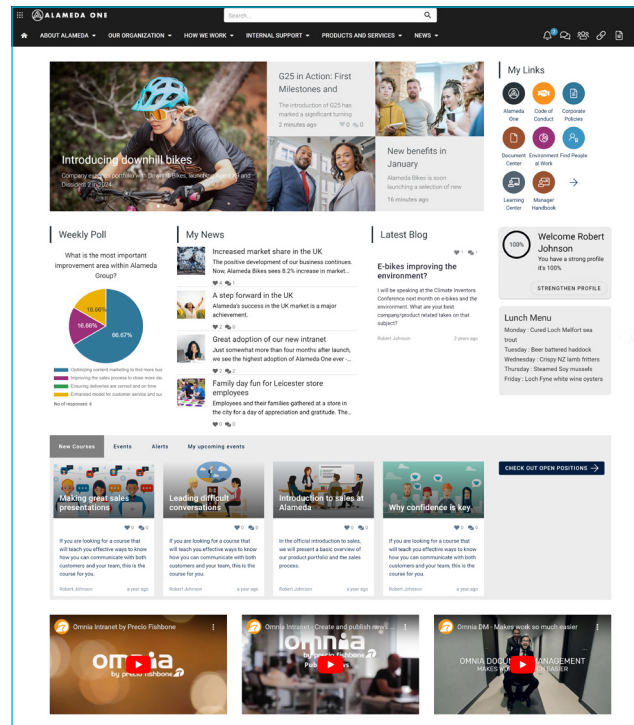
Omnia provides an excellent user experience, with great capabilities for delivering rich features and compelling design.

Omnia provides a high quality, contemporary user experience which goes well beyond that offered by SharePoint. The quality extends across the site with flexible, widget driven layouts providing companies with a wealth of options for creating a compelling intranet. Layout is clean and coherent even with a high number of elements on the page. We were shown a version of the home page that combined news, featured content, poll and event widgets, and a personalised panel containing targeted links, as well as a welcome tutorial to orientate new users.

There's an impressive range of navigation options available. Mega menus can be displayed in the 'traditional' link-led style, or in a tiled format which includes an image and short summary for each section. On pages, sub-navigation is configurable from within the page template, including where on the page it is located, and there is a helpful breadcrumb too. The vendor also highlighted using process or project diagrams within a page as 'visual navigation'. We liked this, though think this is a niche use case and we're mindful of potential accessibility constraints. All navigation can be audience-targeted based on user attributes and admins can build out mobile-specific navigation (see Scenario 8).

Notifications are accessed through the bell icon in the top menu. The notification panel is segmented according to different types and sources of information, for instance, tasks, team announcements or notifications from integrated systems. New notifications are highlighted both through the bell icon and within the panel. Given the potential volume of information that could appear here, it might become a little noisy, and admins will want to balance the evident utility of this function with the need to keep things manageable for users.

Omnia caters fully for branding requirements, with a 'wizard' for a quick, basic site set-up which includes implementing brand elements. More detailed or complex requirements, such as font or palette, can be easily configured within the 'Theme' area of the admin system. Customers' CSS can be applied if required. Multiple brands can be set up for different audiences through use of Omnia's 'Business Profiles', which we cover in Scenario 6.
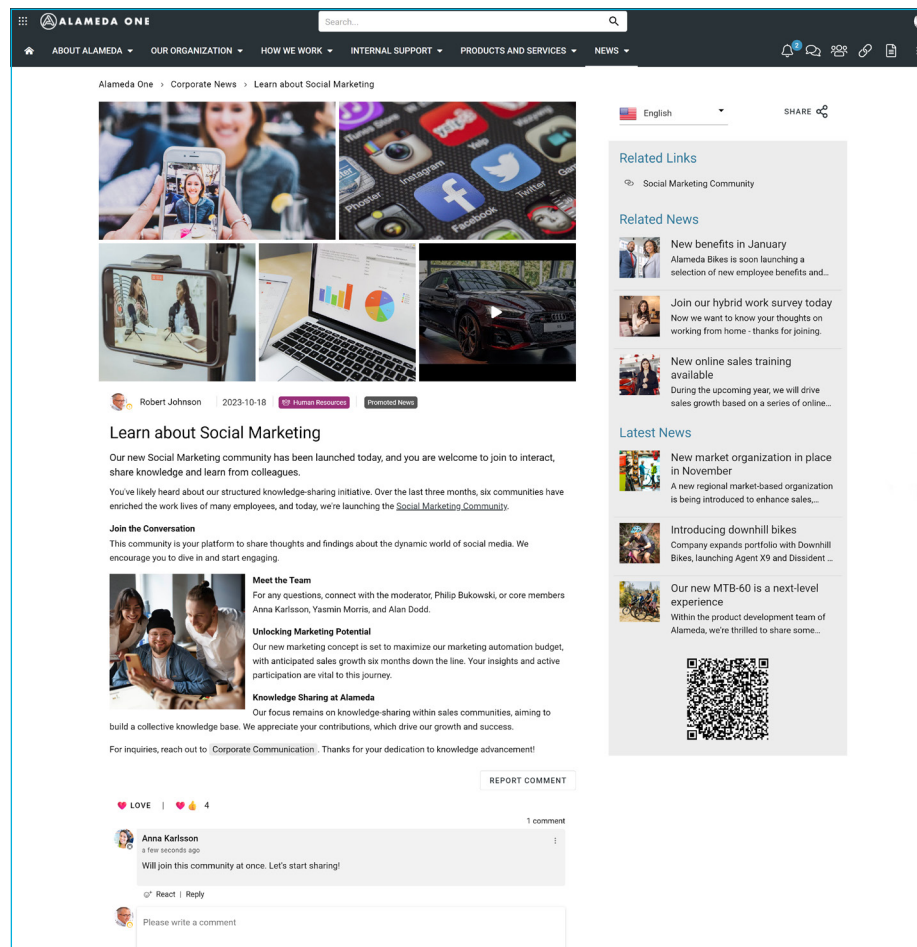
An example of a typical news page featuring an image gallery, content tags and the ability for employees to comment and react.

Omnia provides a wide range of publishing functions, catering well for content creation. Templates for page 'types', such as news articles, are managed from central administration, along with page editing functions, and are applied at the point a publisher opts to create a new content item. When moving into the main editing interface there's an option to auto-generate an entire article using AI; a simple pop-up asks publishers to enter a title and natural language description of the content and any imagery required. Dall-E has also been included to provide AI image generation capability. We tried various scenarios in a sandbox environment; here the AI catered well for the text but less so for the accompanying image.

There are useful features for publishers, we liked the prompt to reduce image file sizes on upload and an automatic image gallery added if multiple images are selected. A summary for the article is auto generated using AI – publishers can refine this once it has been created. Prior to publication the publisher sees the page helpfully previewed in a variety of formats, including mobile. However, we think the content creation experience is simpler overall than other products we've seen and customer feedback suggests this is an area where improvements would be welcome.

Once the article is ready, the publisher completes a properties page containing details such as publication date / time and which intranet channels the article should appear in. Audience targeting can be applied flexibly throughout the site; attributes from Entra, SharePoint and Omnia user profiles are used for segmentation and can be applied to content blocks, pages, documents, people profiles and communities. Publishers can select which channels their articles appear in, though a governance step is in place where channel owners are notified and asked to approve the inclusion of the article in the channel. Users may choose to subscribe to channels and will receive a notification when new content is available.

Omnia provides good flexibility for editorial workflows; admins have full control over the specific roles or users required for each step as part of complex flows, or can set up simpler options, such as giving an author permission to publish without requiring an approval step. Content scheduling takes place on the 'properties' page. Editors need to add an article date; they can make the page live immediately following a preview step or they can schedule the article for future publication.

Omnia includes a 'News Hub' to help with the editorial process as well as a 'My Content' hub which provides details of the content a publisher is responsible for. The News Hub has a calendar view of scheduled articles, and publishers can see a list of pages waiting approval or in draft, which will be helpful to editorial or internal communications teams. The 'My Content' hub shows elements such as engagement statistics, pending approvals and the channels the publisher's content appears in. These are useful features but are comparably simpler than other solutions we've seen, so we think there is scope for further development, such as making the calendar more sophisticated by providing filters.

The content editing interface for a typical news article template.
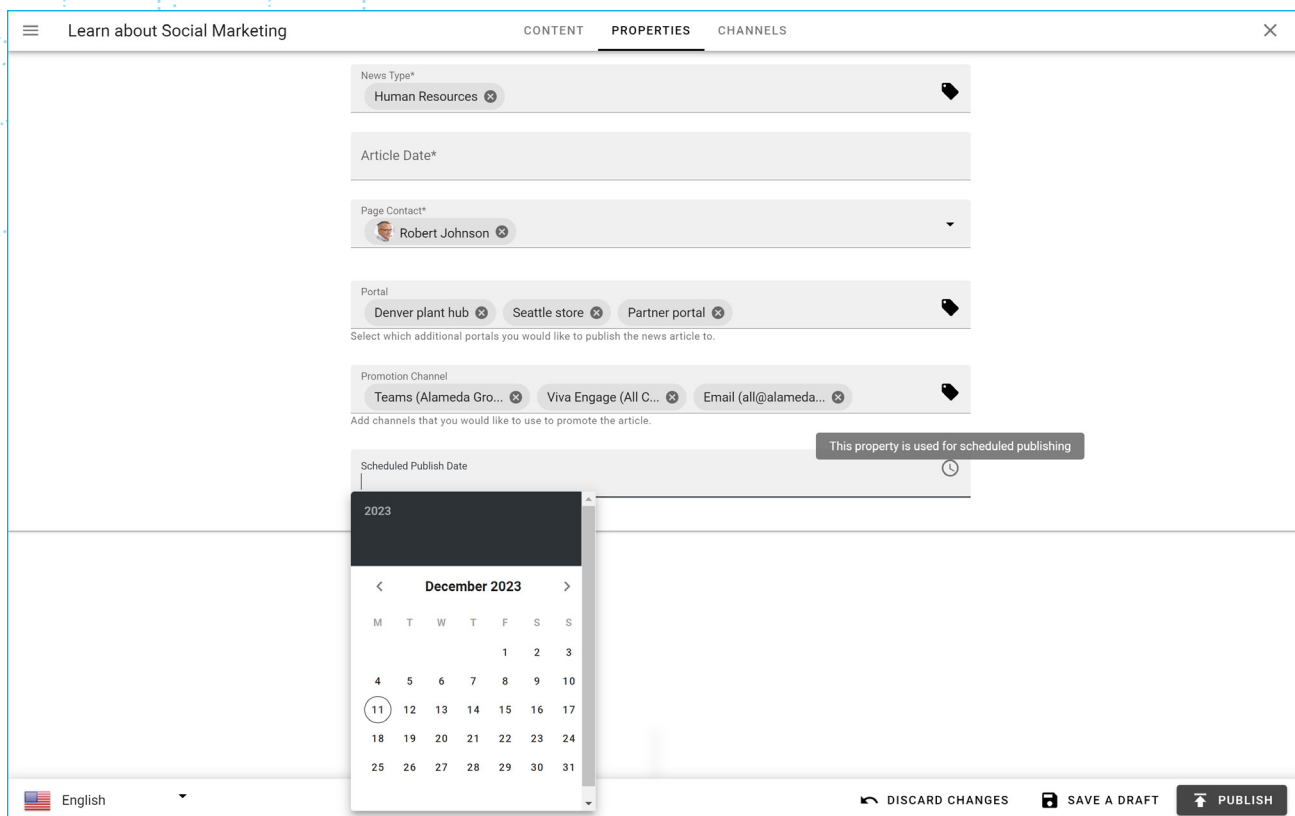
Once the page has been populated with content, editors move to a properties tab where they can add audiences and determine the publication schedule.
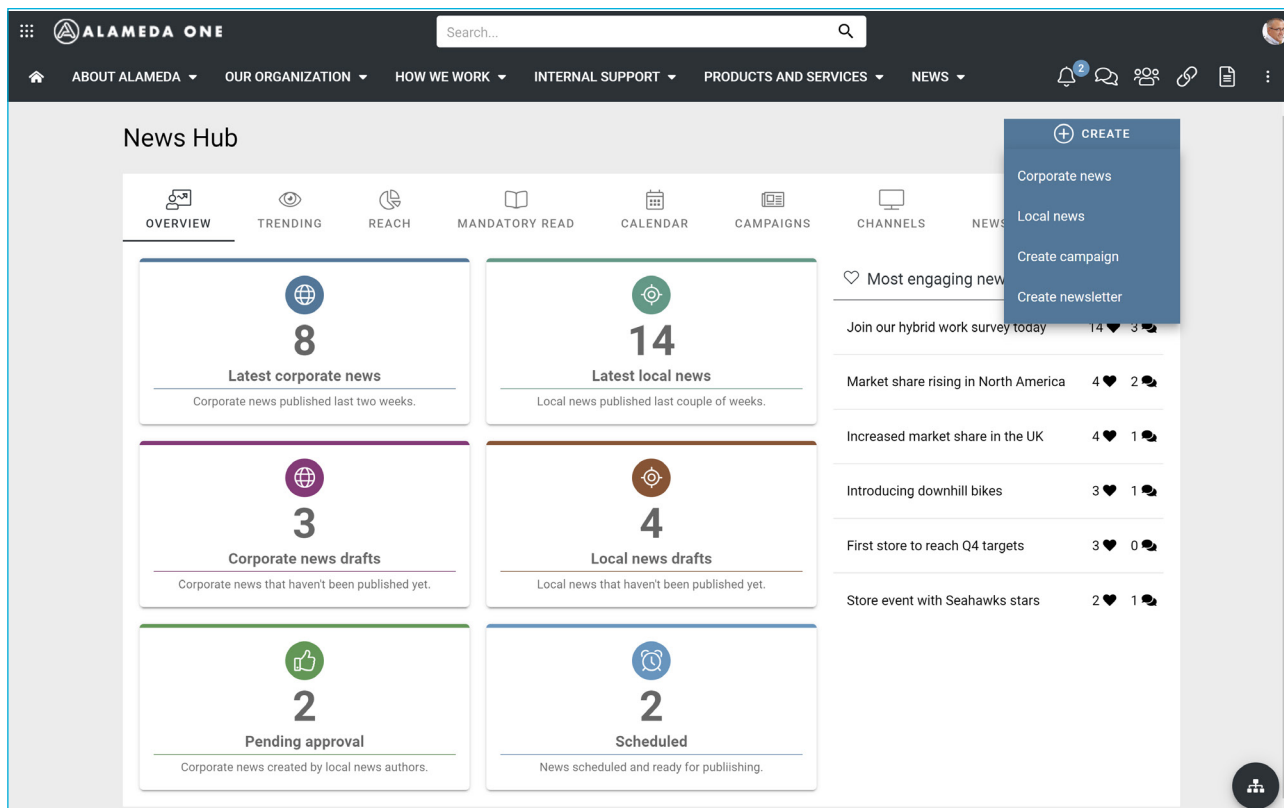
The News Hub helps publishers manage content life cycle and planning.

OMNIA

To support crisis and urgent communications, 'Announcements' are designed for important messages such as building incidents. A Red / Amber / Green status can be assigned to the Announcement and changed as the incident progresses. Along with the target audience, the editor can select a start and end date / time and assign properties such as priority. Announcements can be positioned flexibly to show at the top of all intranet pages or in other positions on the page, and if several Announcements are live at once the order can be dictated. Users are notified when an Announcement is published and have the option to make a comment, close the Announcement, or 'sign off as read' where it is a mandatory read. Other options for crisis management include an out-of-the-box template specifically for incident management, where relevant documents can be shared and an activity log tracks recent events.

Omnia provides options for multi-channel publishing, though it is more limited in this regard than other products we've seen. It allows a single piece of content to be pushed to multiple locations across the system. This can take place automatically, or rules can be applied so replication only happens if certain conditions are met. If the destination for the content uses a different template, the system will reshape the content to fit. Properties from the source are retained but local content edits can be made if required. News articles can be automatically published into a Viva Engage channel (see Scenario 4). Omnia supports digital signage via third-party systems and APIs and there is also the option to provide a browser view of an individual page, including a QR code for access to the full article. Lastly, there is a newsletter builder but this is less sophisticated compared to others we've seen.

Overall, Omnia addresses this scenario well and will meet the needs of many communicators, which is supported by feedback from customers. However, there remains room for improvement, particularly with simplifying the experience for editors.
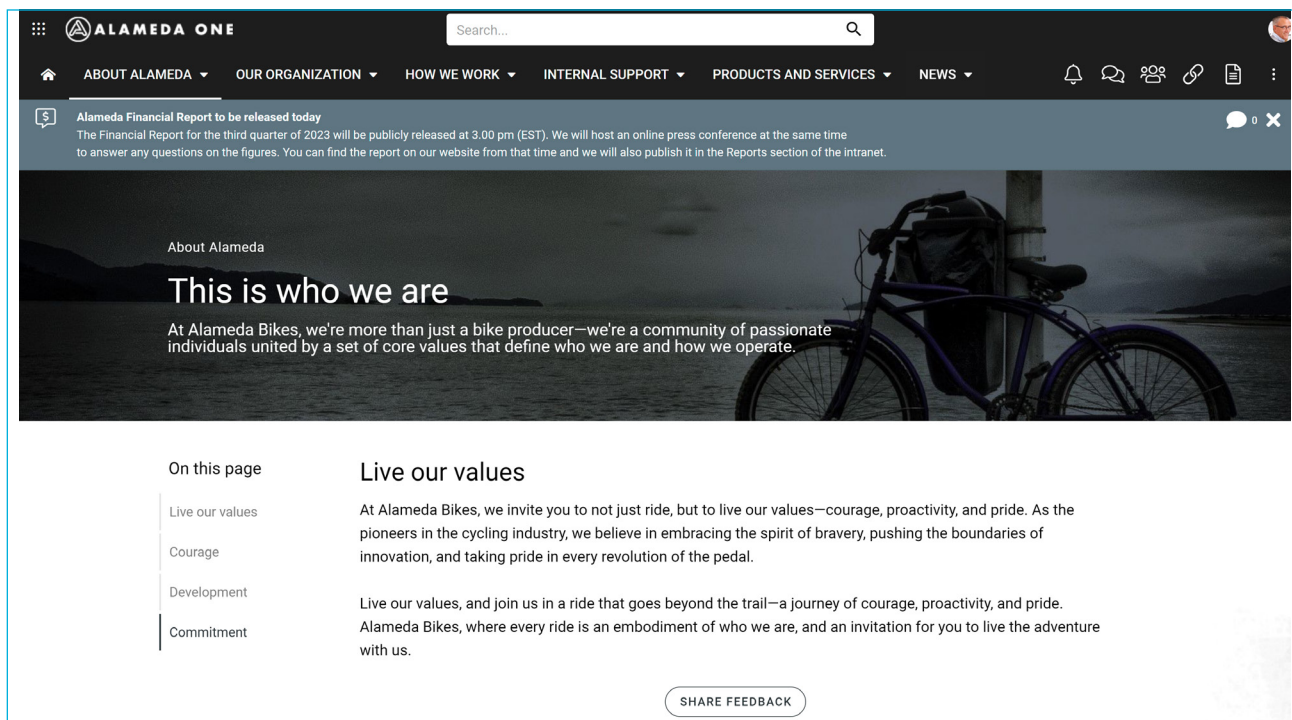
Announcements will appear at the top of all pages in the site.

3. COMMUNITY & ENGAGEMENT

4.5

Communities can be set up easily using a pre-defined template which includes features such as an activity feed and calls to action for contributing content.

There are ample opportunities for fostering and generating engagement in Omnia, with a broad toolset encompassing Communities, polls and surveys, self-service learning and giving 'praise' to colleagues. We like that these elements can be targeted at specific audiences, for instance directing a poll to frontline workers, or combining them into a bespoke onboarding experience for new starters.

'Communities' are a well-developed way to create both formal and informal colleague engagement. There is a 'wizard' feature to help with the initial Community set up; a template provides predefined functions such as knowledge articles, discussions, or blogs, and there's a familiar social media-style interface for creating posts. Within a Community an activity feed aggregates latest interactions and this activity can be shown in the user's notifications panel too. In the feed, employees can use emoji reactions, and are able to share Community content to Viva Engage or Teams. We like that people earn points and badges relating to their level of participation, providing an element of gamification, and can also give ratings to Community contributions, such as uploaded documents.

Admins control whether comments and reactions are enabled on pages or in Communities and which reaction icons are available. We like the tooltips describing the different reactions and that users can view which colleagues have reacted in which way. For moderation, a button can be added onto a page for reporting comments there, we would like users to be able to send a report directly from individual posts or comments. Comment reporting uses the general 'page feedback' function and so reports are listed with any other feedback, although moderators are notified by email when there is something to review; we'd like to see the moderation notices added to the main notification panel rather than just sent via email. Content owners and Community moderators can then delete posts or comments as relevant.

There are good polling, survey, and quiz options; although there's an option to embed M365 forms the native form builder in Omnia is better as it includes features such as assigning points for different answers to generate an overall survey response score. Submitted responses are reported in the admin system with simple styling. We like that surveys can be copied to provide a template for future use. Quizzes can similarly be created though Omnia's form generator and users are able to check their answers on completion. Quick polls can be used flexibly around the site, for instance on the home page or targeted to a frontline audience through the mobile app. Results are displayed instantly and are exportable.

Quizzes sit alongside page content and open in a separate dialogue box,
people can then check their answers on completion.
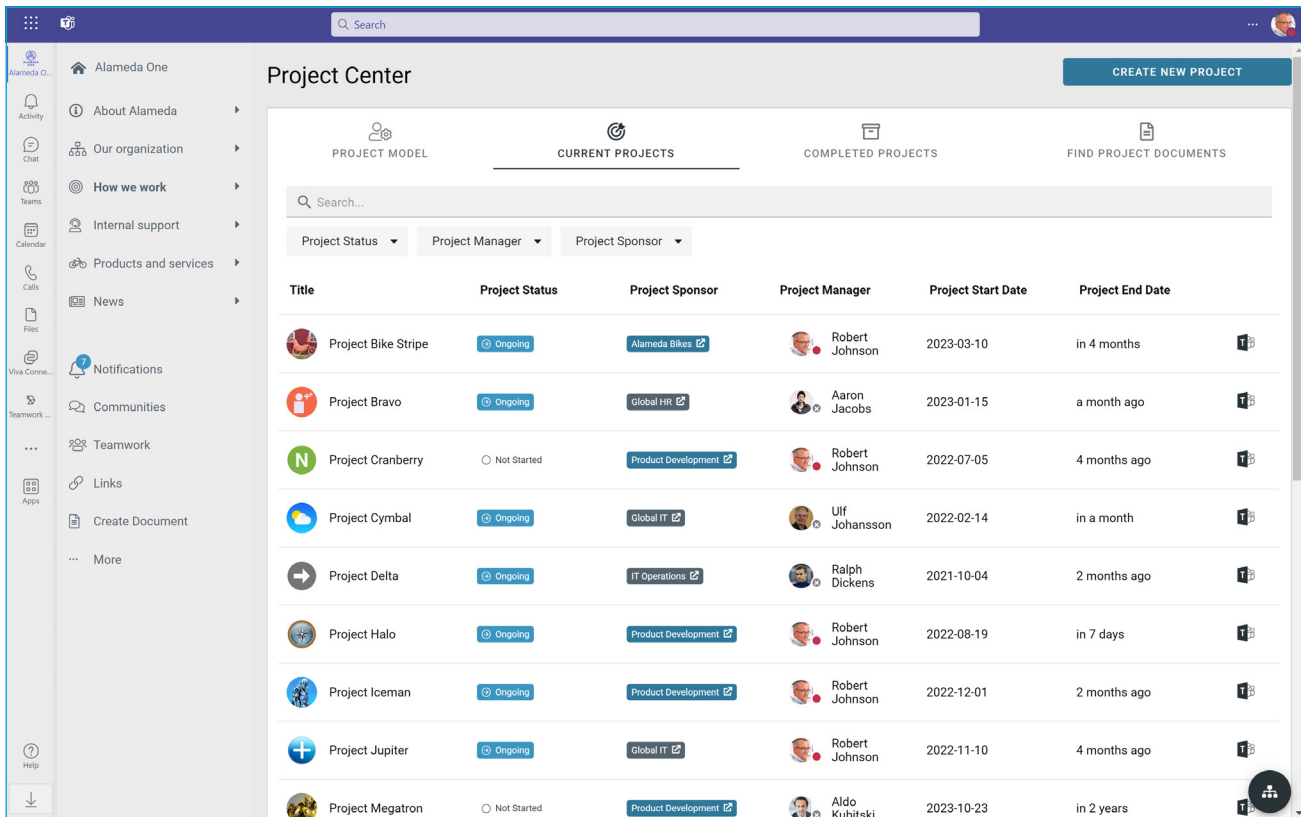
Omina provides an out-of-the-box 'onboarding portal', set up using a wizard, which is helpfully pre-populated with a variety of new starter focused features. People move through a checklist of content and are required to sign off mandatory read items in order to progress. Users are also encouraged to update their profile – a status bar shows how complete it is and admins can determine what comprises a 'complete' profile. Helpfully, this section can also be used for 'pre-boarding', where people are assigned a temporary Omnia account for access. This is a more developed approach than we've seen in other products, and we liked the thought that has gone into elements such as the welcome tutorial and the templated approach to providing information about the company.

A 'learning centre' can also be created using Omnia's wizard, providing internal, external and self-service courses. The learning centre template provides a full course catalogue and course schedules, and employees can view trending and top-rated courses. The self-service items are 'micro courses' created within the site containing elements such as video, text and surveys. On completion there's a summary of the course where users rate what they've just consumed, and completed courses are listed on the user's profile. 'Internal' courses are effectively an events tool within the context of the learning centre, showing details about an event or course content, providing a means to sign up and the option to ask questions of the course administrator. Course bookings synchronise directly with Outlook. We think this is a well-executed feature for managing and delivering structured training where a dedicated third-party LMS isn't available.

Finally, 'Praise' is a colleague recognition tool. Employees can praise an individual colleague, or a whole department, then other people can react to and comment on the praise. A 'praise gallery' lists all the praise activity across the business and Praise also appears in an employee's profile card. We liked the embedding of praise cards on the site home page to give them higher visibility.
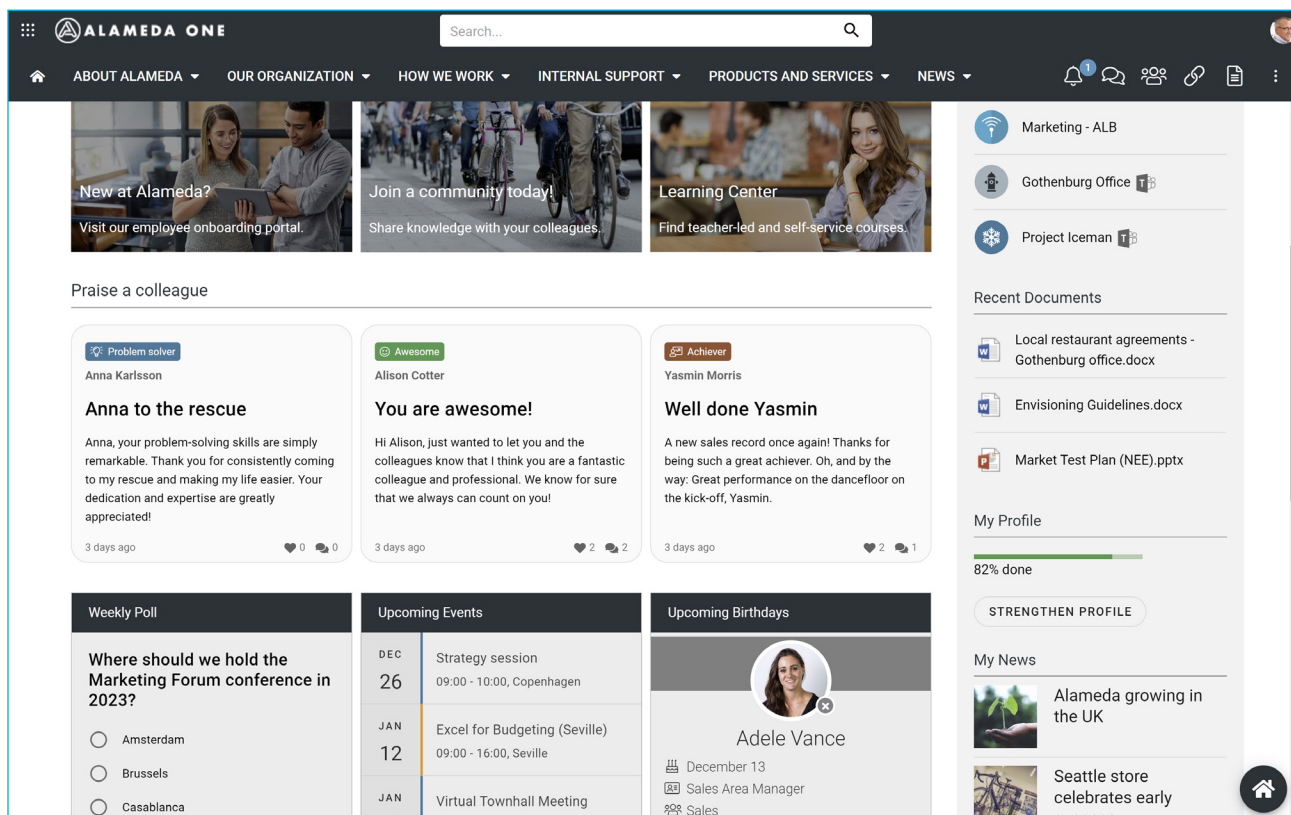
Praise can be promoted around the site, such as in a dedicated zone on a landing page.

3+

4. INTEGRATIONS & SERVICES (INCLUDING M365)

Omnia integrates closely with MS Teams allowing employees to use Omnia functionality directly from the Teams context.

Omnia provides a variety of ways to integrate with other systems. On a basic level, users can create personalised links in the 'my link' panel as a simple jumping off point to other tools and publishers can use iframes for simple content embedding. There's an RSS reader which brings external feeds into widgets. Out-of-the-box integrations with media asset services such as Vimeo, Pexels, YouTube, and Mediaflow allow publishers to select content directly from the external source for use on a page. 'Draftable' is a helpful integrated document comparison tool for users to compare and identify changes to text easily.

There are out-of-the-box connectors available for some of the more common business systems such as Workday or ServiceNow. Admins also have provision to work with CSS and JavaScript to achieve more sophisticated integrated services, however, we think the script interface could be simplified so that admins don't have to work directly with code.

Notifications from third-party tools can be added into the notifications panel either using out-of-the-box connectors, or through custom extensions using the Omnia FX framework. However, there isn't an option to transact directly from Omnia with them, the user is instead taken to the source system if they follow a notification link, which we think is a shame. Note that Omnia FX is an extensibility framework which can be used by customers to develop their own customised integrations or features in a structured way. Omnia will work with customers to ensure that any site elements developed this way don't subsequently break following a core product update.
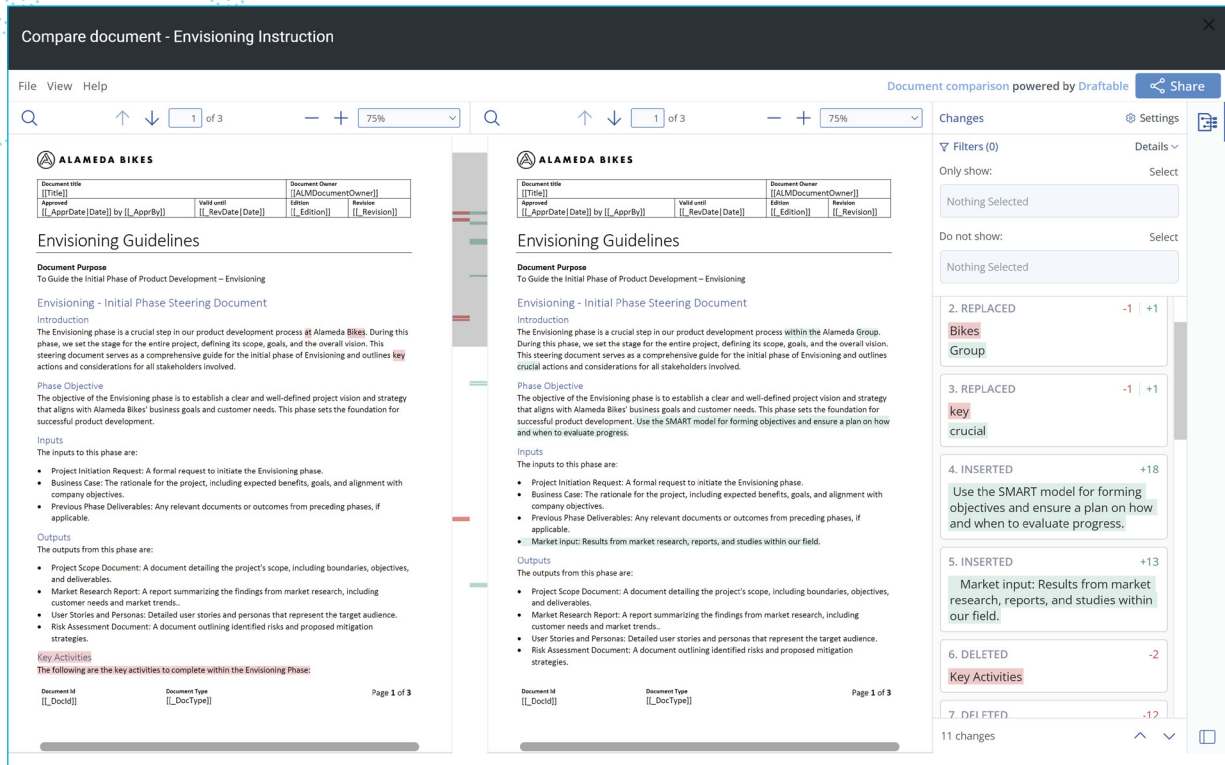
Draftable is an integrated document comparison tool to help users identify changes quickly.
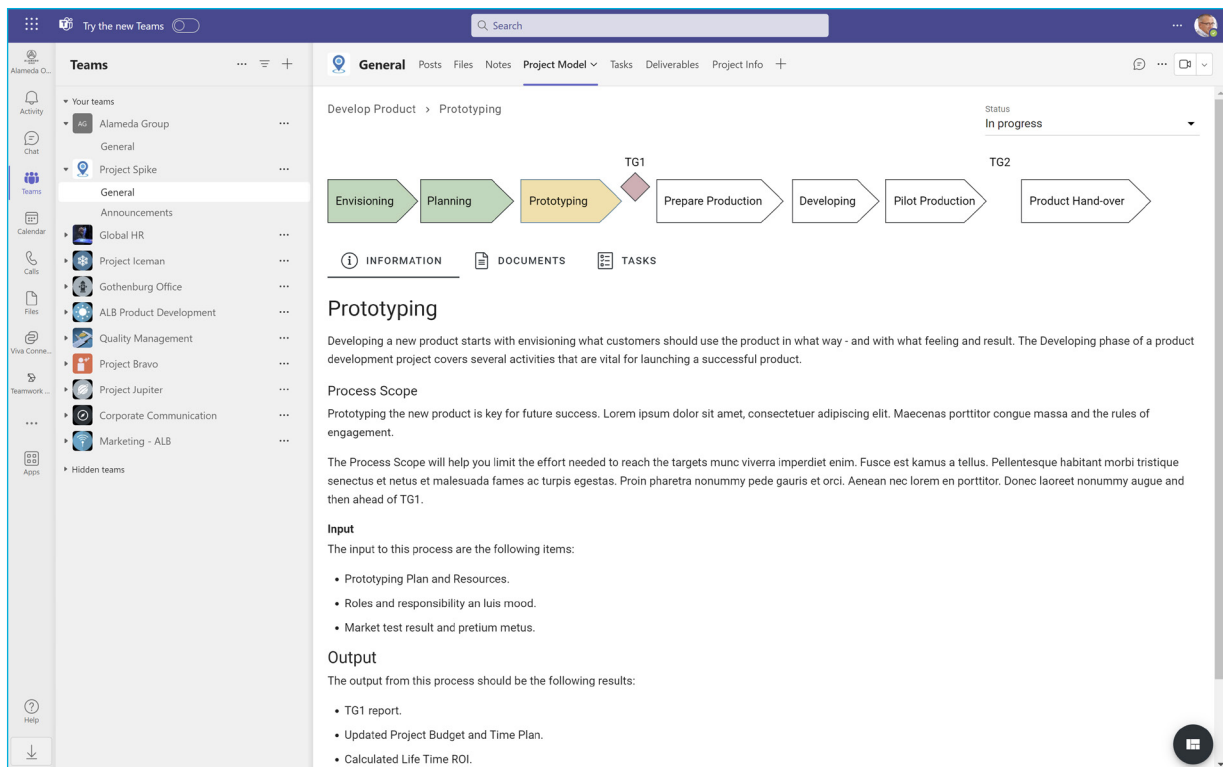
**Example of a project site constructed with Omnia which has been
integrated with Teams, where it can be managed.**

Omnia integrates closely with a wide range of M365 applications including SharePoint, Teams, Viva Engage, Viva Connections and Planner. The vendor demonstrated an example of integration between Omnia, Teams, SharePoint and Planner to build and manage a project site in Teams. This is a great illustration of what can be achieved, though we are mindful of the effort required to configure this type of service even though Omnia makes this easy to do.

The integration with Teams is highly configurable, to the extent that aspects of Omnia's administration system can be packaged and deployed as a discrete application within Teams. This is an unusual feature we haven't seen elsewhere and one that may appeal to Teams-centric organisations. There are extensive configuration options for how the Omnia front-end manifests in the Teams environment, for instance choosing to reposition navigation as a left hand menu rather than a top-bar, or changing the theme to 'blend in' more with Teams.

All Omnia pages are stored within SharePoint, as are documents and files, while management aspects such as permissions and life cycle are handled by Omnia itself. We like that any changes to document properties or settings made in Omnia will be reflected in SharePoint. Users can create documents within SharePoint and OneDrive using business templates managed in Omnia.
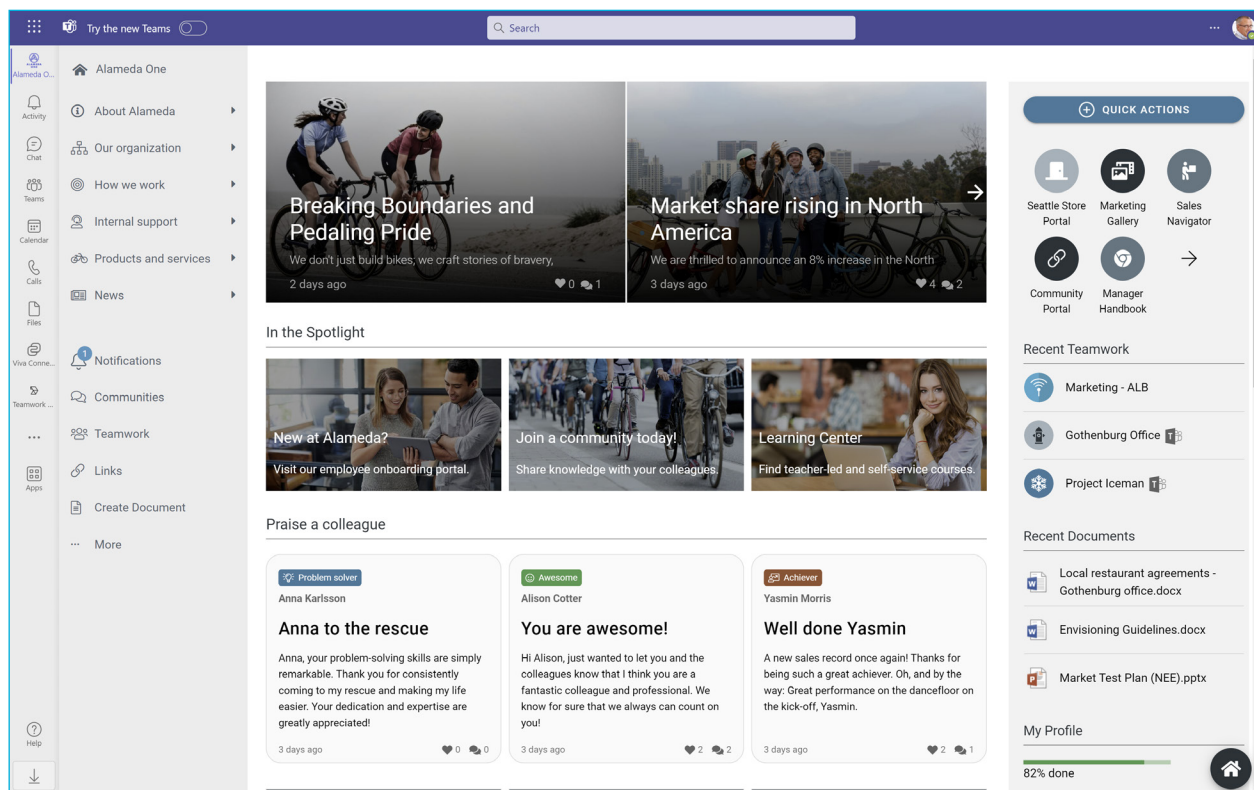
An example of Omnia embedded into Teams showing how navigation and theme can be altered to work more effectively in the Teams context.

The integration with Viva Engage is comprehensive, starting with Engage conversations that can be embedded in a widget. Admins can set News Centre items to be automatically posted into an Engage feed and editors can also choose to publish individual items to Engage groups. Posts, reactions, and comments can all be synchronised between Omnia and Engage; we think this is a helpful feature for sustaining employee engagement.

Other M365 integrations include connections with PowerApps; we were shown an example of an integrated leave request form driven by PowerApps. There are integrations with both Microsoft Stream and Stream on SharePoint for selecting and publishing video content. Finally, Omnia have indicated that integrating their Glossary tool with Microsoft Topics is on their roadmap.

Overall, the opportunities available via integration with M365 and the thoughtful use of these connections within Omina itself are impressive. However, out-of-the-box integrations with other business systems are more limited and the interface for setting up API connections could be simplified for admins. We would also like to see more two-way connections provided to allow users to transact with third-party systems directly.

An example of a leave request form driven by PowerApps integrated into a content page.

5. INFORMATION FINDING & SEARCH

4+
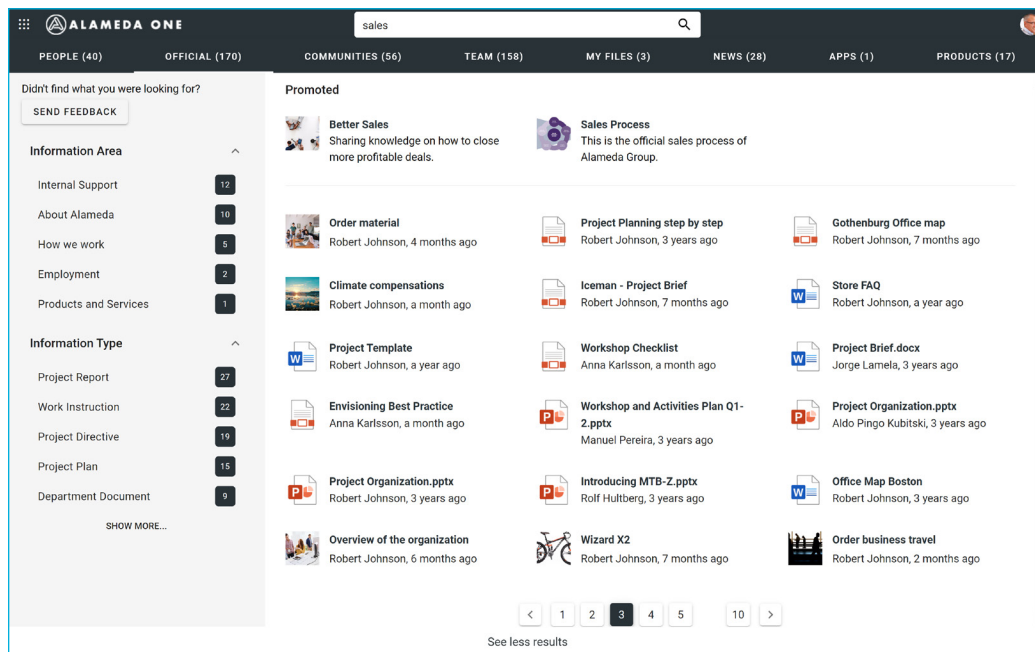
Omnia has powerful search capabilities, fully configurable within the product, and serves up advanced content returns in a well-designed area.

The search experience in Omnia is extensive and powerful, both in terms of features to help users find content and the substantial configuration toolset for administrators. Initial searches use 'Quick Search': suggesting returns as someone types, and suggested spelling corrections for mistyped queries are helpfully included. Quick Search results are segmented by content type and promoted results will also display here, with links into 'Advanced Search' for more. Advanced Search has a polished design in relation to other products we've seen. The search segments are set out clearly and within each segment there are filters such as date range sliders and the option to provide feedback relating to the results.

Admins have a high degree of control over search configuration, with the ability to manage all aspects of the search experience, for example, content categories returned in quick search, promoted results for each category, or how many returns are displayed overall. Admins even have access to the code determining how search queries operate; this isn't particularly user friendly but is designed for technical admins in organisations that need this level of control. This level of configuration is both impressive and notably greater than in most other products we've seen.

Omnia provides SharePoint Search and M365 Search as default search engine options. It's possible to integrate an alternative search provider and admins can create bespoke settings for how third-party content sources are interrogated, giving the opportunity to serve up a genuine enterprise search experience through the intranet. However, the configuration overhead for administrators shouldn't be underestimated.

People search benefits from predictive search and suggested corrections. All profile fields are searchable and a pop-up profile card displays a variety of details including key contact information, an organisational chart, and elements such as courses the colleague has completed, their Community engagement and praise they've received. The main contact card is very similar to the profile card in M365. There aren't many weaknesses in Omnia's search offering but the design of the profile cards could be more engaging.

6. ADMINISTRATOR EXPERIENCE

4
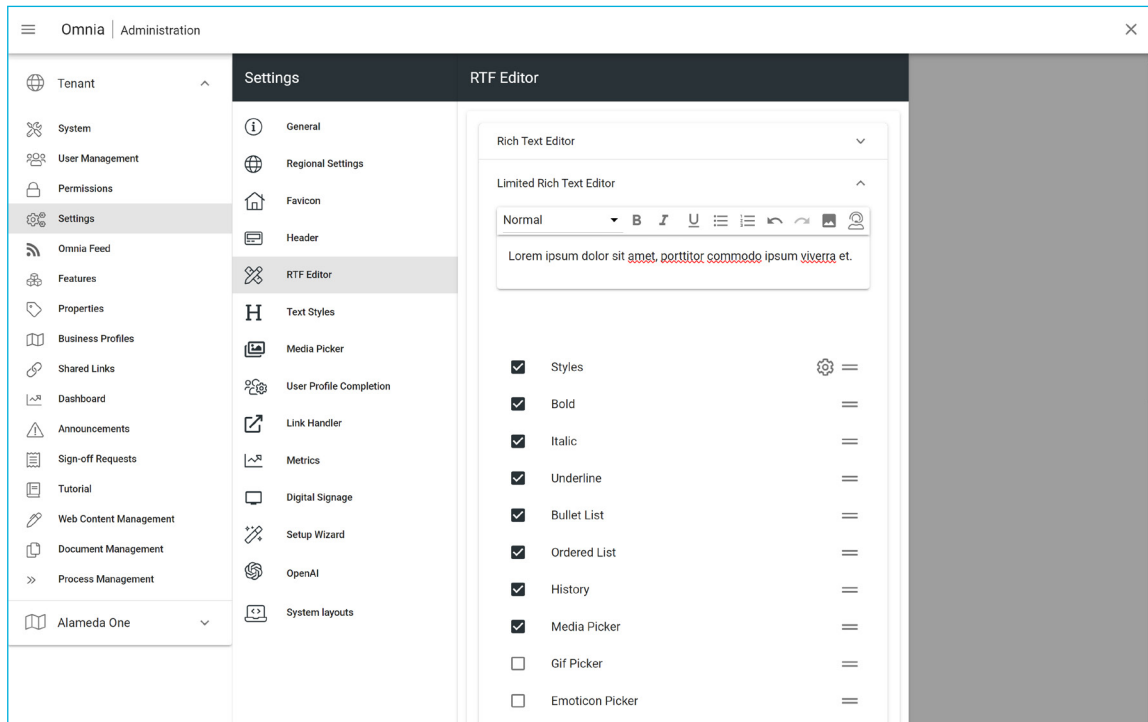
Administrators have control over a wide range of settings including what's available to editors in the Rich Text Editor toolbar.

Omnia is a sophisticated system with many levels of administration and is highly configurable. There are often multiple layers of menus to drill down through, which is reflective of the volume of controls available. This could be slightly daunting on first encounter; admins will want to spend some time orientating themselves. Helpfully, the back-end interface aligns with the level of permission assigned, so administrators only view and manage what is allowed as part of their role. Typically, there are three levels: Tenant Administrator, Business Administrator and App Administrator, with additional permissions available at app level for editors and authors.

Tenant level administrators have permission to manage any aspect of the system, such as enabling or disabling features within the Rich Text Editor or setting which call to action buttons are available for use in the site. At this level an admin can also see a complete overview of the permissions in place for each feature within the product. 'App' level administration is where page publishing and community management takes place. Settings for publishing are set by App Administrators and there are additional roles available at this level for editor and author, the distinction being that editors can manage page layout as well as publish content.

'Business Profiles' contain branding, navigation, roles, and access rights that determine the sections and content across the intranet, extending to extranets and sub-brand sites too. For example, Business Profiles can be used to onboard new employees or provide frontline workers with their own navigation and home page layout via the app. Admins at this level manage elements such as branding or navigation. Each Business Profile has its own admin workspace, which is where the home or landing pages are managed. Templates are provided for creating a landing page, however they can also be compiled from scratch by adding content blocks and widgets into page sections. The UI here is a little less user friendly than other systems we've seen but there's no doubting its capability, which extends to determining alternative layouts for different device screen sizes, even though the site is responsive by design.

Content life cycle management is available for many elements in Omnia including pages, documents, and processes. For example, Omnia allows rules to be set for document management determining how it should be approved and whether there are review reminders, as well as archive and retention management settings. Controls for setting review intervals and reminders are comprehensive, though they vary according to content type. Review notices are sent out by email; we think accommodating these in the notifications panel would be helpful. In addition, the Editorial Hub (see Scenario 2) contains useful content life cycle details such as pages overdue for review.

Omnia facilitates page translation and there are some helpful options for publishers. There are twelve different system languages available out of the box covering elements such as labels and buttons. Admins may also customise labels manually. There are two options for translating content – one is to assign a 'variation author' who is an employee notified via email when content needs to be translated. The alternative is to use machine translation. While creating translations, the variation author can helpfully compare the original and translated texts side by side; they also have the option to use machine translation if they want. Users can toggle between the different published versions and will see a disclaimer on the page if it has been machine translated. We'd like to see more help for multilingual end users, for instance, there is no auto translation on comments or posts, as this provision is more limited than we've seen in other products.
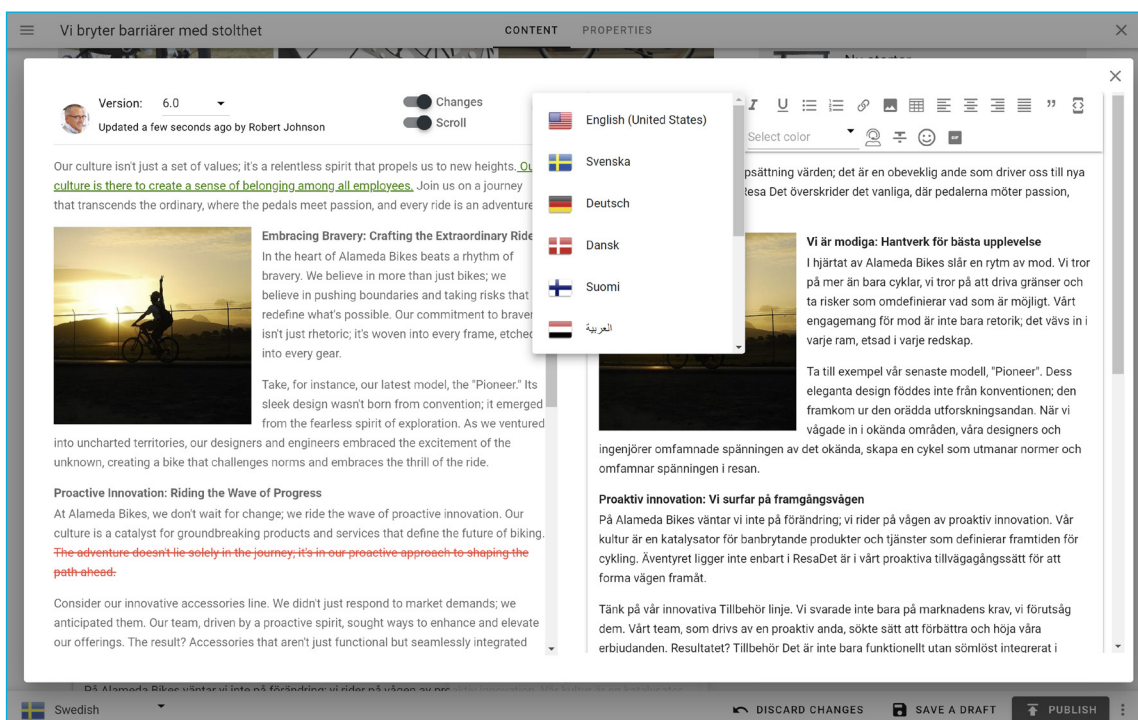
Where content is being translated, Omnia helpfully shows the source language text alongside the translated text in draft.
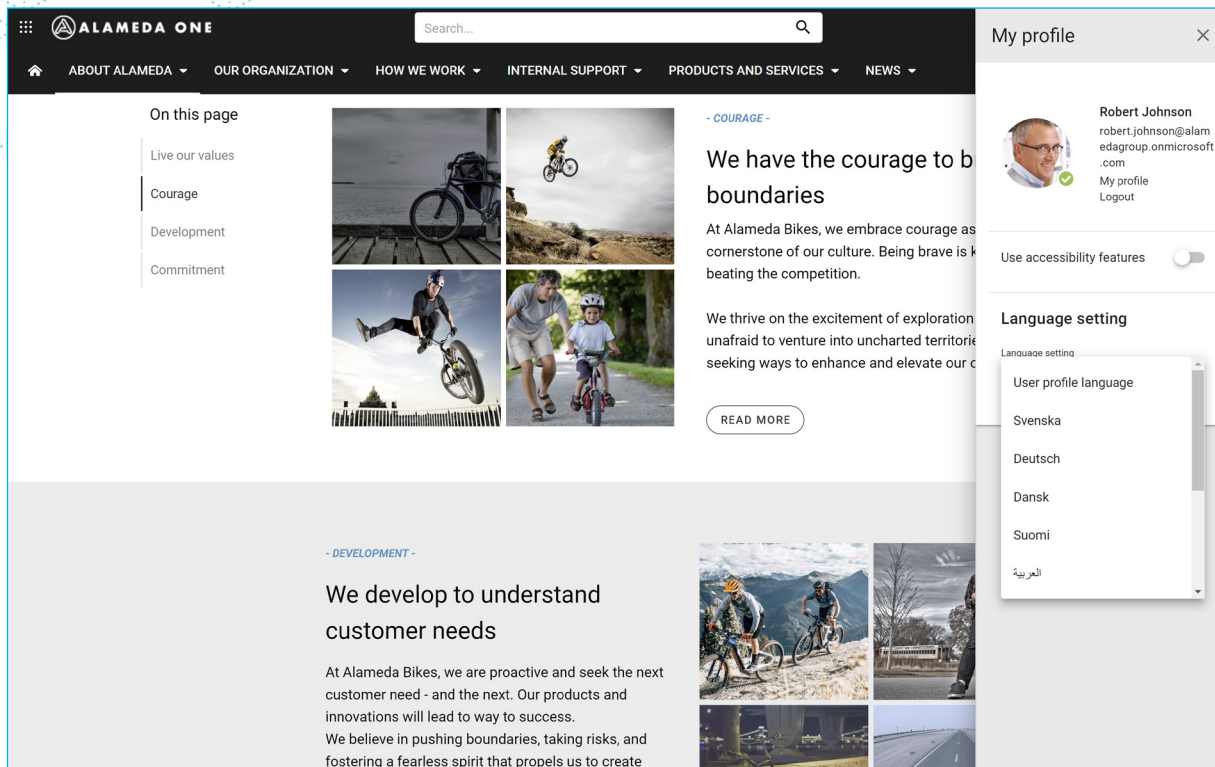
Users can switch the language in the site interface 'on demand' through their profile.
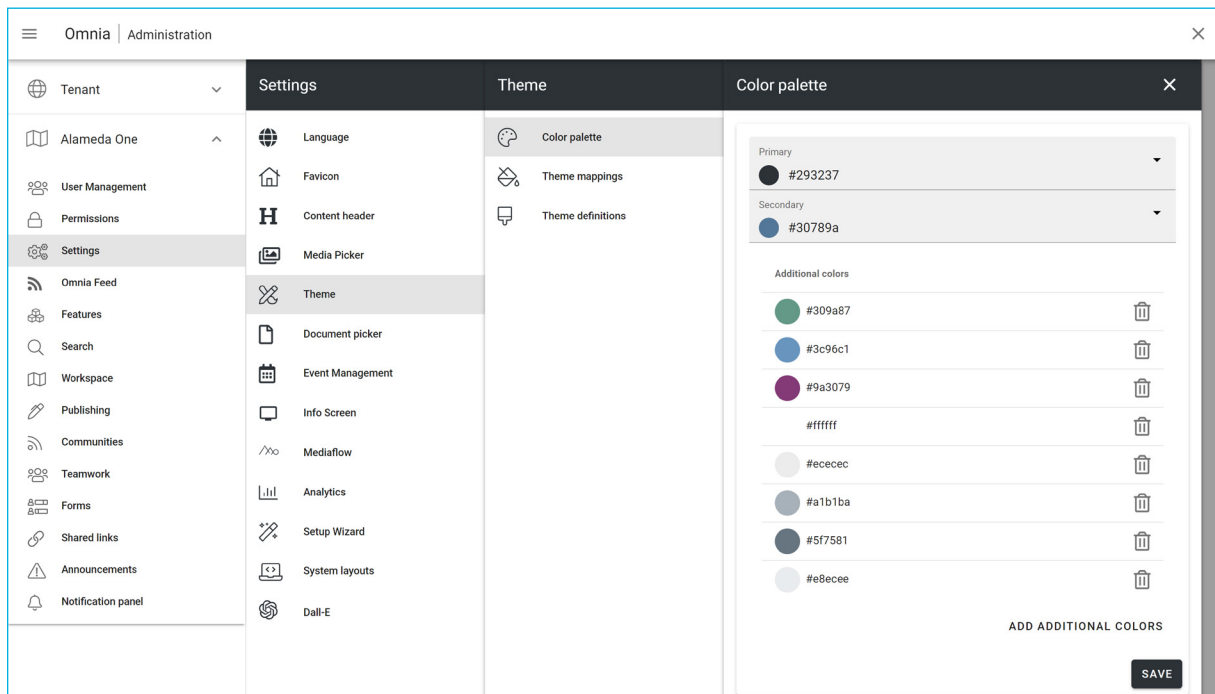
Admins use 'business profiles' to set up different sections within the site and manage elements such as sub-section branding, navigation and audience targeting from this area.

The extensive capabilities of Omnia's administration system are reflected in the ability to 'break out' certain aspects of Omnia admin and package them up as Microsoft Teams apps, allowing users to capitalise on Omnia's capabilities in the Teams context. Admins work within Teams to manage the app, for example the vendor demonstrated a 'teamwork governance' application created in Omnia which is manifested and fully managed within Teams. We cover M365 integration in more detail in Scenario 4.

Finally, we like the configurable 'Tutorials' feature that is most commonly used for introducing new users to the features of the intranet. However, Tutorials can be used anywhere on the site and allow admins to easily introduce employees to topics, functionality, and instructions. Tutorials are easy to configure and help admins deliver the excellent end-user experience explored in Scenario 1.
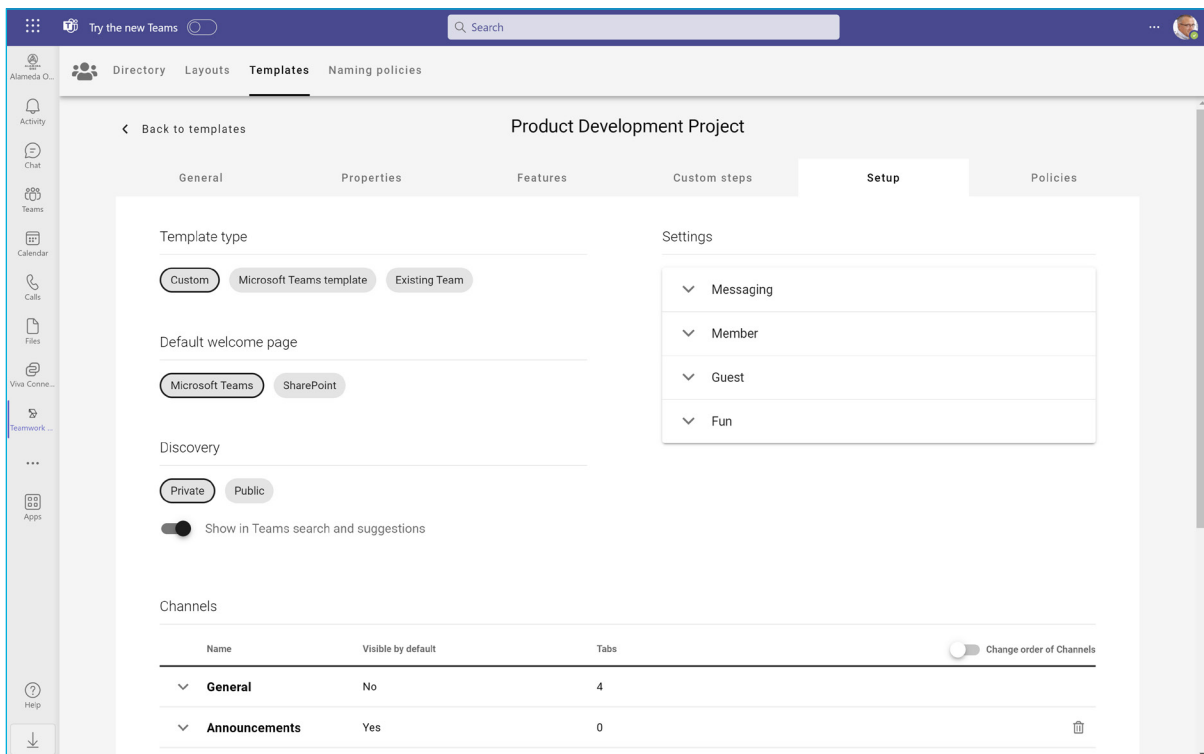
Omnia's administration capabilities extend to being able to package up parts of it to create applications that can be used with MS Teams.
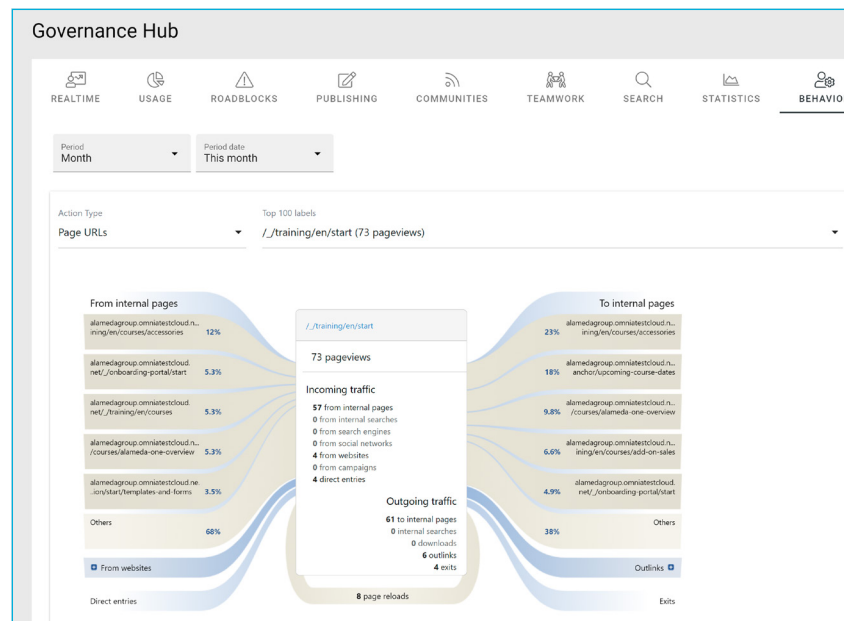
The behaviour flow report shows user routes to and from specific pages.

During 2023 the vendor continued making improvements to Omnia's analytics. Analytics is powered both by native functions and the Matomo open-source product, and has two report categories or 'Hubs'. Basic dashboards can then be drilled down into to show more detailed reports; although we found this experience a little fragmented, as the route to finding more detail is not always obvious, with links in some cases only revealed via a hover-over. Alternatively, there is the option to integrate third-party analytics tools such as Google Analytics or Clarity.

The 'Governance Hub' is targeted towards intranet administrators and covers a variety of standard metrics. We like the 'Roadblocks' dashboard that includes a broken links report and 'Behaviour' dashboard showing user journeys through the site. 'User data' is presented through a clickable map with a large amount of filterable detail, but we felt this format was a little clunky. We're happy to see a 'Search' dashboard which includes useful detail such as abandonments and 'no-results', along with where and when in the site the search took place. The 'Statistics' dashboard provides a full breakdown of all site pages in a tree structure, showing details such as average time on page and exit rates. All data is exportable.

Analytics information in the 'News Hub' is intended for communicators. The 'Overview' dashboard shows engagement, and publishing metrics such as news in draft or pending approval. The 'Published News' dashboard shows unique users for each page but no other metrics, while 'Trending' is simply a page of tiled content ordered by most read articles. The 'Reach' dashboard replicates 'Published News'; however, clicking on the 'unique user' count opens a panel where the report can be further drilled into, revealing useful extra data. We'd like this additional information to be more prominent.

There is a mandatory read report, which is managed through 'sign-off requests'. It can be viewed by any user with access to the News hub and results can be exported to CSV. Controlled documents can have read-receipt tracking, news articles can be marked 'mandatory' to display in associated web parts and see Scenario 2 for 'Announcements'.

Overall, while there have been improvements in this area, we think there is scope to further develop the user experience. Additionally, the vendor has said they are actively working to improve the styling of reports.
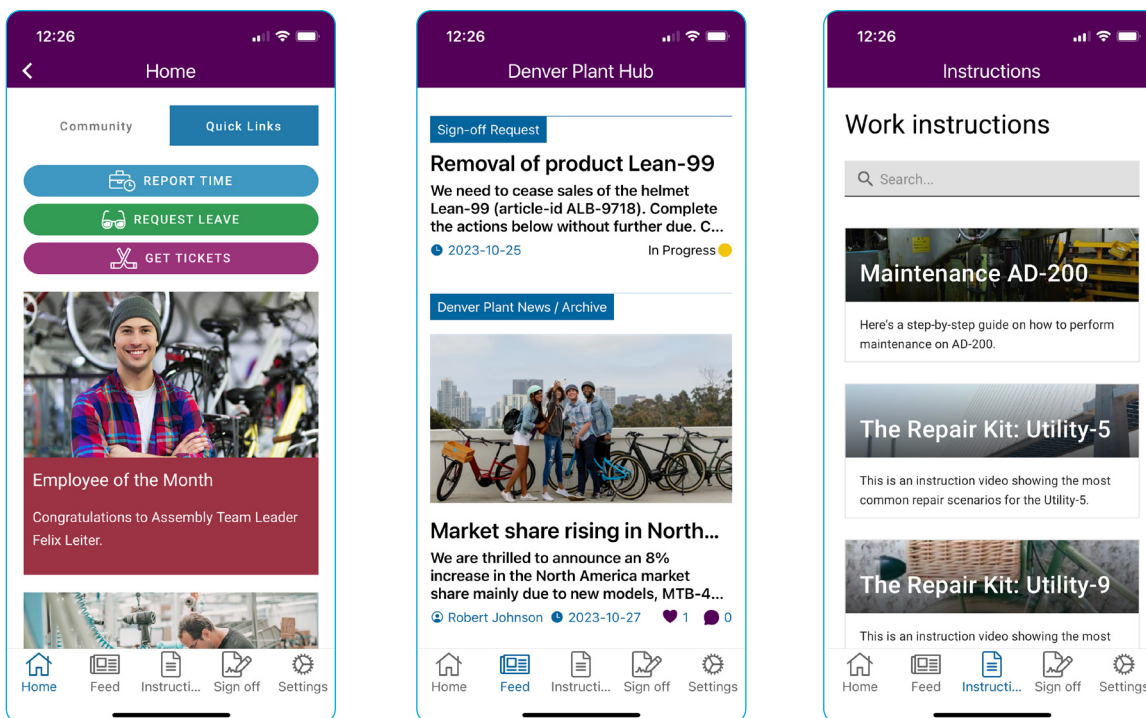
Omnia's native mobile app can be configured for specific roles, such as frontline workers, providing the opportunity to deliver a fully customised mobile experience for employees.

Omnia works responsively and has a native app available for iOS and Android, with a white-label option for branding. It supports a variety of authentication services, including Entra ID, as well as providing authentication through the user management function within Omnia itself. Access is via username and password, OTP using an authenticator app, or from a onetime link sent by email. Employees can be given a QR code which takes them to a self-service registration page and there's an option on initial log in to direct users to an onboarding page, which we think is useful for orientation. Biometric access for subsequent access would be helpful.

The app provides access to the entire Omnia intranet but can be set up based on a Business Profile (see Scenario 6) to give employees a tailored experience. The versatility available for creating bespoke experiences is impressive, for example, it's easy to provide simplified menus, alternative branding, and a toolset targeted for mobile audiences. There are several features which could specifically support frontline workers, for instance the provision of a structured product catalogue template and services covered in Scenario 4. A 'Conversation' feature lets frontline workers chat with each other in a secure environment.

There's an option to use tabs on the home page to segment different features, such as quick links or the Community area. The 'Feed' typically provides news and updates, but this is fully configurable; we were shown an example containing just a list of mandatory read requests and Community posts. Administration of the app includes defining alternative layouts, configuration of the feed, navigation and audience targeting. Admins can also amend responsive view settings to optimise the experience on different devices.

Throughout the app, content and calls to action are clearly laid out, and the overall design works well, particularly for a product based on top of SharePoint. We have seen more compelling apps in other products so there is room for improvement; however, we think the combination of functionality and flexibility to configure the toolset plus design for different audiences on mobile is impressive.

THINGS TO BEAR IN MIND

Omnia is a powerful product and is highly configurable, so much so that some intranet teams might never use its full capability, or may even find it slightly intimidating. Customer feedback highlights that there are functions which could be simplified, particularly for content editors, and we agree with this sentiment. However, there is a lot of key functionality that can be delivered using set up wizards which means Omnia is still well worth a look for smaller businesses.

There are areas of the product that would benefit from further development. In the analytics package there's not quite as much detail as might appear on first look and the more detailed reports are often hidden away, making the experience feel somewhat disjointed. Businesses with specific reporting requirements will want to reassure themselves that they can get the insights they require. Additionally, customers have suggested the mobile app has room for improvement and, while it is better than many other SharePoint intranet in-a-box products we've seen, we tend to agree.

The degree of integration with M365 in Omnia is impressive yet, while there are clearly good opportunities for integration with other systems, the options for connecting with third-party tools focus on using APIs. Out of the box connectors are also a little limited, particularly where potential customers might wish to let employees transact directly from the intranet with another tool.

The attractive price point for all this functionality shouldn't be ignored, though costs cited in this report don't include those for implementation partners. Furthermore, it's worth considering the time and effort likely to be required for setting up and maintaining complex M365 integrations. Potential customers should also consider whether they need the level of administrative capability on offer. However, for businesses who want full control over development of their intranet, Omnia is definitely an option worth exploring.

Why choose this product

Omnia provides a comprehensive toolset for constructing and managing a large intranet. It delivers an excellent experience for employees on desktop and mobile, and offers administrators a high degree of control over all aspects of the site. Its close integration with M365 presents opportunities for developing innovative approaches to delivering workplace services. We think Omnia will appeal to medium to large companies who want to provide a rich, tailored intranet experience for a diverse workforce.

Vendor roadmap

ROADMAP 2024-2025

USER EXPERIENCE
Improved push notifications
New concept for event-driven task-oriented push notifications delivered to all devices, with new end-user settings.

COMMUNICATION
Template-based content editor
A new concept for easy creation of great looking content.

ENGAGEMENT
New interactive profile card
New flexible concept for end-users to stay visible within their organization.

GOVERNANCE
Improved content reach analytics
Further improvements to the rich analytics concept focused on content reach.

MOBILE & FRONTLINE
New chat and conversation
Possibilities for users with no M365 license to drive conversations and chat with colleagues.

INTEGRATION
Extended M365 & Viva integration
Further integration with the most used Microsoft 365 and Viva apps.

ENGAGEMENT
Engaging employee stories
A personal channel for sharing engaging posts, images, videos and more with their followers.

USER EXPERIENCE
New model for theming and design
Improvements that will make it even easier to build visually appealing solutions aligned with design guidelines.

INTEGRATION
Adding built-in connectors
Updates that will support connecting the intranet to commonly used business systems.

COMMUNICATION
Native mobile support for editors
Supporting publishers and editors in creating and sharing beautiful content from mobile devices.

GOVERNANCE
Extended user behavior analytics
Further improvements to the rich analytics concept focused on user behavior.

MOBILE & FRONTLINE
Improved document collaboration
Possibilities for users with no M365 license to work with and collaborate on documents.

ROADMAP 2024-2025

INTEGRATION
Co-pilot & AI integration
Continuing the journey to support content creators with great AI-driven services.

MOBILE & FRONTLINE
Support for kiosk users
Possibilities for users with no M365 license to work from shared devices.

USER EXPERIENCE
Improve search and navigation
Making it even easier to build solutions where end-users can find what they are looking for.

ENGAGEMENT
Improved gamification and praise
Enhanced tools for showing appreciation and celebrate achievements.

GOVERNANCE
Content policies improvements
Improvements to security and compliance including integrating with M365 policies and services within this area.

COMMUNICATION
Multi-channel push notifications
Take full control of the push notifications of any content to selected user groups.

GOVERNANCE
Content lifecycle improvements
Streamlining of content lifecycle processes across all business objects in Omnia, such as pages, documents, communities etc.

ENGAGEMENT
Improved learning concept
Standardized content support, extended integration and follow up.

ENGAGEMENT
Enhanced Knowledge Management
Further improve the Knowledge Management workflows, to encapsulate a larger part of requirements in this area.

USER EXPERIENCE
Interactive master feed
Enhance your notifications to act on the information they contain, without switching your context.

MOBILE & FRONTLINE
Biometric authentication
Building support for simple and password-less sign-in without an Azure AD account.

INTEGRATION
Omnia Graph API
Improving methods for creating external integrations with ease.

Roadmap images provided by Omnia Digital Workplace.

Back to index

Powell Intranet

FULLY STANDALONE

REQUIRES SHAREPOINT

OPTIONALLY WORKS WITH SHAREPOINT

FRONTLINE FOCUS
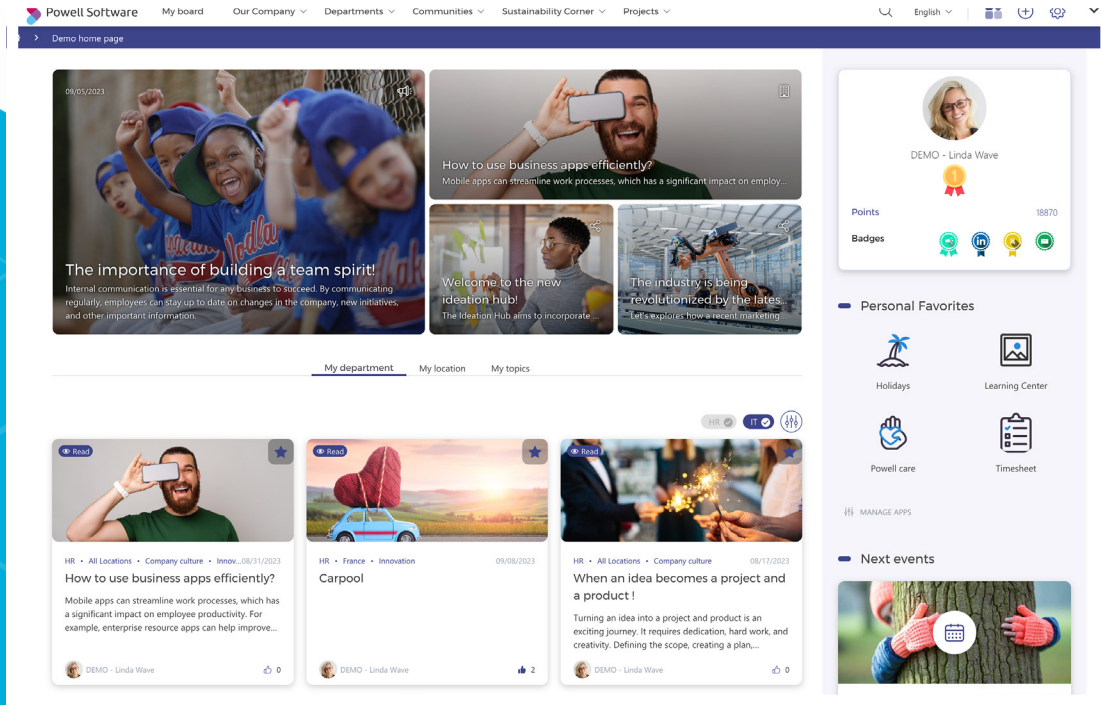
Typical deployment:

1,000 to 5,000 employees

Company locations:

VISIT THE WEBSITE
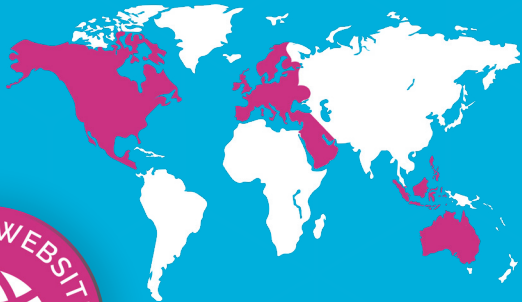
The product in a nutshell

Powell Intranet is an attractive SharePoint-based product with powerful governance, rich engagement and gamification features, and a set of well-designed templates to get started quickly.

SUMMARY

Powell Intranet owned by Powell Software

Powell Intranet from Powell Software (Paris, France) provides a flexible set of modules and features to create a visually appealing intranet. The product is based on SharePoint and the broader Microsoft ecosystem, but offers significant added value in areas such as employee advocacy, ideation, gamification, and frontline worker access. We like the focus on providing a set of visually pleasing building blocks, although in some areas, such as search, this means that certain standard Microsoft features are no longer available. The product is well-suited to medium and large organisations, allowing them to efficiently manage a complex intranet setup, but it also offers ready-to-go templates that will appeal to smaller organisations.

News and page content can be easily and attractively designed, supported by a long list of Powell's own web parts. There is a powerful site deployment and governance tool called Powell Manager that enables the intranet to be implemented quickly, and it helps to ensure consistency as it grows post-launch. There is also a mobile app which reflects the functionality of the desktop intranet, and another cut-down version of the app for frontline workers who are not covered by a Microsoft 365 licence.

The solution will be most useful when deployed alongside collaboration in MS Teams and Viva Engage. Integration with non-Microsoft applications is limited out of the box, but much can be achieved using Power Automate and third-party connectors. To get the most out of the platform, companies will need trained administrators or partner organisations to support them, and be prepared to make clear design choices about when and how they will use Powell Intranet features alongside SharePoint's.

Pricing

PRICE BAND	
250 users	💲💲💲💲
1,000 users	💲💲💲💲
5,000 users	💲💲💲💲
20,000 users	💲💲💲💲

These prices are indicative, offering a comparison of the products featured in this report only. Please contact the vendor for a bespoke quote.

PRICING MODEL

Subscription – price per user per month.
Subscription – price band based on number of users.

COSTS TYPICALLY

Fairly evenly spread across three years.

DISCOUNTS

Charities and non-profit organisations, schools and educational institutes, Government / public sector and multi-year commitments.

PRICE INCLUDES

Customer Success, online training, updates and maintenance.

Product type

Majority ready-to-run

Branding opportunities

All branding, complex options

Base systems

Fully standalone	Requires SharePoint	Optionally works with SharePoint	Other

Sectors

Accountancy, banking and finance	Business, consulting and management	Engineering and manufacturing	Healthcare	Public services, government and administration

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Voices of Gaïa: Ideas to Change

Founders' Journey: From Fossil to Green

New Tokyo Office: Expanding Horizons

My department   My location   My topics

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👤 Powell Software administrator   👍 0

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ALL NEWS →

― New hires

Bright Green Future: Diego Joins the Flock!
Green Innovations Lead.
10/19/2023
Dubai
Sales

Welcoming Our New Gem, Harriet!
Eco-Development Strategist,
10/18/2023
France
Communication

Sustainable Steps: Robert Joins Our Journey!
Chief Sustainability Officer.
10/19/2023
China
HR

Green Horizon: Samantha Steps into Gaïa!
Environmental Strategy Coordi...
10/19/2023
Spain
Finance

ALL NEW HIRES →

― Gaïa in the Social Sphere
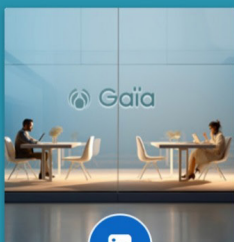
LinkedIn
Exciting times ahead for #TeamGaïa! Unveiling our next-generation renewable...
5 days ago

Instagram
Our team in action! 🌱 Planting trees for a brighter tomorrow. #GaiaGrows #PlantWithUs
5 days ago

Youtube
Step into our Berlin hub! Get exclusive insights, meet our passionate team, and...
5 days ago
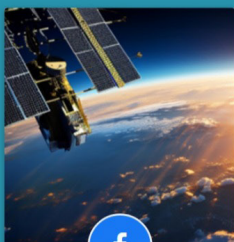
Facebook
Proudly introducing Gaïa's latest renewable technology - making green energy more accessible...
5 days ago

SOCIAL WALL →

Liam Taylor
2

Points	3960
Preferred action	Read an highlighted content
Latest bad...	

― My applications

Travel

Timesheet

People Directory

Reward Center

MANAGE APPS

― Next event

03/21/2024   10:00 AM - 4:00 PM

RecycleMania Unleashed: Gaïa's Upcycling Challenge Awaits!
ADD TO MY CALENDAR
📍 Musterstraße 17, Berlin

ALL EVENTS →

― Kudos

Teamwork
They say teamwork makes the dream ...

Agility
We are constantly adapting, evolving, ...

Innovation
We are always innovating to improve ...

― Your Voice Counts

Are you using the new employee directory?

○ Frequently.
○ Occasionally.
○ Not yet.

Vote

SUBMIT YOUR IDEA →

COMPANY AND PRODUCT

Company details

Company
Powell Software

ISO 27001 certified
Powell Intranet is compliant with ISO 27001

Data residency
While Powell Intranet is on Powell's Azure tenant, the client's data remains within the client's own Microsoft 365 customer tenant. Countries are Microsoft countries.

Company founded
2016

Product launched
2016

Typical client size
Range varies from 500 to 100,000 employees; typical customer is 1,000-5,000 employees.

Largest deployment so far
100,000 users in one country. 60,000 users in 20 countries.

Customers
Clients include: La Poste, Quest Diagnostics, Carl Zeiss, Groupama, SNCF. Please see their website for more.

Partner locations
Please see their website for details.

Company locations
France, Paris (HQ), USA, Germany, Australia, UK, Dubai

Product and technical details

Name of product

Powell Intranet

Deployment

Client on-premises	Client private cloud	Microsoft Azure	Amazon Web Services	Vendor-hosted	Microsoft 365 tenant	Other

Client data encrypted

In transit only	In transit and at rest	At rest only

Authentication supported

Entra ID	ADFS	Okta	Open ID	Oauth	G Suite	Other

App deployment

Google Play store	Apple store	MDM	MAM	Other

Accessibility

WCAG 2.1 compliant

Document library sources integrated

Box	Dropbox	Google Drive	SharePoint	OneDrive	Other

Optional integrated enterprise search engines

Coveo	Elastic	IBM	Lucidworks	Microsoft	Mindbreeze	Sinequa	Other

User interface multi-language

Pre-configured	Editable	Right to left script supported	Other

Content multi-language

Machine translation for publishers	Machine translation for end users	Editable machine translation for publishers	Manual creation for publishers	Right to left script	Other

Set-up and support

Set-up process for new clients

The customer decides to deploy either the standard portal (with a few clicks) or decides which levels of customisation they need (can range from adapting their various site collections templates to fully customising the look and feel, and metadata structure). Full deployment can vary from 2-3 hours for a packaged site for small businesses, to 3 months for large multinational companies requiring the finest levels of customisation.

Current version

Release of September 2023

Product updates

Monthly updates as a SaaS solution

Product update process

Customers updated at once as a SaaS solution

Reverse-out options

The customer's data remains hosted in the customer's own Microsoft 365 tenant, so it is not impacted by reversing out of the platform. However, the customer will lose access to Powell-specific intranet features such as Search Web Parts, navigation header, etc.

Technical support

Email support	Phone support	Chat support	Online portal	24/7 support	Office hours only*

* Powell supports local office hours for three regions (Europe, North America, Asia-Pacific). 24/7 support requires a specific contract co-signed with a Powell partner.

User community

Powell Software have an active user community with several channels: an online portal for day-to-day exchanges, monthly open calls, some local physical events (FR, DE, US), and an annual online user conference.

Voice of the vendor

Powell Software says: "Powell Software is on a mission to help companies meet the challenges of the hybrid workplace: improve employee engagement and productivity thanks to a digital workplace solution accessible to all. Our Digital Workplace is based on two pillars: Powell Intranet and Powell Teams.

Powell Software builds innovative SaaS solutions for an augmented Digital Workplace that informs, engages, and boosts the productivity of organizations. Our products are crafted to provide tools that ease communication, collaboration, and employee engagement. Furthermore, we enable organizations capitalizing on Microsoft 365 to get the most out of it, ensuring effective information governance and organized communication and collaboration spaces. Every organization must be inclusive: we develop solutions that are genuinely usable by all employees, regardless of their comfort with technology. Active listening to our clients and collaborative work with our partner network is at the heart of our approach, allowing us to innovate and expand our operational capacity to meet expressed needs and provide the best possible service."

Voice of the customer

When asked about what's best in the product, customers often mention the variety of pre-built site templates and the rich choice in additional web parts. "Out-of-the-box site templates address many use cases that are not handled in standard SharePoint" says one customer, adding, "many web parts are available to overcome the functional limits of SharePoint". This rich choice of building blocks is much appreciated: "It's more like a toolbox, and not a one-size-fits-all platform" says another customer. The configuration and management options, including the back-end tool Powell Manager, also receive praise: "Powell Manager lets you manage and deploy sites with custom templates" says one customer, and another one adds that "the platform is easy to configure from an admin point of view, but also from an editor perspective".

Improvement suggestions are mixed and relate mainly to specific functionality that users want to see improved. A first example is the mobile app, where one customer says, "the mobile app does not fit all our needs; a new release of the app would be welcome". Other examples include better integration with third-party applications, and improved analytics: "We would like to see more detailed and built-in analytics." And while Powell Manager is praised for its rich functionality, there are some concerns about the dated user interface. One customer wants "a more ergonomic and intuitive user interface for Powell Manager" while another says that "documentation and guidance for intranet administrators is lacking".

Not all customers have a direct experience of working with Powell, as the product is often implemented by a partner. Those customers that did have regular interactions all have a very positive impression. "Very good relationship, very attentive, with regular communication and responsive to our questions", said one customer. The Customer Success Managers are especially very much appreciated: "The support of our Customer Success Manager is very helpful when it comes to conceptual and technical issues." Another customer is also very satisfied with the technical support team from Powell: "Excellent working relationships, whether with the Custom Success Manager or the technical support team. Both are attentive, and very responsive, with the will to find solutions."

SCENARIOS & SCORES

Please see the Scenarios below for more detail on each of these.

SCENARIO AND SCORE	KEY BENEFITS	IMPROVEMENTS / CONSIDERATIONS
4+ **1. User Experience & Visual Appeal**	Attractive templates and web parts to build a highly usable, contemporary intranet. Navigation is flexible.	Branding options are basic but can be extended using custom CSS, possibly with the help of a partner.
3.5+ **2. Publishing & Communications Management**	Content creation is done through intuitive templates. Crisis communications are well served.	A ChatGPT assistant comes at an additional cost. News management and multi-channel options simple.
3.5+ **3. Community & Engagement**	Excellent support for idea management, employee Kudos, and gamification through badges and leaderboards.	Rich social reactions are not included. In-built polls are simple.
3+ **4. Integrations & Services (Including M365)**	Strong integration with M365 applications. Helpful in-built employee services.	Integration with non-Microsoft platforms is less advanced.
3 **5. Information Finding & Search**	Visually attractive and user-friendly layout of the search results page.	Some Microsoft search features are not supported or are hidden. No federated search.
3.5+ **6. Administrator Experience**	Powell Manager is a capable and feature-rich tool for setting up and managing complex intranets.	There is a steep learning curve to master Powell Manager.
3+ **7. Analytics**	Extensive set of reports. Insightful engagement report.	Reports rely on PowerBI and Google Analytics or Matomo. Configuration will be required.
2.5+ **8. Mobile & Frontline Support**	Well-designed native app. Works for users without Microsoft licences.	Setting up the app is not straightforward and typically handled by an implementation partner.
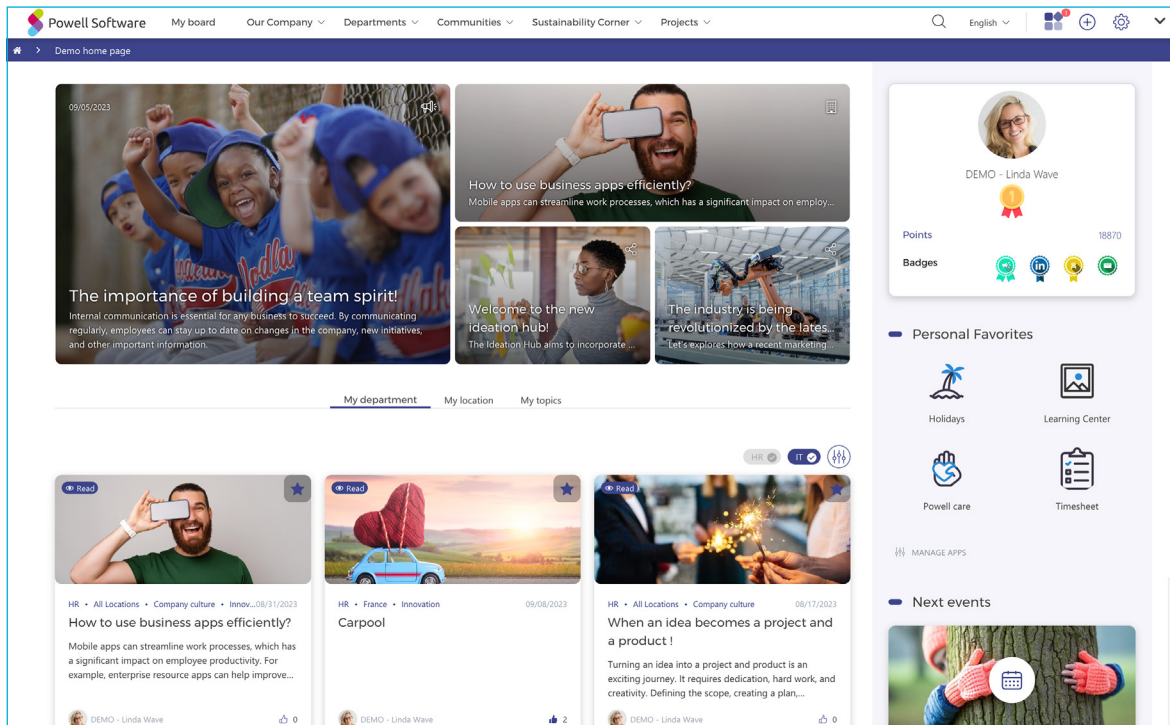
Powell Intranet includes many visually attractive web parts to build a highly usable intranet.

Powell Intranet offers the building blocks and features to create a highly usable intranet with a contemporary look and feel. The product is built on modern SharePoint, but it is possible to hide the top SharePoint bar and the left side icons, avoiding potential confusion. A range of well-designed, modern web parts are available, and Powell Intranet comes with several predefined templates to get going quickly. The top navigation bar includes role-targeted buttons where end users, publishers and admins get access to personalisation and configuration options. This includes an area for accessibility support, for adjusting contrast and fonts. Tooltips are available, but a guided tour would be a useful addition to help newcomers and infrequent users.

A top-level mega menu persists across site collections, replacing the standard SharePoint menu. The menu is managed in the front end of the product in an intuitive way (see Scenario 6 for more). Images and icons can be added to the menu to increase the visual appeal. Menu items can be displayed according to a user's role, department, or location, based on SharePoint or Entra ID groups - we like the option to build more sophisticated queries and apply rules for very specific targeting.

Notifications are nicely brought together; new ones are clearly marked, and you can mark all as 'read' or delete all, but there is no 'save for later' or filtering. Employees can configure which types of notifications they want to receive, and in which channel – on the desktop intranet, in the mobile app, via email, or into a specific Teams channel.

The standard branding options are based on SharePoint themes but are extendable. Themes are easily adapted through an intuitive user interface, and it's equally straightforward to create and switch to temporary or seasonal themes, although these remain somewhat simple. Organisations that want to go beyond the standard functionality will typically do so with the help of a partner. We were shown some visually appealing examples that show the power of what can be achieved.

Overall, there are many attractive building blocks and features within Powell Intranet that will appeal to employees and will allow them to enjoy a personalised experience.

Content authors manage all their content in an intuitive contributions board.

Powell Intranet makes content creation easy, especially for inexperienced authors but also with more advanced news capabilities for seasoned internal communication managers. Creation of new content, including news articles, starts from the 'create' sign in the top navigation, visible only to authorised content creators. Powell's approach is to guide authors through the publishing process with a structured content template. The template prompts them for the title and description, as well as metadata for targeting purposes, such as department, location, and topic. The template also includes optional steps to set a publication date, to translate the article into other languages, and to generate notifications. An approval workflow with notifications is also available, for instance to check and approve translated versions of the article.

Once the initial template is completed and the content saved, a duly authorised editor can then view the complete page and may decide to make changes to the web parts or the layout, using standard SharePoint editing features. This two-step process is a consequence of Powell's approach to content creation, and it will take some time for editors to get used to.

News and page templates are created in Powell Manager (see Scenario 6), leveraging an extensive range of both SharePoint and Powell Intranet web parts to ensure content is presented attractively. Powell web parts are grouped together and presented in an attractive catalogue that is easy to both browse and search. This catalogue can also be expanded with company-specific web parts for use by local content creators across the organisation.

Creating a news article is done by filling out a predefined template.

All Powell web parts are grouped together in a well-structured catalogue.

Integrated into the template is an AI-based feature called 'Powell Buddy Assistant'. Based on ChatGPT, this tool will generate content from a natural language prompt provided by the content author. By selecting a specific tone of voice, length, and target audience, the content author influences the style of the output. We particularly like the option to select a preconfigured context that sets the scope of the tool to a specific content area or use case, such as producing marketing material or writing client case studies. This reduces the burden on the content creator to produce detailed prompts and enhances the quality of the output. Note that Powell Buddy Assistant is an optional and payable add-on that is not included in the pricing provided for this report.

The ability to target content and to let users control their feed of news goes beyond standard SharePoint functionality. Authors add Term Store tags to target their articles to a particular department, location, or other Entra ID groups. On top of this mechanism, end users have the option to set their personal preferences. They may be interested in news from departments and locations other than their own, or wish to follow news about selected topics. User preferences are set within the news web part and not in the user profile, which is unusual and easily missed if not explained.

Content owners have access to a Contributions board that shows content and news they own, along with details such as approval status. This board can be configured to show content owned by a team or the whole organisation, but there is no calendar view to help with communications planning.

Powell Buddy Assistant generates content within a specific context and for a specific target audience.

Once published, there is an option to share news stories into a Teams channel, into a Viva Engage group, or by email. An employee advocacy page provides a news feed for external sharing on social media too. News items can also be aggregated into a newsletter digest using the standard SharePoint functionality or by using an optional module that integrates with WeAdvocacy and JungleMail (see the Product Overview section of this report for a review of JungleMail). Nothing specific is foreseen within Powell Intranet to integrate with digital signage systems, but this could be implemented by a third-party provider via Power Automate.

For urgent communications, alerts can be created like any other content type and will display a message in a banner at the top of the site, plus send a mobile phone push notification. The banner is colour-coded depending on the severity of the alert. A nice addition would be to include an option for employees to confirm that they have seen the message and to leave a comment, for instance confirming they have removed a product from sale. A separate feature which we like is a well-designed template for a crisis management site, to be activated when needed. If required, the crisis management page can temporarily take over the intranet's regular home page.

Overall, the experience for content creators and editors is pleasant and intuitive. The templated approach to content creation is especially useful to guide junior or infrequent authors. More could be done though to support the editorial process, for instance by adding an editorial calendar or similar tool.
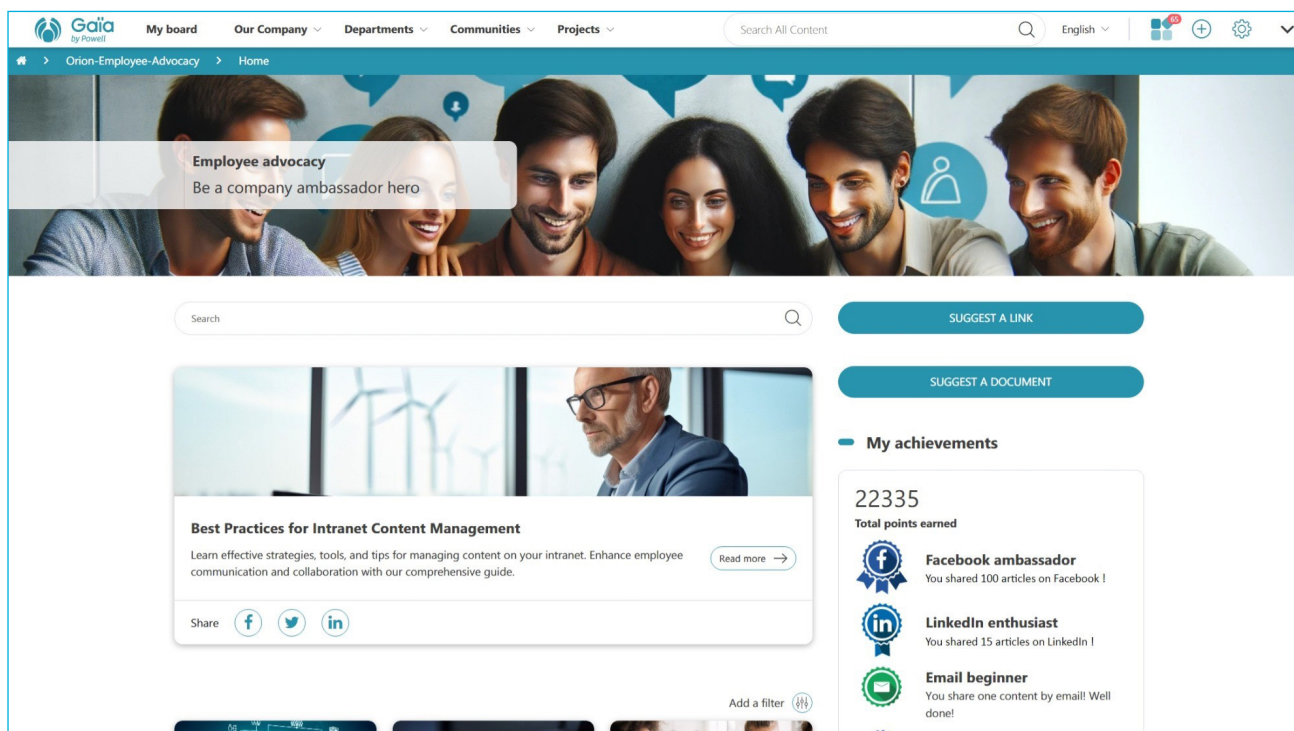
Users can share approved content on their social media channels from the employee advocacy page.
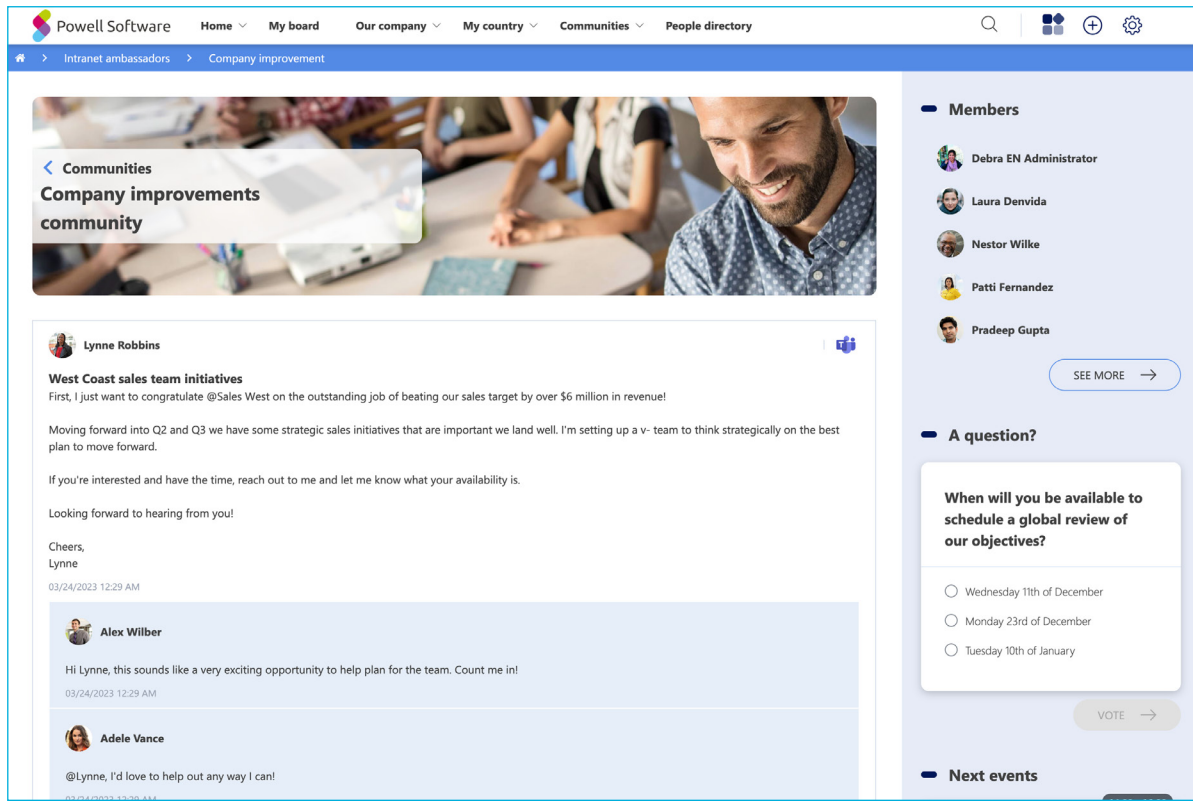
An example of a community space.

Powell Intranet supports various use cases for communities, engagement, and recognition. Communities are created using a ready-to-go template, which by default uses Viva Engage for discussions but applies a more consistent design in line with the rest of the intranet. Optionally, the Viva Engage discussion feed is replaced by Powell Intranet's own social module, so organisations that don't use Viva Engage can still use the feature.

The product includes an 'Ideation Hub' tool which enables users to submit ideas and respond to challenges posed by the organisation. The available functionality serves many idea generation needs through a pleasant user interface. Campaigns are set up by authorised contributors, while employees can view current and previous campaigns, and the most popular ideas. Any user can create a page to share a new idea – they don't need to be a contributor. Users may also like, comment, and share ideas in Viva Engage or in a Teams channel. The creator of a campaign will review all ideas, shortlist some for further evaluation, and select winning ideas for implementation. There is functionality in the tool to support some of these actions, but other steps will require manual updates and could be improved.

Employees can like and comment on content pages and news articles anywhere within the intranet, but richer social interactions beyond the standard like button are not part of the product. There is also no centralised activity feed to give users an overview of activities across the platform. However, we do like the strong support for gamification within the product. Various activities such as liking and commenting, sharing ideas, and posting on external social media enable users to earn points. Badges are awarded when a predefined target is reached, and employees see their position on a leaderboard. Admins have ample flexibility to set up different types of badges and their associated targets, so the feature can be fine-tuned to match the organisation's priorities and culture.

Powell Intranet includes a simple poll web part to collect feedback from employees. Responses can be viewed in a SharePoint list and downloaded as an Excel file. Alternatively, contributors can run polls and surveys using Microsoft Forms, which provides more granular analysis but has a less tailored look and feel.

Another way to give and receive feedback in the product is through the 'Kudos' feature. Organisations can set up different Kudos categories, for instance to reflect their corporate values or strategic areas of focus. Kudos can be given by anyone, publicly or privately, and there is even an option for the receiver of the Kudos to refuse it. Kudos given and received contribute to an employee's position on a leaderboard, and there is also a Kudos wall that shows all Kudos recently given, as well as the organisation's Kudos champions.
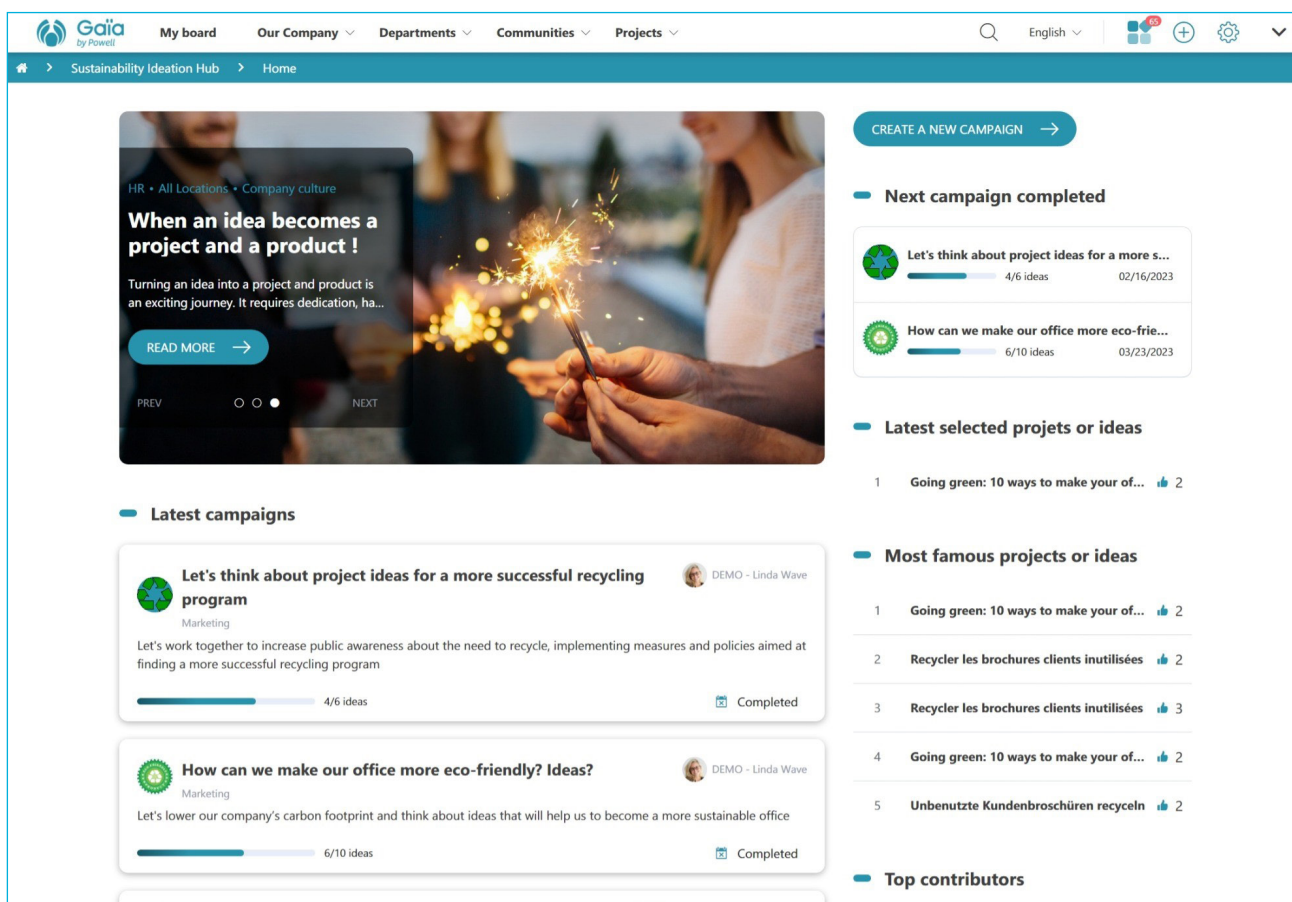
The Ideation Hub is the place where users contribute to ongoing campaigns and get an overview of selected projects or ideas.

A gamification leaderboard shows the badges and points earned by top performers.

A simple form to give Kudos to a colleague includes a configurable Kudos category and explanation.

Powell Intranet offers some attractive people-oriented features to support employee engagement and wellbeing. We particularly like a watercooler feature which Powell calls 'the water fountain'. This is a collection of discussion communities around non-work-related topics such as music and pets, brought together in a single place. For each topic, a number of ice breaker questions are proposed to get the interaction started. The 'classified ads' module is another popular way to bring employees together. For those licensed for the separate Powell Teams product, another module is 'coffee machine', which checks on team member's availability for a break time and randomly allocates them to an informal meeting with a colleague.

Onboarding is another area where Powell Intranet adds useful functionality. There is a ready-to-use template for an onboarding area, where newcomers will find personalised information such as their manager and team members, and a set of learning videos targeted to their role and department.
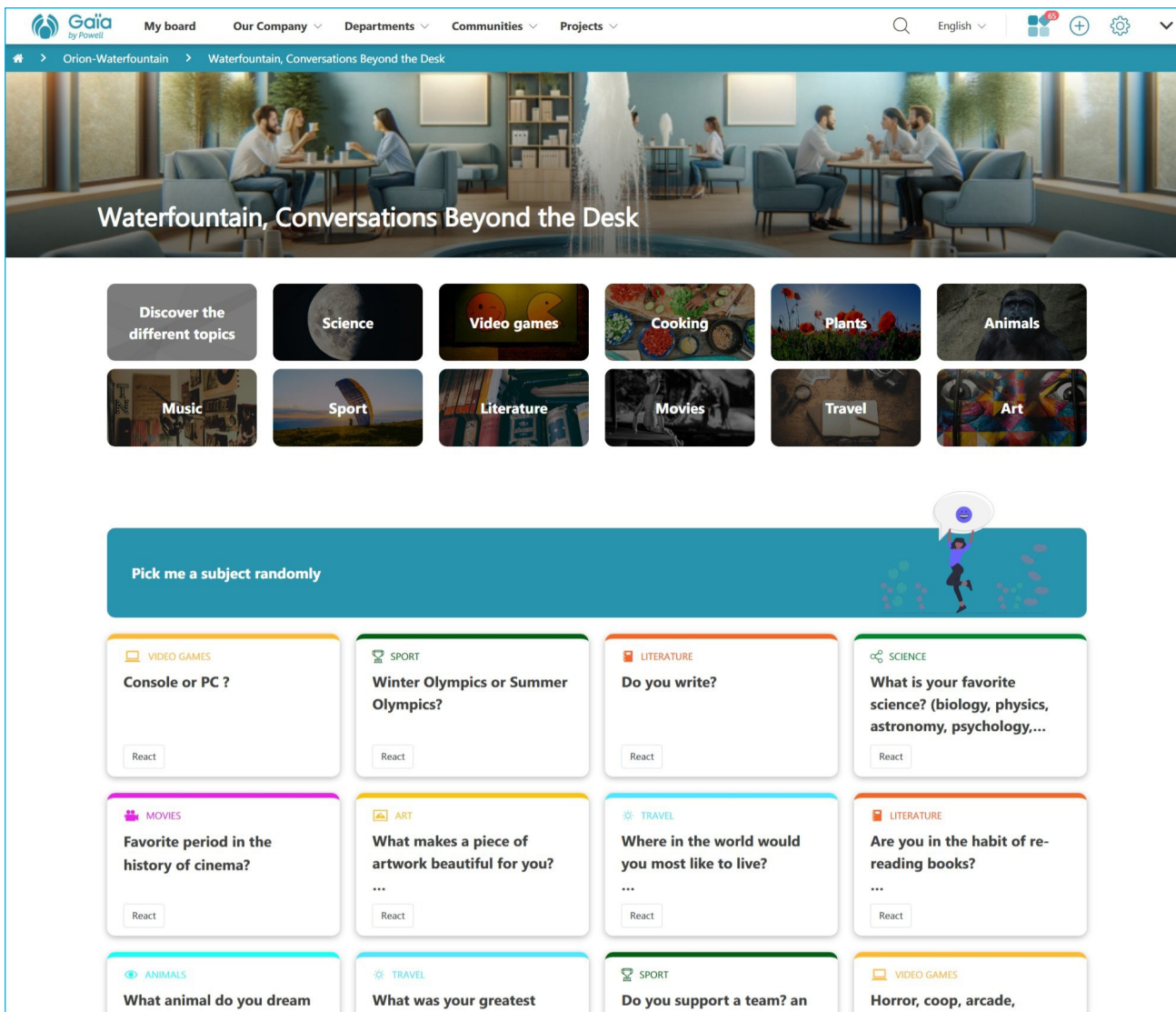
'The water fountain' offers ice breaker questions to start a discussion on non-work-related topics.

'My Board' is a personalised overview page of a user's activities and work.

Powell Intranet is tightly interlinked with SharePoint and the broader Microsoft 365 ecosystem, so naturally the integration with Microsoft's products starts from a strong basis. Still, there are areas where it is best for customers to choose one possible approach and stick to it, for example Powell news or SharePoint news rather than mixing both. As a start, we like the personalised 'My Board' overview page, where a variety of integrations across the Microsoft 365 platform are thoughtfully brought together.

The integration with MS Teams and Viva Engage is particularly strong. Content such as news articles can be shared into Teams, into Viva Engage, and also by email (see Scenario 2). There is a web part to surface a conversation from Teams or Viva Engage onto any content page, and another web part gives an overview of all Teams and Viva Engage groups that a user has access to. Notifications on Powell Intranet can be presented in Teams too, as discussed in Scenario 1. There is also a more advanced integration using Power Automate, whereby a post in Teams can be transformed into a wiki page within the knowledge management area of Powell Intranet.

Powell also offers a separate product called Powell Teams that can be used alongside Powell Intranet (note it's not included in the pricing provided), which goes well beyond the features described above. It includes a user-friendly dashboard and a powerful provisioning tool with predefined templates to help organisations manage their Teams environment. We believe that Powell Teams will mainly appeal to IT managers that want to streamline the usage of MS Teams through governance and life cycle management. As such, it is an interesting companion product to consider.

The integration with Viva is focused on Viva Engage and Viva Connections. The dashboard and the feed from Viva Connections can be integrated onto a Powell Intranet page or can be viewed directly in Teams on the desktop and on mobile. Powell has developed a number of specific cards for the Viva dashboard. There are cards to give Kudos to view birthdays, to register for an event, and to book a desk through the Flex Desk module, which is discussed further below. There is also a card that gives full access to the intranet, which will be useful mainly on mobile.

Integration with third-party applications is handled in two different ways. A first approach is through a generic integration web part which Powell calls 'universal connector' and which is based on an industry-standard REST API. Using this connector, the product includes a visually attractive integration with ServiceNow. The status and the owners of tickets are retrieved and displayed in an intuitive card layout on the intranet. The status of a ticket can be changed from within the interface, and this will generate a notification within Powell Intranet. To view the full content of a ticket, employees click on the card and go to the ServiceNow platform. Powell say that this generic connector will work for any enterprise system, but apart from ServiceNow this has not been documented, so time and effort will be required to set it up.
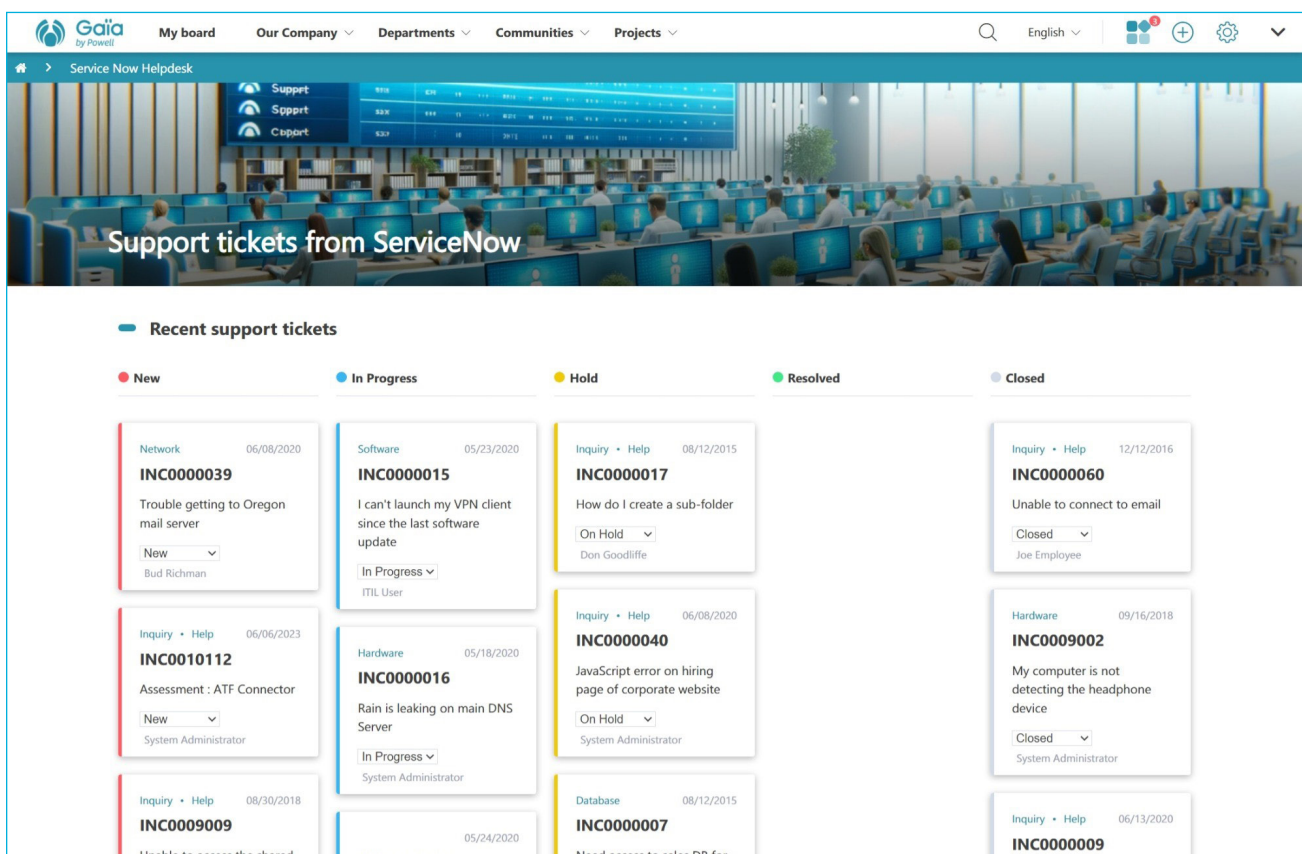
Tickets from ServiceNow are displayed within Powell Intranet in an intuitive card-based interface.

A second approach is to use connectors in Power Automate. One area where Powell Intranet puts this technology to good use, is by creating a social wall that brings together posts from Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram onto a single page in the product. The same approach can be used to connect Powell Intranet to all the major enterprise platforms using their third-party connectors.

Powell Intranet also includes a few built-in tools offering employee services, especially around supporting hybrid work. There is a car-pooling application, and there are some specific services for frontline workers based on Power Apps; see scenario 8 for more. We particularly like a versatile desk booking tool called Flex Desk. Originally designed to be a simple tool for employees to book a desk or a meeting room when coming to the office, it has been extended based on customer feedback to include other bookable resources such as spaces in the car park or tables for lunch in the cafeteria. At the core of the product are a number of floor plans that need to be uploaded by an administrator. These are then divided in the tool into different zones, such as meeting rooms or open space areas, and are turned into bookable places. Flex Desk can be accessed from the personal favourites on the home page, from the native mobile app, and via a Powell-provided card in the Viva Connections dashboard.

Flex Desk allows hybrid workers to book a desk for the day.

*The social wall uses Power Automate connectors to bring content
from an organisation's social media channels together on a single page.*

The search results page has an attractive card-based layout, with refiners and filters available.

Powell Intranet provides its own enhanced search experience, but users can also access the standard SharePoint search box, by switching a toggle in the top navigation bar. There is a choice to search the entire intranet, or to filter by news, documents, people, or videos. The search results page is well designed using an attractive card layout, which is more visually appealing than the standard Microsoft results page. Filters and refiners are easy to add based on the tags set up in the Microsoft Term Store. Powell Intranet includes contextual search boxes on many of its templates, such as a document repository.

Overall, we like Powell's search approach although some improvements would be welcome. Most search management functionality is handled within standard Microsoft admin tools, so an admin account is required. Bookmarks in Microsoft Search are supported with a 'promoted search results' web part, but other useful Microsoft Search features such as Q&A are not supported in the Powell Intranet search experience. There are currently no features providing spelling correction and stemming, but Powell say that AI-powered natural language processing of search input is on the roadmap.

Powell Intranet can usefully do a federated search across multiple tenants in Microsoft 365. Content from other tenants can be configured to display in a separate web part, for instance to bring news articles together on one page. This will be attractive for larger organisations or companies that have recently gone through a merger or acquisition. Federated search across other business applications is not available; disappointingly standard Microsoft Graph connectors are currently not supported, but Powell says that this is due for imminent release.

People finding is fully integrated; any type of information included in people's profiles can be searched, such as skills or past projects. Search results are presented following the same card layout. Employee cards are similar to Microsoft's but include some nice additions. We like the integration with Powell Intranet's Flex Desk module (see Scenario 4) to show an employee's current location in the office, as well as future reservations. Employee cards detail a user's position in the company hierarchy, but a fully-fledged organisation chart is not included; Powell says this is coming soon.
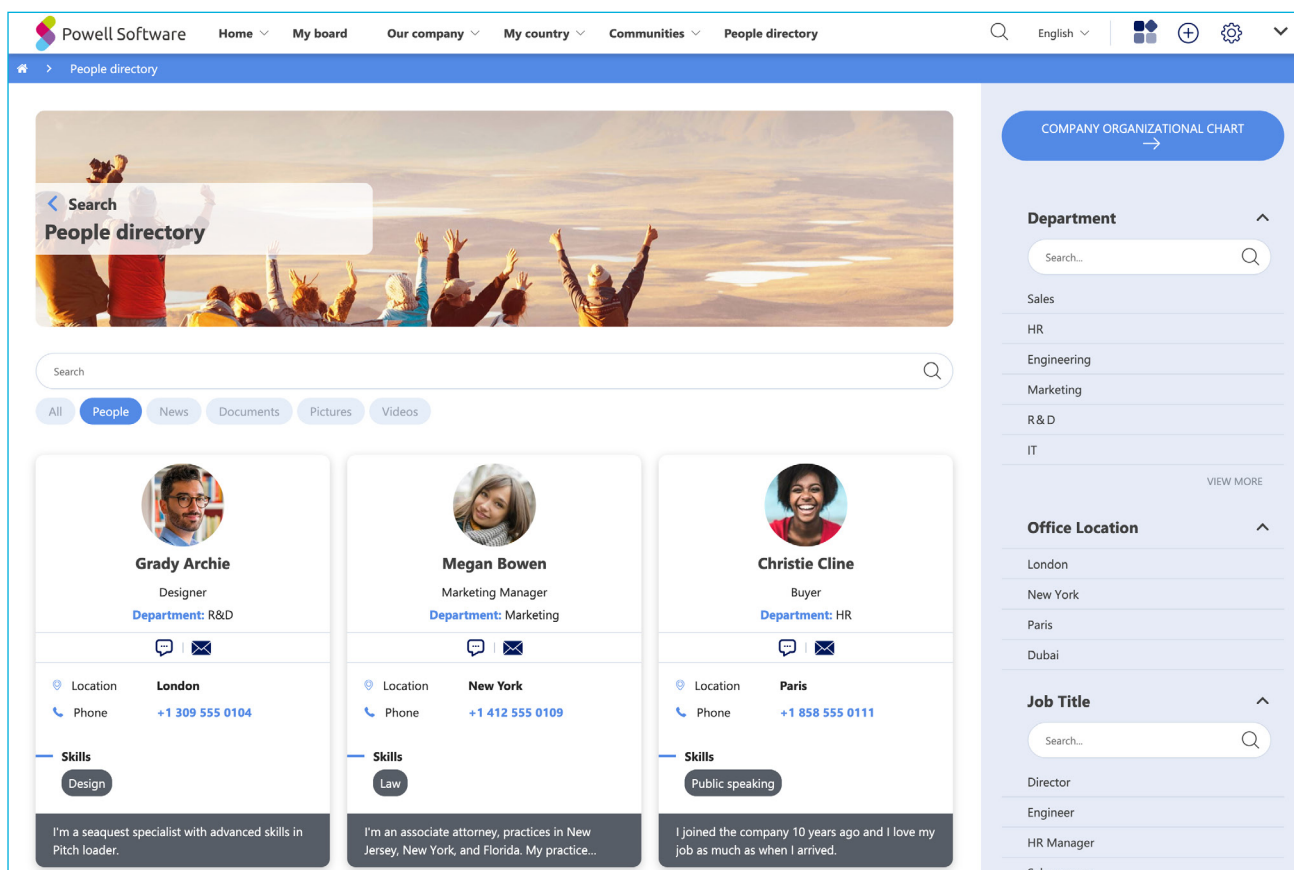
The People Directory includes helpful refiners and an attractive card layout.

3.5+

6. ADMINISTRATOR EXPERIENCE
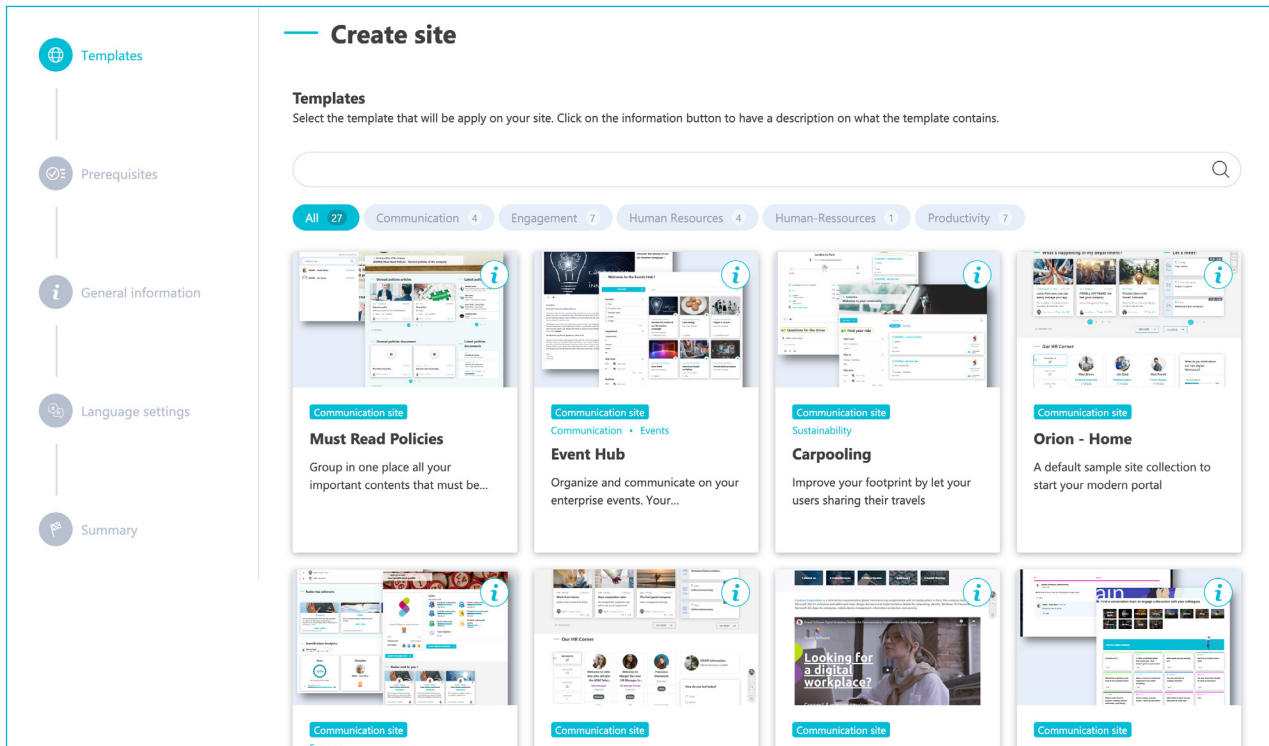
The product includes a simple workflow to create and deploy a new site from a choice of predefined templates.

Powell Intranet provides a highly granular degree of control as well as significant options to configure the structure, behaviour and the look and feel of the platform. Global admins will use Powell Manager, a dedicated tool that includes comprehensive provisioning and governance features, to ensure new sites and pages are deployed and managed in a controlled and consistent manner. One of the strengths of Powell Manager is that admins can make changes to site and page templates and then redeploy them in one go to a complex intranet consisting of many site collections. Large organisations with a complex structure will find this an important time saver.

Powell Manager is a versatile tool and goes beyond what most other SharePoint-based products in this report offer. It is a very capable product, but the range of options also makes this an expert-level tool, and the interface is very different to SharePoint. Additionally, some parts of the user interface of Powell Manager have been modernised, while other parts are older and feel dated. This creates a mixed experience for admins which is not ideal. We believe that there will be a significant learning curve for admins to master Powell Manager.

Powell say that they are making more and more configuration options available directly in the front-end without the need to go to Powell Manager. For example, from the Settings icon, non-technical users can manage the top-level navigation, change a site to a temporary or seasonal theme, or even create and deploy a completely new site from a predefined template. We think this is a positive evolution, as it makes more functionality readily available to content owners across the organisation, without requiring admin access and training for Powell Manager.

Creating the layout of the home page and the landing pages of an intranet site is still one of the core functionalities of Powell Manager. Page layouts can be created either by adapting a predefined layout that comes with the product, or by starting from scratch. Pages are built by adding single or multi-column sections to the page using a drag-and-drop interface, and then filling these sections with appropriate web parts, as shown in the screenshots below. Powell Manager is also where admins set up content creation forms for each type of content, such as news or events. These forms are then automatically presented to content creators in the front-end, making the content creation process straightforward.
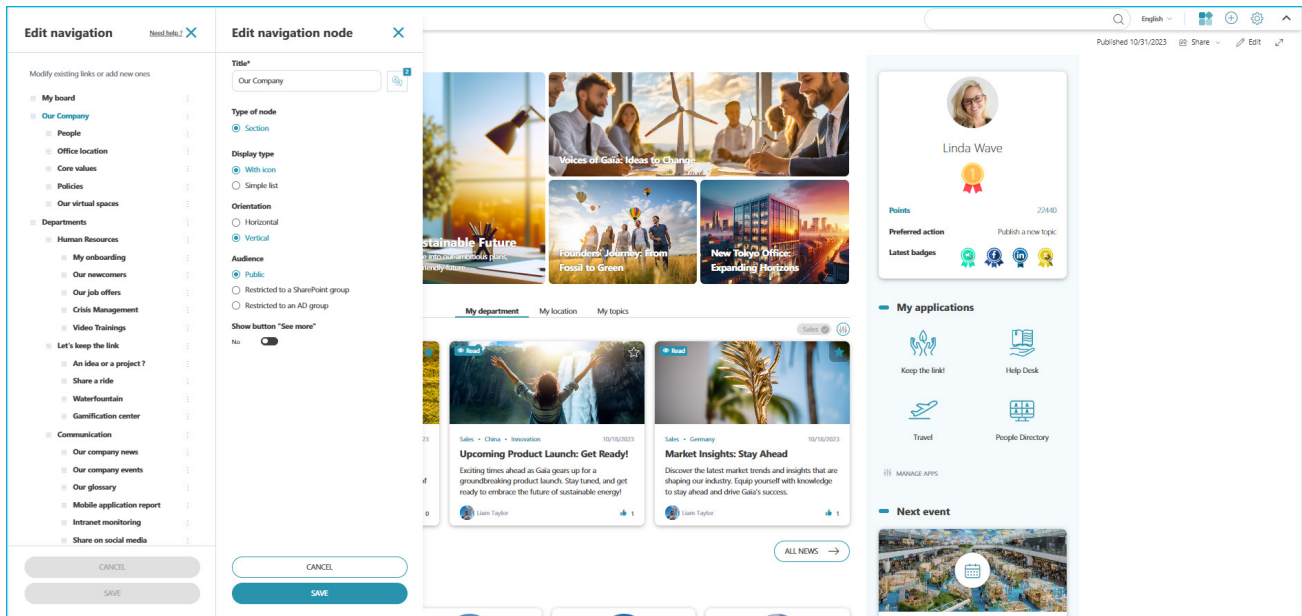
The global navigation can be managed in the front-end of Powell Intranet by non-technical users.
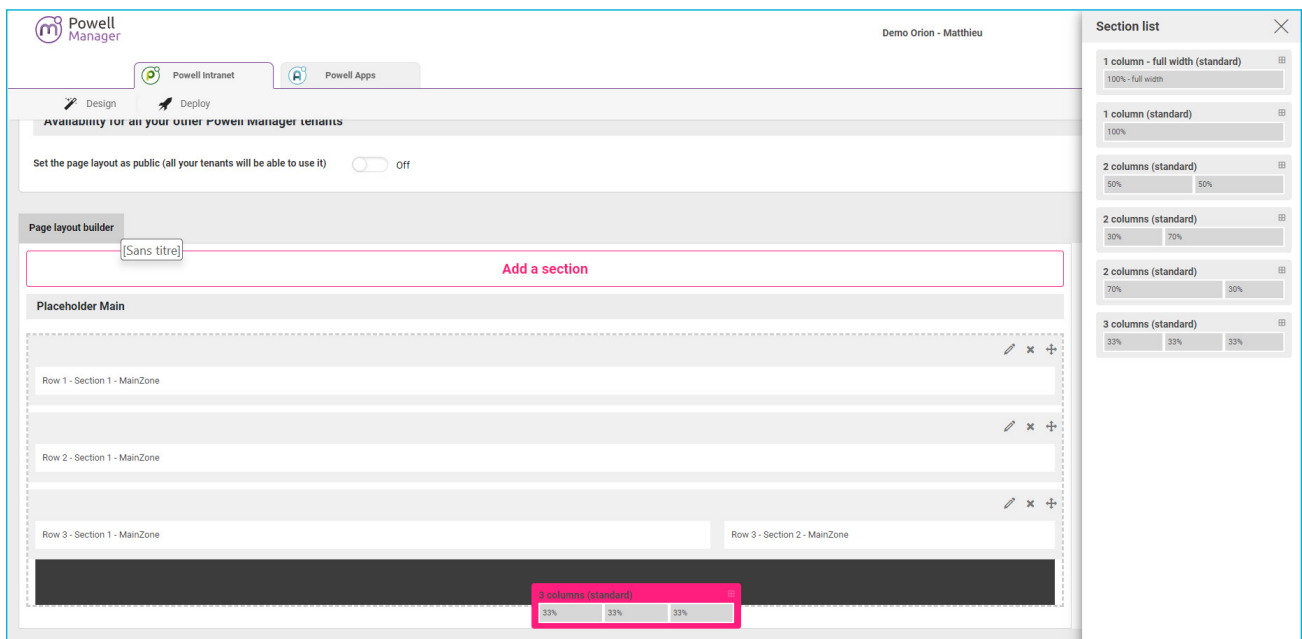
When creating a new page layout, single or multi-column blocks are dragged and dropped into place.

Local admins may not have access to Powell Manager, but they can manage various aspects under their control in the front-end of the product, in the 'Settings' icon in the navigation bar. For instance, they can manage permissions on specific site collections for which they are responsible. They can also configure individual web parts on the pages under their control by going into a configuration panel, similar to the standard SharePoint interface.

Powell Intranet includes a personalised dashboard called 'Contributions board' (see Scenario 2) that provides a helicopter view of everything that a content owner has published over time. From this dashboard, content can be archived if needed, but there is no review date available, so it's not obvious to know which pages should be reviewed. There are also no workflows built into the product to notify content owners when pages need to be revised; Powell say that these can easily be added using Power Automate.

Powell Intranet supports multilingual content well, with a combination of automatic and managed translation. For manually managed translations, the product uses the standard capabilities of SharePoint and adds some extra features. Content can be created and stored in multiple languages, and workflows are available as part of the content creation process to notify assigned reviewers for each language.

The intranet presents content in an individual's default language, and a dropdown is available in the top navigation bar to switch to another supported language. Powell Intranet makes sure that all elements on the page are translated, including web part titles and icon descriptions. For all these items, translations are stored and can be reviewed and updated. Alternatively, the product also includes a nicely integrated auto-translate functionality using translation services in Azure. This can be used to translate complete pages, and is integrated into the content creation process to produce a first version of translated content for review.
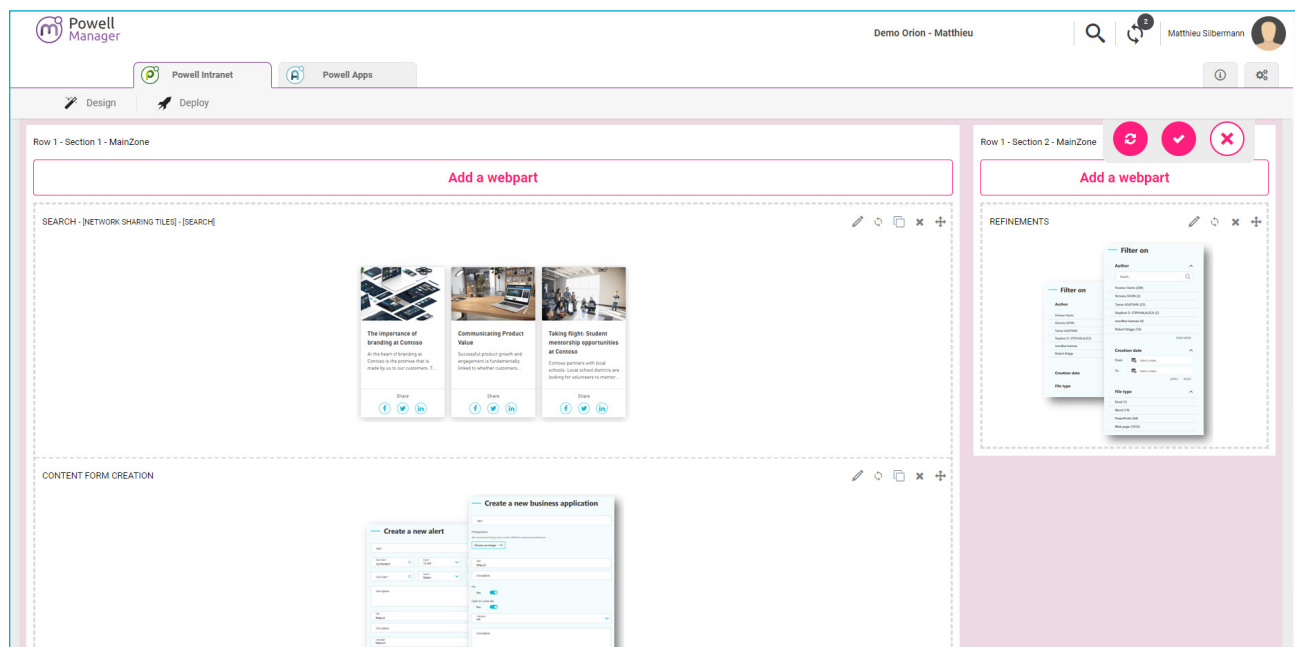
Web parts are added to the various areas on the page and are then individually configured.
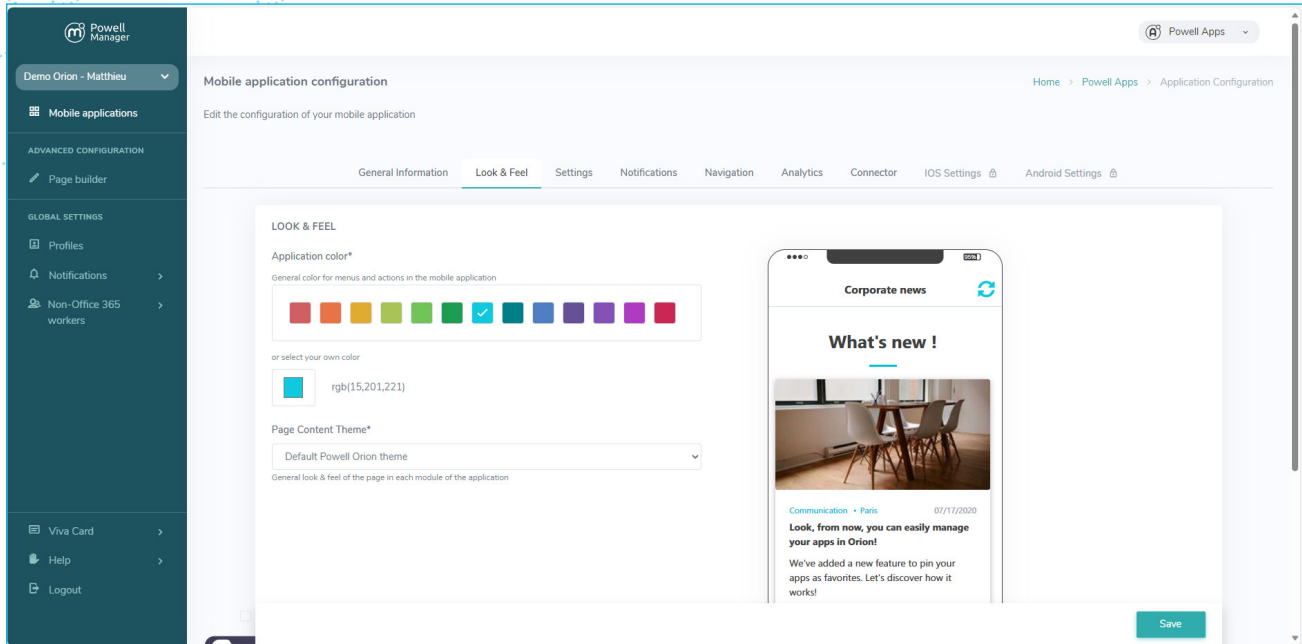
Powell Manager is used for complex tasks such as configuring the native mobile app.
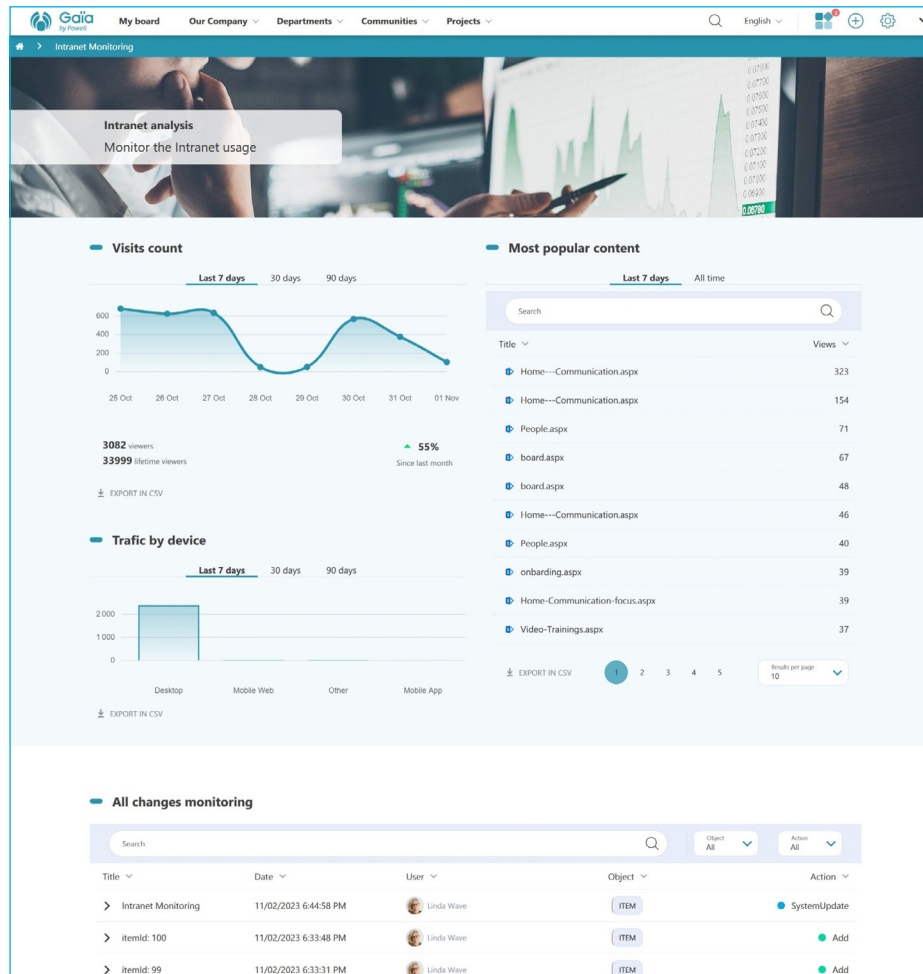
Powell Intranet includes an aggregated report across all site collections within the intranet.

Powell Intranet provides a broad range of reports and valuable insights, but the presentation can feel somewhat disjointed as there is no consistent look and feel across reports. Basic analytics is available on every page in Powell Intranet, very similar to what SharePoint provides out of the box. This includes a visit count for the last 7, 30 and 90 days, the most popular content, and traffic by device. There is also an aggregated view available across all site collections within the intranet.

There is an insightful report on engagement, showing participation and amplification across internal and external channels such as Teams, Viva Engage, Facebook and LinkedIn. Reports can be anonymised to department level for areas where privacy is a concern. We particularly like how the report delivers actionable insights. For example, subject matter experts can be identified based on social sharing of content on particular topics. There is also a separate report available dedicated to mobile app usage.

To go one step further, these intranet analytics can be merged with data from Google Analytics or from Matomo through a Power BI 'content pack', which can be downloaded from Powell's learning centre and configured with the help of an implementation partner. This provides more useful data including page views and average time per page, as well as usage by country, office, and department. There is an additional 'campaigns' tab on the Power BI dashboard, where internal communication managers can track the success of their news articles across the organisation. We like the reports provided but these are only useful where PowerBI is in place. If not, organisations will have to work with standard Google Analytics or Matomo reports, or find help to customise them.

A 'mandatory read' feature is available by marking any content type as 'Must Read'. Mandatory content can be targeted to specific groups, and a due date can be set, which will trigger an automatic reminder notification. Reporting is available to admins and for export to enable further data manipulation.

Analytics on search are partially integrated; an overview of most popular search terms is available in the PowerBI dashboard, but other insights are only available in the standard Microsoft search admin reports.
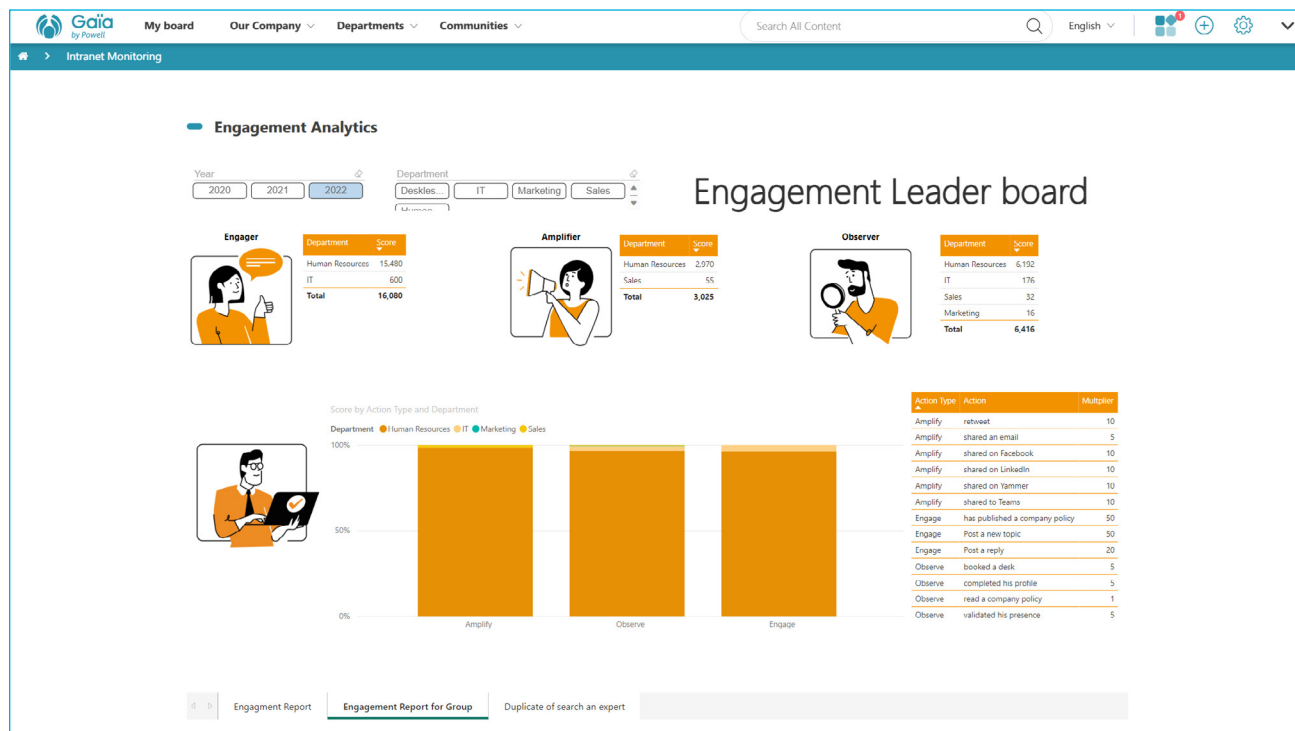
The data on engagement across the intranet is helpful.
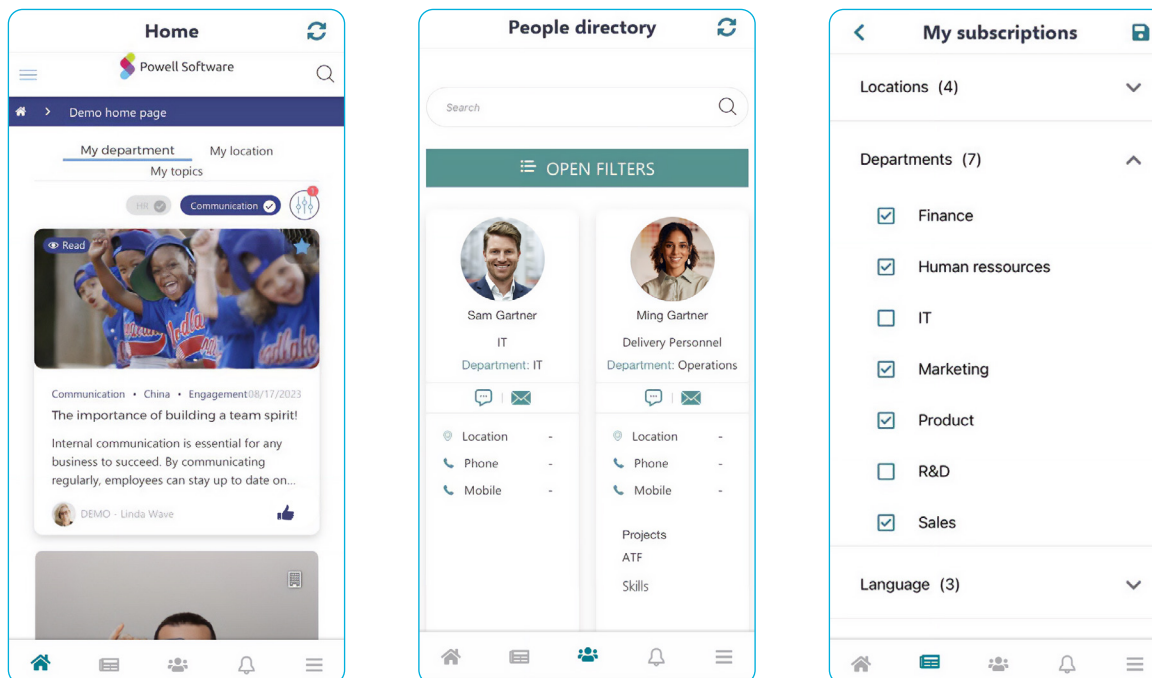
*The Powell native mobile app is targeted at the needs of mobile workers,
giving them access to relevant news, a people directory, and personalisation options.*

Powell Intranet provides good support for mobile and frontline users, although the functionality is less rich than in other products in this report. Powell Intranet offers a fully responsive site and includes a dedicated mobile app for iOS and Android. The standard app requires a suitable Microsoft 365 license, but there is also a version of the app for frontline workers without license, but still uses Entra ID for identity management.

The app can be downloaded from the public app stores and will recognise automatically at sign-on if a Microsoft licence is present or not, and configure accordingly. A QR code can be generated and distributed to frontline workers to make downloading the app even easier. Customers need a premium licence to customise their app's name and logo, and deploy it to managed devices through their MDM solution.

The content and functionality offered within the app is highly configurable. By default, icons are available at the bottom of the screen, leading to typical areas such as people directory, notifications, and search. These icons are configurable and can be replaced by other functionality, such as direct access to applications, if desired. Content pages within the app can be designed independently from the desktop site, so they are better suited to mobile users. For organisations that prefer not to use the app, the responsive site can be fine-tuned to some extent. Many Powell Intranet web parts can be configured to behave differently across mobile and desktop, for instance displaying fewer news items.

Specific services for frontline workers include a leave request and a site inspection tool that have been implemented as Power Apps, but are only available to licensed users. The app also integrates notifications generated by third-party applications such as ServiceNow.

App administration is handled within the back-office tool Powell Manager (see Scenario 6). Understanding and using Powell Manager is complex, and some app settings are not inherited from the desktop version so need to be configured separately. This means setting up the app for initial launch or making subsequent change is not straightforward. Powell says that mobile app setup is typically handled by an implementation partner as part of the client engagement process.

THINGS TO BEAR IN MIND

Powell Intranet is a well-rounded product that will help Microsoft 365 customers expand SharePoint's functionality through a rich set of tools, templates, and additional features. In the back-end, Powell Manager is where the setup, deployment and management of the intranet is handled. It offers extensive opportunities for governing complex intranet sites, but has a level of complexity that will be daunting for less technically-minded administrators. This is also reflected in the Voice of the Customer section: users appreciate the rich functionality of Powell Manager but have concerns about its complexity and the somewhat dated user interface. Powell say that they are addressing the issue by making more and more configuration options available in the front-end. This is certainly welcome, but even then there will still be a need for a well-trained internal resource to master Powell Manager, or a partner to support smaller organisations.

In the area of integration with third-party applications, the focus of Powell Intranet is clearly on the Microsoft ecosystem and less on non-Microsoft applications. For instance, there is no integration or federated search with Google Drive or Dropbox. A lot can be achieved by using Power Automate connectors, but these may come with an additional cost and effort to implement. We were also surprised to learn that Microsoft Graph connectors for federated search are currently not supported, which will be an issue for organisations that are planning to use this standard Microsoft functionality. Powell says that support for Graph connectors is in beta testing and due for imminent release.

Powell's analytics are strong, with some very capable and actionable dashboards, and we like the fact that not only Google Analytics but also Matomo is supported as a data source. However, the resulting set of reports rely on a mixture of technologies, including PowerBI and standard M365 search analytics, and are not well integrated. More could be done to streamline the presentation of the dashboards in a single location.

Also worth noting is that Powell relies on its extensive partner network to handle most implementations. Choosing the correct partner to work with will be a key factor for success, as important as choosing the right product.

Why choose this product

Powell Intranet is a product that will appeal to a diverse range of organisations. Small organisations will like the simple and attractive user interface and the many ready-to-go templates to build a new intranet quickly. Pricing is also attractive, especially for medium-size organisations. Large and complex organisations will be impressed by the richness of the functionality and by the power of Powell Manager. Powell Intranet will also be particularly relevant for companies wanting to link their intranet's capabilities with broader collaboration in MS Teams and Viva Engage. Such companies may also consider Powell's other main product, Powell Teams, as a complement to Powell Intranet.

Vendor roadmap

Roadmap images provided by Powell.

SharePoint and Viva

FULLY STANDALONE

REQUIRES SHAREPOINT

OPTIONALLY WORKS WITH SHAREPOINT

FRONTLINE FOCUS
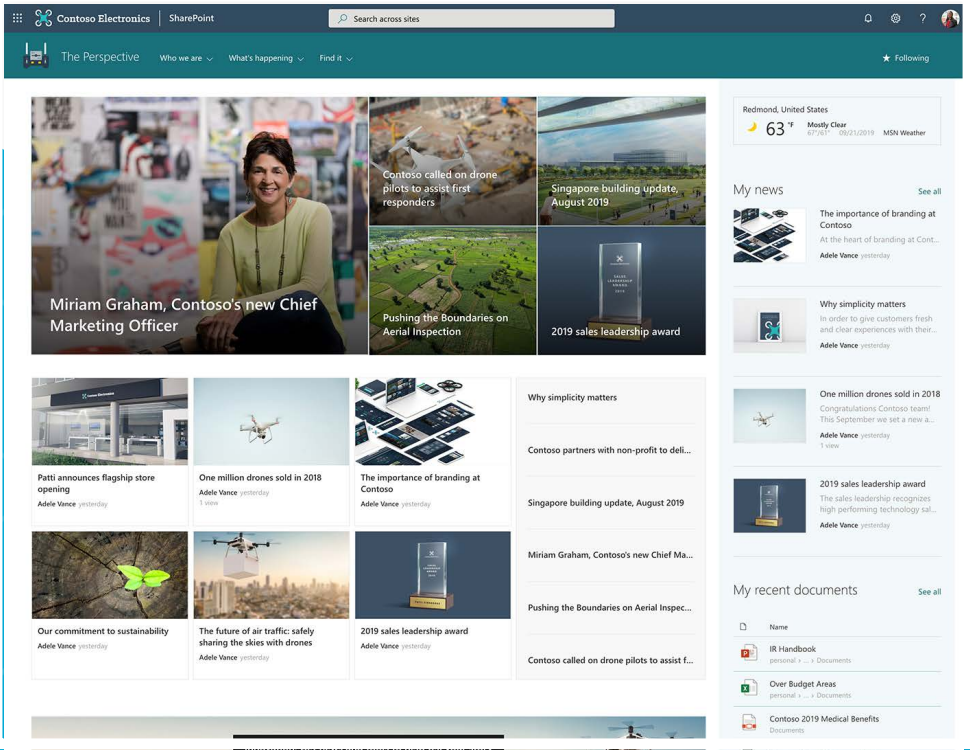
Typical deployment:

Not disclosed

Company locations:

The product in a nutshell

SharePoint out of the box lets you create simple and attractive intranets quickly and easily, while Viva Connections and Viva Engage add extra dimensions to Teams.

VISIT THE WEBSITE

SUMMARY

SharePoint and Viva in Microsoft 365

SharePoint in Microsoft 365 is positioned as 'the intelligent intranet'. It offers a modern, highly flexible approach to employee communications, as well as powering many elements of Microsoft 365 behind the scenes. In 2021, Microsoft also released **Viva Connections** as a way to surface SharePoint intranets within Teams, and in 2023 they re-branded Yammer as '**Viva Engage**' and embedded it more deeply into Teams for social interactions. The latest addition is '**Viva Amplify**' to manage cross-channel communication campaigns. As many customers will already have these elements in their Microsoft 365 licenses, we have evaluated the Microsoft Viva Employee Communications and Communities package, which includes SharePoint,

Viva Engage, Amplify and Connections for a small increment over the standard enterprise licenses. Where relevant we've also considered the role of **Teams**.

It's worth noting that the recently released Copilot adds a powerful AI capability to assist information workers. For example, it can synthesise answers from internal content as part of a natural language dialogue ("do I get paid when I'm off sick?"); it can summarise texts and answer queries about video transcripts ("What actions were assigned to Jordan in yesterday's Team meeting?"); summarise documents; draft text; and even insert new tables and analyses into Office documents. The potential is exciting, but given the scope and high price point, we have not included it in the scores for this year's report.

SharePoint Online

Viva Connections

Viva Engage

Viva Amplify

Teams

Out of the box, standard SharePoint Online is attractive and the basics are relatively easy to use for small-company set-ups, making it simple to get going. To create a basic intranet, communication and hub sites offer a friendly editing environment that makes it straightforward for site owners to change layouts. Viva Connections extends this ability with a dashboard for tools, a targeted news feed and the ability to integrate a SharePoint intranet into Teams. It meets a perceived need to 'take the intranet to where the users are', though we feel the implementation is currently a little clunky, especially the navigation aspect. The mobile experience in the SharePoint or Teams app is not an intranet as many would expect but does reflect the collaboration and task-centred aspects of Microsoft 365 well.

Despite all the feature advances, SharePoint and Viva Connections remain a complex platform to build and run an intranet on once it reaches any kind of size. The newer functionality is slick and well designed, but under the hood, power users will often bump into older components that are confusing and disjointed.

Internal Comms pros may find SharePoint takes a little getting used to as its default model is to aggregate news from many diverse sources. However, there is an 'organization news site' feature that can be used as a hub to push a central 'authoritative' voice out to many end points. The new Viva Amplify module also makes it easier for comms creators. The ability to create a professionally curated news experience can sometimes require careful planning, as the presentation of news is partly determined by an algorithm which tailors what is shown to the individual. In contrast, smaller companies with limited resources may welcome this level of automation, as SharePoint does a good job of keeping the home page fresh by pulling in new content from across the intranet estate.

Smaller companies can do much with the built-in features but may find they have to buy in expertise to fully exploit them or where more than a small set of sites are required. Medium to large organisations are likely to hit limitations around customisation and governance. However, these are not necessarily show-stoppers, and many companies decide they are happy to accept these constraints in return for something that integrates well with other parts of Microsoft 365 and is covered by their licenses.

Pricing

PRICE BAND

250 users	$ $ $ $
1,000 users	$ $ $ $
5,000 users	$ $ $ $
20,000 users	$ $ $ $

These prices are indicative, offering a comparison of the products featured in this report only. Please contact the vendor for a bespoke quote.

PRICING MODEL

Subscription - price based on number of users.

COSTS TYPICALLY

Fairly evenly spread across three years, depending on whether significant development is chosen.

DISCOUNTS

Microsoft offers special discounts and sometimes free seats to non-profit organisations.

PRICE INCLUDES

Based on E1 Office 365 license (which also covers Teams, Exchange and more) and the Microsoft Viva Employee Communications and Communities package, which adds an extra $2 per user per month. F1, a limited license for frontline workers is much cheaper. Please see Microsoft's website for full pricing details. This review assumes other optional as Microsoft Topics are at extra cost (indicated by scores in brackets). We have not included SharePoint Premium which adds high-end AI tools for content governance and content processing via 'Syntex'.

Product type

Majority ready-to-run

Branding opportunities

Good branding, single choice

Base systems

Fully standalone	Requires SharePoint	Optionally works with SharePoint	Other

Sectors

Public services, government and administration	Retail	Engineering and manufacturing	Healthcare	Accountancy, banking and finance

The Perspective

Who we are ⌄   What's happening ⌄   Find it ⌄

★ Following

Contoso called on drone pilots to assist first responders

Singapore building update, August 2019

Pushing the Boundaries on Aerial Inspection

2019 sales leadership award

Miriam Graham, Contoso's new Chief Marketing Officer

Patti announces flagship store opening
Adele Vance yesterday

One million drones sold in 2018
Adele Vance yesterday
1 view

The importance of branding at Contoso
Adele Vance yesterday

Our commitment to sustainability
Adele Vance yesterday

The future of air traffic: safely sharing the skies with drones
Adele Vance yesterday

2019 sales leadership award
Adele Vance yesterday

Why simplicity matters

Contoso partners with non-profit to deli...

Singapore building update, August 2019

Miriam Graham, Contoso's new Chief Ma...

Pushing the Boundaries on Aerial Inspec...

Contoso called on drone pilots to assist f...

Innovation: Get news and tools to help tell your story

LEARN MORE

BREATHTAKING VIDEOS & PHOTOS

Contoso MARK8 is the first drone to offer an 8K HDR camera that tilts vertically at and angle of 180°, combined with an up to 2.8X lossless zoom and dolly zoom effect.

–

2.8X FULL HD ZOOM
Reveal your inner filmmaker

LEARN MORE
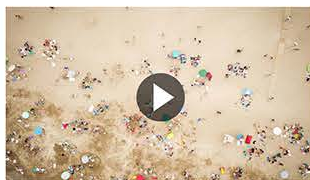
FLYING IS A BREEZE

The easy-to-operate MARK8 is designed for high-quality aerial photography and cinematography. Fly, capture and share photos and videos directly from the mobile app.

–

8K HDR VIDEOS AND 21MP PHOTOS
Perfection is in the details

LEARN MORE

SMART & POWERFUL

Equipped with a smart battery that lasts up to 45 minutes and resists extreme temperatures the high-performance and super quiet drone you can take anywhere.

–

SLOW MOTION & HYPERLAPSE
Speed it up or slow it down, take control of time

LEARN MORE

FLYSAFE

FLYSAFE CONFERENCE

See the world through a new perspective

For the seasoned drone enthusiasts, new hobbyists, to professionals whose industries are rapidly adopting to this cutting-edge technology. Over 20,000 enthusiasts and 400 exhibitors are expected to attend, with 10 professional edu...

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Redmond, United States

63 °F   Mostly Clear
67°/61°   09/21/2019   MSN Weather

My news   See all

The importance of branding at Contoso
At the heart of branding at Cont...
Adele Vance yesterday

Why simplicity matters
In order to give customers fresh and clear experiences with their...
Adele Vance yesterday

One million drones sold in 2018
Congratulations Contoso team! This September we set a new a...
Adele Vance yesterday
1 view

2019 sales leadership award
The sales leadership recognizes high performing technology sal...
Adele Vance yesterday

My recent documents   See all

Name

IR Handbook
personal › ... › Documents

Over Budget Areas
personal › ... › Documents

Contoso 2019 Medical Benefits
Documents

Contoso Quad Customer Script
Documents

BI Improvement
personal › ... › Documents

Audit of Small Business Sales August
personal › ... › Documents

My recent sites   See all

Mark8 Project Team

Retail Operations

The Perspective

Product support

Communications

Consumer Retail

Company events   See all

+ Add event

NOV 28 / NOV 29   Thanksgiving
Thu, Nov 28, All day

JAN 2   In the design lab with Carlos Slattery
Thu, Jan 2, 10:00 AM

JAN 3   Company all-hands
Fri, Jan 3, 10:00 AM

JAN 31   Utilizing recycled materials in drone components
Fri, Jan 31, 1:00 PM

FEB 3   Inclusion training
Mon, Feb 3, 10:00 AM

COMPANY AND PRODUCT

Company details

Company
Microsoft Corporation

ISO 27001 certified
Yes

Data residency
Many country data centres available but defaults are EMEA, APAC and Americas.

Company founded
1975

Product launched
2001

Typical client size
Not disclosed

Largest deployment so far
Not disclosed, but probably Accenture (480,000 employees). Several companies over 200,000 employees.

Customers
190 million users across 200,000+ organisations. Over 85% of Fortune 500 companies use SharePoint, including Bank of America, Wells Fargo, JP Morgan, Unilever, and ExxonMobil..

Partner locations
Global

Company locations
Global; headquartered in Redmond, USA

Product and technical details

Name of product
SharePoint Online & Viva Connections

Deployment

Client on-premises*	Client private cloud	Microsoft Azure	Amazon Web Services	Vendor-hosted	Microsoft 365 tenant	Other**

*On-premises version differs substantially from that reviewed here
**Government-specific cloud options

Client data encrypted

In transit only	In transit and at rest	At rest only

Authentication supported

Entra ID	ADFS	Okta	Open ID	Oauth	G Suite	Other

App deployment

Google Play store	Apple store	MDM	MAM	Other

Accessibility
Microsoft doesn't make absolute claims, but do publish detailed conformance reports and meet most criteria.

Document library sources integrated

Box	Dropbox	Google Drive	SharePoint	OneDrive	Other

Optional integrated enterprise search engines

Coveo	Elastic	IBM	Lucidworks	Microsoft	Mindbreeze	Sinequa	Other

User interface multi-language

Pre-configured	Editable	Right to left script supported	Other

Content multi-language

Machine translation for publishers	Machine translation for end users	Editable machine translation for publishers	Manual creation for publishers	Right to left script	Other

Set-up and support

Set-up process for new clients

For small customers, online help is available in the SharePoint help centre, but everything is self-service. Medium to large customers tend to use Microsoft Certified Partners.

Current version

N/A for Online (SharePoint Server Subscription Edition for on-premises)

Product updates

Several per month

Product update process

Most are rolled out to Microsoft 365 tenants automatically. Microsoft gives advance warning and indicates impact level. Customers can choose to defer some high-impact changes, they can also elect to get changes early if they opt-in to the 'Targeted release' scheme.

Reverse-out options

Phased withdrawal of access. Manual migration to new host required.

Technical support

Email support	Phone support	Chat support	Online portal	24/7 support	Office hours only

User community

Very strong, with SharePoint User Groups in hundreds of cities around the world. There are also many online forums for technical and business users. Microsoft host the annual Ignite conference, where SharePoint features prominently, and host the online TechCommunity. They also provide extensive input to the annual SharePoint Conference in Las Vegas and the European SharePoint Conference (location varies).

Voice of the vendor

Microsoft bills SharePoint as: "Your mobile, intelligent intranet. Share and manage content, knowledge, and applications to empower teamwork, quickly find information, and seamlessly collaborate across the organization."

Voice of the customer

People using SharePoint for their corporate intranet consistently praised the ease with which content can be added and the range of functionality. Several observed how much SharePoint has improved in recent years on this point. As one customer put it, "SharePoint OOTB is actually a very decent intranet. Navigation, the hub / home site set up, the site templates and lookbook, modern page designs and layouts and good selection of web parts all make for a far easier way of building a useful intranet." Another enthused: "The news feed capabilities are terrific. Being able to setup audience targeting is a game changer." A third expressed: "It has enabled us to build a good intranet without much development effort and our editors are able to maintain their content quite easily."

As may be expected, the integration with the rest of the M365 suite was often cited as a highlight: "Its interoperability and integration with the other products, namely Teams and Outlook." Another said: "Great at document management and integrated with other powerful tools in the O365 suite."

Notably, several customers spoke about "no additional cost", implying they saw a SharePoint-based intranet as cost-neutral compared to other options. Another positive theme was the ecosystem that surrounds SharePoint. "Full integration, easy to use, independence of third-party suppliers, continuous improvement" was one succinct comment.

Regarding things to improve, a common thread was about managing large intranets, including from a communicators point of view. One commentator put it well: "Although a lot of good features are provided, often Microsoft don't think from the perspective of running an intranet built from many sites. For example getting a view of content across sites from a content management perspective is sadly lacking, central control of permissions is difficult due to sharing breaking inheritance, moving pages between sites can't be done without a third-party tool etc."

A recurring improvement request was also about targeting and personalising content. One asked for: "An easier way to achieve target groups to be able to publish / provide relevant information to the right target groups." Another was more optimistic: "Viva has a long way to come in terms of the personalisation aspects, but we can see some great things on the roadmap."

The limitations of SharePoint's social features were raised a few times. One person wished for "a seamless integration for commenting and reacting on news pages, which means not using the built in SharePoint commenting function but having functionality like Viva Engage on the actual news page". Another said: "I would like to see more social elements being part of SharePoint itself."

Analytics, ease of integrations for non-technical users and "general clunkiness" were also mentioned as downsides. Comments included: "built-in analytics along with Google Analytics is OK but not super intuitive for internal comms team." And: "I don't like having to pay extra and have to install an add-on product like TyGraph pages just to get decent analytics."

Feelings about a customer's relationship with Microsoft range widely, with some having a stronger direct relationship than others. One customer said, "despite working directly with Microsoft the experience so far was incredibly good" and another: "Excellent; no issues to report." Whereas others were more muted: "Average to below average. Microsoft does not work hard at supporting clients unless they are Fortune 500." Another customer added: "Mixed. Sometimes it is terrific. Sometimes it takes a long, long time to get an answer or have something corrected. We setup what Microsoft called a 'Fasttrack project', which is specialized support, as we worked to set Viva Connections up. It wasn't great, there were too many Microsoft people on the call, all who seemed to want to show us some other feature, and it was hard to move things forward."

In contrast to most other products in this report, the majority of customers said they worked with an implementation partner rather than Microsoft directly, and most spoke positively of this experience.

SCENARIOS & SCORES

Please see the Scenarios below for more detail on each of these.

SCENARIO AND SCORE	KEY BENEFITS	IMPROVEMENTS / CONSIDERATIONS
3 — **1. User Experience & Visual Appeal**	Capable of attractive page designs. Layouts work well across a range of screen sizes.	Cross-site navigation is confusing, especially in Viva Connections. Branding opportunities rather constrained but will improve.
3+ — **2. Publishing & Communications Management**	Creating pages and news posts is straightforward. Viva Amplify adds a campaigns and cross-channel element. Strong video support.	Audience targeting is less flexible than others. Amplify not well integrated with rest of the news publishing experience.
3+ — **3. Community & Engagement**	Viva Engage very capable communities platform. Reactions, polls and comments well supported.	Engage, SharePoint and Teams all have different 'social' features. Employee wellbeing modules extra cost.
3+ — **4. Integrations & Services (Including M365)**	Close integration with M365, particularly Teams. Many connectors to non-Microsoft applications.	Viva Connections dashboard has few integrations. Alerts from other tools not well integrated.
3.5+ — **5. Information Finding & Search**	Powerful capabilities from Microsoft Search. Useful search curation tools. Federation with other sources.	Viva premium licenses needed to bring the people search experience up to par with rivals.
2.5+ — **6. Administrator Experience**	Simple page administration is consistent and easy to learn. Versatile page-level templates.	Governance across a multi-site intranet gets complex; numerous admin panels across M365.
2+ — **7. Analytics**	Comprehensive platform adopting reporting from M365 / Azure.	Internal Communicators will find audience engagement reporting disappointing. No 'mandatory reads'.
2.5+ — **8. Mobile & Frontline Support**	Teams offers several frontline-specific tools.	The mobile apps are not news-centric and don't feel like an 'intranet in your pocket'. Few ways to enrol non-desk employees.
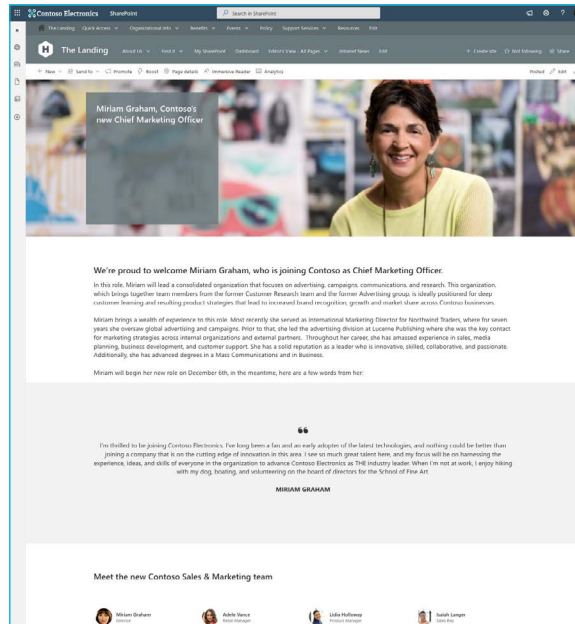
Page layouts are versatile, enabling modern, appealing designs.

From a user point of view, modern SharePoint is capable of some very attractive page designs that use images, space and highlights effectively. Layouts generally work well across a range of screen widths, and controls are consistent across the various elements of SharePoint. On first use, a neat feature is that a short series of pop-ups appear to give guidance.

When the intranet is embedded into the Teams desktop application via Viva Connections (see Scenario 4), the SharePoint element works in just the same way, but things become less predictable; controls appear in multiple places, some menu bars disappear, and some actions lead to a browser window opening rather than staying within the Teams app.

Navigation in Viva Connections is a particular pain-point for this embedded experience; whereas most SharePoint menus run horizontally, the Viva global menu is a fly-out from the left-hand toolbar. Unlike most mega menus, this cannot be browsed by a mouse-over and requires a series of clicks, similar to opening folders. It's a method that makes sense on a touch screen but is cumbersome on a desktop.

Navigation in SharePoint generally can be a challenge. Menus can be built for an individual site and also for a hub site. A hub site will aggregate sites associated with it and add a second menu bar layered over the first. Such stacked menus are rare on the web and could cause confusion. It can be disorientating to click on a news story and be taken into a hub site with totally different branding and menus too. User-based targeting for menus is possible but gets complex behind the scenes at scale (see Scenario 6).

There's limited ability to generate notifications in SharePoint. They do exist on the toolbar, but SharePoint and Viva still rely heavily on email notifications and setting them up will be too fiddly for your average user. Notifications can also appear on the 'dashboard' section and in MS Teams – we would rather see a more coherent approach that makes more comprehensive use of Teams, and Microsoft say this is on the roadmap with 'Announcements' in Viva Connections.

SharePoint makes it easy to apply simple branding – a logo, on-brand theme colours and a banner image for a site. Changes beyond this get complicated, but many customers choose to simply accept these limitations (and a much more flexible approach is on Microsoft's roadmap). Consistency across a whole intranet cannot be readily imposed top-down without third-party governance tools.
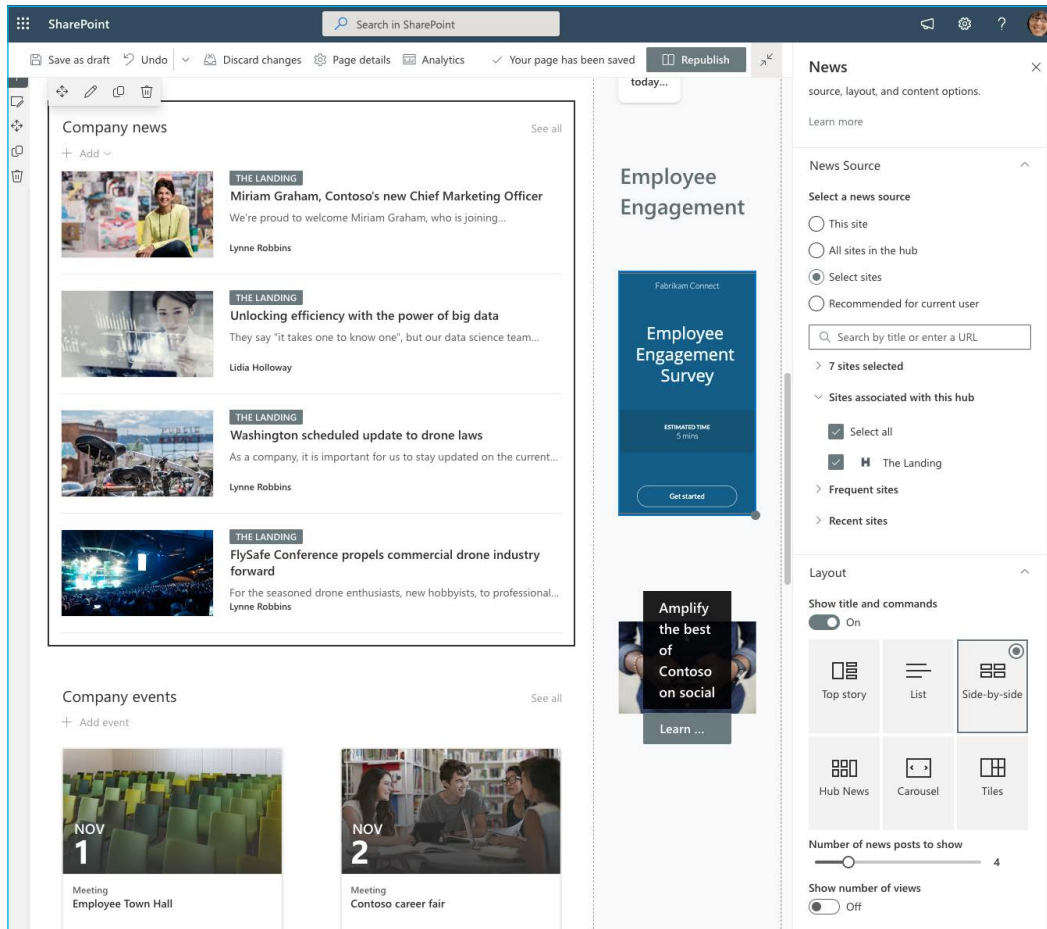
News web parts can aggregate news from other sites, such as all those associated with a hub site.

It is easy with SharePoint to create a news story page, and straightforward to add images, videos and even charts. Every news item is a fully featured SharePoint page, making it simple to add rich functionality via web parts. The image picker is particularly handy, supporting libraries or corporate image assets as well as a licensed stock image search. We like the recent addition of image editing for simple enhancements within the content editor tool.

News can be rolled up from other sites and targeted to show only stories tagged with metadata topics. This is straightforward, but less powerful than matching those tags to an employee's profile. News can also be filtered so that it only appears for a particular audience, but these must be defined in Entra (Active Directory), meaning that some internal communicators may be more dependent on IT admins than they would wish. Similarly, users cannot easily opt-in to news topics, but they can join groups for specific audiences such as New York and Dallas offices to get news for both in their feed.

Many larger organisations want a model where news is pushed from a central source to multiple locations. This is possible using an 'organization news site', or more flexibly using metadata to tag news stories and then picking up on those tags by configuring news web parts on a page. However, other platforms tackle this need more elegantly. In general Microsoft's model encourages news to be widely scattered, so internal comms teams may find it hard to deliver a well-curated news experience.

Currently, news can be scheduled to publish on a pre-set date, but there is no site-wide way to plan or monitor this. A simple approvals process is built in though, and this works well. To promote a story the 'boost news' feature also pushes it to prime position on the hero web part, and it is smart enough to de-promote a story for a user once it has been read. However, the story must live in a designated organization news site for this to be an option. There's no 'alert' feature or ability to push out a notification, although many companies get around this with a suitably styled web part or by sending out emails from SharePoint. Coming soon will be the additional option of a pop-up on the Windows desktop.

For cross-channel publishing, the Viva Amplify module released in October 2023 introduced a campaigns capability. News can be created as a series of 'broadcasts' around a campaign and then pushed out to specific channels such as SharePoint, Outlook and Engage (Teams is on the roadmap). The process for Amplify is clearly designed, but Microsoft see it more as a tool for central IC teams rather than something for routine news creators across an organisation. As such, it feels a little disconnected from the overall news publishing experience at the moment.

News can also be promoted via email. There is an AI-driven weekly digest of stories that may have been missed, and this is individualised to each person – if the user clicked on the story in SharePoint, it won't be repeated in the digest. Another welcome addition in late 2023 is the ability to send full news posts in Outlook. There are six 'email ready' templates with a cut-down range of web parts so publishers can use SharePoint as the design tool, and recipients can see the full-fidelity article without leaving their inbox.

Videos too are very capable – powered by Microsoft's Stream platform – they adapt well to the device and bandwidth in use, and automatic captioning is invaluable. Videos can be played back within a SharePoint page, Teams or Viva Engage, and there is a dedicated player app for iOS and Android. Playlists also support curated collections of related videos.

Microsoft Stream neatly integrates video playback, either on-page, in a mobile app or within the Stream portal.
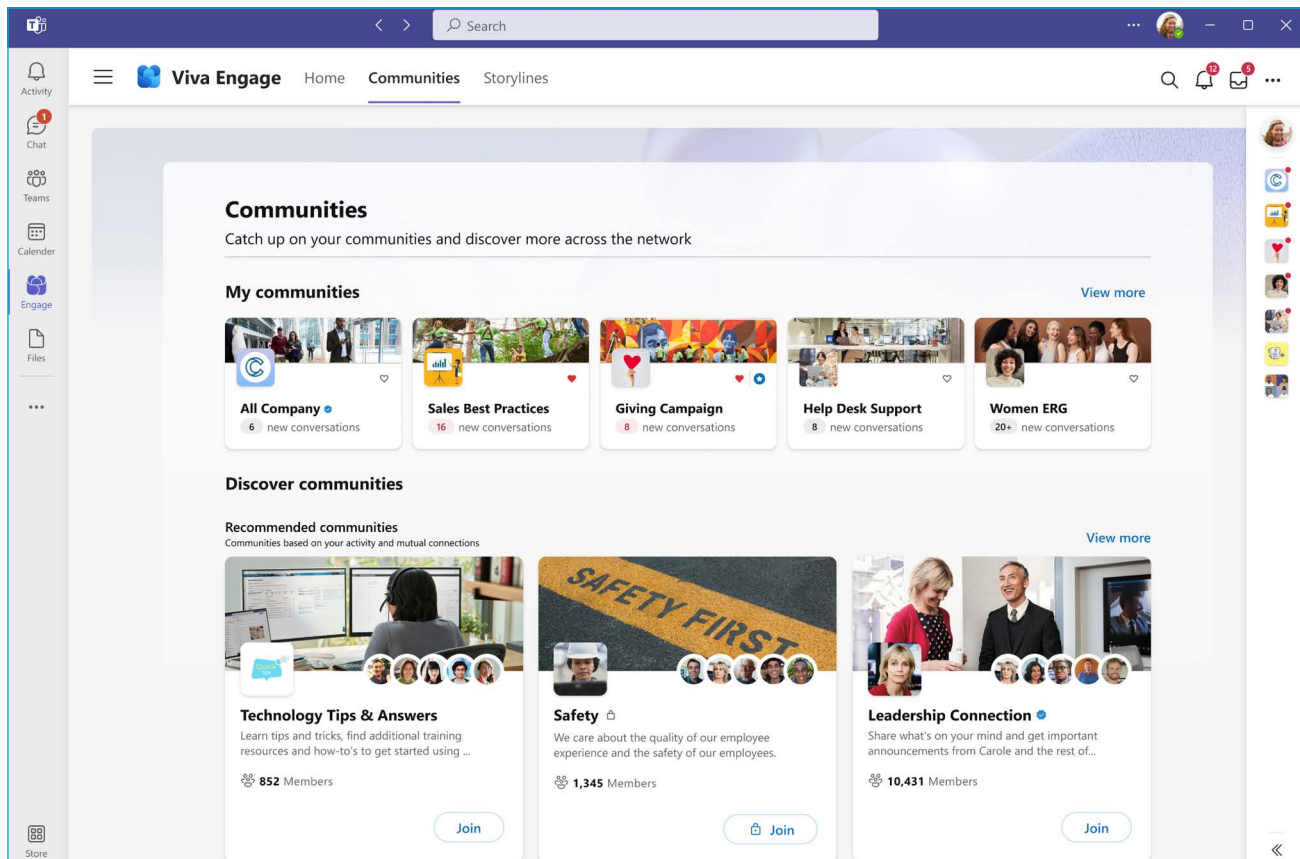
Communities are supported through Viva Engage, and these can scale from small groups to enterprise-wide.

Microsoft's primary tool for community and social engagement is Viva Engage (formerly Yammer). It provides a good option for communities of practice and more recently for individual creators via the 'Storyline' feature. Engage is well set up for online communities, expert forums, employee resource groups (ERGs), hobby and interest forums. It supports modern social features such as giving praise, ad-hoc polls, and a range of possible reactions rather than just 'likes'.

Engage activity can be made more visible with SharePoint web parts that allow flexible embedding of groups, topics or even one person's posts into a page. Viva Engage's integration into Teams also makes it feel less like "one more place to go" than it used to be. However, Engage still has the air of a bolt-on rather than something fully interwoven into an intranet, and many companies struggle to differentiate it from Teams as the place for social collaboration.

The Storyline element of Viva Engage adds a contemporary blog-style capability, similar to writing an article on LinkedIn. Previously, users could only post into a specific community. A Storyline post, however, is shared directly into the feed of people who follow you, as well as anyone you @mention in the post. In addition, there is a Storylines landing page, where users see a personalised feed combining people they follow with trending content from across the organisation. It is also possible for a Storyline to be a branded channel, owned by a team or ERG. Unlike a community, other users can respond and comment on posts, but not publish new ones.

With a Viva Employee Communications and Communities license, admins can also identify select users as 'leaders' (which could be by position or expertise, for example). Leaders are then set up with a target audience, and a useful dashboard of analytics shows how well that audience is engaging with posts. This also adds a 'Leadership Corner' destination, making it easy for employees to follow their thoughts and opinions. Also included in the premium experience is AMA – an 'ask me anything' capability. Also in the pipeline is AI-assistance through Copilot, which will prompt the author to consider audience reaction as the article is drafted.
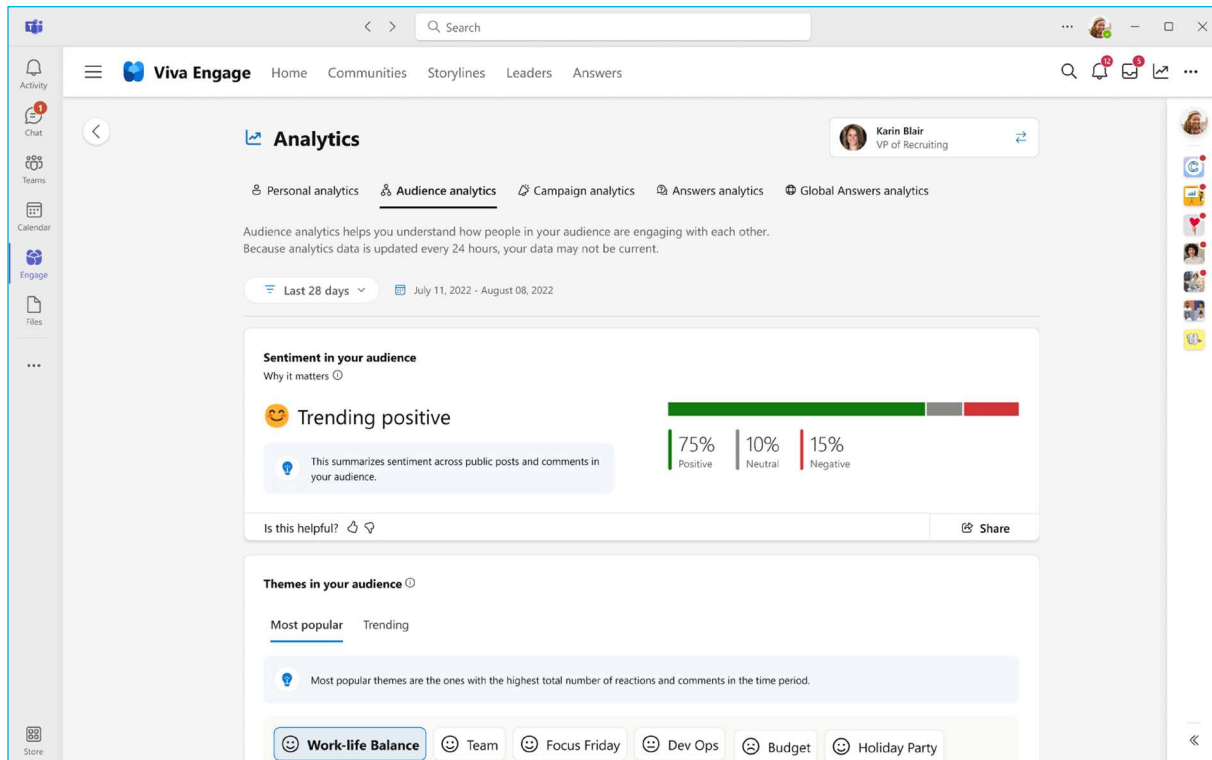
***With a Viva Engage premium license, leader's Storylines will show
rich analytics on feedback and sentiment to recent posts.***

The social side of SharePoint is weaker than some rival platforms. SharePoint features comments and reactions on pages, and this works pleasantly enough but the overall experience is fragmented. For example, comments on news, Stream and Engage all work separately. Governance for SharePoint comments also falls short - there is no ability to report a comment and no central analytics for comments. You can, however, add a 'highlighted news' web part that filters by 'most commented' stories, and we like that the card for a news story headline shows the number of comments clearly.

In addition to polls in Viva Engage, more sophisticated surveys can be created using Microsoft Forms. These embed well within a SharePoint page or Teams channel, and can include a range of response types as well as images and video. A simple results overview is included and it is easy to export them into Excel. The main limitation of this approach is that there's no easy way to see trends over time without manually stitching the results of each survey together.

Microsoft's play for the 'Wellbeing' dimension is Viva Insights. For individuals this comes free with Microsoft 365 and encourages employees to book focus time, stay connected with employees and reflect. It even includes meditation and mindfulness exercises. For an additional fee, there's Workplace Analytics that gives managers an aggregate report on things like email overload, employee wellbeing self-reports and team meeting habits. This seems more valuable than the individual version if used with care and consent.
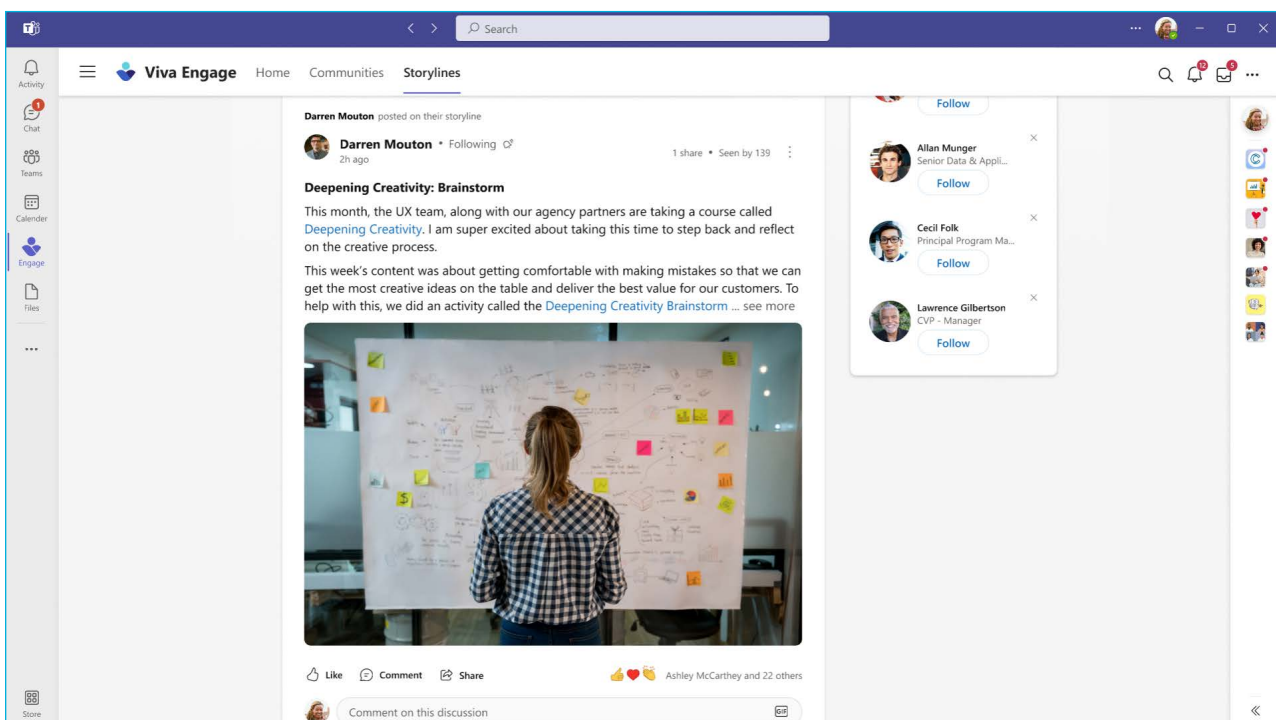
Storyline allows people to create individual posts, sharing their personal perspectives, ideas and experiences.
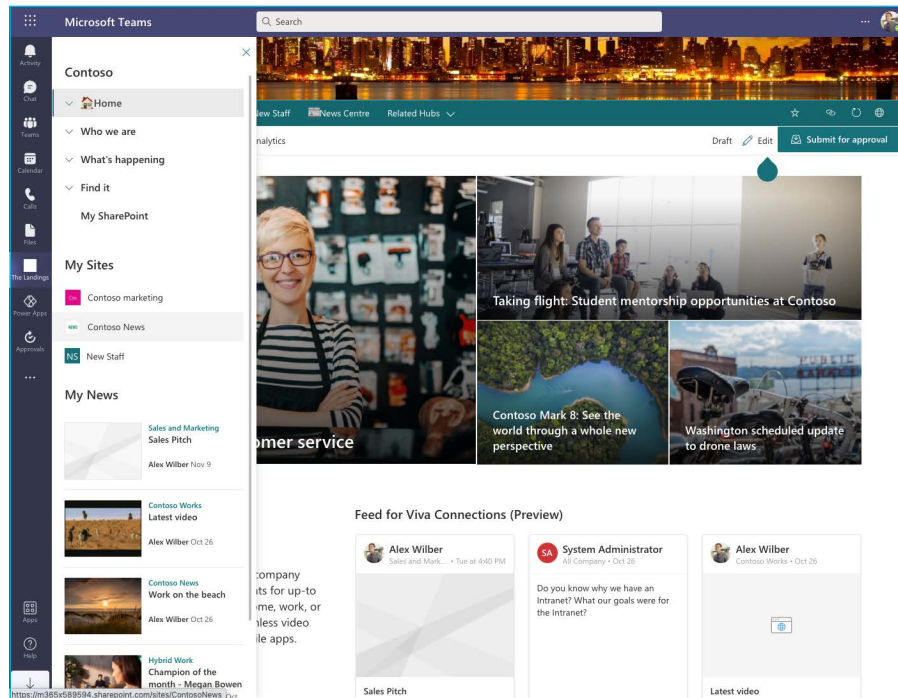
An intranet in Microsoft Teams using Viva Connections. The intranet name ('The Landing' in this example) appears on the Teams toolbar.

For many companies, integration with other parts of Microsoft 365 is a compelling reason to use SharePoint for an intranet, so you'd expect this scenario to be a straight flush. However, the story is not so straightforward.

The continuity between collaborative content and the published intranet is where the Microsoft route excels. It is a very versatile tool at the level of departments and team use of an intranet (rather than the corporate level). For example, it is very easy to combine collaborative elements such as inserting a document library, highlighting documents based on metadata, showing recent and popular documents, or adding a Power BI chart, to a page. However, there are multiple points in the user experience where SharePoint and Teams are not as tightly integrated as may be expected.

We'd like to see more curation of "my collaboration spaces", as found in other intranets that work well with M365. SharePoint will show you a list of traditional 'team sites' but that doesn't help a user who can't remember if "Task force X" was in MS Teams, a SharePoint team site or an Engage community.

The OneDrive application gives a very versatile entry point that combines personal files, ad-hoc sharing and more structured collaboration storage within Teams and SharePoint sites. All of these are useful ways to help make information more findable and highlight connections between types of content.

Viva Connections adds the ability to turn a SharePoint intranet into an app for Teams, as well as extending SharePoint's own functionality with new web parts. If the intranet has its own name and logo then this appears on the app. Part of the interface can be a little clunky though – clicking on the app button in Teams a second time reveals the global navigation as a vertical menu (see Scenario 1). There's also a list of 'My Sites' (based on user favourites) and 'My News' (an automatically curated list of news from the sites the user has access to as well as Engage posts and Stream videos).

Multiple vendors such as Salesforce, ServiceNow, Workday, UKG (Kronos) and Talentsoft have connectors that will work with the Viva Connections dashboard feature, and this offers the most direct integration with SharePoint. Some of these are presented as fairly simple read-outs on a tile, such as an approaching holiday, while others support a full transaction process within a card, effectively meaning that the employee doesn't need to leave the intranet. This is a concept we have been advocating for many years and a very welcome development, though we are yet to be convinced that the dashboard feature is the best way to deliver it.

A second route is to use Power Apps, which can be embedded on a SharePoint page and made to work well on mobile too. This is an enormously versatile facility, giving a high level of functionality without requiring significant coding skill. Power Apps can be delivered on SharePoint pages, in Teams, as Dashboard Cards and on mobile. There are several hundred connectors that support data exchange with other services, such as Box, Google Drive, Oracle, Stripe and Zendesk. However, many are not fully developed (previews), and common enterprise-grade tools such as ADP are missing.

The third possibility is the Teams app store. This is certainly extensive, and for SMEs may usefully plug a gap. However, Teams is a challenging way to navigate across many apps so this route risks exacerbating a common problem that intranets try to solve: "what tools do we have and where are they?"
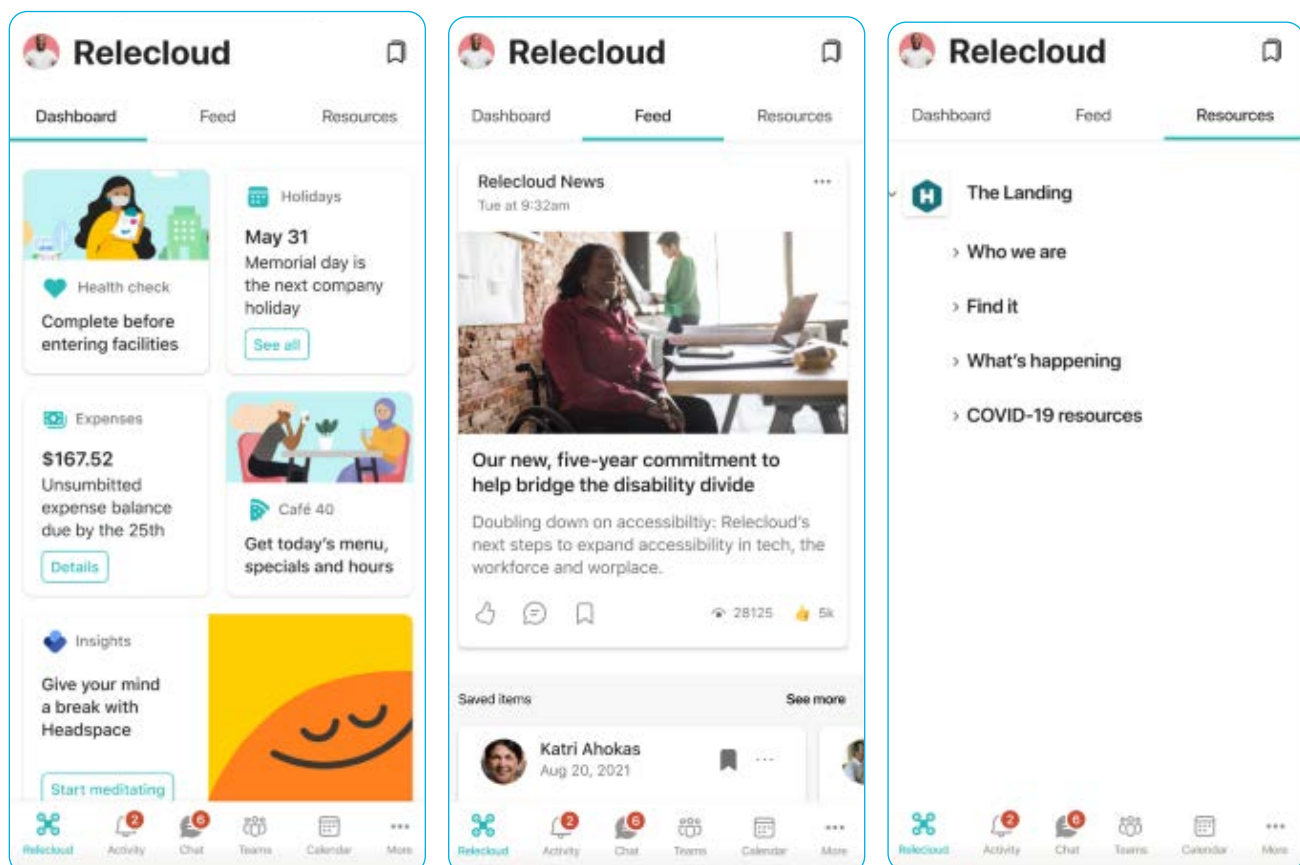
Your intranet appears on the MS Teams app with its own icon and name. The default screen is the dashboard view, with 'Feed' showing news stories (image credit: Microsoft).

Finally, there is the full-development route using APIs and SharePoint Framework (SPFx). This is a mature and flexible option that overcomes many problems of the past, where customisations were often at the mercy of Microsoft's changes, but of course there is little out of the box to start you off. Due to the widespread availability of APIs for most major platforms, companies committing to SharePoint as an intranet will rarely find themselves at a dead-end for integration options, although it may take more work than it first appears, and organisations may need to develop governance around integration to ensure consistency.
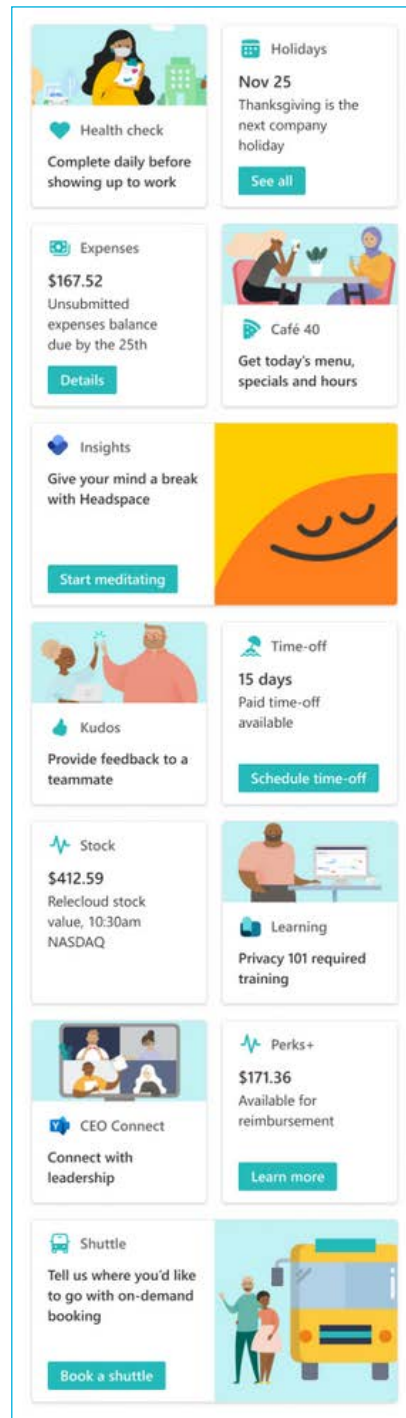
The Dashboard web part in the desktop version of Viva Connections (image credit: Microsoft).
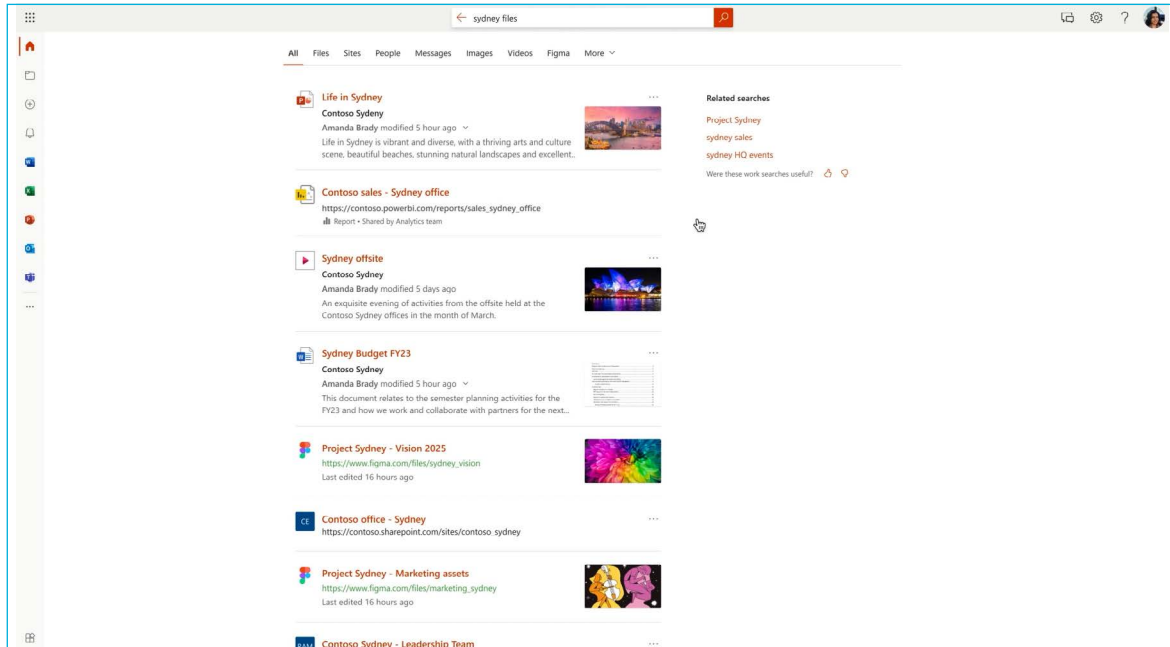
Search results are clearly presented with thumbnails for each file and page.

Microsoft Search powers the search experience across M365. The ability to search across documents in collaboration spaces on Teams, as well as published content in a SharePoint intranet, Stream video and even content in Viva Learning and Power BI, is one of the primary reasons why some companies choose SharePoint over other intranet platforms. The reality nearly delivers on this promise, though there are some disconnects.

In SharePoint, the search interface is pleasant and helpful, it makes suggestions as you type and suggests spelling corrections in the results. Videos, images, and Office files all have a preview thumbnail, which is very useful for PowerPoint, for example. There are multiple ways to filter by search type and date, though we wish these would stand out more.

Management of search has moved out of SharePoint and into a sperate Microsoft Search console, which makes sense given its range, although the downside is that it gives intranet managers less scope to make hands-on improvements. However, there are specific search categories that can be centrally managed under the 'Answers' tab:

- Acronyms – common abbreviations in your organisation
- Bookmarks – detect keywords and put the 'best bet' location as the first result, for example a link to the HR application when people search for "Leave"
- Floor plans – upload AutoCAD DWG plans with room labels; these can then be assigned to people profiles, rooms, and equipment to be part of the search result
- Location – like floor plans, these show building locations on profiles
- Q&A – show a short textual answer directly in the results rather than making the user click on a link.

The Q&A is a particularly handy feature that we don't see used widely yet. It could be applied when you detect search terms that just need a quick, simple answer such as "shuttle bus timetable" or "Wi-Fi guest password". Answers can be specific for groups or locations, and even tailored per device (for example to give a different answer for setting up email if the user is on iOS or Android).

Bookmarks and 'answers' only work when the search scope is global – the scope concept is subtle but has a big impact on results. For example, if you search within a hub then the results are scoped to only sites associated with this hub. This can be a good way to help users avoid being deluged with hits, but we worry that it's not always obvious what search scope is in use. The home page of an intranet is likely to be designated the SharePoint 'home' site however, and this has a global search scope which feels intuitive.

We've always liked the ability to manage metadata and synonyms via the Term Store, and this provides a very capable set of tools to create consistent metadata across an intranet, defining multiple languages and synonyms for each metadata entry. Overall, the administration tools are very powerful indeed when used with sufficient knowledge and resources to manage search proactively.

Microsoft's strongest offering for knowledge management is its Microsoft Topics add-on. This makes Wikipedia-like entries visible as summary cards that are automatically hyperlinked when keywords and acronyms are detected – not just on pages but in Teams discussions, Viva Engage and Outlook emails too. However, the additional cost will be prohibitive for many organisations and we haven't factored it in this review.

Federated search is supported via Microsoft Graph connectors. These usually enable Microsoft Search to index a third-party source and present the results within a SharePoint search or within their own refiner tab. Microsoft options include Salesforce, ServiceNow, Oracle SQL and MediaWiki, but there are numerous other connectors from BA Insight, Accenture and Raytion available at extra cost.

People search is good for individual results (a nice contact card and smart spelling correction). For those with the optional Viva premium licenses, there is a new extended search facility which includes the ability to filter on specific fields and an enhanced org-chart view.

Search admins can assist some search types by defining acronyms, bookmarks, floor plans and Q&A.

6. ADMINISTRATOR EXPERIENCE
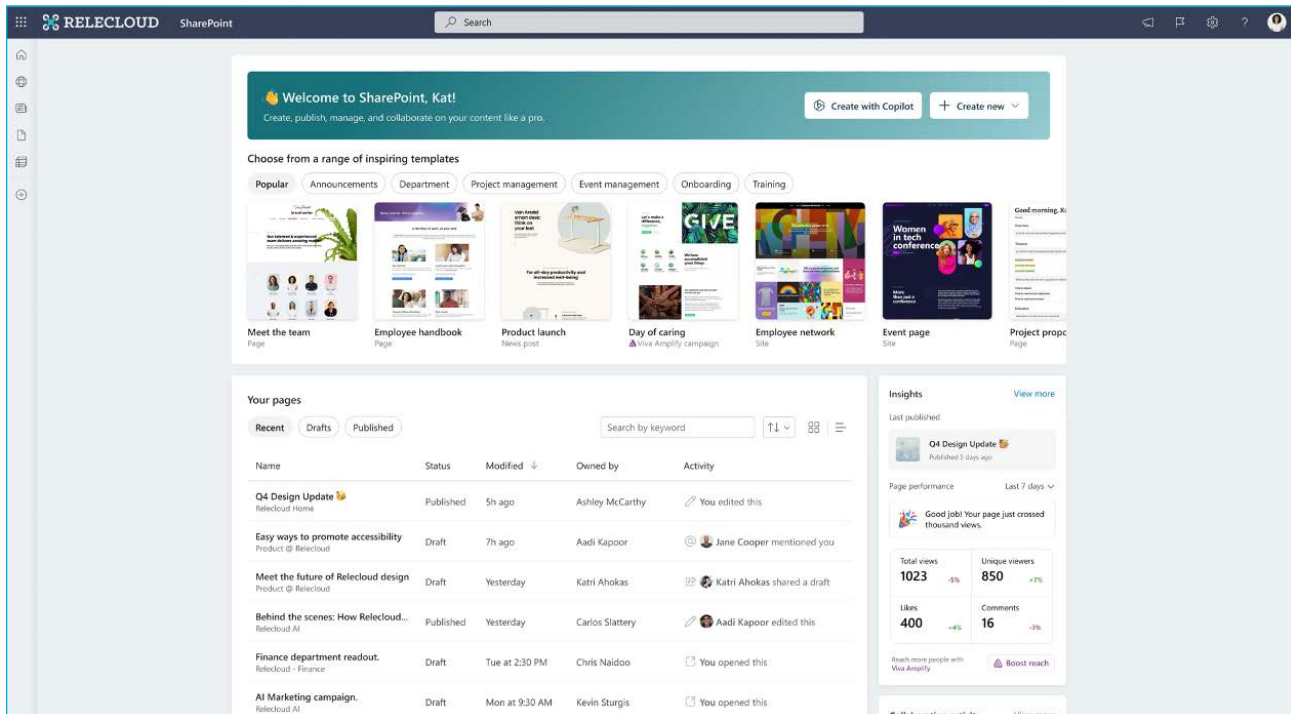
The new SharePoint start experience makes it easier for individual contributors to see their content and create new template-based pages.

Administration for sites, and particularly for a whole intranet, can soon feel very complex. Part of the challenge with SharePoint is that settings can be spread across multiple locations. Some can only be seen in 'classic' admin pages, others only in 'modern'. Many things that affect a SharePoint intranet are not in the SharePoint admin area at all, but in other elements of Microsoft 365.

For administrators of SharePoint pages, the experience is consistent and accessible; pages can be built using a wide range of drag-and-drop widgets, and dialogues for configuring each are clear and consistent. The interface for the text editor is now very rich, giving a good range of layout and formatting options. It is also easier to directly insert an image into text, crop and re-size it and so on. New since the last edition of our report is the SharePoint 'Start' experience. Aimed at small t0 medium enterprises, this gives content creators a single page where they can see all of their past content, as well as working drafts and analytics on published pages.

Templates can be set up to encourage (but not enforce) page consistency and you can even define templates for section layouts such as "one-third left image and text". Templates for a whole site are much harder to create as they require programming skills; most companies rely on third-party tools to make it more manageable. Once templates are defined though, SharePoint offers a nice step-by-step wizard to apply a suitable template to a new site. Microsoft also supply some ready-made templates for scenarios such as help-desk and crisis comms. Any subsequent changes to the template do not get applied to existing sites though.

For governance, reporting will show usage against storage quotas, but it is much harder to find unused sites because they don't generate usage data. One feature we do like though, is a 'site performance' report, which clearly shows where elements on pages may be slowing things down. At additional cost SharePoint Advanced Management ("SAM") offers additional tools such as inactive site detection and content oversharing reports.

By design, SharePoint reflects a low-governance philosophy by Microsoft, where anyone can create a site. This can be blocked, and a request process put in place for new sites, but there is no nuanced middle-ground. This can prove problematic for intranet managers; most organisations want to make it easy to create sites for MS Teams, but this creates a loophole where it is equally easy to create 'shadow intranets' away from the corporate one. It is, however, possible to enforce a site expiry policy by requiring owners of the associated M365 group to confirm it is still needed and compliant via an emailed 'attestation' process.

SharePoint makes it easy to create a multilingual experience, supporting around fifty languages for both the interface and for content. Where sites have language alternatives, users will see a drop-down menu of choices. Microsoft has implemented some good tools for managing this. For example, translators can be set up for each site and are notified when the source language version changes. However, there is no machine-translation option, it's a wholly manual process. As translations happen at the page-level, monitoring untranslated sections in a site will be tricky. On the front end, machine translation exists for posts on Engage, but not for comments on SharePoint pages.

Also worth a mention are Microsoft Lists. This is a highly versatile tool that fills a gap for ad-hoc data collation when it's not worth building a full app, but something is needed with more structure than the usual Office tools or replying to an email. What elevates Lists from a simple 'to do' is that columns can be styled in very versatile ways, for example tags can appear as colour-coded labels, people names include photos and a link to profiles, images appear as useful thumbnails etc.
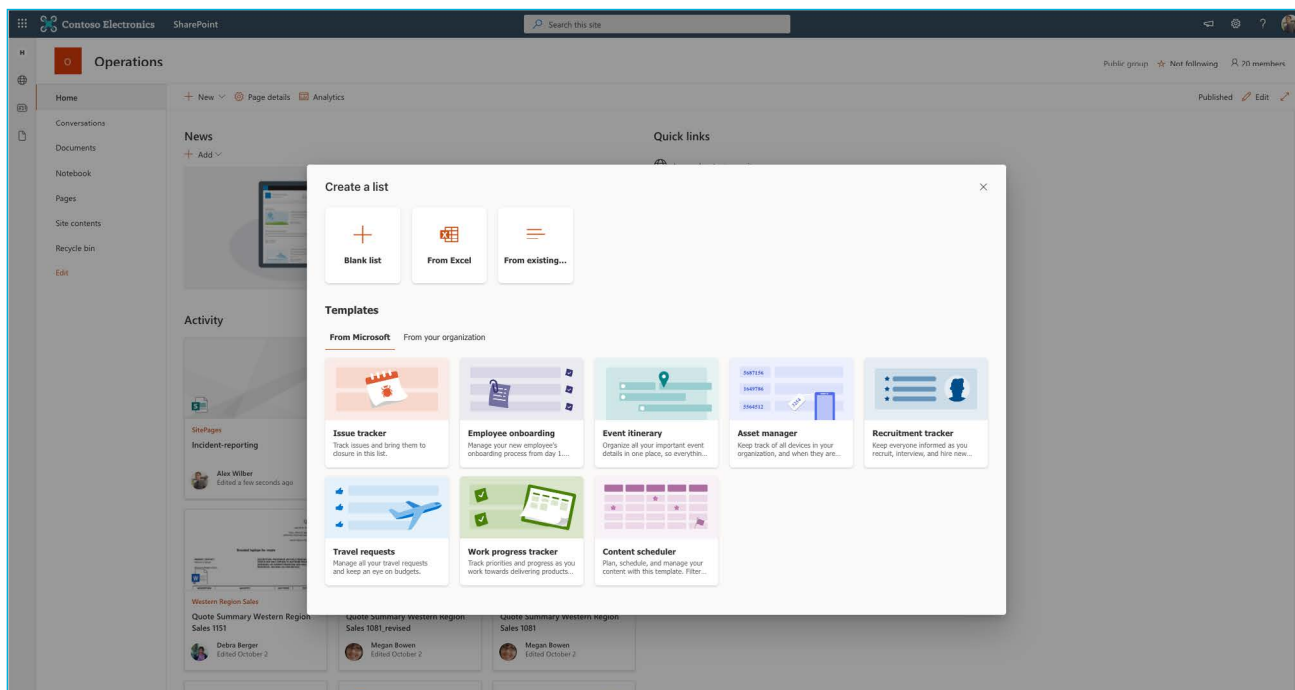
Lists can be readily created in SharePoint or Teams, and a number of templates are suggested.

It is easy to edit Lists as a table, including styling of text (image credit: Microsoft).
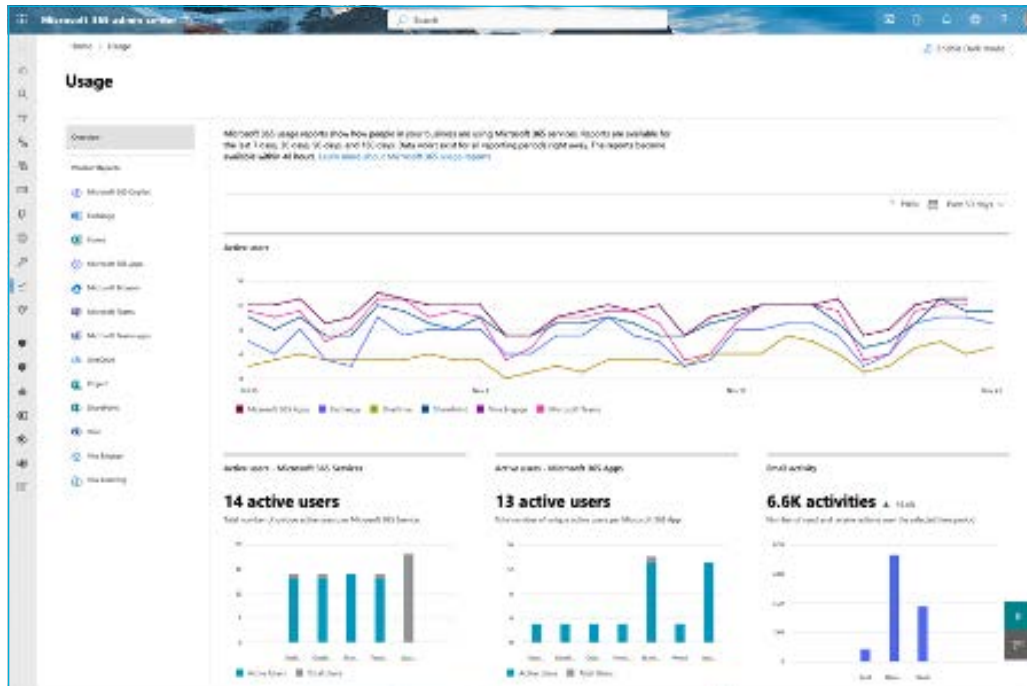
Microsoft 365 provides detailed usage analytics.

Every page on a SharePoint intranet has its own simple analytics panel visible to the site admin, showing views, time spent, and most active times. We applaud the ease of access for this implementation. Similarly, there are informative analytics within Engage (with a premium license) that show audience sentiment trends and emerging themes for leaders using the platform for two-way comms. Unfortunately, things do get a bit more complicated after this.

SharePoint will generate usage reports for individual sites, showing unique viewers, site visits, popular posts, and documents. To see more, admins must look into Microsoft 365 and Azure reports. These are OK as far as it goes, but most of what is shown is about license usage. Intranet owners, particularly Internal Comms people, often are more interested to learn "did my article engage people?", and there are no views to address this. Nor is it possible to create audits of article views for a 'mandatory read' facility, though Forms and PowerBI reports could be used as an ad-hoc workaround (or Viva Learning has a 'required training' feature at extra cost).

Moreover, building up a picture of what is happening becomes very fragmented, especially if you consider your intranet to be a combination of SharePoint, Viva Engage, Stream and Teams. It is possible to extract all the data into Power BI and there is a 'Microsoft 365 usage analytics' report to start you off. This requires Power BI Pro licensing at additional cost, and we expect most organisations would need to substantially customise the report to give insights on content performance.

The good news is that those licensing the Viva Amplify module also benefit from a campaigns-oriented dashboard with more of the audience and performance details that communicators would expect to see. For example, it shows the number of unique viewers combined across all distribution channels, and report can be filtered by audience, function, seniority etc. It also includes a 'sentiment' analysis, though this is currently presented in a rather bland table.

Search analytics cover the essentials well – there are reports on top searches, failure to find and abandons. A helpful addition is the inclusion of a feedback form on the search results page, and responses are aggregated into the Microsoft Search admin panel.

2.5+

8. MOBILE & FRONTLINE SUPPORT
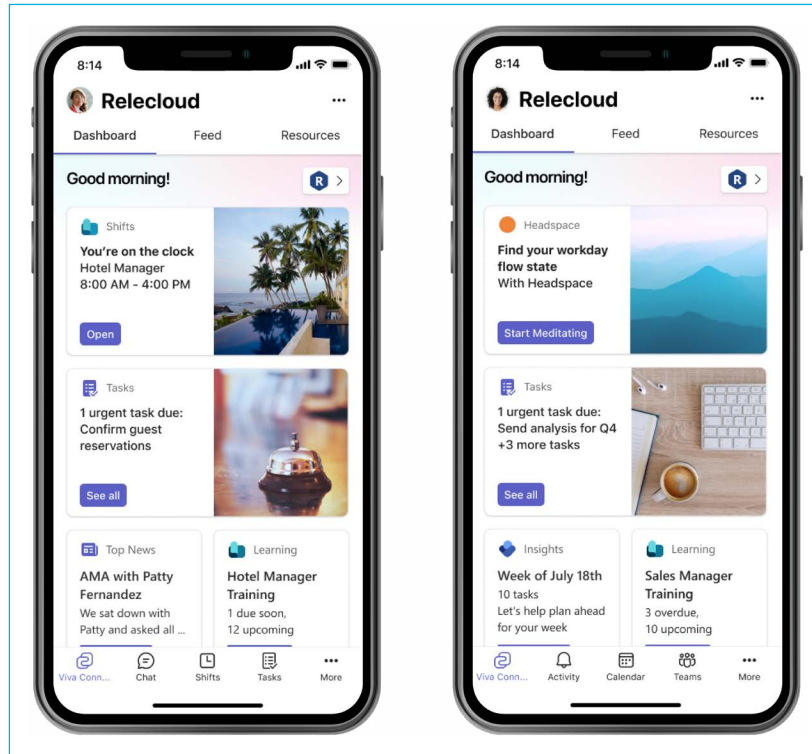
Viva Connections provides a mobile experience for SharePoint integrated with the Teams app.

SharePoint intranets can be accessed on mobile devices either through a browser, the SharePoint mobile app, or the Teams mobile app when Viva Connections is enabled. In all three options, we found navigating via menus just OK – it works well within a site but moving between sites or hubs is fiddly.

The browser-based experience for SharePoint generally works well: modern pages are responsive out of the box and web parts re-arrange to fit available columns. However, they are not adaptive – you can't hide web parts when a small screen is detected, and some large web parts such as calendar views can be problematic. Microsoft has at least added a control to dictate where the vertical sidebar will appear on small screens.

The SharePoint and Teams mobile apps are clean and snappy to use, but neither feels like an 'intranet in your pocket'. SharePoint's app opens with a 'Find' tab and shows documents and a list of sites. A separate News icon shows a machine-curated list of news stories. Recently, Microsoft also added a 'Home' icon, that will take users to their SharePoint intranet home site. In most cases this will look similar to, but not the same, as the News tab, which we fear will create confusion.

The Teams app, when Viva Connections is enabled, does show an icon for your intranet, but it opens onto a dashboard view (see Scenario 4) rather than news. Although it is arguable that the dashboard is a more practical tool, this isn't what internal communicators typically hope for, so it won't suit every organisation's vision for their intranet.

Teams is marketed as a frontline solution, particularly as a mobile app, and it includes a small set of relevant tools such as Shifts (roster scheduling) and Planner (task management). In addition, Power Apps and lists (see Scenario 4) provide plenty of potential for frontline-friendly tools. Microsoft also emphasise the frontline use-cases for standard features such as two-way dialogue with leaders, kudos, and the targeted mobile dashboard experience (Viva Connections) for employee services.

Microsoft offer few options for enrolment compared to industry leaders, but workers can be enrolled via email address or SMS.

THINGS TO BEAR IN MIND

Although SharePoint, Viva Connections, Viva Amplify and Viva Engage have many strengths, there are also some gaps from an intranet point of view. Often the starting assumption is that if you already have Microsoft 365, then SharePoint is 'free'. However, SharePoint is not a ready-to-run intranet, it is a platform on which an intranet can be configured and there will be costs involved. Additionally, we have mentioned other Microsoft applications (such as Viva Topics, SharePoint Advanced Management, and Power BI Pro) that are at additional cost to those we've included in this review, so you may find you need further Microsoft products to achieve your goals. Before defaulting to using SharePoint, companies need to carefully consider their objectives and the costs, not just of setting up but of running the intranet well over many years. In some cases, other products in this report will be easier to live with in the long term.

Even medium-size enterprises can get into trouble because the first steps are easy, but the scaling up is not. A single intranet with a few sites is simple enough, but creating a manageable navigation over more than one hub site remains problematic, even with the new home site and global 'app bar' or Viva Connections. The global menu approach is unintuitive, and the combination of site-level and hub-level menus is confusing.

Analytics are found in several places in SharePoint and Azure, but they will appeal more to IT than intranet managers. Many companies end up buying a dedicated tool or must create custom Power BI dashboards to compensate for this. Governance analytics to detect old content and dead sites may need yet another third-party tool for a complete picture. Additionally, social features are good if Viva Engage is deployed, but still fall short of some non-Microsoft products, where user activity across comments, likes, discussions and profiles are well integrated and not just part of a social networking component.

The most powerful appeal of a SharePoint plus Viva Connections intranet is everything being integrated into Microsoft 365. In the past when intranets had a strong collaboration role to fulfil this was indeed very important. Now that Teams is the de-facto entry point for collaboration however, the significance of this for an intranet platform is less than it used to be. Just about any intranet in this report will surface documents from SharePoint for things like a policy library. Nor do we consider Viva Connections a game-changer. Having an intranet in Teams is handy, but it is really just using Teams as a browser. There is little to make the user click on the intranet icon when they are focused on activity in meetings, channels, and chats. Other products even do a better job of this aspect.

The ubiquity of SharePoint means that there are many web parts available on GitHub which address some of the shortfalls identified in this review. These are free but unsupported. Many small or medium enterprises may feel they do not wish to go down this route, but larger customers with in-house IT skills may well find this a viable route to getting a SharePoint intranet to deliver the desired functionality.

When it comes down to it, the main advantage of staying within the Microsoft 365 world is the integration of search and profiles, plus the range of features and ease of use of SharePoint if your site needs are straightforward. These are important concerns, but not the only things to consider, and SharePoint isn't the only way to address them, particularly if you're willing to look at some of the other products in this report that sit directly on top of Microsoft 365.

Why choose this product

Modern SharePoint is capable of some attractive and very versatile intranets. It works best when an organisation has a very federated mindset to intranet governance, preferring there to be a very large number of loosely coupled sites rather than a top-down and highly structured architecture. Ultimately, SharePoint is best considered an intranet and content platform within a much wider digital workplace or employee experience (EX) strategy and part of a technology stack that includes Teams, Lists, Power Apps and the whole Viva Suite. When viewed from this perspective, the comprehensiveness of what is on offer can often override reservations about SharePoint from a pure intranet point of view. In addition, Microsoft's roadmap is ambitious and fast-moving, so many companies make a legitimate decision to deploy on Microsoft 365 and put faith in any gaps being filled over time. In 2024, this is likely to be particularly true for buyers with firm AI ambitions, attracted by the potential of Microsoft's Copilot offerings and the potential of generative AI for boosting employee productivity.

Vendor roadmap

Please see Microsoft 365 Roadmap.

Staffbase

FULLY STANDALONE

REQUIRES SHAREPOINT

OPTIONALLY WORKS WITH SHAREPOINT

FRONTLINE FOCUS
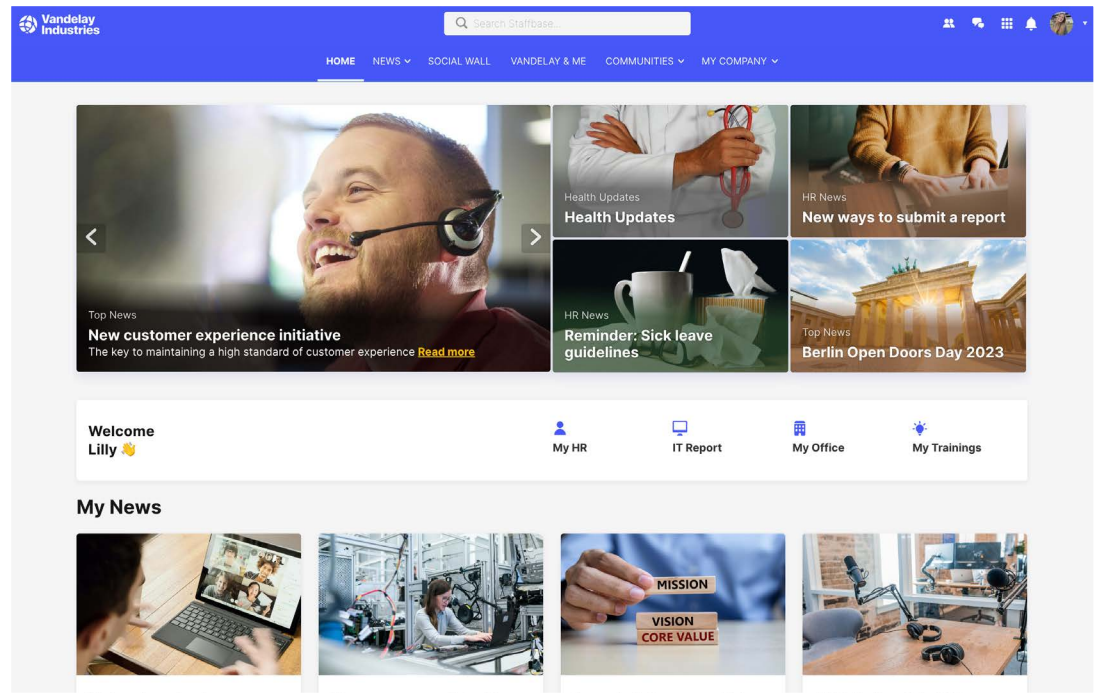
Typical deployment:

1,000 - 50,000 employees

Company locations:

VISIT THE WEBSITE
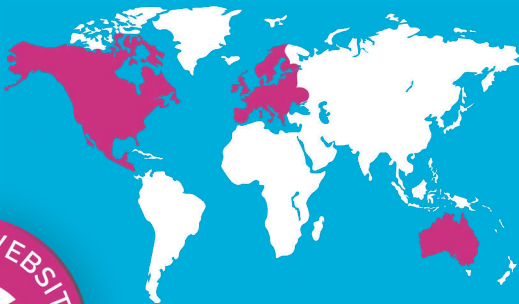
The product in a nutshell

Staffbase provides an excellent user experience on both desktop and mobile, with mature, feature-rich communications tools that will appeal to medium and large businesses seeking to reach employees through multiple channels.

LEADING PRODUCT
ClearBox
CHOICE
2024

Staffbase owned by Staffbase

Staffbase was founded in 2014 by Staffbase, who are headquartered in Germany, with office presences in North America, Australia, and Europe. Its focus is primarily on employee communications and engagement, with multi-channel publishing options available.

Staffbase is a mature product, with well-developed and thought-through features. It's particularly strong in content creation and its community elements are excellent. The mobile experience is very good and behind the scenes there is a substantial administration and analytics function underpinning the management of sites. Aspects such as Campaign reporting and audience-specific content 'Journeys' are impressive and help it stand out from the competition.

That said, there are areas for improvement. The Content review and approval workflow module comes at an additional cost and currently there are no search analytics provided. While the mobile and desktop sites are essentially identical functionally, there are few specific tools provided out of the box for frontline workers.

Staffbase is likely to be best suited to medium to large businesses with a dispersed workforce comprising both desk based and frontline workers. It's also worth noting the cost, which is at the higher end of the spectrum for organisations of all sizes.

Pricing

PRICE BAND

250 users	$ $ $ $
1,000 users	$ $ $ $
5,000 users	$ $ $ $
20,000 users	$ $ $ $

These prices are indicative, offering a comparison of the products featured in this report only. Please contact the vendor for a bespoke quote.

PRICING MODEL

Subscription – price band based on number of users.

COSTS TYPICALLY

Fairly evenly spread across three years.

DISCOUNTS

Charities and non-profit organisations, schools and educational institutes, Government / public sector, healthcare, frontline users, multi-year commitments and businesses over 20,000 users.

PRICE INCLUDES

Trainings for admins, digital customer success services, maintenance, product support, branding / theming services, editor manuals, updates and upgrades, choice of modules / add-ons, hosting, onboarding user data, access to a community & webinars, project team trainings and onboarding project managers support all new customers in platform provision process.

Product type

Ready-to-run, installed in days

Branding opportunities

All branding, complex options

Base systems

Fully standalone	Requires SharePoint	Optionally works with SharePoint	Other

Sectors

Engineering and manufacturing	Healthcare	Property and construction	Retail	Transport & Logistics

You may also be interested in...

Blink.

firstup

interact

clearbox.co.uk

Health Updates
Health Updates

HR News
New ways to submit a report
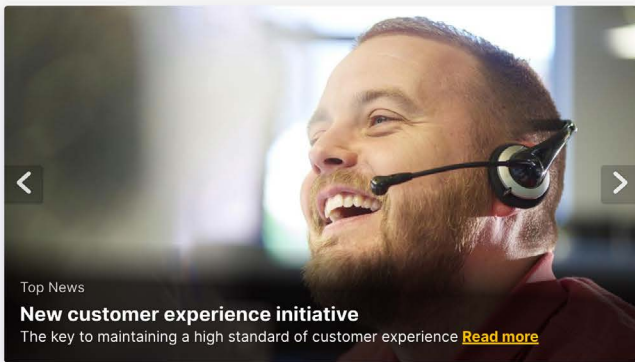
Top News
New customer experience initiative
The key to maintaining a high standard of customer experience **Read more**

HR News
Reminder: Sick leave guidelines

Top News
Berlin Open Doors Day 2023

Welcome Lilly 👋

My HR   IT Report   My Office   My Trainings

My News

We're changing how we collaborate
July 27 at 9:02 am

How can you assist with Job Hazard Analysis?
June 7 at 6:44 pm

Snapshot: Company Values contest now open
June 4 at 11:25 am

MISSION
VISION
CORE VALUE

AMA Podcast 4: CSO on setting goals
May 4 at 11:25 am

Social Wall

What's on your mind today?

Lilly Meyer
September 6 at 10:41 am - Social Wall

🌴 Just Back from Paradise! 🌴

I just wanted to share a little update about my recent adventure. I took some time off and embarked on a truly unforgettable trip to Bali.

From the moment I touched down in Denpasar, I was greeted by the warm Balinese hospitality and the breathtaking beauty of the island. [...]
Read more

👍 Like   💬 Comment

My Tasks

Search...

All Tasks **3**   Not Started **3**   In Progress **0**

○ Get familiar with the intranet and app
To do
◉ Not Started ⌄
📅 Overdue (85 days)

○ Send a message to your HR Business Partner
To do
◉ Not Started ⌄
📅 Overdue (84 days)

○ Read the employee handbook carefully

Pulse Check

How do you feel today?

☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

COMPANY AND PRODUCT

Company details

Company
Staffbase

ISO 27001 certified
Yes

Data residency
Europe and USA

Company founded
2014

Product launched
2014

Typical client size
1,000 - 50,000 employees

Largest deployment so far
550,000 employees in
220 countries

Customers
Clients include: Verisure, Aldi US, Mister Car Wash, Whataburger, General Electric, John Deere, Alaska Airlines, Geberit, Heraeus, Deutsche Post DHL Group

Partner locations
Australia, Austria, Denmark, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, Switzerland, UK, USA

Company locations
Chemnitz, Germany (HQ), Germany, UK, USA, Netherlands, Canada, Australia

Product and technical details

Name of product

Staffbase

Deployment

Client on-premises	Client private cloud	Microsoft Azure	Amazon Web Services	Vendor-hosted	Microsoft 365 tenant	Other

Client data encrypted

In transit only	In transit and at rest	At rest only

Authentication supported

Entra ID	ADFS	Okta	Open ID	Oauth	G Suite	Other*

* OpenID Connect, SAP, Gygia, Shibboleth, APM, invitation via known email, email self-sign-up, invitation via access code, and hybrid options.

App deployment

Google Play store	Apple store	MDM	MAM	Other*

* Client's website, Android App Stores in China

Accessibility

Staffbase isn't WCAG compliant, but there is a comprehensive approach to addressing accessibility requirements that uses the WCAG framework in the background. For example, Alt text is in use for images, keyboards can be used for navigation, optimised for screen readers and adjusted contrast settings.

Document library sources integrated

Box	Dropbox	Google Drive	SharePoint	OneDrive	Other

Optional integrated enterprise search engines

Coveo	Elastic	IBM	Lucidworks	Microsoft	Mindbreeze	Sinequa	Other

User interface multi-language

Pre-configured	Editable	Right to left script supported	Other

Content multi-language

Machine translation for publishers	Machine translation for end users	Editable machine translation for publishers	Manual creation for publishers	Right to left script	Other

Set-up and support

Set-up process for new clients

Clients are onboarded and supported by an onboarding project manager from Staffbase. They help clients set up the platform and guide them through topics like platform layout, user management, admin training, information architecture (user groups, content, navigation, personalisation), use cases, and content strategy for high adoption. They also offer expertise on launch planning. On average, customers spend 2-4 months building initial content before launching.

Current version

2023.3 - September 2023

Product updates

An updated version of the web app is rolled out to customers every week. An updated version of the native mobile app is rolled out once per quarter. New features are usually bundled into the quarterly native app release and communicated accordingly.

Product update process

Web app updates are rolled out all to customers automatically every week and contain mostly technical improvements. The quarterly release contains more new features and functionality, some of which are rolled out automatically, and others of which can be activated upon request. All updates are documented in the support portal and can be discussed with customer care agents.

Reverse-out options

Upon expiration of the subscription term or termination of the contract, Staffbase deletes and / or returns all personal data processed under the data processing agreement. Only in the case that the law requires Staffbase retain some personal data will they do so.

Technical support

Email support	Phone support	Chat support	Online portal	24/7 support	Office hours only

User community

Staffbase has a highly active user community. They offer regular onsite and virtual customer events that give community members the opportunity to share best practices and knowledge. Some events are sector-specific for more detailed exchange. Each year Staffbase host a large internal communications conference called VOICES, where industry professionals, customers, and internal comms experts gather to discuss trend topics, exchange ideas and network. In addition, customers have access to a platform for submitting ideas for new product features, and sharing and discussing use cases.

Voice of the vendor

Staffbase says: "The world's best companies excel thanks to motivated employees that care deeply about creating a fantastic customer experience, delivering better service and advanced innovations, and building competitive differentiation.

These brands succeed even though many of the tools used to steer employees - command and control-driven hierarchies and physical offices - have disappeared in a digitally-driven world in which frontline work and hybrid work environments dominate.

Inspiring people in this environment doesn't happen by chance: it requires a great narrative and new tools to bring it to life. That's why Staffbase provides a complete platform and methodology to create, deliver and understand the impact of communications, with best-in-class channels to reach and engage employees wherever they are."

Voice of the customer

Staffbase customers liked the user-friendly nature of the product for both administrators and end users. One commented, "the Staffbase intranet is user-friendly and easy to navigate, even for employees who are not tech-savvy. It's been incredibly easy to onboard with the business". This was echoed by another calling it "intuitive", while more than one described it as "fun" to use. Customers also liked that it provides functionality for the whole employee base: "I very much like that it brings the suite of tech options across the business into one place." Associated with this, the mobile app was also highlighted as a positive because "it's very aesthetically pleasing and easy to use on the go".

Suggestions for improvement were varied but nearly all comments were associated with the back-end experience for admins and publishers. One person said, "while the integrations are fantastic – it would be great to see more out–of–the box", adding they would like configuration tools appropriate "for the less tech-savvy". There were a couple of requests for "expanded functionality" within certain tools too, such as the forms and the events calendar. For publishers, one person said it was frustrating that news and content pages were separate, meaning "duplication of content", while another person simply asked for a "better backend solution for editors".

Customers are unanimously happy working with Staffbase. One was impressed with the support commenting: "My partners at Staffbase are very kind, knowledgeable, and patient. They've been invaluable." Other descriptions included "very good: a competent and committed team that always looks after us well" and "excellent from start to finish- and beyond. It is a partnership…with mutual trust as its basis".

SCENARIOS & SCORES

Please see the Scenarios below for more detail on each of these.

SCENARIO AND SCORE	KEY BENEFITS	IMPROVEMENTS / CONSIDERATIONS
4.5 **1. User Experience & Visual Appeal**	Highly user-friendly experience. Clear and bold page layouts.	Desktop home page design a little underwhelming. Fly-out menus not ideally suited to deep navigation.
4.5 **2. Publishing & Communications Management**	Excellent multi-channel options. Easy to create compelling communications.	Publisher workflow options are basic. Comparatively simple crisis communication support.
4.5 **3. Community & Engagement**	An impressive toolset providing multiple ways for employees to interact.	Employees will need to be clear on the best way to engage with each other.
3+ **4. Integrations & Services (Including M365)**	Good range of M365 integrations.	Integrations with business systems largely involves APIs with additional set up (and potentially additional cost).
3 **5. Information Finding & Search**	A solid people search experience.	Search configuration and management largely missing.
4.5 **6. Administrator Experience**	A feature-rich experience providing admins with a wide set of tools.	Content review and approval workflow module comes at additional cost.
4 **7. Analytics**	Comprehensive set of reports providing a wide range of insight.	No reports for search.
4.5+ **8. Mobile & Frontline Support**	A fully branded, slick mobile experience.	Few out of the box functions specifically for frontline workers.
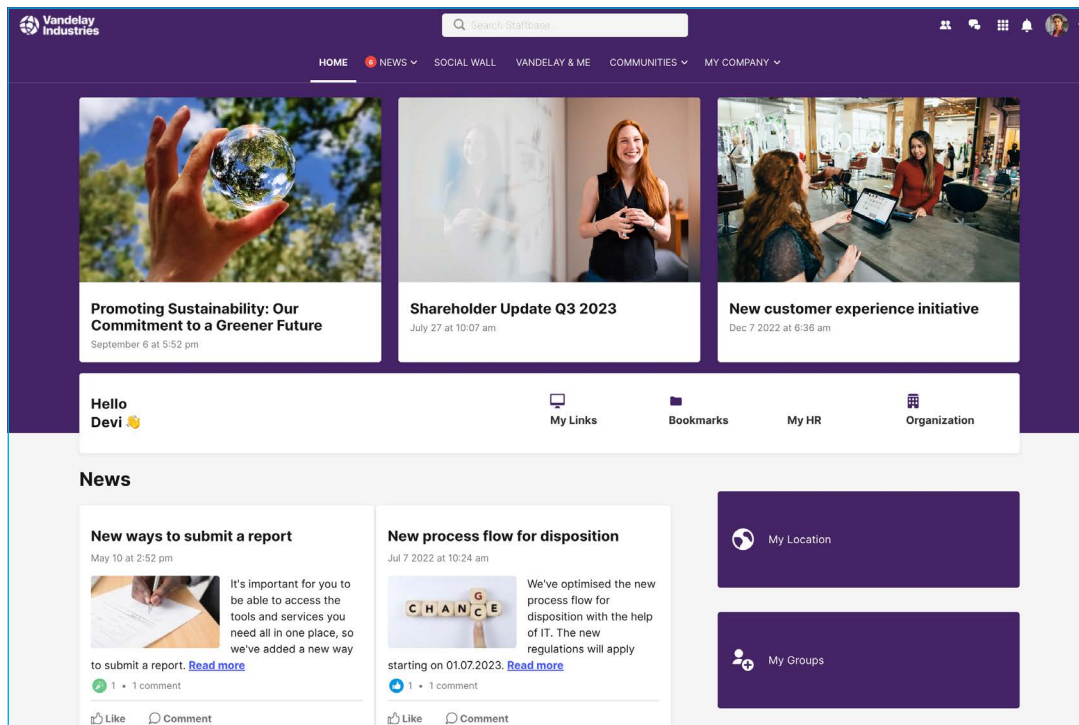
The desktop home page is clearly laid-out, combining personalised and audience-targeted information with promoted content and clear calls to action.

Staffbase provides a highly usable experience for employees and admins alike, with a clear consumer-facing app influence in evidence. There's a parity of experience across mobile and desktop, though both versions can be configured differently, and users can expect a consistent quality of experience as they move around the site, or through the admin studio.

On desktop, the site mega menu is persistent and navigation elements can be audience targeted. It's possible to build sub-levels, for instance for news topics, though the space available for multiple links in the sub-menu fly-outs feels a little constrained. Menus may contain images and text to provide additional context.

Desktop users access notifications, the staff directory, their personal profile, and an app launcher from the top of the home page, while on mobile, all these options are combined with main navigation in a fly-out menu available through a standard hamburger icon (see Scenario 8 for more on the mobile experience). On desktop there's also a targeted quick links panel in the page body - this isn't provided on mobile.

A bell icon provides access to a list of notifications. The ability to mark notifications as read or unread is a welcome recent addition; clickable on desktop, on mobile these can be removed or marked as unread by swiping. Notifications from external systems can also be pulled in here, such as from an HR system or ServiceNow, see Scenario 4 for more. Push notifications are available to support communications and are covered in Scenario 2.

Staffbase includes some branding options, including fonts, background images and icons. It's possible to reflect sub-brands by tailoring different design elements and audience targeting these to employee profiles. The desktop home page design is a little underwhelming on initial view compared to other products we've seen, although there is scope to improve the visual design of the iconography in the 'welcome panel'. However, this is a minor point and the bold and bright layout of other sections such as 'My Office' or 'Communities' is more reflective of the site experience overall.

Staffbase provides an editorial calendar to help with content scheduling. Content can be created directly from here and it includes a 'blocking' function to limit publishing activity at chosen times.

Staffbase's toolset for creating and managing communications is comprehensive, with a well-developed experience covering news and content pages, email newsletters, digital signage and direct publishing to LinkedIn. Access to the admin studio is also available through mobile, handy for small amendments or quick posts.

Article-type content is generally segmented into 'News' and 'Pages'. News uses 'Channels' which contain individual articles and are audience targeted. Audience targeting is flexible, with audience groups created from integrated HR systems and / or Entra ID, or manually compiled using a profile field. Audiences can also be built on the fly by manually selecting individuals and / or profile groups.

News and Pages are easy to compile, where editors initially choose a layout from a set of templates; the pre-populated layout can be amended if required, using drag and drop sections, a wide range of widgets, and free text. There's a good set of publishing options, covering publish / unpublish date and time, commenting and engagement, mandatory reads, whether the article is a highlight (although this applies to news only), as well as push and email notifications. Editors can publish as an alias, and there's a review function for leaving comments within the page editor. However this isn't a workflow – there's no automation here – but this is on the roadmap.

In late 2023 Staffbase introduced a generative 'AI Companion' tool that uses Azure OpenAI Services, with data hosted and retained in Europe. The tool allows editors to create elements such as teaser text, summaries, titles, or alter the tone of copy with a single click. There's also the option to ask the AI to create a full article. Functionally, this is similar to what we've seen in other products, though here it benefits from Staffbase's polished user experience. It's early days for this type of tool but the results are impressive, and the use case seems solid.

Staffbase uses 'acknowledgements' to indicate content is a mandatory read, which displays a label on the associated page. There's an option to re-send a notification to users who have not seen the item, or who have not yet acknowledged it. Editors can change the notification text for the reminder and determine whether it is resent as a push or email notification. Note that users can deactivate notifications on mobile devices.

Acknowledgements play a role in supporting crisis communications. Additionally, an 'announcements' widget specifically for important messages can be positioned as required on the home page. The vendor also highlights that Campaigns (see below) may assist with crisis communications, however overall, we feel there is scope for Staffbase to develop these features further.

A calendar function provides an overview of what's published and what's planned for publication across the platform, although visibility of calendar items depends on assigned permissions. There's plenty of flexibility for viewing future and retrospective activity, filterable by channel and campaign. We liked the ability to set up 'blockers', which limit what can be published due to another activity taking place at the same time. Draft articles can be dragged into the calendar, and publication details amended in the calendar context, which is a nice touch.

Staffbase have incorporated generative AI features into the content editor to help publishers quickly produce relevant summaries, titles, and other text.

Campaigns offer a way to track the effectiveness of a specific set of communications over time – for instance on a particular topic, or relating to an area of the business. A key element is what the vendor terms 'smart impact': on creating a campaign, admins designate an overall goal and specific metrics to be measured as part of the campaign. When an article is created and assigned to the campaign, editors can add a single pulse survey 'smart check' question. If added to multiple articles, there is repeated, consistent measurement over time, which can then be tracked to illustrate how the campaign is landing, its visibility amongst employees and the sentiment around it across different audiences. We think this is an exciting feature, and a potential game changer for internal communications teams who often struggle to interpret the impact of a campaign over an extended period.

There are options for publishing outside of the application itself. Articles can be created for use on digital signage browsers. These display a QR code, where employees scan the code for access to the full article. Staffbase also provides the opportunity to publish directly to LinkedIn for users with the right permissions; the vendor sees external publishing as a focus area for future development.

A further channel option is Staffbase's excellent newsletter builder. Editors define different layouts using drag and drop to add the required content and create a fully branded email. There's a preview option, and some smart features such as an email size for Gmail truncation. The newsletter interface is simple and smooth to use, and communicators will appreciate the availability of this within the context of a single publishing platform.

The campaigns dashboard gives administrators an overview of active campaigns, including some at-a-glance statistics to help understand campaign performance.

clearbox.co.uk
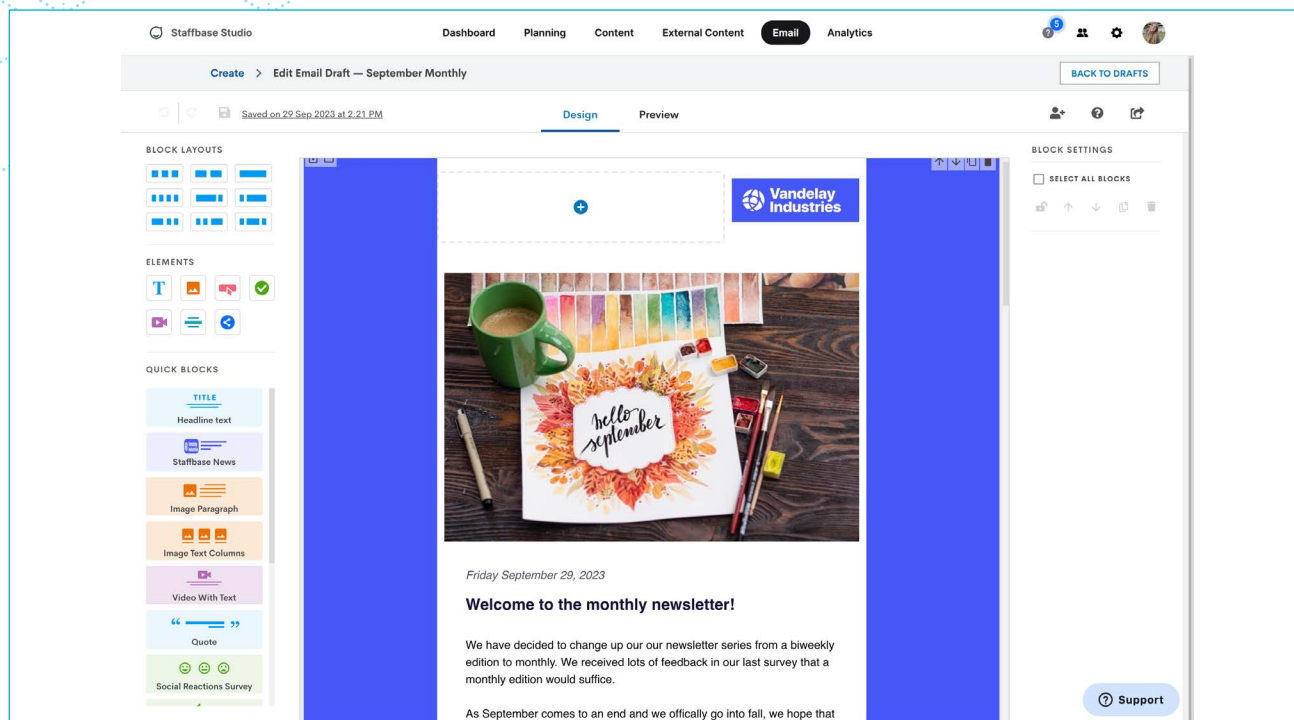
The newsletter function in Staffbase lets authors quickly compile communications by using drag and drop layout blocks and widgets.
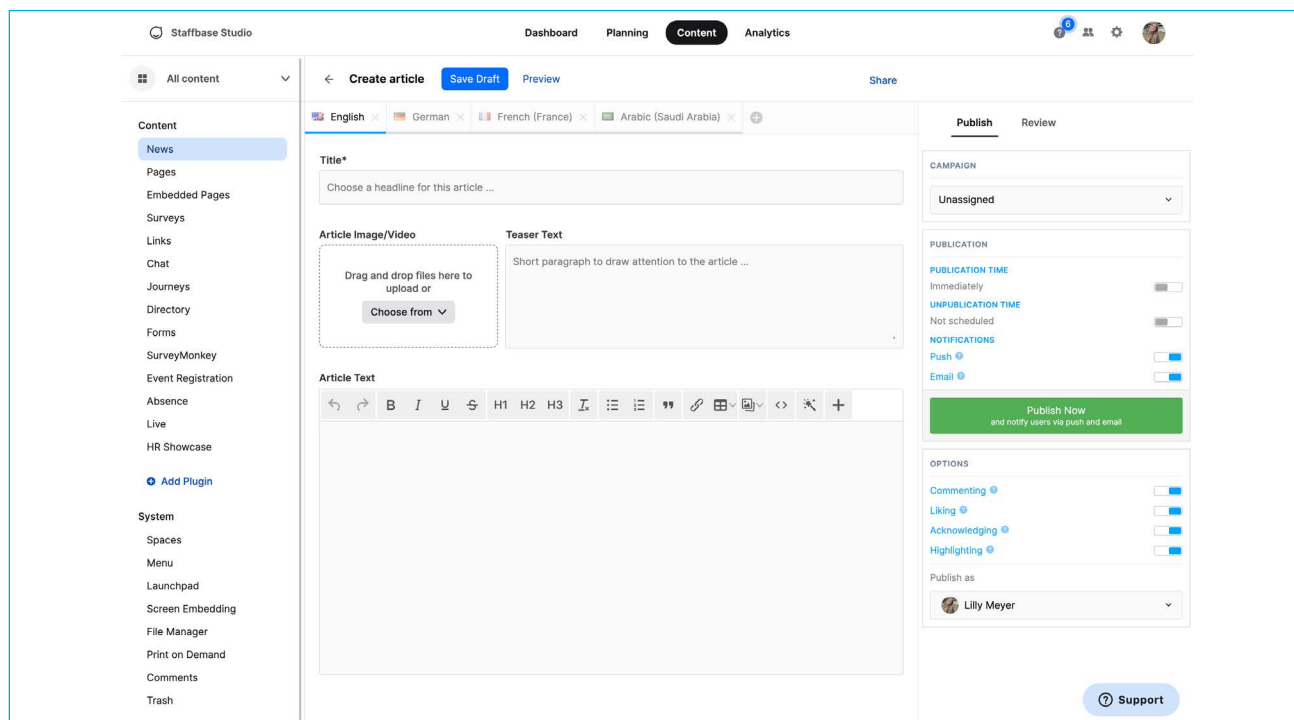
The news creation interface is easy to work with allowing templated content to be created quickly.
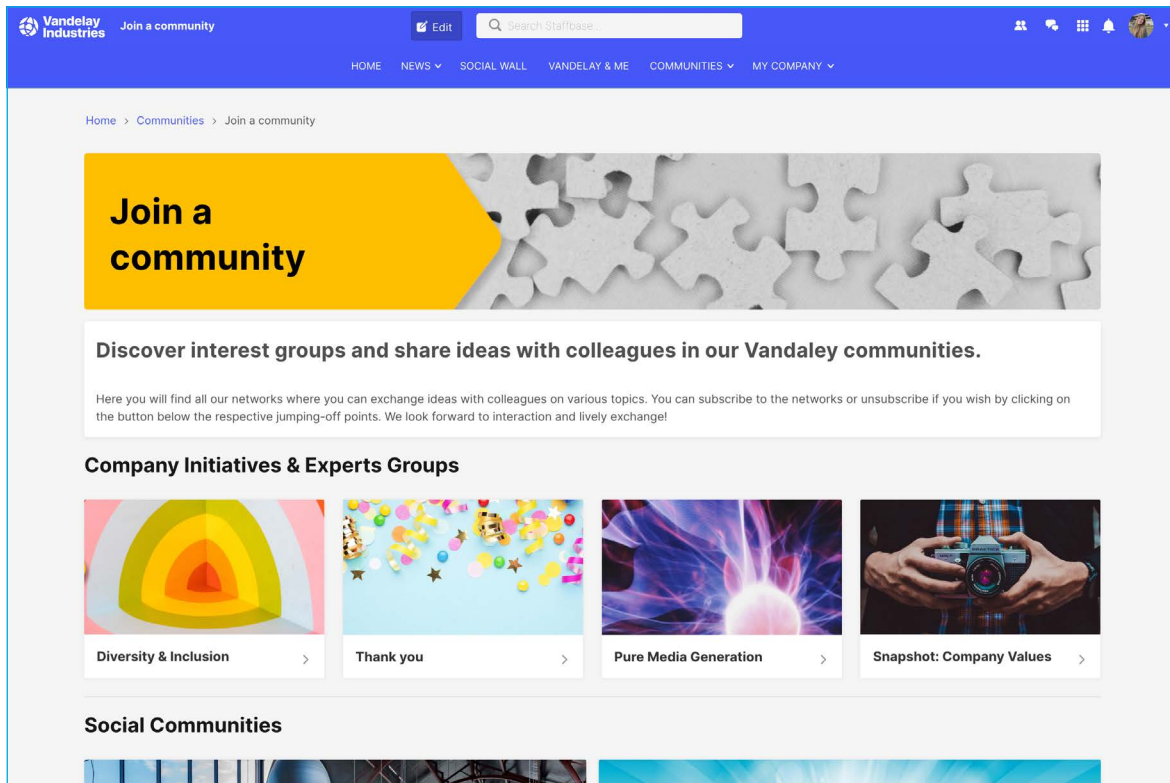
Communities in Staffbase are generally open access and provide a means for employees to engage with each other through topics of shared interest.

Community and engagement tools in Staffbase are impressive and the user experience is excellent on both mobile and desktop. Aside from being able to interact with content using comments and emojis, employees can use a 'Social Wall' (essentially a social media-style timeline feed), participate in communities, chat one-to-one or in a group, and complete polls and surveys. Reporting options for admins include sentiment analysis, which tracks all comments made in the platform and can highlight adverse responses. Surveys, forms and polls can be audience targeted and used flexibly across the site to encourage participation and gather feedback. There is a note of caution: with such a wide variety of engagement options there is potential for some confusion around which tool to use, especially where businesses have other products providing similar functions; however, the vendor highlights that they work with customers to help clarify the use case for each option.

An enjoyable aspect of the Social Walls in Staffbase is the straightforward posting and consuming content, something which has been lost to a degree in the consumer applications they clearly derive from. Employees can quickly create a post, with colleagues able to add a comment, and users can 'reply to a reply' but comment threads are kept manageably short. There's a defined set of emojis for reactions, and we liked the tooltip explaining what the emoji responses are. On demand translation is available for comments so users can respond in their own language. Posts can be bookmarked for future reference, which is an unusual and useful feature. Any comment can be reported confidentially directly to a moderator, though not posts themselves.

'Communities' are functionally similar to Social Walls, providing a way for employees to easily interact with each other. Communities are generally open access and users can subscribe or unsubscribe with a single click without having to wait to be added to a group. The Communities an employee sees and is able to engage with can be managed through audience targeting, based on the user's profile attributes. This would be particularly helpful in larger organisations where an untargeted view would become noisy quite quickly. The ability to create a new Community can be locked down, with employees needing to submit a form to request one. Within the Community, admins are able to determine who the owner is and who has publishing rights.

Chat is executed well in Staffbase, with employees able to chat to individuals or a group. Participants can be manually added to existing groups, or they have access automatically assigned – or removed – based on their profile, for instance if they move roles in the business. Users can attach a file or image to a chat and mobile users have the option of creating a voice message. An eye icon indicates that a message has been read, and conversations can be muted, archived, or deleted. Emoji responses are available but are different from those elsewhere in the product; these also have tooltip descriptions. We think an option for users to indicate that they aren't available to chat (like the 'no entry' icon used in MS Teams) would be useful here but, overall, it's a smooth experience.

The social wall is a timeline feed encouraging employees to share stories and engage with colleagues.

Polls, surveys and feedback forms provide additional engagement options within the product. An example use-case is a simple form embedded on a page that's used to ask an anonymous question of the CEO. Form submissions are compiled in the admin area and the results are emailed or downloaded via CSV. There's a compiler available to set forms up quickly and forms can also be connected to a workflow tool such as Power Automate.

Surveys can be used flexibly throughout Staffbase, in particular within pages and news articles, which are audience targeted. Different rating formats, such as star gradings and sliders, are available and results are tracked through well-presented reports in the content administration section.

A 'Journeys' feature sets up an information flow using a predetermined timeline, such as for employee pre-boarding, or onboarding once an employee starts. It could also be used to provide training. Admins construct a new Journey by selecting content items to be targeted to users once a condition is reached, such as 'two days after the start date'. Users receive a notification at each stage of the Journey to inform them that new content is available, or a new action is to be completed, until their Journey is finished. There's a variety of management controls such as setting the trigger for a Journey to begin. The good range of Journey statistics, including start dates and read rates, are exportable. We think this is a well-executed feature, and a potentially powerful tool with scope to be applied in a wide variety of scenarios but particularly with supporting new employees in remote or frontline roles.

Journeys provide a way to set up a targeted schedule of content
to users and can be used for a variety of purposes.
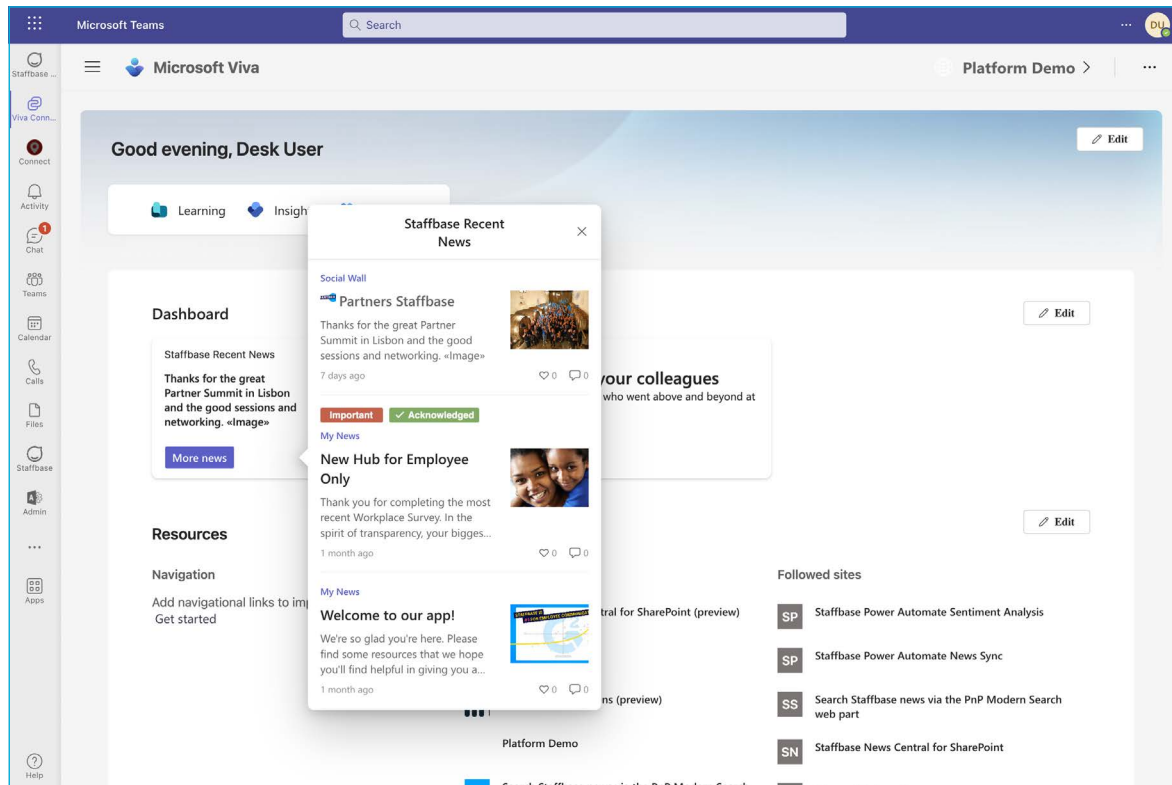
Staffbase news showing in a Viva Engage card.

Staffbase provides multiple options for integration, including out-of-the-box connections, opportunities to bring services and information onto the site via API, as well as potentially using the 'Neptune' framework to integrate third-party services directly into the tool. While there are out-of-the-box integrations with Google Calendar and Google Drive, Staffbase is particularly strong with its M365 integration (notable as the product is not based on SharePoint).

A home page 'launchpad' sits alongside the notifications bell, providing a quick route to key applications. The launchpad is audience targeted, and a selected app will open in a fresh browser tab or as a deep link on mobile.

Other tools can be embedded via API elsewhere in the site as required. Staffbase will build custom plugins if desired, although the product uses 'click and drop' Power Automate connectors, so not all API integrations need to be set up manually. All information regarding integrations is available through a comprehensive Staffbase developer portal. However, we think setting up integrations can feel complex for non-technical admins, which is a sentiment echoed by customers.

For those customers who want further integration options there is Neptune. This is a low code / no code framework which provides an integration layer for connecting third party tools into Staffbase, allowing users to transact with the tool directly without having to leave the platform. For example, via an HR tool connected in this way, users could book leave directly from the intranet rather than having to visit the HR application. Staffbase highlight that potentially any employee-facing self-service tool could be integrated in this way, if permitted by the third-party provider. Neptune comes at additional cost, however we think this has the potential to be a valuable element in the overall user experience.

Out-of-the-box integrations are provided for Google and Microsoft services. There are two Google widgets, one for Calendar and one for Drive, which can be provided together on a 'hub' page, or used flexibly throughout the site. There is a variety of Microsoft widgets that could be used to create a dashboard including tasks, calendar items, latest files, SharePoint sites, a Teams overview and feed, trending and latest used documents. A document viewer provides a preview of files directly in the intranet, while opening a file takes people into the relevant MS app. In addition, calls to action on employee profiles let users start a Teams call or chat directly from the profile page. All visible content is based on permissions set in Microsoft rather than Staffbase.

An unusual integration feature is the ability to manifest Staffbase content in SharePoint. There's a specific web part available for this purpose, with tailorable layouts. Readers access articles via the web part within SharePoint and may interact using likes and comments. Users may also access their Staffbase notifications, bookmarks, or search Staffbase content directly from SharePoint without having to return to the intranet. All content pulled into the web part is created and maintained within Staffbase, as are permissions. The vendor highlights that for mobile or frontline staff who might not have Microsoft licences, this connection allows all Staffbase users to consume the same content while it only needs to be created and managed from one place. We think this is a well-thought-out integration approach, helping reduce context switching, especially for heavy SharePoint users.

Another integration allows content published in SharePoint to appear automatically in Staffbase, though users will again need a Microsoft licence to view it. Staffbase also provide a card for use in a Viva Connections dashboard, which will display up to ten Staffbase news articles. The intranet can also be embedded to be viewed through Teams both on desktop and mobile, where the mobile view renders the mobile version of the product (see Scenario 8).
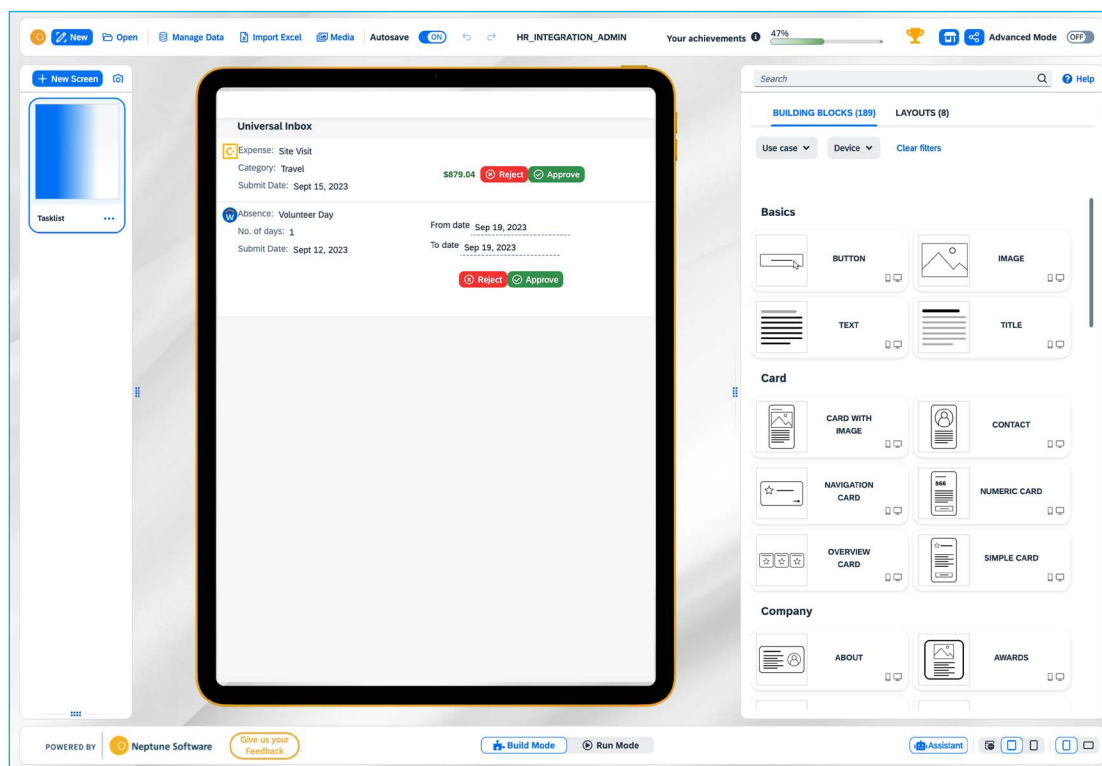
The Neptune integration can connect third-party employee self-service tools, allowing users to interact with them directly through Staffbase.

We liked the opportunities available with PowerBI, where dashboards embedded within the Staffbase context can be consumed and used in situ. The PowerBI dashboards are also accessible on mobile devices, though screen size will limit usability somewhat. Staffbase will act as an identity provider, so users don't have to log in separately. Conversely, Staffbase analytics may be pulled into PowerBI for custom reporting.
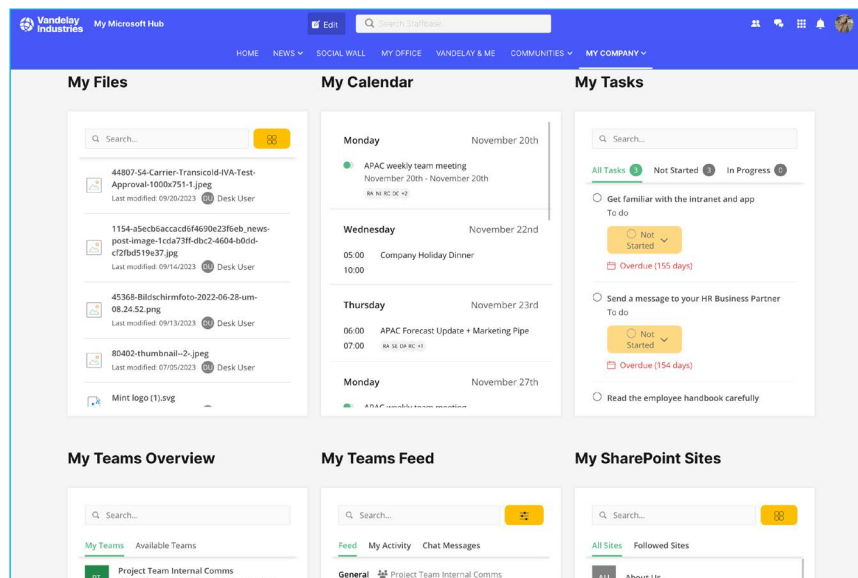
Content from M365 can be compiled into a dashboard view within Staffbase, allowing employees to consume key information from M365 sources in the intranet context.
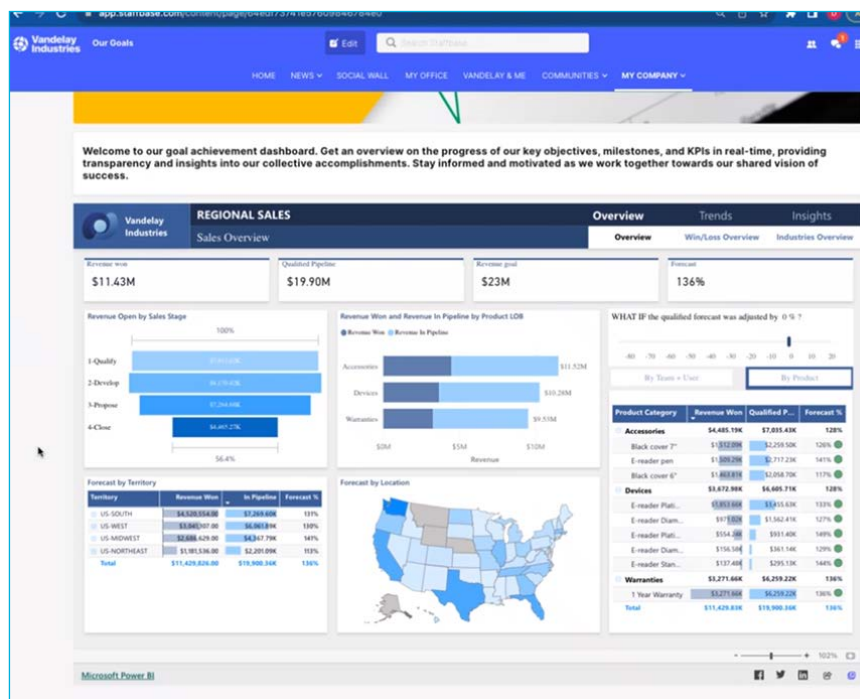
PowerBI dashboards can be integrated directly into Staffbase, where employees can use them in the intranet context rather than having to switch to the native application.
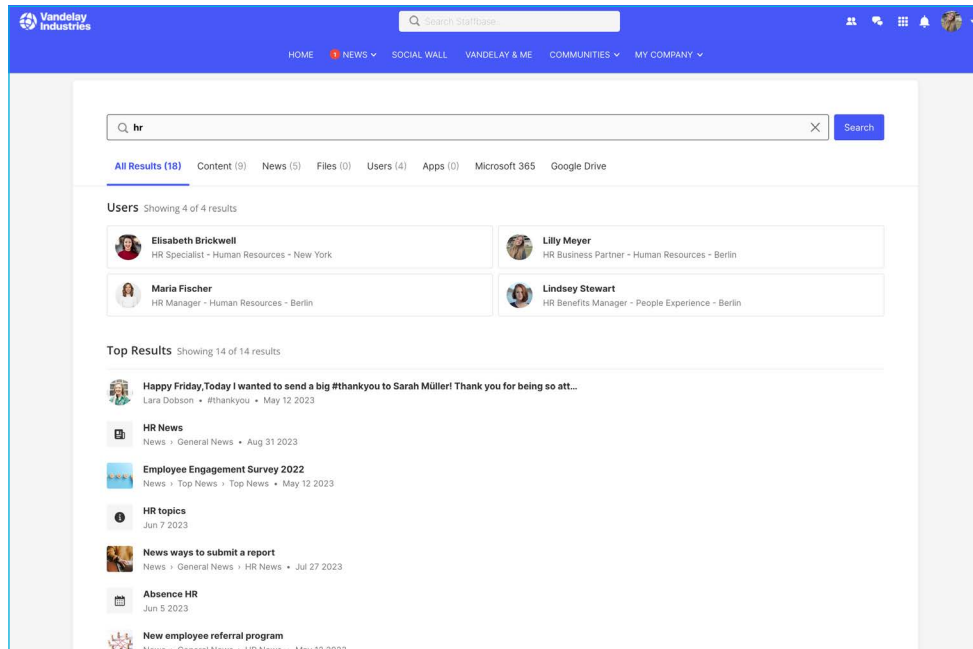
Staffbase search crawls multiple content types and provides returns from within pages and files, not just titles and summaries.

The search bar in Staffbase is persistent; users may search for a variety of content types, as well as applications and hashtags. Returned results are based on information within the page body, not just title and summary, and files including PDFs are also searched. Suggested search is available but not fuzzy search, although this is on the roadmap. There are also limited filtering options to hone results.

Initial returns are aggregated under 'all results' and are segmented further under tabs for content, news, files and users, along with M365, Google Drive and ServiceNow (if set up). Results are permission-based and clicking on an item from a third-party system opens the content in the source application. On mobile, if the user has the relevant application the file will open there – alternatively it will use a browser version if the user is logged into the service.

'Companion search' is an AI-based, chatbot-style natural language search tool due for release in early 2024. It looks interesting to us from initial demos, but it's too early to judge it's potential full impact.

The employee directory is easily accessible via a link in the top banner and uses predictive search to suggest contacts. Admins can configure search to look at additional profile fields, such as language and skills. Profile information is drawn from the customer's preferred data source, with an option for employees to complete optional fields within the intranet itself. Employees can upload a background image and personal image to their profile page. A new organisational chart feature is displayed on user profile pages and is compiled natively in the product using attributes drawn from the customer's chosen data source. It provides an explorable tree structure displaying mini-profile cards. Clicking on a card opens up the colleague profile alongside the org chart, which is unusual functionality but works well, and this in turn displays the organisation structure relevant to that employee.

Search works well and will be sufficient for the vast majority of users. However, there is still room for further improvement, such as the introduction of fuzzy search, and search management features are still broadly missing, including 'best bets' and content tags.
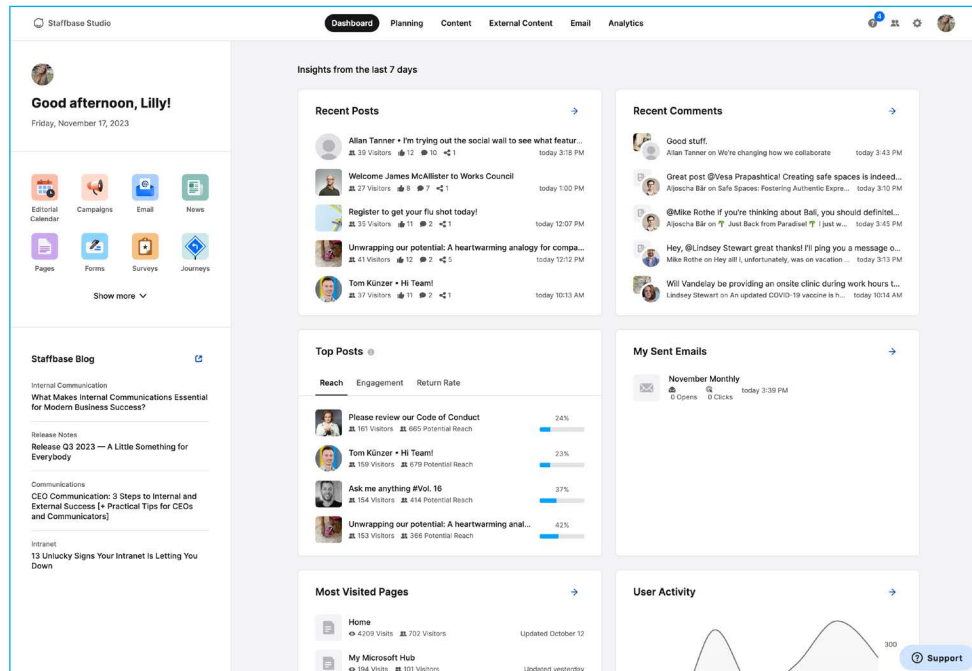
The dashboard for super users provides a helpful at a glance view of key activity within the site over the preceding seven days.

Staffbase combines a broad toolset with a high-quality user experience for site management. There are generally three levels of administrator roles: channel editor, system editor and super user, and the admin experience is different for each, with more advanced options hidden from those without permissions. A recent addition to the product is a file manager for use with content creation; while not particularly innovative in itself, it adds to the sense that Staffbase are aiming to cover all bases here.

Administrators with super user rights see a dashboard displaying insights from the previous seven days, such as recent posts, recent comments, top posts, sent newsletters and more. We liked this approach as it gives a sense of what is happening across the site without having to dip into analytics. Admin sections are split into planning, content, external content, email, and analytics, with sub-menus for content. System settings and the plug-in section are accessed from the left-hand menu.

To help administrators get the most from the platform, Staffbase have created pop-up guides and tours within the studio, providing a step-by-step guide to using specific features. We think this is particularly useful for keeping admin knowledge up to date in a decentralised publishing scenario and for general knowledge transfer to administrators. Similarly, release notes for admins are provided via a short (and engaging) video summary of latest features, provided via pop up when accessing the studio.

Most customers will work with pre-defined templates (see Scenario 2) when creating pages so they just have to populate the page content. However, editors can modify the page structure using drag-and-drop elements and add or rearrange widgets as required. There's a large selection of widgets such as quick links, accordions, buttons and plug-ins available and these are easily added to a page with a single click. Widgets can be configured to display to specific user groups or audiences and additionally can be configured for display only on mobile, only on desktop, or both.

*The latest release notes are presented to admins when they log in,
making it easy for users to keep track of improvements and upgrades.*

*Templates allow for swift page creation, though editors can modify the page
structure using drag and drop elements and add or rearrange widgets as required.*

There's a content review function whereby an update reminder can be set for pages through a predefined duration list. A bell appears in the list of pages indicating that the page is up for review. We think this could be developed further, as at present, editors need to be working in the admin system to see when content needs to be updated. We'd recommend introducing other elements to support the content lifecycle, for instance providing a calendar function to set a review date, and the ability to push reminders to publishers.

A version history is available for each page going back 30 days, with the current version clearly marked, showing date and time stamp and the publisher. Older versions can be restored at a single click.

One of the stand-out Staffbase features is 'Spaces'. These are locally administrated areas of the wider site that are easily set up, where users manage their own small instance of the platform, similar to an extranet. Examples are where multiple country sites are needed, or a variety of sub-brands. Content such as channels, pages and forms can be set up to provide a specific experience for a dedicated user group and for users; this works seamlessly with the wider site to provide continuity of experience. Super user admins see reporting for all Spaces; local Space administrators can access analytics for their area to help them understand the performance of content under their control.

Out of the box, Staffbase supports around sixty languages for front-end use and the administration system is available in five languages. Importantly, the system supports right to left script and all these options can be used on both mobile and desktop. Users can switch the content language in their personal settings. This changes buttons and navigation labels to the desired language instantly; page content and comments stay in the language of origin, but these are auto translated with a single click. For editors, a single content item can be set up to cater for multiple languages. Automatic translation is available to help and the article can be reviewed and amended prior to publication. On-demand translation is provided for comments on posts and articles, too.
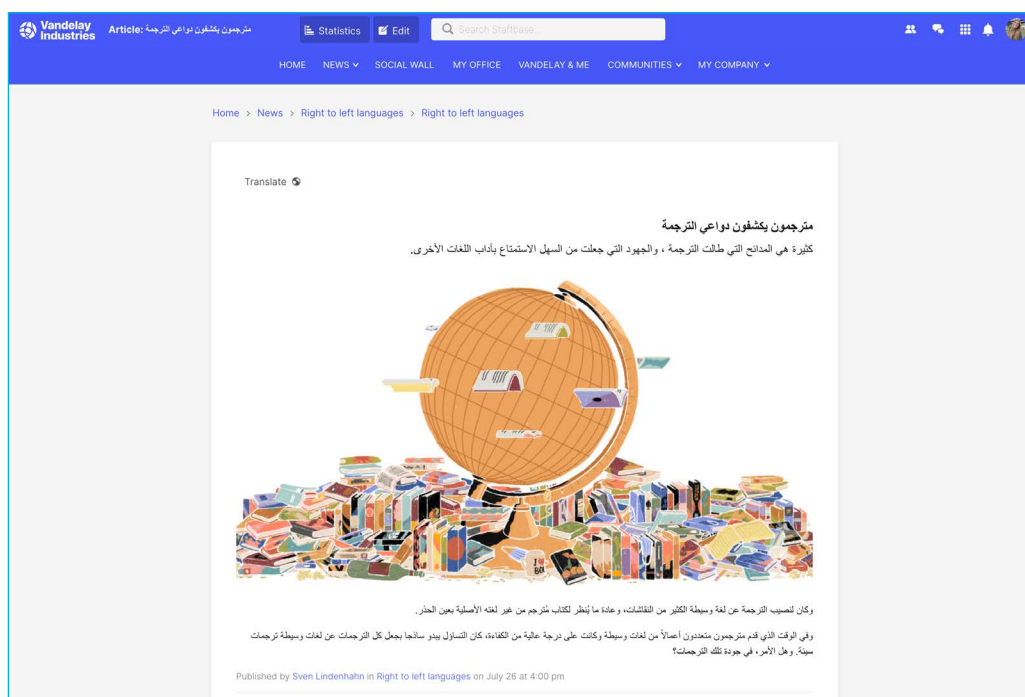
Staffbase supports right-to-left script, an important provision for generating engagement by ensuring all users can consume content in their desired language.

4
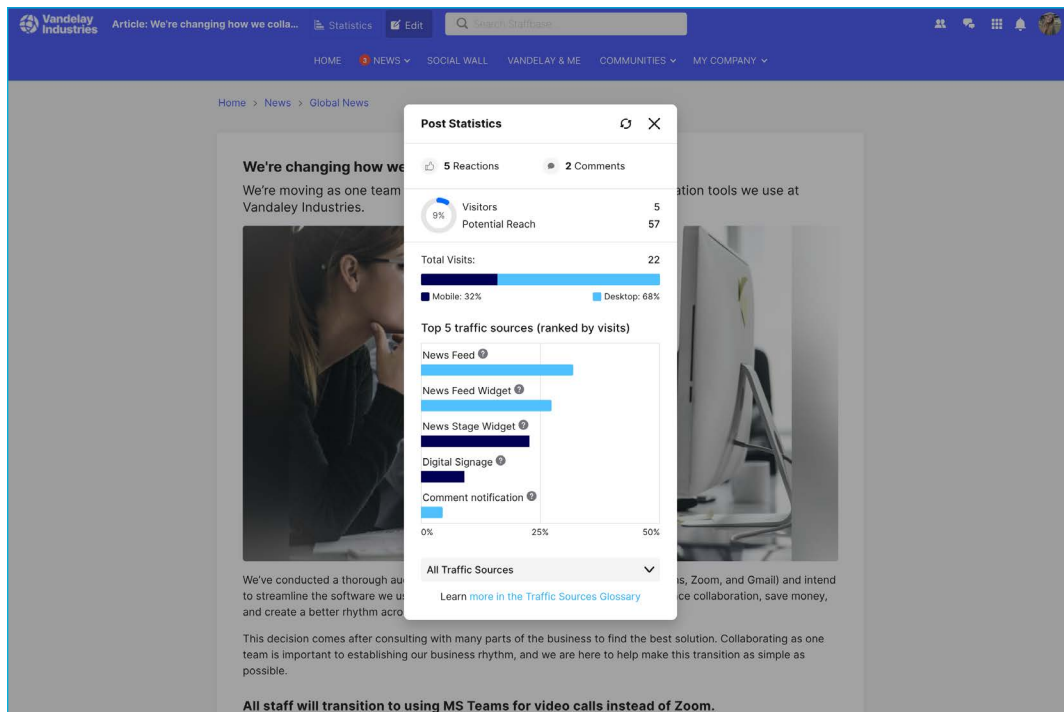
Page content reports are accessible via the posts themselves.

Analytics reporting in Staffbase is well-developed and stands out against competitors. There's a broad range of reports for news and content, as well as for chat, hashtags and users, along with campaigns reporting. Reports can be segmented by space, channel, group and platform and all data is exportable to CSV, or for use in PowerBI or other data tools. Staffbase also includes more detailed insights such as percentage of posts with user interactions over time. Email newsletter reports are also comprehensive.

Page content reports are accessible via the posts themselves. We liked the helpful link at the foot of the post statistics panel to a glossary of traffic source terms. Mandatory reads ('acknowledgments') can be viewed directly from the post as well as within the main analytics.

Within the 'user overview' there's a useful heatmap to illustrate key periods of activity. For data privacy purposes, if a user group has fewer than five employees it will not be tracked. Survey and poll information isn't held here, it's provided in the survey section, however, we liked that poll and survey results are presented as reports and not just as download files.

Campaign (see Scenario 2) analytics show activity aggregated on a campaign level that illustrates content performance over an extended period of time. The report demonstrates campaign impact, such as changing opinions amongst the employee base, and details include user groups with lowest engagement, highest positive sentiment, and which are not reading messages. These factors are combined to provide an overall 'alignment score' indicating the level of campaign success. We think this is a step change in how communications teams can understand their activities and is a standout feature within Staffbase.

Video analytics are attached to individual files stored in the file manager. Along with file metadata – where the video is used and where / when uploaded - total views, unique views and an average viewing time are all provided. We'd like video reports to be accessed via the main analytics section and see viewer drop-off points added.

Intranet search reports are not yet provided but are on the roadmap for early 2024.
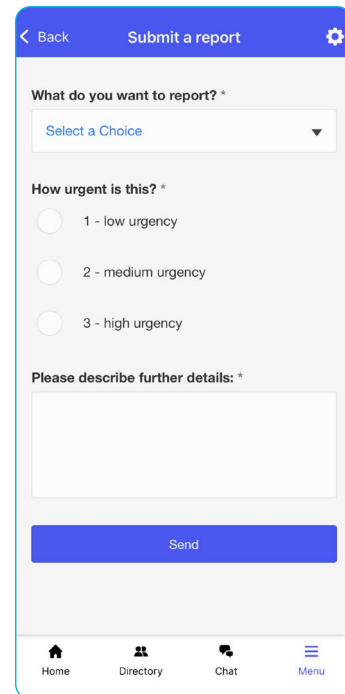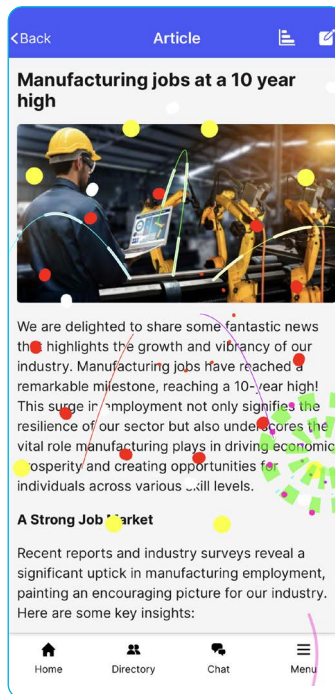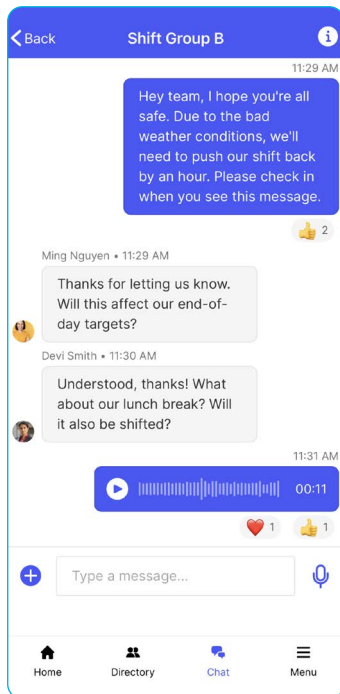
*The experience for frontline and mobile workers is excellent,
with parity between the desktop and app environments.*

Staffbase has its origins in the employee mobile app market and a mobile-first mindset is clear to see throughout the product. Its look and feel works particularly well on mobile and it can be fully branded with a corporate identity. Once the app has been downloaded from the relevant store, log in can take place using a username and password, single sign-on, Microsoft Entra ID credentials or a unique identifier from a profile in Active Directory or third-party HR tool. The app recognises whether a passcode is set on the user's phone and will force log-ins every time if not in place, but also recognises biometrics to grant easy access.

Staffbase's full range of functions is available in the app, for example search works smoothly, with results clearly segmented. The design is attractive and the main feed, titles and text are clearly and legibly laid out, making for enjoyable and easy scrolling. The main menu is a fly-out accessible through a hamburger icon.

There are options that cater specifically for frontline workers. For instance, HR services could be integrated to enable employees to view a payslip or make an absence request. A helpful feature lets users play sound files (podcasts) natively in their device while their phone is in their pocket. Staffbase highlight that providing tools such as chat on mobile helps reduce the use of shadow IT, providing a secure and licence-free means of communication across the business. The audience targeting possibilities also means the environment can be simplified for a mobile audience.

Administrators have the same range of functions as on desktop, which means that changes can be published on the move. The experience is not as slick as on desktop, which is understandable, but this is still a useful option for making quick changes, and provides a flexibility for content creation that we think publishers will like. Additionally, the on-page insight reports are available to view on mobile.

THINGS TO BEAR IN MIND

Staffbase is first and foremost a communications and engagement tool, with a strong mobile environment. While it's possible to build out a large body of content and an accompanying navigation structure, there are some gaps that we feel need to be addressed. Organisations looking for a comprehensive information repository may not find Staffbase sophisticated enough. In addition, those who have specific content governance needs, such as in the financial sector, should be aware that the content workflow module comes at an additional cost.

With so many ways for employees to interact with each other – Social Walls, Communities, commenting, Spaces, chat – the lines between these features can get blurred. Potential customers may want to consider the individual use cases and aim to articulate clear distinctions between them for employees.

Finally, in our previous report we shared a concern that the addition of new functionality (via other products purchased by Staffbase) would make the back-end complex. However, we are pleased to see Staffbase has so far largely protected the admin experience and kept things simple. The product comes at a high price point, but the range of features are generally excellent and overall it offers good value for money.

Why choose this product

Businesses looking to provide first class, multi-channel communications to employees will find much to admire in Staffbase. This is a mature product with a wide variety of well-developed features at both front and back end, a comprehensive analytics section and an impressive selection of community and engagement tools, allied to an excellent user experience on both desktop and mobile. It's best suited to medium to large businesses with a workforce geographically spread across office and frontline operations.

Vendor roadmap

No roadmap has been supplied by Staffbase.
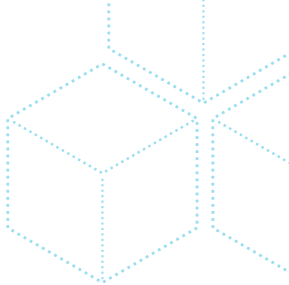
unily

FULLY STANDALONE

REQUIRES SHAREPOINT

OPTIONALLY WORKS WITH SHAREPOINT

FRONTLINE FOCUS
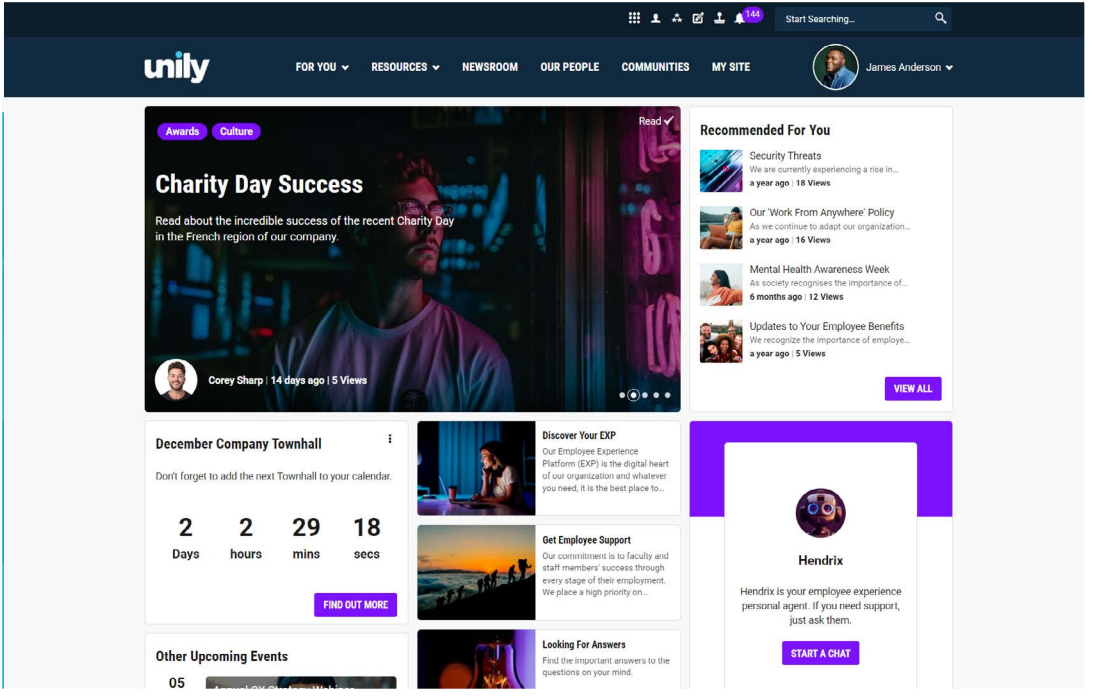
Typical deployment:

10,000+ employees

Company locations:

The product in a nutshell

Unily is a flexible and comprehensive solution that will particularly appeal to large or complex organisations, yet would meet most business needs well.

VISIT THE WEBSITE

Unily owned by Unily

Unily has been a familiar name in the employee experience industry for the last ten years and that maturity is clear to see within its sophisticated features. Launched in 2014 by UK-based Unily, there are frequent updates so a lot has evolved in that time. The new analytics suite launched in late 2023, for example, provides a good first step for further improvements in that area.

Unily performs very well across most of our scenarios and will meet different business needs for multiple departments. For example, internal communicators will find a lot to like, with notable features such as 'Campaigns' for managing multiple communication items and channels to reach people beyond the intranet, such as a configurable newsletter. Community and social features will satisfy those concerned with employee engagement, while those responsible for compliance or knowledge management will appreciate the strong life cycle management tools and version control behind all content.

This degree of comprehensiveness means that it will take more time to get Unily set up, and subsequently manage, than other products we've reviewed. For infrequent or less technically minded administrators, the back end may feel complex at times. There is also a risk of overwhelming employees with lots of features, so care is needed around the initial design.

Overall, Unily will particularly appeal to large or more complex organisations and will meet their needs well. It falls into the highest price bracket in our report, yet clients get a lot for their money and there will be places to make savings where not all features are wanted.

Pricing

PRICE BAND

250 users	$ $ $ $
1,000 users	$ $ $ $
5,000 users	$ $ $ $
20,000 users	$ $ $ $

These prices are indicative, offering a comparison of the products featured in this report only. Please contact the vendor for a bespoke quote.

PRICING MODEL

Subscription - price band based on number of users.

COSTS TYPICALLY

Fairly evenly spread across three years.

DISCOUNTS

Charities and non-profit organisations, Frontline users

PRICE INCLUDES

Customer success services throughout the contract, including a Customer Success Manager for those over 5,000 users; professional services to help with the initial implementation; support services (level selected by the customer); access to the customer community.

Product type

Ready-to-run, installed in days

Branding opportunities

All branding, complex options

Base systems

Fully standalone	Requires SharePoint	Optionally works with SharePoint	Other

Sectors

Accountancy, banking and finance	Energy and utilities	Media and internet	Retail	Transport & Logistics

You may also be interested in...

interact

akumina.

Staffbase

unily

FOR YOU ⌄   RESOURCES ⌄   NEWSROOM   OUR PEOPLE   COMMUNITIES   MY SITE

James Anderson ⌄

Awards **Culture**

Read ✓

Charity Day Success

Read about the incredible success of the recent Charity Day in the French region of our company.

Corey Sharp | 14 days ago | 5 Views

Recommended For You

Security Threats
We are currently experiencing a rise in...
a year ago | 18 Views

Our 'Work From Anywhere' Policy
As we continue to adapt our organization...
a year ago | 16 Views

Mental Health Awareness Week
As society recognises the importance of...
6 months ago | 12 Views

Updates to Your Employee Benefits
We recognize the importance of employee...
a year ago | 5 Views

VIEW ALL

December Company Townhall

Don't forget to add the next Townhall to your calendar.

2	**2**	**29**	**18**
Days	hours	mins	secs

FIND OUT MORE

Discover Your EXP
Our Employee Experience Platform (EXP) is the digital heart of our organization and whatever you need, it is the best place to...

Get Employee Support
Our commitment is to faculty and staff members' success through every stage of their employment. We place a high priority on...

Looking For Answers
Find the important answers to the questions on your mind.

Other Upcoming Events

05 Jan
Annual CX Strategy Webinar
Online (MS Teams)
10:00 AM - 11:00 AM

11 Apr
Competitor Alignment Seminar
Online (MS Teams)
4:00 PM - 5:00 PM

03 Jun
Masterful Management: Train...
Berlin Office, Tucholskystraße 2, Berlin, ...
2:00 PM - 5:00 PM

Other Popular Pages

📄 **About Us**
Modified: Mar 27, 2023 | 158 Views

📄 **FAQ Portal**
Modified: Mar 27, 2023 | 114 Views

📄 **Platform Overview**
Modified: Mar 27, 2023 | 94 Views

Hendrix

Hendrix is your employee experience personal agent. If you need support, just ask them.

START A CHAT

Simple Sentiment Survey

How happy are you at work?

☹ 😦 😐 🙂 😊
Very Unhappy   Very Happy

CANCEL **SUBMIT**

Welcoming Our New Joiners

‹ ›

New Joiners
Recruitment

Say hello to Garrett Bowen, our new Marketing Executive
Our marketing team is welcoming a new team member
4 days ago | 5 Views

Recruitment
New Joiners
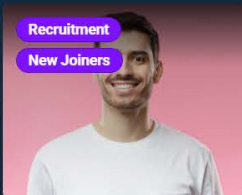
Say Hello to Garry Ferguson, Presales Engineer, US Sales
Say Hello to Garry Ferguson, Presales Engineer, US Sales
5 days ago | 1 View

New Joiners
Recruitment

Welcoming Dana Boone, Marketing Executive
Welcoming Dana Boone, Marketing Executive
a month ago

Recent Recognition

10 Points

Thank you for following up with me on my projects.

Adam Hansen was awarded the Accountability Kudos by Elizabeth Boyd

◦ ● ◦

💎 **Why not check out Kudos Corner**

COMPANY AND PRODUCT

Company details

Company
Unily

ISO 27001 certified
Yes

Data residency
Australia, Canada, Hong Kong, Singapore, USA, UK, The Netherlands, Ireland.

Company founded
2006

Product launched
2014

Typical client size
Unily's typical customer profile includes medium to large enterprises with a headcount of over 10,000 employees.

Largest deployment so far
EY (Ernst & Young) with 360,000 employees globally across 150 countries and over 700 offices worldwide.

Customers
Clients include: Adecco, Cathay Pacific, CVS health, Baker Hughes, British Airways, EY, Estee Lauder, L'Oréal, McDonalds, Shell, Wipro

Partner locations
Wipro (a Unily customer and an implementation partner), headquartered in India.

Company locations
Godalming, Surrey, UK (HQ), USA, Canada, Australia

Product and technical details

Name of product
Unily

Deployment

Client on-premises	Client private cloud	**Microsoft Azure**	Amazon Web Services	Vendor-hosted	Microsoft 365 tenant	Other

Client data encrypted

In transit only	**In transit and at rest**	At rest only

Authentication supported

Entra ID	ADFS	**Okta**	**Open ID**	Oauth	**G Suite**	**Other***

*Unily also supports identity providers that align with SAML, Okta, Facebook, LinkedIn, OneLogin, and Ping Federate. As a result, Unily fully supports the multifactor authentication (MFA) capabilities of client-provided identity providers.

App deployment

Google Play store	**Apple store**	**MDM**	**MAM**	**Other***

*Via private store (client), Huawei App Market, Tencent MyApp, Oppo Software Store, VIVO App Store, MIUI App Store, Baidu Mobile Assistant, Samsung App Store, PP Assistant (Alibaba), Wandoujia (Alibaba), Lenovo Store

Accessibility
WCAG 2.1 compliant

Document library sources integrated

Box	Dropbox	Google Drive	SharePoint	OneDrive	Other

Optional integrated enterprise search engines

Coveo	Elastic	IBM	Lucidworks	Microsoft	Mindbreeze	Sinequa	Other

User interface multi-language

Pre-configured	Editable	Right to left script supported	Other

Content multi-language

Machine translation for publishers	Machine translation for end users	Editable machine translation for publishers	Manual creation for publishers	Right to left script	Other

Set-up and support

Set-up process for new clients
Unily has a five-step approach:
1. Initiate - Focused on technical readiness, completed in 9-12 weeks.
2. Define - Focused on basic training; personas; site, content and platform governance; taxonomy; discoverability; launch plans.
3. Design - A client starts to overlay their strategic principles to create the platform.
4. Configure - Unily facilitates working sessions for clients and their site owners whilst configuring their platform, providing just-in-time support.
5. Launch – All users gain access to the platform. The aim is to start thinking about continuous improvement.

Current version
Version 16 - November 2023

Product updates
Unily's Feature Store delivers new features and new platform experiences monthly that can be installed on-demand without upgrade or downtime. More significant platform upgrades are released, on average, three times a year.

Product update process
Feature Store features can be installed on-demand by customers themselves. Major releases require a customer upgrade which is managed closely with the customer based on their needs and schedules. Major releases will include enhancements to existing or net new capabilities in the platform.

Reverse-out options
Clients can request an end-of-contract export as part of their site decommission deployment. The Service Engineering Team will review it and it will be actioned prior to the scheduling of the decommission. The exported data will be shared with the client via a secure, time-limited OneDrive link. The client must provide confirmation of receipt of data, which will be attached to the deployment request.

Technical support

Email support	Phone support	Chat support	Online portal	24/7 support	Office hours only

User community
Alongside a thriving customer community called Universe, customers can enjoy a host of in-person, virtual, and on-demand events. Customers receive invitations to release launch webinars, regular webinars by topic, and receive on-demand content. Unily also produce the Unily podcast. By hosting an annual Unite conference, a global workshop series, and customer-exclusive dinners, Unily create a thriving and constantly evolving environment for sharing and learning.

Voice of the vendor

Unily says: "Unily is the employee experience platform that connects, informs, and engages your enterprise. We support the world's leading brands through our platform and expert teams to deliver world-class digital employee experiences.

Our approach is centred around our four cornerstones of digital employee experience: Alignment, Engagement, Enablement, and Simplicity, each representing a fundamental area of value for an organization.

First, you must Align your employees to ensure they are informed and connected to your organization's mission and understand their role in achieving it. From here, you can Engage them so that employees feel valued and respected, knowing that their voice is heard, so they can fully embrace your culture in everything they do. You must then Enable your people by providing them instant access to the expertise and knowledge they need to unlock their true potential and thrive in their roles. Finally, at all times, we must work to introduce simplicity into their digital world of work, giving employees the tools and services that allow them to operate efficiently and easily, resulting in better quality of work.

By placing these four cornerstones at the centre of everything we do, Unily innovates in its platform and drives meaningful change within organizations seeking to improve their employee experience."

Voice of the customer

We received a high volume of feedback from customers about Unily, where many praised the "Slick, good design elements providing good UX at a high level" alongside the "good search engine". One customer summarised well: "I'd say their desktop intranet might be one of the best I've seen." People also complimented the personalisation that's achievable, with one customer highlighting it's easy to "surface information to create the right user experience that meets your business needs". Associated with this, some customers praised the "ability to customise the platform", adding "although you really need a good developer for this".

In terms of development areas, the analytics were consistently mentioned as an area requiring improvement; although this feedback was gathered before the release of new dashboards in late 2023 and so may now be somewhat resolved. There were requests for "more flexibility" in the general creation and configuration of widgets alongside specific requests, such as a "what's new on the intranet" widget.

With a product as comprehensive and flexible as Unily, it has meant there were some differing views in the feedback we received. In particular, some customers praised the CMS, with one person saying, "our communications teams on the ground are owning and personalising the employee experience for their audiences"; whereas other customers said they felt the CMS was complex, while another said the CMS is intuitive "once you are trained". Some customers praised the "great engagement tools" while others asked, "to see features that are more consistent with modern engagement tools that we all use every day". The final area of inconsistency was around the flow of new features, for example one customer said, "the three major releases a year mean the product keeps up with the ever-faster pace of what employees expect in an intranet"; while another said, there are, "many new releases that do not always bring benefits for the publishers (it gets more complicated)".

Feedback about working with the vendor was mixed, although the overall sentiment was positive. Customers who mentioned the initial implementation were largely dissatisfied, however, with the common theme being the lack of flexibility of Unily's process (or the way it was followed by the Implementation Manager). The "helpdesk" was praised for being "very responsive" and "keen to fix any issues – which is rare"; although a number of customers expressed frustration with the ticketing system and associated slow response times. Some customers also said there were "many bugs" after new releases, which were often slow to be resolved. Others commented that bespoke developments sometimes have "extended timelines" compared to what was quoted.

In terms of ongoing customer support, a large portion of people who replied expressed a positive experience. Individual Customer Success Managers (CSMs) were named and praised, and Unily overall are described as "very helpful," working "tirelessly to champion our needs", and "genuinely such a pleasure to work with". One CSM was even complimented as being "like an extension of our team and is a wonderful advocate for us". Unfortunately, other customers had experiences with a high turnover of CSMs or had a CSM that was "not knowledgeable enough to really support on an ongoing basis". One customer summarised by saying, "ongoing customer support has been difficult, it's always an extended timeline, and we feel 'nickel and dimed' for everything".

Those customers who experienced issues in other areas expressed a less positive overall impression of working with Unily, where one customer said "in the past 4 years, our experience with Unily as a partner has been disappointing" and another said "I wouldn't recommend them". However, the majority of customers who replied were incredibly positive about working with Unily, with one person saying: "Of all the vendors I have worked with, even beyond communications platforms, Unily has some of the best customer service I've ever experienced". Another customer said Unily "has been a great partner to us". Finally, this customer is very satisfied with Unily: "This is a vendor who demonstrates their belief in employee experience through modern, thoughtful product features. Their staff is committed to this idea – they're not just talking the talk, they are walking the walk."

SCENARIOS & SCORES

Please see the Scenarios below for more detail on each of these.

SCENARIO AND SCORE	KEY BENEFITS	IMPROVEMENTS / CONSIDERATIONS
4+ **1. User Experience & Visual Appeal**	Very attractive. Simple and effective navigation. Good range of notifications.	Admins should be careful not to make the intranet overwhelming. Unily helps with initial design, then subsequent changes requires technical knowledge.
4.5 **2. Publishing & Communications Management**	Excellent suite of effective tools.	News creation simpler than other platforms. More could be done to aid news scheduling.
4.5 **3. Community & Engagement**	Flexible range of features. 'Kudos' and 'Journeys' particularly noteworthy.	Form results not as detailed as other solutions (for surveying purposes). Widget approach to social features flexible but may take time to set up.
2.5+ **4. Integrations & Services (Including M365)**	Good range of micro-transaction integrations to choose from.	Integrations require technical knowledge to set up.
4+ **5. Information Finding & Search**	Strong user experience. Highly configurable for admins to control the experience and results.	Initial range of results may feel overwhelming when looking for something simple.
4 **6. Administrator Experience**	Very comprehensive with fine-grained controls throughout.	Feels complex in places, particularly for infrequent admins.
3.5 **7. Analytics**	Overhaul has resulted in a good range of analytics.	Overall depth could be improved.
3.5+ **8. Mobile & Frontline Support**	All features translate well to mobile. Offline reading and shift tool valuable for frontline workers.	A comprehensive desktop experience gives admins a greater challenge to simplify for the mobile environment.
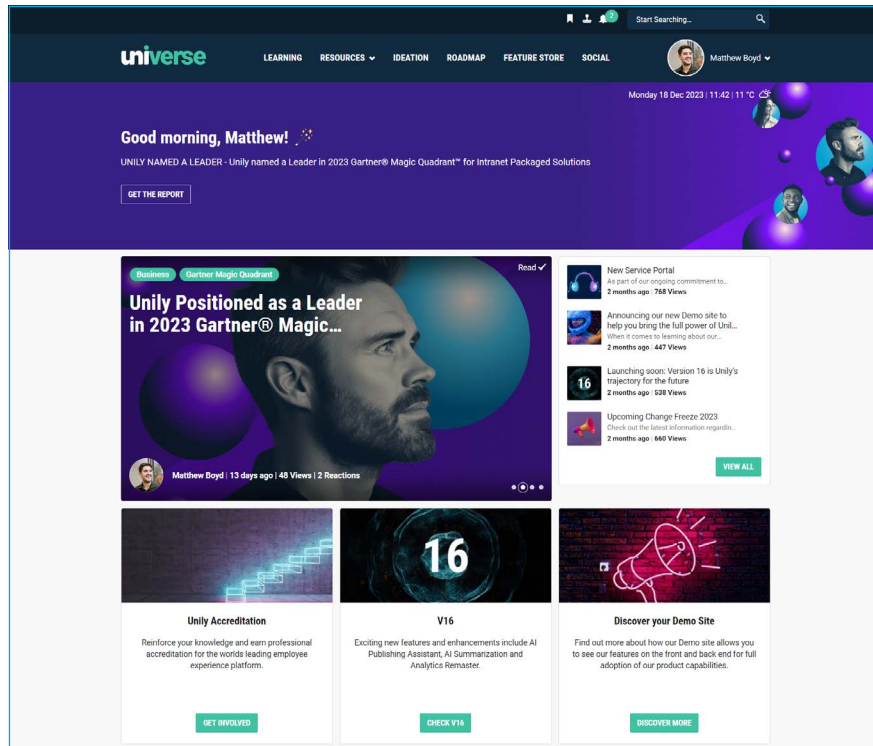
Unily's design and branding options are very strong.

Unily is a comprehensive platform with a focus on enterprise-scale clients, which is clear through the sophisticated audience targeting and tailoring possible across all aspects of the site. This comprehensiveness could bring complexity for employees if admins aren't careful; we think a configurable welcome tour would be a helpful addition, to avoid initial overwhelm.

Navigation is handled in a few ways. First, the header ribbon provides access to system level features, like a 'mandatory content' drop down, and a waffle menu of links. The global navigation includes 'single link' items (like to a dashboard, an individual page, or a link to a system), or 'Workspaces' of content gathered in dropdowns. Within Workspaces are local navigation panes of single or dropdown options. Finally, admins may configure the footer to be consistent across the intranet or different in chosen places.

The bell in the header ribbon contains notifications; employees can dismiss notifications but there's no 'save for later' type flag, which would be helpful given the potential for there to be a large number. We like the degree of control admins and end users have over what notifications are received and how, including on the desktop, via email and as mobile push. SMS notifications are on the roadmap. There is the potential for employees to receive a lot of notifications, so admins should spend time getting the initial configuration set up to remove that administrative burden from colleagues.

Unily impresses with the design options that are available, which are flexible and create attractive results. Note however that Unily helps with the initial design implementation, then any subsequent changes will either need to be completed by them or an admin with JavaScript or CSS technical knowledge. Complex branding is possible, such as for multi-business organisations, and we like that campaigns (see Scenario 2) can change the home page design for a defined period.

Overall, Unily provides an excellent employee experience with a high degree of flexibility for admins to influence this. Caution is advised, however, to deliver suitable experiences for employees rather than introducing all features that are covered in this review – as there are a lot.
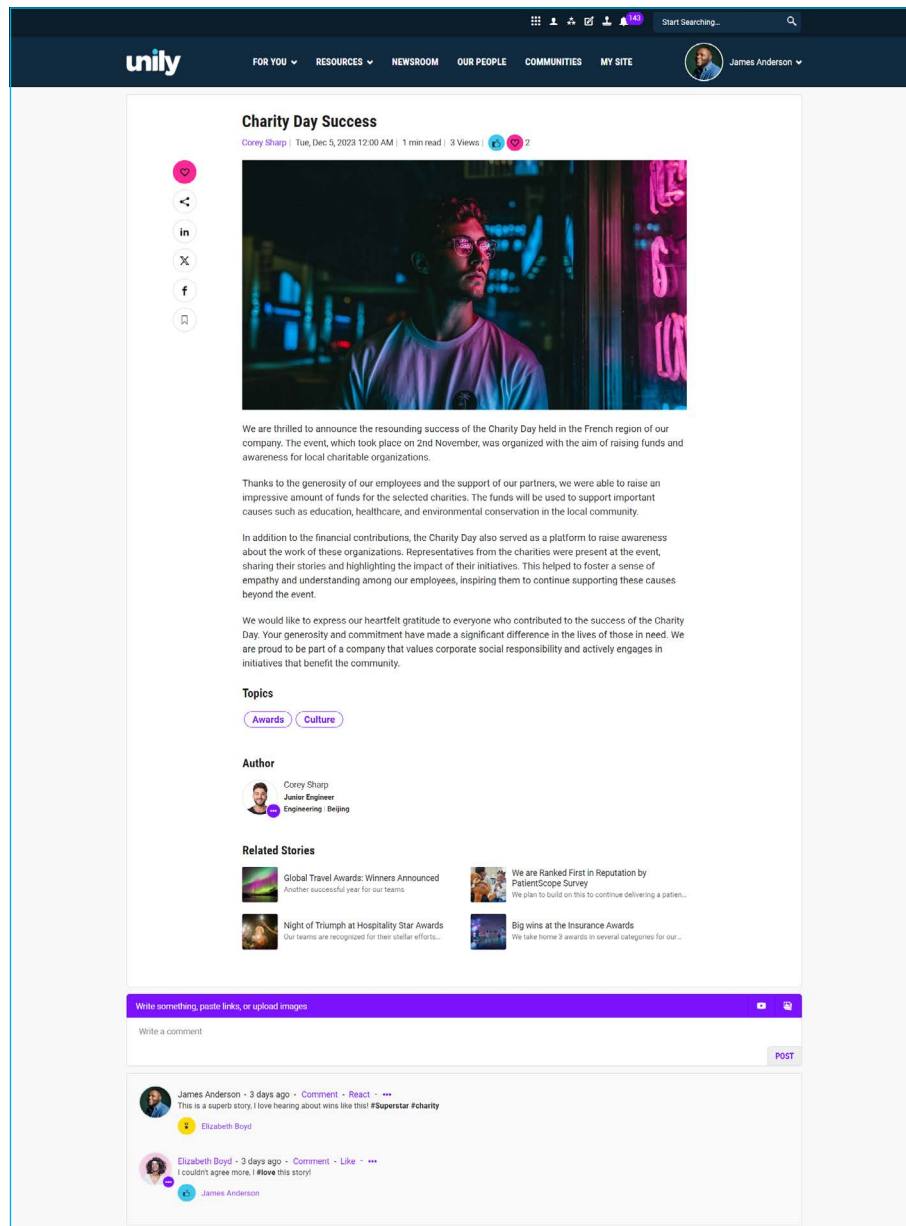
Completed news articles look very attractive.

The back end of Unily is vast, but security trimming means infrequent publishers will have a simpler set of screens than a site-wide admin. It is a comprehensive solution, however, so training the publishing community is important and Unily offers different levels of accreditation to support this.

There are templates available, but these are primarily used for complex pages to aggregate content or present complex information simply. Templates to set up frequent messages, such as monthly CEO updates, aren't available, which we think is a shame. News articles are then created via a form approach, with fields for a title, summary, page content, and post image. Page content is created using a rich text editor that allows for video or other media embedding, which is simple but creates effective articles.

There is also an 'AI assistant' option that allows people to type what they "want to write about", select a level of formality of the final piece, and a tone of voice from seven options including "humorous". Behind the scenes, Unily sends the request to Microsoft Azure OpenAI with a prompt for internally facing intranet context already applied. This means the results should be more appropriate and secure than using ChatGPT directly. If a publisher only needs help to simplify or summarise content, then the AI assistant can help with that too. Publishers preview and edit the text as wanted. We like that access to the AI assistant is controlled, so only those who understand the implications of using it can do so. There are some exciting developments on the roadmap, such as the ability to apply intranet / organisation content and context to generated content. We're looking forward to seeing how this develops to support writers and end-users alike.

Audience groups are inherited, such as from Entra ID, or are created in Unily's admin screens. Audiences can only be created by authorised users and cannot be built on-the-fly; Unily says this is so that that managers can carefully control who may communicate with which audience(s). Audience groups are very fine-grained, using any profile field(s) to build a group. This includes static audiences, such as those in a particular department, and dynamic groups based on rules, which is useful for Journeys (see Scenario 3).

Scheduling is handled via publication date and time, with approval workflows available if required. To help with managing the flow of news, Unily includes a content calendar that shows all scheduled content (not just news) with filters to refine what's displayed. We think a facility to create news from here would be helpful, as would the ability to add non-intranet events like an all-company conference plus a way to gauge audience(s) fatigue.
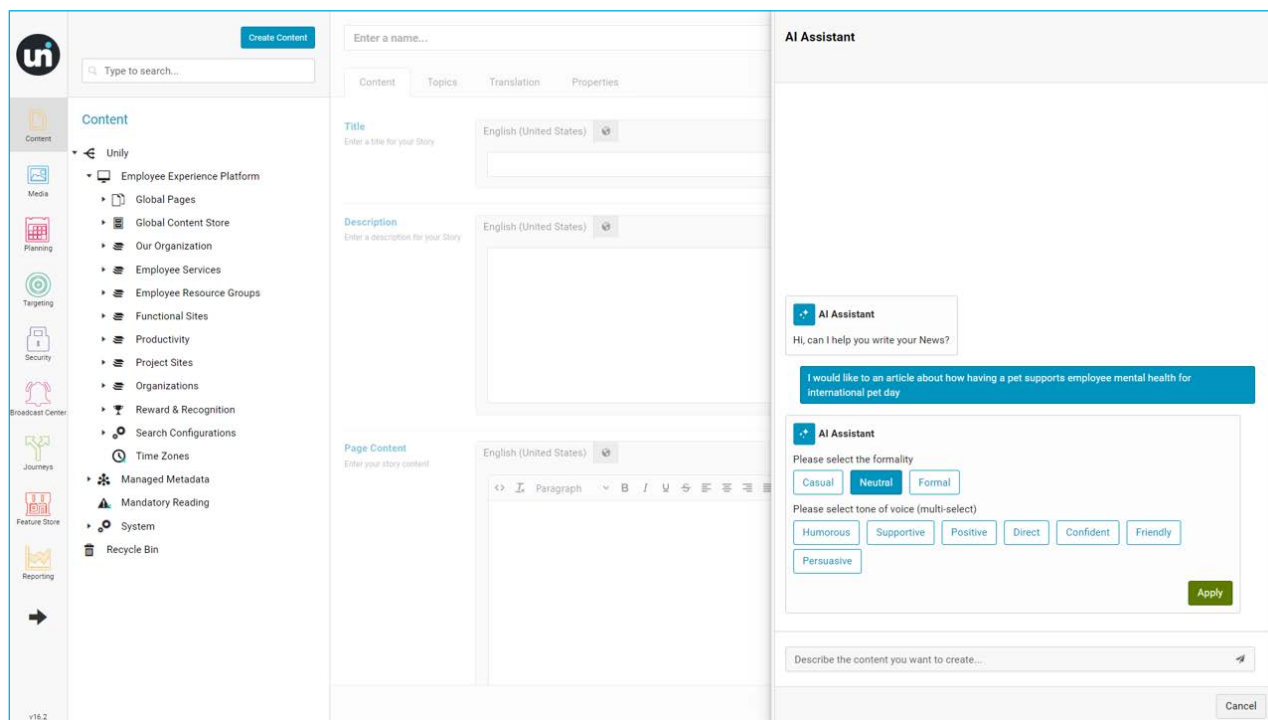
The AI Assistant helps with drafting articles from scratch, or adjusting what a publisher has written.

To aid scheduling and offer a more dynamic approach to releasing communications, Unily offers a 'Campaigns' feature. Campaigns are intended for the promotion of a particular topic such as a product launch. Campaigns are built using a defined goal / title, with a timeline of events that includes articles, emails, or posting to social channels. Conditional triggers are possible, such as to send a reminder if someone hasn't read an article. There is a good set of analytics to accompany each campaign, which includes where employees have used defined hashtags for their own content, which we particularly like.

Unily offers a variety of methods for urgent or crisis communications, with the range of notifications mentioned in Scenario 1 a good start. 'Popups' will take over the screen, while an 'announcements' banner is subtler but persists at the top of the home page. We like the 'crisis management dashboard' template developed during Covid and will help organisations collate information from integrated sources.

There is a good range of options available for communicators to reach beyond the intranet. Integrations with MS Teams, Viva Engage, and Slack allow links to articles to be posted into either a pre-specified channel, or into a Unily chatbot. Similarly, employees can share defined articles via their personal social media, including LinkedIn and Facebook. A native digital signage solution is on the roadmap for 2024, although integration via Unily's API is possible now.

Finally, there is an excellent newsletter builder. This can provide simple digest newsletters that are sent at a defined cadence and include personalised content for each recipient. Alternatively, publishers can build attractive newsletters using a variety of layouts and include personalised fields. Articles, events, and other content can be dropped into the newsletter builder and additional text added manually. We like the newsletter tool and in some ways believe the creation process is better than the main article form builder.

Overall, Unily's publishing and communication management features are very strong. While the back-end screens could be simplified for some processes, the range of communication options is impressive. Internal Communicators will find plenty to like here.

Campaigns help promote a topic with an internal audience.
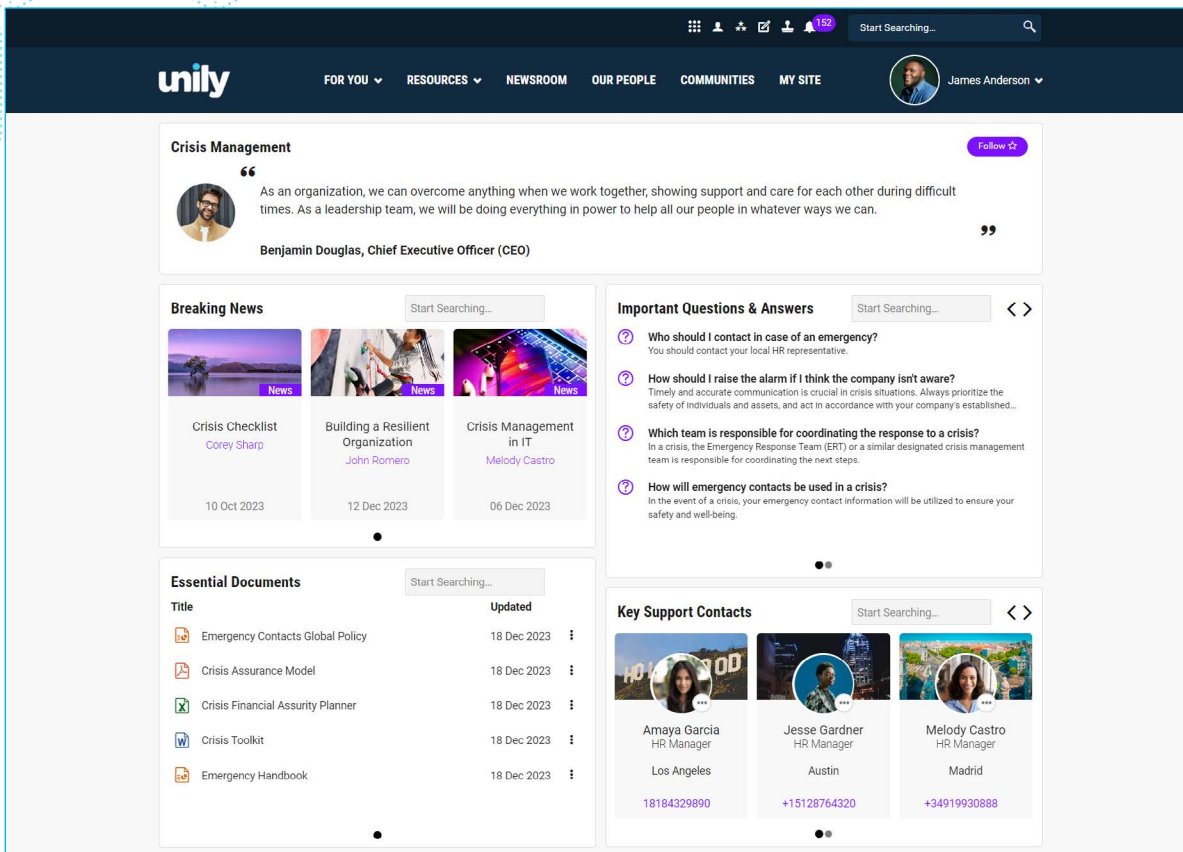
The Crisis Management Dashboard helps employees keep on top of vast, changeable situations.
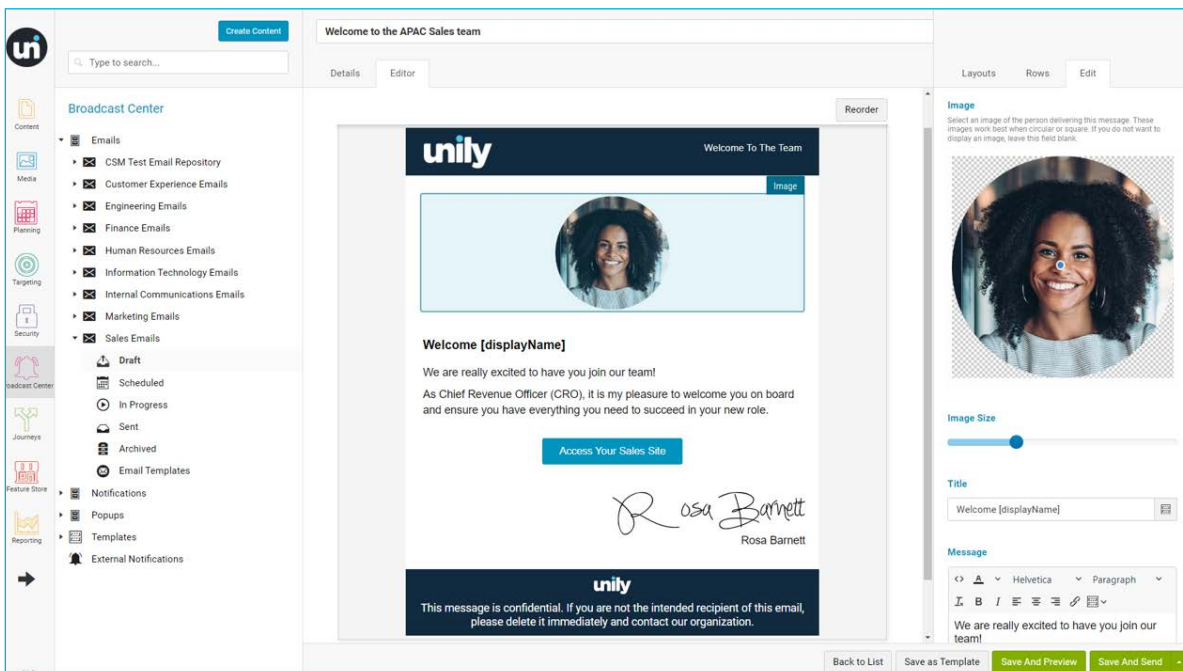
Unily's newsletter builder is flexible and helps communicators reach beyond the intranet.
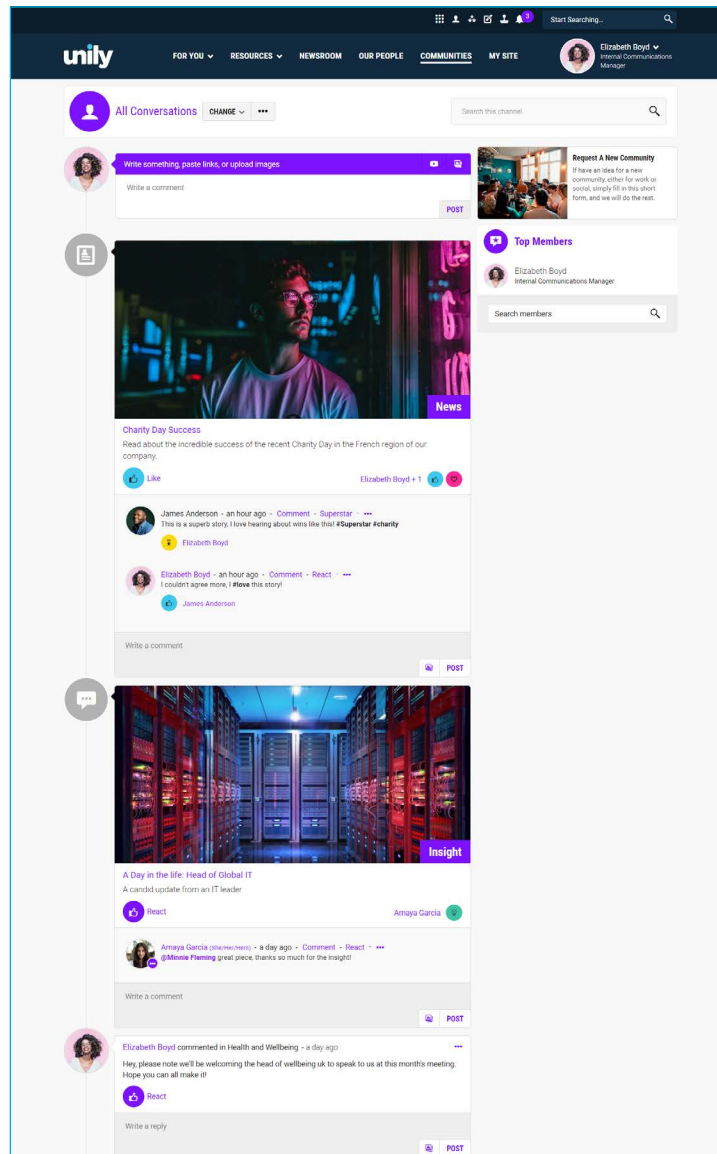
Conversations take place in Channels, feeds of posts that may take over an entire page or be embedded as a widget.

Unily has a variety of approaches to community and engagement that will serve most organisation's needs. Conversations are encouraged via 'Channels', which are timelines or feeds similar to those you find in social media platforms. Admins choose whether Channels are grouped together under different topics, or are embedded as a widget on other pages. Creating a Channel then embedding it in another page feels a little fiddly when compared to other products, but the functionality within the feeds is great for encouraging discussions.

Alternatively, people may express their thoughts within threaded page comments. Both inappropriate comments and Channel posts can be reported; this action will snapshot the post when it's reported, in case of edits before an admin has time to review the report. This works very well alongside configurable 'banned words' and should reassure organisations anxious about deploying internal social features.

Employees can react to content as well. Reactions go beyond 'likes' and are configurable by admins, who may choose to add a lightbulb icon or something brand specific as a reaction type. It's also possible to restrict where certain reactions are used on the intranet, for example a 'love' reaction type in blogs. Reactions are defined with sentiment scores, which is captured and reported on in the analytics. This is one of the best examples of reactions we've seen in this report and while it may seem minor, it is something people expect to see.

A 'Knowledge Portal' encourages informal collaboration and is excellent for knowledge communities. The Portal includes 'Knowledge Bases' that are themed spaces, such as 'publishing community' for those who are responsible for intranet content, and contain 'knowledge articles' on different topics. Bases will support a wiki requirement when open for anyone to edit, alternatively authors may be specified. There is a 'ratings' feature that allows readers to indicate how helpful an article is, plus a 'related articles' feature and a localised search for ease of finding useful content. Helpfully, a widget of Knowledge Portal articles can be positioned on other pages where relevant.

The Knowledge Portal allows organisations to build communities of knowledge and practice.

There is a simple but effective ideation tool, with an attractive landing page that can be filtered by author, category, or status to reduce the thread of suggestions. The thread could potentially be quite long, so we think more could be done to show the status of an idea more clearly. To submit an idea, employees submit a form for others to comment and up / down vote. The top ideas are highlighted on the landing page and related ideas are displayed on the idea page. This is less sophisticated than dedicated ideation tools but provides a helpful mechanism for gathering employee ideas.

The ideation tool is simple but effective.
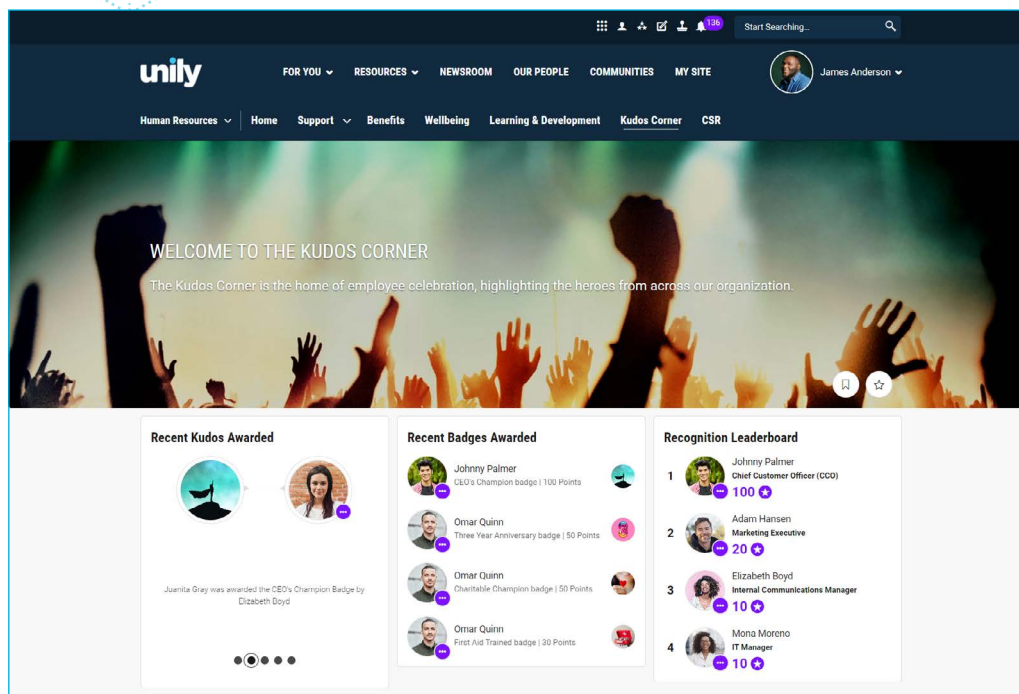
Kudos is awarded between colleagues and includes a friendly gamification element to encourage sharing.

To gauge opinion, there are simple polls in Channels and page widgets that will show cumulative results as completed. Alternatively, a forms tool is available for simple surveys. These are built using drag and drop, where conditional branching of answers is possible, and workflows are available to pass results to relevant people. Results are available for interrogation but don't offer the same actionable insights we've seen in other tools. The forms functionality is carried across into 'quizzes' that are typically short and embedded in a page to test someone's understanding.
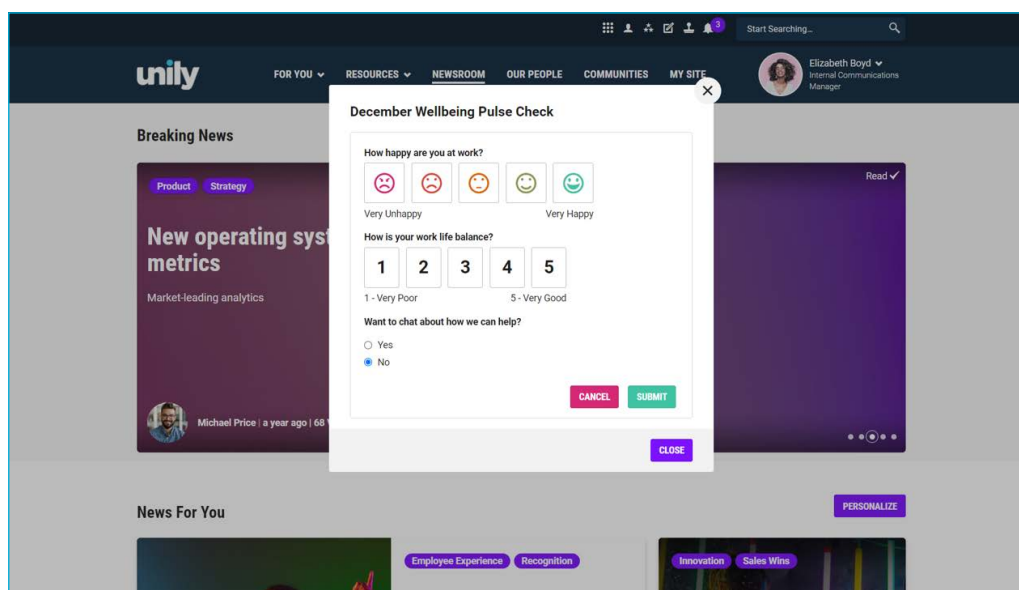
Someone in the Customer Experience department receives this pop-up to see how they're feeling at work.

Unily's strong engagement features include 'Townhalls' in events that will help organisers gather questions in advance and includes native uploading of recorded video, with a helpful AI speech to text translation feature. The 'Kudos Corner' is where people acknowledge the hard work of their colleagues. Each Kudos awarded includes points values for gamification, although it's a shame there's no rewards platform integration out of the box. We like that those people someone is in touch with more often are prioritised and that Kudos topics can be configured to be related to company values. 'Badges' are similar to Kudos - please see Scenario 5 for more.

'Journeys' draws on the features found within Campaigns and supports people at vital stages of their employment. A common example is onboarding a new employee but Journeys could also be built to re-enrol for business benefits (commonly required in the US), or to guide people through a parental leave process. Enrolment on a Journey is subject to rules associated with a trigger date, which would be added to (but hidden on) an employee's profile; messages would then be triggered in relation to that date. Messages take the form of configurable popups, emails, and notifications, timed as appropriate by admins. Admins choose whether events require a 'condition' to be met, for example the individual has read the parental leave policy before receiving a follow-up about 'staying in touch' days. Those events have associated reminder notifications, where the recurrence, message and channels (including email, push notifications, and Teams) are all configurable. Helpfully, people can be re-enrolled on Journeys as appropriate, such as for an annual performance review.

It's easy to configure the steps and associated activities within a Journey.
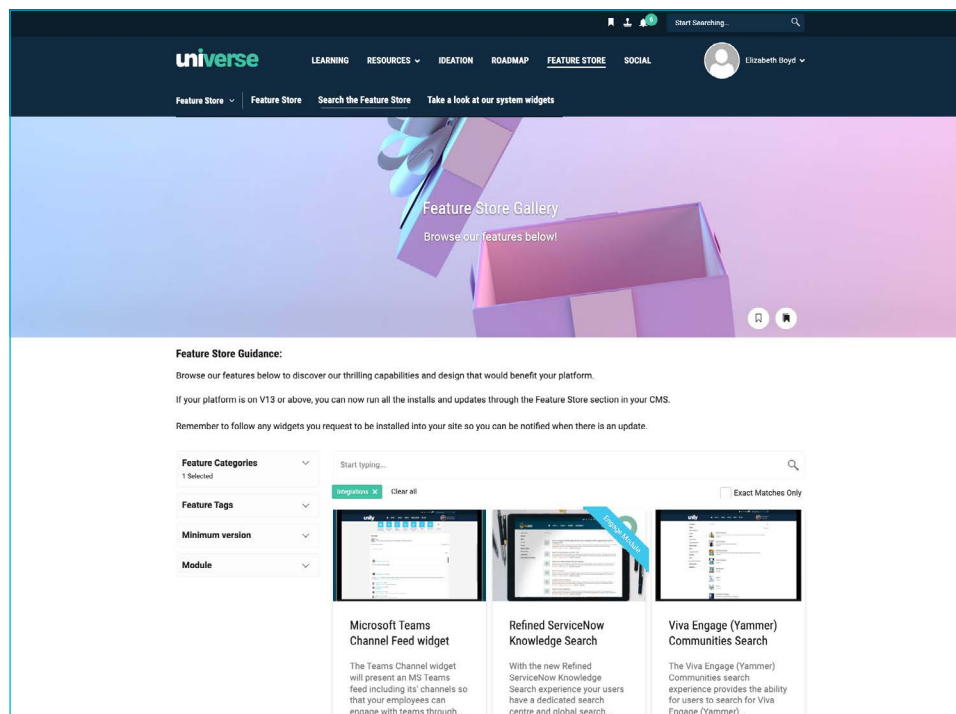
The feature store is where admins find integration options to add to their site.

At a basic level, the forms feature mentioned in Scenario 3 is useful for simple transactions like ordering a uniform. However, the types of organisations that choose Unily are likely to have dedicated third-party tools for most businesses systems, so integrations become more important.

There is a feature store in the back-end with a series of cards displaying available integration options, which would need to be configured by someone with technical knowledge. Unily says they have focused on micro-transactions, which is evident from the choices such as content roll-ups from external systems, chatbot widgets, and 'share' buttons into specific systems. However, deeper integrations are also available out of the box, such as viewing and actioning Concur expenses or ServiceNow tickets.

Other helpful integrations include Workplace by Meta channels, Gmail and Outlook calendars, and email roll-ups – all of which can be interacted with inside the widget. Unily says that Viva Engage or Workplace by Meta channels could be used instead of the native commenting function, although this may take effort or additional cost to configure.

The nature of the roll-up widgets means that content of sites and recently opened documents can be displayed within Unily from both Microsoft and Google environments. The employee's available MS Teams spaces and content from specific Teams channels can also be displayed and interacted with. We also like that when employees choose to share content into Teams or Slack, they decide where it's shared to rather than the chatbot approach in Scenario 2. Finally, Unily says that accessing the intranet via a Teams app is on the roadmap, which will be a helpful addition.

Overall, Unily offers a good range of helpful integrations out-of-the-box and also provides an API for custom development. They shared that one of their clients has integrated their own in-house shift management tool, for example. Configuring the existing integrations or creating new ones will take effort and requires technical knowledge, although there are guides to help in their customer community portal. Unily also says they can assist, however this may be at additional cost and we advise that development timescales are discussed before committing.

Unily includes helpful content roll-up widgets out of the box,
which can be fed from Microsoft or Google if wanted.
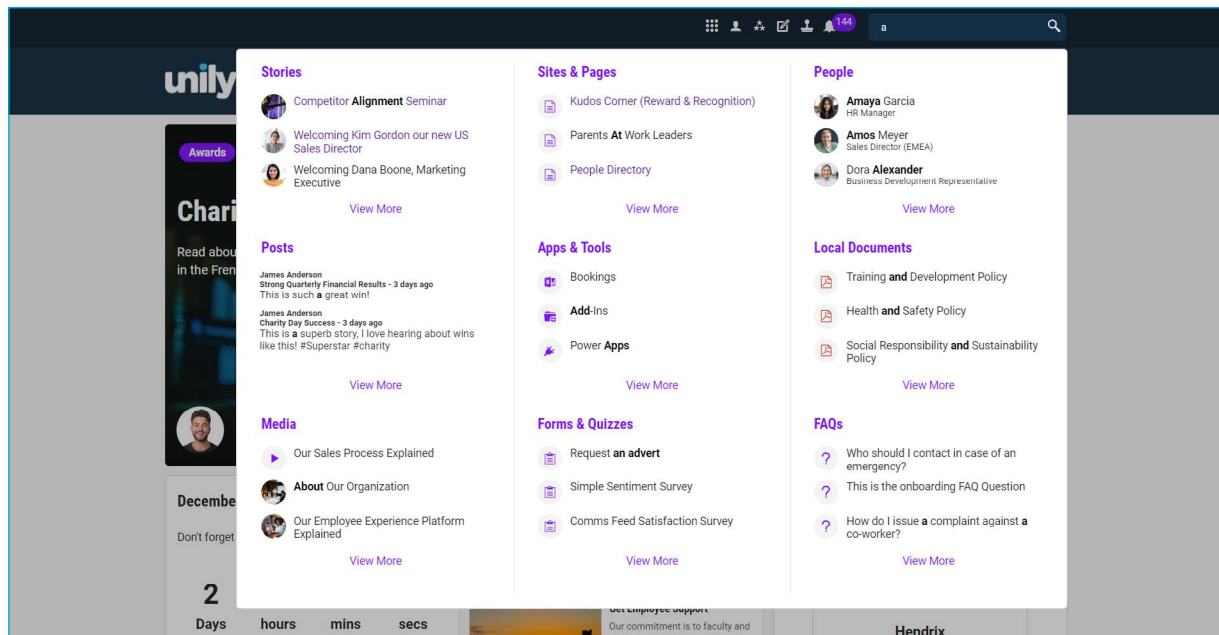
The Global Search presents comprehensive results as someone types.

Unily provides a very comprehensive search experience with a good degree of control for admins. As someone types into the persistent 'Global Search' at the top of the screen, a dropdown opens to present potential results. This is an attractive pane that's helpfully split into content types for ease of browsing, where partial and fuzzy matches are supported to try and pinpoint a result immediately. What's included in the dropdown is configurable by admins, including audience targeting of columns to give employees relevant quick results; this is another area where admins will have to carefully plan what to include. People can click results from this dropdown or press enter to be taken into the 'Search Centre'.

The Search Centre presents a greater number of results as a list or in tiles, depending on the employee's choice. Results are presented with helpful summaries, plus associated images or defined icons depending on the content type. The different content types with associated filters are presented as a list on the left and these are dynamic, responding to the available results to dictate what options are displayed. We like that quick actions can be taken from within the results, for example to share something into Teams, complete a quick edit on a page, or flag an email for follow-up. Search Centres can also be set up in 'Workspaces' or other areas to provide localised search on specific content areas.

Unily includes very fine-grained controls for admins to influence how search behaves. Promoted search results are supported in both the Global Search and Search Centre, results are audience targeted from the content and also in the search configuration options, plus there is good metadata throughout such as topics and ratings. Advanced settings then allow technical admins to configure all aspects of the search, such as reducing the likelihood of older posts from appearing in results or boosting the degree of fuzzy match that's acceptable. This is sophisticated and Unily advise that they configure search during set up, but it does mean that organisations with complex search needs will be well served. We would like to see a simple feedback mechanism introduced for results accuracy, to help admins configure the search appropriately, although Unily says this could be built using forms. More detailed search reporting (see Scenario 7) would also be welcome.
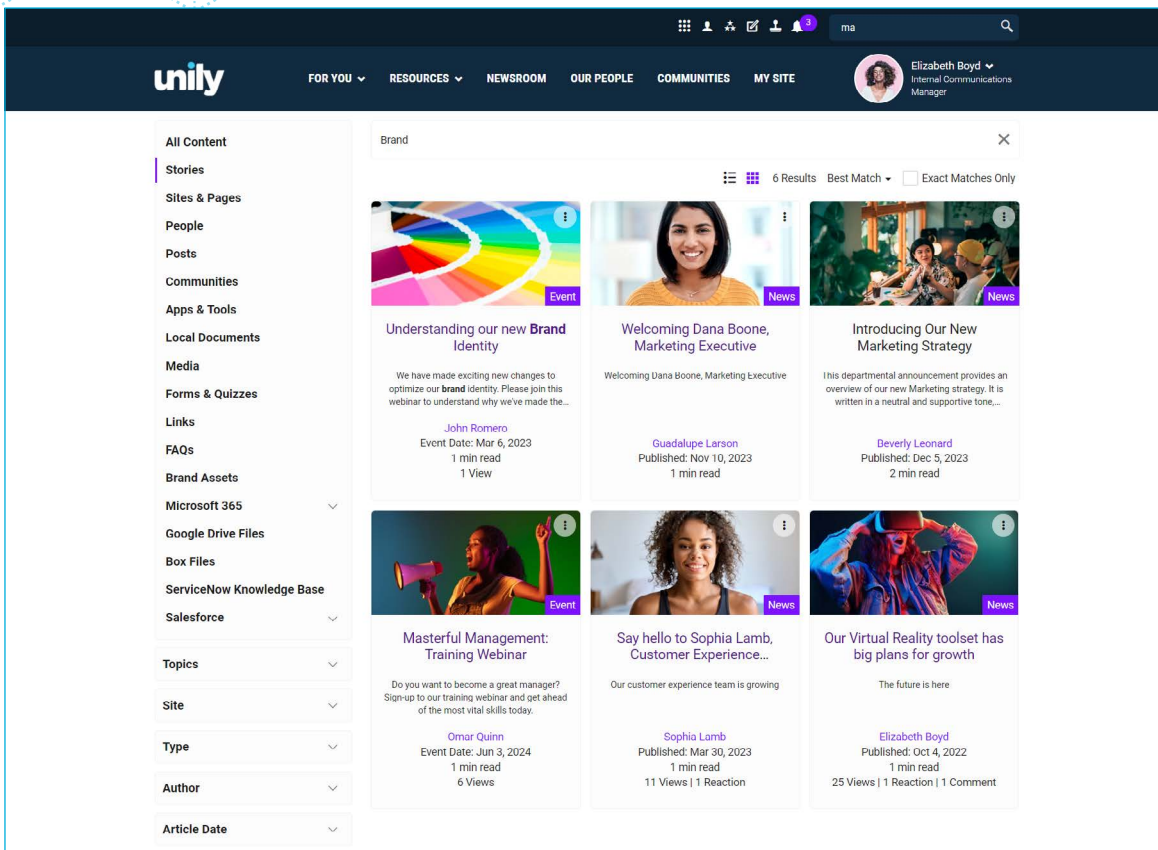
The Search Centre is attractive and gives people a lot of filtering controls to narrow down to the result they're looking for.
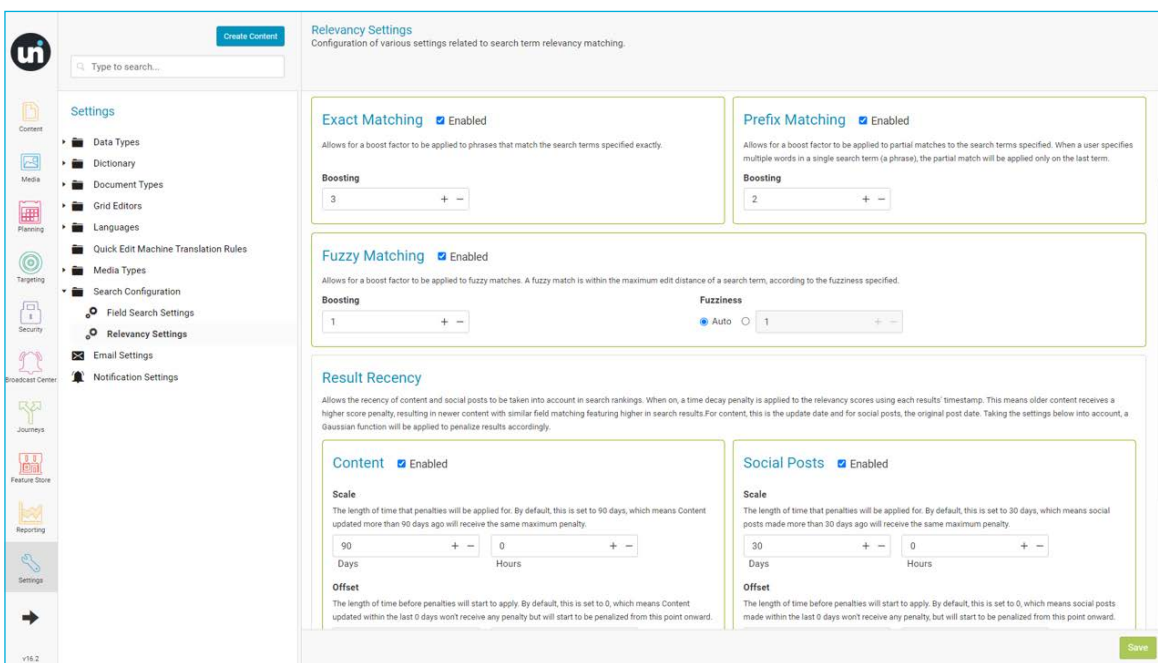
An example search configuration screen that shows the depth of detail admins can go into.

The federated search works well, with data from a variety of integrated sources being indexed. This includes SharePoint and Google Workspace. The display of results is influenced by the incoming API, which is out of Unily's control, but they do well with what they receive. An AI-assisted search is coming in 2024 and we hope to see a 'likely answers' approach, which will help smooth the styling inconsistencies from federated search results. This would also help reduce the potential to overwhelm from such a comprehensive platform too.

People are included in search results, or a directory could be added to the site navigation if wanted. It's possible to start calls and award Kudos (see Scenario 3) from the search results, without having to open a profile page. Search indexes all visible profile fields as well as badges that are awarded by admins for site or organisational labels. This could be for 'mentor' or 'first aider' for example and is a helpful feature.

Profile pages are attractive, with a simple organisation chart that can be opened and explored further. Organisations may choose to let employees edit all or some profile fields, or it can be populated from relevant sources such as an HR system. Behind the scenes, the number of profile fields can be greater than those on display or indexed during the search. This allows for fields such as 'job start date' or 'parental leave start date' to be fed from an appropriate system, which will add people into relevant Journeys (see Scenario 3) without colleagues being able to see personal information.

Overall, Unily provides a very comprehensive search experience. For end users, this means it's likely they will find what they're looking for but at the risk of getting overwhelmed initially. For admins, this means features to help people find content or completely control the experience, which may be desirable for those with sophisticated needs.

Profile pages are attractive and include helpful information,
such as awarded badges, skills, and an organisation chart.
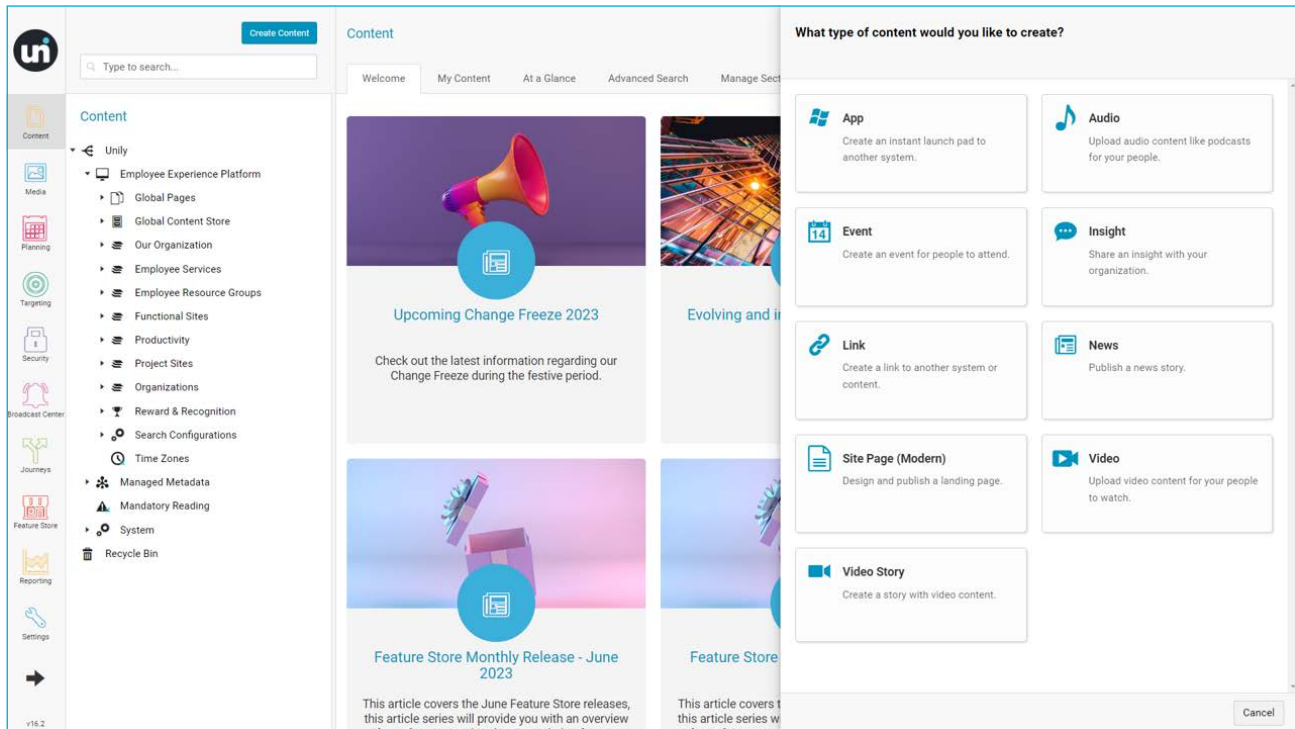
The 'create content' menu bypasses the need to navigate to the relevant space in the CMS to add something.

As Unily is so flexible and comprehensive, the separate CMS environment for administering the site is understandably vast. In the environment we saw there were fourteen different menu areas for admins to navigate between to create content, manage media, create Journeys, get into the developer tools, and more. Each menu then contains a sub-menu, where selected items open new tabbed menu screens where configuration takes place. Most screens have to be saved before changes are applied, or discarded before the admin can move onto another screen, which is helpful to stop accidental losses. For those used to managing websites, the CMS experience will be familiar, but is more complex than some of the other SaaS solutions we've seen in this report. Customer feedback about the CMS has been mixed, too.

Helpfully there are fine-grained site-wide permissions, so infrequent publishers would see a different set of options compared to someone managing technical elements. To help admins navigate such a comprehensive CMS there is a full search experience, which we wish other products would introduce too, although it can be tricky to differentiate between 'content' results. There are icons to try to distinguish different activities, but this could take a little while to become familiar with; additional tool tips or a key in the results screen would be beneficial. However, we do like the 'create content' button, which allows publishers to create news centrally and then apply its location later.
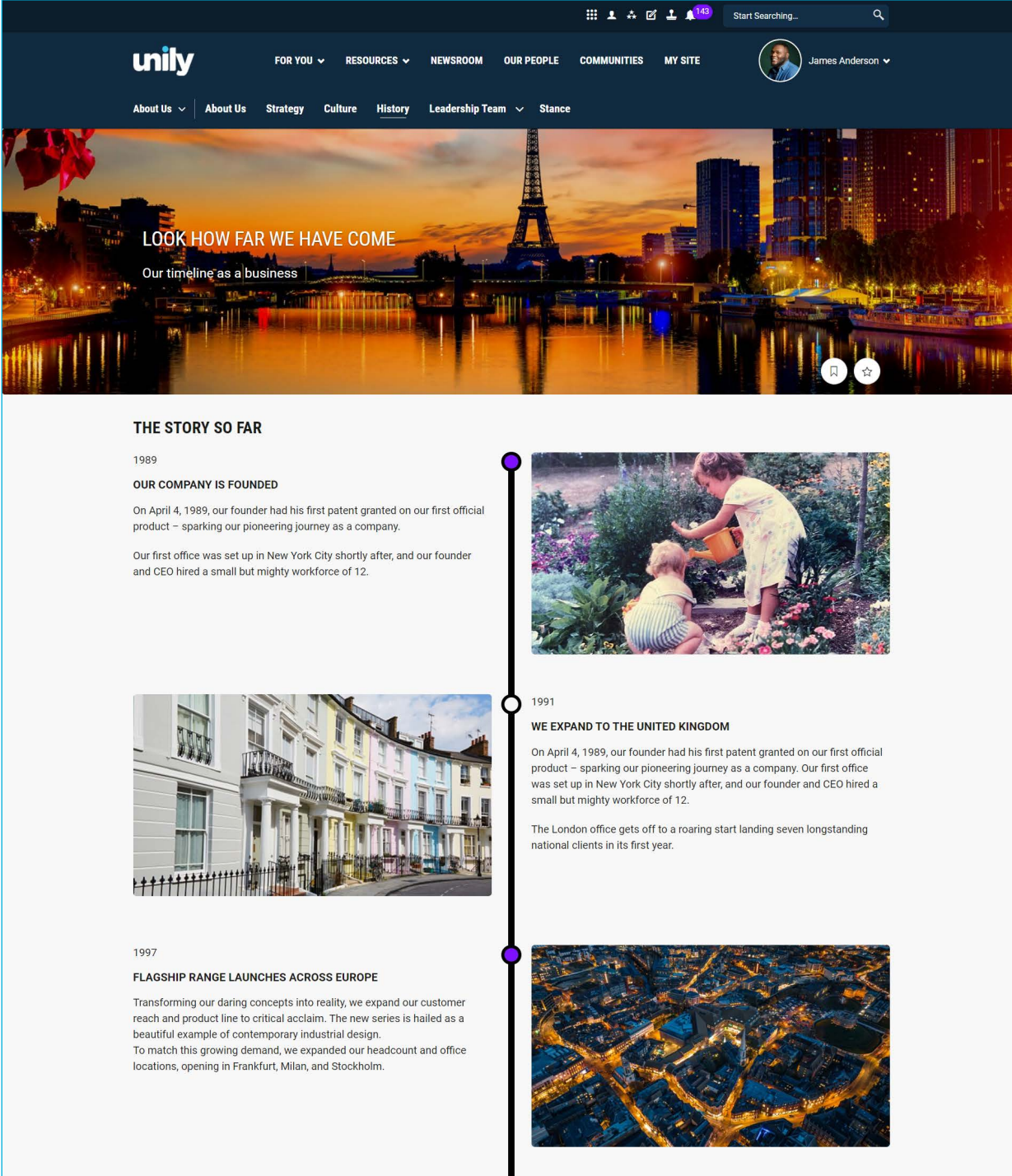
It's surprising there aren't any inbuilt provisioning request processes or workflows; Unily says the fine-grained permissions should mean that requests aren't needed, as those with relevant settings have the permission to create new pages or spaces. However, there are always edge cases and given the potential for there to be a lot of site admins, organisations would have to carefully train people so they know who to talk to about such requests. Alternatively Unily forms could be used if wanted.

In the 'Content' menu, 'Global Pages' is where admins configure home and other landing pages. There are a variety of tabs to control aspects such as permissions, while 'content' is where the design is configured. Admins drop widgets, installed from the feature store, into a grid layout and configure the widget as wanted. Use of the 'preview' is a must to check progress, although Unily will configure these pages during set up; coming soon is a 'live page editor' where publishers can see what they are building as they design it. It's worth noting that although a Global Page can be audience targeted, individual widgets can't, which we feel is a little restrictive for an otherwise flexible platform. However, we appreciate the simplicity of creating a Page, applying audiences, and choosing whether it is automatically shown in the navigation or not.

Each widget is easily configured from a popout menu.

There are some helpful pre-configured pages for creating information related to the organisation's vision, history, or stance on external topics, like climate change. These pages look very attractive and require no design skills from the publisher, as everything is ready for them to just add content into, but more widgets can be added where wanted. We particularly like the timeline widget, which could be used to explain the history of the organisation in an attractive way.

Templated pages, such as this timeline, look attractive and are easy for publishers to populate with appropriate content.

Content has publish, review, and expiry dates, where content passing expiry is automatically unpublished but not deleted; this can apply to whole content spaces, not just individual articles or pages which is helpful. Content owners are notified when their content is due for review – where they have multiple upcoming notifications, these are automatically aggregated to reduce noise. Content owners see the status of all their content in a helpful 'My Content' dashboard in the CMS and can take appropriate action from there too. Each menu area also includes a helpful dashboard showing an overview of how well content inside is being maintained, although it's a shame the review settings can't also be easily accessed from here. Organisations looking for sophisticated management features will appreciate the detailed audit logs, option for those editing to add associated comments, and the ability to rollback to an earlier version.

Unily handles multi-language needs well, starting with settings that control which content employees may choose to auto-translate. Where publishers want more control over language versions, they select the starting language and which languages to translate into. This creates additional language versions using Microsoft Azure, which are displayed as tabs that publishers may then edit. There is no workflow to keep translations in sync if things change later, but the translation process can be re-run if needed. Admins may also choose to set rules that auto-translate content of Workspaces into pre-determined company languages on page publication, which is unusual and helpful for publishers who forget translations are needed. Users set their preferred language in their profile and can switch languages while viewing content as well.

Overall, Unily's administration options are very comprehensive and flexible, which will likely meet the needs of complex organisations. It's helpful that infrequent publishers or content managers can be separated from many of the options, while technical administrators may appreciate being able to easily edit code. However, because of the sophistication of the platform we found the experience a little confusing at times and found it tricky to know where to go to complete activities. More in-depth training from Unily, which is available to clients, would likely help as would experience over time.

It's easy to create content in multiple languages.
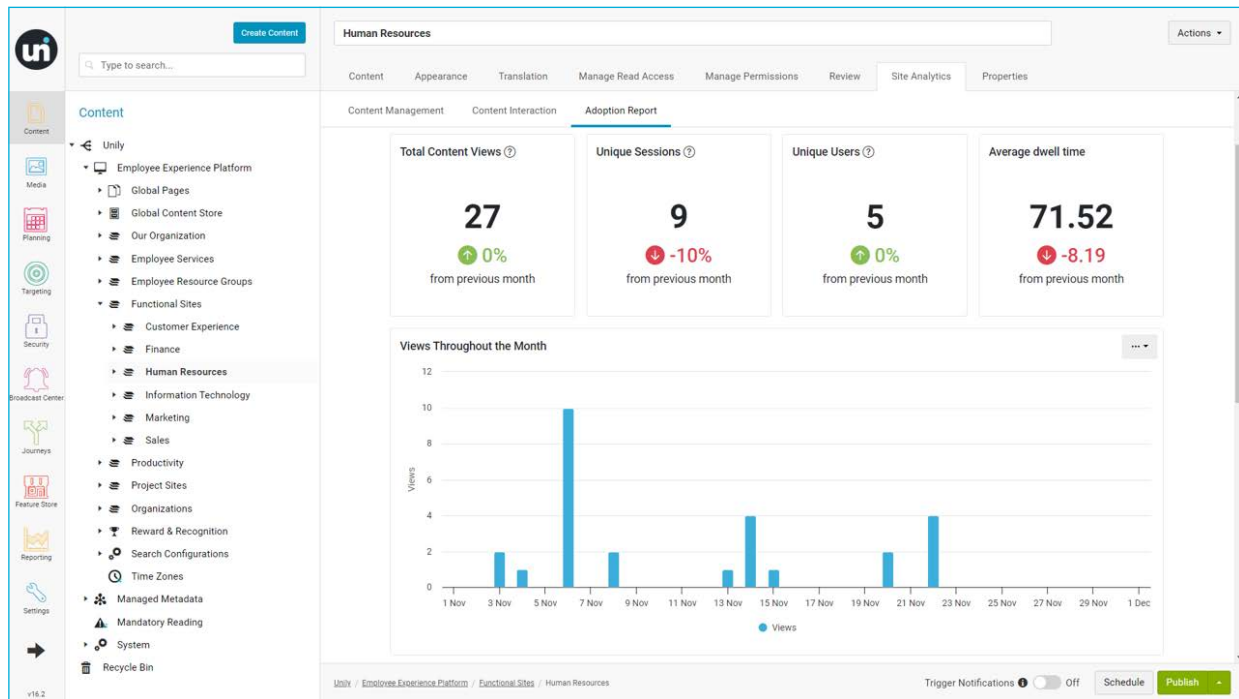
Unily's dashboards include charts and tables of data.

In late 2023 Unily released a new analytics suite, where admins select from available dashboards in the feature store to build the reporting as desired. By then applying appropriate permissions, people will only see the data that's relevant, which is a nice approach, and we like that client-specific profile filter labels are automatically applied (such as 'franchise'). There is a helpful range and depth of data, but at the time we saw it there was room for improvement. Unily had plans to launch additional dashboards by the time this report is published, however.

We like that entire dashboards can be downloaded as PDFs, for ease of sharing, and some individual charts are downloadable in a variety of formats. There are helpful tooltips to explain what some data means, although some were unclear and there are other areas where instructions could be clearer. Dates are configurable and applying content filters by clicking data in tables works well. We'd like to see comparisons of periods added, such as last week vs the previous week, but the month-on-month benchmarking data report is nice.

We like the 'used integrations' listing, which is helpful to show which business tools are being used, allowing admins to make changes to site content in response. Campaigns, Journeys, Workspaces, and pages each have their own data, which allows owners to assess the success of their content. There is also a search dashboard that shows overall numbers, for example total searches and the search terms used. Each would benefit from being developed so that admins can take appropriate actions; for example, there's no way to see which search terms returned zero results.

Mandatory reads are managed via admin screens within their own menu, meaning they are created as their own content item rather than applied to a news article or reference document. They can include links to existing content, however. Results are viewable and exportable as a CSV, but there's no easy way for publishers to trigger reminders to those who haven't read something.

Overall, we think the new analytics dashboards have a few gaps but show a lot of promise and there is a good foundation for further development.
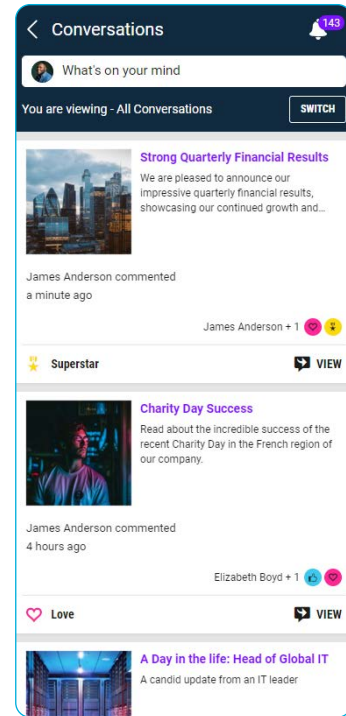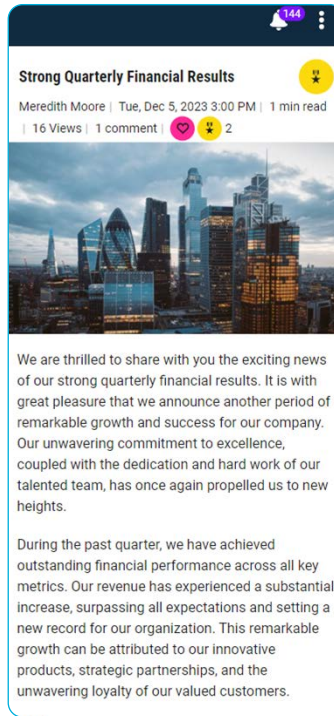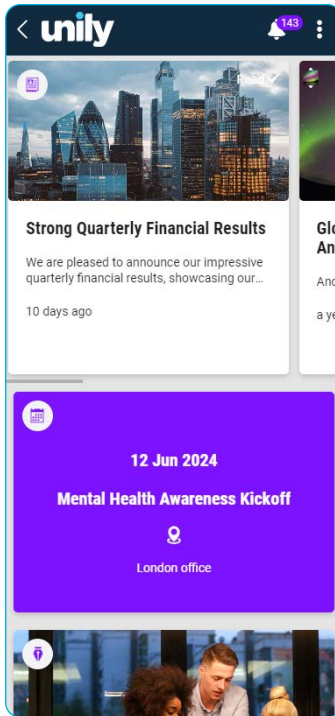
***Unily translates well to a small-screen environment, retaining
its comprehensiveness and attractive experience.***

Employees can find the native Unily app in app stores, which includes those outside of Apple and Android. A custom-branded option is available at extra cost for clients with MDM platforms or via Apple Business Manager. The desktop branding is then reflected in the app environment, regardless of deployment method.

Employees log in using existing credentials, with single sign-on supported from systems like Microsoft or even LinkedIn. Employees may stay logged-in to the app until they log-out, making subsequent access easy. However, Unily customers may want tighter security controls, and adding biometric authentication, which is not included, would be a welcome addition.

The mobile experience is engaging and the suite of features on offer work well for frontline audiences, such as offline reading for newsfeed content. A built-in shift calendar that integrates with third-party shift management systems such as Workforce.com is also helpful. People can see allocated shifts, request changes and check-in or check-out from within the Unily app.

Search in the app gives a comparable experience to the desktop version, with results appearing and refining as someone enters text. The same options for filtering results are also available, as are the optimisation controls covered in Scenario 5.

Main navigation items, like home and social, are at the bottom of the screen, with a hamburger menu reflecting the desktop navigation. This works well, but deep desktop navigation may feel like a lot to click through where the experience isn't simplified by admins. Unily's grid and widget design system supports variants however, so different navigation options, features and content can be shown on mobile versus desktop. It's therefore in the hands of admins to optimise the desktop environment so that it's appropriate on mobile. As Unily can be comprehensive on desktop and the admin tools are extensive (see Scenario 6), this could be a challenge.

Overall, Unily works well on desktop and mobile, with features like the Channels timeline feeds arguably working better on the small screen. The range of controls means it's flexible for admins and can be simplified for mobile users, although may take some effort to set up appropriately.

THINGS TO BEAR IN MIND

Unily includes fine-grained controls that allows admins to build an employee experience almost any way desired. This approach will serve larger or more complex organisations well, as they are likely to have dedicated skilled administrators who will be able to make use of all the settings. This comprehensiveness and flexibility does mean that it feels like there is more ground-up designing required for a Unily intranet than other SaaS solutions we've seen.

There are a variety of tools and features on offer, so careful planning and training will be needed to avoid overwhelming employees – both end-users and those with admin permissions. We would also say it's advisable to use Unily's features (such as the Knowledge Base with Channels) to maintain a publisher community. This will reduce the risk of overwhelming infrequent publishers, while also supporting a decentralised governance model well.

While dedicated in-house resource is likely to work best, Unily says they can offer support to organisations around the creation of integrations or other admin configuration needs. We would advise discussing organisational requirements with Unily to identify what development is needed, then also who will do this work and over what timeframe. It's also worth noting the less positive feedback in the 'Voice of the Customer' section regarding bespoke developments.

Unily are open about focusing on enterprise-scale organisations as their core customer base and the high price reflects that decision. However, the pricing structure is formed from different module options and means that it could be more affordable for smaller or less complex businesses that don't need the full range of features. There is a lot to like in Unily, so we would advise people to weigh up the pricing against the value the product offers.

Why choose this product

Unily is a sophisticated platform that delivers comprehensive desktop and mobile environments, with good audience targeting and tailoring. Employees will appreciate the ease of use and variety of community features, while admins will like the range of flexible tools to maintain their site as desired. Internal Communicators and HR colleagues in particular will find a lot to like. Large or complex organisations will find Unily meets their needs effectively, while also delivering an attractive end result that will represent their brand well.

Vendor roadmap

No roadmap has been supplied by Unily.

workvivo

a **ZOOM** company

FULLY STANDALONE

REQUIRES SHAREPOINT

OPTIONALLY WORKS WITH SHAREPOINT

FRONTLINE FOCUS
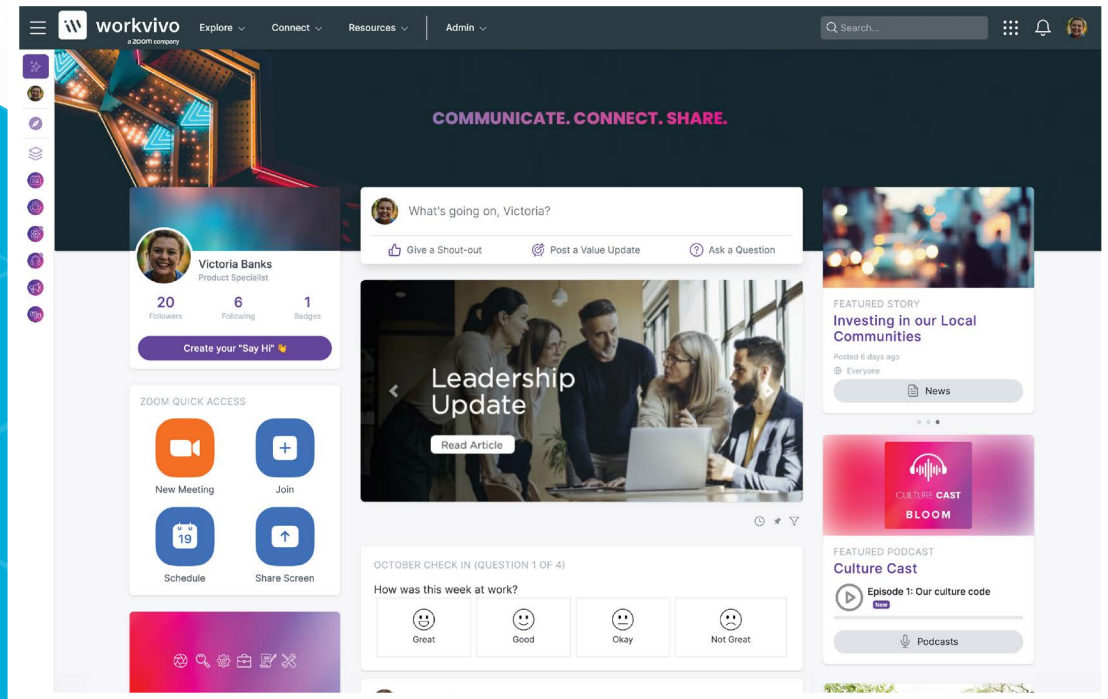
Typical deployment:

5,000 - 10,000 employees

Company locations:

VISIT THE WEBSITE
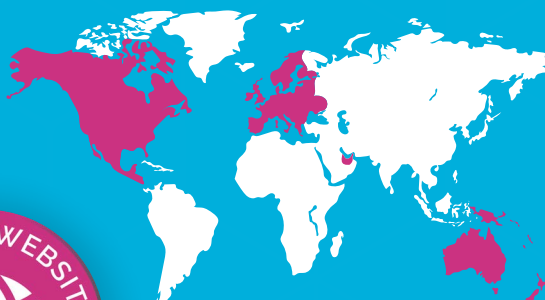
The product in a nutshell

An attractive, modern interface that seamlessly combines both user-driven social and internal communications features for businesses with distributed workforces.

Workvivo owned by Workvivo (a Zoom Company)

Workvivo was founded in 2017, then was purchased by Zoom in early 2023, and is headquartered in Cork, Ireland. The Workvivo platform is very well-designed. Its user-friendly interface and sleek home page options make it easy to access and navigate for a wide range of users. The social and community features that are baked into almost every area of the product provides a dynamic, user-driven experience.

The out-of-the-box internal communications and messaging features are successful in equipping internal communications teams and content publishers with the tools they need to easily plan, build, and publish attractive site content. Additionally, the strong multi-language capabilities of the platform make Workvivo an appealing option for businesses whose locations span countries and languages. The live broadcasting features, for both livestreams and podcasts, are unusual and add to Workvivo's range of communication features. Spaces, Workvivo's term for microsites, provide an excellent way for both corporate teams and special

interest groups to form community and identity, thanks to the numerous features available.

However, some admins might want greater control over configuring the platform. For example, integrations with third-party systems, including M365, are somewhat light. Search may also feel lacking for customers setting up integrations with numerous business systems or vast SharePoint instances, as promoted and featured results are not possible. The mobile app environment is strong although some functionality would benefit from further development, such as the chat.

Workvivo will most suit medium to large sized organisations where communications and engagement are the key priorities. Additionally, the attractive mobile application and flexible digital signage feature primes Workvivo to fit the needs of both frontline and office workers. Note that pricing is among the higher products in this report, but Workvivo is modular so there is the potential to reduce this somewhat where certain features aren't wanted.

Pricing

PRICE BAND

250 users	$ $ $ $
1,000 users	$ $ $ $
5,000 users	$ $ $ $
20,000 users	$ $ $ $

These prices are indicative, offering a comparison of the products featured in this report only. Please contact the vendor for a bespoke quote.

PRICING MODEL

Subscription – price band based on number of users.

COSTS TYPICALLY

Fairly evenly spread across three years.

DISCOUNTS

Charities and non-profit organisations and multi-year commitments. The vendor also offer discounts for customers who support Workvivo with using their logo for marketing purposes and with case studies.

PRICE INCLUDES

In addition to the software and initial implementation services, all customers will be supported by the Workvivo Customer Success Team, Workvivo Support Team and have access to the Online Workvivo Knowledge Base. All available modules are included in this pricing.

Product type

Ready-to-run, installed in days

Branding opportunities

Good branding, complex options

Base systems

Fully standalone	Requires SharePoint	Optionally works with SharePoint	Other

Sectors

Engineering and manufacturing	Healthcare	Hospitality and events management	Retail	Transport & Logistics

You may also be interested in...

Haiilo   firstup   MangoApps

COMMUNICATE. CONNECT. SHARE.

Victoria Banks
Product Specialist

20	6	1
Followers	Following	Badges

Create your "Say Hi" 👋

ZOOM QUICK ACCESS

📹 New Meeting   ➕ Join

📅 Schedule   ⬆️ Share Screen

LINKS

Key Systems	+
Useful Apps	+
Key Apps	+

YOUTUBE

Workvivo
140 Subscribers

Employees get to know one another

The #1 Rated Employee Experience Ap...
Internal Communicators 👋 Reach every member of your organisation - and measuring employ...

507 views • 0 likes • 0 comments

What's going on, Victoria?

👍 Give a Shout-out   📝 Post a Value Update   ❓ Ask a Question

Leadership Update
Read Article

⏱ 📌 �+ ⏳

OCTOBER CHECK IN (QUESTION 1 OF 4)

How was this week at work?

😀 Great	🙂 Good	😐 Okay	☹️ Not Great

Wes Harris posted a shout-out.
2 days ago • 🌐

Shoutout to Sue Taylor, Maurice Lawson and Cheryl Lewis for organizing a very successful client meeting today! They were very impressed by her great presentation. Nice work! #ClientFocus

Shout-out to:
👤 Sue Taylor   👤 Maurice Lawson   👤 Cheryl Lewis

9 likes • 1 comment   ↗ Share

❤️ 9

Ben Williams
Well done everyone - I heard it went great 👏👏
18 hours ago ♡ 0

Leave a comment...

Amy Martin posted a value update.
2 days ago • 🌐
Value: No Limits

Thank you to our amazing Marketing team for making this new video highlighting #internal #communications challenges that will be launched on all of our social channels! 👏

FEATURED STORY
Investing in our Local Communities
Posted 6 days ago
🌐 Everyone

📰 News

FEATURED PODCAST
Culture Cast

CULTURE CAST BLOOM

▶ Episode 1: Our culture code
New

🎙 Podcasts

UPCOMING EVENTS

OCT **26** — Company Volunteering Day
📍 Global
🕐 09:00 - 14:30
Corporate and Social Responsibility

OCT **26** — Cybersecurity Training Session
📍 Zoom
🕐 15:00 - 17:00
Open in Zoom
🌐 Global

📅 Events

TRENDING HASHTAGS
#ClientFocus
1 post in past 7 days

FEATURED PAGE
HR Hub

📄 Pages

COMPANY AND PRODUCT

Company details

Company
Workvivo (a Zoom company)

ISO 27001 certified
Yes

Data residency
Customers have a choice of AWS Regions to host their data. They can host their data in the EU, US or in the Middle East.

Company founded
2017

Product launched
2018

Typical client size
5,000 - 10,000 employees

Largest deployment so far
190,000 employees at Dollar General across the USA

Customers
Clients include: Bupa, Dollar General, Amazon, Virgin, Clipper Logistics, TELUS International, Lululemon, Madison Square Garden, AIB, Everton F. C.

Partner locations
Global

Company locations
Cork, Ireland (HQ), Ireland, USA, UK, UAE, New Zealand

Product and technical details

Name of product
Workvivo

Deployment

Client on-premises	Client private cloud	Microsoft Azure	Amazon Web Services	Vendor-hosted	Microsoft 365 tenant	Other

Client data encrypted

In transit only	In transit and at rest	At rest only

Authentication supported

Entra ID	ADFS	Okta	Open ID	Oauth	G Suite	Other*

*For organisations that don't have employees on a Single Sign On platform, Workvivo also has native username / password for user authentication.

App deployment

Google Play store	Apple store	MDM	MAM	Other

Accessibility

Alt text is in use for images and keyboards can be used for navigation. Workvivo develops their software with WCAG 2.1 guidelines in mind and they strive towards WCAG 2.1 principles. In addition to the areas above, users can also use a screen reader to navigate through Workvivo. Workvivo also has captioning and transcription features, to assist deaf or partially deaf people.

Document library sources integrated

Box	Dropbox	Google Drive	SharePoint	OneDrive	Other

Optional integrated enterprise search engines

Coveo	Elastic	IBM	Lucidworks	Microsoft	Mindbreeze	Sinequa	Other

User interface multi-language

Pre-configured	Editable	Right to left script supported	Other

Content multi-language

Machine translation for publishers	Machine translation for end users	Editable machine translation for publishers	Manual creation for publishers	Right to left script	Other

Set-up and support

Set-up process for new clients

New customers are onboarded using Workvivo's Project Methodology that consists of four key areas. Technical Setup, System Customisation, Change Management and Content Creation. Workvivo projects can run from four weeks in duration up to 12+ weeks for enterprise customers

Current version

October 2023

Product updates

Workvivo is updated on a continuous basis with major features being released every month.

Product update process

All customers are updated at once. However major new features are "feature gated", enabling customers to enable / disable these features at their own convenience.

Reverse-out options

All data posted on Workvivo is owned by the customer. As a result, customers can request a full return of their data in the event of a termination of contract. Workvivo also has procedures and controls in place to securely destroy customer data when no longer required. Details are provided in contracts with customers.

Technical support

Email support	Phone support	Chat support	Online portal	24/7 support	Office hours only*

*UK office hours, but with some increase support times available on request.

User community

In summer 2023, Workvivo launched their Customer Community. Unlike a public forum, their Community platform is a dedicated Workvivo instance, exclusive to their customer Comms Leaders. Customers can share best practice and ideas, plus seek advice from peers. Workvivo hold a monthly best practice webinar where customers can connect and knowledge-share. Customers hear directly about key Workvivo moments, new feature releases and get access to thought leadership content. There is an assets library available, helping to elevate their comms efforts.

Voice of the vendor

Workvivo (a Zoom company) says: "Workvivo is an employee experience platform (EXP) that simplifies communication and increases engagement by empowering employees to be heard and helping everyone feel included, no matter where they work.

The platform unifies employee communications, engagement, intranet, and measurement features into one modern employee app that captures the heartbeat of the organisation and brings its culture to life.

Research shows that people are disengaged and at work, leading to severe business challenges such as record high employee turnover, absenteeism, and lower productivity. As per Gartner (October 2022), the number one challenge facing CEOs today is keeping employees engaged, motivated, and emotionally connected to their company's culture, values, and goals, wherever they work from.

There is an experience gap. With fewer people working from the office (frontline and hybrid employees) companies find it increasingly difficult to effectively reach, communicate, and engage their people, nourish a sense of belonging, and assure a positive connected employee experience and energy.

There is also a technology gap. Companies have too many communication and engagement tools without a clear centre, making them hard to manage and ineffective. Legacy intranets are poorly adopted, email newsletters are ineffective and messaging apps, such as Slack and Teams, have become overloaded and distracting. In addition, while everyone wants to feel part of the company, frontline employees are often excluded from these primary communication channels, making it impossible for them to stay up to date on the latest developments.

The transition from an office-first to a digital-first workplace is no easy feat. To make it successful, companies must find ways to bridge the experience and technology gaps so that every employee – regardless of their location – feels informed, included, and emotionally connected to the company's culture, values, goals, and people."

Voice of the customer

We received very positive feedback from Workvivo customers. From those who replied, we heard that the product's ease of use was a standout, with an overall sentiment along the lines of Workvivo being a "very intuitive system for both admins and users". Additionally, one customer expressed that, unlike their old intranet solution, Workvivo enabled "each business area the autonomy to share their own content". Customers also praised Workvivo's communication offerings, sharing "it has a lot of different functionality for different forms of communication".

Feedback we received from customers regarding areas where they'd like to see improvement largely centred around providing customers with even more options for customisation and functionality. While customers appreciate the different types of communication available, they wish for things like the "ability to customise newsletters a little more". and "greater ability to edit text within posts". This desire for more functionality extends to surveys and event registration features as well, with one customer sharing they'd like to, "be able to branch off with survey questions and include rich imagery".

"Responsive" and "Receptive" were words that all customers who responded to our survey used to describe Workvivo. Across the board, customers praised Workvivo for being an excellent partner from the time of onboarding to ongoing support. Customers expressed that they feel Workvivo listen to customers and have been receptive to feedback, with one customer sharing, "we started working with them early on and they have always been receptive to improvement feedback". One customer summed up their experience with, "Workvivo are the dream partner to work with".

SCENARIOS & SCORES

Please see the Scenarios below for more detail on each of these.

SCENARIO AND SCORE	KEY BENEFITS	IMPROVEMENTS / CONSIDERATIONS
4 — **1. User Experience & Visual Appeal**	Sleek, modern interface.	Limited customisation options for navigation. Branding for multi-business organisations is simple.
4 — **2. Publishing & Communications Management**	Easy to plan and publish content.	Audience targeting and support for urgent comms could be more robust.
4.5 — **3. Community & Engagement**	Wide range of social and community engagement features offer plenty of versatility.	Busy activity feeds and multiple community areas may overwhelm users.
2+ — **4. Integrations & Services (Including M365)**	Good range of light integrations available, including with M365 and Google.	Deep integrations rely heavily on APIs and development.
3 — **5. Information Finding & Search**	Intuitive search interface for site and third-party system content.	Features such as promoted results and indexing of PDF content would enhance the experience.
3+ — **6. Administrator Experience**	A simple experience for non-technical users. Multi-language features work well.	Limited out-of-the box functionality for customising areas of the site. Life cycle tools have room for improvement.
3.5 — **7. Analytics**	User-friendly interface with plenty of filtering options.	Adding search analytics would be a welcome improvement.
4 — **8. Mobile & Frontline Support**	Well-thought-out mobile app supports an equitable user experience across devices.	Search experience in mobile isn't as robust as the desktop app.
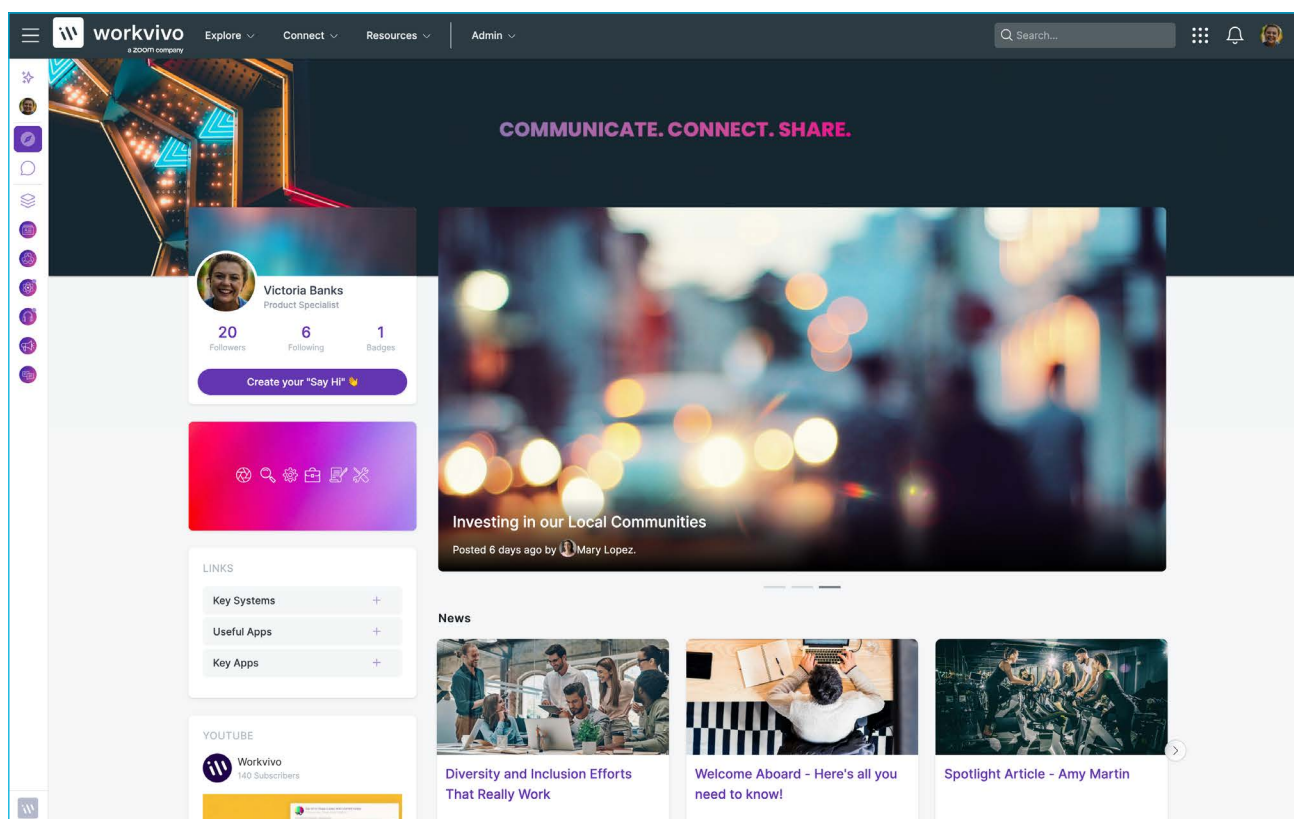
The Spotlight home page layout option displays the most important site content such as news, events, and featured pages.

Workvivo's emphasis on employee engagement offers a contemporary layout akin to modern social networking sites, thanks to the product's social and community-driven elements. The home page centres around an activity feed with activity and content widgets to promote items such as news articles and company podcasts. Alternatively, a 'Spotlight' layout revolves around news, which can be accessed via the left navigation or set as the default home page. Both layout options lend well to providing a sense of timeliness and connectivity for employees, with the activity feed focusing on dynamic social aspects whereas the Spotlight may work better for more traditional top-down communications. See Scenario 6 for more on the home page design.

Navigation is mainly structured around top- and left-hand navigation bars. The left-hand navigation is personalised to users and is where access to 'Spaces' is found. Spaces are the vendor's version of dedicated community and reference areas, with features such as private activity feeds, Q&A, pages, and documents. Only Spaces the employee is a member of will display here (see Scenario 3). Other content accessible from this navigation menu include user profiles, personal bookmarks, and the in-platform chat. On the desktop, the left-side navigation icons appear rather small and not very distinguishable. However, expanding the menu panel will remedy this issue for most people.

The top navigation bar has tabs for 'Explore', 'Connect', and 'Resources'. Customisation of this navigation bar and its elements is very limited; the rationale being to provide a consistent user experience across the desktop and mobile app environments. Despite the limitation in customisation, what results is a persistent menu bar offering users a reliable way to access site content such as Pages, Spaces, news articles, documents, and the people directory. A fourth tab, Admin, appears here for users with administrator permissions.

A 'mega menu', Workvivo's term for the site waffle menu, is also in the top menu and provides quick links to third-party tools and critical or frequently referenced resources. While not a traditional mega menu, it does plug some of the gaps from the other less configurable menu options and helps people access what they need quickly, which is further helped through audience targeting. No breadcrumbs or visual indicators of subpage levels are readily available, but the company logo in the top navigation bar acts as a reliable north star, taking users back to the home page should they get lost.
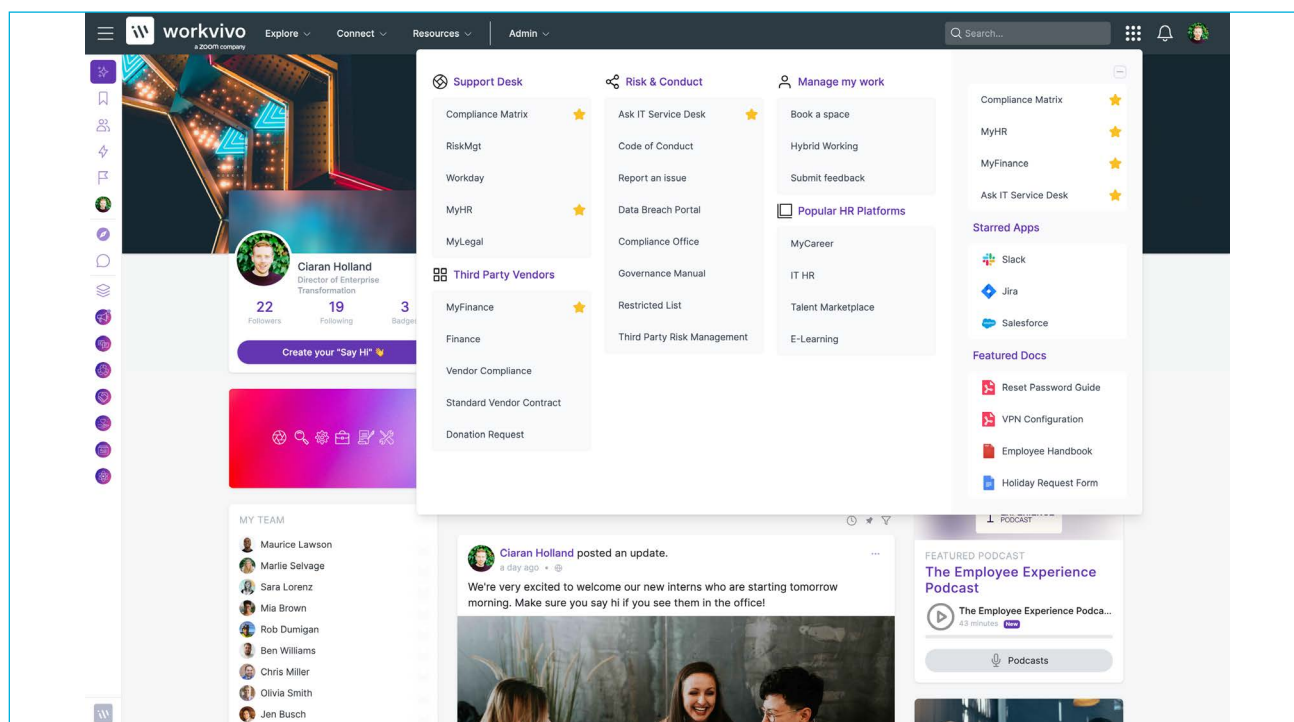
The mega menu in Workvivo is an app launcher and offers admins a way to surface links to site content and / or external tools.

In both the desktop and mobile apps, users will find notifications via the bell icon in the upper right corner. Notifications in this area are ordered chronologically. Read content does not disappear from the list, possibly undesirable for users when it results in many notifications to scroll through, but unread content is distinguished by appearing in bold. Users can set notification preferences at both the site level and Space level, providing a sense of control over how notifications are received. Notifications are sent via email or mobile push alerts in addition to the site bell menu.

Customised colour schemes, logos, icons, and background images are applied by admins, enabling customers to convey a strong sense of brand identity, despite a relatively rigid home page design. Spaces may have their own images and icon, helpful in delineating these areas as distinct communities or addressing specific topics. Customers with multiple brands, requiring a very distinct feel from the main site, may feel restricted in what they can do. Elements such as colours, icons, and the overall site logo are set globally. It is possible to select custom page backgrounds and user profile images, plus the targeted content and design of Spaces will help, but overall the multi-brand approach isn't as extensive as those offered by other products in this report.
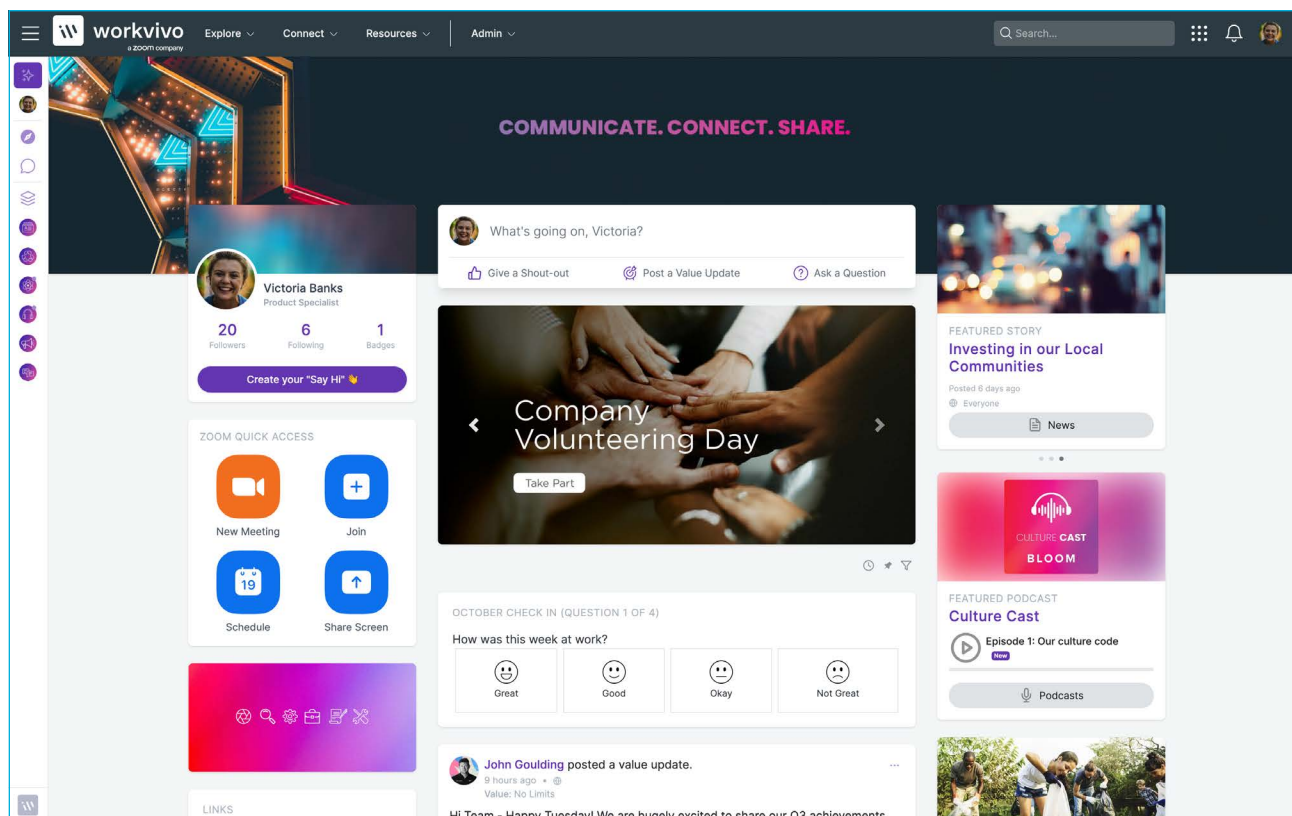
A Workvivo home page displays the main social activity feed and dynamically presents content and resources via widgets.
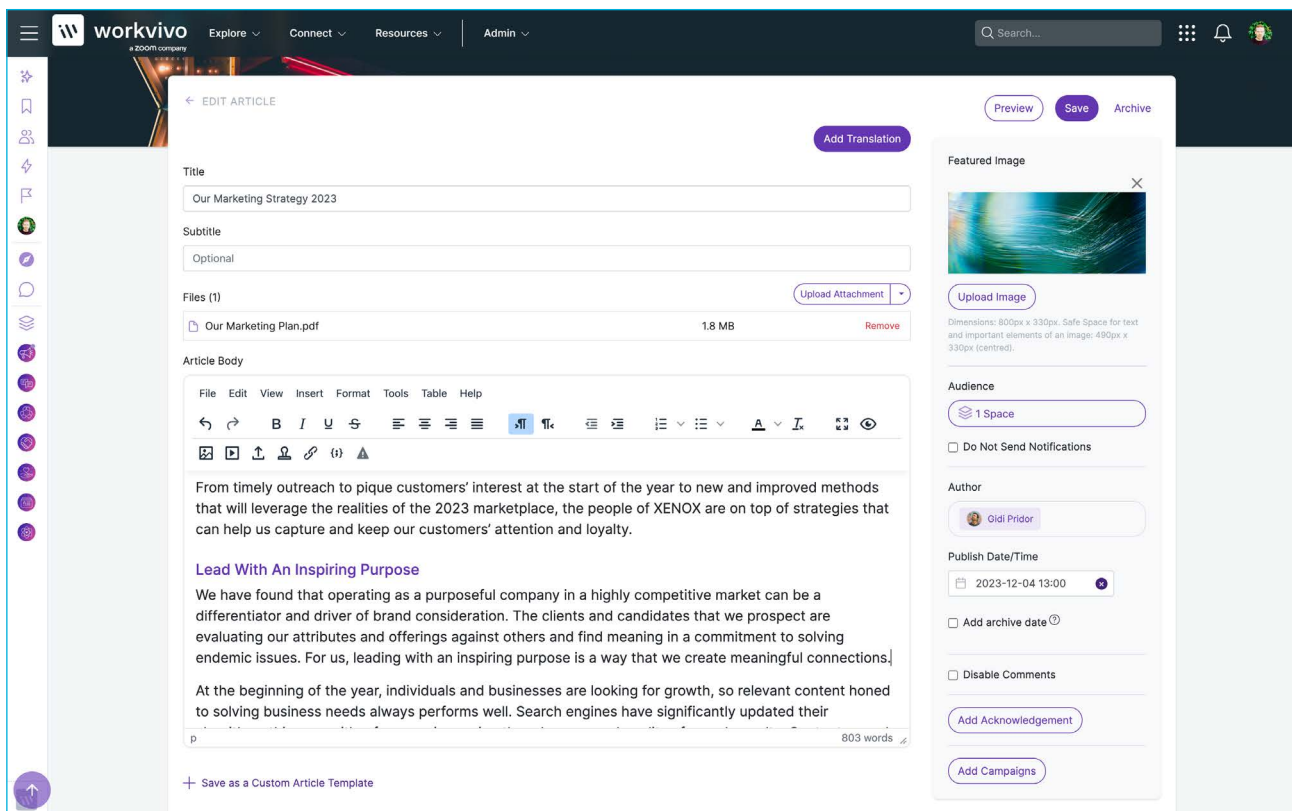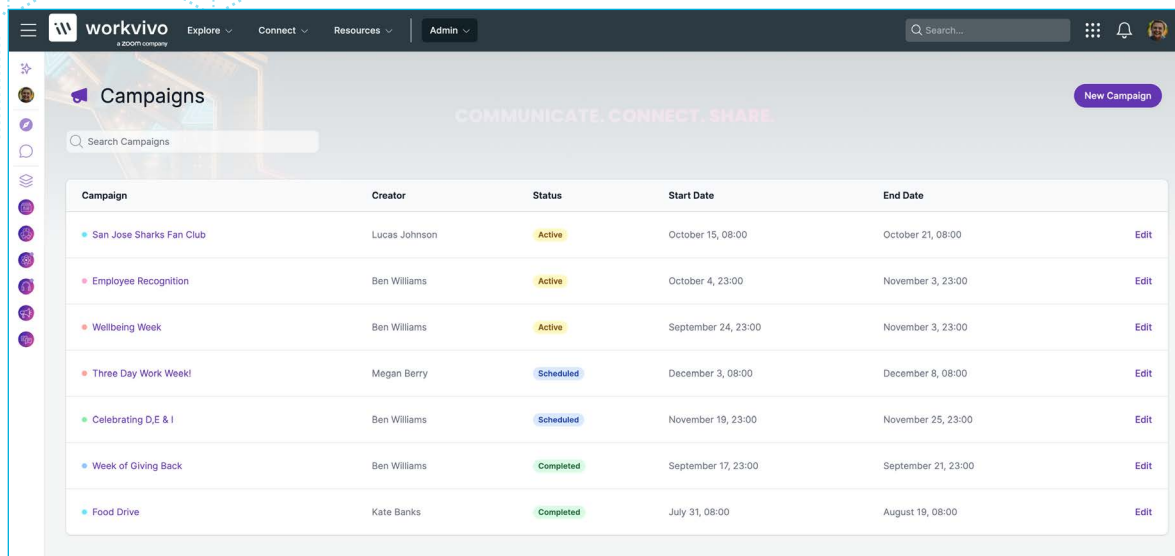
Comms teams can simultaneously create scheduled news articles
while adding them to a universal comms planning calendar.

With a strong emphasis on communications, Workvivo offers customers an array of options when creating and scheduling news and updates. Posts can be leveraged to celebrate company values, a standout feature that's covered in Scenario 3. Longer form articles are then built from scratch or from templates; templates come out of the box or are built / customised using a rich text editor. While the rich text editor approach offers basic design capabilities, useful features of the template builder include setting feature images and adding tags.

Articles and posts can be shared either globally or targeted to audiences, with audiences primarily created from membership of Spaces and 'Teams'. Teams in Workvivo are based on location or department and may be pulled in from company directory systems such as Entra ID. Targeted content sent to Spaces will appear in both the main activity feed and the activity feed located at the Space level. A noteworthy limitation here is broader audience targeting is not possible for articles created in Spaces. While multiple Spaces can be selected when publishing content from an individual Space, Space admins and content authors will still need to think ahead when publishing content intended for multiple groups of employees.

Approval and publishing workflows, date archiving rules, campaign linking, and hashtags may be leveraged. Applying a 'campaign' to an article allows comms teams to associate content with specific messaging plans, track reach, and view analytics (see Scenario 7). Campaigns work well in Workvivo and we like that employee generated content that uses associated hashtags will be included in reporting.

Campaigns can be added to site content by administrators and communications teams, allowing for the ability to track engagement and reach on published content.

The 'Content Calendar' is where content managers and internal communications teams can plan out and schedule all planned content across the site, including livestreams (see Scenario 8). We like that teams can log internal 'notes' about certain dates, for example to highlight a company conference. Where content has no cover or banner images we found the standard calendar icons helpful. Planned content and internal notes will appear as tiles in a sort of hybrid calendar-kanban view, with metadata such as title, location, time, and audience displayed on the tile itself. Filters at the top of the calendar can be used to narrow planned content by type, such as posts, events, and news, as well as by author and audience.

The Content Calendar allows internal communications teams and content publishers an in-platform way to plan out messaging and scheduling.

A date toggle allows users to look at planned content week-to-week, although adding monthly or quarterly views would be a helpful addition. Teams can also create new posts, events, articles, and internal notes directly from the Content Calendar page, with the same full editing functionality, including adding message campaigns.

Published content can be pinned to the top of the activity feed, but there is a risk that pinned content may get lost at the top of a busy feed. To address this, we think a widget designed specifically for urgent communications would go a long way in getting these types of messages noticed. Alternatively, an 'Acknowledgement' feature (mandatory reads) can be turned on for posts and articles, prompting users to read and acknowledge critical content. Acknowledgement enabled content remains displayed on the user's feed until action is taken. Reports can be generated to determine who has not acknowledged the content, and from the report screen admins can send out 'nudges' as a reminder to users who have not read. Urgent and critical communications can also reach staff via mobile push notification when admins override user notification preferences.

News articles can be promoted in the main activity feed as well as reshared in new posts, and shared to specific Spaces. Digital signage is accomplished through Workvivo TV (at additional cost but included in the pricing provided here), where dashboards can display existing site content or custom content that can be pushed to multiple devices.

Links to activity feed posts can be reshared internally to Slack and MS Teams, and externally to sites such as LinkedIn. Newsletter digests can be aut0-generated or manually configured to promote specific content with audience targeting. The manual newsletter option allows for published content to be dropped into a template but lacks an email builder functionality that some comms teams may want. We like that news articles can be sent in their entirety as an email, however.
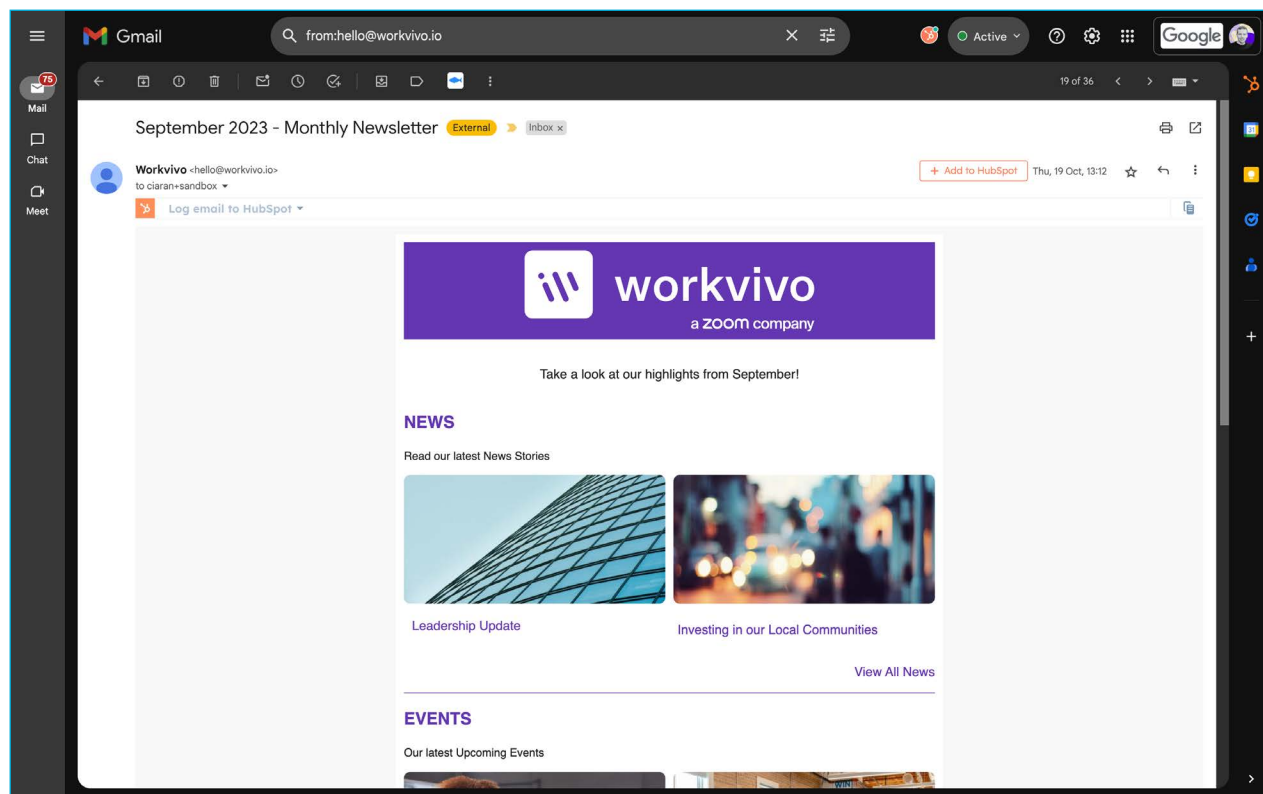
With the newsletter feature staff receive curated email digests,
including news stories that can be read as full body emails.
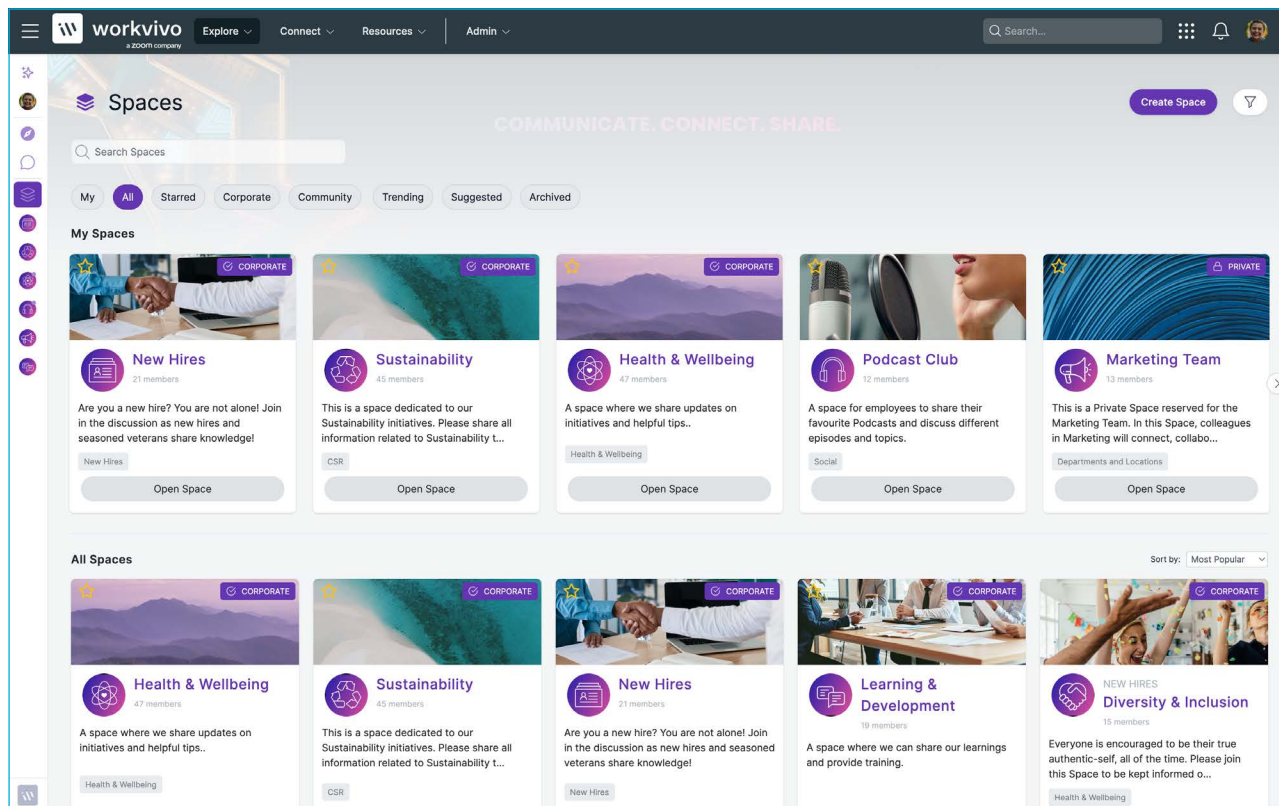
Spaces equip teams and departments to collaborate internally or turn their areas of the site into public areas, where they can share their work and activities more broadly with colleagues.

Workvivo possesses numerous strengths when it comes to structuring the site around social activity, community collaboration, and employee engagement. Mentioned previously in Scenario 1, Spaces are dedicated areas that come with community-driven features, offering ways to foster engagement and inclusion for audiences such as new hires, special interest groups, and affinity group representation. We like that Space members may choose whether to post something to the smaller scale Space activity feed, rather than the global feed. Although, between the main activity feed and Space feeds, there is a risk of overwhelming users with too many places to go for updates, this could be mitigated by turning off activity feeds or by configuring a static landing page for relevant Spaces.

In activity feeds, users can post quick updates, create polls, give a 'shout-out' to colleagues, and link to a company value. People can make use of an 'Ask a Question' feature when posting to activity feeds to generate peer discussion and dialogue, including upvoting for both the original question and submitted answers, as well as actions to accept the most accurate answer. Any post can be liked, shared, or commented on. Moderation frameworks can be set by admins to ensure compliance of corporate policies and auto-blocking of certain content types, like credit card numbers. Reported content will trigger notifications to admins and content moderators for review. For an added layer of assurance, activity feeds with reported content will display a report at the top of the feed, prompting admins and content moderators to act. Reactions to posts are currently limited to likes, which we feel is simplistic considering Workvivo's otherwise robust social features. Further reactions will be available in 2024.

Pulse checks and staff engagement efforts are supported in Workvivo polls and surveys.

Polls can be posted directly in feeds by any user with permission to do so, and employees vote from the post itself. Poll responses are displayed on the post for a sense of real-time voting and transparency. Surveys can be created by admins to reach targeted audiences. A useful back-end question bank serves to categorise and reuse questions, and to manage responses. If desired, admins can integrate third-party survey tools like Qualtrics.

'Post a Value Update' posts celebrate company values, we think this is a standout feature, as it offers customers a way to show how company values are lived in the organisation. A custom set of organisational value tags are created that can then be linked to content or used in a post to @mention a colleague embodying a value. 'Give a Shout-out' is another type of post that supports employee recognition and allows for @mentioning individuals and teams. The post will appear in the feed marked as a 'shout-out', and others can like, comment, and reshare.

The Values page promotes company values from a centralised location, with users able to click on a value to post a value update and celebrate colleagues by tagging them in the post.

The Explore tab in the top navigation bar houses links to Values and Badges pages. These pages offer persistent, dedicated recognition pages where staff can see the names of colleagues who have received these recognitions. Shout-outs and value posts carry over to a user's profile. Visitors scrolling through a profile activity feed will see the tagged shout-out posts. A Value widget lists the company values that the employee has been given, including the option for profile page visitors to add their own endorsement. A Badges widget displays accomplishments and noteworthy celebrations, such as years of service or certifications, and new ones can be assigned from here in a peer-to-peer manner.

Workvivo offers an easy way for customers to create awards that staff can then nominate colleagues for. Admins create custom awards, with the option to associate them with company values. Award nomination periods are set, with admin ability to view submissions and close nominations. Staff will receive notifications when award nominations open and can follow the prompts set by admins to submit a nomination. Unusually admins can create a shortlist of nominees and open voting, potentially to only senior managers, to decide on the winner(s).

The Workvivo calendar feature offers comms and events planning teams a way to easily manage the central corporate events calendar. Events are created using a rich text editor, with options for including additional event information such as booking URLs, RSVP requirements, audience targeting, and adding a livestream. When events are published, users will see the event appear in the activity feed. Additionally, an Events page is linked from the 'Explore' tab of the site's top menu bar. Page visitors will see an events calendar from where they can view all scheduled events and access event and reservation details.

An event page provides information about the event and includes the ability to comment, like, and share.
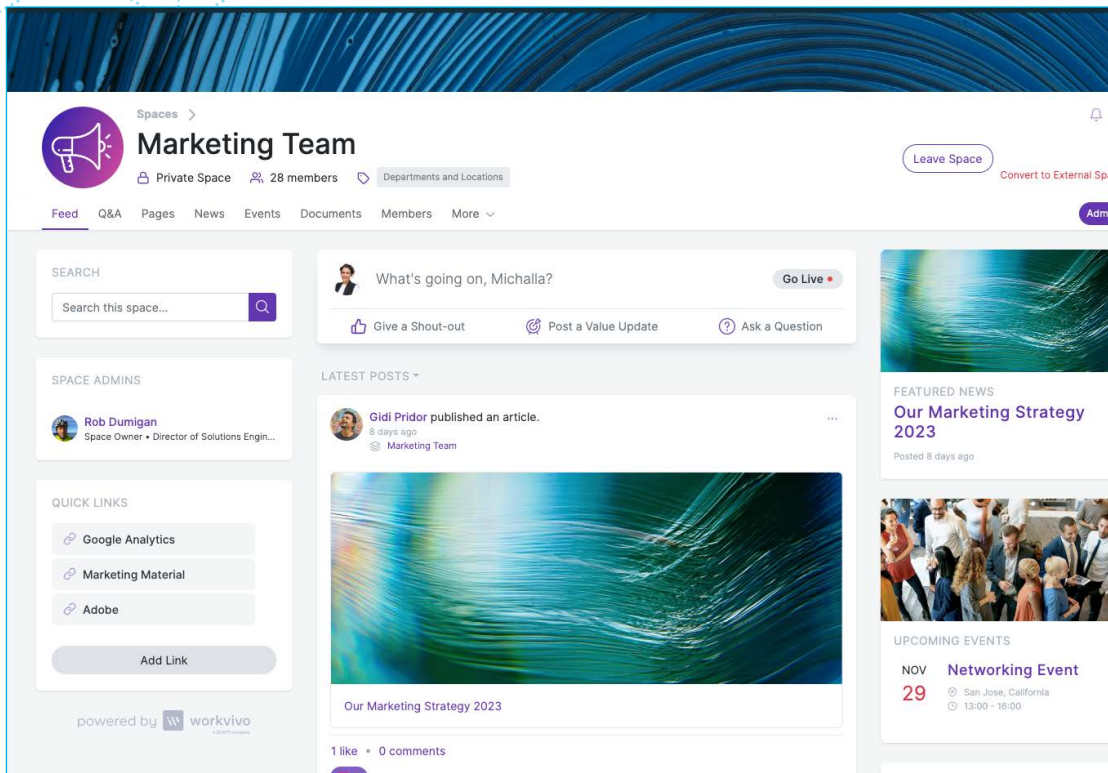
Space members can post shout-outs and value updates privately to members, offering a smaller-scale, community-driven way for employees to recognise one another.
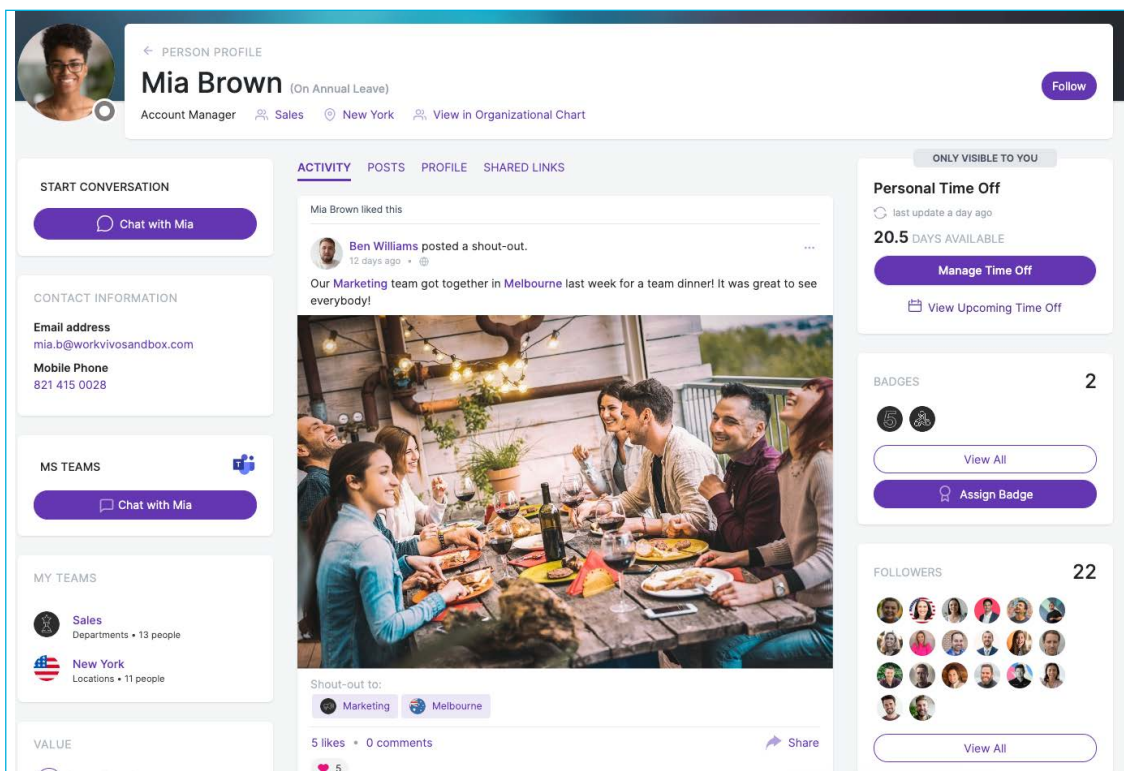
Profile page visitors can see the badges, shout-outs, and values their colleagues have been awarded.
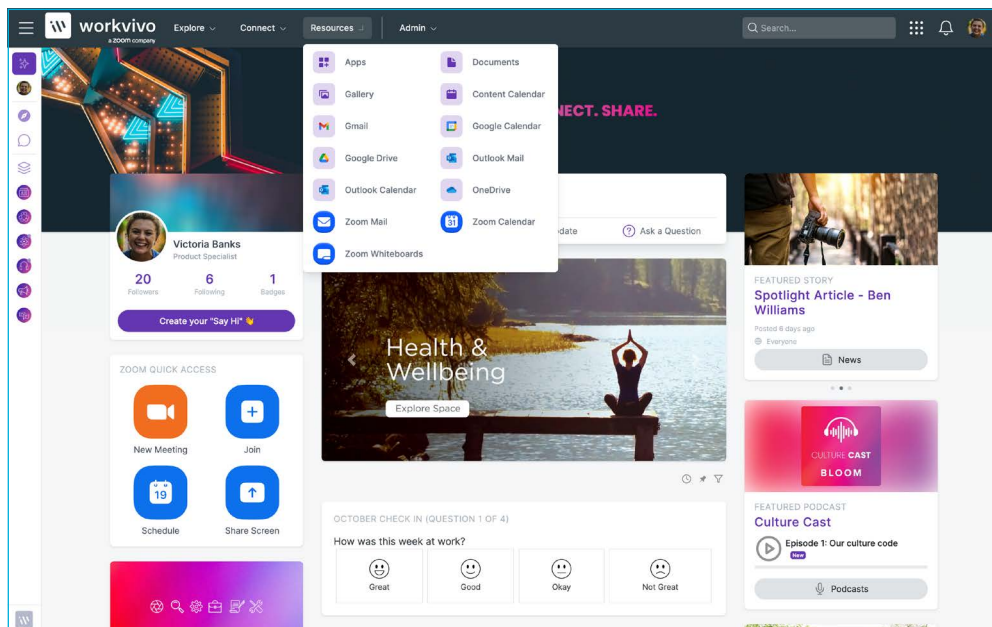
The Resources tab acts as a quick links to the most important or frequently used third-party tools and applications accessed by staff.

Workvivo has the option to integrate with M365 applications and numerous third-party tools. However, M365 capabilities are less robust than we'd like to see, plus other integrations and custom widget configurations rely heavily on APIs rather than out-of-the-box integrations. Workvivo did share integration examples with us though, so there is evidence of what's possible.

Integration options include notifications from third-parties that display in the Workvivo bell. Custom widgets are also an option for pulling in content from external sources, for example an employee's time off balance from the HR system could display in their profile. For customers who use ServiceNow, a well-designed chatbot widget can be added so employees can raise a new ticket and explore its knowledge base. Many integrations are achieved via simple embeds or more complex RSS, APIs, and webhooks; these require additional setup time and developer expertise by the customer or vendor (potentially at additional cost).

As a result of the Zoom purchase of Workvivo in early 2023, users can access a Workvivo site directly from the Zoom desktop client. A 'Workvivo' icon in the Zoom menu displays the Workvivo home page. The user experience is the same as the web browser, and people can navigate around the site, post and react to content, access Spaces, and use search. This very direct integration is a helpful proposition for organisations who find themselves in Zoom meetings most days.

There are satisfactory M365 integration capabilities, for example content housed in Outlook, OneDrive and SharePoint can be pulled into a Space, page, or linked from the mega menu. Workvivo honours permissions set by the native Microsoft app, which means those without a license can't view content. Useful to clients who find themselves on multi-tenants, Workvivo touts the ability to bring multiple M365 tenants into a single Workvivo site. Workvivo content can be shared out to MS Teams channels, and users can start Teams chats from Workvivo if preferred over the Workvivo Chat. The vendor says Workvivo would typically replace Viva Engage functionality with features covered in Scenario 3, so there are no integrations there. Finally, there's a PowerBI integration to display data dashboards.
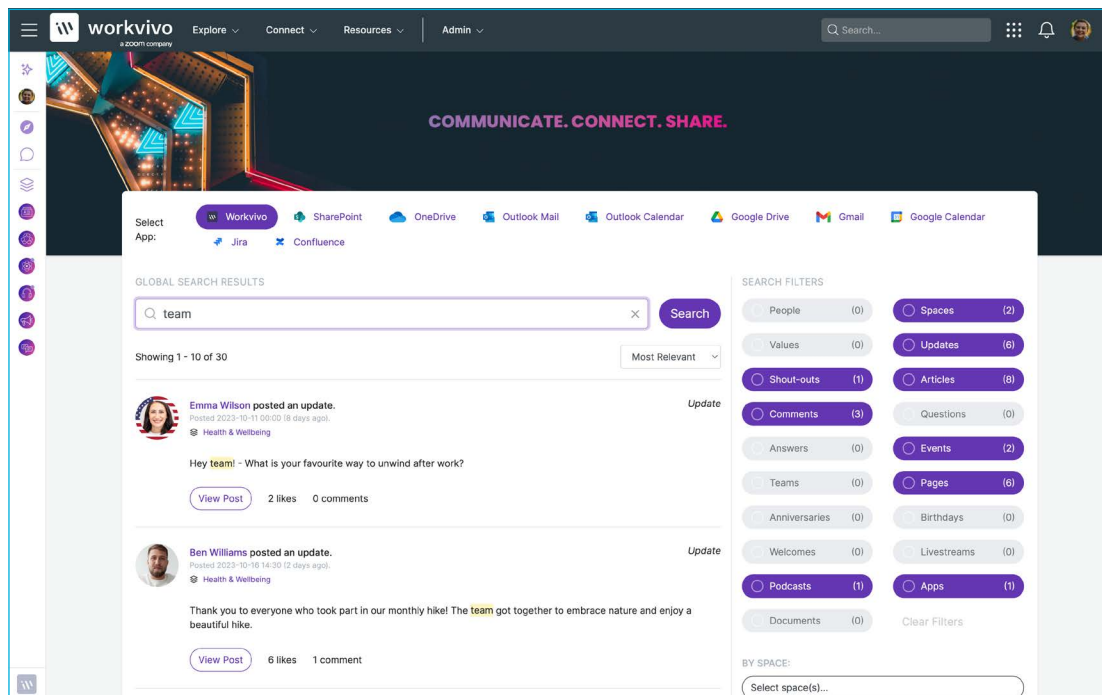
Advanced Search allows users to narrow their search by different filters relating to content type, Space, team, date, Q&A, and third-party systems.

Employees will find the search experience to be effective and easy to use. The global search bar is easily found in the top navigation. Results appear with search terms highlighted in the text snippet and labelled by content type – both helpful pieces of information to display that provide useful context about the results.

The results page is well laid out and intuitive. Users have plenty of search filter options, including by Space, livestream, pages, events, and company values; although some people may find the number of filters overwhelming. Areas of improvement include supporting spelling corrections (including names) and word stemming. While content tags and metadata are indexed, administrators don't have options to leverage search management features such as promoted results. However, searching can be conducted at the Space level, which has the same UI as global search and so works well; the search parameter defaults to be contextual to location and membership.

Results can also be federated from connected third-party tools such as SharePoint, OneDrive, Google Drive, Outlook, Gmail, and Atlassian apps. It is not obvious to users whether they can search across multiple apps at once, but it is possible by clicking reference tabs at the top of the page. This styling isn't as attractive as the standard search results experience due to the limitation of the third-party's APIs.

Finding colleagues in the Workvivo platform is a straightforward experience. All profile fields are searchable, including name, location, department, and skills. Profile pages are attractive and laid out nicely on both desktop and mobile; however, the profile fields are standardised, and we would like admins to be able to add their own as well as define which are displayed. Org charts can be found via profiles and may come from integration with existing HR systems or configured manually, if manager information is provided. Nice touches to foster quick peer-to-peer connection include the ability to endorse skills and values, and award badges from within colleague profiles (see Scenario 3).

6. ADMINISTRATOR EXPERIENCE

3+
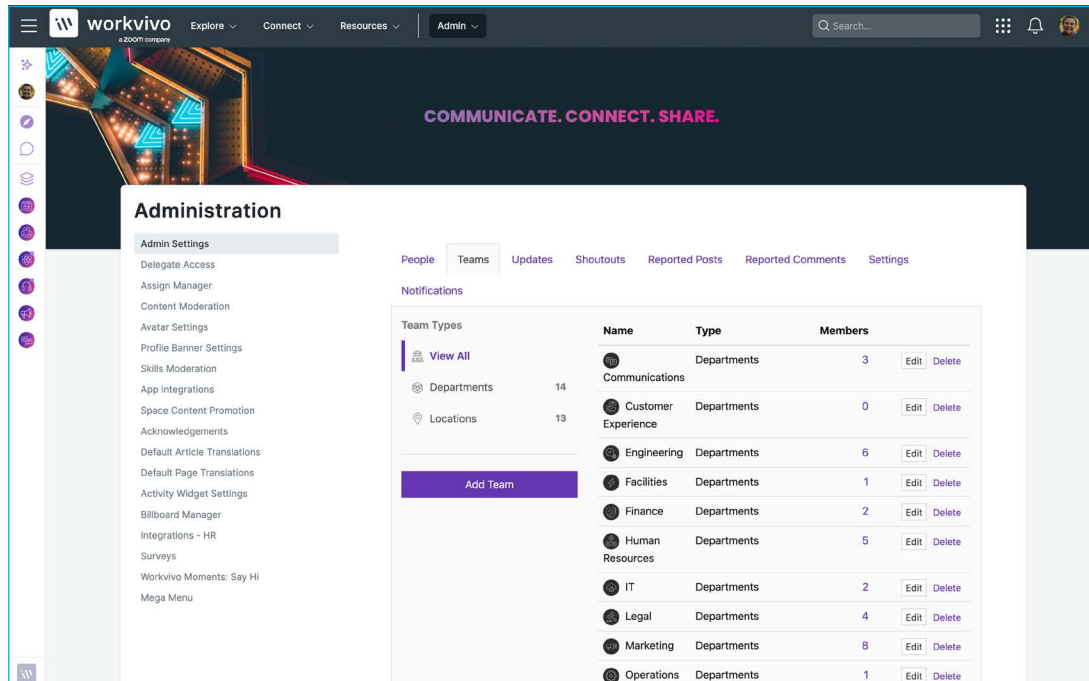
The administration area is straightforward to use and is where key tasks are completed.

The overall admin experience is straightforward. A wide array of role types exists at the system level, including top-level admins and granular roles for content administrators. Admin roles can also be auto-assigned based on Entra ID groups. Space-level admins will enjoy the autonomy to customise and manage their own areas and can determine what Space features to enable (such as news and Q&A), membership management, and set Space background and icon images.

Home page layouts are limited to two options – the default approach or the Spotlight format, which displays site content as tiles and isn't configurable. The default home page focusses on the activity feed, with a handful of other widgets either side of it. Admins can choose the content of some widgets as well as adjust the order but overall will have less control than in other products we've reviewed. There is also limited configuration for the navigation, see Scenario 1 for details. Administrators who would like close control over the home page and navigation may find Workvivo restrictive.

Auto-archiving is carried out by setting expiration dates for each content type, including apps and Spaces, as well as by date-based retention rules. Publishers receive notifications when content has expired; admins can also opt to manually archive content. Archiving in the site is considered a 'soft delete', allowing for retrieval. Orphaned Spaces and Pages are identified through a helpful report; however, we felt this was somewhat buried and admins must manually assign new owners per Page / Space. We think a centralised dashboard for content owners and admins would be helpful.

Admins select which languages are used across the business and are therefore available for translation options. Publishers create the content in their native language, then select the languages it should be automatically translated into. Once translations are added, admins can always go back and add or remove translations, plus edit or replace translated content. We like that words or phrases can be protected from the auto-translation. Employees choose language preferences when setting up their profile as part of onboarding, or later via their profile settings and content displays appropriately for them.
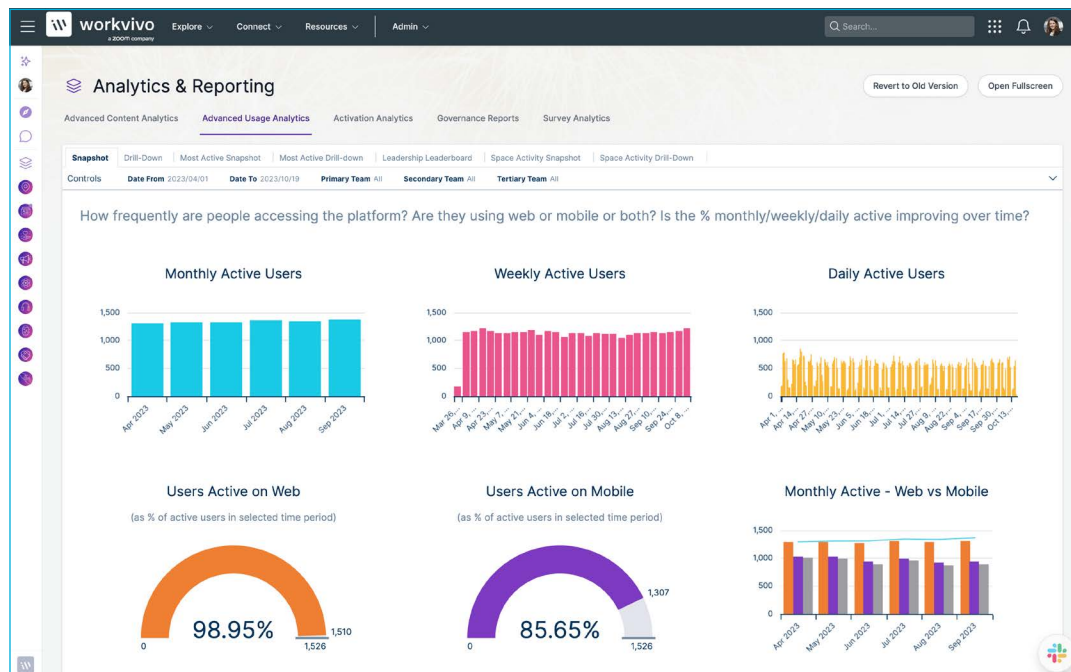
Site analytics are presented cleanly and clearly through graphs, charts, and tables.
All analytics reports may be exported for additional analysis and presentation.

In 2023 the vendor introduced 'Advanced Analytics', a module at additional cost but included in the pricing supplied for this report, which has improved the out of the box reporting significantly. Reports are provided through a series of dashboards covering content, site usage, activation, governance, and surveys, with additional reports under each category, all accessed through tabbed navigation. The presentation is a mixture of graphs, charts, and boxes pulling out key figures, and for each report a full data table is provided alongside summary information. All reports in analytics are exportable. Reports can be filtered by period, content type, audience and individual author or publishing team. There's an emphasis on volume metrics but the ability to filter and alter the parameters of the reports is useful in understanding performance over time.

Alongside the comprehensive content and usage data, several aspects catch the eye. We like the 'Leadership' tab in the usage section providing details of senior leadership engagement with the platform, such as CEO / CTO page impressions over time, or days active on the site. A word cloud on the hashtag report is a quirky touch too. Other things of note include a neat call to action within mandatory read reports, where users can be sent a notification from the report to remind them to view content. Department and team data can be hidden from usage reports – useful, for instance, for aligning with Workers Council policies.

There remain areas for improvement, however. For example, there's currently no reporting available for on-site search and we feel this would be of greater benefit than some of the more niche reporting such as parts of the hashtag dashboard, or some of the competition tab metrics. There's also a catch-all 'reports' tab which holds additional content and user reports. In truth this feels something of a hangover from Workvivo's previous approach to analytics and is perhaps a candidate for retirement.

Overall, analytics in Workvivo have come on leaps and bounds; we look forward to seeing further refinement of what is now a comprehensive set of reports. Finally, it's worth highlighting that the vendor will work with customers to identify any specific reporting requirements to develop custom dashboards.

8. MOBILE & FRONTLINE SUPPORT

4
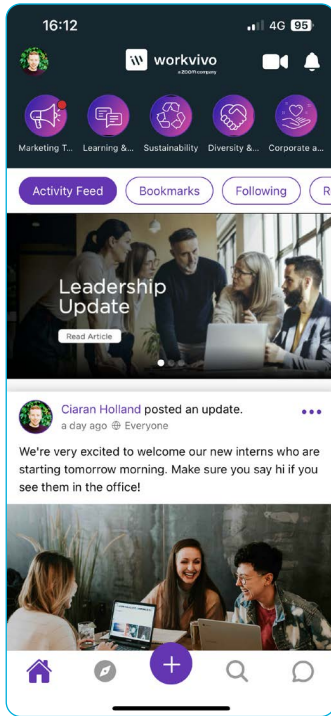
The pared down mobile app home page is attractively laid out with clear top and bottom navigation menus.
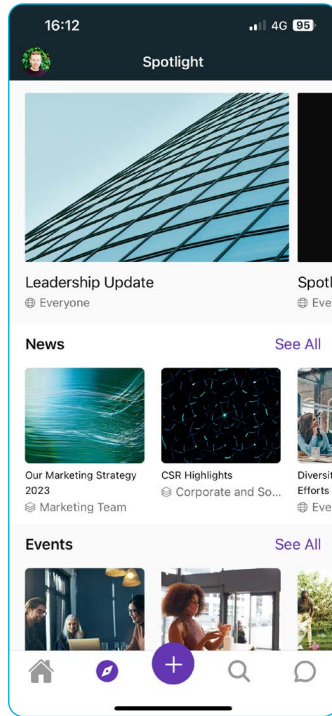
The compass icon in the bottom navigation takes users to the Spotlight page for news, events, podcasts, and Spaces.
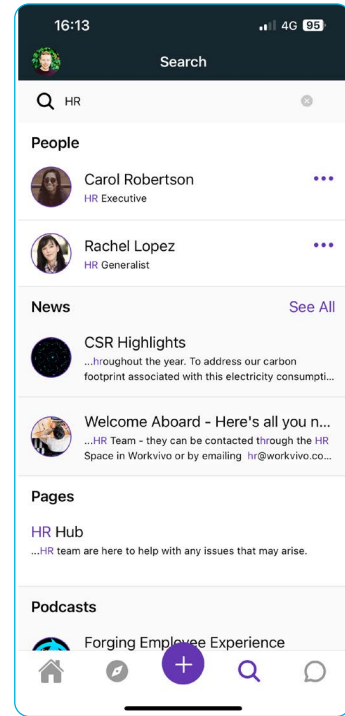
Mobile app users can search by keyword to find site content, documents and people.

The vendor has said that they aim for parity across the desktop and mobile experience and it is apparent that considerable effort has gone into the development and design. The Workvivo app is available from public app stores. It can then be accessed in a variety of ways, including QR codes on digital signage that will direct to the mobile app, as well as one-time use of personal QR codes, biometrics, and single sign-on. Multi-factor authentication is also available.

The mobile interface is sleek and is consistent with the desktop, preserving the sensibility of a modern, user- and comms-driven experience. Mobile users will have an easy time navigating through the app. Navigation elements include icons at the top of the home page for personalised Spaces, while a second menu bar shows the global activity feed in tabs. Options to select personalised content such as bookmarks and recently updated content are available. User profile photos appear in the top left, where the mega menu is located, and the notifications centre is top right. A bottom menu bar contains links for home page, 'Spotlight' for site content, search, chat, and a + button for posting to the activity feed.

Whether scrolling through the activity feed or a Space, users will enjoy well-laid-out content tiles for posts and updates, with features to comment, like, and reshare. However, search in the mobile app is significantly less robust than desktop. Users can search by keyword or term and see a list of results with contextual snippets, but no filter or advanced search options are available. Colleagues are found via the people directory in the mega menu or through site search. Users can update their profiles in the mobile app and choose which profile fields they want to share or hide, for example opting to not include mobile number, which we think is helpful for frontline workers.

No offline reading functionality is supported, but the vendor has accounted for instances where internet connectivity is low or not available by intentionally designing the mobile app to require low bandwidth. The flexibility in customisation of the mega menu for mobile users and by audience targeting is also a noteworthy opportunity for admins to tailor the mobile app for frontline staff.

Other opportunity areas for engaging mobile users include promoting corporate podcasts, which users can subscribe to and play without the app needing to be open. The 'kudos' feature covered in Scenario 3 also works well for frontline workers, as it's easy to complete on mobile. Livestreams, with interactive chat and live user engagement, offers another approach for customers to share out information and engage frontline users by meeting them where they are. Employees are notified via a pop-up icon on their activity feed when a livestream starts, and mobile users can simply tap the icon to join while still being able to use the site.
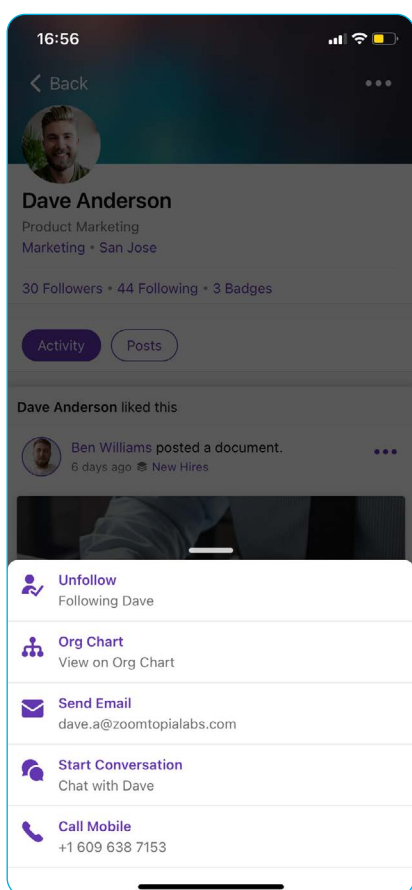
Through the mobile app users can see key information from a user's profile, including org chart and contact information.
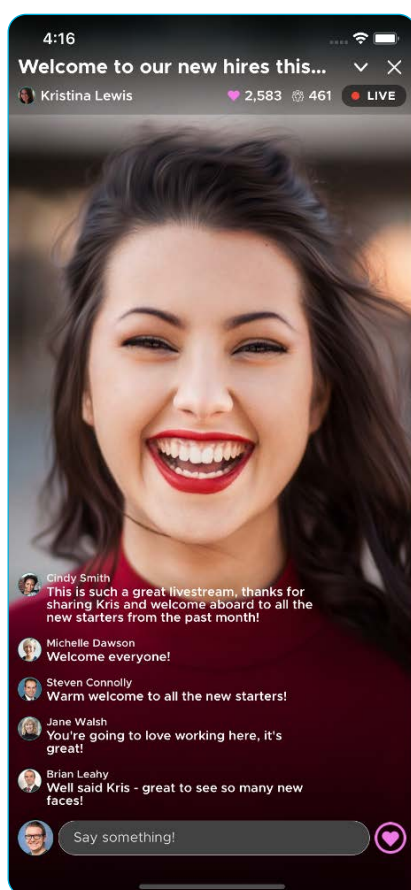
Mobile users will see a livestream notification in the activity feed and can join by tapping the icon.
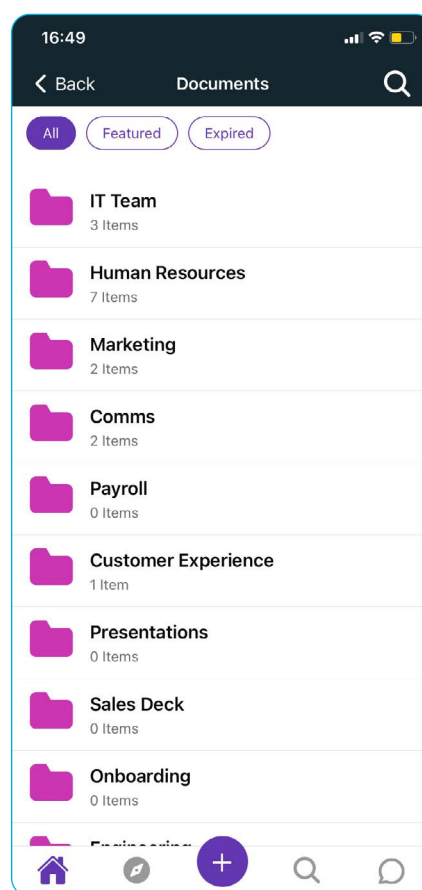
Documents are found in the mega menu which is accessed by tapping the user profile photo.

Workvivo offers 'chat' functionality, which can be one-to-one or consist of group chats. Chat 'channels' are named spaces, such as 'Chicago team', reinforcing team identity and autonomy by allowing users the ability to self-identify and name their chat channels (rather than more formalised Spaces). Chat channels provide frontline workers with an alternative to Slack or MS Teams and has the potential to eliminate the need for tools like WhatsApp, which is a chronic issue for organisations with large numbers of frontline or cross-country teams. The out-of-the-box chat could be an effective solution for frontline workers; however, this feature is still a bit limited in terms of functionality. For example, it is not possible to reshare a post or news article in a chat. Note that Chat is an optional module at additional cost, although has been included in the supplied pricing.

Overall, frontline workers will be well supported with the number and type of well-thought features Workvivo has incorporated into the mobile app experience.
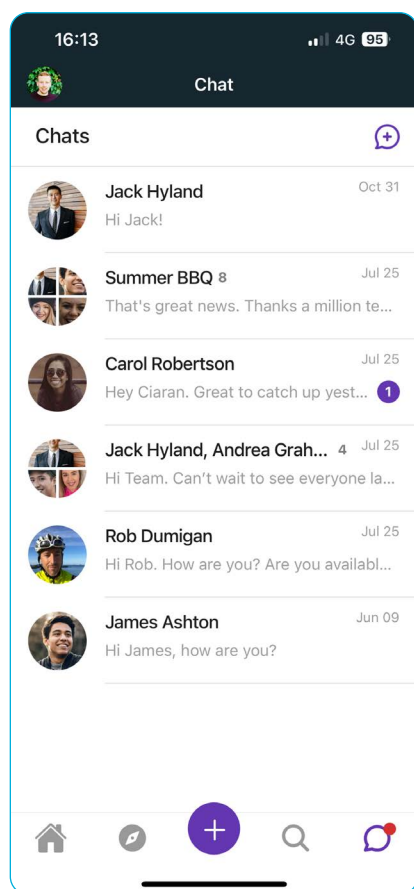
A list of all their chats will display for users from the main chat screen.
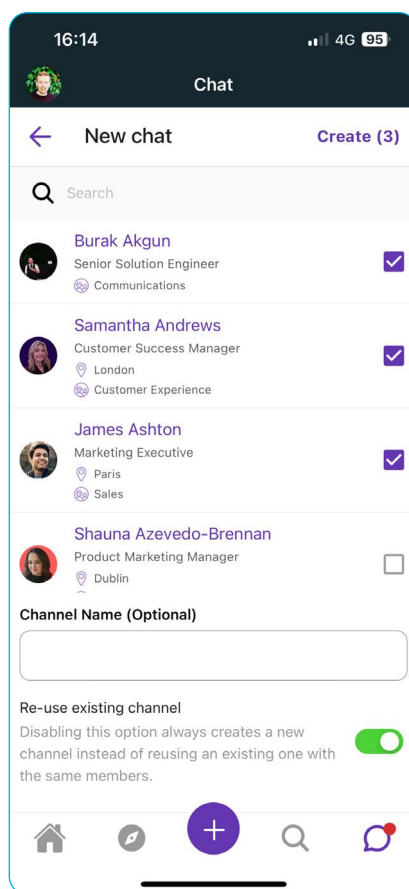
Users can re-use an existing channel rather than creating a new one with the same members.
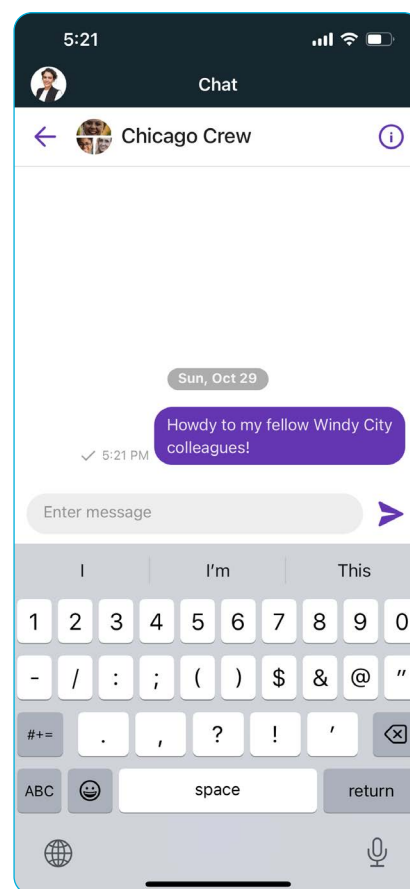
Users can create channel names to self-identify by team or group.

THINGS TO BEAR IN MIND

Communication, community, and social features are strong, however customers with other traditional intranet business needs may find Workvivo somewhat limited. Those who desire a more traditional page-focused intranet solution may feel constrained in what they can achieve, because Workvivo does not offer many options for the more typical landing page and sub-page site structure. Spaces, Workvivo's concept of micro-sites, is their solution, but customers could find this approach too cumbersome to build around despite being able to turn off social features.

The limitations in customisation of site navigation menus and deep linking of pages may also be a constraint for customers who are looking to build out comprehensive reference areas of the site, such as wikis. This gap in site navigation and page linking is an understandable trade-off given the product's primary focus is on community features and user social activity to drive employee engagement.

The number of third-party tools and systems Workvivo can connect to is impressive. Integration options include the M365 suite and Google Workspace. However, some customers may question the apparent trade-off of the amount of integrations available compared to how robust these integrations are. Additionally, potential customers with very specific integrations needs may not be willing to take on the amount of setup needed to carry out integrations that are achieved via webhook, RSS, and API. Where the integrations options may be limiting to admins, from a user-perspective, the integrations will be perfectly adequate.

Workvivo is on the higher end of pricing, although it is modular and so there will be savings to be had where businesses don't need all the features that are on offer. Larger organisations may find sophisticated integration, customisation and branding needs aren't met. However, Workvivo makes an excellent communication and engagement tool that will do an excellent job of reaching the frontline in any sized business.

Why choose this product

Workvivo combines an intuitive user experience with an impressive amount of community and social features that are sure to boost employee engagement and participation. Coupled with the impressive translation capabilities, Workvivo's feature-rich internal communications options will be a benefit for comms teams and content publishers in disseminating dynamic looking content to a wide range of users. The desktop and mobile apps are equally well-designed and are sure to meet the needs of diverse sets of workforces and audiences. Medium and large sized businesses seeking a product that delivers a community-driven experience will find Workvivo to be a very capable tool.

Vendor roadmap

Roadmap image provided by Workvivo (a Zoom company).
Please note this refers to Q4 2023 and H1 2024.

PRODUCT OVERVIEWS

Attollo

FULLY STANDALONE

REQUIRES SHAREPOINT

OPTIONALLY WORKS WITH SHAREPOINT

FRONTLINE FOCUS
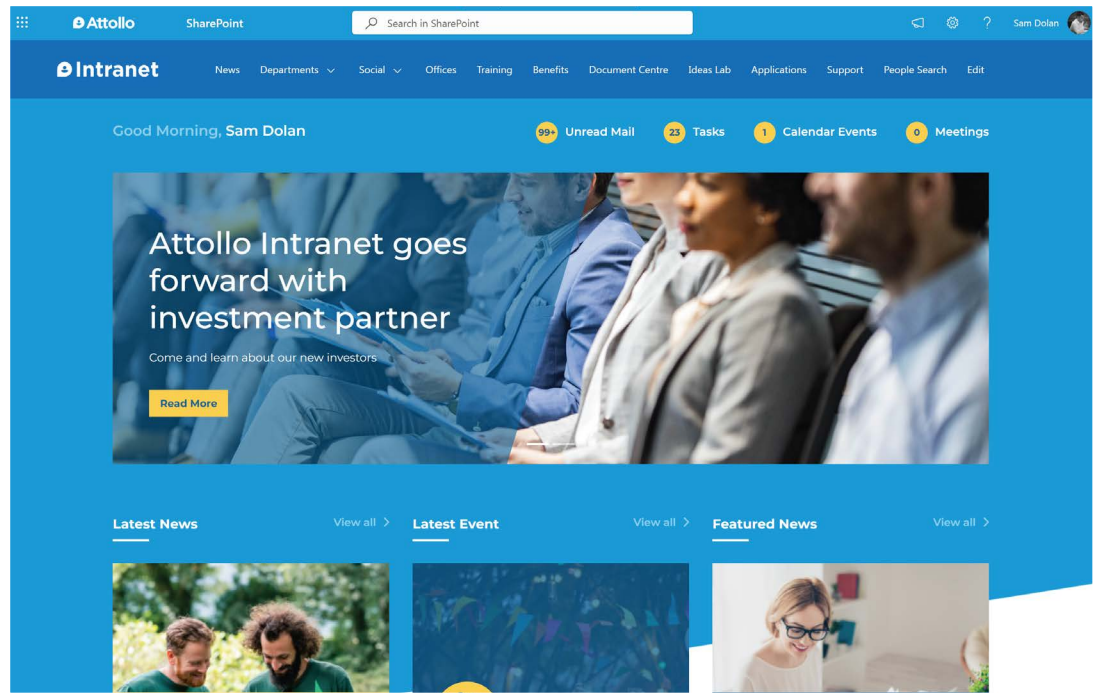
Typical deployment:

60 - 15,000 employees

Company locations:
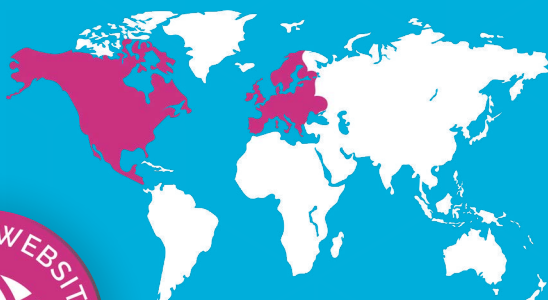
The product in a nutshell

Attollo intranet's user-friendly interface will appeal to companies committed to SharePoint who want to improve the user experience for both employees and administrators.

VISIT THE WEBSITE

Attollo Intranet (Attollo from here) is a SharePoint intranet in-a-box product from a UK-based vendor. Attollo provides a more user-friendly experience and greater versatility in site creation than comes natively with SharePoint. It combines M365 functionality with additional features, multiple templates and can be fully branded, including individual styling of web parts. Developed to align to Microsoft's roadmap, changes and updates to SharePoint are immediately integrated into Attollo. There is no native app, but the site is responsive and can be accessed in Teams via Viva Connections.

On deployment customers receive an intranet shell using a whole-site template, which is then tailored to requirements, and predefined templates mean site collections can be spun up quickly. As an example, the landing page template, designed for departmental sites, has quick links, featured news, events, popular documents and highlight areas. Publishers can create sub-pages, with full control over page layout and theme. Other templates include employee onboarding, which can be personalised, a 'location' template, an events centre, a training section, and employee benefits pages. Administrators have plenty of flexibility for adapting templates, however some companies might find the predefined format too prescriptive.

The home page includes personalised elements such as a 'Me bar', providing employees access to their Delve profile, email, tasks, calendar, and meetings. There are areas for news and promoted content, and a quick links panel - we liked the clear layout and bold call to action buttons here. There are multiple options for featuring content and the page is easily laid out using drag and drop web parts – there are over fifty available – which is an improvement on SharePoint. However, Attollo uses SharePoint's standard approaches to navigation, which can be a challenge.

Attollo's 'news centre' reflects that customers may want to create, manage and view news from a single location, rather than over multiple sites in SharePoint.

There is a ChatGPT content creation feature to assist publishers in compiling text, functionally this is simpler than we've seen in other products but is a good start. We liked the tile-led approach to the news centre, and there's a full archive with good search and filter functions. Content tagging drives much of what is presented throughout Attollo. For example, articles can be targeted through a 'your news' web part, showing tags someone has followed; however, this does depend on employees actively subscribing to content.

Attollo uses standard SharePoint search, but with a few additions. There's a dedicated people search, where Delve profile information is presented using Attollo's more attractive layout. The 'application centre' provides both a search option and an alphabetical list for finding apps. The 'document centre', which is for managing documents held in the intranet, has a local search and works well. A page is created here for each document, containing the file plus metadata such as author and review date, along with a preview window. Document review workflows can be implemented and there's a mandatory read capability.

Other features we like include a 'Communities' section, which integrates Viva Engage conversations alongside community-focussed information, helping keep users in the intranet context. We liked that MS Clarity is fully integrated as standard for analytics. There is also a support centre that can integrate with third-party tools via API, for instance allowing users to log a support ticket directly into ServiceNow.

Attollo's strength is in providing a fully branded and user-friendly way to capitalise on an existing SharePoint installation, offering well-designed templates and a usable interface that remove some of the common frustrations experienced with SharePoint. It will appeal to companies who are committed to SharePoint but who want to provide a better experience for both employees and administrators. We think medium to large businesses are likely to derive most benefit from Atollo, particularly given its low price point.

Good Morning, **Sam Dolan**

99+ Unread Mail   **23** Tasks   **1** Calendar Events   **0** Meetings

Attollo Intranet goes forward with investment partner

Come and learn about our new investors

Read More

Latest News   View all >

March 30, 2023
Planting New Trees in Ramsbottom
Corporate ★

Latest Event   View all >

Sun **25** Feb
Attollo Christmas Party
⏱ 15:00 - 16:00

Featured News   View all >

March 30, 2023
New Laptops Available For Employees Working From...
IT ★   Security ★   Featured ☆

Quick Links

Knowledge Management | Manulife Global | Payroll Guardian | Latest Vacancies | Concur

Employee Benefits | Forms Library | People Directory | Cyber Security | PMO Office

Quick Poll

What is your preferred social media tool?
You voted for: *LinkedIn*

Facebook | Twitter | Instagram | LinkedIn | Tumblr | I don't use any

Change Vote
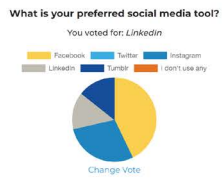
For Your Interest

New Starters
Here you will find everything you need for your first day, first week and first month
Read more >

Human Resources
Everything from policies to procedures all in one central play for all employees
Read more >

People Search
Get to know your colleagues by searching and connecting with them instantly
Read more >

News Centre
Stay up to date with all the internal and external news plus social updates
Read more >

CEO Update

New
Today Paul Robinson talks about what internal communications means to a company.
Read more >

Employee Spotlight

Curtis Hennessy
Technical Solution Lead
Curtis is the person behind the scenes who manages keeping the intranet fresh and full of new features.
Read more >

C-Suite Update

HR
Sarah Dawson, HR Director, shares her thoughts on the bright future of Attollo and how it is changing the way intranets are adopted.
Read more >

Clubs & Communities

Women in leadership | The Finer Things Club | Formula 1 Fan Club | Everything Star Wars

Show More

Did you find what you were looking for?   Yes   No
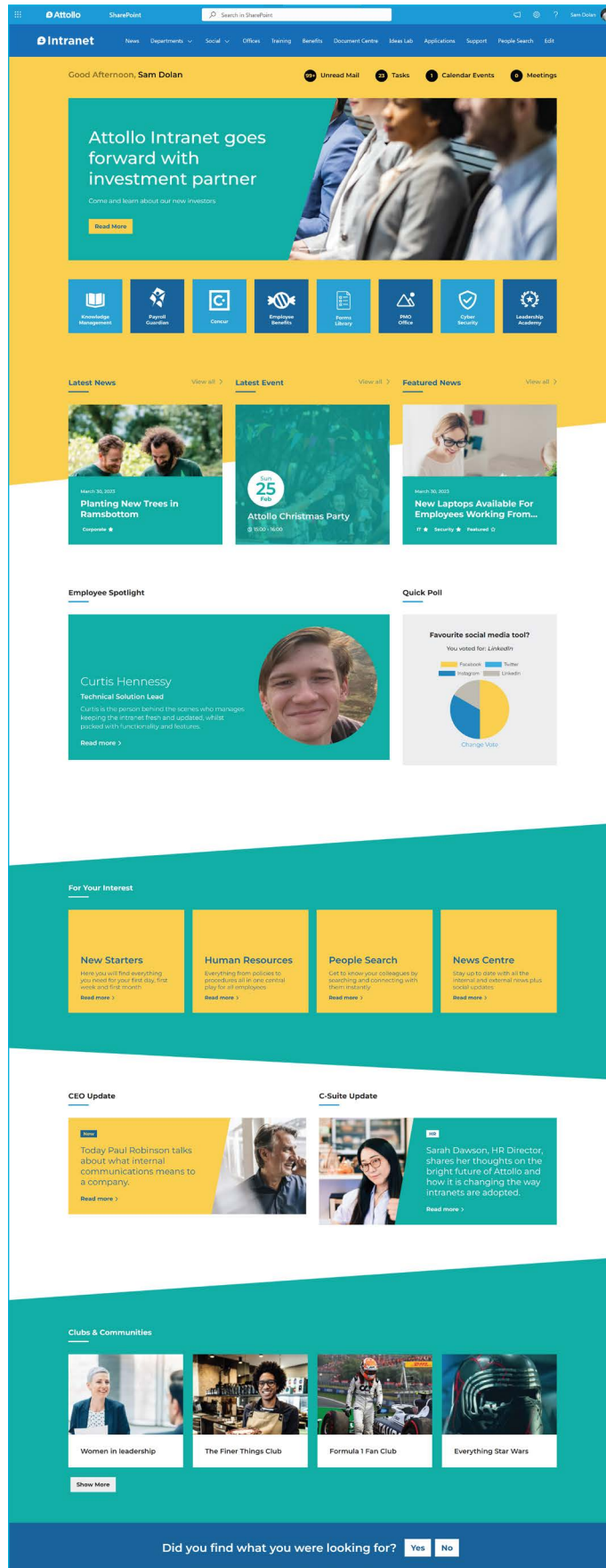
Attollo uses the familiar SharePoint navigation but provides plenty of flexibility for styling the home page.
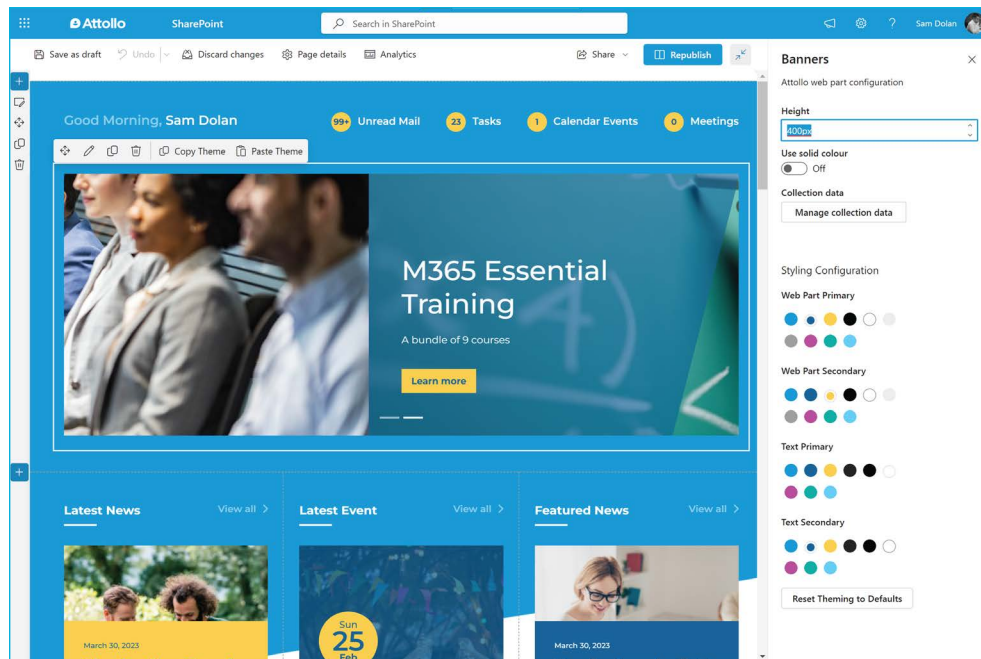
Attollo provides multiple options for styling web parts individually.
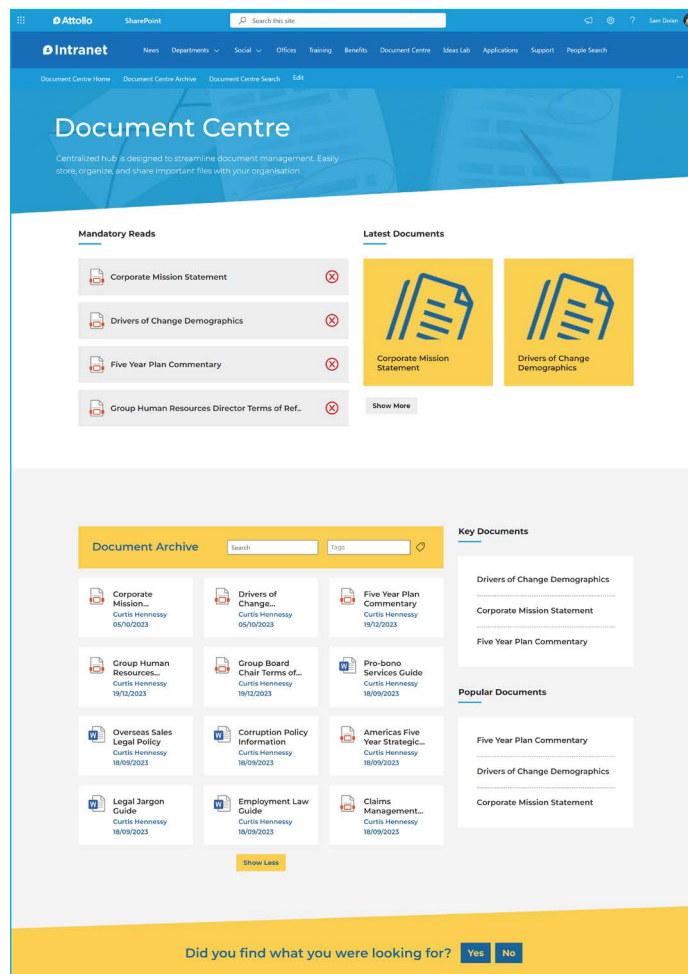
Attollo's document centre holds documents centrally within the intranet.
There's a dedicated search function and content can be marked as a mandatory read.
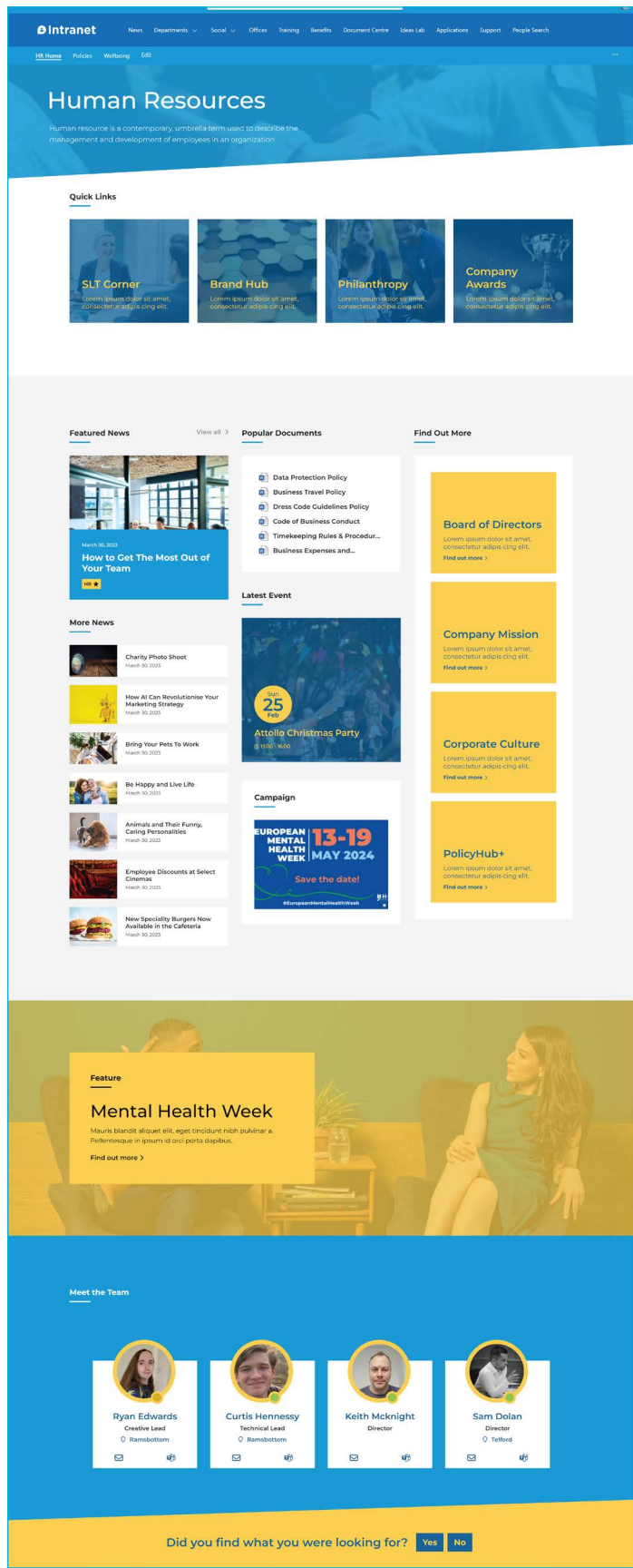
Department landing pages combine news, documents, events and feature panels as standard in a helpful out of the box template.

Pricing

PRICE BAND

250 users	$ $ $ $
1,000 users	$ $ $ $
5,000 users	$ $ $ $
20,000 users	$ $ $ $

These prices are indicative, offering a comparison of the products featured in this report. Please contact the vendor for a bespoke quote.

PRICING MODEL

Subscription – price band based on number of users. One-off payment. Subscription – price based on unlimited users

COSTS TYPICALLY

Fairly evenly spread across three years.

DISCOUNTS

Charities and non-profit organisations

PRICE INCLUDES

Professional services cover bespoke development, but everything is included in the Discovery & Deployment cost / phase.

Product type

Ready-to-run, installed in days

Branding opportunities

All branding, complex options

Base systems

Fully standalone	Requires SharePoint	Optionally works with SharePoint	Other

Sectors

Energy and utilities	Engineering and manufacturing	Environment and agriculture	Healthcare	Law, law enforcement and security

You may also be interested in...

TŌGŌ A social digital workplace by NTT DATA

Lightspeed365

involv BUILT ON MICROSOFT 365

COMPANY AND PRODUCT

Company details

Company
The Attollo Group

ISO 27001 certified
No

Data residency
N/A

Company founded
2017

Product launched
2022

Typical client size
60 - 15,000 employees

Largest deployment so far
15,000 employees

Customers
Clients include: Keysight Techologies, LaSalle, Loxam, YMCA Canada, Malta Financial Services Authority, Bridewell, Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer, Inigo Insurance, NHS, RETAL.

Partner locations
UK, USA, Australia, Central Europe

Company locations
Telford, Shropshire, UK (HQ), USA

Product and technical details

Name of product
Attollo Intranet

Deployment

Client on-premises	Client private cloud	Microsoft Azure	Amazon Web Services	Vendor-hosted	**Microsoft 365 tenant**	Other

Client data encrypted

In transit only	In transit and at rest	At rest only

Authentication supported

Entra ID	ADFS	Okta	Open ID	Oauth	G Suite	Other

App deployment

Google Play store	**Apple store**	MDM	MAM	Other

Accessibility
WCAG 2.1 compliant

Document library sources integrated

Box	Dropbox	Google Drive	SharePoint	OneDrive	Other

Optional integrated enterprise search engines

Coveo	Elastic	IBM	Lucidworks	Microsoft	Mindbreeze	Sinequa	Other

User interface multi-language

Pre-configured	Editable	Right to left script supported	Other*

*Out of the box Microsoft Language options.

Content multi-language

Machine translation for publishers	Machine translation for end users	Editable machine translation for publishers	Manual creation for publishers	Right to left script	Other *

*Language Pack for SharePoint

Set-up and support

Set-up process for new clients

1. Discovery - Understanding client requirements and challenges. The customer's site architecture, structure, page layouts, branding requirements, content types etc. requirements are captured.
2. Deployment - The Attollo solution is deployed into the customer's environment and configured accordingly (site templates, names of sites/centres etc.)
3. Training & Content Creation – The Attollo Group work closely with content editors and look at the customer's content advising them on best practice. They train and support content editors during the content creation phase.

Current version

v2

Product updates

Weekly

Product update process

All core updates are deployed as and when needed. New functionality is first presented to the client, demo'd etc and then can be deployed automatically or decided by the client. Customers can choose the delivery method.

Reverse-out options

The client can cancel anytime and their data will stay within their M365 tenant. The vendor does not take data from the client tenant. All page content will stay within the client tenant.

Technical support

Email support	Phone support	Chat support	Online portal	24/7 support	Office hours only

User community

None

Voice of the vendor

The Attollo Group says: "Built on SharePoint for Microsoft 365, Attollo Intranet enables you to organise, inform and communicate with all your employees.

- Attollo are experts when it comes to creating intranet solutions, bespoke development and understanding the Microsoft 365 platform.
- We have a proven track record of creating, developing, and launching intranet solutions in a wide range of industries all over the world.
- Within Attollo we have over 50+ man years of experience in building intranet solutions. Across several different people there are specialisms which no single person is going to have. These specialisms are available to you if / when you need them.
- Attollo instantly gives you 10 years+ of intranet solution development out of the box within one week.
- We are here to support you with any issues, questions or query. Our partnership relationship is very important as we both go on this journey.
- Attollo gives you 10+ years of web part, template, site features and functionality development instantly.
- Our platform is always maintained and up to date to ensure you have the very latest technology available.
- As we learn more about your business, we continuously look to take advantage of our platform, as well as the 365 platform to deliver tangible benefits, productivity increases and efficiency savings.
- Creating partnerships with our clients is essential, we want to be an extension of your team providing expertise, guidance when needed."

BEACON RIPPLE
CONNECTING PEOPLE

FULLY STANDALONE

REQUIRES SHAREPOINT

OPTIONALLY WORKS WITH SHAREPOINT

FRONTLINE FOCUS

Typical deployment:

1,000 - 100,000 employees

Company locations:

The product in a nutshell

The range of products from Silicon Reef will help intranet managers design attractive sites with useful tools, plus help communicators effectively run campaigns.

VISIT THE WEBSITE

The Silicon Reef suite is comprised of three products that are designed to complement Microsoft's offerings, without masking standard SharePoint functionality. They all work together and there is no co-dependency, so customers can choose the combination they wish to use. Each is offered at a good price, and we can see how each can make a real difference to SharePoint-based intranets.

Beacon provides more flexible branding and design options than those offered by Microsoft. As an example, organisations can use custom fonts and any colours for primary, secondary etc. choices. We particularly like the automatic accessibility checks that show where colour contrasts might not be high enough. Technical admins also have easier access to fine tune branding, such as to round web part corners.

Beacon also introduces a range of attractive web parts with configuration options that give admins flexibility over the content and design of each. For example, an admin could add an 'accordion' web part, with a series of clickable images that display simple text and automatically uses the global brand settings. Some web parts are added by Beacon while others are from the standard SharePoint range, but with more configuration options. There is also an optional private ChatGPT integration (via Azure) that checks aspects such as whether the tone matches global settings, and generates a page description for publishers to edit. We like this approach, as it assists with the writing process rather than replacing it.

Ripple, the second product, works well alongside Beacon but is focused on supporting internal communication campaigns. Communicators set up a campaign, for example 'company values launch', with associated dates, AI settings (where Beacon is in place) for tone and style, and any associated landing page that will collate associated content. We particularly like the option to apply strategic goals, which are linked to Viva Goals where in use.

Campaign articles are created using standard SharePoint functionality (plus Beacon), although 'boosting' positions them in dedicated Ripple web parts that promote campaigns. We like the tags that show people which campaign an article belongs to. Optionally, Ripple can replace standard SharePoint comments: using Teams in the background, a new channel is created for every campaign article and each comment is a new post. Employees are taken to the channel if they want to read more comments than displayed on a page, which might be jarring. However, we like that this integration brings through Teams reactions for the page, extending what's on offer in SharePoint.

There is a helpful calendar showing all campaign articles, plus a kanban board to help manage the status of each article. A feature called 'Scoop' lets communicators easily add other content from the intranet or on another website. Campaign analytics are fairly basic, but sentiment data is helpful and there is more to come on the roadmap. Also on the roadmap is a method to share campaign content into other Microsoft channels. We think this will be a helpful addition, as campaigns are rarely just intranet-based. It would be helpful for communicators to be able to manually add other campaign-related activities into Ripple, so that everything is kept together.

The final product is **MyTools** and hasn't been included in the pricing provided. MyTools allows people to filter, favourite, add, and reorder tool links that are displayed in the SharePoint app bar, in web parts, Viva Connections and MS Teams. Tools have categories and location tags, making it easier for employees to work out which they need. This improves on the standard SharePoint approach, but we'd like to see some initial audience targeting of tools applied to make it even more compelling.

Green Scholarship Programme

Funding the next generation of eco-scientists and engineers.

"At TerraNova, we recognize that our commitment to a sustainable future extends beyond our innovative projects. The Green Scholarship Programme is an embodiment of our dedication to nurturing the next generation of eco-innovators."

Rachel Schilling, CEO

Scholarship stories   See all

Scholarship Stories
Dan O'Riley, 2023 Awardee

Scholarship stories
Aisha Patel, 2021 Awardee

Scholarship stories
Liam Nguyen, 2023 Awardee

Scholarship stories
Nina Rodriguez, 2022 Awardee

✓ **80% success rate**

The TerraNova Scholarship Program has seen a 80% success rate, with 16 scholarship recipients going on to secure employment in the renewable energy sector within six months of graduation.

💡 **200+ innovations funded**

To date, the program has funded over 200 innovative projects, providing the resources for young thinkers to create sustainable solutions.

👥 **Diverse talent pool**

The program boasts a 60% participation rate from underrepresented groups in STEM, reflecting our commitment to diversity and inclusion in shaping the future of clean energy.

How can I get involved?

The #GreenScholarshipProgramme is not just a beacon for young eco-innovators, but also a platform for our employees to make a lasting impact. Whether you're looking to mentor, share knowledge, or even collaborate on groundbreaking research, there's a role for everyone.

Become a mentor

Run a workshop

Promote the programme

?

How much time commitment is expected if I decide to become a mentor?   +

Can I collaborate with scholars on research even if it's not directly related to my current role?   +

I have an idea for a workshop/seminar. How do I propose it?   +

How can I stay updated on the program's progress and successes?   +

Mapping the future

"We're not just harnessing the power of the elements to energize the world; we are embodying the forces of integrity, innovation, and inclusivity to empower every community
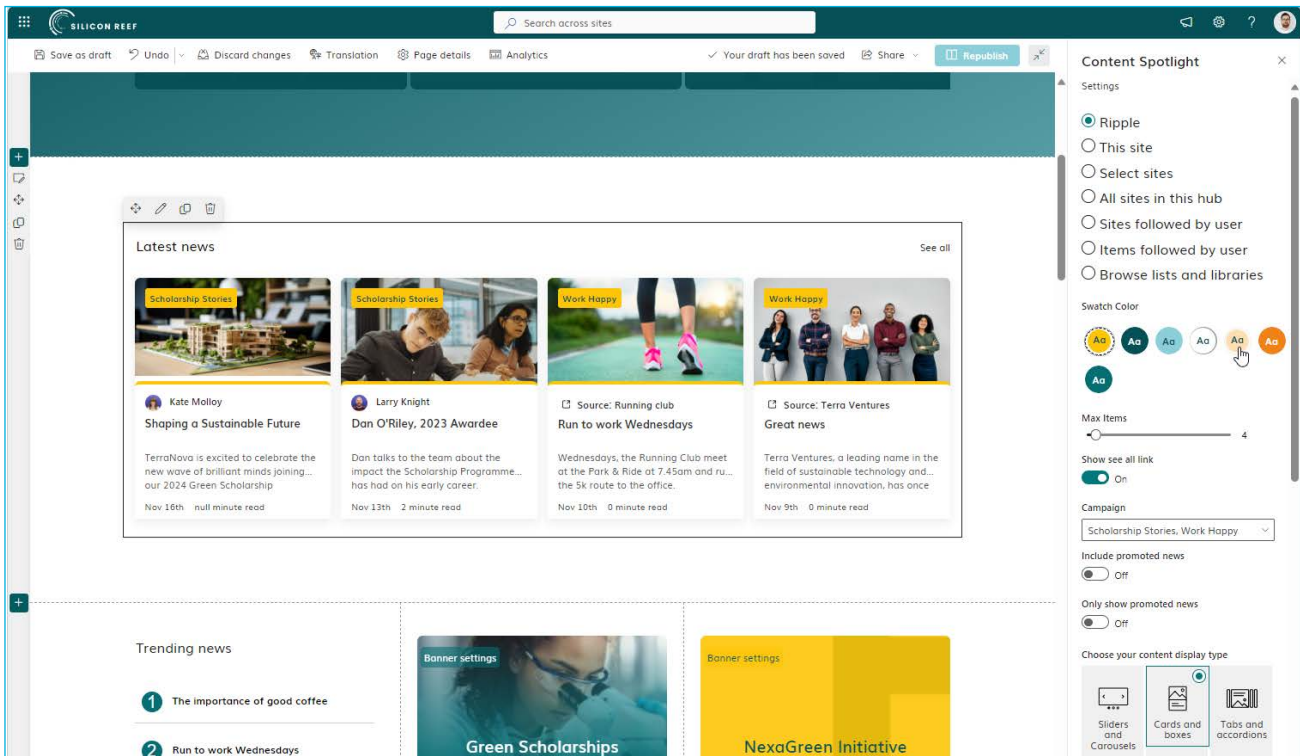
There is an excellent range of options in Beacon to design each home page web part, meaning a SharePoint intranet can look attractive and on brand for any organisation.
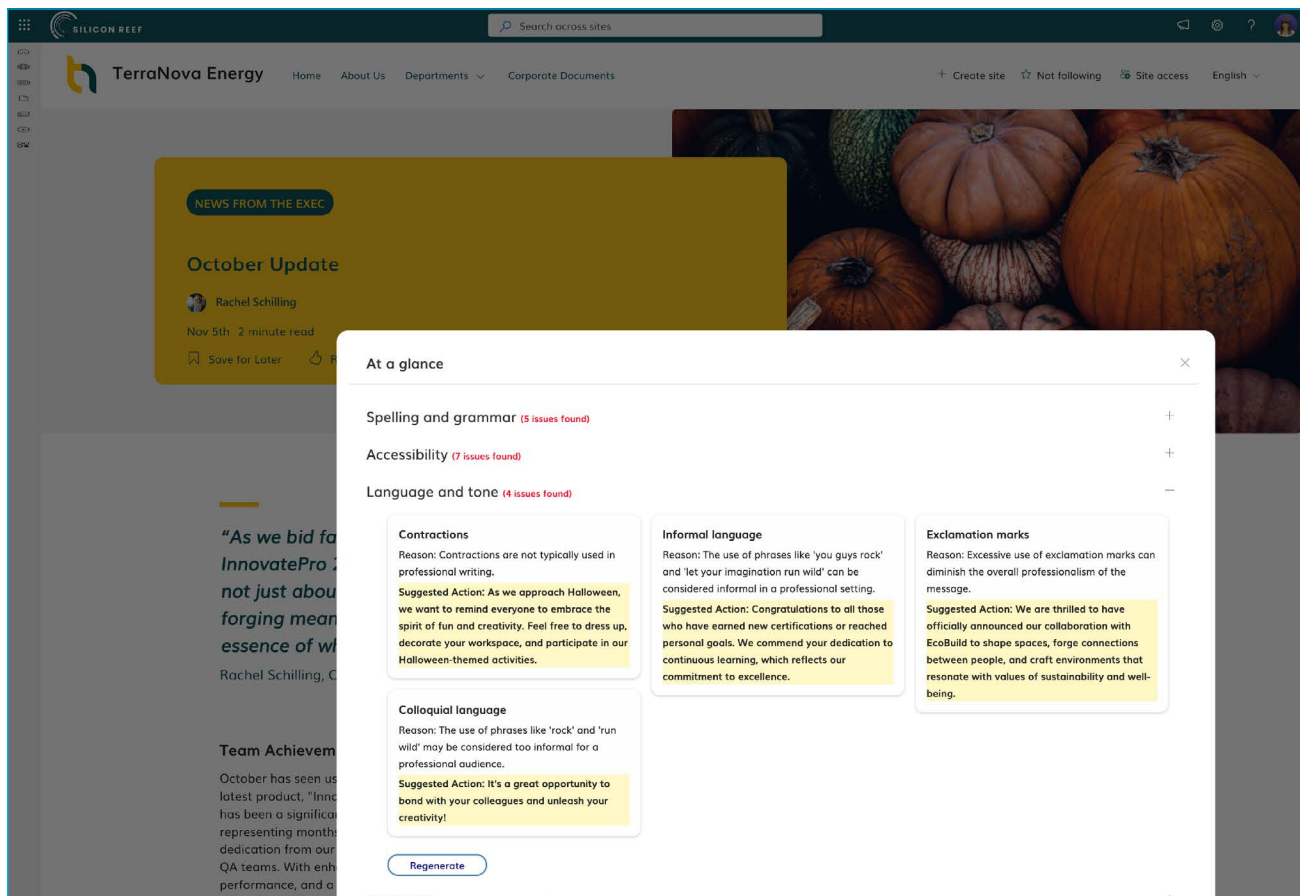
Each Ripple campaign has a variety of carefully considered settings, including AI choices that overwrite those set in Beacon, meaning a campaign can have its own voice.

Beacon offers web parts in pages too, extending standard SharePoint functionality dramatically.
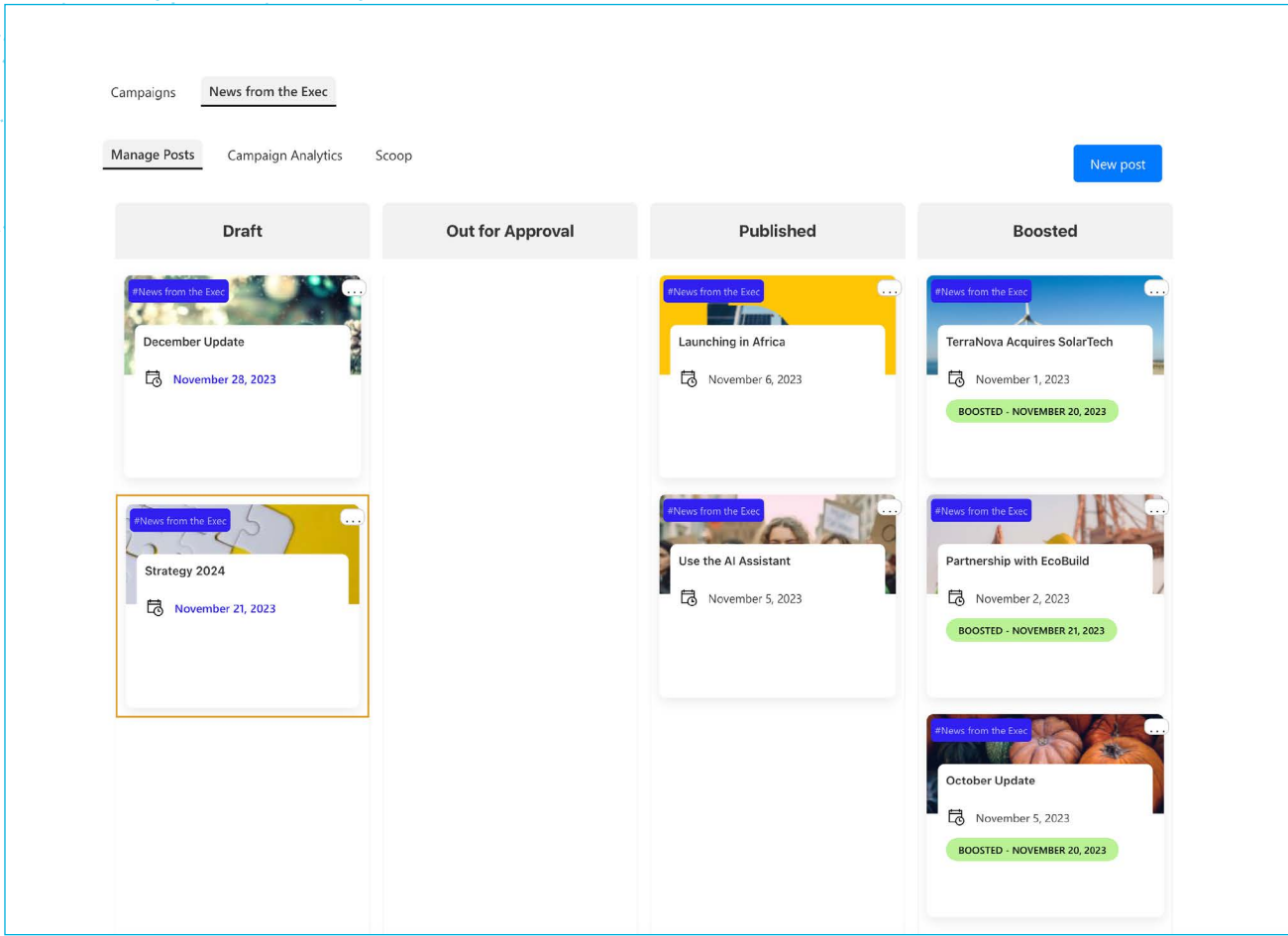
Each Ripple campaign includes a Kanban board, which is helpful to see the progress of content.

Pricing

PRICE BAND

250 users	$ $ $ $
1,000 users	$ $ $ $
5,000 users	$ $ $ $
20,000 users	$ $ $ $

These prices are indicative, offering a comparison of the products featured in this report. Please contact the vendor for a bespoke quote.

PRICING MODEL

Subscription – price band based on number of users.

COSTS TYPICALLY

Fairly evenly spread across three years.

DISCOUNTS

Charities and non-profit organisations, schools and educational institutes, Government / public sector, multi-year commitments

PRICE INCLUDES

Training for administrators is a standard part of Onboarding. Maintenance, support, updates and upgrades of Code are included within the Subscription fees. Customer success services are included as part of Silicon Reef's ongoing Account management for clients too. The Beacon and Ripple products are included in this pricing.

Product type

Ready-to-run, installed in days

Branding opportunities

Good branding, complex options

Base systems

Fully standalone	Requires SharePoint	Optionally works with SharePoint	Other

Sectors

Engineering and manufacturing	Media and internet	Property and construction	Public services, government and administration	Retail

You may also be interested in...

contact monkey

Lightspeed365

firstup

COMPANY AND PRODUCT

Company details

Company
Silicon Reef

ISO 27001 certified
No

Data residency
N/A

Company founded
2016

Product launched
2021

Typical client size
1,000 - 100,000 employees

Largest deployment so far
90,000 employees across
56 sites in 15 countries

Customers
Clients include: TP ICAP, MetOffice (Award
Winning Intranet), Sega, Willmott Dixon,
Anglo American, Bauer Media Group

Partner locations
UK

Company locations
London, UK (HQ)

Product and technical details

Name of product
Two products: Beacon and Ripple

Deployment

Client on-premises	Client private cloud	Microsoft Azure	Amazon Web Services	Vendor-hosted	Microsoft 365 tenant	Other

Client data encrypted

In transit only	**In transit and at rest**	At rest only

Authentication supported

Entra ID	ADFS	Okta	Open ID	Oauth	G Suite	Other

App deployment

Google Play store	Apple store	MDM	MAM	**Other***

* No native mobile app, but the Teams & Viva Connections app can be used instead

Accessibility
WCAG 2.1 compliant

Document library sources integrated

Box	Dropbox	Google Drive	SharePoint	OneDrive	Other*

* Silicon Reef can use any integrations that exist within the customer's M365 tenant.

Optional integrated enterprise search engines

Coveo	Elastic	IBM	Lucidworks	Microsoft	Mindbreeze	Sinequa	Other

User interface multi-language

Pre-configured	Editable	Right to left script supported	Other*

* Browser translations handle most (if not all) areas of the tools for admins in their chosen browser language.

Content multi-language

Machine translation for publishers	Machine translation for end users	Editable machine translation for publishers	Manual creation for publishers	Right to left script	Other*

* Use of the SharePoint translations pages with the Ripple AI helper to provide natural language translations.

Set-up and support

Set-up process for new clients

The deployment and configuration are done through a largely automated process into the client's tenant. Setup of initial pages and layout designs to support the onboarding to the new intranet can be provided as a separate consulting engagement if needed, including comms support for launch.

Current version

v3.1

Product updates

The product is scheduled for quarterly minor releases and no more than one annual major release.

Product update process

Customers are invited to update and may then schedule the update when they are ready. It is always advised that the update is taken. Silicon Reef's Support and Product teams and Customer Success or Account Managers will work with customers to make sure they are happy, ready, and supported during and after the update.

Reverse-out options

All data is held in the client environment. If the contract ends users will have a transition period to move the data into a new system before access to the web parts is removed.

Technical support

Email support	Phone support	Chat support	Online portal	24/7 support	Office hours only

User community

Currently Silicon Reef's customers are the community that inform their roadmap but they do not have an official user community. They are considering setting one up as they serve nearly 1,000,000 end users across all their services.

Voice of the vendor

Silicon Reef says: "Silicon Reef want to help all organisations to Work Happy and get past poor experiences with SharePoint Online. Do you or your employees ever find yourself saying 'I wish it didn't look that bad' or ' Why can't I find this data easily?', 'Is my organisation listening to me?'

Our wealth of experience of delivering complex SharePoint Portals, Comms and bi-directional and engaging Employee Experience enables us to distil knowledge into our products – answering, what we think are, the obvious easy answers for all customers. Further, we can break down our products to answer specific use cases and therefore enable customers to get the best value and the easiest route to success on top of SharePoint Online.

Beacon is a series of web parts for SharePoint modern which make the page aesthetically pleasing and present information in a way that employees are used to experiencing on consumer websites. Designed for user experience and aligned with accessibility standards, Beacon highlights and guides you to the important and interesting content.

Ripple supports internal comms teams to plan, create and track employee comms and key strategic update news. With drag and drop planning capabilities, rich content editing web parts from Beacon and custom branding, Ripple builds pages which look and feel like your company and help you deliver exceptional campaigns. Scoop – our latest product will be part of Ripple enabling users to share news from across SharePoint into the Ripple news header and Ripple news web parts.

MyTools – Quick access, personalised app launcher to all your company apps providing productivity enhancement."

contact monkey

FULLY STANDALONE

REQUIRES SHAREPOINT

OPTIONALLY WORKS WITH SHAREPOINT

FRONTLINE FOCUS

Weekly Newsletter

Default Colours · Comments Off · Preview · Save & exit

CONTENT · ROWS · SETTINGS

Create New Email

Welcome {{firstname}} !

We're thrilled to have you on board. Whether you're a seasoned pro or new to our platform, we're here to support you every step of the way. Feel free to reach out if you have any questions or need assistance. Let's embark on this communication journey together!

Did You know?

| TITLE | PARAGRAPH | LIST |
IMAGE	BUTTON	DIVIDER
SPACER	SOCIAL	HTML
VIDEO	ICONS	MENU
TEXT	GIFS	EVENTS

Typical deployment:

200+ employees

Company locations:
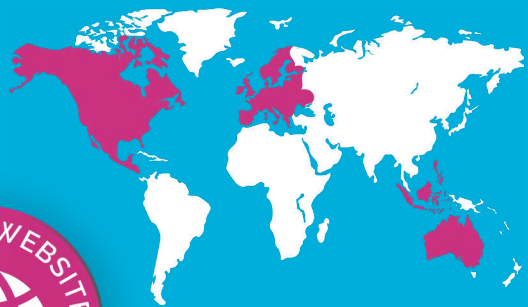
The product in a nutshell

ContactMonkey is a compelling option for any organisation looking to improve email and SMS communications.

VISIT THE WEBSITE

CLEARBOX VIEW

ContactMonkey is an email platform from Canadian vendor ContactMonkey, who also have offices in the UK and Australia. ContactMonkey is designed to help internal communicators reach employees via email effectively. A simple SMS tool for urgent comms is included in the pricing provided. We can see the benefit of SMS for organisations with a frontline workforce, but this review focuses on the email software.

During the initial set up, the vendor configures client branding for use across all emails. This is fine-grained, allowing heading sizes to be defined for example, and results in attractive on-brand emails. We like that the vendor will also configure initial templates, for example a 'monthly health and safety update', although admins may edit or add more in future. Helpfully, template elements can be locked down if wanted.

Communicators with appropriate permissions create emails, choosing a relevant name and associated tags that group similar emails together. They then choose an appropriate template, or start from scratch, clicking on embedded 'widgets' to insert content; or they can easily drag and drop new rows and widgets into the email. Widgets include content such as 'GIFs' and 'surveys'. It's possible to personalise the subject line and content, for example starting the email with "Hi [FirstName]". Up to five communicators can work on a single email at the same time and we like that they can leave comments, including @mentions, to help the editorial process. There is a new AI writing assistant, but we didn't see this in action.

Images are added from an inbuilt file manager and there is a helpful integration with Creative Commons for free stock imagery, embedded images benefit from great inbuilt image manipulation tools like cropping. We like that embedded links to video, such as in YouTube or Vimeo, automatically generate appropriate thumbnails. Links to other content can be embedded, such as buttons to intranet news stories. An integration that allows MS Teams content to be easily brought into ContactMonkey is now available, but we haven't seen it, and a SharePoint integration will follow in Q1.

Survey widgets include scales and ratings, and these work well, with more on the roadmap. The results of survey widgets are presented as average scores or employee Net Promoter Scores (eNPS) for ease of analysis. Communicators can create an aggregation of results over time to easily see an improvement in the eNPS, although the styling of custom reports is simple. We like that recipients can add comments that are captured in analytics, though. For events, communicators create a simple 'landing page' within ContactMonkey that has basic styling but includes useful controls, such as limiting attendance numbers. In the email builder, publishers add 'event' widgets and select the associated landing page to be embedded; alternatively, events held within Outlook or similar tools can also be embedded.

Where an organisation is using Google Workspace, the email is sent from within ContactMonkey. Those using Outlook will have to open a new email and the ContactMonkey plugin, before embedding the email, which is less smooth but still works well. Recipients are held as audience groups inside ContactMonkey, but this is fed from an HRIS or Entra ID.

Analytics are strong, providing a good range of data about all emails, then each email has its own detailed results; a heat map showing widget performance is particularly helpful. We like that publishers can compare fields across multiple emails, for example the open rate for all 'monthly emails from the CEO', and think a way for people to set and track goals would be a helpful addition.

Overall, ContactMonkey is an excellent newsletter and SMS building tool that admins will enjoy using and employees will appreciate for the sophisticated emails that they receive. It comes at an attractive price too, making ContactMonkey a compelling choice for any organisation looking to improve email communications.

CONTENT | ROWS | SETTINGS

Create New Email

Welcome {{firstname}} !

We're thrilled to have you on board. Whether you're a seasoned pro or new to our platform, we're here to support you every step of the way. Feel free to reach out if you have any questions or need assistance. Let's embark on this communication journey together!

Did You know?

Boosted Productivity

Did you know that effective internal communication can lead to a 47% higher return to shareholders over five years? It's not just about sharing information; it's an essential driver of productivity and business success.

Communication Channels Abound

There are more communication channels today than ever before. From emails and instant messaging to video conferences and collaboration tools, it's estimated that the average employee uses at least four different channels daily for work-related comms.

Drag it here

Drop content blocks here
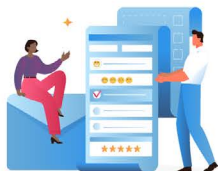
Feedback Matters

Feedback-rich companies tend to have employees who feel more engaged and satisfied. Studies show that organizations with regular feedback practices have turnover rates that are 14.9% lower than for employees who receive no feedback.

How do you find the experience so far?

★★★★★

Content blocks panel:

TITLE	PARAGRAPH	LIST
IMAGE	BUTTON	DIVIDER
SPACER	SOCIAL	HTML
VIDEO	ICONS	MENU
TEXT	GIFS	EVENTS
EVENTS	SURVEYS	ENPS
TABLE		
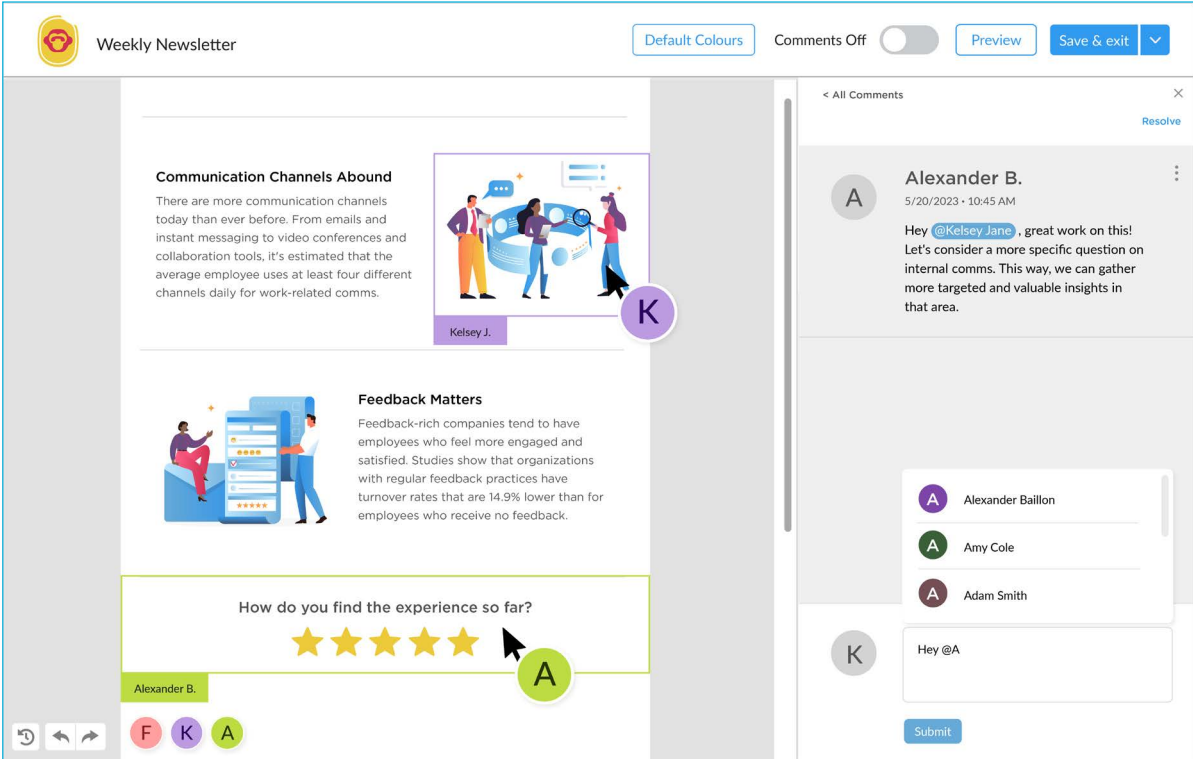
Up to five communicators can edit an email at one time, with comments (including @mentions) a helpful way to work together.
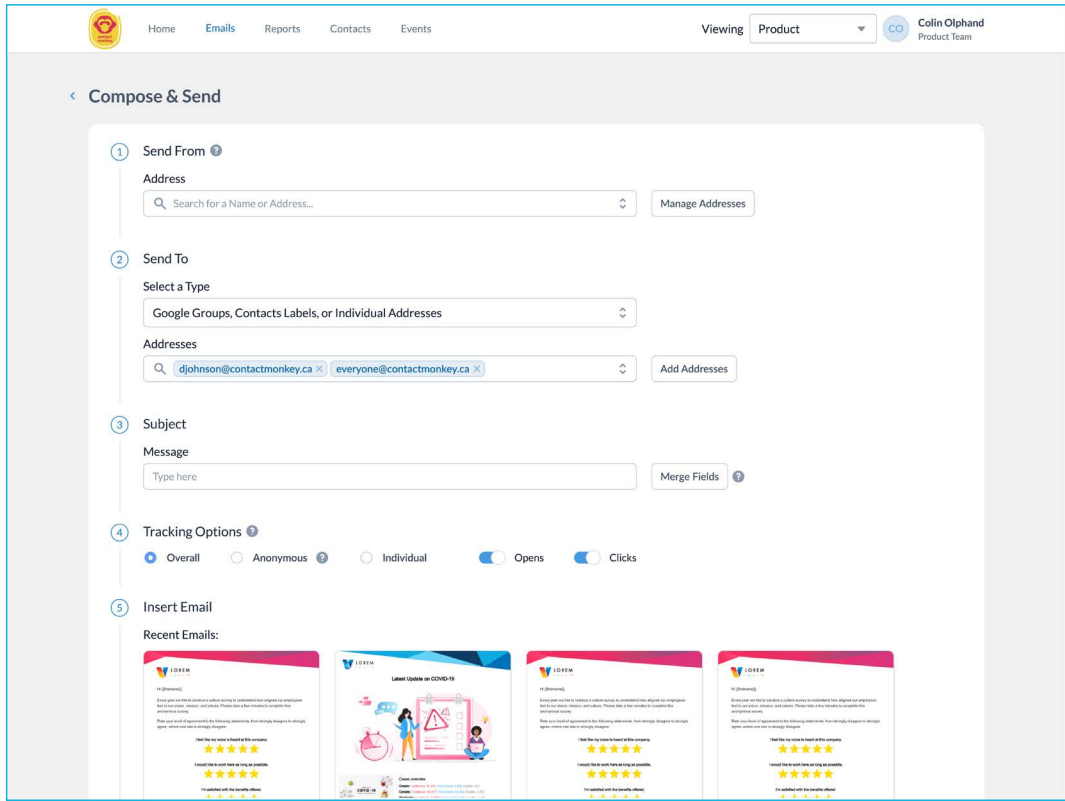
Once an email is ready to send it's easy to add recipients and choose the correct newsletter to issue.
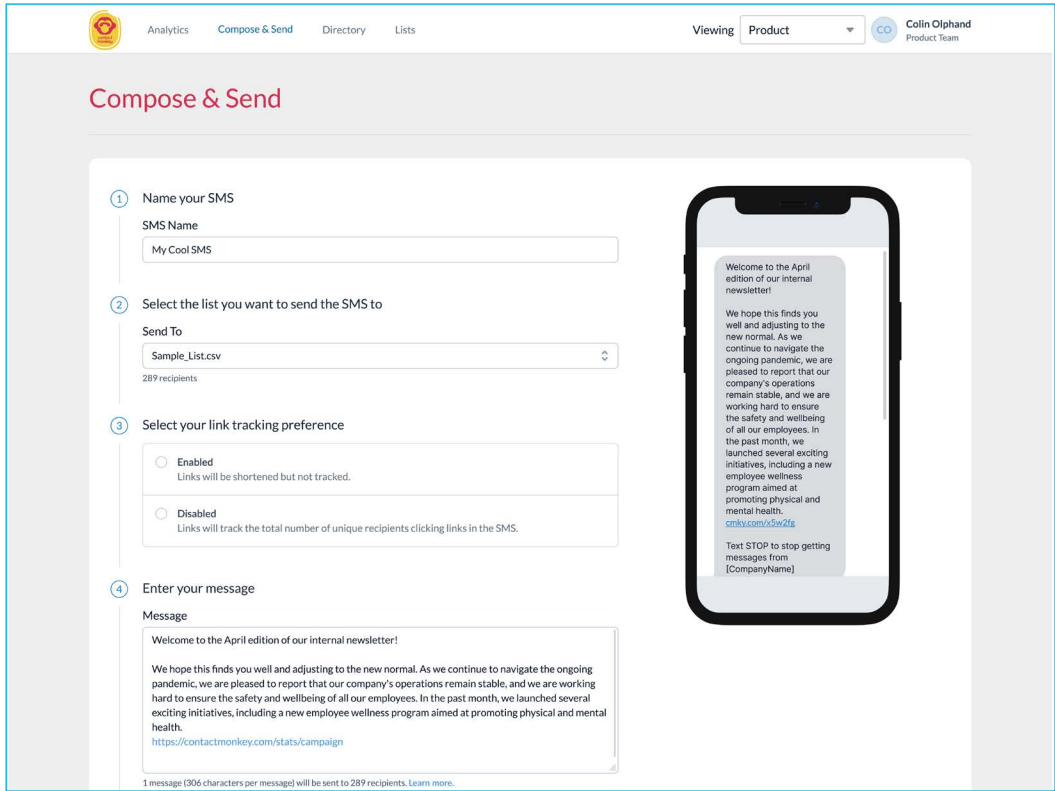
The SMS tool is simple but very effective, giving those with a frontline workforce a quick way to reach employees.
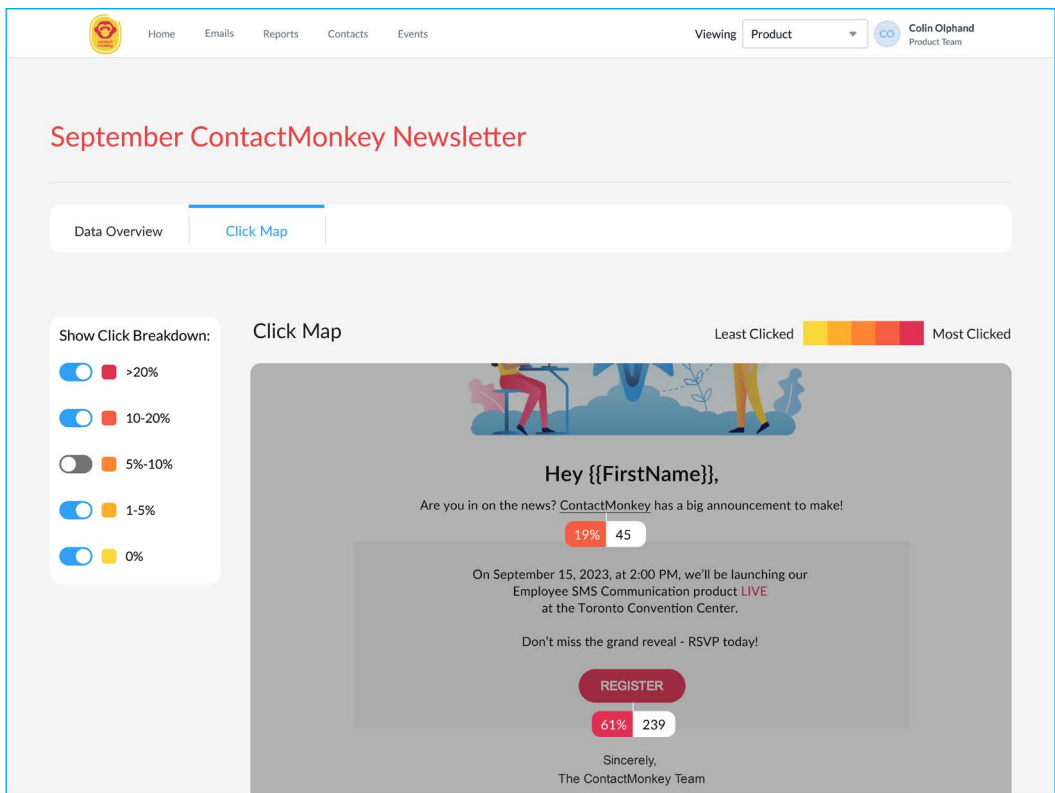
A heat map is among the good range of analytics included in the tool.

Pricing

PRICE BAND	
250 users	$ $ $ $
1,000 users	$ $ $ $
5,000 users	$ $ $ $
20,000 users	$ $ $ $

These prices are indicative, offering a comparison of the products featured in this report. Please contact the vendor for a bespoke quote.

PRICING MODEL

Subscription – price band based on number of users. Based on number of licenses needed for sending plus number of recipients you're sending to. Onboarding fee in year one.

COSTS TYPICALLY

Weighted towards the start (during the 'project phase'), then much lower for the remaining term.

DISCOUNTS

Charities and non-profit organisations, multi-year commitments

PRICE INCLUDES

Every ContactMonkey customer is assigned a Customer Success Manager, dedicated to helping deliver successful internal communications programs. This includes monthly check-ins and quarterly reviews to help customers understand what's working and how to improve.

Product type
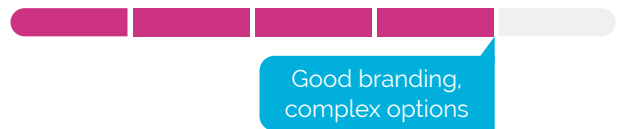
Ready-to-run, installed in hours

Branding opportunities

Good branding, complex options

Base systems

Fully standalone	Requires SharePoint	Optionally works with SharePoint	Other*

*Works with Gmail and Outlook

Sectors

Energy and utilities	Healthcare	Information technology	Science and pharmaceuticals	Teaching and education

You may also be interested in...

Junglemail for Office 365

firstup

Staffbase

COMPANY AND PRODUCT

Company details

Company
ContactMonkey

ISO 27001 certified
ContactMonkey are SOC 2 Type 2 certified.

Data residency
United States, EU (Ireland), Canada and Australia.

Company founded
2012

Product launched
2018

Typical client size
Any company with over 200 employees

Largest deployment so far
Global IT Consulting and Services firm with 1,083 active global sending users. They have unlimited licenses included with their contract and are sending to over 50,000 employees

Customers
Please see their website for details.

Partner locations
None

Company locations
Toronto, Canada (HQ), UK, Australia

Product and technical details

Name of product

ContactMonkey

Deployment

Client on-premises	Client private cloud	Microsoft Azure	Amazon Web Services	Vendor-hosted	Microsoft 365 tenant	Other

Client data encrypted

In transit only	In transit and at rest	At rest only

Authentication supported

Entra ID	ADFS	Okta	Open ID	Oauth	G Suite	Other

App deployment

Google Play store	Apple store	MDM	MAM	Other*

*There is no mobile app for ContactMonkey

Accessibility

Background colours can be set by the individual user, contrast can be set by the individual user, individual users can change the font size of what they're seeing, Alt text is in use for images, keyboards can be used for navigation and motion animation triggered by interaction can be disabled.

Document library sources integrated

Box	Dropbox	Google Drive	SharePoint	OneDrive	Other

Optional integrated enterprise search engines

Coveo	Elastic	IBM	Lucidworks	Microsoft	Mindbreeze	Sinequa	Other

User interface multi-language

Pre-configured	Editable	Right to left script supported	**Other***

*Only English is currently supported

Content multi-language

Machine translation for publishers	Machine translation for end users	Editable machine translation for publishers	Manual creation for publishers	**Right to left script**	Other

Set-up and support

Set-up process for new clients

Typically can be deployed within 30 minutes.

Current version

O365 3.5.0.7 7/11/2023 Gmail uses our Backend, no public version number COM add-in 1.7.41 2/21/2023

Product updates

Production deployments occur at least weekly.

Product update process

Depending on the scope of the release, releases may or may not be feature flagged for a gradual roll out. Customers cannot influence timing or opt out.

Reverse-out options

Customer data is deleted within 60 days after contract end as per our data policy.

Technical support

Email support	Phone support	Chat support	Online portal	24/7 support	Office hours only

User community

No not specifically for users, but every year ContactMonkey hosts a virtual conference where thought leaders within the internal communications industry come together to discuss and share the latest industry trends.

Voice of the vendor

ContactMonkey says: "ContactMonkey is your comprehensive solution for transforming internal communications within your organization. In a dynamic and ever-evolving work landscape, our powerful software is designed to address the challenges faced by internal communicators and unite your entire workforce.

Our platform seamlessly integrates with your preferred email client, including Outlook and Gmail, as well as SMS and HRIS systems. This versatility empowers you to reach every corner of your organization, ensuring that essential company announcements, life-saving alerts, and critical updates are delivered promptly to all employees. Whether your team members are working remotely, adopting a hybrid approach, or occupying desk-less roles, ContactMonkey provides a unified communication solution.

But it doesn't end there. ContactMonkey allows you to discover valuable engagement metrics across all your messaging channels. You can build segmented employee lists, collect real-time feedback, and leverage robust email analytics, including open rates, click-through rates, read rates, and eNPS. These insights empower you to understand what truly resonates with your employees, enabling you to refine your communication strategies for optimal engagement.

In a world where effective internal communications are key to success, ContactMonkey empowers your internal communications team to elevate employee engagement, streamline communications, and drive productivity. Transform the way you connect with your workforce."
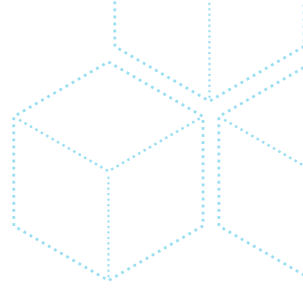
ENGAGE

FULLY STANDALONE

REQUIRES SHAREPOINT

OPTIONALLY WORKS WITH SHAREPOINT

FRONTLINE FOCUS
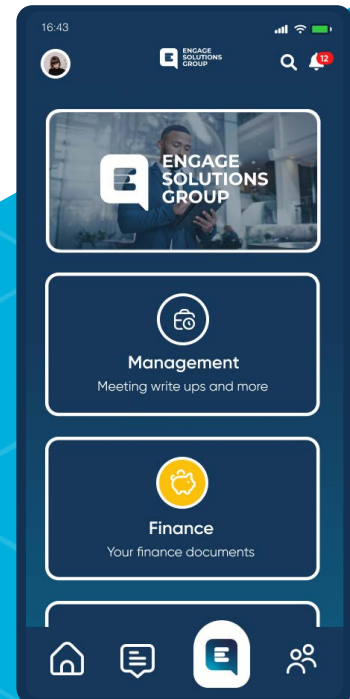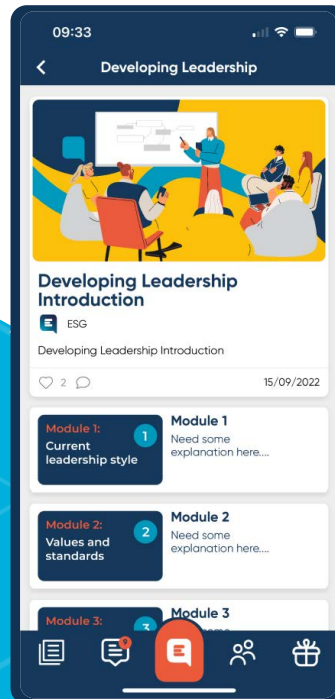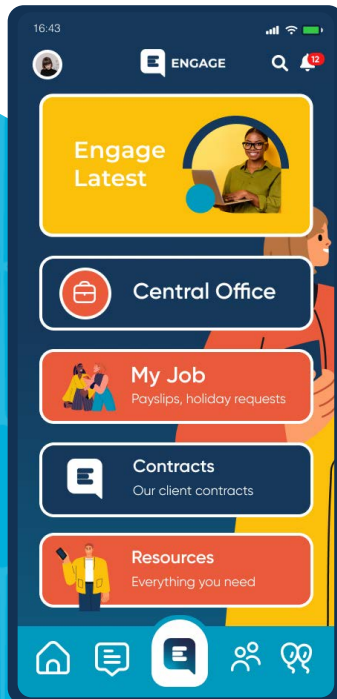
Typical deployment:

2,500 employees

Company locations:
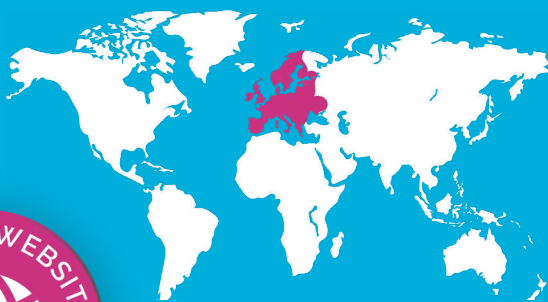
The product in a nutshell

Engage is a fully featured product with strong engagement and practical features, which is tailored to people based on their stage of the employee life cycle.

VISIT THE WEBSITE

CLEARBOX VIEW

Engage, from UK-based Engage Solutions Group (ESG), launched in 2019 and we are impressed by the range and depth of features on offer in a comparatively young product. Engage is unusual as it focuses on the employee life cycle as a means to influence what is presented to individuals, so employees in a 'development' phase will have a different experience from alumni. The desktop environment is simple but the mobile experience is particularly strong and is the focus of this review.

Desktop and mobile interfaces are clean and contemporary, offering a host of branding options that will suit any organisation's needs. This not only includes the capacity to support multi-brand approaches, but the stage in the employee life cycle may also dictate the branding and design. White labelling of the app is at additional cost, however. Navigation is icon-based, with a consistent set of graphics used for the mobile app and desktop. The 'home' icon opens a menu of buttons to subsequent features, such as 'kudos', or content spaces, such as 'HR'. The navigation icons and home menu are configurable for the organisation and tailored to the employee. This is a simple navigation approach, which is not as sophisticated as a mega menu but works well.

A 'Feed' menu aggregates all platform activity, including employee generated content, in a familiar social media-style timeline. The algorithm automatically promotes company news and admins can pin messages for increased visibility. News and reference content uses 'Pages', which are created via a separate publishing environment. Content publishing tools are simple yet flexible and produce attractive pages for mobile and desktop. Audience targeting comes from tools like Entra ID, or 'smart groups' that are based on people 'attributes', such as those who have completed training modules or are in certain cycle stages. There are expiry dates for deactivating old content, but the admin screens are fiddly compared with other products we've seen.

There is a range of native tools and features that address common businesses challenges. One example is a configurable 'kudos' tool that uses AI to display relevant awards in a feed and includes nice animations on associated kudos badges. Bite-sized training presents modules appropriate to the person's role and position in the life cycle, completing 'about the business' training as a new starter for example. We particularly like the option to add augmented reality into a page, which is triggered when someone scans a QR code. This could present a message from the CEO or render a 3D view of a new product.

Analytics is better than others we've seen, but more could be done to improve presentation and depth of data. The people search works well with good profile pages, but the platform search has room for improvement, particularly on mobile. There is an effective federated search option, however, which extends the integration options on offer. Where appropriate, Engage can act as a single sign-on provider for third-party business systems. There are native employee services, such as holiday booking, with a feed into a third-party system, or as a two-way integration. As another example, an integration between Hubspot and Chat brings sales leads into Engage. Engage can present payslips to employees and provide deep links to tools including external file managers such as SharePoint.

This review only scratches the surface of the features on offer in Engage, which has proved to be more fully featured than we expected. The price is quite attractive for larger businesses already and as the product is modular, all business sizes may find there are savings to be had. We feel any organisations looking to provide functional tools and tackle employee engagement challenges, particularly via mobile, will find Engage worth a closer look.
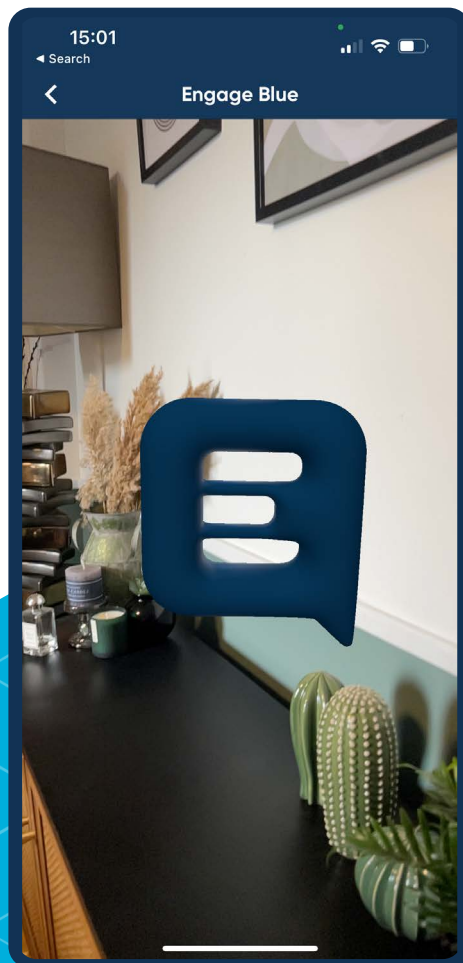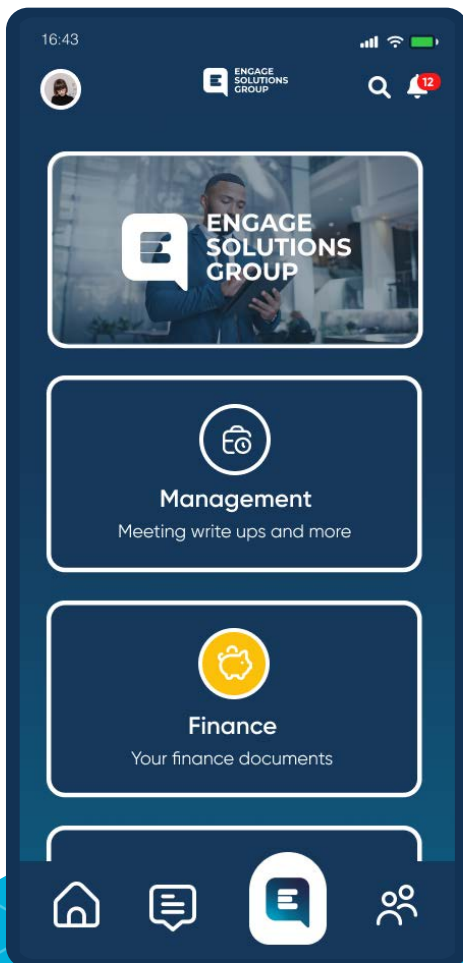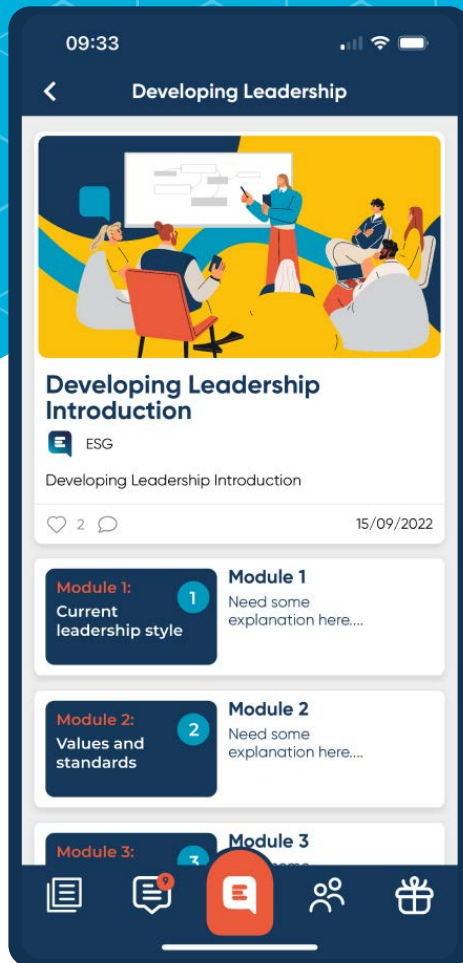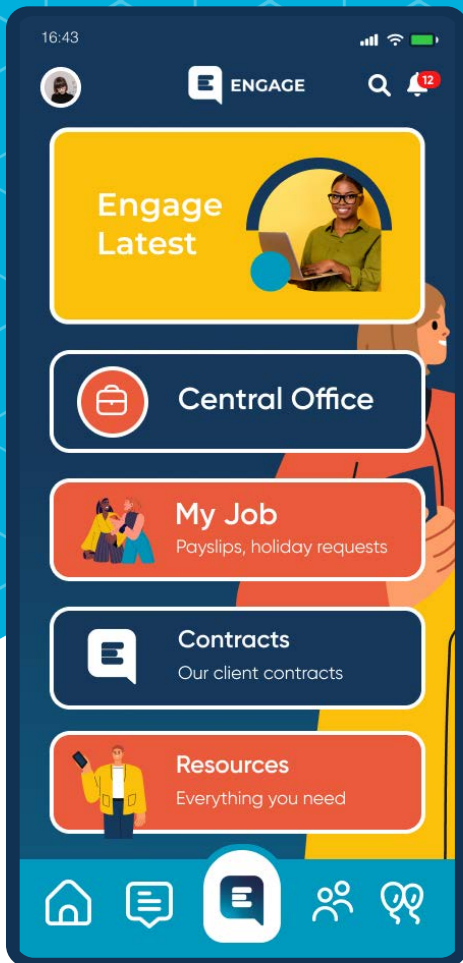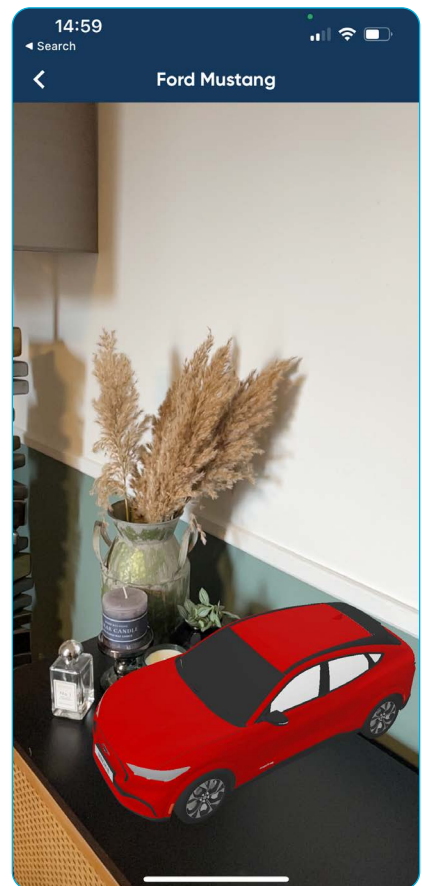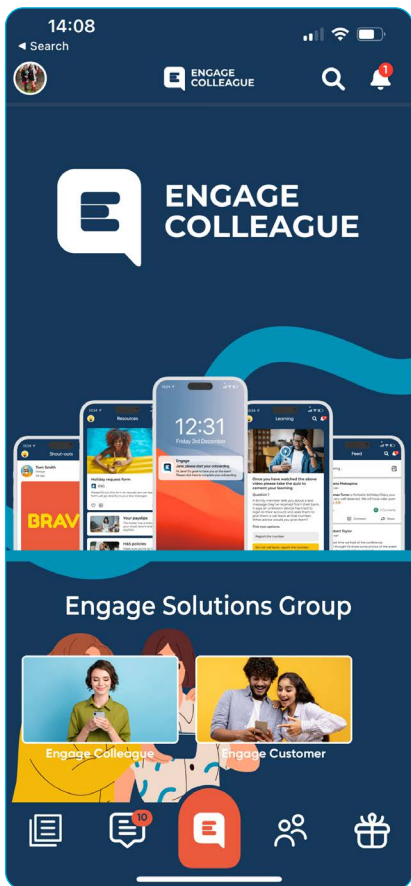
Engage works very well on mobile, providing great social tools, as well as more unusual features like augmented reality.
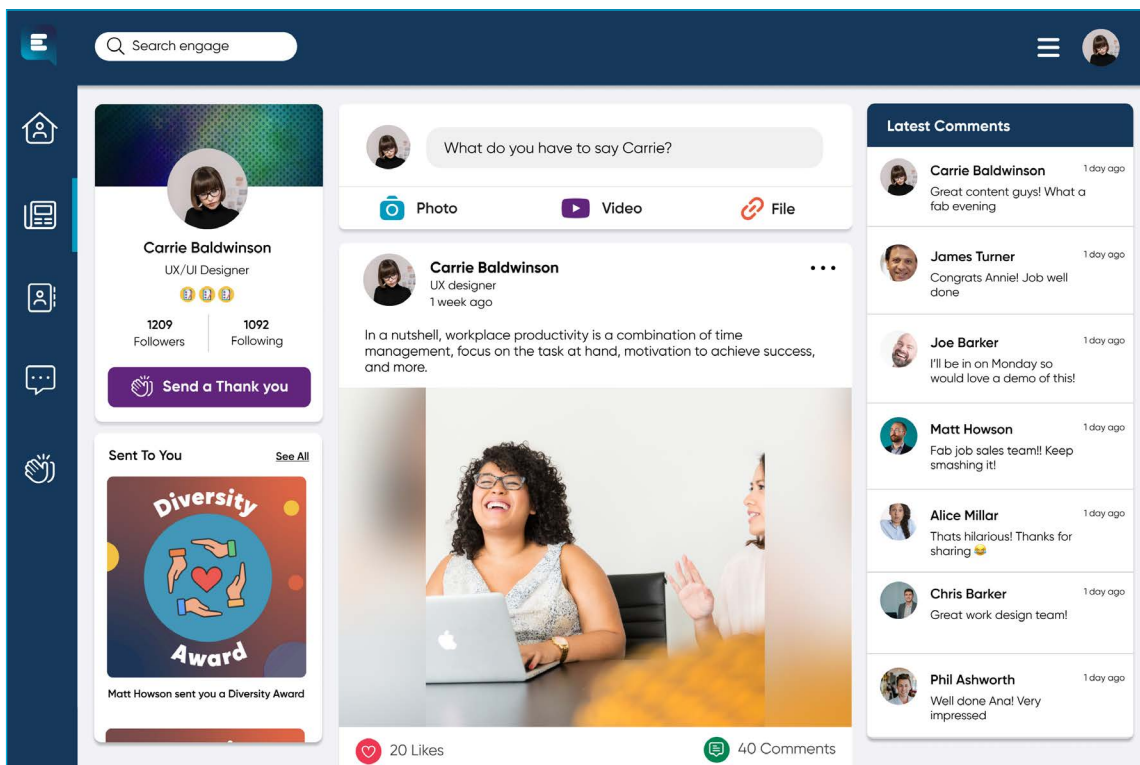
The 'Feed' on desktop shows all posts as well as widgets of other useful content.
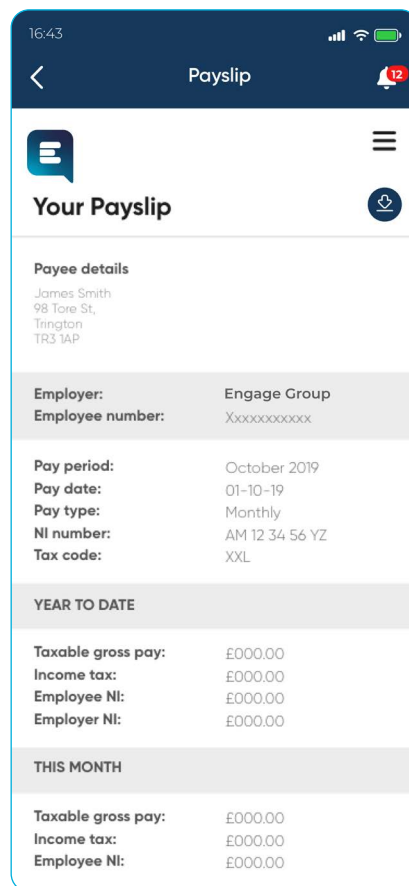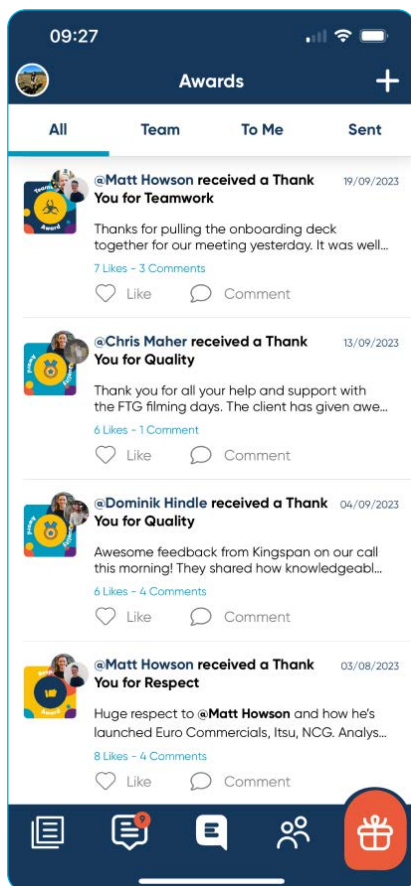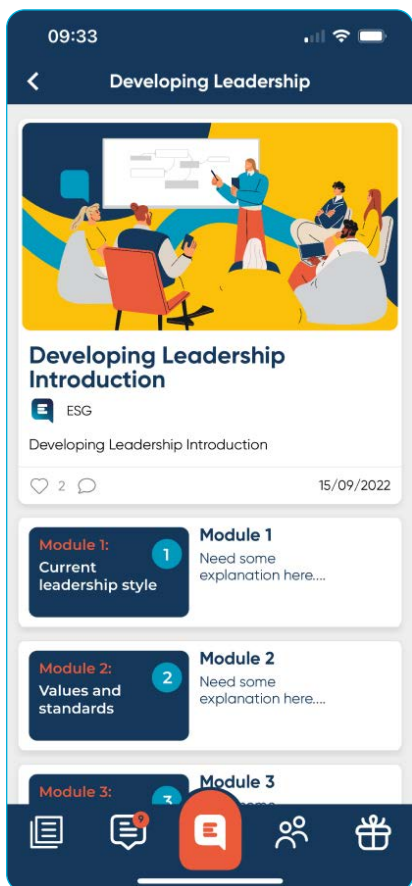
Bite-sized training, employee recognition, and easy access to payslips are all services Engage provides.
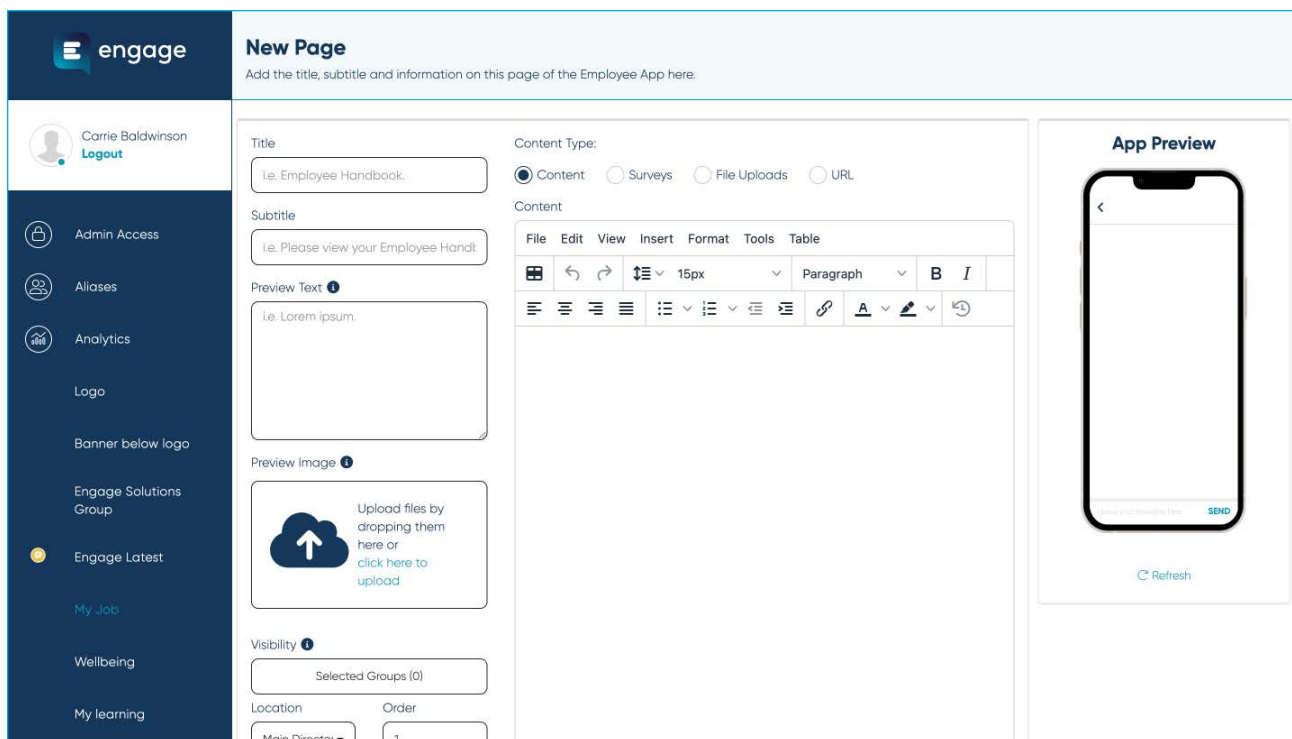
The desktop CMS is simple, yet creates attractive news and reference pages
that display well in a small screen environment.

Pricing

PRICE BAND				
250 users	$	$	$	$
1,000 users	$	$	$	$
5,000 users	$	$	$	$
20,000 users	$	$	$	$

These prices are indicative, offering a comparison of the products featured in this report. Please contact the vendor for a bespoke quote.

PRICING MODEL

Subscription – price per user per month, Subscription – price band based on number of users. One-off payment.

COSTS TYPICALLY

Fairly evenly spread across three years.

DISCOUNTS

Charities and non-profit organisations, schools and educational institutes, Government / public sector, healthcare, frontline users, multi-year commitments

PRICE INCLUDES

Regular software updates, customer support (24/7 access via phone, email, and chat), basic training, quarterly reviews (to assess how well the platform is meeting your needs and suggest strategies for maximising its utility).

Product type

Ready-to-run, installed in hours

Branding opportunities

All branding, complex options

Base systems

Fully standalone	Requires SharePoint	Optionally works with SharePoint	Other

Sectors

Accountancy, banking and finance	Engineering and manufacturing	Facilities service management	Leisure, sport and tourism	Retail

You may also be interested in...

Blink. **Staffbase** **unily**

COMPANY AND PRODUCT

Company details

Company
Engage Solutions Group

ISO 27001 certified
Yes

Data residency
UK, USA, Australia

Company founded
2017

Product launched
2019

Typical client size
200 - 10,000 employees

Largest deployment so far
141,500 employees Global
(majority in the UK and USA)

Customers
Clients include: Ford - Parts Plus,
Ford – Trustford, B&M, Coop, Onward Homes,
Kingspan, Greater Daytona RTA,
Liverpool FC, Soreen

Partner locations
USA, Portugal, Spain, France, Italy, UK,
Germany, Australia, New Zealand

Company locations
Manchester, UK (HQ)

Product and technical details

Name of product
Engage

Deployment

Client on-premises	Client private cloud	Microsoft Azure	Amazon Web Services	Vendor-hosted	Microsoft 365 tenant	Other
			Amazon Web Services			

Client data encrypted

In transit only	In transit and at rest	At rest only
	In transit and at rest	

Authentication supported

Entra ID	ADFS	Okta	Open ID	Oauth	G Suite	Other*

*SAML2 IDP

App deployment

Google Play store	Apple store	MDM	MAM	Other

Accessibility
WCAG 2.1 compliant

Document library sources integrated

Box	Dropbox	Google Drive	SharePoint	OneDrive	Other

Optional integrated enterprise search engines

Coveo	Elastic	IBM	Lucidworks	Microsoft	Mindbreeze	Sinequa	Other

User interface multi-language

Pre-configured	Editable	Right to left script supported	Other

Content multi-language

Machine translation for publishers	Machine translation for end users	Editable machine translation for publishers	Manual creation for publishers	Right to left script	Other

Set-up and support

Set-up process for new clients

Engage Solutions offer a plug-and-play solution that clients can get started with immediately. From there, their team is available at every step to assist with any custom configurations and integrations customers may need. A fully tailored solution can be up and running in 2-6 weeks.

Current version

2023.3

Product updates

Every 6 weeks

Product update process

Customer regions are updated sequentially. There is no opt out.

Reverse-out options

All the client data belongs to them and can be easily exported in a standardised format within a stipulated timeframe. This ensures they retain full control and ownership of their information. Post-contract, all client data is securely deleted from the vendor's servers in compliance with data protection regulations, unless otherwise specified in our agreement.

Technical support

Email support	Phone support	Chat support	Online portal	24/7 support	Office hours only

User community

Engage Solutions have an active user community that extends both online and offline. They maintain a version of Engage where users can ask questions, share tips, and provide feedback directly to the product development team. They also offer specialised webinars, training sessions, and an extensive knowledge base to support their community. The user community plays a vital role in their ongoing development, helping them to refine and enhance their offerings based on real-world feedback and needs.

Voice of the vendor

Engage Solutions Group says: "Engage is designed to be more than just an employee engagement platform; it is an all-encompassing ecosystem that facilitates better communication, collaboration, and professional growth within an organisation. In the age of remote working and digital transformation, we understand that human connection and engagement are more important than ever. That's why our platform is tailored to foster a work environment where every voice is heard, every contribution is acknowledged, and every employee feels a sense of belonging.

We excel at offering an adaptable and comprehensive tool that supports employees throughout their entire lifecycle within the company—from attraction and recruitment to onboarding, development, and even exit. Our platform is particularly adept at breaking down communication barriers that often exist in organisations—be they departmental silos or the divide between desk-based and non-desk employees. With features like real-time messaging, social intranet, and segmented content delivery, we ensure that every individual receives targeted, meaningful, and timely communication.

One of the key business problems that Engage addresses is the fragmentation and inefficiency that often accompany conventional communication methods like emails and disparate intranet systems. By offering a single platform that can be customised to fit the unique needs of different departments and roles, we eliminate the clutter and confusion that come with using multiple platforms for internal communication. Moreover, our features like recognition awards, pulse surveys, and learning modules help organisations not only retain talent but also continuously develop and nurture it.

Additionally, we acknowledge that the modern workforce is increasingly diverse, mobile, and global. That's why our platform supports multilingual environments and integrates smoothly with existing systems through Single Sign-On and APIs. This ease of integration makes us an excellent fit for companies looking for a quick and effective digital adoption strategy.

In summary, Engage aims to empower organisations to build a more connected, transparent, and engaged workplace. We aspire to be not just a tool but a partner in your business success, supporting you in creating a culture where employees don't just work, but thrive."

engage

FULLY STANDALONE

REQUIRES SHAREPOINT

OPTIONALLY WORKS WITH SHAREPOINT

FRONTLINE FOCUS

Typical deployment:

100 – 10,000 employees

Company locations:

VISIT THE WEBSITE

The product in a nutshell

Engage (from Sorce) is a customisable and user-friendly intranet solution that will appeal to businesses seeking a clean interface, employee collaboration, and an adaptable mobile experience.

CLEARBOX VIEW

Engage is a classic intranet platform from UK-based Sorce, who are an experienced intranet software supplier having been a presence in the industry since 2001. Engage is simple, with many features that admins can tailor for their organisation and across device types. Design options are limited when compared to other products, however, and may not suit those with more sophisticated needs.

The configurable navigation is easy to use across desktop and mobile. The top-menu is a basic drop-down that is intended for navigating intranet content. The secondary navigation, which runs along the left of the screen, helpfully gives quick access to practical activities, including tools like people directory and documents. The top ribbon adapts based on permissions and contains notifications. Users can adjust their notification preferences, choosing to have them pop up in the intranet, be delivered through email or disable them completely (unless mandatory).

Home and content 'Pages' are intranet spaces for different purposes. For example, Pages can encourage employee engagement, or as a place for teams to collaborate, and are tailorable for different audiences. Page templates are provided, which administrators can select and adjust to suit their needs, and contain widgets that are simple to embed and easy for people to engage with. Example Page widgets include forms, articles, videos, and integrations with SharePoint libraries (but note not Google). We particularly like Engage's recognition widget, which allows people to share a 'shoutout' to a team, group, or person which others in the organisation can also engage with. A 'microblogging' widget, in the form of an activity feed, allows employees to reach out to others in the organisation with ideas, questions, and for support. People can engage with microblogs, recognition posts, articles and other content through likes and commenting.

The 'article' widget is where news is shared. We like that publishers have the option to add articles directly from the widget or via the back-end CMS. The content creation process is basic but intuitive, using a rich text editor that allows for embedded media. Advanced settings include @mentioning, categorisation, tagging, scheduling, and pinning in the widget. If not adjusted, content will automatically expire after three months, but administrators can retrieve it. There is a good editorial workflow and news can be shared to Microsoft Teams channels.

The search experience is simple, for example content is categorised by type without further refiners, yet there are some interesting features. For example, utilising AI, the search will remove extraneous words or adjust spelling mistakes to present relevant results and snippets of content will be displayed to potentially answer questions quickly. We like that admins can configure the order of returned categories, depending on business needs, however admins have no influence on the results that are returned. For people-related searches, the dedicated people directory is the optimal tool, providing the ability to search using any profile field, such as skills, expertise, and tags.

Engage is easy to administer, but admins may find the experience less sophisticated than similar digital workplace tools. The overall styling, for example, isn't as contemporary as many other products we've seen. Similarly, there is a decent range of analytics, we like the engagement score that's generated for content for example, but the depth of data and styling of presentation could be improved. Additionally, there are few integrations out of the box (only SharePoint mentioned above), although Sorce say they can develop more on request.

Overall, Engage offers a configurable intranet solution for organisations that want to keep things simple, yet also want a degree of flexibility over what's on offer. Note that the company only has a presence in the UK, but it comes at an attractive price, particularly for larger organisations, which makes Engage worth exploring.

engage

✕ 📌 📷 f ▶ in

CARING FOR OUR EMPLOYEES
FIND OUT ABOUT OUR COMPANY VALUES →

Welcome
Helen Parker
PEOPLE DIRECTOR

FIND SOMEONE
Who are you looking for? 🔍

TO DO ➕
My tasks ▾

• Overdue • Outstanding • New • Complete • Draft

QUICKLINKS ✏
KPIs	Absence	Innovation
Intranet apps	Accident book	Cycle to work

CONNECT YOUR MOBILE PHONE
FIND OUT MORE →

UPCOMING EVENTS ➕

17 JUL
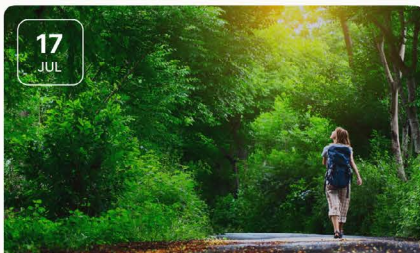
Company charity walk
17th July 2023 16:00 – 18:00

OUR NEWS ➕

Corporate volunteering scheme
JAMES THOMPSON
05 JUL 2023
👍 34   💬 9

THE BLOG 🔍

Share something...

Choose file No file chosen

POST

SOPHIE JONES – A FEW SECONDS AGO
@Sam Lamb will be joining us from Hong Kong this week to work on collaborative projects.
👍 25   💬 7

DAN SMITH – 9 MINUTES AGO
Company lunch photos from last Friday! Thanks for the great lunch @Hannah!
👍 86   💬 17

HANNAH ROBSON – 30 MINUTES AGO
Dyslexia awareness week
Dyslexia is a common learning difficulty that mainly causes problems with reading, writing and spelling.
👍 31   💬 9

RECOGNITION ➕

James Durrant
HR ADVISOR

Values champion
NOMINATED BY **ROB CLARKE** ON 15TH JULY 2023

I wanted to recognise @James for all his hard work in championing our new company values. James is constantly reinforcing our values and relating this back to the bigger picture. Keep up the good work James!
👍 67   💬 25

SPOTLIGHT ON ➕

Hybrid life

Katie's hybrid life

KATIE GRAHAM

Office relocation
VIEW PROJECT PAGE ❯

Bus timetable
TIMES FOR OUR LOCAL SERVICE ❯

Canteen menu
VIEW TODAY'S MENU ❯

Health & Wellbeing
VIEW H&W PAGE ❯

It's easy for admins to create spaces to enhance employee inclusion, collaboration, and wellbeing.
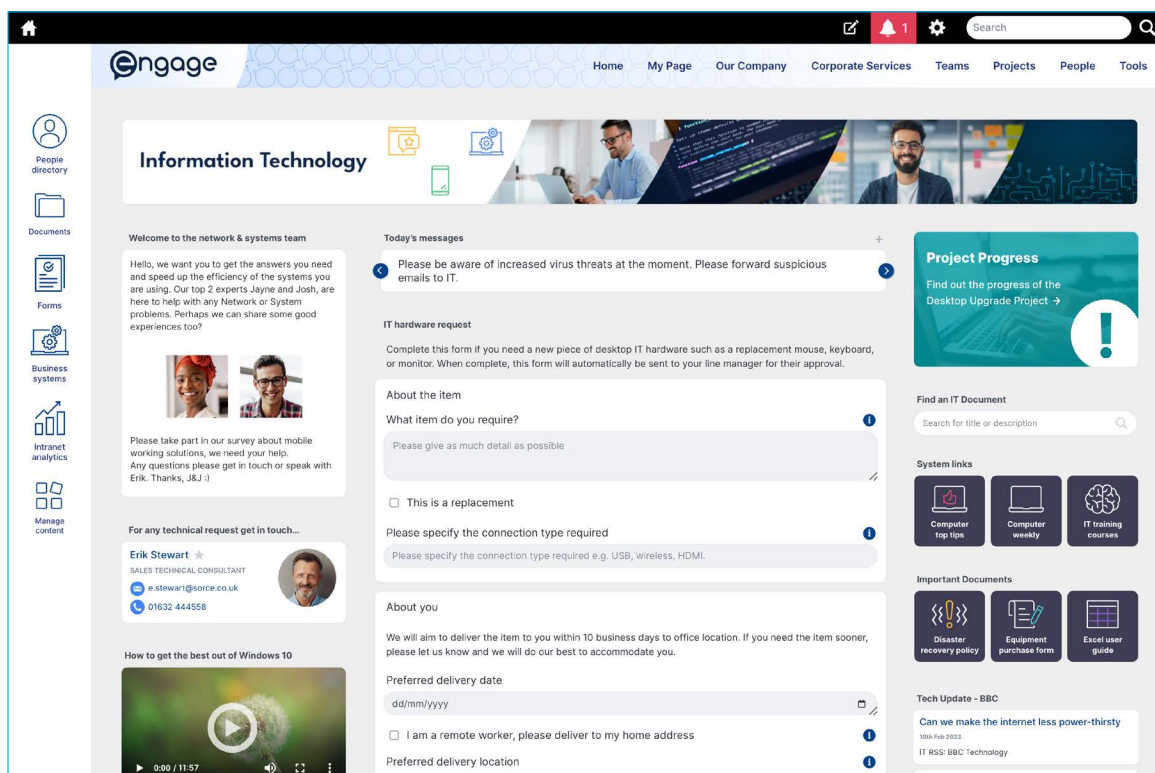
Teams can use pages specific to them to collaborate and connect.
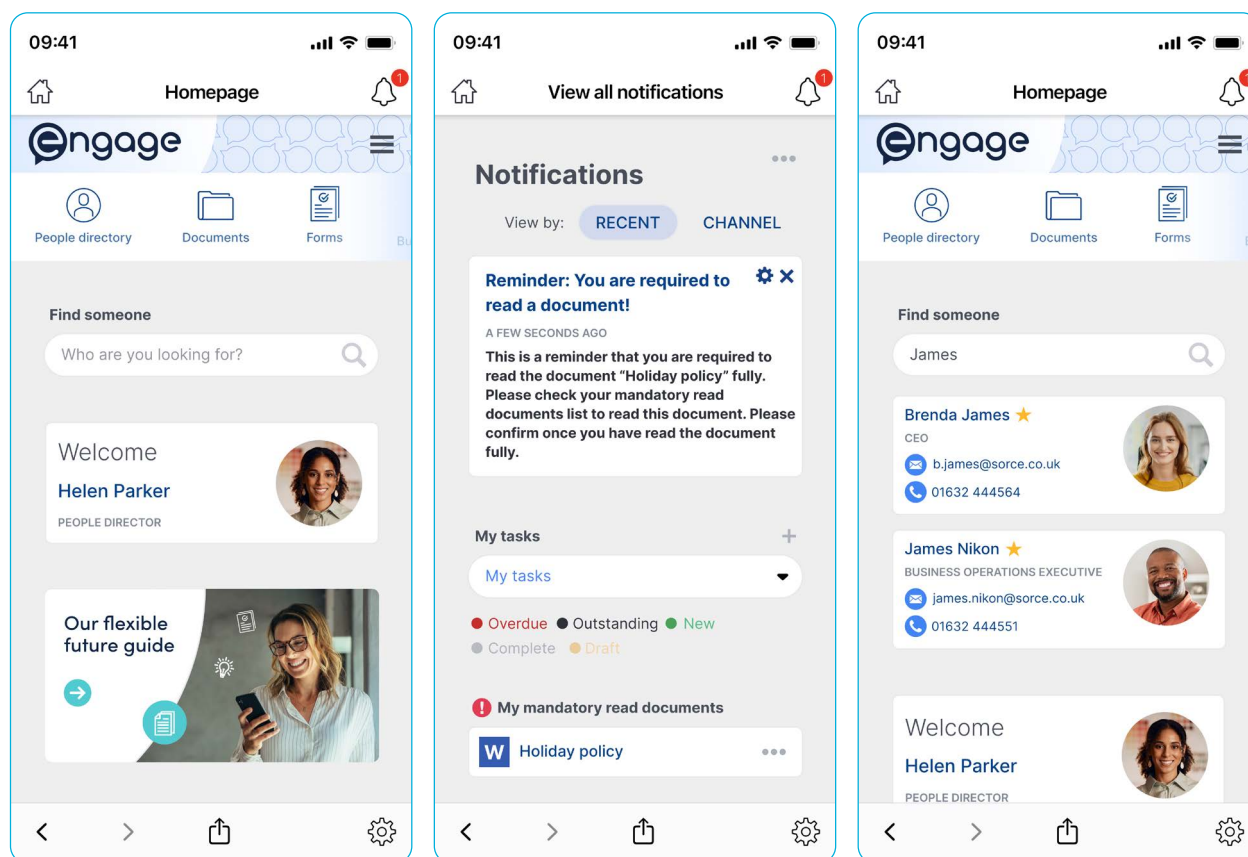
It's easy to interact and find people across the organisation through notifications and the people directory.

Publishers can create articles inside a widget, without having to leave a Page.

Pricing

PRICE BAND	
250 users	$ $ $ $
1,000 users	$ $ $ $
5,000 users	$ $ $ $
20,000 users	$ $ $ $

These prices are indicative, offering a comparison of the products featured in this report. Please contact the vendor for a bespoke quote.

PRICING MODEL

Subscription – price per user per month. Subscription – price band based on number of users.

COSTS TYPICALLY

Slightly higher at the start of the term, but generally spread.

DISCOUNTS

Charities and non-profit organisations, frontline users and multi-year commitments.

PRICE INCLUDES

Hosting (optional), product updates, ongoing training and call-off consultancy.

Product type

Ready-to-run, installed in days

Branding opportunities

Good branding, complex options

Base systems

Fully standalone	Requires SharePoint	Optionally works with SharePoint	Other

Sectors

Healthcare	Law, law enforcement and security	Property and construction	Public services, government and administration	Retail

You may also be interested in...

ahead

MangoApps

oak engage

COMPANY AND PRODUCT

Company details

Company
Sorce

ISO 27001 certified
Sorce does not hold ISO27001 accreditation, but their hosting partner does.

Data residency
UK

Company founded
2001

Product launched
2001

Typical client size
100 - 10,000 employees

Largest deployment so far
57,000 employees across 120 countries

Customers
Clients include: Next, Connells, RSM Global, South Wales Police, Anglian Home Improvements, Keltbray, Redrow, Sense, West London NHS, Gateley.

Partner locations
None

Company locations
Newbury, UK

Product and technical details

Name of product
Engage

Deployment

Client on-premises	Client private cloud	Microsoft Azure	Amazon Web Services	Vendor-hosted	Microsoft 365 tenant	Other
✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		

Client data encrypted

In transit only	In transit and at rest	At rest only
	✓	

Authentication supported

Entra ID	ADFS	Okta	Open ID	Oauth	G Suite	Other*
✓	✓	✓				✓

*Including MFA with Entra and open authenticators (e.g. Google authenticator)

App deployment

Google Play store	Apple store	MDM	MAM	Other
✓	✓	✓		

Accessibility
WCAG 2.1 compliant

Document library sources integrated

Box	Dropbox	Google Drive	**SharePoint**	**OneDrive**	Other

Optional integrated enterprise search engines

Coveo	Elastic	IBM	Lucidworks	Microsoft	Mindbreeze	Sinequa	**Other***

*DTSearch

User interface multi-language

Pre-configured	**Editable**	Right to left script supported	Other

Content multi-language

Machine translation for publishers	Machine translation for end users	Editable machine translation for publishers	**Manual creation for publishers**	Right to left script	Other

Set-up and support

Set-up process for new clients

Sorce typically guide their clients through a series of activities, which help plan a successful structure which is relevant to the client's business. They then deliver the design and build to tailor a solution to meet the user's needs. Sorce can provide a more templated approach with minimal services, however most clients choose to spend more time in the planning and configuration of a more tailored solution.

Training is provided for administrators and content owners and they help their clients to become self-sufficient going forwards. Sorce also help with defining good governance for ongoing usage and management.

Current version

Release 7.37

Product updates

New releases are provided as often as every 3 weeks

Product update process

Clients can take product updates at a time to suit them and Sorce do not enforce any updates on them. New features are not typically enabled by default as part of the upgrade process. Instead, clients can choose to switch on the appropriate new features when the time is right for them. As part of the update process, Sorce's Intranet Success Team works with clients to help them understand the new features and plan the best way to implement and maximise them within their intranet. Most clients choose to update their intranet 1-3 times per year.

Reverse-out options

Client data can be provided in the form of a SQL database backup and file system which will contain all page content, documents, users, group structure and custom styles.

Technical support

Email support	Phone support	Chat support	Online portal	24/7 support	Office hours only*

*GMT/BST. Please note that support for the hosting infrastructure is 24/7.

User community

Sorce have an online portal for their clients called Engaged, which is delivered using their Engage product. Clients use this site to make suggestions, ask questions and interact with each other. Sorce run regular success panels, where clients can help define requirements for product enhancements and help them prioritise future developments.

Sorce also run regular webinars which update the whole community on new product features and future plans. They typically hold an annual event where they get everyone together to share success stories and case studies plus network in person.

Voice of the vendor

Sorce says: "At Sorce, we have over 20 years' experience of implementing hundreds of successful intranets for a wide range of organisations. Our Engage product has evolved over this time to meet the ever-changing needs of businesses large and small. Engage is highly flexible, enabling our clients to implement a tailored modern intranet quickly and easily. The product is packed full of features to help customers engage their staff and help them work smarter. Its flexibility delivers future proofing for our clients by enabling their intranet to evolve as their business does.

Engage includes functionality aimed at improving employee experience (such as recognition and interactivity), getting work done (such as forms and workflows) and joining the dots (such as Microsoft 365 integration). The look and feel of the product is very adaptable, ensuring tailored design can be easily delivered (and regularly changed) to meet brand requirements.

Functionality aside, we understand that a successful intranet project is about much more than just software installation. Our implementation methodology is tried and tested and includes activities to support the end-to-end process and resultant cultural change. From structure planning to launch strategy and governance, we can help with all the key activities and decision making needed throughout the implementation process.

We recognise that intranets are a long-term investment and ongoing support and improvement are key to continued success. Our Intranet Success Programme helps our clients enhance and improve their intranets over time and ensure that they keep delivering a return on investment. We provide all our clients with a package of support, training and call-off consultancy to help achieve their long term goals."

ichicraft

FULLY STANDALONE

REQUIRES SHAREPOINT

OPTIONALLY WORKS WITH SHAREPOINT

FRONTLINE FOCUS
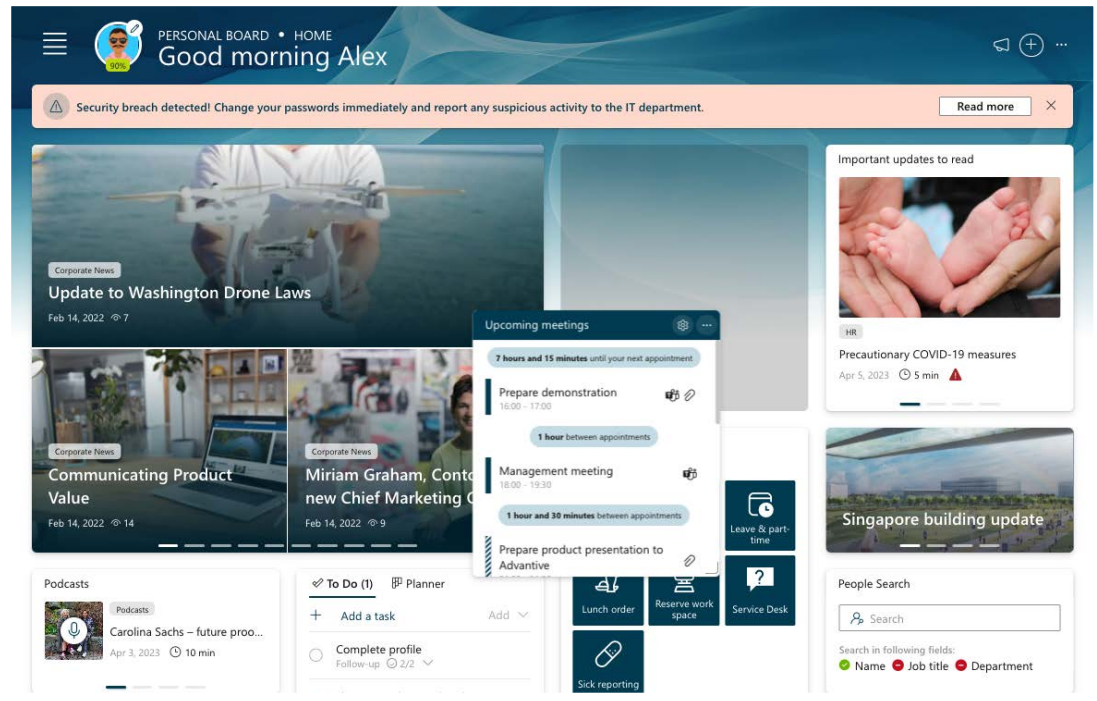
Typical deployment:

2,000 employees

Company locations:

VISIT THE WEBSITE
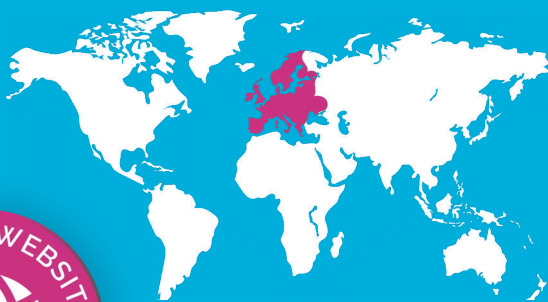
The product in a nutshell

Ichicraft Boards is a highly configurable Microsoft Teams and SharePoint add-on that aggregates multiple information types in easy-to-use dashboards that could appeal to any size and type of organisation.

CLEARBOX VIEW

Ichicraft Boards is a unique SharePoint and Teams dashboard add-on from Netherlands-based Ichicraft. Ichicraft provides the product only, so clients that want help with implementation will work with one of several European or North American partners.

The product provides attractive, configurable and targeted dashboards that can be further personalised by end-users. The dashboards display full-page or may run alongside other SharePoint web parts on a page; the product is essentially a single web part that is a container for a multitude of 'widgets' that display diverse information from news to applications. One consideration of the single web part approach is the download overhead when the dashboard loads for the first time. Ichicraft have optimised the application and caching to address these concerns so we would recommend confirming performance for your environment.

The overall user experience is very good for admins and employees alike. Boards can be fully branded to reflect the client's corporate identity. Widgets are moved around the board using a simple drag and drop interface and each widget has a familiar cogwheel icon where further options are chosen. There are helpful tooltips that explain admin options and employees are supported with 'teaching bubbles' that introduce widgets, their capabilities and options. Currently these instructions are set by Ichicraft so clients can't change or add text, which we think would be a useful addition.

Admins set up responsive templates for boards, including widgets that can be further configured by employees. When we saw the demo, Ichicraft Boards did not come with any pre-made templates, but the vendor has plans to include some by the time of publication. Widgets support audience targeting using Microsoft Entra groups, however Ichicraft are considering an 'audience layer' that would put more control in the hands of administrators, which we welcome. Usefully, employees can share their boards with one or more colleagues.

There are widgets to show news from SharePoint communication sites displayed in a 'hero' or listing format and employees can opt-in or out of seeing these stories site-by-site. The product also includes lightweight publishing to support cases such as a welcome message for new employees or issuing urgent messages, including content such as a video or slide deck. We like that these are promoted with a banner and include a tracked 'mark as read'.

There is a multitude of widgets available that show a broad range of information sourced from across the Microsoft 365 suite including SharePoint, Outlook, Planner, Stream and PowerBI. We also like the employee profile completion indicator and ability to add profile information directly in the tool.

A third-party app launcher widget enables employees to access the apps they want from a menu of options and features integrations with Citrix, Azure Virtual Desktop and Liquit. Employees will appreciate the supporting information provided for apps, including description and introductory video. Third-party services (such as Workday or Concur) with a suitable API can be integrated as well, although the product does not come with any connectors as standard. However, Ichicraft has a committed community of clients who have developed widgets that have been shared with the whole client base. Analytics track usage of widgets and whether things like personalisation features are being used. Ichicraft offers a range of connectors to third-party analytics tools including Google Analytics, HubSpot and Segment for reporting.

Overall, we think that Ichicraft Boards is an attractive product at an appealing price for all organisation sizes. Most of the current client base are large, complex companies but we don't see why this product would not appeal to smaller organisations looking to aggregate information into easy-to-use dashboards.
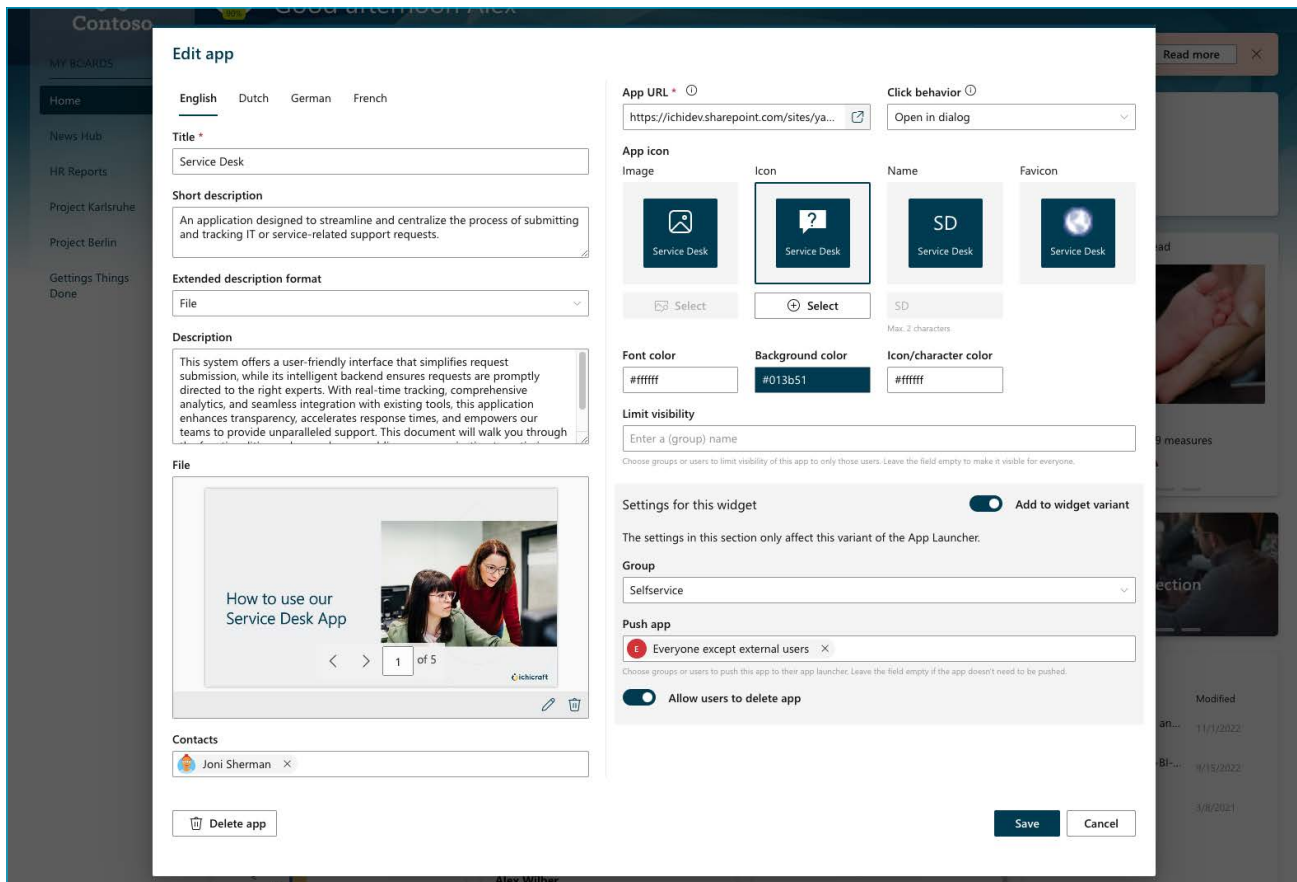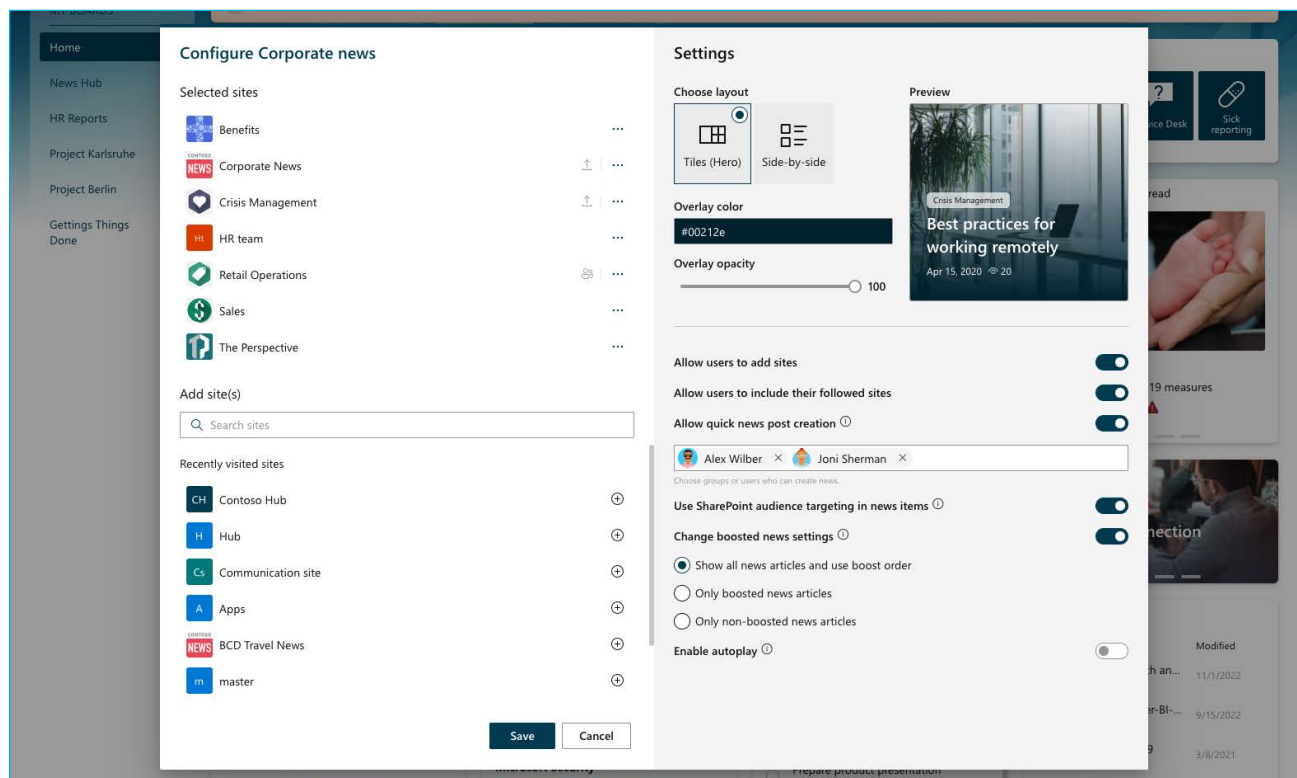
An Ichicraft Board with the navigation and widget components highlighted.
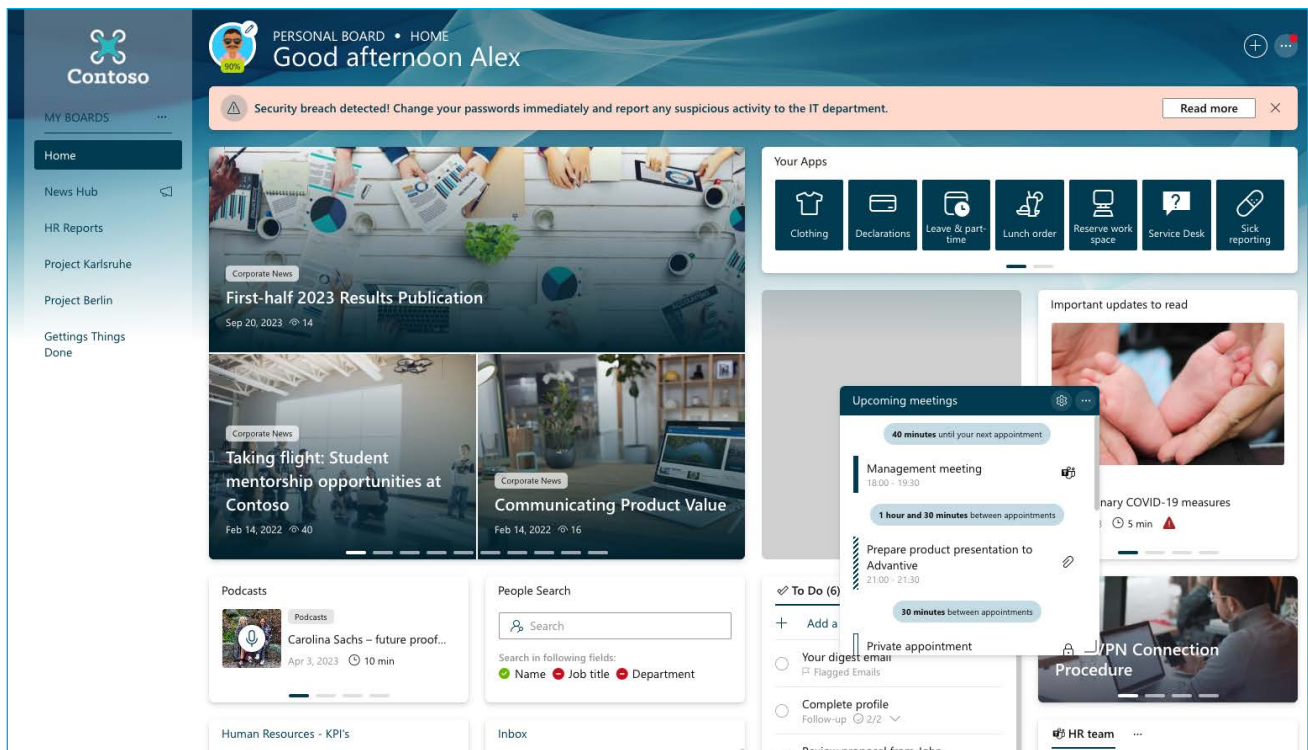
*Boards are configurable - employees can personalise them by adding,
removing and moving widgets with drag-and-drop.*

The third-party app launcher has useful features for adding a description and supporting content such as a presentation (pictured) or introductory video.

Admins configure how news from communication sites is shown and what sites are included. Employees see a similar but simplified panel to opt-in and out of additional news sites.

Pricing

PRICE BAND	
250 users	$ $ $ $
1,000 users	$ $ $ $
5,000 users	$ $ $ $
20,000 users	$ $ $ $

These prices are indicative, offering a comparison of the products featured in this report. Please contact the vendor for a bespoke quote.

PRICING MODEL

Subscription – price band based on number of users.

COSTS TYPICALLY

Slightly higher at the start of the term, but generally spread.

DISCOUNTS

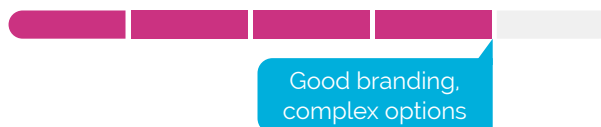Charities and non-profit organisations, schools and educational institutes, multi-year commitments.

PRICE INCLUDES

Ichicraft offers a complimentary 2-hour functional training session, and for those interested in creating custom widgets on their platform, they provide a 2-hour introduction to widget development. Partners and clients can access widget source code, using Ichicraft's widgets to jumpstart their own development projects.

Product type

Ready-to-run, installed in hours

Branding opportunities

Good branding, complex options

Base systems

Fully standalone	Requires SharePoint	Optionally works with SharePoint	Other

Sectors

Accountancy, banking and finance	Engineering and manufacturing	Healthcare	Property and construction	Retail

You may also be interested in...

Junglemail™ for Office 365   **BEACON**   **Workgrid**

COMPANY AND PRODUCT

Company details

Company
Ichicraft

ISO 27001 certified
Ichicraft says certification is expected in Q2 2024.

Data residency
The client's data is securely stored within their own tenant.

Company founded
2019

Product launched
2019

Typical client size
2,000 employees

Largest deployment so far
35,000 employees,
worldwide deployment

Customers
Clients include: Rabobank,
Red Bull, T-Mobile, Cargill

Partner locations
The Netherlands, Germany, UK, Austria,
Switzerland, Canada, Norway, USA

Company locations
Rotterdam, The Netherlands (HQ)

Product and technical details

Name of product
Ichicraft Boards

Deployment

Client on-premises	Client private cloud	Microsoft Azure	Amazon Web Services	Vendor-hosted	Microsoft 365 tenant	Other

Client data encrypted

In transit only	In transit and at rest	At rest only

Authentication supported

Entra ID	ADFS	Okta	Open ID	Oauth	G Suite	Other

App deployment

Google Play store	Apple store	MDM	MAM	Other*

* No native mobile app, but the Teams or SharePoint apps can be used instead.

Accessibility
Contrast can be set by the individual user and individual users can change the font size of what they're seeing.

Document library sources integrated

Box	Dropbox	Google Drive	SharePoint	OneDrive	Other

Optional integrated enterprise search engines

Coveo	Elastic	IBM	Lucidworks	Microsoft	Mindbreeze	Sinequa	Other

User interface multi-language

Pre-configured	Editable	Right to left script supported	Other*

* On the UI level Ichicraft currently supports: English, German, Norwegian, Spanish, French, Portuguese and Dutch. Customers can however add additional content languages.

Content multi-language

Machine translation for publishers	Machine translation for end users	Editable machine translation for publishers	Manual creation for publishers	Right to left script	Other

Set-up and support

Set-up process for new clients

Ichicraft Boards features an installation wizard that guides clients through the initial configuration process. This setup, which includes approving the necessary API permissions, can typically be completed within a few hours. For a more customised experience, the process typically requires 3-5 days to ensure a tailored setup.

Current version

Ichicraft Boards is continuously evolving, with detailed technical release notes available on their website. User-friendly descriptions of latest features are also available on their website.

Product updates

Weekly to monthly as needed. See their GitHub page for more details.

Product update process

Centralised updates ensure customers are always using the latest version. However, for enterprise customers, Ichicraft provides an option to temporarily pause updates. This option requires coordination with Ichicraft and is available only in exceptional circumstances.

Reverse-out options

Ichicraft does not store any client data.

Technical support

Email support	Phone support	Chat support	Online portal	24/7 support	Office hours only*

* UTC +1

User community

Not at the moment

Voice of the vendor

Ichicraft says: "Ichicraft Boards is a fully personalised digital workplace solution, consolidating all the tools and resources an employee needs during their workday into a single, user-friendly dashboard. Ichicraft Boards improves productivity by helping employees stay organised and well informed, while fostering seamless collaboration with colleagues.

Companies have the option to create board templates that are tailored to specific groups of users, helping them to provide a personalised digital workplace that perfectly aligns with the requirements of each team, department, or user group. From an individual user standpoint, one of the standout features of Ichicraft Boards is the ability to customise the digital workplace to match specific needs and work style. Users have the flexibility to select the most vital tools and resources, crafting a dashboard that suits them best.

Installing Ichicraft Boards is easy and fast, with a simple installation wizard that gets you up and running in no time. With new features and updates deployed automatically, customers can be sure that they're always using the most up-to-date version of the product. Ichicraft Boards also offers the ability to integrate line-of-business software, providing users with a familiar interface to interact with these tools. In terms of security and compliance, Ichicraft Boards is designed to store and keep client data within the client's tenant, ensuring that it is secure and compliant with most relevant regulations. Additionally, Ichicraft Boards has a multilingual interface, making it accessible to users around the world.

Ichicraft is a provider of tailored Microsoft 365 solutions, specialising in robust extensions for SharePoint and Teams. Our flagship product, Ichicraft Boards, empowers diverse user groups to customise their digital workplace efficiently. With years of industry expertise, we excel in delivering stable, efficient, and visually appealing products. Our adept team creates both functional and aesthetically exceptional solutions, ensuring maximum client satisfaction.

We maintain a global partner network to expand our reach and serve businesses worldwide.

Our commitment to excellence shines through our high-quality products and unwavering customer support. We are dedicated to assisting clients and partners in optimising their Microsoft 365 experience, earning trust as a reliable partner."
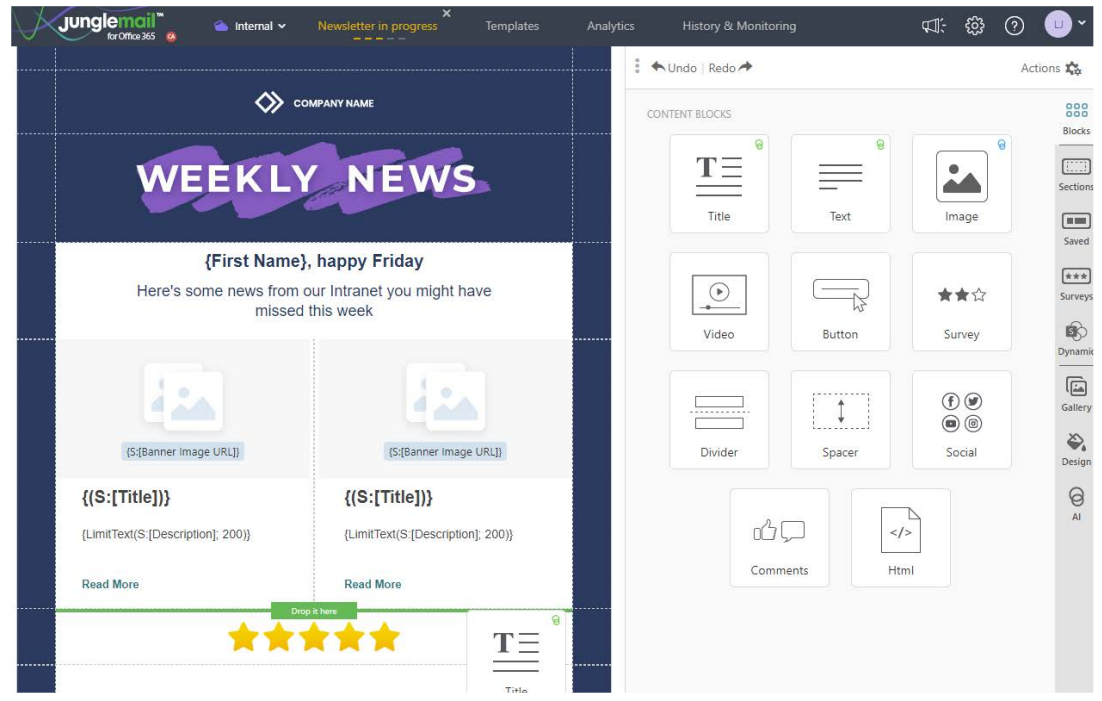
junglemail™
for Office 365

FULLY STANDALONE

REQUIRES SHAREPOINT
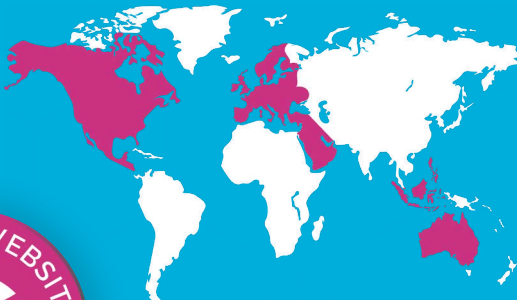
OPTIONALLY WORKS WITH SHAREPOINT

FRONTLINE FOCUS

Typical deployment:

2,000 – 5,000 employees

Company locations:

VISIT THE WEBSITE

The product in a nutshell

This impressive feature-rich newsletter tool is highly integrated with SharePoint and will appeal to businesses who want to simplify the production of large volumes of targeted employee email.

CLEARBOX VIEW

JungleMail, provided by Lithuania-based EnovaPoint, is an email newsletter tool primarily built to work alongside M365 and SharePoint intranets. Its focus is on creating newsletters using content pulled dynamically from existing SharePoint communication sites, and it offers an impressively versatile set of options for constructing newsletters within a nicely styled and well laid-out administration interface. It's worth mentioning that JungleMail can send email to external audiences. It's unlikely that SharePoint content would be utilised in such instances; however, content can be created directly within the product and there is enough effective functionality for this to be a useful feature.

The product takes advantage of existing M365 functionality and content, instead of trying to replicate or replace it. A connection with SharePoint is created by adding the JungleMail app to a SharePoint site; when it's opened within SharePoint a new communication site entry is created in JungleMail. This is where admins create newsletters and configure distribution settings. Alternatively, admins can create a new communication site directly in JungleMail, and subsequently activate a connection back to SharePoint.

Mailing lists can't be set up within the tool - recipient data is instead compiled outside the system. Connectors are the preferred way to manage internal recipient lists, with CSV or SharePoint lists the options for external recipients. You can't combine recipients from multiple sources in a campaign but multiple groups from the same source can be used for internal communication. JungleMail has its own built-in mail server which is suited to larger mailings. The product can also use any authorised M365 account to act as the sender, however, Microsoft limits mailing speeds so this method is best used for sending to low numbers of recipients. JungleMail can also use an SMTP server.

The product's standout feature is its versatility for laying out newsletters. These can be based on an existing template or created in situ and the design saved for future re-use. 'Sections' are the main template building block – individual, tailorable components which can also be created afresh, also with the option to save them for later use. The SharePoint connection comes to the fore when using 'dynamic sections' which pull in content directly from a SharePoint communication site. In any section, the publisher can tailor how content is presented – for instance, editing titles or summaries.

By using dynamic sections in tandem with the scheduling function, a news digest can be created and distributed automatically. A pre-configured template pulls in content from a SharePoint source and then uses assigned Entra groups (in real time) to drive distribution. As sections are displayed based on a recipient's access rights, a single digest could be set up to cater for multiple audiences. With any automation of this sort, publishers and admins will need to be diligent when configuring the template. However, the flexibility it offers it will be an attractive option for busy internal communications teams.

There's a simple workflow to send a newsletter, and we like both the desktop and mobile preview. Once the email is sent, JungleMail compiles a report which includes email metrics such as open rates, poll results if applicable, as well as a reading device breakdown. Additionally, through the connections with Entra, report data can be segmented by profile data such as department. This information is presented in a reporting dashboard and the data is all exportable.

Email remains an important communications channel for many businesses. JungleMail will appeal to SharePoint-focussed communications teams looking to simplify how they generate and distribute messaging, maximise value from their existing SharePoint content, and provide consistency in communications. Additionally, an attractive price point makes this an option well worth considering when assessing third-party mailing tools.
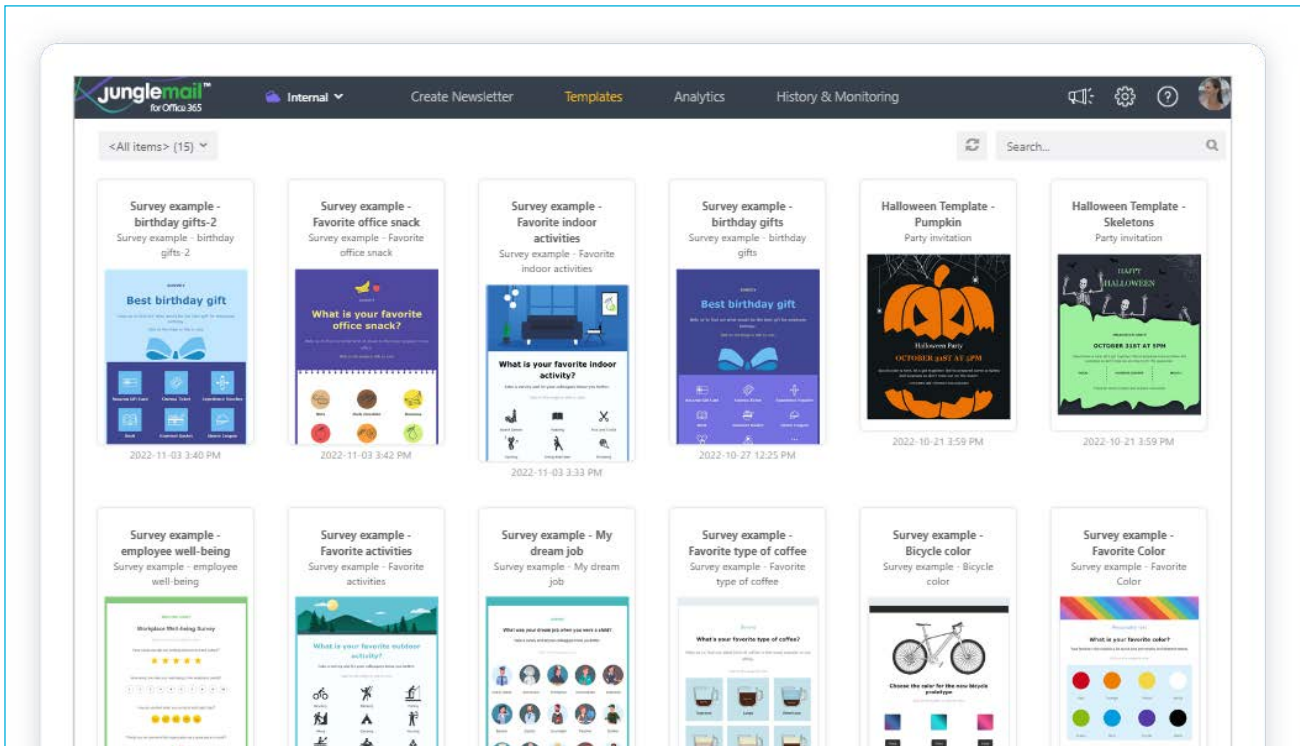
Within the communication site, publishers can choose to begin compiling their newsletter by selecting from a set of existing templates or start a fresh one from scratch.
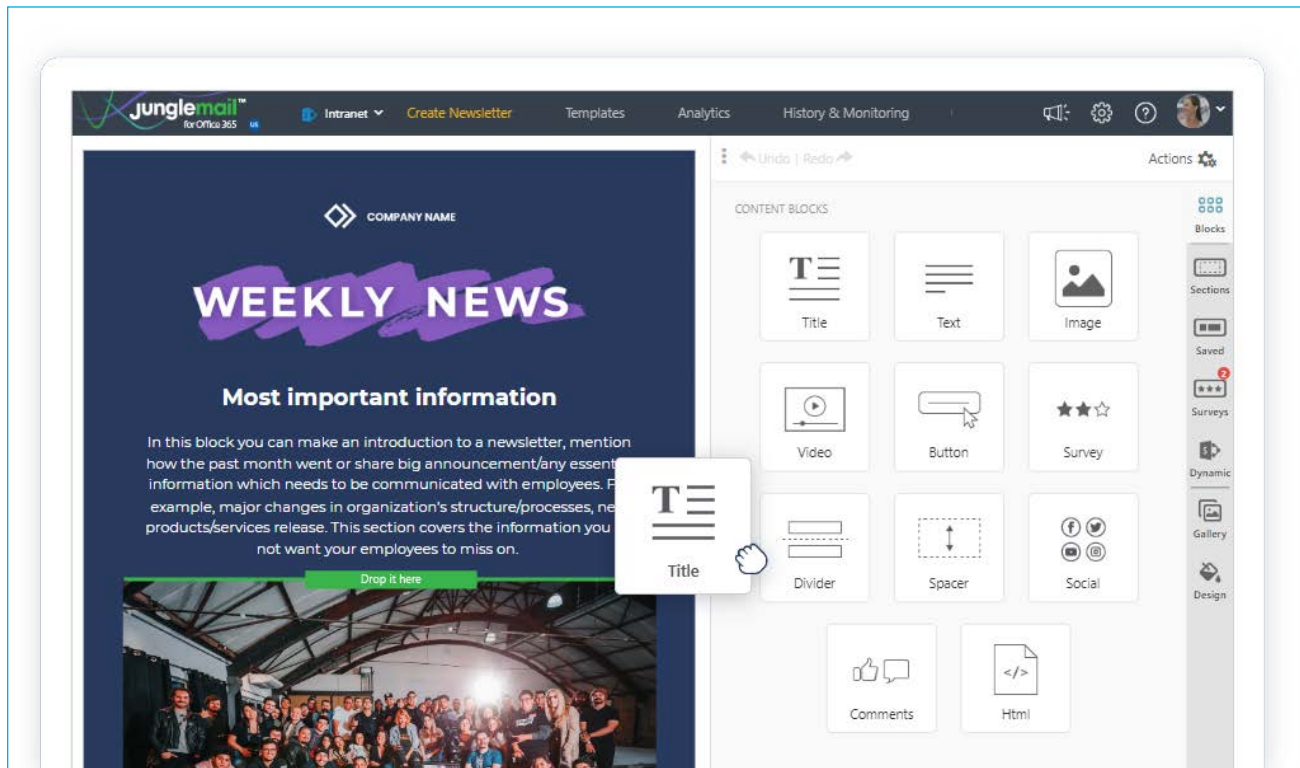
The interface for compiling a newsletter provides a wide range of options for publishers, including the ability to configure finer details such as the default character count in Title or Summary fields. Layout is primarily controlled using 'sections' which are highly configurable. 'Dynamic Sections' are used to draw content from associated SharePoint communication sites.
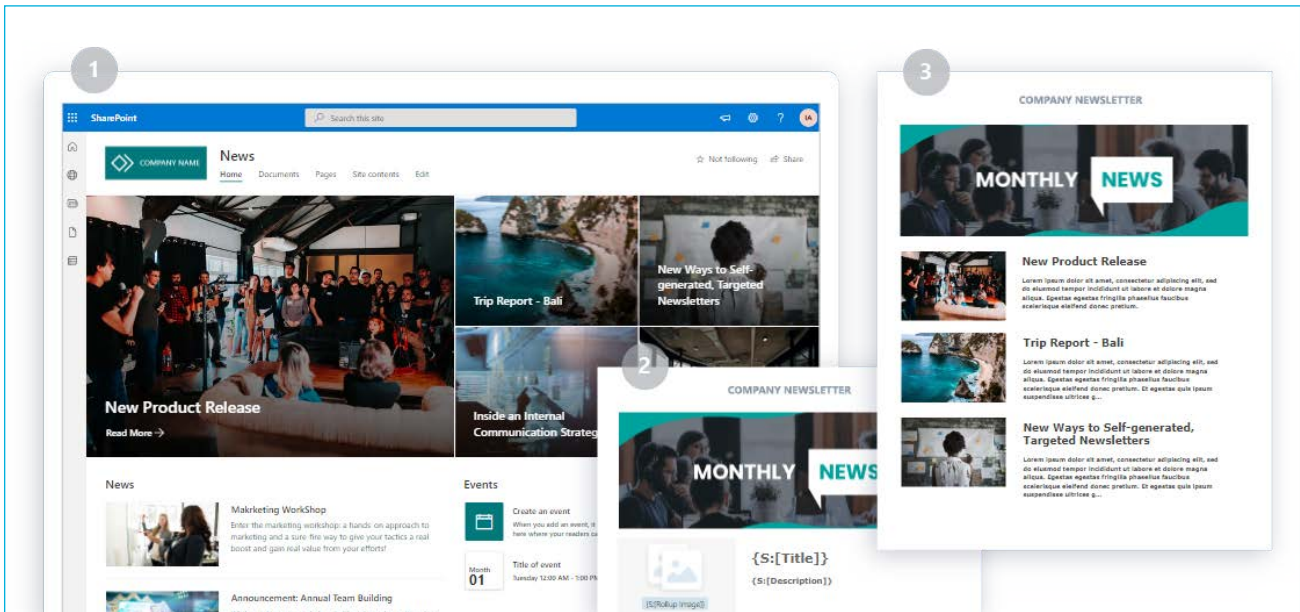
As part of the workflow for sending a newsletter, publishers can see a preview of the newsletter in a helpful 'device' view. These are scrollable, allowing the publishers to see the full newsletter as it would be seen by recipients on their selected device.
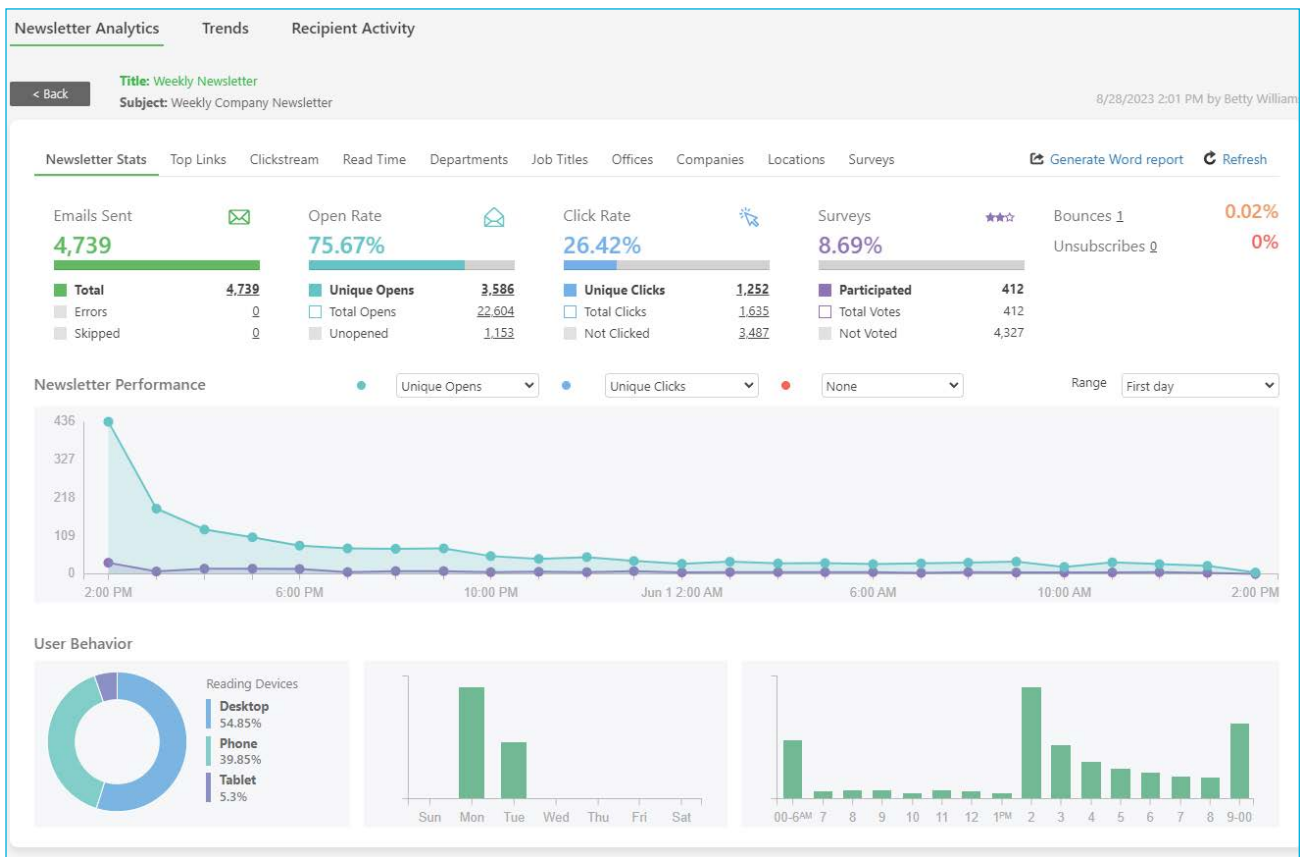
The reporting dashboard includes a variety of standard metrics such as open, click-through and bounce rates. Through connections with Active Directory, data also can be segmented by elements such as job title, department and location, and all data is exportable.

Pricing

PRICE BAND	
250 users	$ $ $ $
1,000 users	$ $ $ $
5,000 users	$ $ $ $
20,000 users	$ $ $ $

These prices are indicative, offering a comparison of the products featured in this report only. Please contact the vendor for a bespoke quote.

PRICING MODEL
Subscription - price band based on number of unique recipients (employees) and feature set (Basic, Pro, Enterprise).

COSTS TYPICALLY
Fairly evenly spread across three years.

DISCOUNTS
Charities and non-profit organisations, schools and educational institutes, multi-year commitments.

PRICE INCLUDES
Training for end users, customer success services, maintenance, product support, updates and upgrades, webinars, consulting services.

Product type
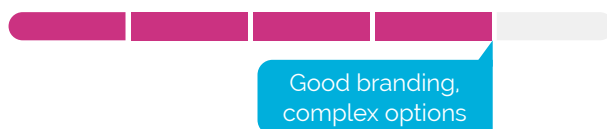
Ready-to-run, installed in hours

Branding opportunities

Good branding, complex options

Base systems

Fully standalone	Requires SharePoint	Optionally works with SharePoint	Other*

*Requires M365, also works with Google Workspace.

Sectors

Accountancy, banking and finance	Healthcare	Public services, government and administration	Science and pharmaceuticals	Teaching and education

You may also be interested in...

contact monkey   BEACON   ichicraft

COMPANY AND PRODUCT

Company details

Company
Enovapoint

ISO 27001 certified
Yes

Data residency
Customers can choose one from the following hosting locations: USA, Canada, Australia, UK, or the Netherlands (EU).

Company founded
2011

Product launched
2015

Typical client size
2,000 – 5,000 employees

Largest deployment so far
100,000 employees / unique recipients

Customers
Clients include: Metro Vancouver, Emporia State University, GateGroup, Republique et canton de Geneve, Spar, Optus

Partner locations
France, USA, UK, Canada, Australia, Belgium, Hungary, UAE.

Company locations
Vilnius, Lithuania (HQ)

Product and technical details

Name of product

JungleMail 365

Deployment

Client on-premises	Client private cloud	Microsoft Azure	Amazon Web Services	Vendor-hosted	Microsoft 365 tenant	Other

Client data encrypted

In transit only	In transit and at rest	At rest only

Authentication supported

Entra ID	ADFS	Okta	Open ID	Oauth	G Suite	Other

App deployment

Google Play store	Apple store	MDM	MAM	Other*

*There is no native app

Accessibility

Alt text is in use for images.

Document library sources integrated

Box	Dropbox	Google Drive	SharePoint	OneDrive	Other

Optional integrated enterprise search engines

Coveo	Elastic	IBM	Lucidworks	Microsoft	Mindbreeze	Sinequa	Other*

*Search is used for sourcing content and finding previously sent newsletters

User interface multi-language

Pre-configured	Editable	Right to left script supported	Other

Content multi-language

Machine translation for publishers	Machine translation for end users	Editable machine translation for publishers	Manual creation for publishers	Right to left script	Other

Set-up and support

Set-up process for new clients

The customer's tenant administrator signs into the JungleMail 365 app and chooses the data hosting location. After the customer account approval, admins will activate the connections that will be utilised by JungleMail users (Entra ID groups, SharePoint, Exchange), configure the features in JungleMail settings (sending accounts, archive, analytics segmentation, etc.), and set up permissions for their users. Typically, Enovapoint offers online assistance and guidance (up to 90 minutes) with the connection activation and JungleMail configuration according to the customer's needs.

Current version

September 2023

Product updates

Continuously, 1-2 times per month on average.

Product update process

All SaaS customers are updated at once on a particular hosting location during out-of-office hours.

Reverse-out options

Per the data retention procedure, a customer account is flagged for deletion if there's no activity for six months, specifically if the subscription isn't renewed within 6 months following the end date of the last active subscription period. Subsequently, all data will be purged within the next 14 days. Although customer data persists in backups for another three months, it is eventually erased in line with the Backup Retention Policy. Upon request, a customer's account can be flagged for earlier deletion. Importantly, no customer data is stored in non-electronic formats.

Technical support

Email support	Phone support	Chat support	Online portal	24/7 support	Office hours only*

* 1am - 4pm EST, Monday to Friday.

User community

No

Voice of the vendor

Enovapoint says: "JungleMail 365, an internal communication platform, enables you to easily create, manage, and distribute personalised email newsletters, polls, announcements, and updates within your company's Microsoft 365 or G Suite environment. JungleMail seamlessly integrates with these ecosystems, enabling the utilisation of existing tools and data sources like SharePoint, Microsoft Entra, Graph API, or Google Directory.

JungleMail promotes a strong sense of community within your organisation by keeping employees informed and connected. By fostering open communication and collaboration, JungleMail helps build a more engaged, productive, and cohesive workforce.

JungleMail's built-in analytics provide valuable insights into the performance of your newsletters, allowing you to measure and improve your internal communications. Track key metrics such as open rates, click-through rates, and engagement patterns to identify trends and optimise your messaging. Armed with this data, you can make informed decisions to ensure your content resonates with your audience, leading to increased engagement and a more connected organisation.

JungleMail 365 is a SaaS solution. However, for organisations that prioritise enhanced privacy and security, JungleMail can be provided as a dedicated platform hosted within your own cloud or local network. This choice grants you full control over your data and infrastructure, ensuring compliance with the strictest security requirements and data protection standards."

Lightspeed365

FULLY STANDALONE

REQUIRES SHAREPOINT
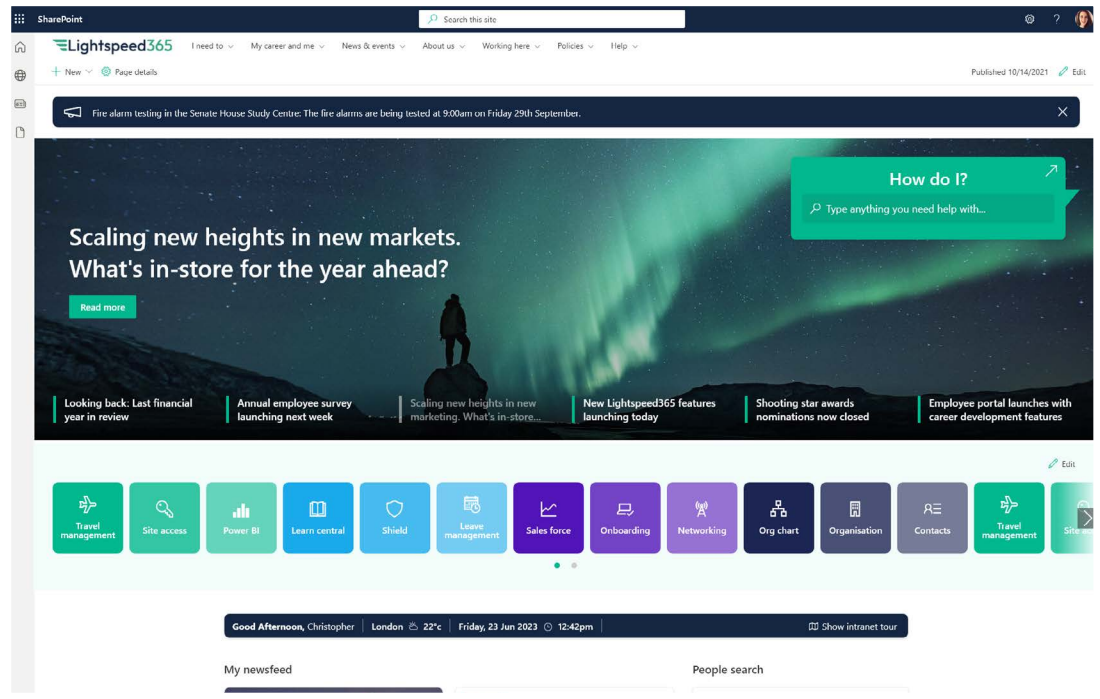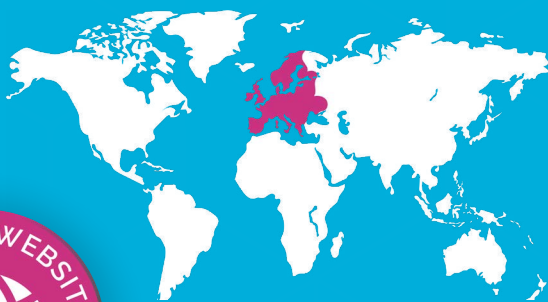
OPTIONALLY WORKS WITH SHAREPOINT

FRONTLINE FOCUS

Typical deployment:

500 – 100,000 employees

Company locations:

The product in a nutshell

Lightspeed365 adds useful functionality and design options to SharePoint that will appeal to organisations looking for some additional features without going for a full intranet in-a-box product.

VISIT THE WEBSITE

CLEARBOX VIEW

Lightspeed365 is a suite of useful SharePoint add-on web parts from UK-based vendor, Content Formula. The suite was originally launched in 2020 and includes a range of features - we have highlighted our favourites here. For example, 'page tour' introduces the intranet via a walkthrough, which helps drive adoption. We like that clients can configure the tour's content and settings easily, and that this feature can be deployed anywhere on the intranet.

Lightspeed365 complements and builds on the functionality of standard SharePoint well, with all the web parts supporting audience targeting, using Entra groups. Visually, the web parts inherit SharePoint theming and sit comfortably alongside those supplied by Microsoft, although some add styling options that stand out well on the page. The 'Brand Customiser' facilitates use of custom colours that align with brand palettes and makes managing sub brands more straightforward. Note that the Brand Customiser is an additional cost but included in the supplied pricing. 'Section+' adds styling options to page sections, including background images and colour transparency. 'Tabs' enables multiple web parts to occupy the same space on a page, providing a nice way for different types of news to coexist, for example.

Communications features start with 'Alerts', which are easy to add to pages or sites where they can be populated from central or locally maintained lists. 'News feed' provides multiple options for displaying and styling a dynamically generated list of latest news from across the intranet. This improves on the standard SharePoint news web part with very granular control over how stories are displayed and the sort of metadata (site, author etc.) shown alongside. The news feed also allows employees to subscribe or unsubscribe to news and admins can 'pin' articles to the top.

In reference areas, 'Handbook' is a neat way to help employees find information such as HR policies. Pages are shown in an A-Z listing, or as index cards with title, business area, and description. The page list / cards are dynamically created, searchable, and aggregate content from document libraries or content types from across the intranet. The 'Table of contents' is a useful feature that automatically creates its list from the headings or web parts used on a page, while 'card links' provides some attractive styling options for on-page navigation links. 'Accordion' provides expandable text sections with headings and styling options to help make important information stand out on the page.

A context-sensitive search box moves down the page as you scroll. We can see this being a helpful reminder for employees that they can search when browsing a knowledge base, for example. 'People search' provides a dedicated search for finding colleagues using profile information such as name, skills, department, as well as a browsable directory. Filtering the directory view works well, with terms suggested as-you-type and the ability to add multiple filters, with results refining dynamically. Admins choose whether to show the Microsoft or custom employee profile cards. A nice touch is that departments can add a pre-filtered 'directory' to their site, dynamically listing current team members.

Finally, the 'app launcher' web part shows a targeted, searchable list of business apps that employees can select from a central list or add their own. It would be nice to see apps grouped by category or function as well. Content Formula are working on future enhancements that will add more descriptive information about the app and introductory videos. Two premium web parts not included in the pricing give access to tools for learning management and performance management (powered by LMS365) and policy management (powered by Xoralia).

Overall, Lightspeed365 is a well-made collection of web parts at a good price. It will appeal to those looking for some additional features and granularity of control over SharePoint design, without going for a full-blown add-on product.

Search this site

Lightspeed365

I need to | My career and me | News & events | About us | Working here | Policies | Help

+ New ⌄   ⚙ Page details

📢 Fire alarm testing in the Senate House Study Centre: The fire alarms are being tested at 9:00am on Friday 29th September.   ✕

Scaling new heights in new markets. What's in-store for the year ahead?

Read more

How do I? ↗
🔍 Type anything you need help with...

| Looking back: Last financial year in review | Annual employee survey launching next week | Scaling new heights in new marketing. What's in-store... | New Lightspeed365 features launching today | Shooting star awards nominations now closed | Employee portal launches with career development features |

✎ Edit

| ✈ Travel management | 🔍 Site access | 📊 Power BI | 📖 Learn central | 🛡 Shield | 🗓 Leave management | 📈 Sales force | 🖥 Onboarding | 📡 Networking | 🔗 Org chart | 🏢 Organisation | 🔍 Contacts | ✈ Travel management | Site a... |

● ○

Good Afternoon, Christopher | London ☀ 22°c | Friday, 23 Jun 2023 🕐 12:42pm   🗺 Show intranet tour

My newsfeed

Employee engagement
Lightspeed365 is now available through Teams on mobile
Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Aliquam vel posuere ante. Ut eget...
April 10, 2022

Strategy
Our five pillars for success - for next year and beyond
Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Aliquam vel posuere ante. Ut eget...
April 10, 2022

London office
Michelle Williams wins employee of the month award
Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Aliquam vel posuere ante. Ut eget...
April 10, 2022

People search

🔍 Search by name, team or job title

OR

👥 See people directory

CF
Content Formula Ltd
171.45 GBX
+4.20 (1.73%) ↗
16 Jun, 11:22 GMT

New Lightspeed365 features

| 🎨 **Branding customiser** Branding customiser allows teams to personalise their intranet design, as well... | 💬 **Floating search** Floating search enables users to place a contextual search box anywhere on a... | ▦ **Site index** Site index provides a personalised index of SharePoint sites, Yammer... | 🗂 **Tabs** Tabs enables users to place multiple web parts into a tab system and save page |

Dashboard   See all

🦋 Xoralia
12 mandatory read policies
You have 12 policies that have been assigned to you to read
View policies | View on Xoralia

🦋 Xoralia
2 expired policies
You have 2 policies that have expired and require your attention
View policies | View on Xoralia

👤 Approvals
Need to send a request?
Send and keep track of your requests all in one place
Create request | Go to requests

Teams and communities

🔍 Search for a team, community or site

▽ Filter   ↕ Latest to oldest   View: ☰ ▦

🔷 IT resource centre	☆
🔷 London office facilities	☆
⬛ Workroom for suppliers	☆
🔷 Project LS update centre	☆
🔷 Project CRM114	★

‹   Page 1 of 5   ›

FAQs

Guest Wifi access ⌃
Guests can be given Wifi access using this service.
Please do not provide Wifi access to guests who have not signed in at reception

Booking meeting rooms & catering ⌄

Booking taxis, flights and hotels ⌄

Claiming expenses ⌄

Parking permit applications ⌄

This page was 😊 Useful   😐 Not useful   ☹ Misleading   🚩 Flag outdated content

The news feed web part has more granular controls over styling and what article information is shown than its Microsoft equivalent. However, all Lightspeed web parts use the familiar properties pane for configuration so the experience is consistent with standard SharePoint.
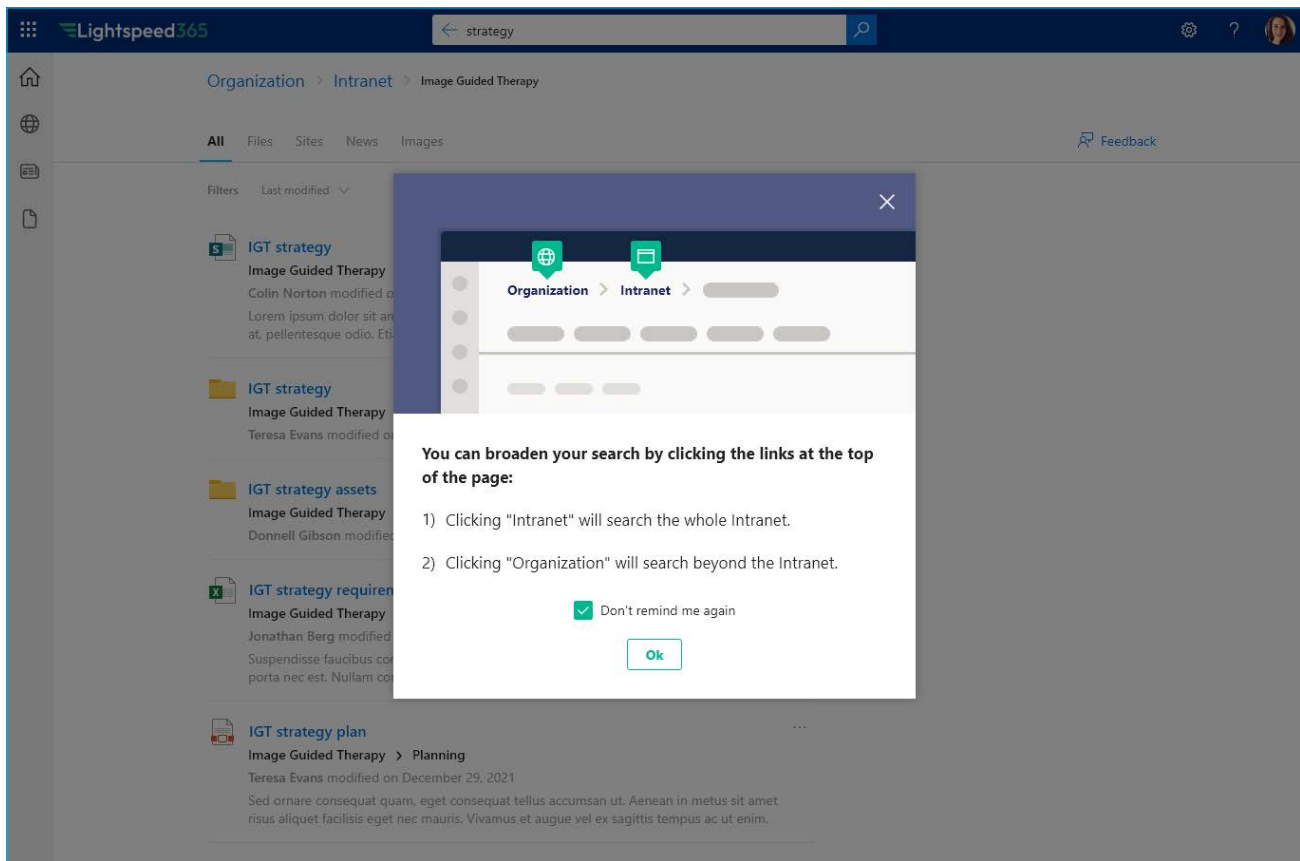
The welcome tour can be used to introduce new features, welcome new starters, or explain how Microsoft Search scope works.
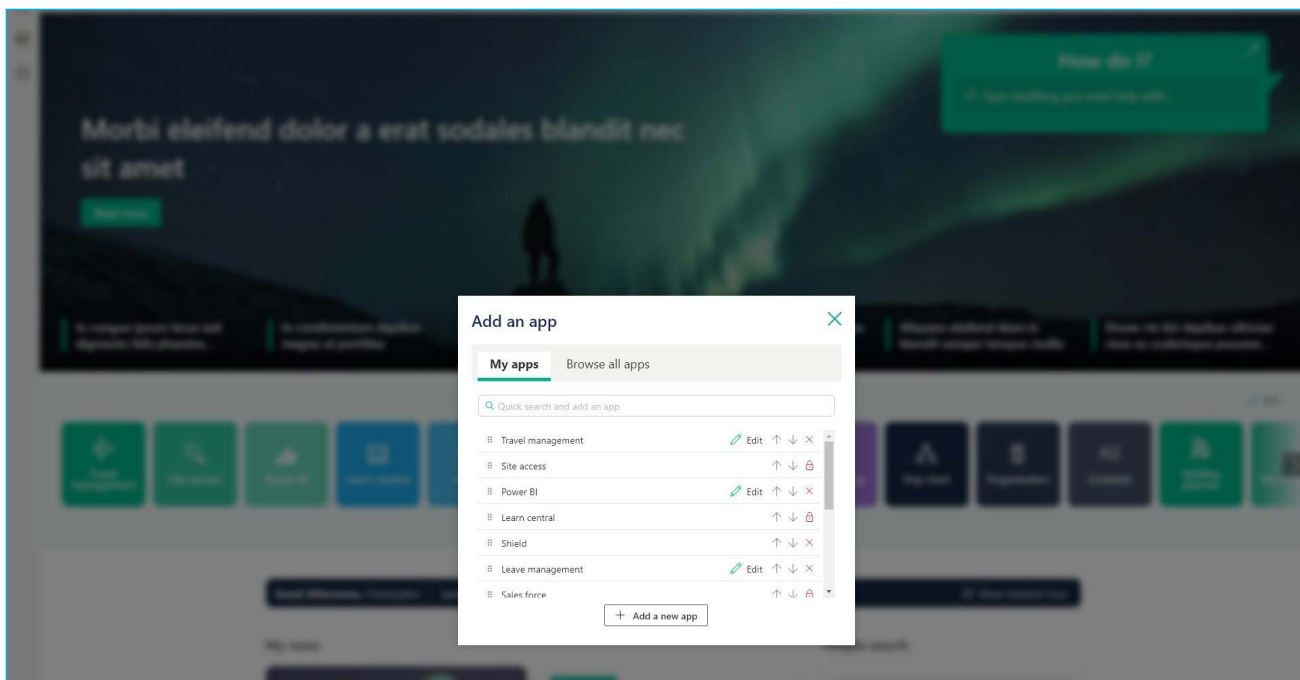
App launcher provides an attractive, targeted list of business apps with a range of styling options. Employees can edit this list and add their own apps, too.

The handbook is an effective tool to bring reference content from across the intranet together in one place.

Pricing

PRICE BAND	
250 users	$ $ $ $
1,000 users	$ $ $ $
5,000 users	$ $ $ $
20,000 users	$ $ $ $

These prices are indicative, offering a comparison of the products featured in this report. Please contact the vendor for a bespoke quote.

PRICING MODEL
Subscription – price band based on number of users. One-off payment.

COSTS TYPICALLY
Fairly evenly spread across three years.

DISCOUNTS
Charities and non-profit organisations, multi-year commitments

PRICE INCLUDES
The 'Core' tier feature set plus the 'Brand Customiser'. Access to new features as they become available.

Product type

Majority ready-to-run

Branding opportunities

Good branding, complex options

Base systems

Fully standalone	Requires SharePoint	Optionally works with SharePoint	Other

Sectors

Accountancy, banking and finance	Business, consulting and management	Energy and utilities	Healthcare	Science and pharmaceuticals

You may also be interested in...

BEACON

TŌGŌ
A social digital workplace
by NTT DATA

worksy

COMPANY AND PRODUCT

Company details

Company
Content Formula

ISO 27001 certified
No - Cyber Essentials has been awarded, however.

Data residency
N/A

Company founded
2005

Product launched
2020

Typical client size
500-100,000 employees

Largest deployment so far
70,000 employees,
50+ countries (all regions)

Customers
Clients include: K Hovnanian, L.E.K. Consulting, Animal Care, Womble Bond Dickinson, Baringa, C&C Group, A Formula 1 Racing Team..

Partner locations
None

Company locations
London, UK (HQ)

Product and technical details

Name of product
Lightspeed365

Deployment

Client on-premises	Client private cloud	Microsoft Azure	Amazon Web Services	Vendor-hosted	Microsoft 365 tenant	Other

Client data encrypted

In transit only	**In transit and at rest**	At rest only

Authentication supported

Entra ID	ADFS	Okta	Open ID	Oauth	G Suite	Other

App deployment

Google Play store	Apple store	MDM	MAM	Other*

*No native mobile app, but the SharePoint and Viva Connections apps can be used instead

Accessibility
WCAG 2.1 compliant

Document library sources integrated

Box	Dropbox	Google Drive	SharePoint	OneDrive	Other

Optional integrated enterprise search engines

Coveo	Elastic	IBM	Lucidworks	Microsoft	Mindbreeze	Sinequa	Other

User interface multi-language

Pre-configured	Editable	Right to left script supported	Other

Content multi-language

Machine translation for publishers	Machine translation for end users	Editable machine translation for publishers	Manual creation for publishers	Right to left script	Other

Set-up and support

Set-up process for new clients
Customers can choose to do a self-install, with instructions provided by Content Formula. In most cases, however, they would run a consulting and set-up project. They have three tiers for this service and the timeline is typically three months, taking a customer from discovery through to intranet launch.

Current version
v1.3.5.0 (January 2024)

Product updates
Content Formula run releases every month. Some are minor improvements, others can include new webparts, major features etc.

Product update process
Customer decides timing.

Reverse-out options
All content is stored in SharePoint and retained by the customer.

Technical support

Email support	Phone support	Chat support	Online portal	24/7 support	Office hours only*

*UK hours. Chat support is via MS Teams.

User community
Not yet, but Content Formula are working on a platform for this (Uservoice style).

Voice of the vendor

Content Formula says: "Content Formula are digital workplace experts and have been designing and building intranets since 2005 for some of the world's biggest companies and brands. Drawing on our many years of experience, and recognising that SharePoint's out-of-the-box intranet features can be a little basic and inflexible, we created Lightspeed365.

Lightspeed365 helps intranet teams build better intranets with rich, flexible, enterprise-grade features and webparts that are easy to use whilst being fully integrated inside the Microsoft Modern Framework (SPFx).

Not only does Lightspeed365 contain all the features and tools needed for a world-class intranet, but it also facilitates organisations that want to make the Microsoft intranet the hub of their digital workplace by incorporating learning management, policy management and performance management tools (powered by LMS365, Xoralia and Weekly10 respectively).

A key philosophy in creating Lightspeed365 is not to compete with Microsoft's software, but to augment it. We provide additional capabilities that work hand-in-hand with the Microsoft native applications and features. Lightspeed365 will never "lock-out" a customer from using features that Microsoft may release in the future."

opentext™
OneSource
CMS for SharePoint

FULLY STANDALONE

REQUIRES SHAREPOINT

OPTIONALLY WORKS WITH SHAREPOINT

FRONTLINE FOCUS

Typical deployment:

10,000 – 55,000 employees

Company locations:

The product in a nutshell

OneSource is a well-rounded intranet that runs on SharePoint and provides a clean and simple experience for employees and administrators alike.

VISIT THE WEBSITE

CLEARBOX VIEW

OneSource is a SharePoint-based Intranet from Canadian company, OpenText, which acquired former vendor, MicroFocus, in January 2023. OneSource runs on SharePoint, but completely replaces the interface for employees and admins. This will appeal to organisations looking for an alternative user experience, while keeping IT happy with the underlying technology. OneSource also claims WCAG2.1 compliance, something that many SharePoint-based products don't.

The product has a clean, appealing and straightforward design. The overall look is defined using 'themes' and branding options (including sub-brands) that set colours, fonts and component styles such as borders, shading etc. Pages comprise building blocks of content and functionality, called 'components'. Pages are responsive and there is a handy mobile preview feature. There is no mobile app but OpenText says OneSource works with the SharePoint or Teams apps.

News publishing is simple but effective; content (pages, components, navigation) is targeted to employees based on their profile. Employees can also subscribe or unsubscribe from certain news channels. Organisations that use SharePoint Communication Sites can include news in OneSource's 'article feed' component. A 'global alerts' feature puts a prominent message at the top of all OneSource sites, while 'mandatory reads' tracks read articles. Editors are supported with an effective, searchable, and filterable content list along with a calendar of upcoming articles.

OneSource provides fairly simple community and engagement features, although companies using Viva Engage can use that instead. Published articles support comments, star ratings and likes. The community bulletin board could support a simple community of practice or social discussion group, but is basic. Blogs are available and enable employees to 'follow' the author for updates.

Integrations are oriented towards Microsoft 365 as you might expect, with components for To Do,

Forms, OneDrive, Outlook and PowerBI alongside Viva Engage. OneSource has a custom app API enabling integration of other services, supported with a developer portal containing tutorials and code snippets. There are no included connectors for popular tools such as Workday or Concur, however.

Content search features are basic but we like the drop down next to the search box to set the scope (whole site, policies etc) and focus results. Result presentation is simple but we like that there is support for 'best bets' that is easier to use than Microsoft's 'Bookmarks'. The people directory provides search and filters for location, department, job title etc. People search results are shown as cards with contact details that can be used to launch email or a Teams chat. Clicking on a card shows colleagues and direct reports.

Admin tools are well laid out in an easy-to-use centre. Admins can add / move / remove components on a content page. A cogwheel icon accesses more settings and we like the helpful explanatory tooltips. There is a good selection of page templates to choose from which the vendor can configure to client needs. We like that corporate templates are organised into 'landing pages' and 'second level pages' with helpful image previews.

OneSource comes with a full suite of analytics that goes from top-level traffic down to detailed reporting for individual pages and real-time tracking of visitors. One of the more unusual aspects is the engagement dashboard that tracks interactions and sentiment analysis for comments, likes and ratings. As well as this detail we like the analytics glossary that explains what all the metrics mean.

Overall, OneSource provides a well-rounded, simple approach to an intranet that will appeal to organisations that want to utilise the SharePoint platform, but don't want the full complexity of building an intranet with modern pages. Organisations looking for more ready to go integration options will need to look elsewhere, though.

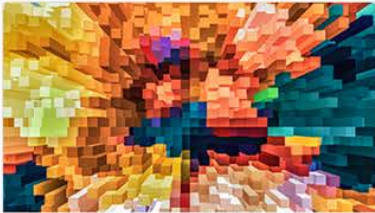## OneSource

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🕐 12:00 AM - 12:00 AM - (All day event)

07 SEP **Expense report**
🕐 9:00 AM - 10:30 AM

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🕐 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM

07 SEP **Collaboration Workshop**
🕐 1:00 PM - 2:00 PM

07 SEP **Project Kickoff and Strategy Session**
🕐 3:00 PM - 4:00 PM

5G and the Future of Connectivity

Exploring the Impact, Possibilities, and Challenges of the 5G Revolution

As 5G technology continues its global rollout, it's poised to reshape the way we connect, communicate, and innovate. This article delves into the profound implications of 5G, from lightning-fast download speeds and reduced latency. Join us on a journey through the 5G landscape.

Cloud Computing: Changing the Tech Landscape

moonlite OUTDOOR CLUB   PINES HIGH   Vera Hotchkins   KORKY'S JUNGLE   KORDIN'S CONSTRUCTION   SA

Welcoming Richard Patel to the Design team

Richard Patel is a visionary designer known for his innovative and boundary-pushing approach to creative projects.

Sarah Rodriguez joins as lead R&D

With a solid foundation in engineering and a passion for problem-solving, Sarah has become a driving force within the R&D field.
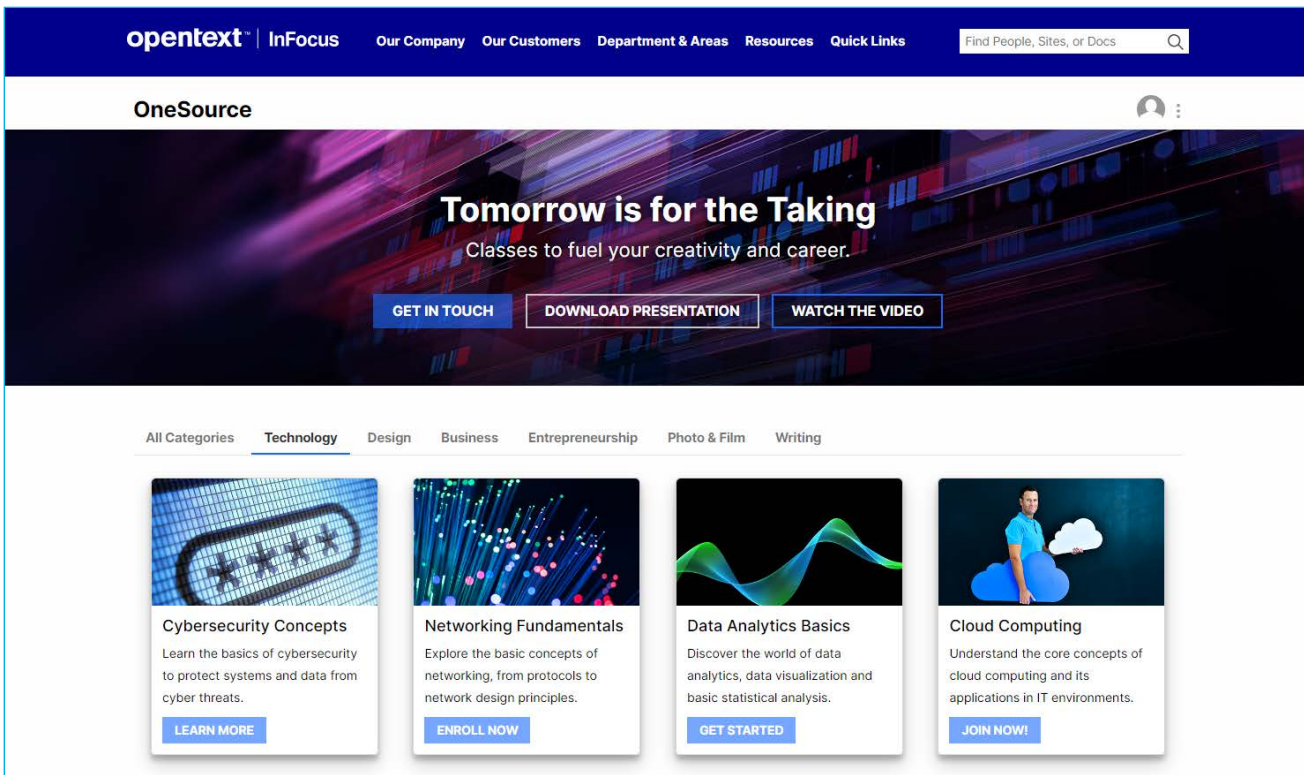
Michael Carter joins as Sales Director

Michael Carter is a results-driven Sales Director with a talent for building high-performing sales teams and driving revenue growth.
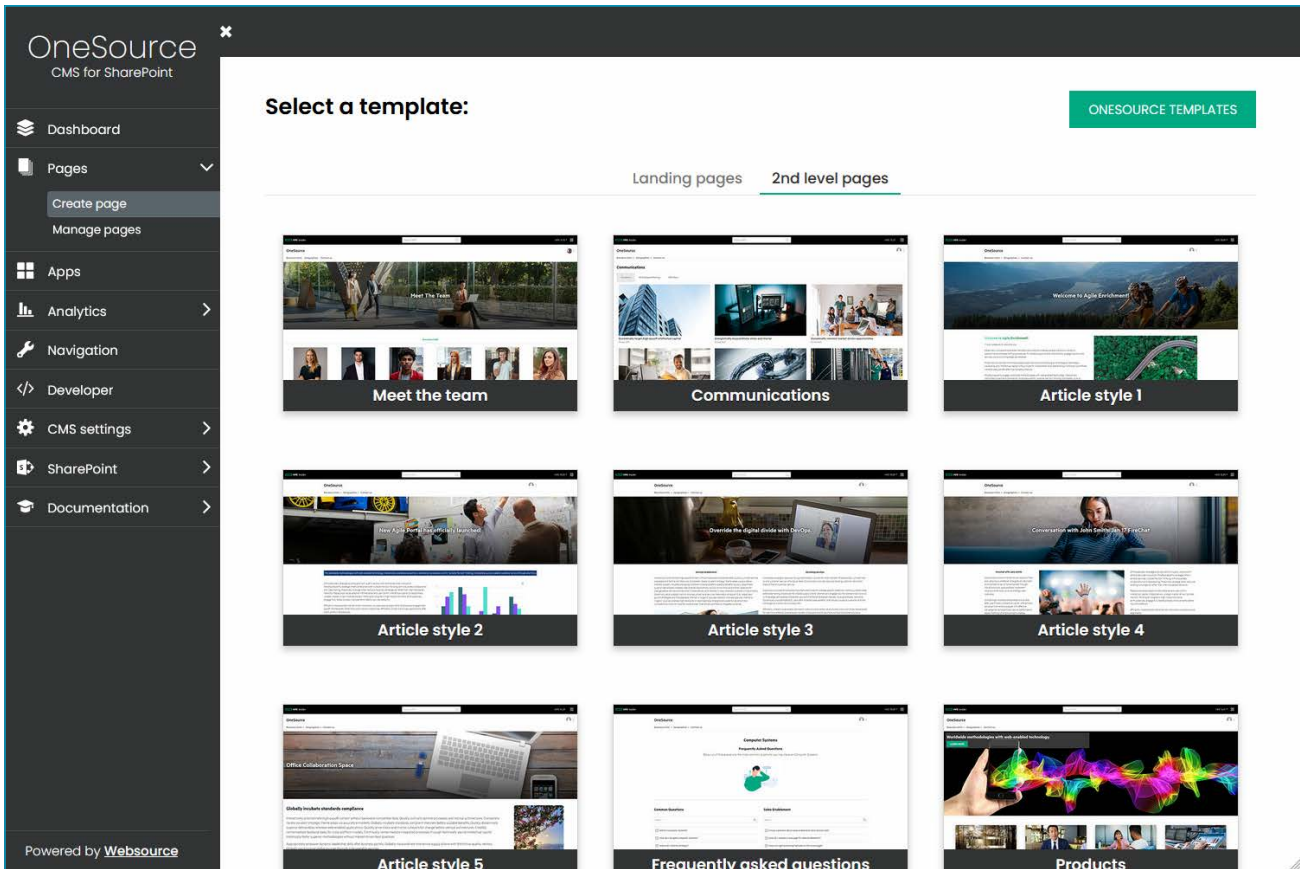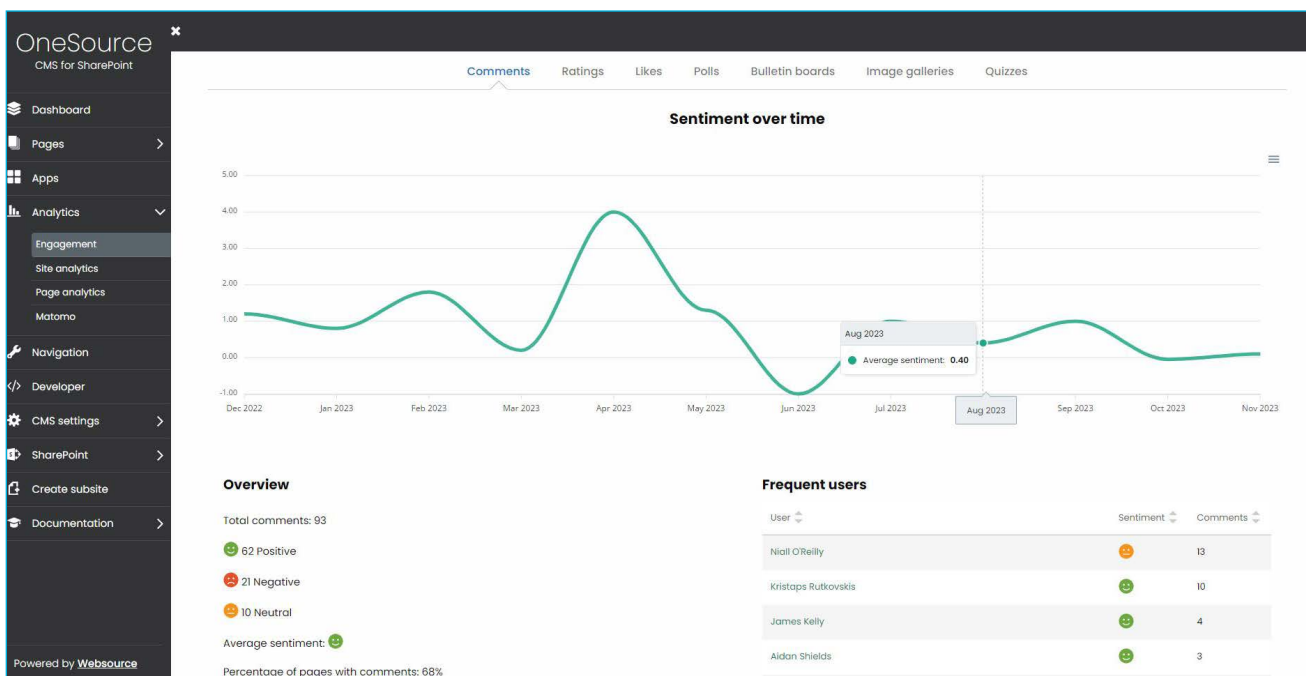
Page templates have a nice visual preview, and we like how they are separated into 'landing pages' and 'second level' pages.

OneSource runs on SharePoint but replaces the interface for employees and admins alike.
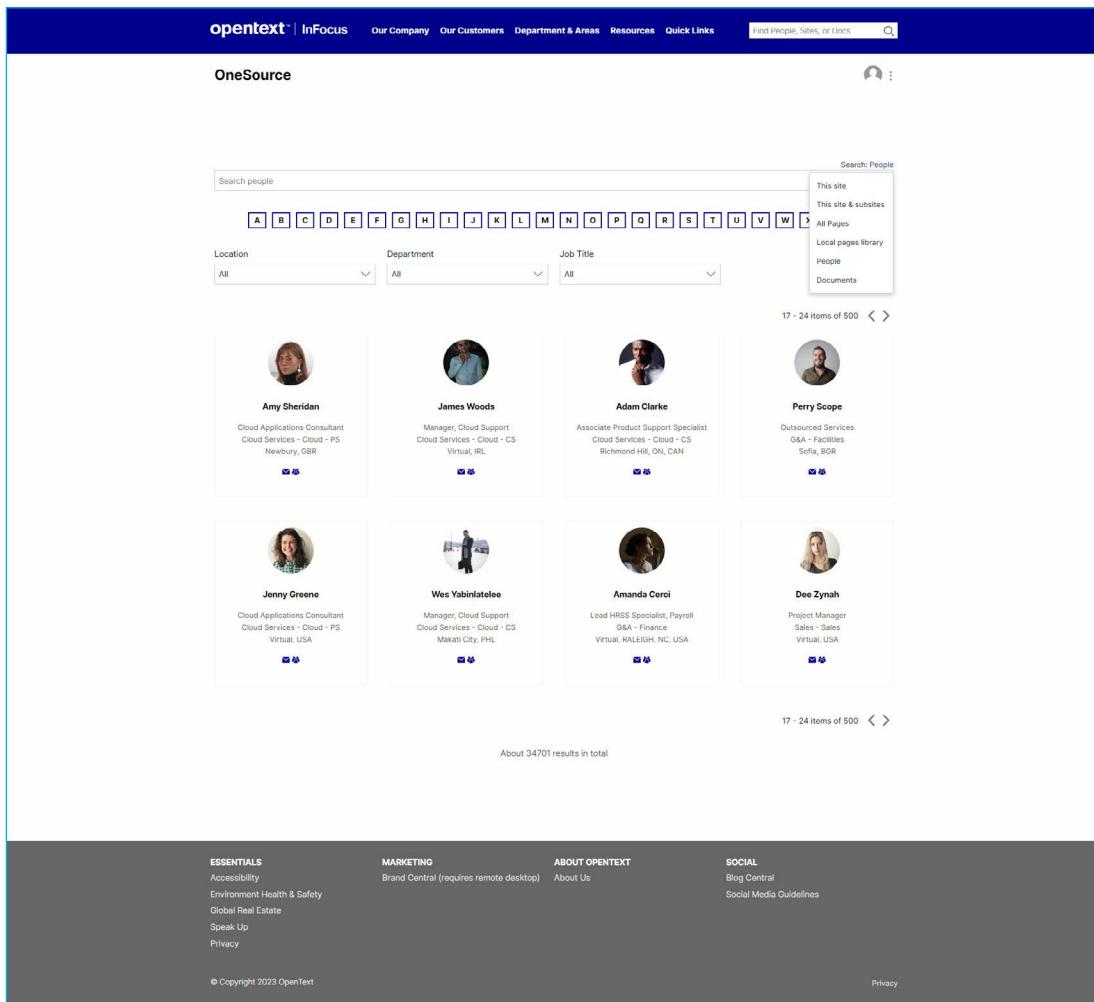
The people finder provides text, a-z and filter options for homing in on the colleague you need.

OneSource comes with a rich suite of analytics that includes measurement of employee engagement with content and sentiment.

Pricing

PRICE BAND

250 users	$$ $$
1,000 users	$
5,000 users	$$
20,000 users	$

These prices are indicative, offering a comparison of the products featured in this report. Please contact the vendor for a bespoke quote.

PRICING MODEL

Subscription – price band based on number of users.

COSTS TYPICALLY

Fairly evenly spread across three years.

DISCOUNTS

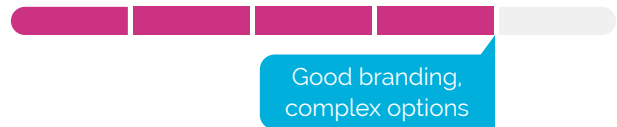Charities and non-profit organisations, Schools and Educational Institutes, Multi-year commitments

PRICE INCLUDES

OpenText offers extra support hours each quarter, determined by the company's size, throughout the contract period. The support encompasses email and phone assistance, continuous training, guidance on advanced site development, review of new functionality requests, and facilitation of four quarterly releases annually. Advanced analytics are also included in the pricing.

Product type

Ready-to-run, installed in days

Branding opportunities

Good branding, complex options

Base systems

Fully standalone	Requires SharePoint	Optionally works with SharePoint	Other

Sectors

Engineering and manufacturing	Healthcare	Information technology	Public services, government and administration	Science and pharmaceuticals

You may also be interested in...

PEOPLE ONE   APPSPACE   Attollo

COMPANY AND PRODUCT

Company details

Company
OpenText

ISO 27001 certified
Yes

Data residency
N/A

Company founded
1991

Product launched
2016

Typical client size
10,000 – 55,000 employees

Largest deployment so far
65,000 employees – a multinational with a global presence

Customers
Not provided

Partner locations
Please see their website for details.

Company locations
Global, with the headquarters in Canada

Product and technical details

Name of product
OneSource CMS for SharePoint

Deployment

Client on-premises	Client private cloud	Microsoft Azure	Amazon Web Services	Vendor-hosted	Microsoft 365 tenant	Other

Client data encrypted

In transit only	In transit and at rest	At rest only

Authentication supported

Entra ID	ADFS	Okta	Open ID	Oauth	G Suite	Other

App deployment

Google Play store	Apple store	MDM	MAM	Other*

*No native mobile app, but the Teams or SharePoint apps can be used instead

Accessibility
WCAG 2.1 compliant

Document library sources integrated

Box	Dropbox	Google Drive	SharePoint	OneDrive	Other

Optional integrated enterprise search engines

Coveo	Elastic	IBM	Lucidworks	Microsoft	Mindbreeze	Sinequa	Other*

*OneSource can pass search terms to an external search service with the results displayed in that service.

User interface multi-language

Pre-configured	Editable	Right to left script supported	Other

Content multi-language

Machine translation for publishers	Machine translation for end users	Editable machine translation for publishers	Manual creation for publishers	Right to left script	Other

Set-up and support

Set-up process for new clients

Setting up a SharePoint intranet CMS for a new client involves several steps. First, OpenText gather the client's requirements and objectives to tailor the solution. Next, they provision a SharePoint site collection, configure permissions, and deploy the OneSource CMS whilst implementing the necessary libraries, lists, and templates to facilitate content management. OpenText then customise the site's appearance and functionality by implementing the corporate branding. They train the client's team on the CMS usage and provide ongoing support. Finally, they conduct testing and user acceptance to ensure a smooth transition.

Current version

September 2023

Product updates

There is a multi-year roadmap for the continued innovation and development of the OneSource CMS for SharePoint. All customers can influence the product roadmap. There are four major releases a year (every 90 days) that consist of major enhancements as well as UX and minor updates to the CMS, all at no additional cost. OpenText coordinates the releases with their customers for a specific date with advanced demos of the new features that will be released. All new enhancements come complete with online tutorials and videos.

Product update process

OneSource product updates are rolled out every 90 days to all customers at once without any impact to the service for the customers. The release date is agreed with the customer in advance of any roll out.

Reverse-out options

The customer owns the content and can continue to use the CMS but no longer receive updates / enhancements / fixes as part of the quarterly releases.

Technical support

Email support	Phone support	Chat support	Online portal	24/7 support	Office hours only*

*UK time

User community

OpenText encourage active internal OneSource communities in Viva Engage / Teams or use of their bulletin board component.

Voice of the vendor

OpenText says: "At OpenText, with the world's most complete and integrated Information Management platform, we empower our customers to organize, integrate and protect data and content as it flows through business processes inside and outside their organization.

OpenText is a world leader in Information Management, helping companies securely capture, govern and exchange information on a global scale. OpenText solves digital business challenges for customers, ranging from small and mid-sized businesses to the largest and most complex organizations in the world. With 23k employees in 120 office locations and 300+ products, OpenText brings together content management, digital experience, trading partner connectivity and security to transform enterprises, SMBs, and consumers into connected and intelligent organizations.

OneSource CMS for SharePoint is delivered as-a-service, which helps to unleash the power of Microsoft SharePoint®, one of the most popular corporate intranet platforms.

OneSource CMS for SharePoint has a 10+ year pedigree in helping organisations to address the existing cost and lead time challenges related to Intranet site management. Its capabilities are extended via quarterly content releases.

It is easy to deploy and requires no technical skills, enabling business users to rapidly create and easily maintain rich and engaging pages with a rich set of capabilities."

PEOPLE ❶NE

FULLY STANDALONE

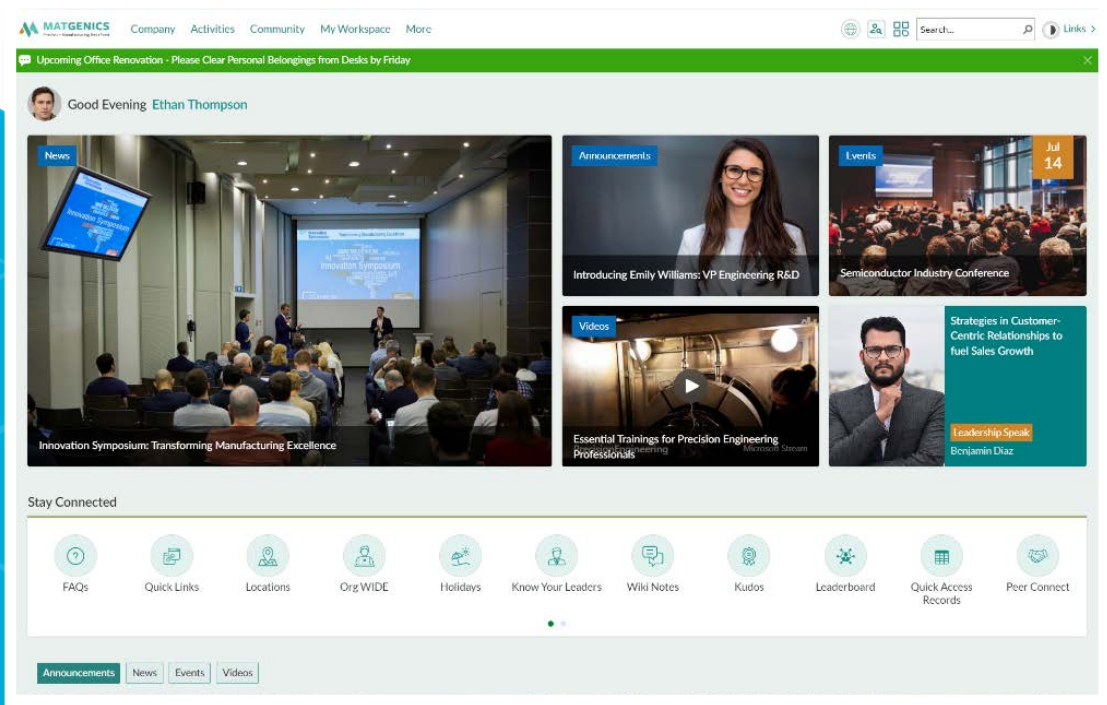**REQUIRES SHAREPOINT**

OPTIONALLY WORKS WITH SHAREPOINT

FRONTLINE FOCUS

Typical deployment:

500-2,000 employees

Company locations:

VISIT THE WEBSITE
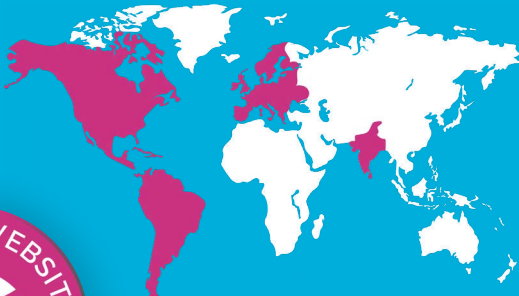
The product in a nutshell

PeopleOne offers a user-friendly interface, lightweight community features, customisable analytics, and some useful tools out of the box to help communicators build and run an engaging intranet.

CLEARBOX VIEW

PeopleOne offers some useful features out of the box to help communicators build and run an engaging intranet. We like the user-friendly interface, lightweight community features and customisable analytics which can help measure engagement. Built on SharePoint and making the most of Microsoft Flow, there are some simple integrations with Microsoft Teams and OneDrive to give users an overview of their documents and workspaces in a tidy interface.

Content types have been well thought through to add value for comms teams and include 'announcements', 'alerts', 'news' and 'events'. These are all administered via a 'Manage Content' screen with a step-by-step creation process that includes optional targeting. Content has a mandatory 'expiration date', which archives it and means it's still findable but removed from content feeds. Authoring content on PeopleOne is permissions based, although an author can delegate editing of a particular page to another user, and there's an optional approval workflow, which is particularly useful for translating content.

The app version of PeopleOne provides users with a similar experience on mobile. Helpfully, external users can be given access to content without M365 licences, which would be useful for organisations with contract workers or volunteers. Users can configure their own granular notifications and set their preferences whether they'd like to receive updates via push, SMS, email or MS Teams.

'People Chronicles' is a news feed which can be used to spotlight employees, and can be contributed to by everyone or restricted. There's a simple 'Community' which allows users to join work or social groups, based around topics and themes and allows posting of text and images. A leaderboard offers gamification based on contributions, as well as engagement on published content – all content can be commented on or liked. Basic moderation is available; flagged posts are automatically removed for review, so it's recommended that a post needs to receive at least two flags before it is reported to

administrators, which is unusual. The 'Community' feature can be turned off, for example if Viva Engage is in use, although Eleviant says their native functionality is beneficial as people don't have to leave the intranet. We think an integration with Viva Engage would be a helpful alternative.

There are multiple ways to provide recognition for employees. We particularly like an 'Awards' module which provides value to teams looking to administer 'Employee of the Year' type initiatives. A configurable workflow allows people to nominate, shortlist and vote. It's not currently available on mobile, which makes it harder for the frontline to participate. Kudos is a peer-to-peer recognition feature where employees can give thanks to one another to recognise positive behaviours. Additionally, managers and admins can apply configurable 'Badges' – for example 'Agile Hero' - to profiles. There are also options to get quick employee feedback, including NPS surveys and polls.

We really like the customisable analytics dashboard, which provides granular data at feature level, with multiple date ranges available in one view. All statistics are exportable to CSV. We'd like to be able to create a shared view, rather than at individual level, and we'd also like to compare previous periods – although this can be worked around with multiple widgets, or compared in Excel.

In terms of findability and knowledge management, the search results offer a slightly tweaked landing page based on regular Microsoft Search. There's a 'people directory', 'FAQs', 'quick links' functionality and 'wiki notes'. The filterable 'activity feed' page gives the opportunity to search for content based on text, date or type of content – although relies on users knowing the difference.

Overall, PeopleOne offers some thoughtful features for organisations wanting to host an engaging intranet with lightweight community features. It may take a little time for users to get the most out of the platform although as ever this should be possible to pick up as part of communications and training.

Upcoming Office Renovation - Please Clear Personal Belongings from Desks by Friday

Good Evening **Ethan Thompson**

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The Power of Mindfulness: Cultivating Present-Moment Awareness
Mindfulness is a practice that helps us cultivate awareness and focus on the present moment. This article explores the benefits of mindfulness and provides practical techniques to incorporate mindfulness into our daily lives for improved well-being.
Clara Clinton

Kudos
Exceptional Attention to Detail
I want to recognize Olivia Mitchell for her exceptional attention to detail. Olivia's meticulous approach to her work ensures that every project and task is completed to the highest standards. Her keen eye for accuracy, thoroughness, and commitment to delivering quality...
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Sarah Cooper's Rapid Career Growth
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0 responses   0

Photo Gallery

Our Milestone Moments | Community Outreach 2023 | Oslo Annual Celebrations | Innovation Expo

The People Profile provides editable information which can enable targeting and help findability.

'My Workspace' offers a clean view of a user's documents and meetings.

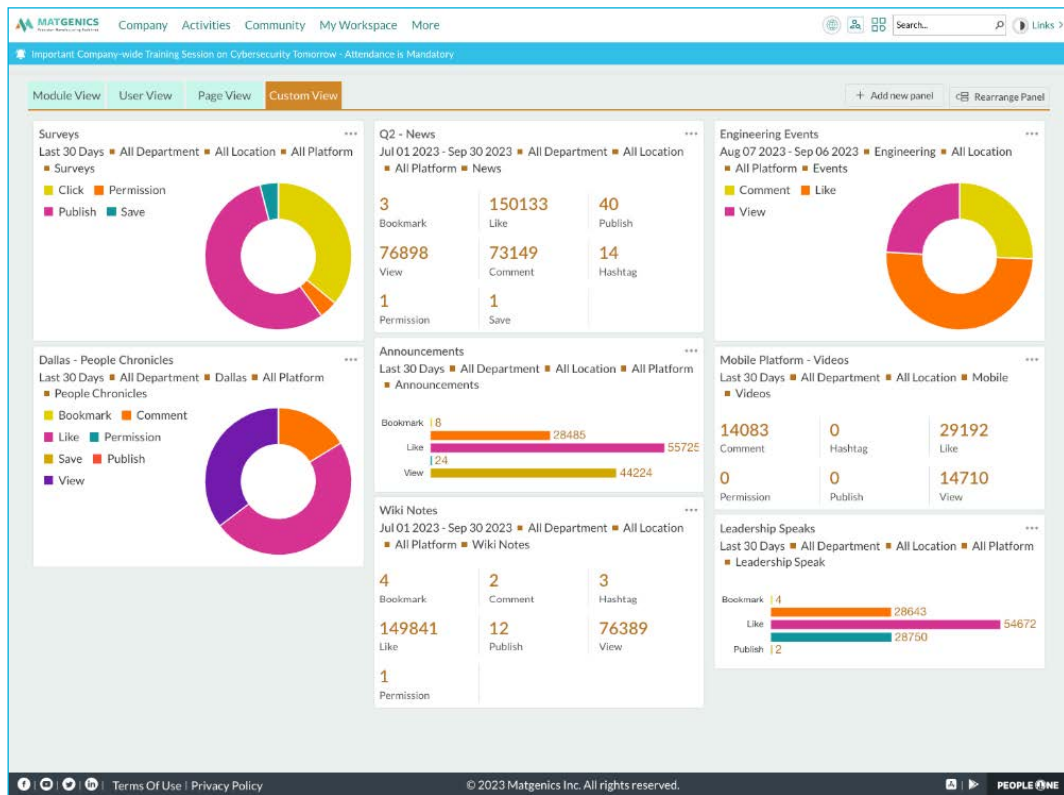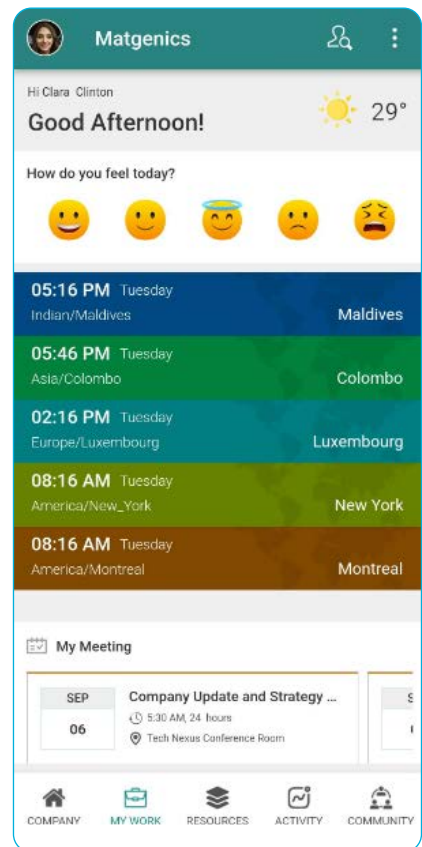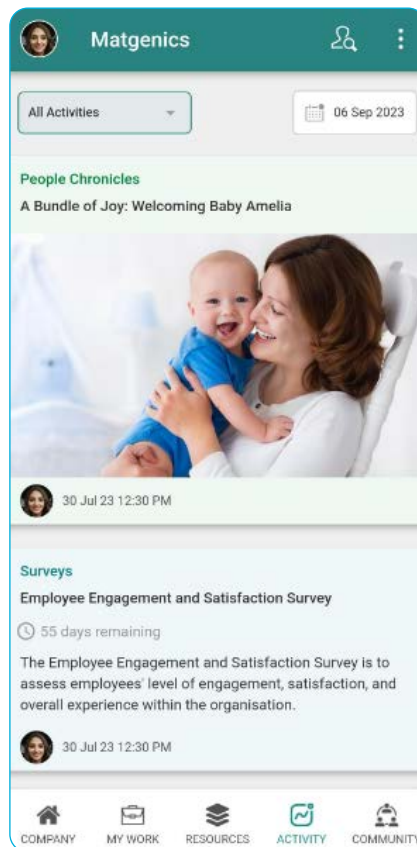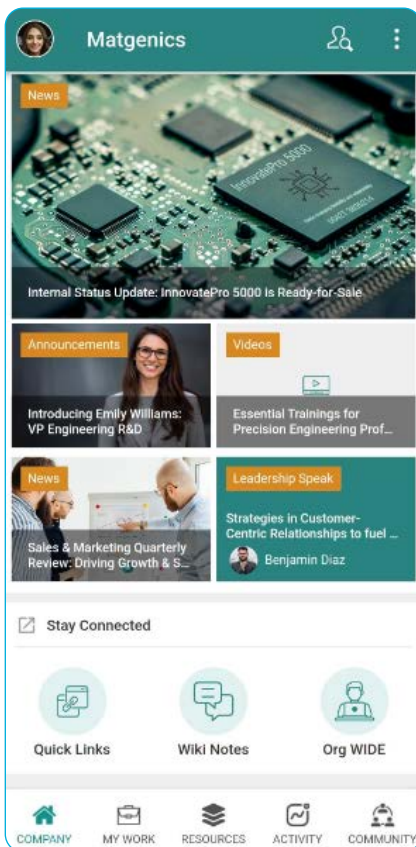*We like the configurable analytics dashboard which can display a variety of statistics.*

The mobile app offers a clean interface for users to access information.

Pricing

PRICE BAND

250 users	$ $ $ $
1,000 users	$ $ $ $
5,000 users	$ $ $ $
20,000 users	$ $ $ $

These prices are indicative, offering a comparison of the products featured in this report. Please contact the vendor for a bespoke quote.

PRICING MODEL

Subscription – Price per user per month + a minimum implementation cost for configuration and deployment, Subscription – price band based on number of users + a minimum implementation cost for configuration and deployment, Perpetual license – Custom quote

COSTS TYPICALLY

Slightly higher at the start of the term, but generally spread.

DISCOUNTS

Charities and non-profit organisations, multi-year commitments and customers only pay for active users.

PRICE INCLUDES

As a part of the overall engagement, Eleviant Tech carry out Intranet workshops with clients to better understand their problem statement / business objective to leverage the right set of features. Two training sessions of 2 hours each will be provided to equip clients on content management, permissions, administration and general configuration.

Product type

Ready-to-run, installed in days

Branding opportunities

Good branding, single choice

Base systems

Fully standalone	Requires SharePoint	Optionally works with SharePoint	Other

Sectors

Accountancy, banking and finance	Business, consulting and management	Engineering and manufacturing	Property and construction	Science and pharmaceuticals

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COMPANY AND PRODUCT

Company details

Company
Eleviant Tech (CTG Group)

ISO 27001 certified
SOC2 Type 1 and HIPAA, ISO 27001 is in active progress.

Data residency
N/A

Company founded
2004

Product launched
2019

Typical client size
500 - 2,000 employees

Largest deployment so far
20,000 employees

Customers
Clients include: CTG, Gemini, LGA, PAR Inc, MediLogix

Partner locations
None

Company locations
Dallas, USA (HQ), Belgium, Canada, Colombia, France, India, Luxembourg, UK

Product and technical details

Name of product

PeopleOne

Deployment

Client on-premises	Client private cloud	Microsoft Azure	Amazon Web Services	Vendor-hosted	**Microsoft 365 tenant**	Other

Client data encrypted

In transit only	**In transit and at rest**	At rest only

Authentication supported

Entra ID	ADFS	Okta	Open ID	Oauth	G Suite	Other

App deployment

Google Play store	**Apple store**	MDM	**MAM**	Other

Accessibility

WCAG 2.1 compliant

Document library sources integrated

Box	Dropbox	Google Drive	SharePoint	OneDrive	Other

Optional integrated enterprise search engines

Coveo	Elastic	IBM	Lucidworks	Microsoft	Mindbreeze	Sinequa	Other

User interface multi-language

Pre-configured	Editable	Right to left script supported	Other*

*Ready language packs available for Dutch, Spanish, German and French. Content will be shown to users based on their preferred language.

Content multi-language

Machine translation for publishers	Machine translation for end users	Editable machine translation for publishers	Manual creation for publishers	Right to left script	Other

Set-up and support

Set-up process for new clients

Eleviant Tech works with the client's IT Team to set up the SharePoint site, Azure, mobile apps and deploy the solution. Eleviant Tech will configure the environments as needed and share necessary documentation. The vendor will also provide two training sessions and arrange regular meetings as needed.

Current version

1.5, Released September 2023

Product updates

On a quarterly basis for stabilisation updates, and features are released as soon as they are available.

Product update process

Timings are based on customer decision. Note that mobile applications are backward compatible.

Reverse-out options

Content resides in the client's tenant. Since PeopleOne is hosted on client's Microsoft Tenant, Eleviant Tech do not have access to client's intranet information.

Technical support

Email support	Phone support	Chat support	Online portal	24/7 support	Office hours only

User community

There is no active user community at this point of time.

Voice of the vendor

Eleviant Tech says: "PeopleOne is a modern intranet solution that focuses on streamlining internal communication, promoting employee engagement, building a positive workplace culture, and providing employees with the right information they need to boost organization productivity. PeopleOne primarily aims at improving employee experience by enabling two-way communication, feedback from employees, employee updates, recognition, communities, people directory, advanced search, knowledge repositories and integrated access to information to carry out everyday work.

Built on SharePoint Online, the solution is hosted on your Microsoft tenant making the intranet safe and secure with no data exposure to external servers.

PeopleOne is equipped with both Android and iOS applications that enables your employees and front-line workers to connect and engage with your organization and workforce on the go.

PeopleOne provides an enhanced UX/UI experience beyond regular SharePoint that enables employees to consume content at ease thereby providing transparency on organization and workforce updates.

The product has the provision to change layouts by drag and drop function that enables client to choose their preferred panels/flavours. This ensures clients can choose the look and feel they would want their employees to experience.

PeopleOne not only focuses on the user experience of end users but also gives primary importance to the users who run the intranet. Administration and governance of PeopleOne is simplified with a clean and dynamic permission model with module specific read/write/publish access.

Content creation and publishing is fairly simple and seamless, thanks to our simplified yet powerful content management system. PeopleOne provides content creators the right set of tools to create, edit, approve, and publish content. WYSIWYG editor, Content translation, targeted content, multi-media support, dynamic workflow, and content expiry management are few features that ensures a non-IT person can own and run the Intranet.

PeopleOne offers enterprise analytics which enable communicators to understand employee behaviour and engagement with the platform. Module, user, and page level analytics are provided for better insights. Advanced filters enable users to view information for a selected timeline and the same can be exported as reports.

Push Notifications and Notification blaster ensure your complete workforce is kept informed on important updates via multiple channels. To summarize, PeopleOne aims at eliminating employee disengagement by building a positive workplace culture, connects your workforce efficiently enabling two-way communication, and improves overall employee experience by providing access to tools and resources."

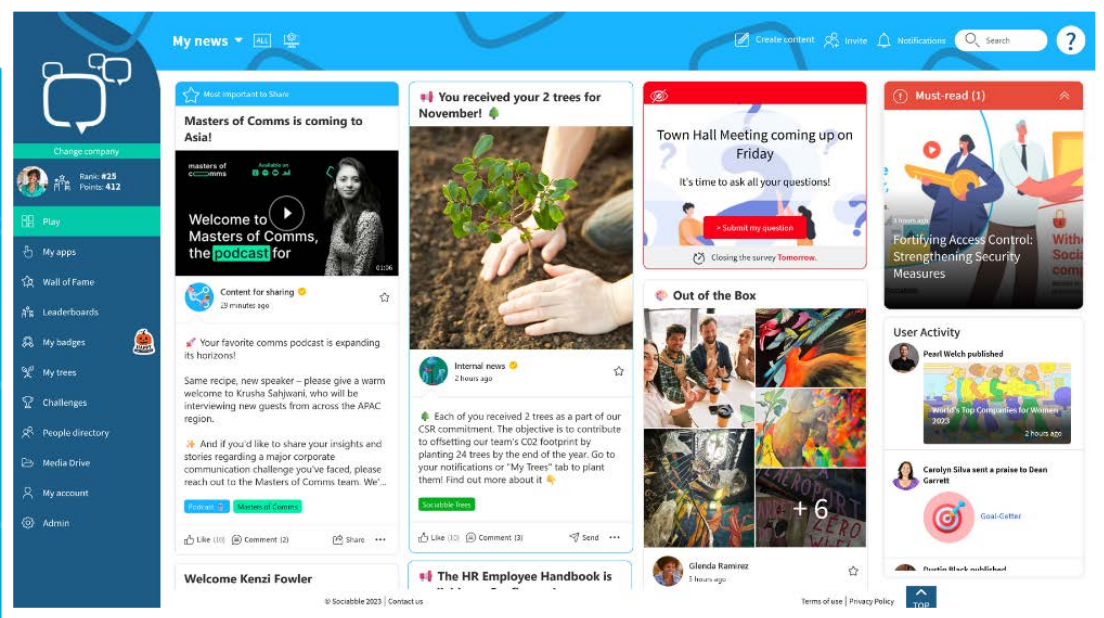# Sociabble

FULLY STANDALONE

REQUIRES SHAREPOINT

OPTIONALLY WORKS WITH SHAREPOINT

FRONTLINE FOCUS

Typical deployment:

1,000 - 110,000 employees

Company locations:

VISIT THE WEBSITE
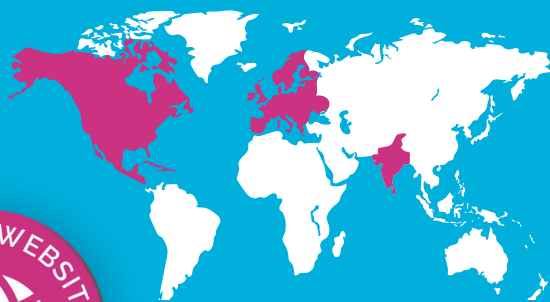
The product in a nutshell

Sociabble is an effective internal and external communication tool on desktop and mobile, with a good range of practical tools to support employees too.

CLEARBOX VIEW

Sociabble, which launched in 2014, has a focus on improving organisational communications and employee engagement, through social and practical features. The attractive interface is easy to use and works well on desktop and mobile, with parity between environments. The only real difference is the app includes a chat feature, which provides a viable alternative to tools like WhatsApp.

The home page 'wall' comprises content tiles, with 'must reads' prominently displayed. Admins decide the default layout and employees can also easily change the layout if permitted, for example transforming it into a social media type feed. A filter allows employees to focus on a specific category such as 'HR news'. We like that people have the option to grey out read tiles and bookmark others for reading later. We also like the notification settings, which are highly configurable by employees. All aspects of Sociabble are targetable; audiences are fed from integrated systems or created inside Sociabble and include dynamic audiences such as 'new starters'.

Publishers create content using a rich text editor or generate / edit via an AI assistant. The AI is guided by a 'tone' configuration and a statement configured by admins, called the 'company context', that includes information such as values. A 'media drive' provides images, files etc. and can be integrated from SharePoint or similar repositories. The media drive search includes a helpful AI that will look at the constituents of images to return appropriate results. Posts are scheduled by publication date in a detailed editorial calendar that helps manage campaigns and communications effectively.

There is a good range of content interactions, including a variety of reactions. Employees may choose to share wall content with colleagues, for example via Teams, or (where allowed) externally into personal social media accounts. When publishers create content they add a suggested post, which employees may edit or use AI to replace. In this case, the AI refers to the company context, the employee's context (a statement they've written about themselves), the settings for each channel (for example, 'no more than three emojis in a LinkedIn post'), as well as the tone. This is a sophisticated approach to AI and social advocacy that we've not seen elsewhere and works well.

Employee activities on Sociabble generate points, which count towards leaderboards and optionally towards configurable 'Badges'. Badges can be manually applied, such as 'copywriter', and include levels to easily spot experts. Badges are also associated with peer-to-peer 'Praise', which can be shared privately and is a nice touch. Praise and Badge icons are displayed in employee profiles. We like the optional 'Sociabble Trees' integration, where organisations choose to plant trees as rewards for activities.

A 'My Apps' menu provides quick links to business systems and company documents such as PowerPoint templates. Integrations with MS Teams are strong: for example, Sociabble is accessible via an app, or Teams channels can include tabs of specified Sociabble topics. Additionally, content can be fed into platforms such as SharePoint, or vice versa. Sociabble integrates with video platforms, such as Stream, but also provides hosting; this includes AI generated summaries and captions in multiple languages.

Search is simple, with result filters for channel and category, but can include results from integrated business systems. Analytics is very strong, with good filters and comparisons of data across multiple dashboards, allowing managers to focus on the analytics that matter most to them. Admins may also create their own sharable dashboards.

It's likely Sociabble would complement a platform like a knowledge management system, but it could certainly serve as a front door to business systems for employees across devices. The higher price point is therefore noteworthy, but we think Sociabble provides a sophisticated solution for those organisations looking to address communication challenges.

It's easy for publishers to create content.

Analytics are impressive, with several dashboards to choose from, each of which contain a good range of data.

AI settings

AI SETTINGS

Advanced settings

Prompt tuning

  Company context

  Tone

  Sharing

  Internal news

  Content for sharing

  Video

PROMPT TUNING - COMPANY CONTEXT

Specify the company context

XYZ stands as an illustrious trailblazer in the realm of digital transformation consultancy, an entity revered for its unwavering commitment and unassailable prowess, standing shoulder to shoulder among industry titans. With a legacy spanning over a century, XYZ has carved an indelible path, serving as the chief architect behind monumental digital triumphs for a myriad of global corporations, marking an era defined by innovation and unparalleled success.

At the core of XYZ's ethos lies a dedication to innovation and disruption, spearheading a revolution that transcends boundaries and redefines the landscape of large-scale digital transformations across diverse linguistic spectrums. The firm's visionary approach doesn't just navigate the complexities inherent in these transformations but pioneers a new playbook, setting the benchmark for industry standards.

Within XYZ, the relentless pursuit of client success takes precedence, driving a global task force that navigates and orchestrates victories in the spheres of Europe, North America, and the dynamic APAC region. This concerted effort intertwines seamlessly with an unwavering commitment to upholding gold standards of quality, forging an indomitable alliance that epitomizes excellence.

Crafting a narrative that resonates as the unrivaled authority in English-speaking markets, XYZ emerges not merely as a consulting firm but as a cornerstone in shaping the digital narrative of our time. Through a meticulously designed framework, XYZ redefines paradigms, steers transformations, and cements its position as an unparalleled force driving the future of digital evolution.

Save

Admins control the context for the Sociabble AI, for example providing a company context statement, defining how the different 'tone' choices sound, and choosing what is shared into different social media platforms.
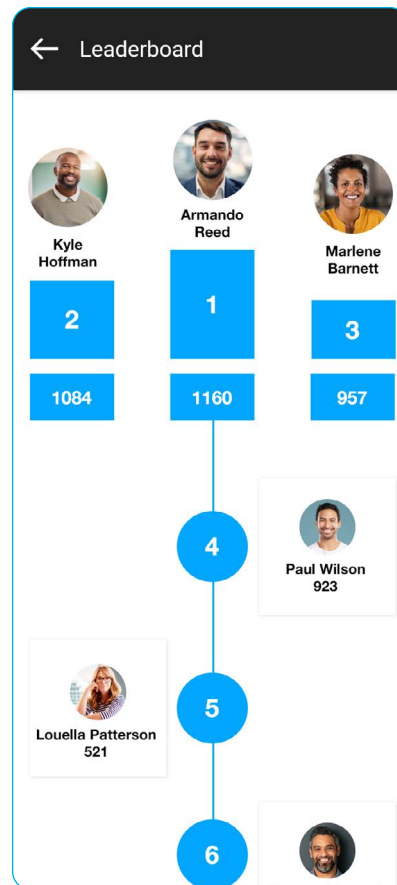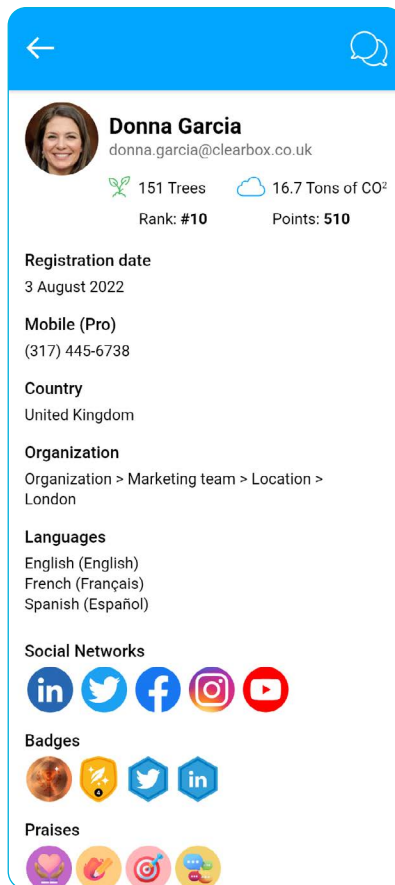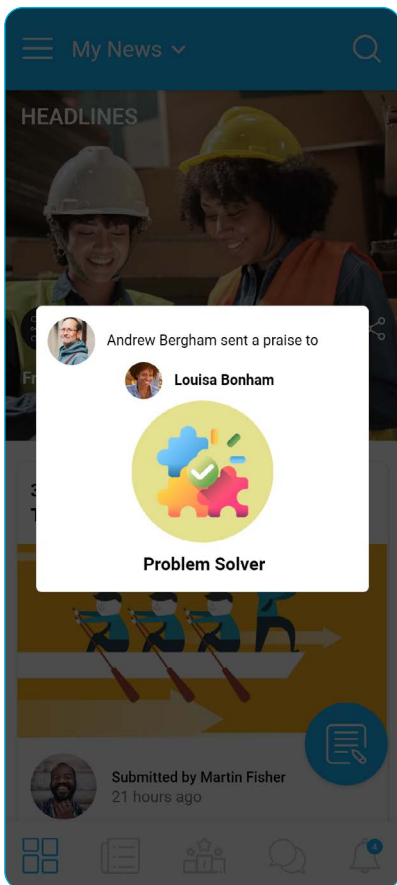
The mobile environment has parity with the desktop experience, where it's just as easy to award Praise, find people and the associated badges they've won, and see the gamification leaderboard.

Pricing

PRICE BAND	
250 users	$ $ $ $
1,000 users	$ $ $ $
5,000 users	$ $ $ $
20,000 users	$ $ $ $

These prices are indicative, offering a comparison of the products featured in this report. Please contact the vendor for a bespoke quote.

PRICING MODEL

Subscription – price per user per month. Subscription – price band based on number of users.

COSTS TYPICALLY

Weighted towards the start (during the 'project phase'), then much lower for the remaining term.

DISCOUNTS

Charities and non-profit organisations, multi-year commitments and Sociabble offers degressive pricing.

PRICE INCLUDES

Installation and configuration, project workshops (to identify needs and associated solutions), admin training, end user training, user rollout services, Customer Success Services, maintenance, product support, monthly updates and upgrades, access to a community and webinars, consulting services (to provide strategic insights and recommendations).

Product type

Ready-to-run, installed in days

Branding opportunities

All branding, complex options

Base systems

Fully standalone	Requires SharePoint	Optionally works with SharePoint	Other*

*Optionally works with Google, Viva, and Microsoft Teams

Sectors

Accountancy, banking and finance	Business, consulting and management	Engineering and manufacturing	Information technology	Retail

You may also be interested in...

Haiilo   Engage   firstup

COMPANY AND PRODUCT

Company details

Company
Sociabble

ISO 27001 certified
Yes

Data residency
Sociabble have data centres in the Netherlands and Ireland.

Company founded
2014

Product launched
2014

Typical client size
Sociabble is an Enterprise solution, so anywhere from 1,000 - 110,000 employees.

Largest deployment so far
110,000 employees,
51 countries

Customers
Clients include: AXA, Coca Cola Europacific Partners, Primark, Capgemini, Accor, L'Occitane en Provence, Renault Group, Deloitte, Generali, Disneyland Paris

Partner locations
EMEA, APAC, North America, LATAM

Company locations
Paris, France (HQ), USA, UK, France, India

Product and technical details

Name of product

Sociabble

Deployment

Client on-premises	Client private cloud	**Microsoft Azure**	Amazon Web Services	Vendor-hosted	Microsoft 365 tenant	Other

Client data encrypted

In transit only	**In transit and at rest**	At rest only

Authentication supported

Entra ID	ADFS	Okta	Open ID	Oauth	G Suite	Other*

*SAML2.0 and OIDC are supported, so any authentication based on these protocols is compatible with Sociabble.

App deployment

Google Play store	Apple store	MDM	MAM	Other*

*Huawei AppGallery.

Accessibility

Background colours can be set by the individual user, contrast can be set by the individual user, individual users can change the font size of what they're seeing, Alt text is in use for images, keyboards can be used for navigation, and there are other settings not included here. Sociabble says they follow the guidelines of the WCAG and use industry-recommended best practices for their development methodology.

Document library sources integrated

Box	Dropbox	Google Drive	SharePoint	OneDrive	Other*

*Sociabble can be integrated to other document services using their public API.

Optional integrated enterprise search engines

Coveo	Elastic	IBM	Lucidworks	Microsoft	Mindbreeze	Sinequa	Other*

*Sociabble provides an API endpoint for search integration.

User interface multi-language

Pre-configured	Editable	Right to left script supported	Other*

*Sociabble offer 17 interface languages and offer translation capabilities in 50+ languages.

Content multi-language

Machine translation for publishers	Machine translation for end users	Editable machine translation for publishers	Manual creation for publishers	Right to left script	Other

Set-up and support

Set-up process for new clients

Sociabble offers a streamlined process for setting up and configuring a new platform, which can be accomplished in as little as a few days. For more advanced configuration, customisation, and implementation needs, Sociabble provides a range of services. The platform's onboarding methodology consists of five distinct phases: Engagement, Organisation, Validation, Launch, Run Mode. The entire journey from initial engagement to successful platform launch typically takes around 1 to 4 months, depending on the project size.

Current version

November 2023

Product updates

Every month. The desktop app updates itself automatically at the next page load. Product updates range from app performance and stabilisation improvements to major feature releases. When a new feature is released, the End-Users will be updated through a pop-up at their first log-in back on the platform, they will be offered a guided tour of the new feature.

Product update process

Clients automatically have access to all the updates on the platform. Sociabble provide uninterrupted service during these updates, communicating these updates via webinars, their consultants, weekly announcements, and notifications. Clients can test the feature in a sandbox environment for large modules before rolling it out to their entire workforce.

Reverse-out options

When a contract is over or terminated, the client has 30 days within which to request a copy of their personal data. After this period, all data is completely deleted, with the exception of anonymised traces used for analytics purposes only.

Technical support

Email support	Phone support	Chat support	Online portal	24/7 support	Office hours only*

*8am to 6pm CET and 8am to 6pm EST

User community

The Sociabble Heroes platform is a community of more than 2,000 customers who share their projects, challenges, successes, and best practices. All Sociabble client Administrators have access to the Sociabble Heroes platform, where they can access Best Practices, Ready to Use Content, Market Insights, New Feature announcements, Offline and online events (webinars) to meet and exchange ideas with other End-Users. All End-Users have access to Sociabble's Knowledge Base and FAQs, which is a "self-service" database of information designed to answer pressing questions in a timely manner.

Voice of the vendor

Sociabble says: "Sociabble is the leading SaaS platform for Employee Communication, Employee Engagement, and Employee Advocacy, designed to meet large companies' needs. With 10 years of experience in large-scale deployments, Sociabble has helped many world-renowned companies like AXA, Primark, Coca-Cola Europacific Partners, to unlock the full potential of their workforce. Sociabble is designed to streamline and elevate internal communications by offering a content hub where employees can discover, share, and engage with pertinent information via their channel of choice—be it a web app, branded mobile app, email, chat, intranet, or Microsoft Teams. The platform's user-friendly interface and intuitive features make it effortless for both frontline and office workers to stay informed, engaged, and act as ambassadors for their company.

Sociabble's platform enables top-down and bottom-up content management of text, photos, audio, and videos at both global and local levels, effectively breaking down silos within the company. Particularly effective at displaying visual content, the platform comes with features like targeted audience segmentation, multi-channel distribution, translation, and 'Must Read' notifications. This ensures that the right individuals receive timely, relevant information in the format that suits them best.

One of Sociabble's key strengths is our Engagement Framework, a dynamic ecosystem designed to drive employee participation and cultivate a culture of engagement. Through top-down and peer-to-peer activation mechanisms such as points, leaderboards, badges, praises, and challenges, along with meaningful rewards tied to CSR initiatives, we empower enterprises to motivate and recognize their workforce, ultimately boosting productivity and innovation.

With its ISO 27001-certified security management, Sociabble meets the most stringent data privacy standards. This provides a robust shield for sensitive information, including all the artificial intelligence features specifically designed to protect data security.

Sociabble is more than just a platform; it's a comprehensive solution backed by our dedicated Customer Success Team. With a global presence in Europe, North America, and APAC, this experienced team plays a pivotal role in the success of our clients' projects. They provide a strong methodology for deployment and adoption, and share industry best practices to ensure optimal outcomes."
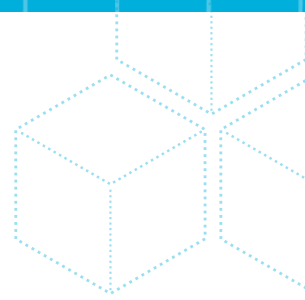
TŌGŌ
A social digital workplace
by NTT DATA

FULLY STANDALONE

REQUIRES SHAREPOINT

OPTIONALLY WORKS WITH SHAREPOINT

FRONTLINE FOCUS
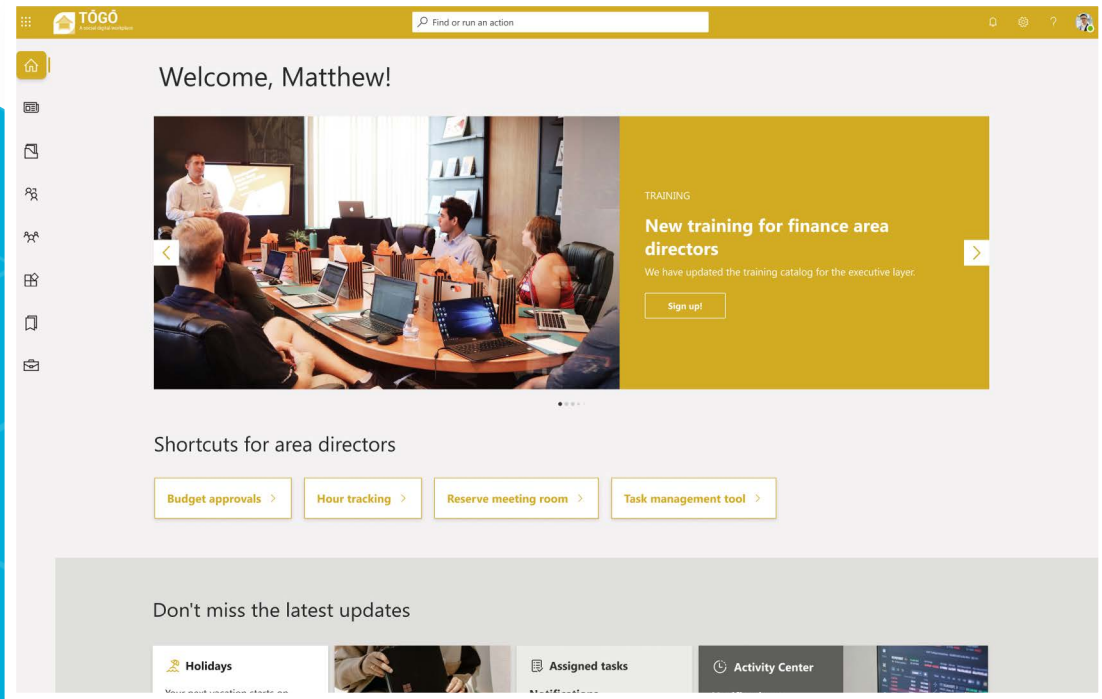
Typical deployment:

15,000 – 20,000 employees

Company locations:

The product in a nutshell

TŌGŌ is a sophisticated SharePoint-based intranet product that adds clever content and community features to help complex organisations be more connected.

VISIT THE WEBSITE

CLEARBOX VIEW

TŌGŌ Social Digital Workplace (TŌGŌ from here) is a SharePoint intranet in a box product from the European arm of global IT services company, NTT DATA. The product was launched 2017 and makes some welcome improvements to SharePoint, giving employees a more joined-up experience of communication and community activity than standard SharePoint.

TŌGŌ has a familiar feel to it but with some notable enhancements. The main navigation adds icons next to the menu labels, but the vendor has subtly used Fluent UI icons here (and in other places) that make them feel seamless. The top navigation bar includes a prominent search-scope drop-down that we really like. An integrated 'Activity Center', aggregates notifications from relevant published content, communities and people, while news feed cards show the number of likes, comments and views.

Publishers and admins access their tools in some novel ways. A click in the search box produces a list of actions to create an article, quick post, upload documents and create a community. The publishing experience is SharePoint but with enhancements. Publishers start pages with forms that prompt for all relevant metadata for the content type. Targeting can use Entra groups, or Workday and SuccessFactors profile information to build dynamic audiences based on rules.

Core to the TŌGŌ feature-set is the 'Dashboard'. This highly configurable web part can aggregate, filter and display information in an impressive number of ways. Information can be aggregated based on a range of criteria including site, content type, metadata and then filtered based on date, audience etc. There are multiple ways to display information including cards, lists and images. The component is used to provide news feeds, community information, policy libraries or any other use case for information display.

TŌGŌ has its own social and community features, although customers can use Viva Engage if they prefer. Using TŌGŌ's capabilities, any published content type (not just news) can be socially enabled

with likes and comments. Communities include documents, blogs and pages alongside the social discussion, supporting professional communities of interest as well as more social use cases. Employees can follow people, communities, tags, pages and sites with activity from these appearing in their feed.

Content search benefits from the above-mentioned scope enhancement in the navigation bar. 'Quick results' appear as you type, grouped by news, communities, people etc. The full search results page is well-presented with tabs for different content types. A useful set of filters narrows results, such as by date, metadata etc. Finding people works well with any profile information searchable. Results are presented as profile cards and people you are following are shown, too. The vendor demonstrated a new generative AI-powered knowledgebase 'Genius Search' as well, where employees ask a natural language question and the tool responds with an answer. This comes at extra cost and is not included in our price comparison.

TŌGŌ comes with a suite of PowerBI-based dashboards that provide a good overview of activity across the various features. What we saw in the demo nicely covered visitors, top content, top community and calculated engagement measures both with monthly snapshots and tracking metrics over time. Basic search reporting is also included with top search terms reported but no failed searches.

Mobile access is via the Teams or SharePoint apps, or mobile browser. The vendor also facilitates clients adding content from TŌGŌ to other enterprise mobile apps. This latter option comes with the benefit of avoiding further Microsoft license costs.

Overall, we think that TŌGŌ is a well-featured and rounded product that adds useful capabilities to the standard SharePoint offering. It will appeal to large, complex organisations that have sophisticated content publishing and targeting needs. License costs appear reasonable for what's on offer, although there will be additional implementation costs. SMEs should note there is a 500-seat minimum on licenses.

Welcome, Matthew!

New training for finance area directors

We have updated the training catalog for the executive layer.

Sign up!

Shortcuts for area directors

Budget approvals > | **Hour tracking** > | **Reserve meeting room** > | **Task management tool** >

Don't miss the latest updates

Holidays
Your next vacation starts on January 5

Open

Notifications
There are news related to your interests! Stay up to date...

Assigned tasks
Notifications
There are news related to your interests! Stay up to date...

Open

Activity Center
Notifications
There are news related to your interests! Stay up to date...

Stay up to date with news

Hello Matthew! What do you want to publish today?

Article | **Document** | **Quickpost**

All | Articles | Documents | Quickposts

DIRECT INVESTMENTS
Learn about the direct investment opportunities in the market!
👁 189

FINANCING
Day-to-day financing
👁 147

ACCESSIBILITY
Accessibility Library
Carlos Fernández Roig
12 days ago

FINANCING
What is the MicroBank loan?
👁 129

INSURANCE
How to get exclusive coverage for businesses?
👁 189

EMPLOYEE CONNECT
Congratulations to the 7 employees that obtained the cer...
👁 147

TRAINING
In Bilbao, we celebrate a training day for shareholders of...
👁 156

SUSTAINABILITY
Did you miss the conference on circular economy and...
👁 129

TRAINING
Get good leadership from your team with the new courses!

INVERSIONES
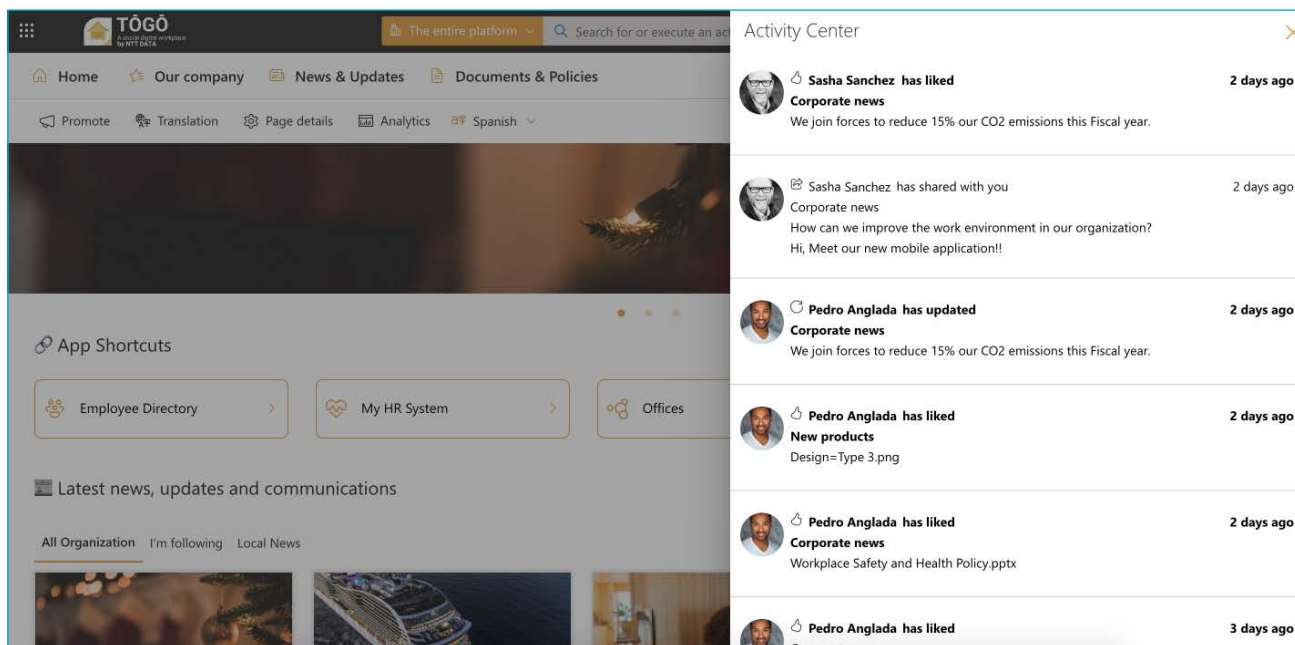**The company offers an investment model based on the...**

CLIENTS
Discover what the entity's business area offers, and get it
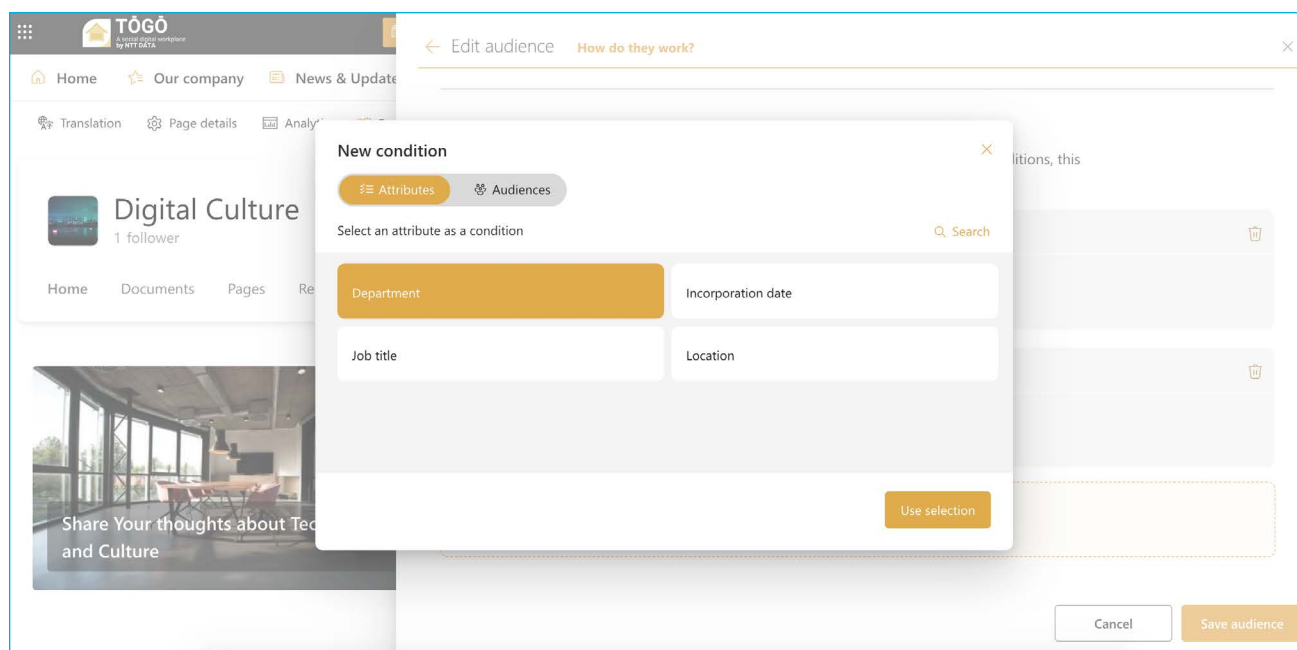
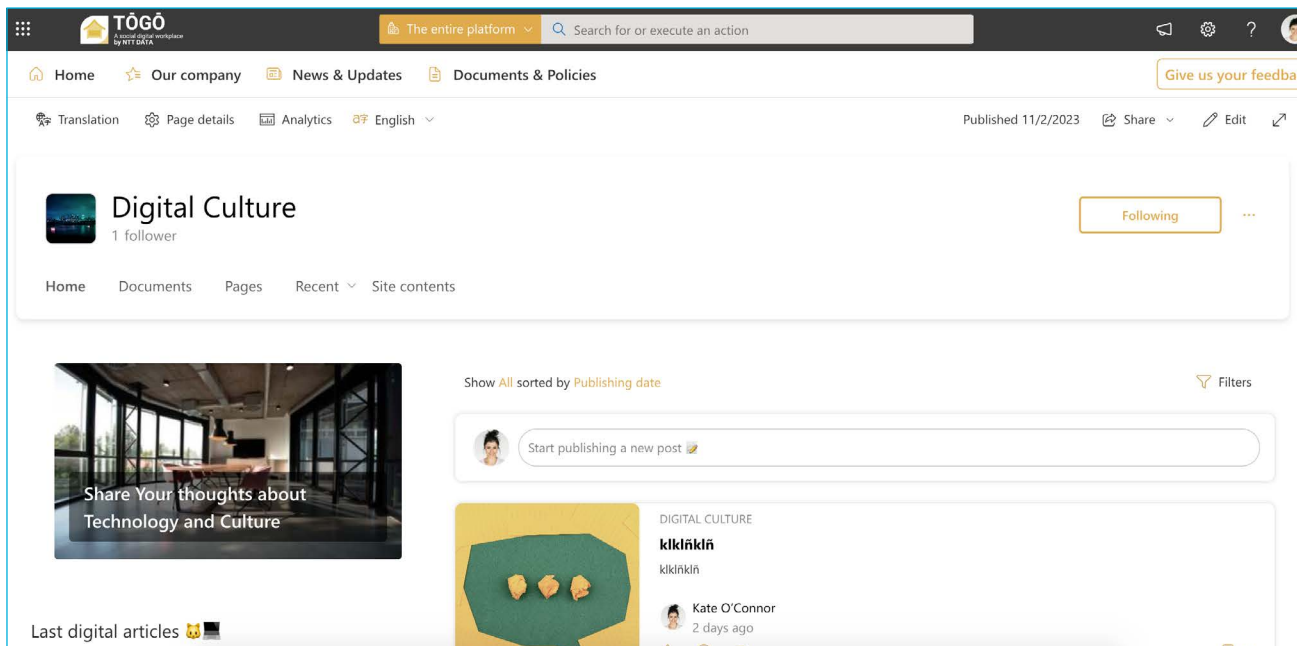EMPLOYEE VACATIONS
Vacation_2023
Carlos Fernández Roig

The 'Activity Center' aggregates notifications for followed content, communities and people.

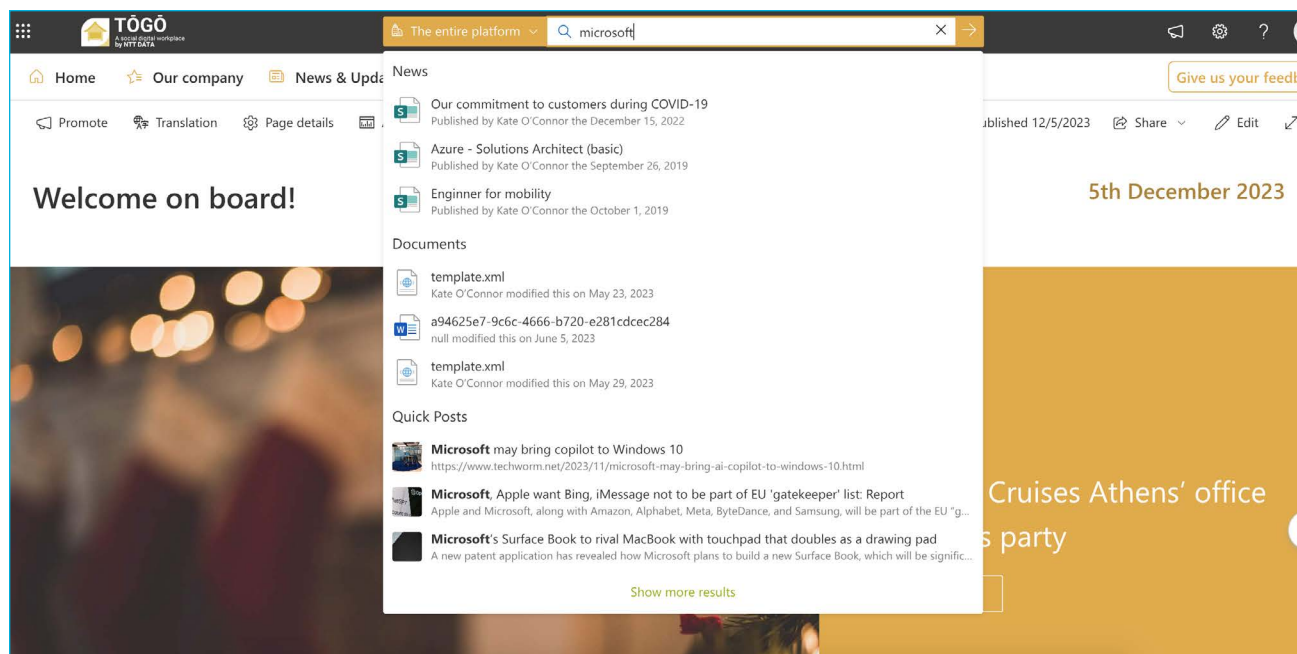
TŌGŌ includes a dynamic audience builder for sophisticated targeting of content.

An example TŌGŌ community home page.

Quick search results are grouped by content type: note the orange search scope dropdown.

Pricing

PRICE BAND

250 users	$ $ $ $
1,000 users	$ $ $ $
5,000 users	$ $ $ $
20,000 users	$ $ $ $

These prices are indicative, offering a comparison of the products featured in this report. Please contact the vendor for a bespoke quote.

PRICING MODEL

Subscription – price per user per month. Subscription – price band based on number of users.

COSTS TYPICALLY

License costs are always the same because they are based on user volume, but there is an additional cost at the beginning associated to the project implementation cost (CAPEX).

DISCOUNTS

Frontline users and multi-year commitments

PRICE INCLUDES

Included with licenses are several services to access new versions of the product with new features, improvements and bug fixing. These services are TŌGŌ Quarterlies (meetings between the client and the TŌGŌ team), TŌGŌ Roadmap (where customers influence the development roadmap), Masterclasses and access to the Partners Centre.

Product type

Ready-to-run, installed in days

Branding opportunities

All branding, complex options

Base systems

Fully standalone	Requires SharePoint	Optionally works with SharePoint	Other

Sectors

Accountancy, banking and finance	Business, consulting and management	Energy and utilities	Information technology	Transport & Logistics

You may also be interested in...

Attollo   Lightspeed365   FRESH

COMPANY AND PRODUCT

Company details

Company
NTT DATA

Customers
Clients include: Amadeus, HDI, Iberia, ITA Airways, Naturgy, NTT DATA EMEAL, Redeia, The global fund.

Data residency
TŌGŌ infrastructure is deployed on the client's Azure tenant. It will depend on how they have their tenant configured where the information / data will reside. TŌGŌ doesn't store any client information outside their tenant.

Company founded
1988

Product launched
2018

Typical client size
15,000 – 20,000 employees

Largest deployment so far
60,000 employees in over 100 countries around the world

ISO 27001 certified
Yes

Partner locations
The implementation partner is NTT DATA itself, so they can deploy in any country with NTT DATA presence.

Company locations
Tokyo, Japan (HQ), Global

Product and technical details

Name of product
TŌGŌ Social Digital Workplace

Deployment

| Client on-premises | Client private cloud | **Microsoft Azure** | Amazon Web Services | Vendor-hosted | **Microsoft 365 tenant** | Other |

Client data encrypted

| In transit only | **In transit and at rest** | At rest only |

Authentication supported

| **Entra ID** | ADFS | Okta | Open ID | Oauth | G Suite | Other |

App deployment

| Google Play store | Apple store | MDM | MAM | **Other*** |

*TŌGŌ doesn't have a native mobile app, they leverage MS Teams. Additionally, there is an API to export the contents from SharePoint Online and a TŌGŌ Mobile SDK to embed or build a custom mobile app.

Accessibility
Background colours can be set by the individual user, contrast can be set by the individual user and Alt text is in use for images.

Document library sources integrated

Box	Dropbox	Google Drive	SharePoint	OneDrive	Other

Optional integrated enterprise search engines

Coveo	Elastic	IBM	Lucidworks	Microsoft	Mindbreeze	Sinequa	Other*

*Integrations with NTT DATA Insights Engine Knowler.

User interface multi-language

Pre-configured	Editable	Right to left script supported	Other

Content multi-language

Machine translation for publishers	Machine translation for end users	Editable machine translation for publishers	Manual creation for publishers	Right to left script	Other

Set-up and support

Set-up process for new clients

NTT DATA start with a TŌGŌ FastTrack implementation, adaptable to client needs through custom developments and migrations. This process begins with a thorough assessment, covering both technical and functional aspects. In the technical phase, they align with the client's IT team, detailing their architecture, security, and deployment procedures. Simultaneously, the functional assessment involves multiple sessions with the client's business teams, allowing them to tailor their product to fulfil their specific needs. This typically takes 3 months; the process culminates in a company-wide Go Live, ensuring a seamless and customised implementation for all employees.

Current version

1.9.0

Product updates

Quarterly.

Product update process

Upon compiling a new product version and deploying it in the TŌGŌ test environments, they follow a client-0 strategy by first deploying it internally on their production company intranet. After weeks of real testing, they inform their clients about the update through a release note and newsletter with a demo showcase at their TŌGŌ Quarterlies. For clients with service contracts, they collaboratively plan and execute the installation, adapting new features according to their needs. Clients without service contracts interested in the update receive the installation package and associated manual for self-installation.

Reverse-out options

If a customer decides to terminate their contract and uninstall TŌGŌ, NTT DATA conduct a session to clarify the implications of the uninstallation. Since the data is stored in the client's Azure tenant, there is no loss of data, but loss of capabilities. NTT DATA help the client in the transition by recommending out-of-the-box SharePoint Online capabilities as workarounds to the existing TŌGŌ features.

Technical support

Email support	Phone support	Chat support	Online portal	24/7 support	Office hours only

User community

TŌGŌ's Customer Success Unit (CSU) forms the core of their active user engagement plan, ensuring continuous support and development throughout the product journey. This dedicated team ensures a deep understanding of client needs and preferences, aiming to achieve their objectives. NTT DATA foster user interaction with clients through regular quarterly meetings, offering a space for feedback that shapes their roadmap and new feature development. Their clients also benefit from release notes, visibility actions, market trends and best practices newsletters, events, webinars, and masterclasses conducted by the CSU team.

Voice of the vendor

NTT DATA says: "NTT DATA, a consulting company, is transforming the corporate landscape with its innovative products aimed at enhancing project efficiency and effectiveness. Leading this change is TŌGŌ Social Digital Workplace, a platform designed to boost employee engagement and revolutionize organizational communication and information sharing. TŌGŌ, seamlessly integrates with Office 365, maximizes the Microsoft platform, streamlining workflows with tools like SharePoint and Microsoft Teams. Additionally, frequent updates are provided in line with Microsoft's roadmap to keep the workplace up to date with the last platform releases such as Viva or Copilot.

TŌGŌ focuses on delivering a superior employee experience by intuitively and personally connecting people and information. It addresses specific enterprise areas, such as internal communications, human resources, and IT. It enhances the company's internal communication and elevates employee engagement through a unified platform, while ensuring content governance and security for corporate resources, tools, and documents. This improves organizational engagement at every level: employee-to-employee, employee-to-company, and company-to-employee.

TŌGŌ is a complete end-to-end solution that supports clients throughout the product journey, offering flexible and customizable solutions tailored to each client's unique needs. The Customer Success Unit (CSU) at TŌGŌ provides ongoing support through regular meetings to align the product roadmap with client needs, initiatives to highlight client successes, masterclasses to broaden knowledge, and much more.

Additionally, TŌGŌ's standout features include:
- The Audience feature which allows targeting information for specific employee groups. This feature integrates seamlessly with any human resources system.
- The Dashboard which provides extensive configuration options for both aesthetics and content, allowing personalization of any page for each user based on pre-defined conditions.
- The Analytics feature which measures engagement and provides insights into platform usage and performance, offering historical data.
- The Genius Search, based on NTT DATA's Gen AI product and fully integrated into the system, collects, and processes all information within a community or file, enabling employees to ask complex questions and receive specific answers.

TŌGŌ is a part of NTT DATA Syntphony, a comprehensive suite of solutions designed to unlock the full potential of organizations' digital workplaces. TŌGŌ seamlessly integrates with other software our clients have, as well as with a range of NTT DATA Digital Workplace-related solutions. These solutions include NAKA, an enterprise-level virtual reality platform; Melt, a digital learning platform; eva, a corporate conversational AI platform; everilion, a platform that integrates solutions for payments, sales, loyalty, and promotions, among others."

Workgrid

FULLY STANDALONE

REQUIRES SHAREPOINT

OPTIONALLY WORKS WITH SHAREPOINT

FRONTLINE FOCUS
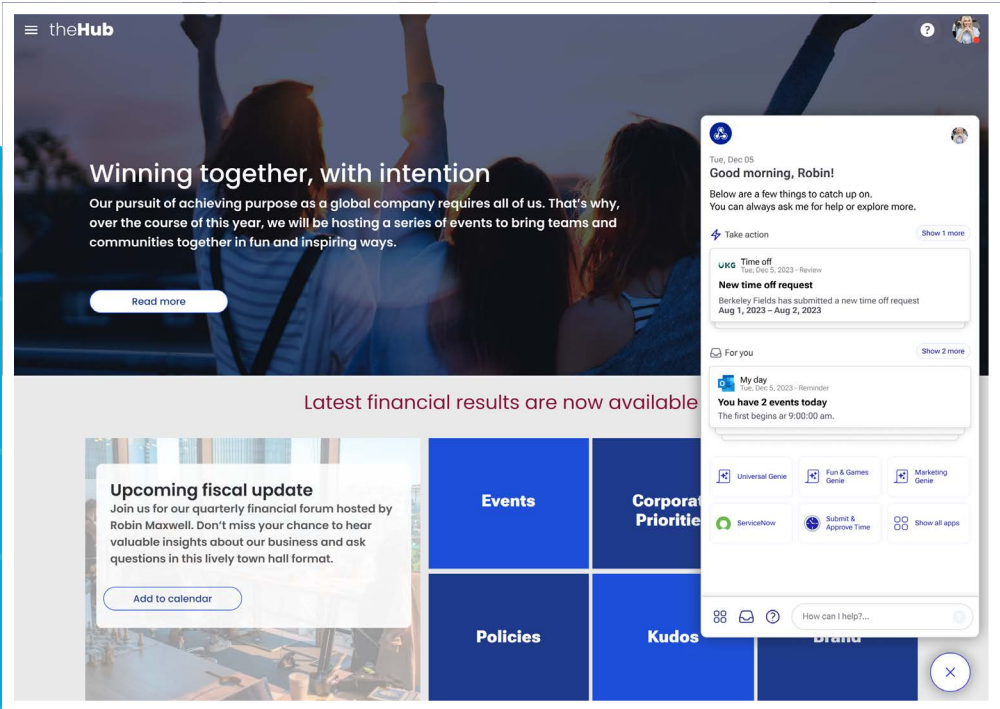
Typical deployment:

5,000 employees

Company locations:

VISIT THE WEBSITE

The product in a nutshell

Workgrid offers an AI-enabled digital assistant to bring workplace systems into one feed for users, with no and low-code options to build workflows to make it easier for businesses to get things done.

CLEARBOX VIEW

Workgrid was born out of a Fortune 100 insurance company's frustrations with having disparate internal systems and multiple places to get things done. In 2022 Workgrid shifted focus from simple integrations to concentrate more on AI-enabled services. Workgrid is not intended to replace an intranet, instead it works as a pop-up assistant which brings a stream of notifications, tasks and alerts into a single, conversational feed. Whilst it can offer a way for communicators to notify employees about content, we can see it being particularly useful for more transactional and technical processes.

There are over fifty workflow templates, and nearly 200 enterprise data sources available out of the box, including for SAP, Oracle, Workday, Trello and Taleo, to solve real-world challenges customers have. Each starts with a trigger, which could be a manual action such as an employee asking the AI assistant a question about remaining holiday, or scheduled, for example to send out a quarterly reminder regarding appraisals in Workday. There are also nice integrations that offer a summary of the action required, with a link into the appropriate system for more information, such as a discount request from Salesforce. Associated notifications come via desktop and within MS Teams.

Workgrid is particularly useful for managers who receive multiple requests for approvals each day, such as approving expenses claims, change requests, or holiday approvals. Additionally, there are useful features to promote vital communications, with AI-generated summaries to highlight what someone has missed. Each of these is impacted by the limited user notification preferences currently available, which we feel would be beneficial to expand. For example, people may have high level permissions within systems due to their job role, but complete tasks there infrequently; or key company announcements could get lost in a flurry of operational notifications. Workgrid have said that user preferences are one of their priorities on their roadmap. We do, however, like the integrations into MS Teams, which provides a useful feed of notifications in one place in a frequently used platform.

When looking for information stored in a connected system somewhere within the organisation, people can search for it using natural language questions. Workgrid will gather information from appropriate sources, such as documents, FAQs, or from knowledge systems like ServiceNow. The AI assistant then presents summaries and contextual information, including a link to the source if relevant. Accuracy of responses can be monitored via conversation analytics, which are helpful, but we found the data fairly basic and we'd like to see some AI features here too, to make it easier for admins to make improvements.

Workgrid provides a clean interface to update or modify associated workflows, but this relies on having technical knowledge to edit or create. It's possible to set up granular permissions, but we'd suggest good governance and stakeholder management skills are required to make sure appropriate answers are provided and content updated on an ongoing basis. Within connected source systems Workgrid relies on having good people data, content that has been tagged appropriately, and appropriate permissions, as it inherits this information. As a result, it may also serve to highlight existing governance issues which are otherwise hidden by their disparate nature. We would therefore recommend that organisations factor in a thorough test period as part of the implementation.

Whilst Workgrid started as a systems connector, the increasing number of AI features, such as AI enhanced templates, reflect a change in the product's direction, and we look forward to seeing how it evolves. Overall, Workgrid is particularly useful to companies with a complex digital landscape; it may be seen as an additional cost on top of existing intranet licences, but we can see the potential for valuable improvements to user experience that save people considerable time where disparate systems are in place.

The digital assistant shows announcements, surfaces approval requests, and displays information from a variety of sources.
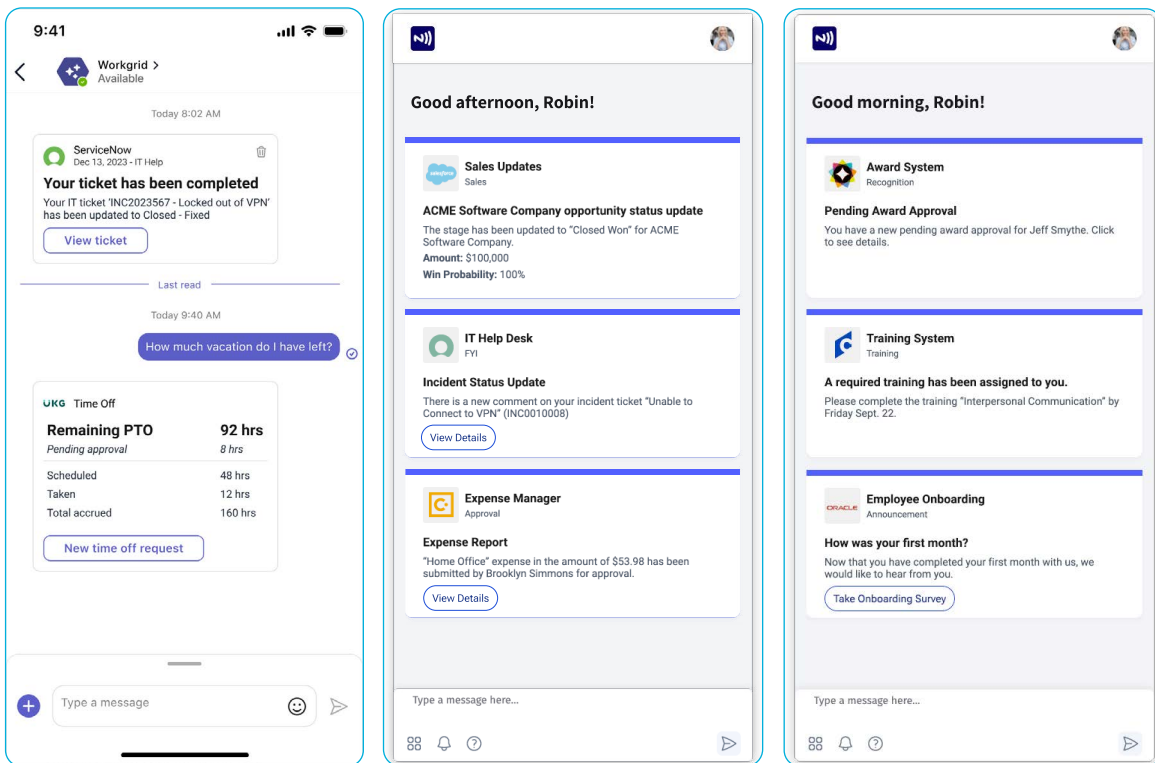
The assistant offers integrations with a variety of apps, and is accessible on mobile via MS Teams.

Conversation analytics show chat and answer activities and highlight where questions go unanswered.

The workflow builder offers drag and drop functionality to build and edit flows.

Pricing

PRICE BAND

250 users	$ $ $ $
1,000 users	$ $ $ $
5,000 users	$ $ $ $
20,000 users	$ $ $ $

These prices are indicative, offering a comparison of the products featured in this report. Please contact the vendor for a bespoke quote.

PRICING MODEL

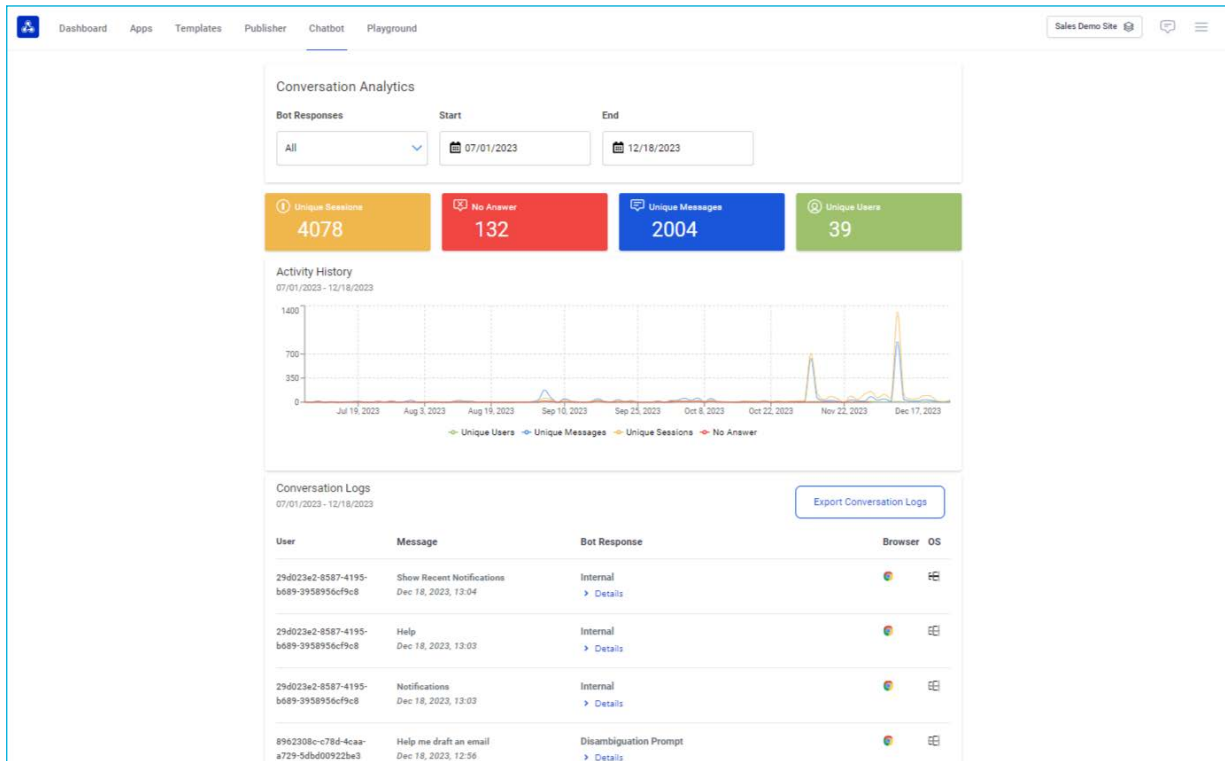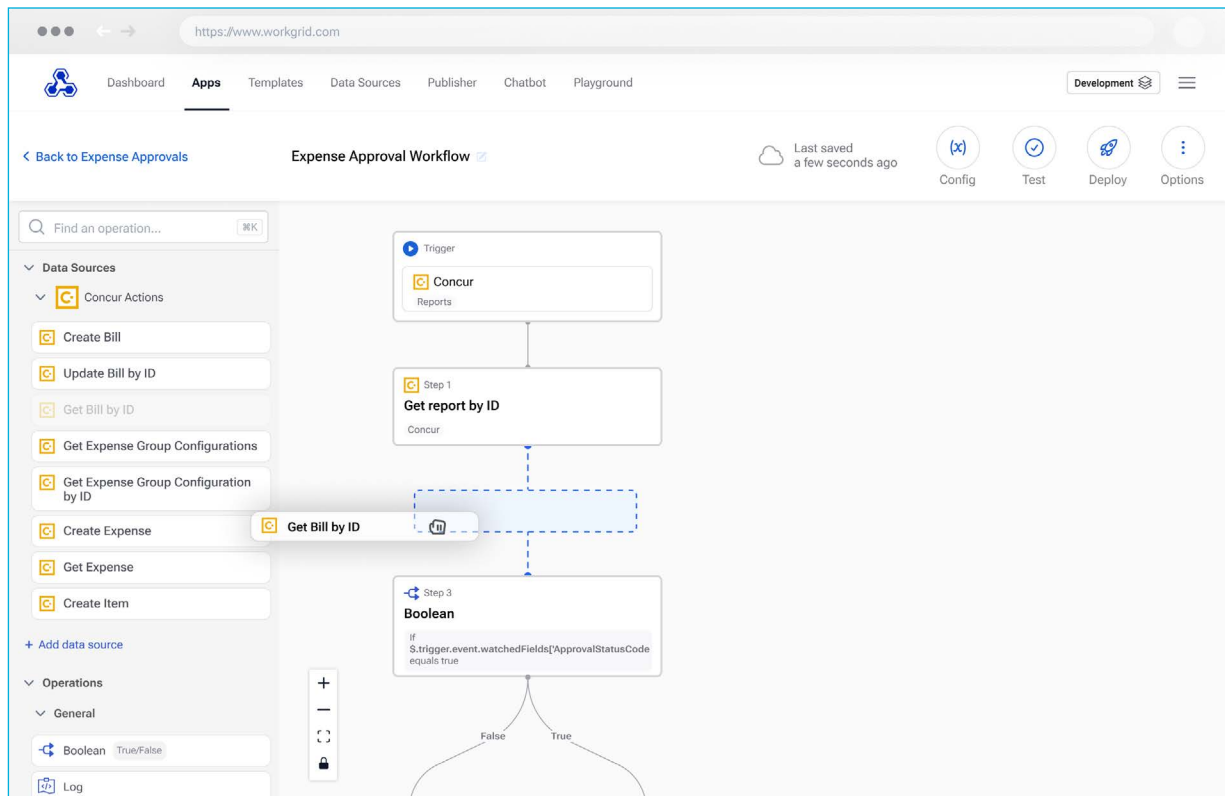Subscription – price band based on number of users. Subscription - price band based on number of users. Workgrid's pricing model is based on a platform fee which is calculated based on the total number of users and is paid annually.

COSTS TYPICALLY

Fairly evenly spread across three years.

DISCOUNTS

Multi-year commitments

PRICE INCLUDES

Training, Product Support and Maintenance, Hosting, Branding, Customer Success, Updates and Upgrades, Resource portal

Product type

Majority ready-to-run

Branding opportunities

Semi-bespoke built

Base systems

Fully standalone	Requires SharePoint	Optionally works with SharePoint	Other

Sectors

Accountancy, banking and finance	Engineering and manufacturing	Healthcare	Information technology	Media and internet

You may also be interested in...

ichicraft   LiveTiles   akumina

COMPANY AND PRODUCT

Company details

Company
Workgrid Software

ISO 27001 certified
No

Data residency
USA, EU

Company founded
2017

Product launched
2018

Typical client size
5,000 employees

Largest deployment so far
50,000 employees
Liberty Mutual Insurance

Customers
Clients include: Liberty Mutual Insurance, AES, Aroma Joes, Integrity Operations, Riverstone Group

Partner locations
USA, UK

Company locations
Boston, MA, USA (HQ), Northern Ireland

Product and technical details

Name of product

Workgrid

Deployment

Client on-premises	Client private cloud	Microsoft Azure	Amazon Web Services	Vendor-hosted	Microsoft 365 tenant	Other

Client data encrypted

In transit only	In transit and at rest	At rest only

Authentication supported

Entra ID	ADFS	Okta	Open ID	Oauth	G Suite	Other*

*Workgrid can be configured to use SAML 2.0 authentication for single-sign-on (SSO)

App deployment

Google Play store	Apple store	MDM	MAM	Other

Accessibility

WCAG 2.1 compliant. Workgrid Software's AI Work Assistant is compliant. For their legacy toolbar front-end, all colours are controlled at the space level, Workgrid Software encourages teams that want to have their own custom theme to stay compliant with WCAG colour rules.

Document library sources integrated

Box	Dropbox	Google Drive	SharePoint	OneDrive	Other*

*These integrations are achieved through Workgrid's no-code platform, which connects to these services as data sources.

Optional integrated enterprise search engines

Coveo	Elastic	IBM	Lucidworks	Microsoft	Mindbreeze	Sinequa	Other*

*The Workgrid no-code platform can connect to hundreds of data sources to aid in content discovery across engines or applications.

User interface multi-language

Pre-configured	Editable	Right to left script supported	Other

Content multi-language

Machine translation for publishers	Machine translation for end users	Editable machine translation for publishers	Manual creation for publishers	Right to left script	Other

Set-up and support

Set-up process for new clients

Workgrid provisions new accounts on the customers' behalf. This process is quick and is set up based on a few factors pertaining to the contract. Once the account is provisioned, the organisation's admins can customise the Workgrid experience, including installing catalogue apps, publishing content, generating content for the chatbot, and custom building their own apps leveraging Workgrid's no code app creator Workshop.

Current version

GA

Product updates

Workgrid has a weekly release schedule.

Product update process

When new features are turned on, release notes are published to the Workgrid Help Center to ensure all customers are kept up to date in real time. Additionally, each Workgrid customer is assigned a customer success manager who will communicate feature enhancements and updates, and can assist with training and answering any questions customers may have.

Reverse-out options

Workgrid is not considered a source of truth of customer data. Customers can export select categories of data during the life of the contract. Upon contract termination, customer data is deleted.

Technical support

Email support	Phone support	Chat support	Online portal	24/7 support	Office hours only

User community

Workgrid offers a community in conjunction with the Help Centre where clients can share ideas, ask questions and find answers based on the available topics. Additionally, any client of the community can follow and subscribe to any thread or topic to receive the latest updates over an email notification.

Voice of the vendor

Workgrid Software says: " Workgrid is an AI Work Assistant that frees employees from the chaos of the work day. With Workgrid organizations can build conversational AI experiences that streamline processes, automate tasks, and help guide employees to the right resources, content, and information, wherever they happen to work.
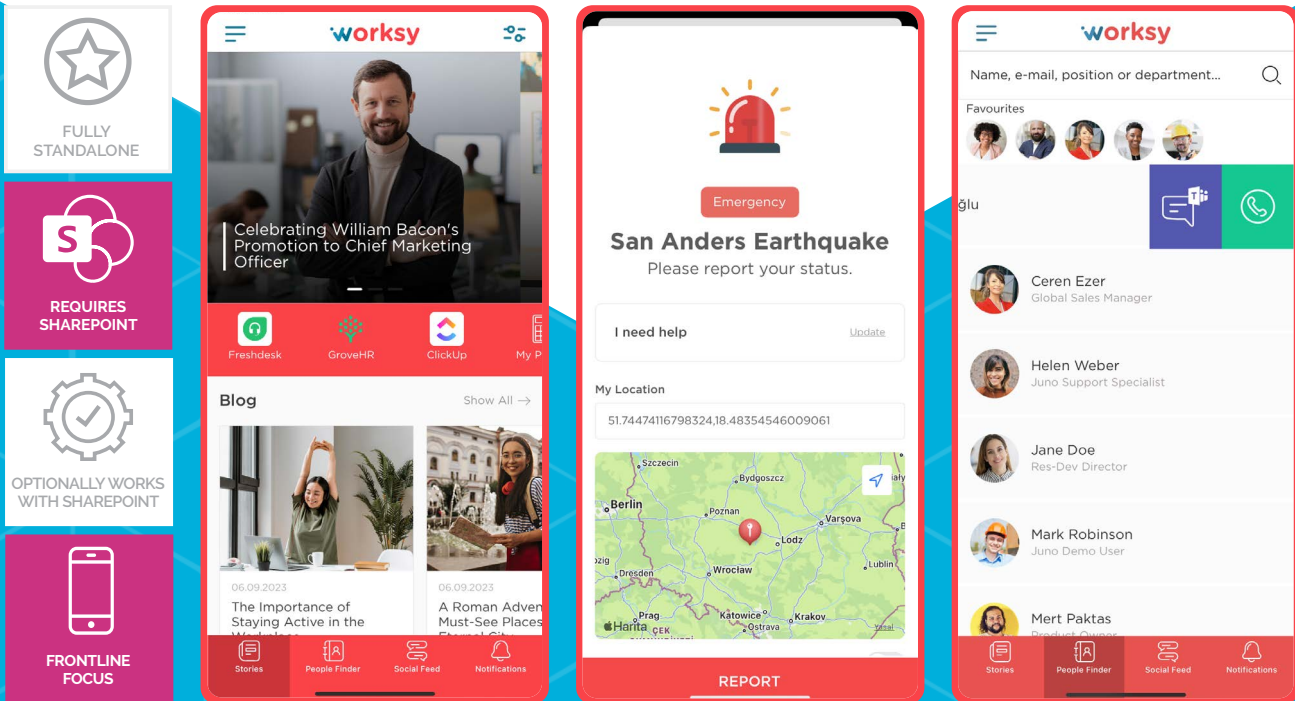
Workgrid achieves this by abstracting notifications, communications, data, and tasks from critical backend business systems, minimizing the need of constant app hopping and context switching.

- **Chat across systems and documents:** leverage conversational AI to chat across business applications and knowledge bases to find the right answer.
- **Receive information and tasks at the right time:** from personalized recommendations to task notifications, the Workgrid AI Assistant guides employees to what matters most.
- **Say goodbye to app hopping:** obtain quick access to your most frequented apps, reducing incessant context switching.
- **Build AI integrations in hours, not months:** Workgrid's no-code, low-code builder reduces the time, effort, and overall cost to build modern user experiences that help employees perform tasks and find information across your digital workplace, all through a single, natural language interface.
- **Deploy 'Ready to Install App Templates':** The Workgrid platform boasts over 50+ pre-built app templates ready for immediate use. Pre-built templates include all the steps of a workflow (e.g., expense approval) and can be easily customized via our no-code app builder.

Whether you're looking to get up and running quickly with our AI Assistant or leverage our platform to customize and build your own conversational AI experiences, Workgrid is focused on helping you deliver engaging experiences to enhance productivity and eliminate digital friction."

worksy

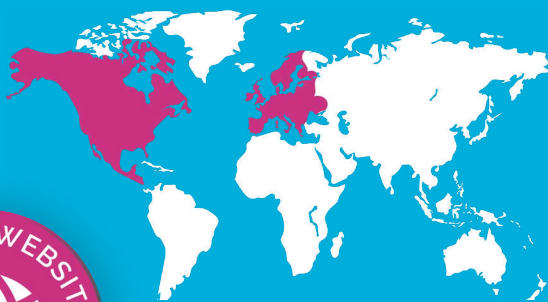**FULLY STANDALONE**

REQUIRES SHAREPOINT

OPTIONALLY WORKS WITH SHAREPOINT

FRONTLINE FOCUS

Typical deployment:

250 - 50,000 employees

Company locations:

VISIT THE WEBSITE

The product in a nutshell

Worksy is a mobile and desktop intranet that puts the emphasis on people, their wellbeing and safety that will appeal to organisations who have a focus on employee engagement.

Worksy (formerly Juno) is a SharePoint-based, desktop and mobile intranet product that was launched in 2018 by Istanbul-based OGOO Technology Agency.

At the time of the demo, Worksy was in the process of being updated to SharePoint modern for desktop browser and content management, so the experience is a mix of classic and modern pages. Most of the desktop browser experience is currently 'classic', with the exception of the 'Happiness' and 'Emergency' features. This work is due to complete "summer 2024". The mobile app is also being updated to become compatible with Amazon Web Services infrastructure.

News publishing uses a simple form-based approach to creating articles that works reasonably well. Admins choose the kind of story they want to post and then fill in publishing details including dates and body text via a rich text editor. Associated push notifications can be sent to the app and to a predefined Teams channel. Reference pages are published using SharePoint classic templates which provide fairly basic options for layout. We like the visual approach to available tags that makes it easy to use and add to content, however.

Employee engagement is well covered through news comments and likes. Employees can post simple text updates, links, pictures and embedded videos to an activity feed via the mobile app. Other people-centric features include automatic birthday, new hire and service milestone notifications and celebrations. Employees can also be surveyed regularly on their 'Happiness', with a range of emoji-based reactions and optional follow-up questions feeding into a reporting system for admins.

A standout 'Emergency' feature was born from the tragedy of the Türkiye earthquake in February 2023. This feature helps companies and employees to check-in with each other and share critical information in the event of an emergency such as a natural disaster. Employees can report they are ok or need help and share their location via the mobile app, while companies get a real-time report of the whereabouts and status of staff and can share emergency documents quickly. There are useful buttons to call government or company emergency numbers, as well as a loud 'whistle' and flashlight buttons to attract attention. OGOO have put a lot of thought into this feature but with the hope it will never need to be used.

Search is available for the documents area of the application, using a SharePoint document library. News and other content search is limited to filtering the activity feed based on tags and categories. People finding is a bit broader, allowing free text search for name, email, job role and department. We like the 'Expert Finder' that allows employees to search or navigate down the organisation structure to find people with particular skills or expertise. The organisation chart and profile pages are nicely presented with information about the employee from Entra ID. If Teams is available, employees can start a chat from profiles.

Analytics is a basic one-page dashboard in Google Analytics data studio. However, OGOO also sends a helpful quarterly report to customers that goes into more detail and provides some commentary around adoption, along with some recommendations for improvement.

Overall, Worksy would suit organisations that want to take a mobile-first approach to their intranet, where desktop access is less of a priority. However, the vendor is actively working on bringing a modern intranet experience to desktop as well. Worksy is very competitively priced for medium to large organisations though, so for those that have modest needs and an equally modest budget, Worksy is worth a closer look.
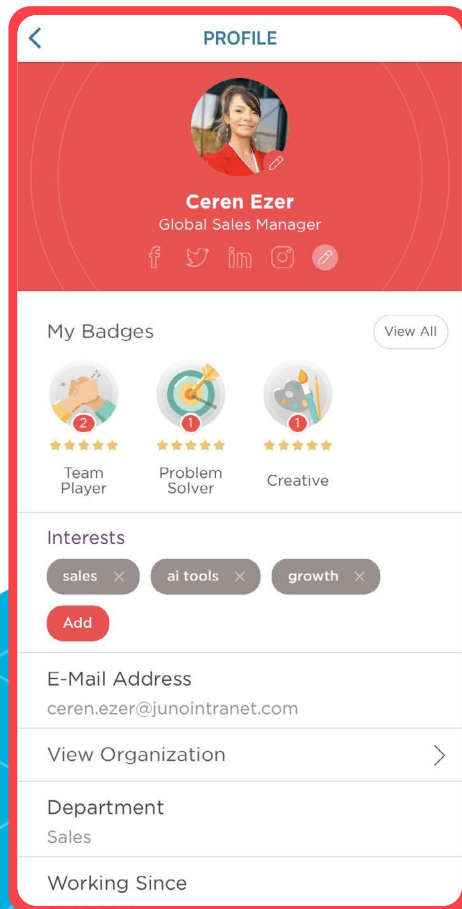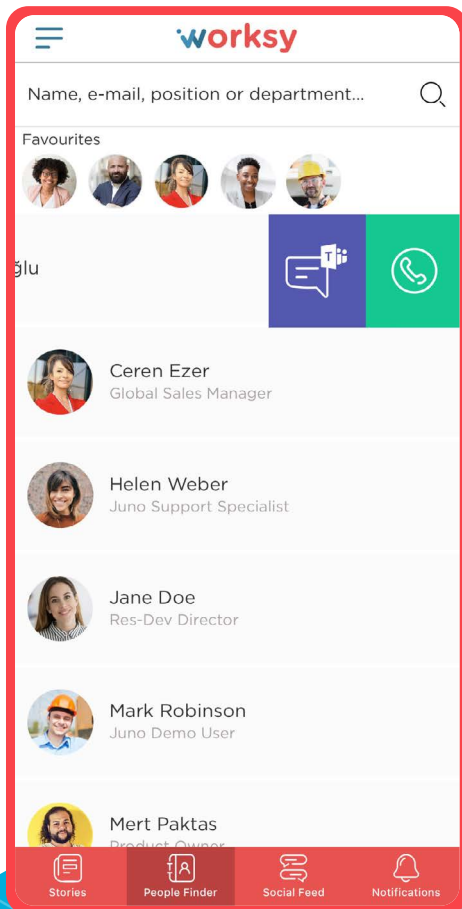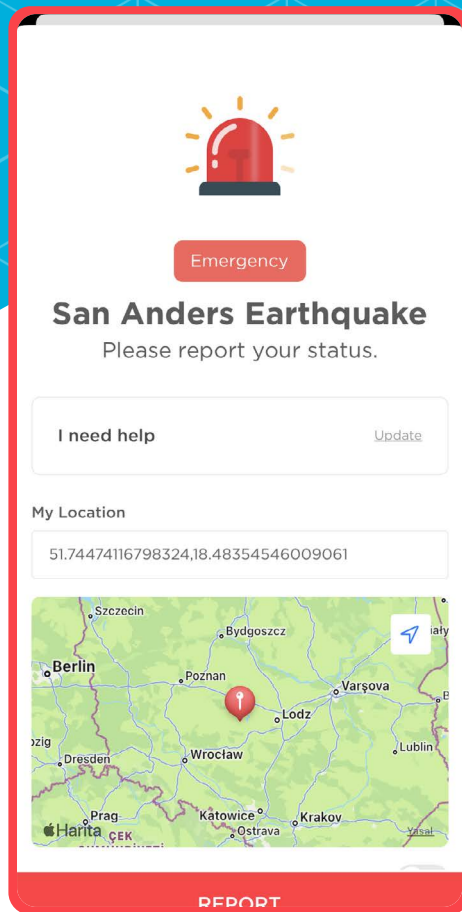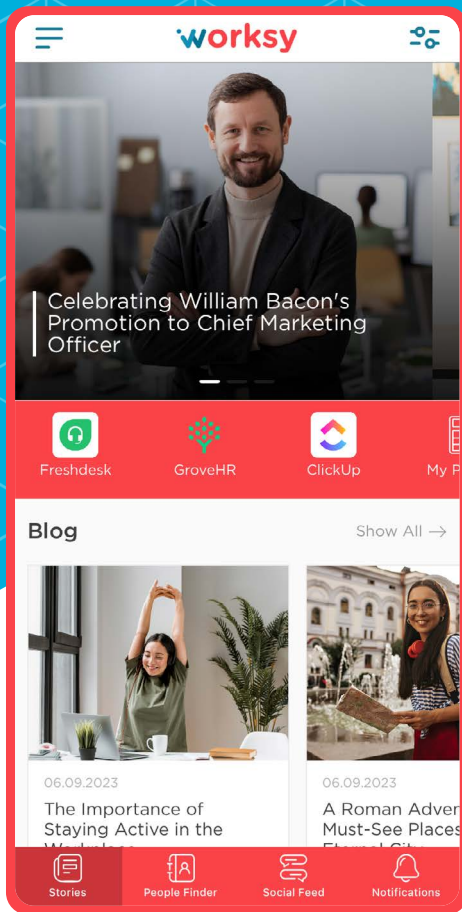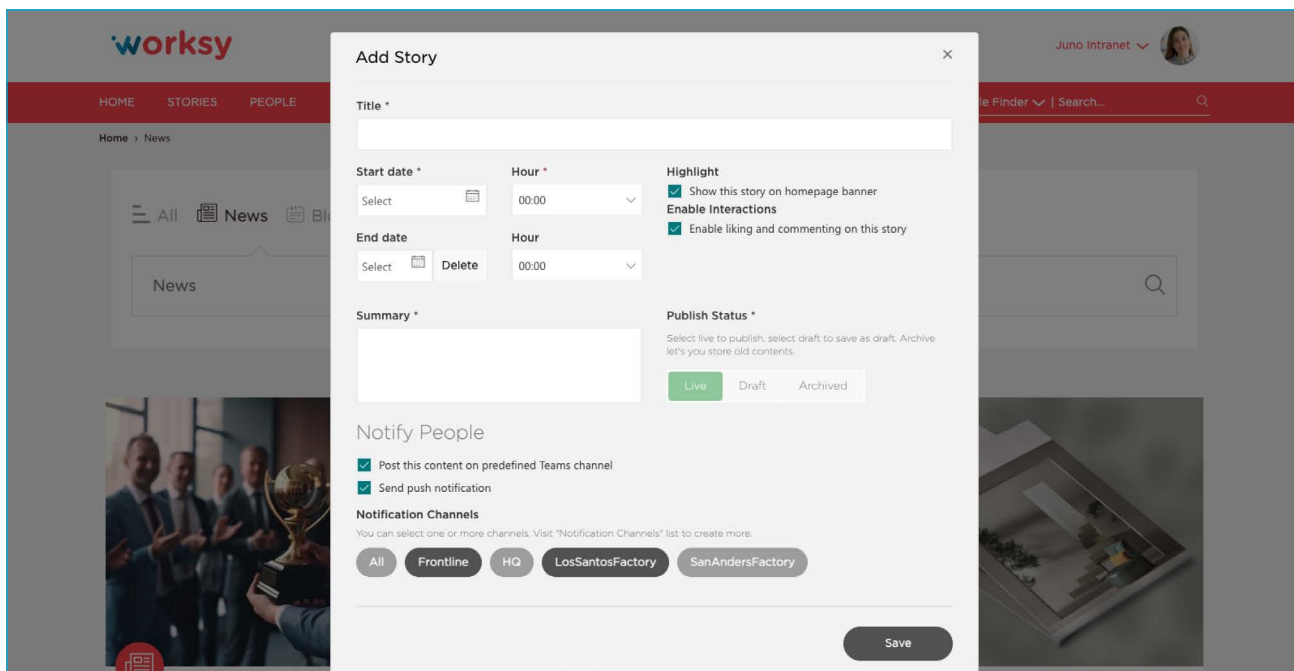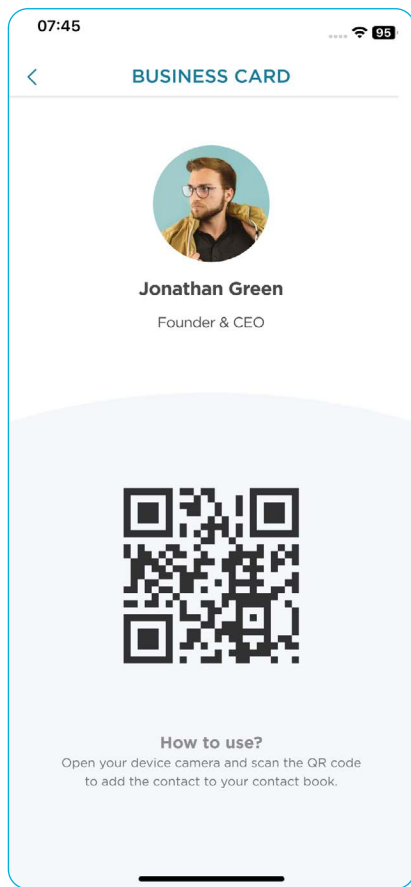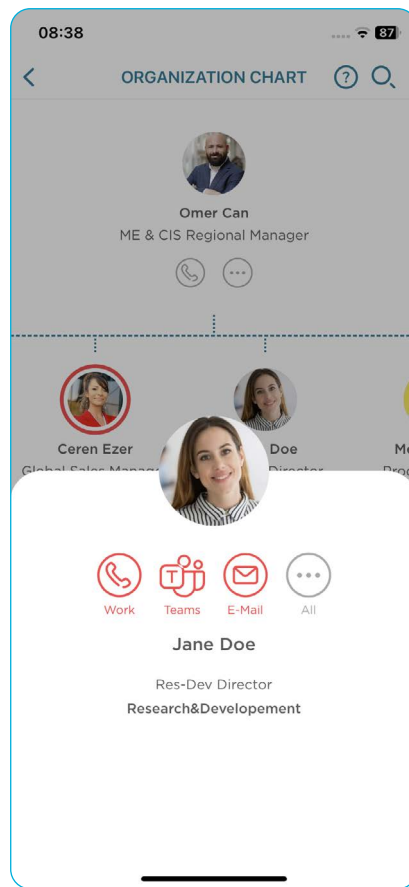
Worksy's easy-to-use news publishing via a simple form.
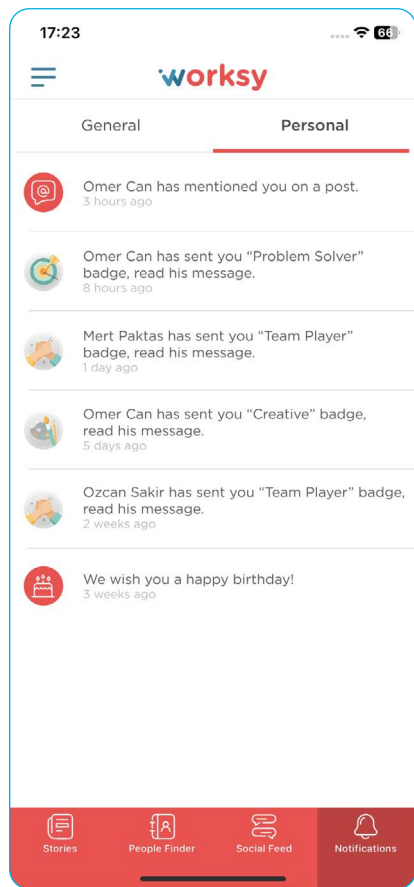
Mobile notifications are attractively displayed and easy to action.

Digital business cards in the app make it easy to add contacts.

The org chart is dynamically generated from employee profile / Entra ID information.
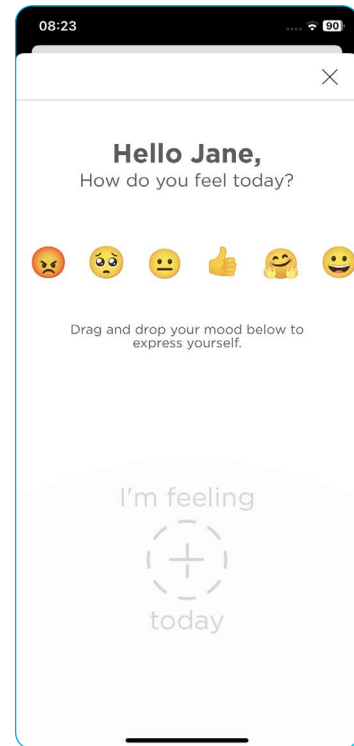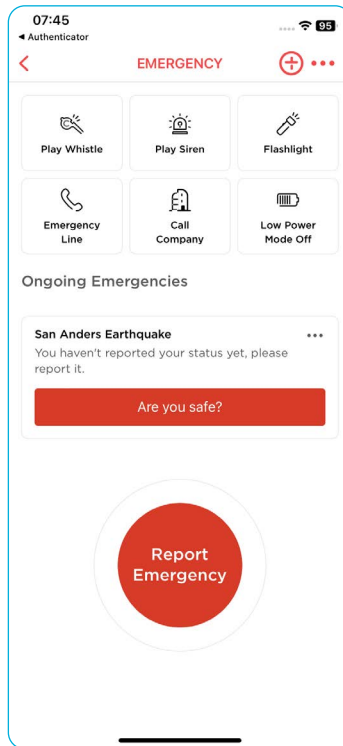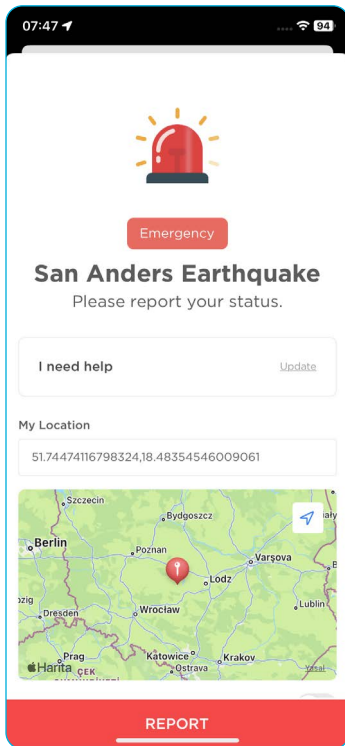
Companies can check if their employees are affected in an emergency. Employees can report their status, plus have access to useful features such as emergency contact numbers and a loud whistle to attract attention.

Checking in on employee wellbeing.
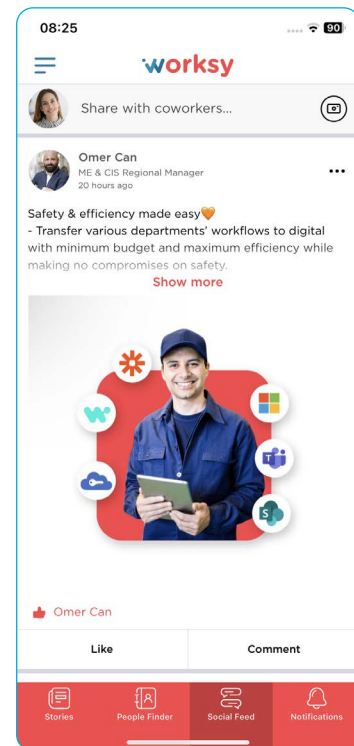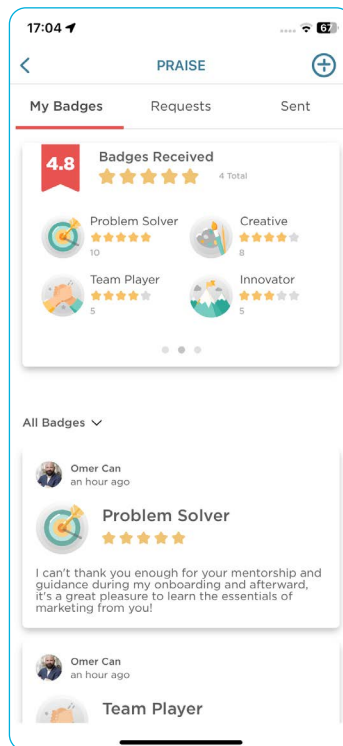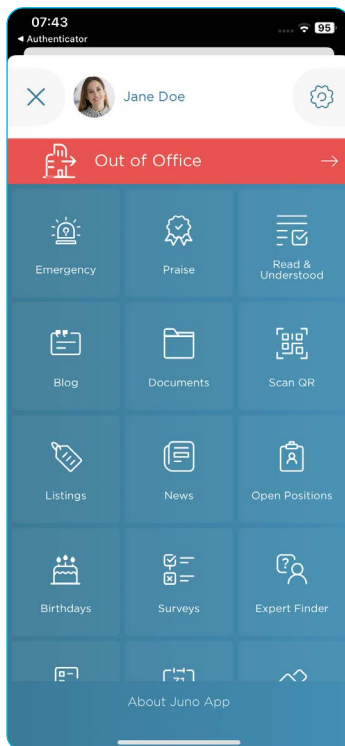
Worksy navigation has large and clear buttons.

Badges can be aligned with company values and awarded to colleagues.

The social feed is where employees share their own news.

Pricing

PRICE BAND

250 users	$ $ $ $
1,000 users	$ $ $ $
5,000 users	$ $ $ $
20,000 users	$ $ $ $

These prices are indicative, offering a comparison of the products featured in this report. Please contact the vendor for a bespoke quote.

PRICING MODEL

One-off payment and ongoing maintenance fee.

COSTS TYPICALLY

Weighted towards the start (during the 'project phase'), then much lower for the remaining term.

DISCOUNTS

Charities and non-profit organisations,

PRICE INCLUDES

Setup, branding, Entra ID integration, governance training, help desk support and customer success support is included. The 'Emergency Communications', 'Moodboard' and org chart are all optional modules that have been included in this pricing.

Product type

Ready-to-run, installed in days

Branding opportunities

Good branding, complex options

Base systems

Fully standalone	Requires SharePoint	Optionally works with SharePoint	Other

Sectors

Energy and utilities	Healthcare	Hospitality and events management	Property and construction	Science and pharmaceuticals

You may also be interested in...

PEOPLE ONE

engage

opentext™ OneSource CMS for SharePoint

COMPANY AND PRODUCT

Company details

Company
OGOO Technology Agency

ISO 27001 certified
Yes

Data residency
N/A

Company founded
2011

Product launched
2018

Typical client size
250 - 50,000 employees

Largest deployment so far
15,000 employees

Customers
Clients include: McDonalds, Isuzu, SOCAR, Ytong, Kapital Bank of Azerbaijan, DOHLER, Koç Healthcare, Opet Fuchs, Abdi İbrahim Pharmaceuticals.
Please see their website for more.

Partner locations
UK, Azerbaijan

Company locations
Istanbul, Turkey (HQ), USA

Product and technical details

Name of product

Worksy Modern Intranet

Deployment

Client on-premises	Client private cloud	Microsoft Azure	Amazon Web Services	Vendor-hosted	Microsoft 365 tenant	Other

Client data encrypted

In transit only	In transit and at rest	At rest only

Authentication supported

Entra ID	ADFS	Okta	Open ID	Oauth	G Suite	Other*

*NTLM and third-party systems integrated with Entra ID.

App deployment

Google Play store	Apple store	MDM	MAM*	Other*

*Worksy Enterprise App Store

Accessibility

There are no accessibility features at present.

Document library sources integrated

Box	Dropbox	Google Drive	SharePoint	OneDrive	Other

Optional integrated enterprise search engines

Coveo	Elastic	IBM	Lucidworks	Microsoft	Mindbreeze	Sinequa	Other

User interface multi-language

Pre-configured	Editable	Right to left script supported	Other

Content multi-language

Machine translation for publishers	Machine translation for end users	Editable machine translation for publishers	Manual creation for publishers	Right to left script	Other

Set-up and support

Set-up process for new clients

Initially, OGOO come together with customers for a kick-off meeting and walk through all the steps of setting up Worksy. The whole setup takes about an hour on their side, after which comprehensive governance training is planned by their CS team. Upon completion of the setup, they offer a 3-month intensive support program to assist customers with best practises as they prepare for their launch. Once all is set and running, lifelong consultancy continues with their helpdesk and training platform.

Current version

Current version (reviewed features and updates) was released in mid-August 2023.

Product updates

Every 3 months, Worksy releases free product updates and new features. Some new features -such as add-ons- can be subject to additional fees but most are free for ongoing subscriptions.

Product update process

Customers who use the Enterprise Plan have the option to decide if or when they want the update. Those who are subscribed to the Cloud Plan, however, are provided the option to select any of the available timeframes given by Worksy. Updates take approximately 30 minutes to install.

Reverse-out options

Data stays on the SharePoint site collection.

Technical support

Email support	Phone support	Chat support	Online portal	24/7 support	Office hours only

User community

None

Voice of the vendor

OGOO Technology Agency says: "Previously known as Juno Intranet, Worksy is now a more comprehensive employee experience solution, solving with ease the pain points of various employee groups regardless of whether they have a computer or are constantly on the go.

As a ready-to-go modern intranet that is accessible from the desktop and is natively mobile, Worksy is tailored to solve high-cost problems with a low-cost and efficient solution. Whether the retention rates are low and lack of engagement is high, communication is exclusive to a group of employees who have computers, or recurring workflows operate in time-consuming ways; Worksy has got you covered.

Through 40+ ready-to-use features under four experience packs and limitless no-code integration opportunities, thanks to M365 and SharePoint, the most prevalent work experience difficulties dissolve within a matter of hours.

Some of Worksy's most-loved features include digital HR forms that reduce the time spent on expenses or vacation requests to seconds, the social feed that brings together the whole company regardless of time or location, and the videos, events, stories, and news highlighted with push notifications. Worksy also offers various add-ons like the brand-new Emergency Communications that can be integrated or purchased separately, Multi-language Support, Organization Charts, Praise to boost the appreciation culture, and White-Label for Enterprises.

Worksy Modern Intranet also includes a native Employee App; which is designed specifically to suit the unique needs of frontline workers while requiring no SharePoint or Microsoft license. Therefore, Worksy is also a comprehensive solution for companies that operate with both white-collar and frontline workers.

Worksy includes integration capabilities; it works in perfect alignment with MS Teams and leverages Power Platforms; Power Automate for workflows and integrations, Power Apps for low-code custom web applications, and Power BI for reporting.

In the very near future, Worksy will quickly adapt new technologies to provide prompt-supported content creation & optimization, form generators, digital business cards, and onboarding modules. Plus, backed by the capabilities of AI, content planning and distribution, personalized training programs, and material optimization & automatized Q&A systems will be parts of Worksy's offer. In addition, through iPaas integrations, Worksy will leverage the power of cross-platform solutions such as with Zapier and Workato.

In short: effective and effortless communication targeted only at the relevant employee group, a strong company culture that fuels motivation & automatized workflows that save hundreds of productive hours. With Worksy, it's all easy."

Need help choosing a new intranet?

We can help, please get in touch and one of the team will get back to you.

ClearBoxCONSULTING

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