

## Signs Your Intranet Needs a Refresh

### 10 QUESTIONS TO ASK ABOUT YOUR LAW FIRM'S INTRANET TO DETERMINE ROI

There was a time when having an intranet at law firms was a nice-to-have, not a need-to-have, and so was relegated to the bottom of the IT budget. Today, this is no longer the case. Some form of remote work is here to stay for most firms, so law firms must ensure that employees have easy access to the resources they need to do their job. A highly functioning intranet also helps firms establish and maintain a sense of culture which assists in attracting and retaining talent.

How can firms use an intranet to maintain culture? Announcing new hires, celebrating work anniversaries and team wins, highlighting positive firm news and facilitating connections between employees all function to create a sense of culture. Recruiters are calling on your high performers

with attractive job offers. To maximize retention, employees need to understand and value the culture of the firm. Otherwise, the decision to stay or go comes down to the highest offer. While a highly functional intranet won't solve your retention challenges on its own, it is a key piece of the retention and productivity puzzle.

The signs that your law firm needs a new intranet might not be as blatant as expected, like using an unsupported version of SharePoint. The signs might be more nuanced, and include:

#### 1. Have five or more years passed since our last redesign?

Innovation in the content management and collaboration space has recently accelerated, largely driven by the increase in remote work since the pandemic. Companies like Microsoft saw the opportunity that the transition from in-person to remote work presented and doubled down in

their efforts to create new collaboration features.

In addition to the new capabilities today's modern platforms provide, the intranet requirements of your firm have likely changed in five years. Firm processes change, and the tools employees use to perform their work need to reflect these changes. Additionally, the expectations employees have of their user experience has changed. Employees now engage with new technologies and user interfaces in and outside of work and a stagnant intranet will show its age after five years. Keeping interfaces and content fresh and up to date is essential to maintain adoption.

#### 2. Is our intranet hosted on-premise?

The value proposition of moving your infrastructure to the cloud used to be primarily about reducing data center footprints. If your intranet runs on SharePoint Server like those of most firms, you likely have at least three or

more virtual servers hosting your intranet. Firms with a development and staging environment usually have three times the number of servers. Firms with redundancy built in have even more. Firms will save money by retiring hardware in your on-prem environment and moving to SharePoint Online.

However, retiring hardware is just part of the equation. A more compelling reason to move to SharePoint Online revolves around capabilities. SharePoint Server (on prem) is years behind SharePoint Online in updates to the SharePoint Framework (SPFx). Writing customizations using SPFx is the right way to do things in Microsoft's SharePoint development model. Investing in the development of an intranet platform with SPFx that is 10+ versions behind will create more technical debt that your firm will have to repay later.

SharePoint Server also has limited access to key resources like the Microsoft Graph, which is the gateway to data and intelligence in Microsoft 365. The Microsoft Graph is a critical asset needed to build rich experiences like those provided in Infodash, and it's not available if everything is on premises. The capabilities available in Microsoft 365 are extensive, and your intranet needs to leverage and integrate with these resources to provide the best user experience possible.

### 3. Do all users see mostly the same content?

Your intranet's user interface should be optimized to present relevant information to the end user.

A litigation attorney from the New York office should see different content than a paralegal supporting an intellectual property attorney in Atlanta when each employee opens the front page of the intranet.

Content management platforms like SharePoint have had basic audience-targeting capabilities for years. The challenge is that managing audience definitions and tagging content can be time-consuming with out-of-the-box solutions. For example, using Active Directory groups to define audiences in SharePoint can create unnecessary clutter and require IT's involvement. Active Directory is one of the most important pieces of security infrastructure in your firm and must be carefully managed by IT. Your IT department has better things to do than add/edit/delete audience definitions on behalf of content managers. These definitions will likely change frequently, and time is of the essence when updates do occur. The good news, however, is there are third-party products like Infodash that make persona-targeting processes more effective and manageable.

### 4. Is our site being utilized and measured?

The biggest driver of ROI for an intranet project is utilization. Your intranet's utilization must be measured and managed so content managers can make the user experience as relevant as possible. Utilization metrics tell your intranet team where to invest more resources. You should be able to answer questions like:

- What percentage of our target user base visits the intranet at least once a week?
- Which pages on the intranet get the most visits?
- How relevant are the results our enterprise search platform provides?
- What news themes and topics generate the most clicks?
- What groups of users are most and least engaged with the intranet and why?
- How many clicks does it take our users to find the information they're looking for?

## 5. Is our intranet fully integrated with our back-end systems?

A modern intranet should be fully integrated with your back-end systems like your CRM, financial and document management systems. The main value proposition of an intranet is to help users easily find important information. If the information isn't there or is only partially available, it's difficult for users to effectively do their jobs. Today, all major back-end legal platforms expose APIs that make integration easy. Exposing your line of business system data through client and matter pages gives timekeepers a single pane of glass to view the data they need to work productively. Matter pages like the one below from Infodash provides a consolidated view reducing the need to switch between systems to get a complete picture of activity.

## 6. Is enterprise search integrated with our back-end systems?

While intranets usually provide easy searching, enterprise search is a separate solution. Effective searching is key to providing easy access to information. Search platforms have become somewhat commoditized in recent years with robust offerings from Microsoft, Google, Amazon and other players in the space. Platforms like Microsoft's Azure Cognitive Search offer artificial intelligence and machine learning features out of the box. AI enrichment, for example, enables capabilities like document and image cracking, which crawls and indexes any text contained therein.

There are also ways to expose the native search capabilities of your document management system via an API call from your intranet in real time. This reduces the need for third-party solutions to recrawl and index your entire DMS, which is always a heavy lift. Firms have several quick, low-effort options to expose search capabilities to users that don't involve recreating a search index your DM platform already built and manages.

## 7. Do we have a robust employee directory?

Intranet use cases generally fall into one of three categories: connection, collaboration and productivity. Helping firm employees establish connections

is one of the more important use cases. Employee retention is influenced by several factors, including the sense of community within the firm. Providing digital assets employees can use to make connections with other employees is critical.

Firms can create engaging employee profiles by enriching profiles with attributes from financial and human resources system like bill rate, practice area, bar admissions, areas of expertise, work anniversaries, language proficiencies and more.

A well-designed search interface like the Infodash user search page below will allow your firm to have rich user profile pages and a mechanism for using them. Enabling attorneys and staff to find people in different practice areas and with specific areas of expertise quickly and efficiently is a must-have in a law firm intranet. This will also enable the business development team to make RFP responses more effective by putting forward the most relevant resources in the firm.

## 8. Do content managers need the help of IT to do their job?

Some platforms leverage proprietary languages and tools to render intranet pages within SharePoint. However, the skills required to create and edit pages and the content within them are often beyond the range of many content managers. When the technical bar is too high for content managers, they usually lean on the IT department to do their job. This increases IT's workload and slows delivery.

The screenshot displays the Infodash intranet interface. At the top is a navigation bar with links: Home, My View, Departments/Committees, Practices, Offices, People, News, Events, and a search bar. The main content area features a large profile card for Nestor Wilke, a Managing Partner in Charlotte. The card includes his photo, contact information (phone, email, social media), office details (36/2121, Construction), Timekeeper # (9741), a bio link, and a standard rate (\$325). To the right of the profile card are sections for Languages (Spanish, Read, Speak, Translate), Bar Admissions (American Bar Association, US Supreme Court), My Groups (My Practice: Construction, My Committees: Compensation Committee), and Documents (Trending: Add\_a\_SQL\_Connector\_to\_your\_Infodash...). Below the profile card is a 'People I Support' section with Patti Fernandez and a 'People I Work With' section with six colleagues: Patti Fernandez, Miriam Graham, Pradeep Gupta, Lee Gu, Diego Siciliani, and Joni Sherman. Each colleague card includes a photo, name, title, and contact options. At the bottom of the page is a footer with technical and content support links, sample links, and social media icons for LinkedIn, YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, and the Infodash logo.

Today there are better ways to manage pages and the content within them, which do not require IT involvement. SharePoint-based intranet tools should operate squarely within the confines of Microsoft's content management model as opposed to a proprietary approach. Anyone who is comfortable editing a SharePoint page should be able to drag and drop assets that your intranet platform provides.

## 9. Are we using a legal-specific solution?

There are dozens of generic intranet platforms available today. Keeping things generic is great for the vendor because it allows them to expand their installation base into other industries. However, not having a legal-focused solution is a liability for firms. Law firm needs are vastly different from those of most other businesses. The tools and solutions firms deploy need to be designed to reflect how legal work gets done, and legal-specific vendors understand this. Having out-of-the-box connectors to the back-end systems law firms use and a deep understanding of legal processes make legal vendors much more productive.

Legal-specific solutions also offer another benefit. As legal vendors deploy their platform, firms typically engage them to customize the solution to the way they work. This process results in new innovations that ultimately get incorporated into the product. As the platform gets deployed at more firms, the product capabilities expand, and existing users get access to these. This innovation cycle is one we follow at Infodash, and

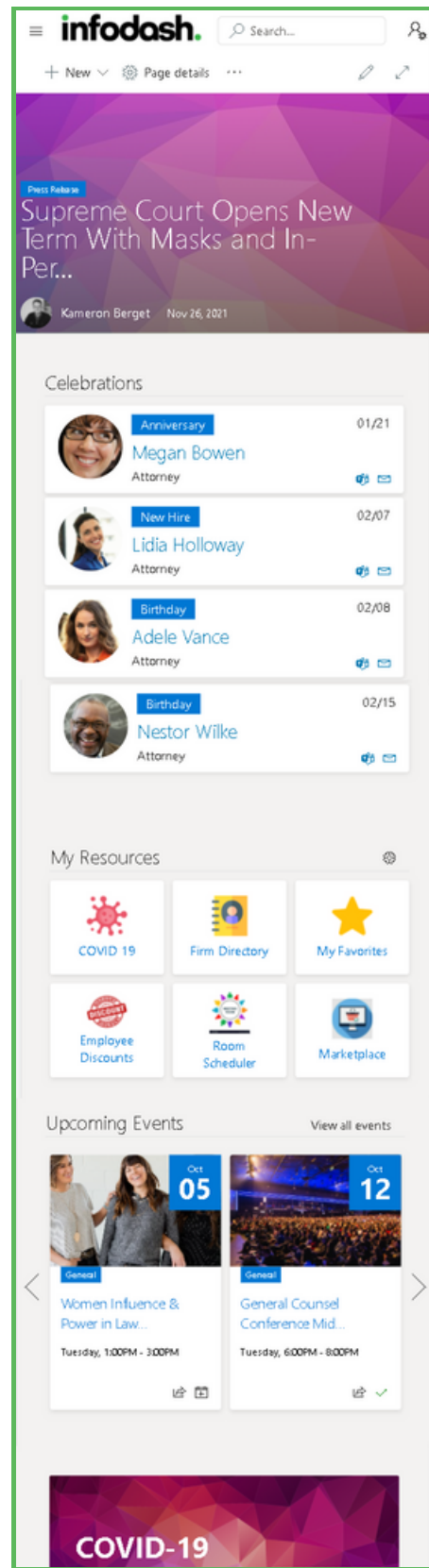
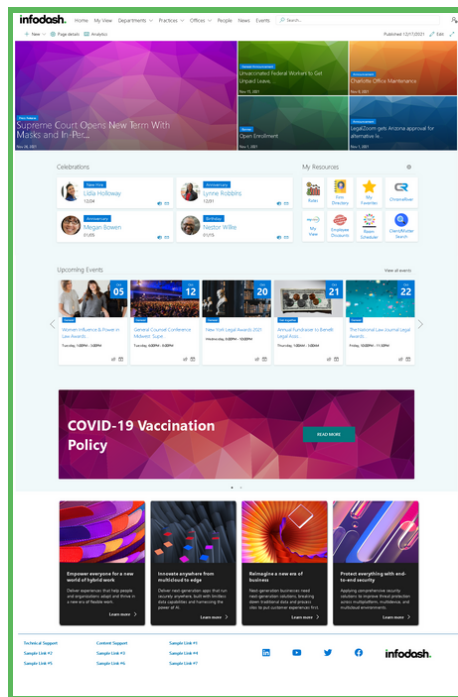
The screenshot shows the Infodash intranet's 'People' directory. The top navigation bar includes links for Home, My View, Departments/Committees, Practices, Offices, People, News, and Events. A search bar is located in the top right. The left sidebar features 'Refiners' for various categories: Title (Accountant, Associate, Designer, Developer, Director), Department (Engineering, Executive, Finance, Firm Administration, HR), Practice Group (Construction, Energy, Healthcare, Litigation), Committee (COVID 19, Compensation, Paperless), Role (Admin, Attorney, Officer), Language (Chinese, German, Spanish), Notary (False, True), and Location (Atlanta, Charlotte, Minneapolis, St. Louis). The main content area displays a list of 15 people, each with a profile picture, name, title, email, and office location. The list is filtered by 'First Name Starts With' and 'Relevance'. The people listed are: Patti Fernandez (Executive Management, President), Adele Vance (Immigration, Immigration Attorney), Lidia Holloway (Engineering, Product Manager), Lee Gu (Manufacturing, Director), Alex Wilber (Information Technology, IT Analyst), Lynne Robbins (Immigration, Associate), Nestor Wilke (Firm Administration, Managing Partner), Grady Archie (R&D, Designer), Megan Bowen (Marketing, Marketing Manager), Isiah Langer (Sales, Sales Rep), Pradeep Gupta (Finance, Accountant), Miriam Graham (Sales & Marketing, Director), Diego Siciliani (HR, HR Manager), Joni Sherman (Firm Administration, Paralegal), and Henrietta Mueller (R&D, Developer). The bottom right corner shows '1 - 15 of 15'.

it allows the product to evolve in alignment with industry best practices.



## 10. Can we access our intranet on our mobile devices?

Most law firms today are adopting the remote/hybrid work environment. Sometimes remote work happens from a desktop in a home office, and sometimes on an iPad in an airplane. Intranets need to seamlessly accommodate both, and everything in between. Every intranet page built needs to be responsive without additional work by the content manager or IT. Legacy intranet platforms do not have this capability. Today's solutions leverage SharePoint Online and Microsoft's Modern UI framework, which is mobile-ready by default. SharePoint pages built on the Modern UI go from the desktop view on the left to the mobile form factor view on the right automatically.



## CONCLUSION

If your firm cannot give productive answers to these questions, it is probably worth exploring alternative solutions to your current intranet. Intranets are the new digital water coolers within firms. Moving your intranet to SharePoint Online will provide all the benefits described above plus enable all the integration opportunities that exist with the rest of the Microsoft 365 (formerly Office 365) suite. Integrating your intranet with Microsoft Teams, for example, allows users to find the people they're looking for and a way for connecting and collaborating with them on content.

Many firms are now piloting Teams as an extension of their intranet, creating client groups and matter channels. Legal teams are then able to collaborate in real time and have a more organized conversation by replacing email with Teams posts and chats. Modern intranet platforms seamlessly support this new model through Teams integration. Client extranets using Teams as a front end also become possible once your back-end systems are integrated. When you have a modern intranet living on Microsoft 365 and supported by a legal-specific solutions like Infodash, the possibilities are endless.

Have questions about how Infodash can help your firm improve connection, collaboration and productivity? Contact us today at <https://getinfodash.com/contact> or schedule a demo to see Infodash in action at <https://getinfodash.com/scheduledemo>.