2025

ClearBoxCONSULTING

OAK ENGAGE

V4.0

INTRANET AND EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE PLATFORMS

Reviews of the best products on the market

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ClearBox's Intranet and EX Platforms report

This is an extract from a much larger report, which includes reviews of the best intranets, employee experience (EX) platforms, apps, and internal communication solutions on the market. This extract is one product review – the remaining reviews and dozens of pages of introduction have been removed for ease of distribution by vendors.

Vendor neutral assessment

ClearBox Consulting Ltd is a UK-based company that helps organisations of all shapes and sizes with their digital workplace needs, from strategy through to content life cycle. Importantly, ClearBox is entirely vendor neutral – this means any critiques in the reviews and client recommendations are based on significant experience and we don't have a product of our own to promote or get commission for any recommendations..

ClearBox has been helping organisations for 17 years and has been reviewing this market for 10 years. We produce the most in-depth reviews of any analyst firm, and we're also a hands-on consultancy helping clients directly.

Download the **full report** for free - it's over 800 pages!

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Read industry news and thought-leadership pieces on the **ClearBox blog.**

oak engage

FULLY STANDALONE

REQUIRES SHAREPOINT

FRONTLINE FOCUS

OTHER

VISIT THE WEBSITE
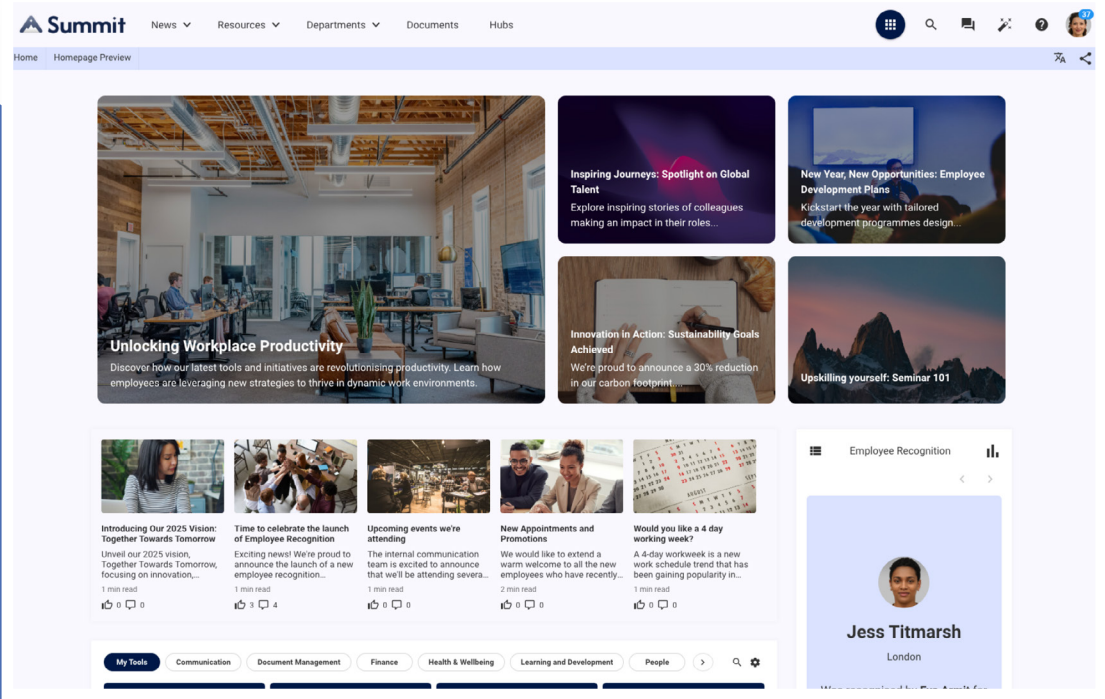
Typical deployment:

1,000 to 5,000

Company locations:
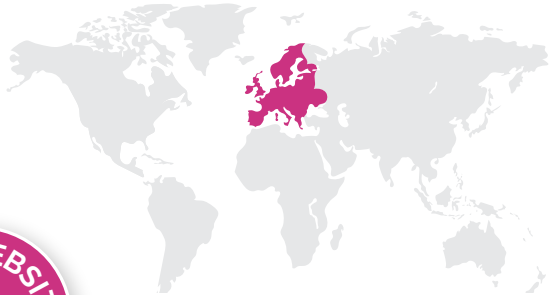
The product in a nutshell

Oak is a flexible intranet platform that delivers an experience employees will find easy to use, while still offering a good range of features on desktop and mobile.

Oak Engage

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. We've also seen a lot of positive developments over the past few years, where the vendor has listened to customer feedback and expanded capabilities in useful directions.

The content creation experience across the platform is good, with functionality that even infrequent publishers would find easy to use. Community features are particularly effective and, combined with flexible home page configuration, give organisations the choice to offer a highly social experience if wanted. Search works well and integration options help employees to find information wherever it's stored in the digital workplace. The broad range of features, such as Aria AI and in-built Help Desk support, provide customers with the potential to deliver significant business value.

There are areas where Oak may lack the sophistication required by organisations with complex needs, however. 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. Even in scenarios where Oak performs well, there is room for improvement. More could be done to simplify the mobile experience or expand on the life cycle tools, for example.

Oak performs well across all our scenarios and offers a lot of functionality at a comparatively low price. 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

1,000 users	$ $ $ $ $
5,000 users	$ $ $ $ $
20,000 users	$ $ $ $ $
50,000 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; frontline users.

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
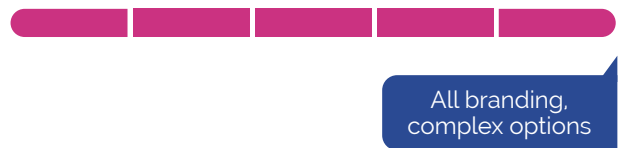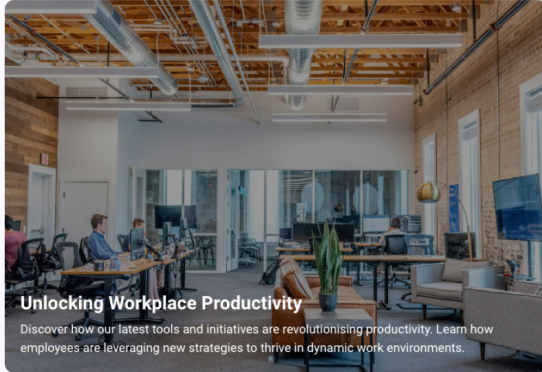
Base systems

⭐	S	⚪
Fully standalone	Requires SharePoint	Other

Sectors

Accountancy, banking and finance	**Engineering and manufacturing**	**Hospitality and events management**	**Property and construction**	**Retail**

Inspiring Journeys: Spotlight on Global Talent
Explore inspiring stories of colleagues making an impact in their roles...

New Year, New Opportunities: Employee Development Plans
Kickstart the year with tailored development programmes design...

Unlocking Workplace Productivity
Discover how our latest tools and initiatives are revolutionising productivity. Learn how employees are leveraging new strategies to thrive in dynamic work environments.

Innovation in Action: Sustainability Goals Achieved
We're proud to announce a 30% reduction in our carbon footprint ...

Upskilling yourself: Seminar 101

Introducing Our 2025 Vision: Together Towards Tomorrow
Unveil our 2025 vision, Together Towards Tomorrow, focusing on innovation,...
1 min read
0   0

Time to celebrate the launch of Employee Recognition
Exciting news! We're proud to announce the launch of a new employee recognition...
1 min read
3   4

Upcoming events we're attending
The internal communication team is excited to announce that we'll be attending severa...
1 min read
0   0

New Appointments and Promotions
We would like to extend a warm welcome to all the new employees who have recently...
2 min read
0   0

Would you like a 4 day working week?
A 4-day workweek is a new work schedule trend that has been gaining popularity in...
1 min read
0   0

| My Tools | Communication | Document Management | Finance | Health & Wellbeing | Learning and Development | People | > |

Org Chart   Instagram   People and HR Helpdesk   TikTok
LinkedIn   My Department   Hubs   People Directory

‹ **1** 2 ›

Employee Recognition

Jess Titmarsh
London

Was recognised by **Eva Armit** for **Rising Star**

Send a Star

Share your thoughts
POST TO HOME

What's on your mind...
Post

Mark Cottier
8 minutes ago
Have you signed up to our Management Conference? Q4 is live now, sign up if you're interested.
65   1 comment
Like   Comment
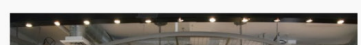
Jason Roberts
7 minutes ago
Really looking forward to this. Eva Armit are you keen to join with me?
Like • 1 | Reply
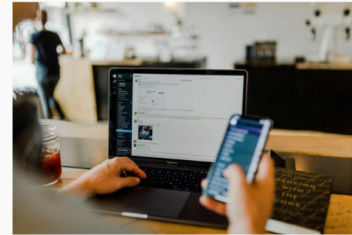
Karen Smythe
10 minutes ago • Edited
Our newest digital newsletter is out! Click to read:
Your News Round-up

Jason Roberts
4 minutes ago
Hey guys, if you're interested in the monthly round up, we've posted it live in Hubs, come check us out.

54
Like   Comment

Billy Braggstone
12 minutes ago
The health and wellness team are here for you! Re-discovered this gem, really relevant to working from home staff
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yzm4gpAKrBk

We would be grateful if you could complete a quick internal survey
Do you have everything you need to be able to perform your role successfully?

1   2   3   4   5
Poor   Amazing

📅 **What's happening**

16 Jan 2025 10:00 - 15:30
Management Conference - Q4
Yvonne Lander   Home

Sign me up!   View

COMPANY AND PRODUCT

Company details

Company
Oak Engage

ISO 27001 certified
Yes. Additionally Cyber Essentials Plus.

Data residency
Global - at the client's discretion

Company founded
1999

Product launched
2017

Typical client size
1,000 to 5,000

Largest deployment so far
In excess of 80,000 users based globally.

Customers
Clients include: Aldi, Burger King, Five Guys, ITV, NatWest Group, ScS, Sevita, Severfield, Pizza Express, Pluralsight

Partner locations
N/A

Company locations
Newcastle upon Tyne (HQ), 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	Google Cloud	Other*

*MS Azure Dedicated Instance & Virtual Private Cloud

Authentication supported

Entra ID	ADFS	Okta	Open ID	Oauth	G Suite	Other*

*PING, Office 365, Any SAML 2.0 connection & Custom

App deployment

Google Play store	Apple store	MDM	MAM	Other

Accessibility

Not WCAG2.1 conformant. Individual users can change the font size of what they are seeing; Alt text is in use for images; 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 that 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

Machine translation	Pre-configured	Editable	Right to left script supported	Other*

*German, Spanish, French, Portuguese, Arabic and Dutch for the user interface

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 customer's 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.

Version numbers

Demonstrated to ClearBox: Version 4.3.0.0
At January 2025: Version 4.5.0.0

Product updates

Minor updates weekly; Major updates every quarter.

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 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 runs a monthly Engagement Webinar to facilitate the sharing of best practice across their user base. They regularly host customer workshops at their HQ in Newcastle, UK.

Voice of the vendor

Oak says: "We're an award-winning employee app and intranet solution and the essential go-to for your employees. Connect and engage with your people wherever they are, whilst giving them the tools to make their jobs easier. We empower your people to get the right message to the right people at the right time.

We're here to bury the traditional intranet. Cluttered, clunky and filled with forgotten files, it's where content goes to die - turning into a content graveyard no one wants to visit.

At Oak Engage we're doing things differently. We're here to make communication simple. We believe an intranet should be dynamic and engaging, built to drive real results and help you achieve your objectives.

Our platform is innovative, agile and ever-evolving. We've led the way with AI powered analytics, personalised targeting and AI-generated content, which tackles your communication challenges head on. We're more than just a tool, we're a forward-thinking partner, taking intranets in a direction no one else dares to go.

The world's biggest brands trust us for a reason. With around-the-clock, 24/7 support and a global network of customers, it's a place that delivers outcomes that matter.

We're redefining the intranet."

Voice of the customer

The user experience was consistently praised by those who responded, where a frequent comment was Oak is "simple to use". This extends into the admin experience too, where one customer summarised nicely: "The product has an attractive interface, [is] intuitive to use and functions really well with a wide range of tools." Others added that "Putting together engaging pages is very quick and easy" and praised the "multitude of options in terms of layout and use for the various applications." Customers also praised the "Search functions and document management" and "support for deskless workers". One person said, "The platform also helps us engage and communicate, which has improved overall team performance."

Requests for improving Oak varied. Content creation features were mentioned a couple of times, one customer asked for "Formatting of tables", another person said "Allow use of more HTML and a bit more flexibility with the layouts" and another mentioned "Embedding images feels awkward" so this is an area that could be improved too. One person asked for further "automation" of communications that are tied to employee dates (called 'Journeys' in other products). "Improved mobile functionality" and an "Offline mode" to "improve usability in areas with unreliable networks" were also requested.

Feedback about the vendor is entirely positive with words like "great", "excellent" and "fantastic" used to describe them, with one customer saying, "everyone is really helpful and proactive – joy to work with." One person described the experience as "10/10" adding they have "A great relationship with the team at Oak". Multiple customers said the vendor were good at "helping you get the most out of the product" with one customer adding that this "Ensures the platform continues to meet our needs."

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.	Styling of features could be improved in places.
4 — **2. Publishing & Communications Management**	Pleasant publishing via 'applets'. 'AI Targeting' effectively releases news as appropriate for each individual.	Some features lack the sophistication internal communicators may want.
4.5 — **3. Community & Engagement**	Communities well handled through Hubs. Excellent employee / peer recognition feature.	Survey results are simple. Styling in places could be improved.
2+ — **4. Integrations & Services (Including M365)**	Good range of integration options and built-in services.	Integrations may take effort to set up as wanted. Some gaps in what's offered.
4 — **5. Information Finding & Search**	Federated search and people directory strong. Novel but helpful search interface.	Few filters and search management tools.
4 — **6. Administrator Experience**	Pleasant page and home page creation. Good multimedia support.	Can feel complex in places. Additional life cycle tools would be beneficial.
3.5+ — **7. Analytics**	Charts are attractive. Useful monthly report with AI generated recommendations.	Greater range and depth of reporting desirable, particularly for search.
3.5+ — **8. Mobile & Frontline Support**	Intelligent audience targeting works well for mobile. App experience can be tailored to the frontline. Helpful in-built tools.	Home page tabs might be confusing. Elements of the experience could be improved.
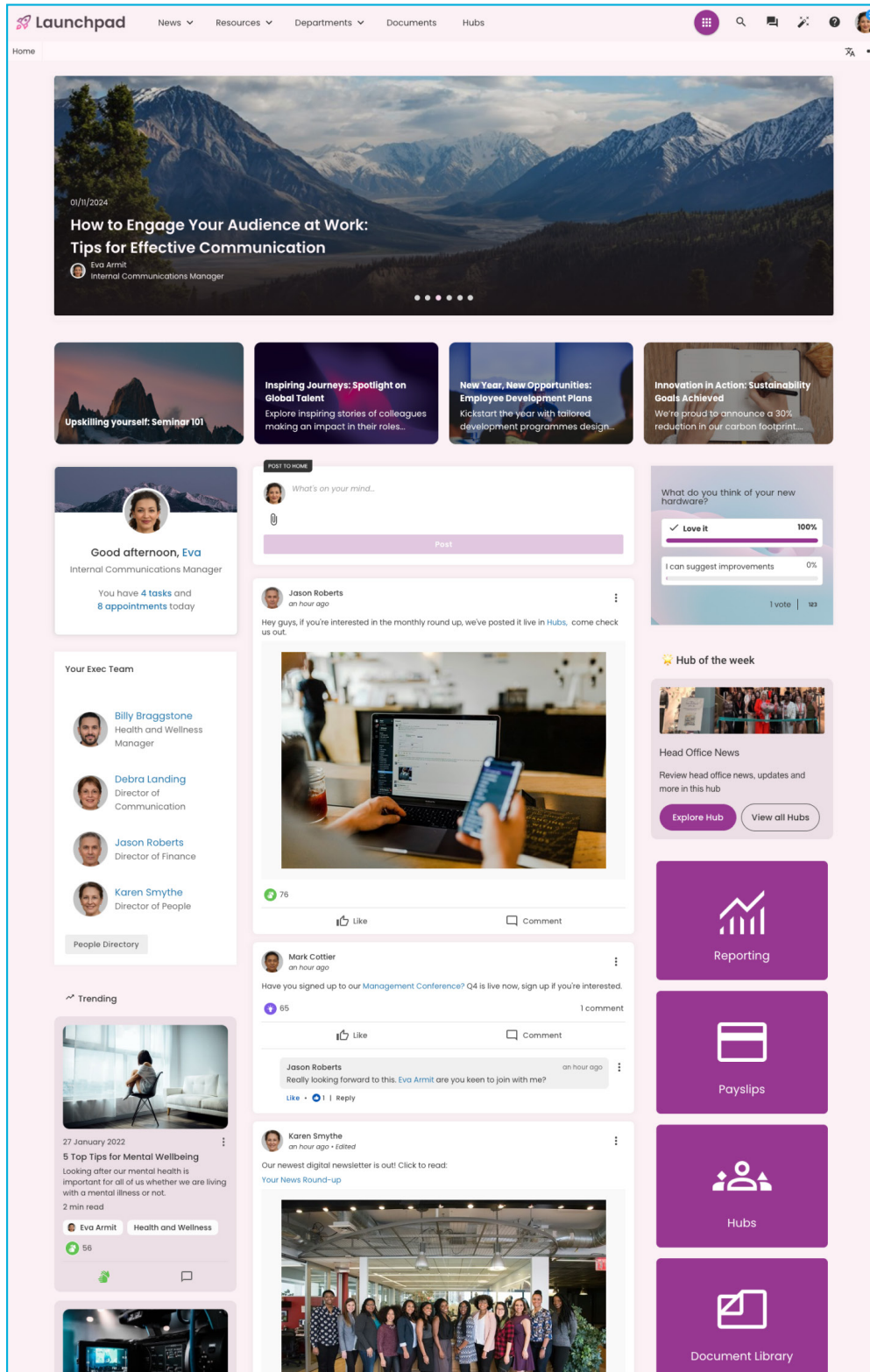
Oak is highly configurable, so one home page can look very different from another. A timeline is the focus in this design, for example.

As customer feedback also echoes, Oak is very easy to use. It is highly configurable, with administrators able to control much of the user experience. For example, a 'Feed' applet combines content from across the platform into a timeline view, allowing organisations to provide an experience more like external social media if this was a priority for them. Note that applets are Oak's version of widgets / web parts that are found across the site. We particularly like the welcome tour which can be configured to reflect the organisation's intranet; this showcases the excellent experience for employees as well as the flexibility for admins.

There are a few approaches to navigation, all of which support audience targeting. The first is a site-wide mega menu, which Oak will help set up initially, but then admins manage as the site evolves over time. The menu is fairly traditionally styled and it would be nice to see an option to add images, for example. A slide-out navigation pane to the left of the screen is a nice alternative to a static layout though.

We like the breadcrumb trails that help people see their whereabouts on the intranet. Left-hand sub-menus can be automatically generated based on the section structure or are served by applets with configurable navigation buttons. A 'favourites' home page applet lets people bookmark pages for quick access.

Alongside the mega menu in the top bar are 'Chats', search, 'Support' (see Scenario 6), 'Aria AI' (see Scenarios 2 and 5) and a profile button. Behind the profile button are the individual's notifications and tasks (with a helpful count to show new activities) that 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, and the option to integrate with desktop notifications too.

Admins will find the branding and overall design options in Oak flexible, including those who want alternative intranet branding to serve different parts of the organisation. Organisations can offer distinct home page and intranet configurations for different audiences, which could include an extranet. We like that branding choices extend even to the initial sign-in screen. The styling of some elements could look more contemporary, although in most places Oak looks and behaves like a modern platform that provides an excellent user experience.

*Articles are presented in an attractive News Centre for ease of browsing.*

Oak has a good range of communication capabilities. Publishers create content in three ways; firstly, via the timeline (see Scenario 3). The second is via the 'Aria' (Oak's AI) wand icon that opens a pane that asks whether a blank page, news article or policy page is to be created. Using natural language prompts, Aria presents suggested wording using material held on the intranet; this can be re-written by Aria but there are no simple controls around tone or length (publishers must enter prompts). 'Create draft' then places the wording into a blank template. Thirdly, content can be created via the Oak 'waffle', where choosing 'Create' presents the different content types available – one of which is 'News'. Creating a new article generates a blank news template.
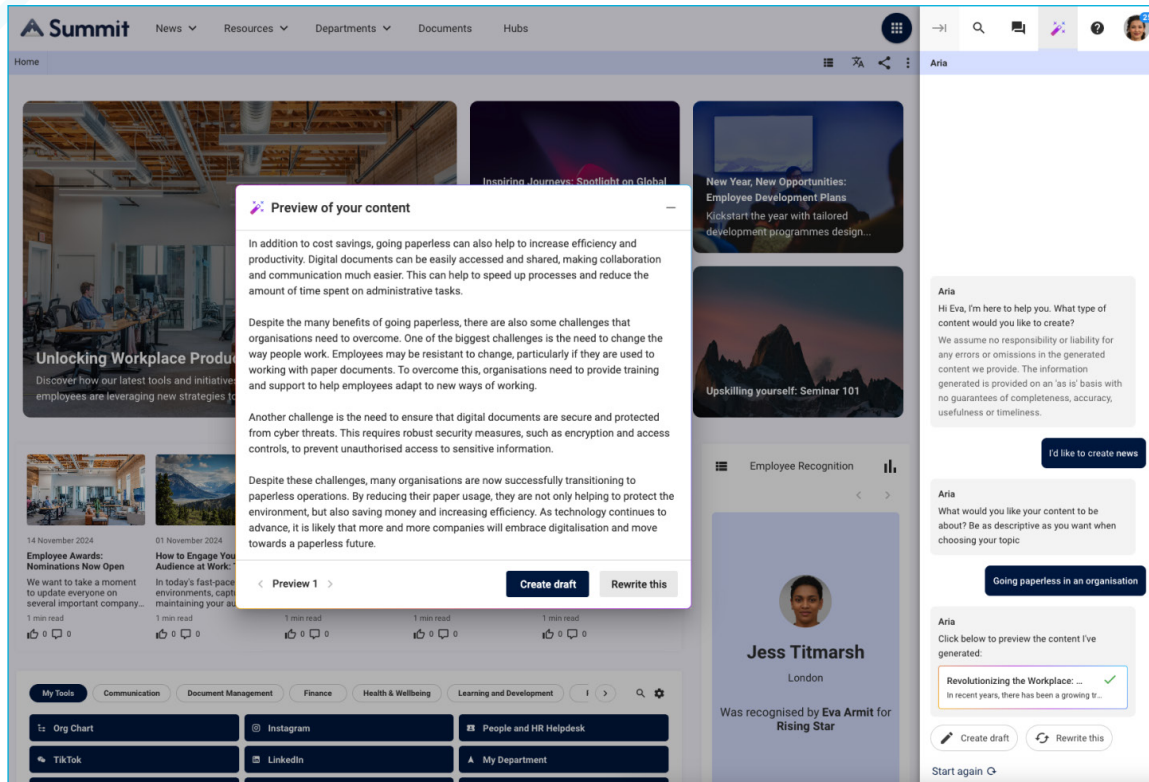
Aria AI will generate content that's then inserted into an appropriate page template.

The vendor will create news templates during setup, although admins can then add more or adjust templates later. We like that applying a template doesn't impact any content already added, so wording drafted using Aria wouldn't be lost, but it would be helpful to apply a template as part of the Aria process. Publishers drag, drop and resize applets as desired. There is a smaller selection of applets available for pages compared to home page design (see Scenario 6), however the range works well. We like the 'latest news' applet that presents related news to the reader, although Oak plans to introduce an AI-driven feature here instead.

'Page content' includes a rich text editor and is where the body text is created / edited. We like the personalisation fields, such as inserting employee first name, which can make material sound friendlier. Images can be embedded into a dedicated applet, a banner or in line with text. Images can be saved to and used from Oak's media manager, which includes options for stock images. We like the familiar image editing options including cropping, adjusting brightness and effects. Overall, the rich text editor approach is simpler than other solutions we've seen; customer feedback indicates improvement would be welcome but when combined with applets, we think the resulting pages are attractive and effective.
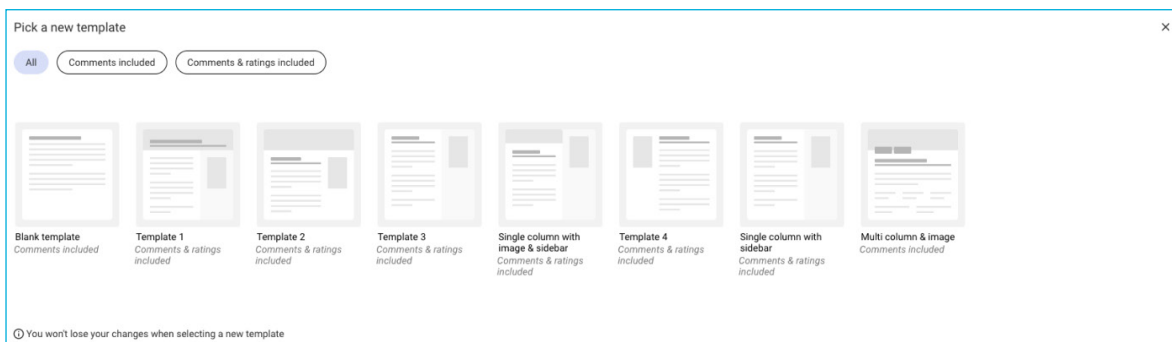

Pages are built using templates comprised of different layouts and applets.

Once an article is ready, the publisher can choose for it to inherit the target audience from the section the page is being published to or change as wanted. Audiences are synced, such as from Entra groups, or can be created within Oak. The vendor can create dynamic, rule-based audiences, such as 'people on vacation'; the ability for admins to do this is on the roadmap. Additionally, people can opt in to topics to expand what's presented to them.

On page creation, the publisher chooses which audiences 'should' or 'must' read the article and by what date. An 'AI Targeting' capability inspects the audience – such as when they're active on the site – and the communications need – for example 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. Content will enter into an approval process, with helpful notifications and 'Tasks' (see Scenario 4) to prompt approvers. Articles are presented to employees in various targeted applets across the site and published into an attractive news centre for ease of browsing.

Oak's 'campaigns' feature makes good use of AI Targeting 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.

Communicators have access to an editorial calendar that displays all content but only allows people to edit the content they have permissions for. Content items in a campaign or without an 'AI Targeting' end date are displayed on a single date, while other content is displayed across all the dates the AI Targeting system is promoting it for. The addition of a toggle in late 2024 to show publication dates only helps to simplify this view.
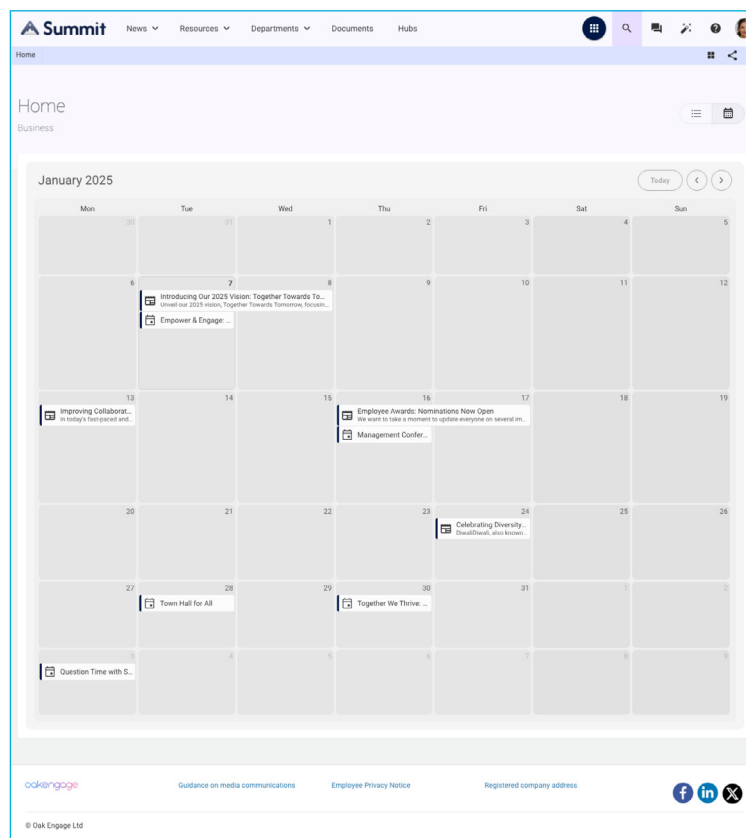

The editorial calendar shows what news has been scheduled or is running within the 'AI Targeting' system.

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', displaying as a thin banner at the bottom of the screen. Notices are easy to build using a sophisticated form that includes 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.

For reaching people beyond the intranet, there is an option to share content into Teams (see Scenario 4). There is also a digital signage capability that will display dedicated home page(s) and / or feeds of content on web-enabled devices. News cycles through on a carousel and a helpful QR code approach will take people to more information. Lastly, Oak offers highly configurable email digest newsletters which can include curated items and be automatically sent at a preferred cadence. These could include specific news feeds, or 'trending' content, or simply what a person has missed on a daily, weekly or monthly basis. Oak has deliberately chosen a digest approach, which works very well, but some communicators may want more flexibility.

Overall, Oak offers a good range of features for internal communicators. While customers have requested greater flexibility and we feel more sophistication is needed in places, communicators are likely to appreciate what's on offer.
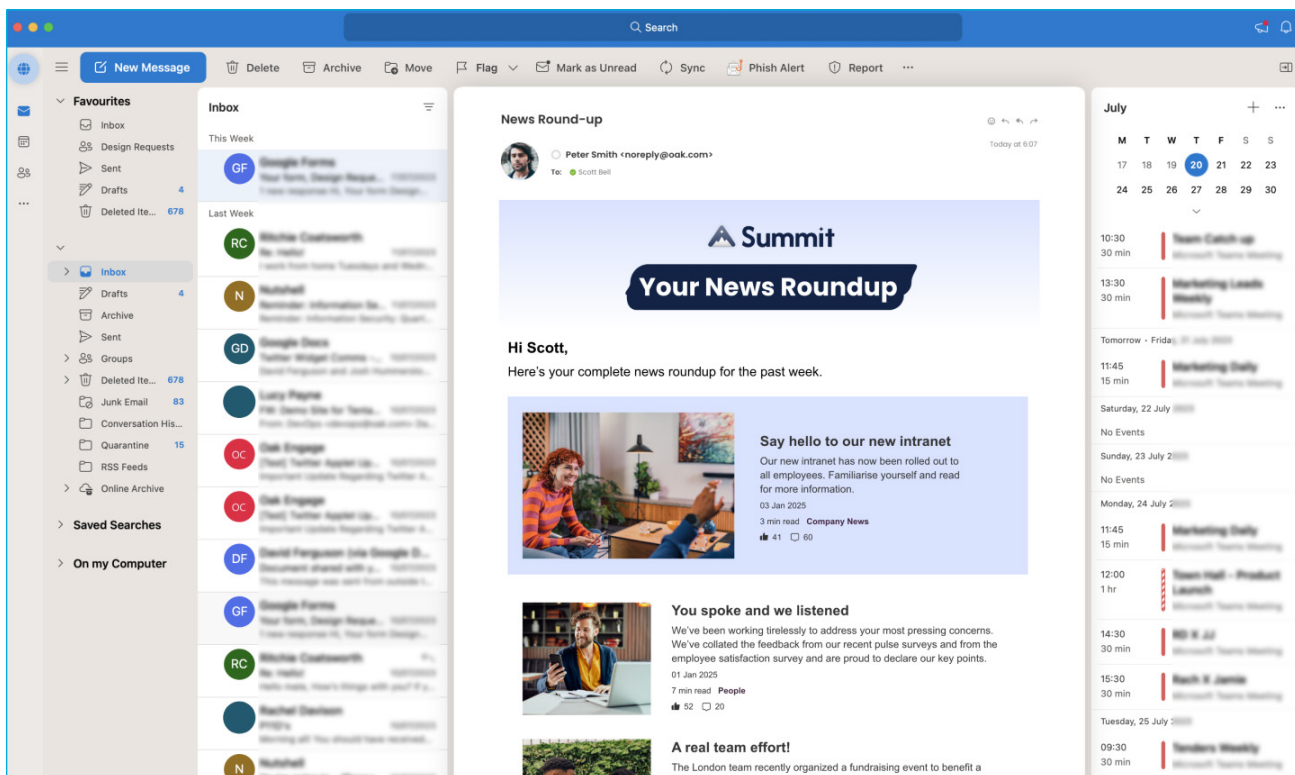
Oak's email digests help keep employees up to date with what's going on across the organisation.
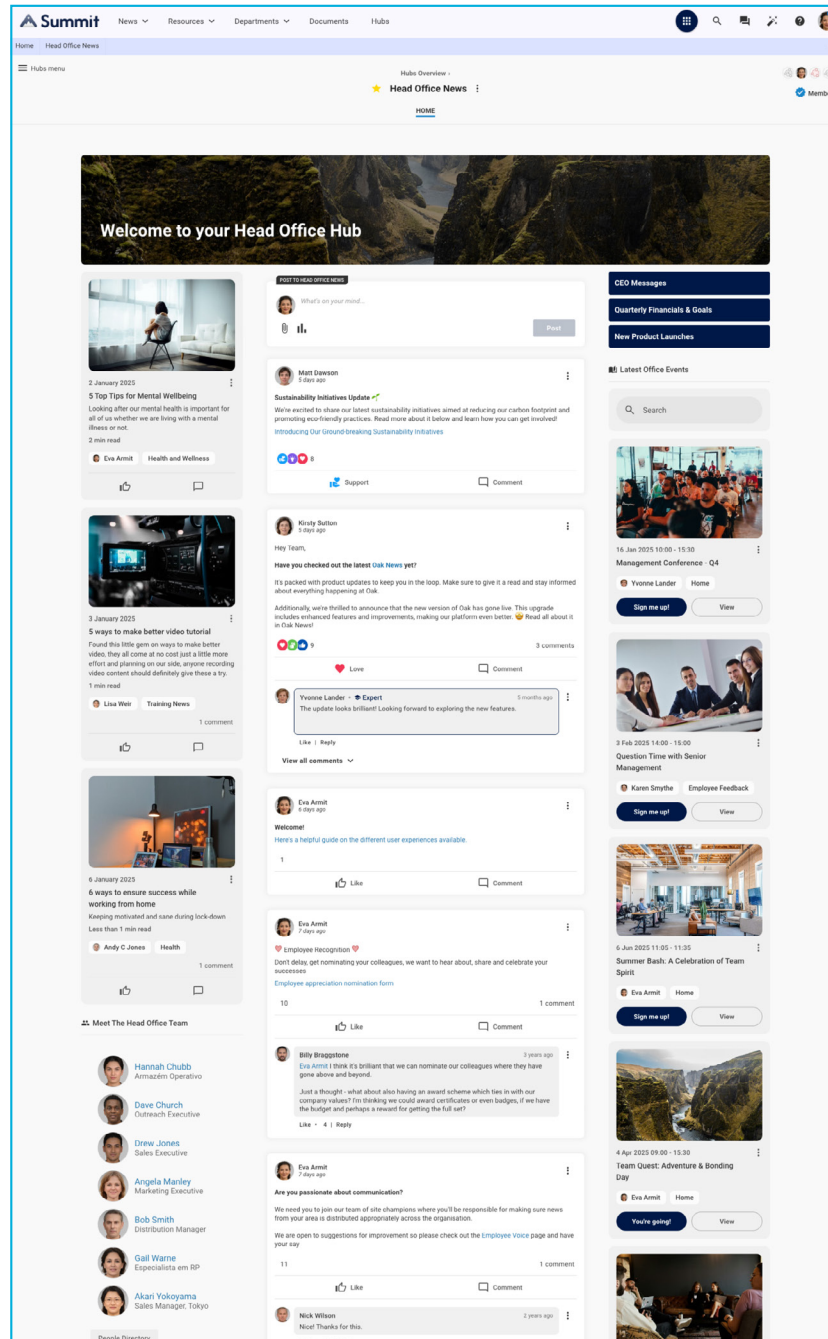
Hubs are built using applets so are flexible enough to meet different needs.

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'. Hubs can be used for communities of knowledge, by allowing anyone to edit or contribute to the space, such as through dedicated blogs. See Scenario 5 for more on the information management features that are also present in Hubs.

A timeline applet is always included in Hubs (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. Helpfully, users can choose which Hub to post to from the main timeline. Posts include simple formatting options, plus links will display a preview and emojis add an element of fun. The Feed is also where employees will find and be able to upload short-form video 'Moments' of less than a minute. These replicate Reels found on social media platforms and offer a quick and simple way for employees to share their stories.

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. On the roadmap is an AI feature that will assess the context and sentiment of reported content, which we think will be helpful. Comments can also be reported, or conversely an admin can mark a comment as 'expert' to highlight it as the best answer. Comments, posts and other content supports a range of reactions.

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. Alternatively, forms and workflows can be used for longer surveys, see Scenario 4 for more on these. 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. A 'Questions' feature collates employees' questions and encourages up- and down-voting of answers until it's resolved. We like that related questions are displayed should someone have follow-up questions.

A 'Questions' feature brings together employee queries to encourage answers from people across the business.

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.

Additionally, an 'Awards' feature 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 HR admins to manage the results within Oak. Overall, the Quick Thanks and Awards features are two examples where a little more styling would help make it look more contemporary. The functionality, however, is excellent.

People can be celebrated through Quick Thanks stars and Award nominations.

An effective 'Events' feature helps 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. A browsable Events landing page and dedicated applets surfaces 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, this scenario is an area of strength for Oak. In places some of the styling could be improved and features made more robust, however the range of options will certainly encourage engagement and create a sense of community.
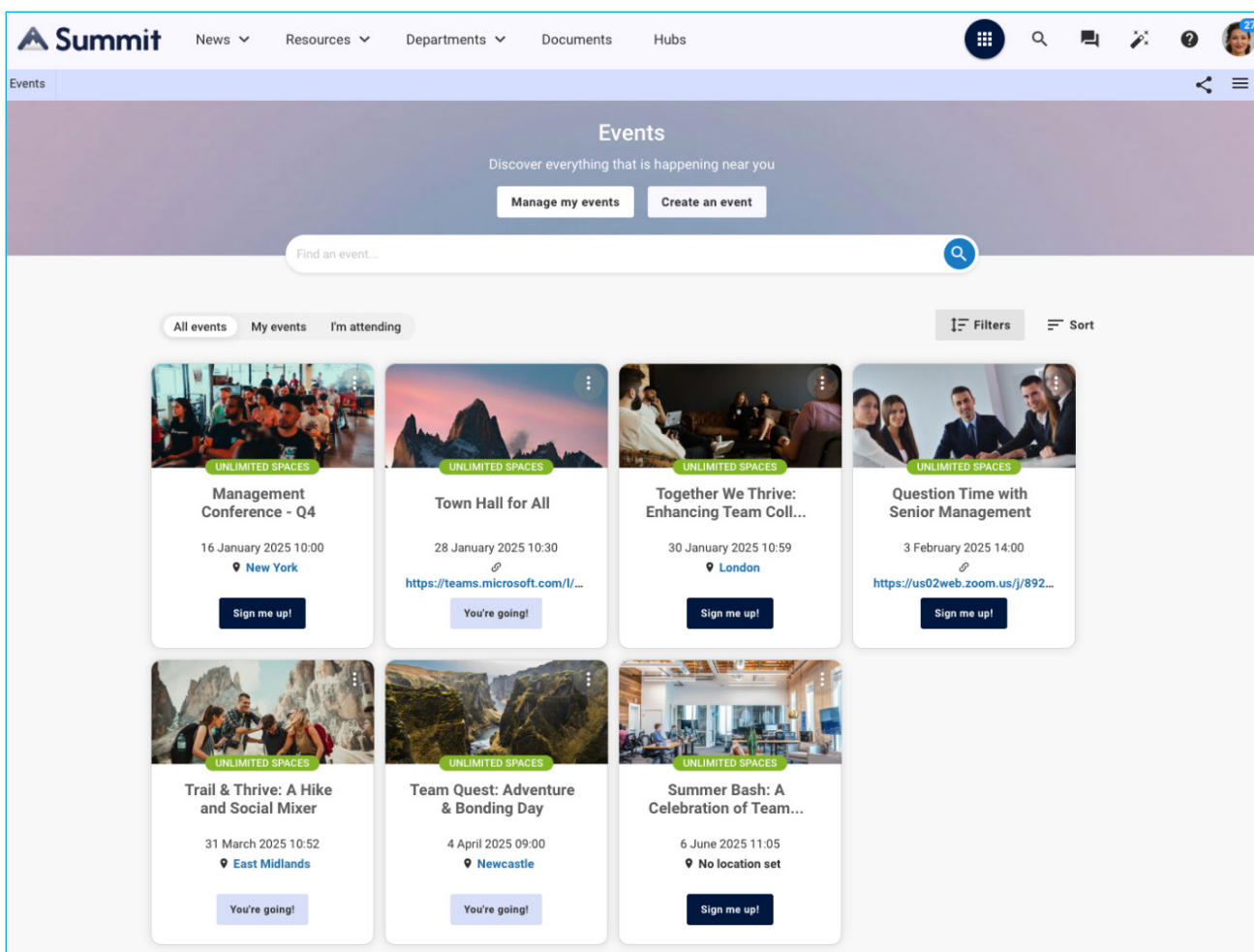
*Events are presented together on an attractive landing page.*
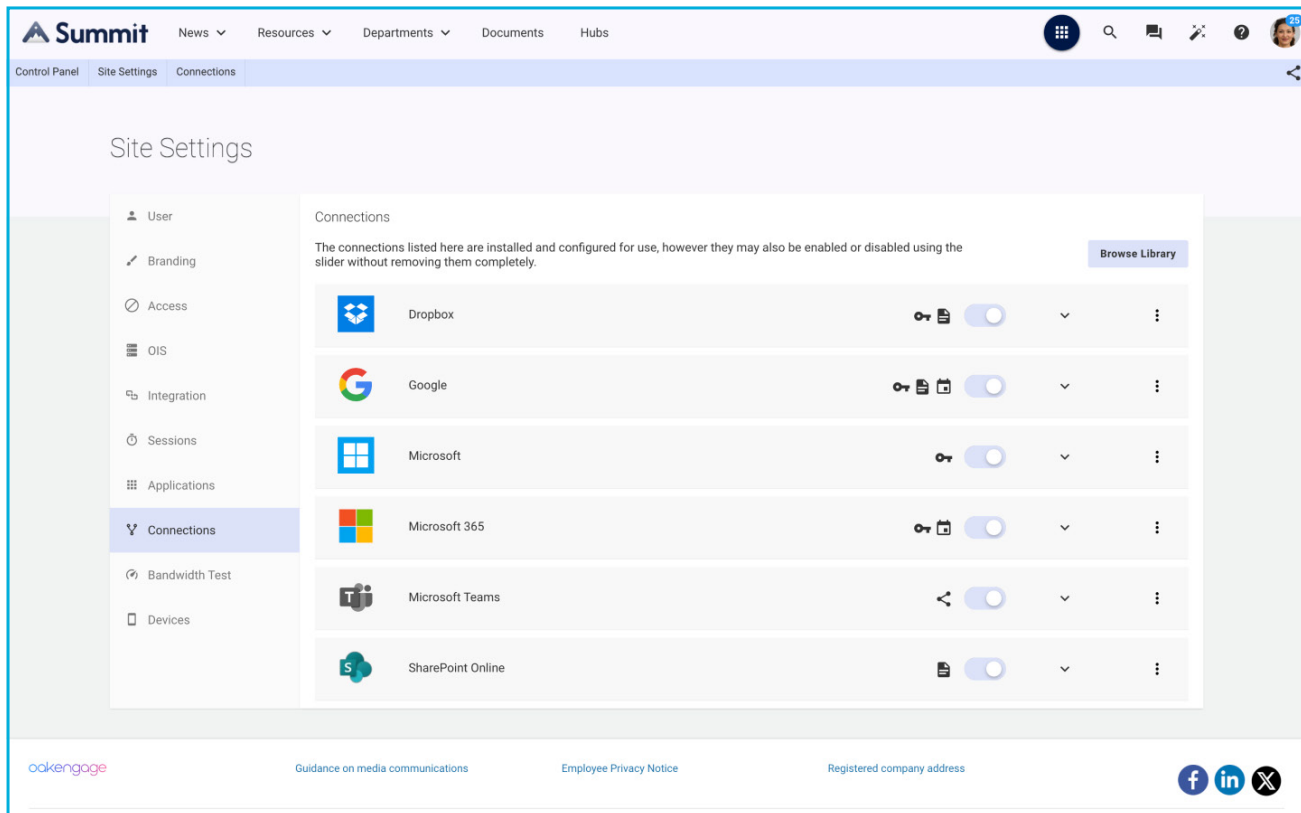
'Connections' provide a simple toggle approach for admins and employees to set up access to content sources.

Oak offers several approaches to business services and integrations. A 'Connections Library' presents many third-party systems that offer single sign-on options. There's a helpful search and each option presents a summary of what's possible; for example, the Dropbox connector allows users to sign into Oak using Dropbox credentials and then browse their own files from within Oak. When admins choose 'add' from the library, they reach a configuration screen. This requires some technical knowledge to complete, but Oak has done a good job of making this experience easier with tooltips and toggle options.

A helpful 'My Tools' applet is audience targeted, customisable by employees, and optionally 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 the individual's more commonly used links first.

Other integrations take the form of applets that admins add to any appropriate page. Applets may display information from external systems or provide deeper two-way integrations. For example, organisations may choose to use Viva Engage as their intranet social feed, replacing what's on offer in Oak. An integration with a training system could display notifications to employees in a dedicated applet showing training to complete.

When Oak creates integrations for customers, they are made available to others. Integrations include Workday, Vimeo, Success Factors, IBM Watson, My Pay and more. The vendor will create additional applets on request, or in-house developers have an effective in-built 'Developer Centre'. This requires coding knowledge, but the Centre makes suggestions within the code to simplify the process.
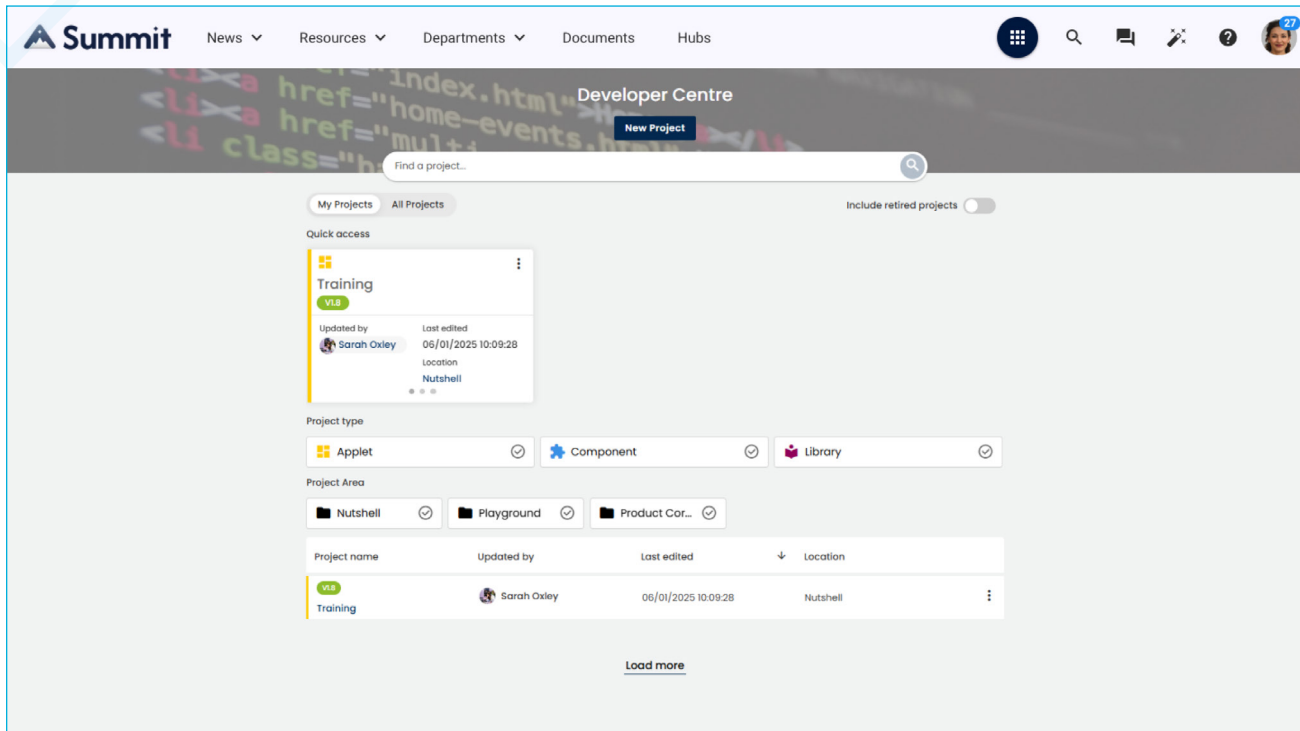
The 'Developer Centre' requires some technical knowledge but simplifies the process of setting up further integrations.

Rota and payslip integrations work well, particularly in the mobile app. Integrated payslips can be secured behind an additional password request or even biometrics on the mobile app, so actual data is blurred out until the additional authentication step is made. The rota integration displays dates and associated shifts from integrated systems, with colour coding to differentiate between holiday days vs a shift that's coming soon. Further styling to help those who cannot distinguish colours would be welcome. A shift swapping capability and clock in and out features are on the roadmap. Within 'site settings' admins can access a 'Connections' menu that contains ready-made integrations with other content systems, including SharePoint and Dropbox. These can be toggled on or off. We like the simple icons to show what sorts of activities are available within each option, such as a two-way sync with a Google calendar, and each activity has its own simple toggle approach to set up. Individual employees can also have the option to toggle on / off any Connected system.

The MS Teams Connection lets employees share content into any Teams channel they have access to. A pop-up lets the employee add a message, search for a Team or choose from a recent list to share a link into. Teams chats and calls can also be triggered from within people profiles (see Scenario 5). We think it's a shame there isn't an Oak Teams app available, although Oak says this will be available soon.

The range of SharePoint and Google Drive integrations is good. When creating a file library, publishers can upload from Google and SharePoint. Publishers are presented with a folder structure to navigate to the list of relevant files. There is a search box alongside the list, but we think additional filters would be helpful. Publishing creates an entry in Oak to a file that still "lives" in its source system, with any changes there syncing to Oak. This allows those without a SharePoint or Google license to view and search for the content, with the benefits of Oak's search experience (see Scenario 5). Security settings in the source system are not reflected but, as publishers can apply these within Oak, this isn't necessarily an issue.

*Files can be stored in SharePoint and benefit from synching with
any content updates, as well as the security and other settings in Oak.*

Admins may choose to present SharePoint and Google libraries within an applet, letting employees browse content and click through to the source. The layout is configurable, such as to show items as lists or cards. There is no local search for this content, although this is on the roadmap and will make a useful addition here.

In-built forms can be used for surveys or simple processes such as ordering uniforms. These are built using drag-and-drop question types, such as a checkbox or date picker, and the form looks clean. Workflow will pass the form onto relevant colleagues or into third-party systems. A 'Tasks' applet extends this by displaying associated workflow actions, as well as any task the employee or their manager has created via their profile page. There are optional modules for organisations without an expenses system, absence tracking or vacation booking solution (at additional cost but included in the pricing here), which are simple but helpful.

Oak's 'Help Desk' capability is helpful for organisations looking for a more formal ticketing system but not ready to invest in a dedicated platform. Multiple options support scenarios such as the categorisation and status of tickets, while notifications inside Oak help to keep employees informed. Finally, it's worth noting that Aria AI is powered by Azure OpenAI and there are no limits on its usage, unlike other products that use credits or similar approaches to AI capabilities.

Overall, Oak provides a good range of integrations, a simple framework for integration development and some helpful in-built services. There's the odd gap, such as no Teams app, and integrations may take some work, whether by Oak or the customer, but what's on offer works well.
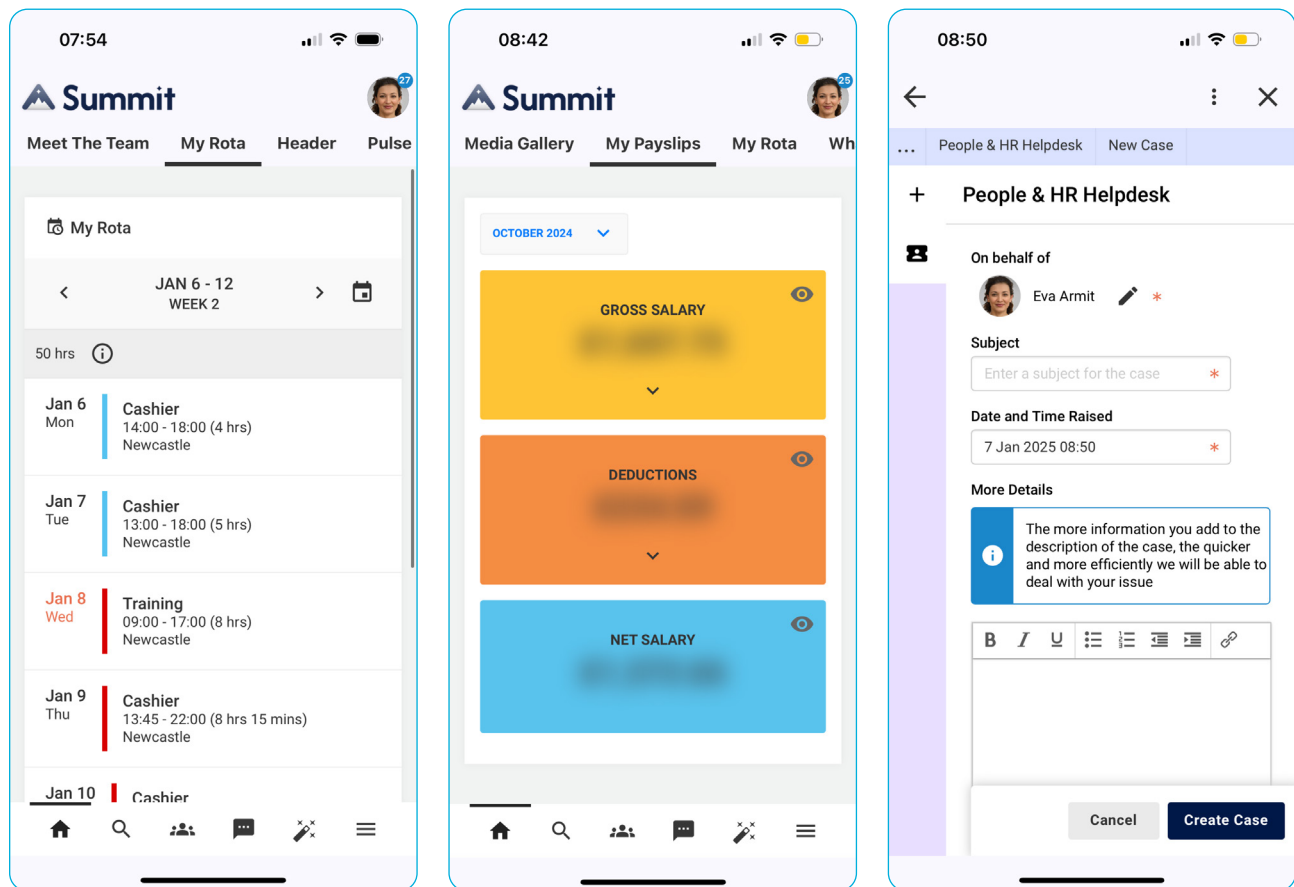
Rotas, payslips and Help Desk features work particularly well on mobile.
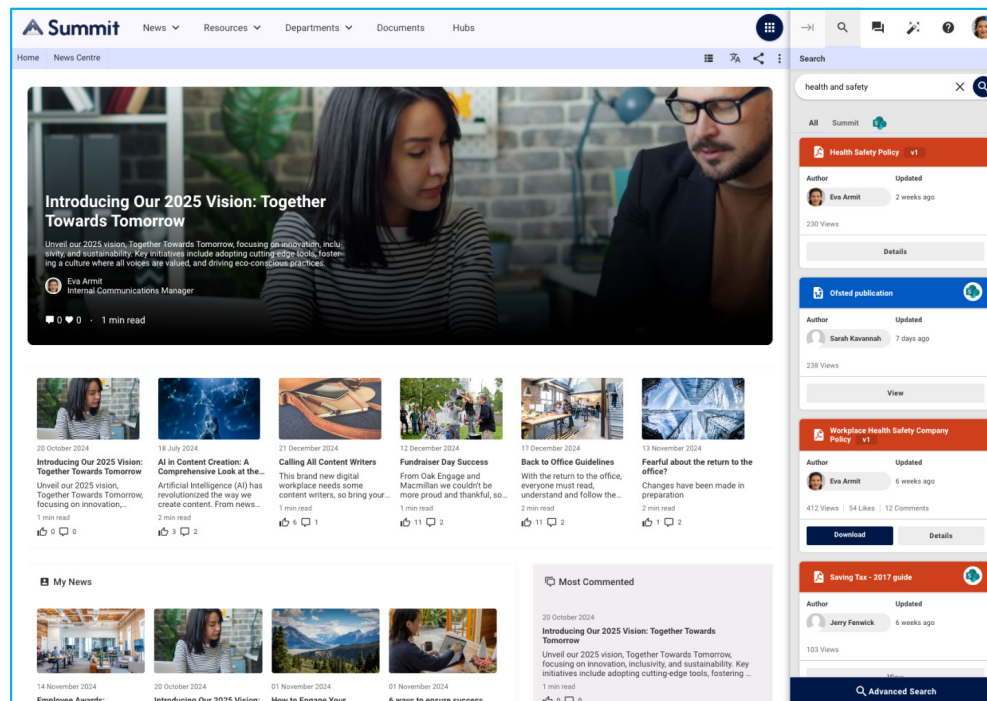
The search panel opens on the right of the screen while results can be browsed and opened on the left.

Oak takes a novel approach to search; while the search icon is 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. This approach allows users to check results by clicking on them and the screen to the left loads the content, leaving the list of results unchanged to the right. This allows people to find the right item without the frustration of having to backtrack.

Results display icons and thumbnails to help people browse for the correct answer. A results refinement list of checkboxes helps filter results, but this list is static rather than being dynamically generated based on the results. An 'advanced search' option includes a query builder for more precise searching, but this may not appeal to average users. 'Promoted results' allow admins to prioritise content associated with a search term, although unfortunately other search management features aren't available. 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 (in addition to what's mentioned in Scenario 4). For Microsoft this means any content in SharePoint and OneDrive; Google Workspace can also be federated out of the box. Other integrations are set up on request; for example, 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 licence for the business tool they will receive no search results.

People finding is via the main search box, although a 'phone book' applet lists appropriate people on pages as well. 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 any approved fields will be searchable.

A 'meet the team' applet is a great way to present who is responsible for intranet content and who to contact for further information.

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), which we think is helpful. A sharable QR code can help people connect quickly and is reminiscent of what's found in LinkedIn. A second tab displays a timeline associated with the individual, so those browsing can see what they've posted, Stars they've received or any blogs shared.

On profile pages, a button opens an organisation chart, which is among the best we've seen in this report. The chart starts with the original person 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 a person provides a summary of their information and button to their profile.

Profile pages include a timeline of activity associated with the individual.

For broader information finding and management, Oak provides a flexible framework for creating sections as desired using applets and deeper navigation options for comprehensive sections. Scenario 4 covers options to integrate document sources, but publishers can create file- and page-based libraries from scratch too. Documents are previewed within Oak's search without having to download, with helpful summary version history information. For pages and documents, tags help with findability, while ratings and feedback fields let employees help content owners keep their material updated. We think the addition of classifications would be helpful.

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. The 'Aria' AI tool can help create content via natural language prompts, generating 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 better use for AI with fewer risks of content accuracy errors.

Overall, information finding in Oak is effective, but there is room for improvement. For example, the addition of localised searches across the platform (in Hubs, document libraries, the news centre etc.) would be beneficial. Additionally, the interface approach to search might not appeal to everyone, but we feel it will serve end users well. On the roadmap are plans to expand Aria AI capabilities into search and we look forward to seeing the results.

Pages and files include rating and feedback capabilities, while documents also display some simple version history and other data.

4

6. ADMINISTRATOR EXPERIENCE
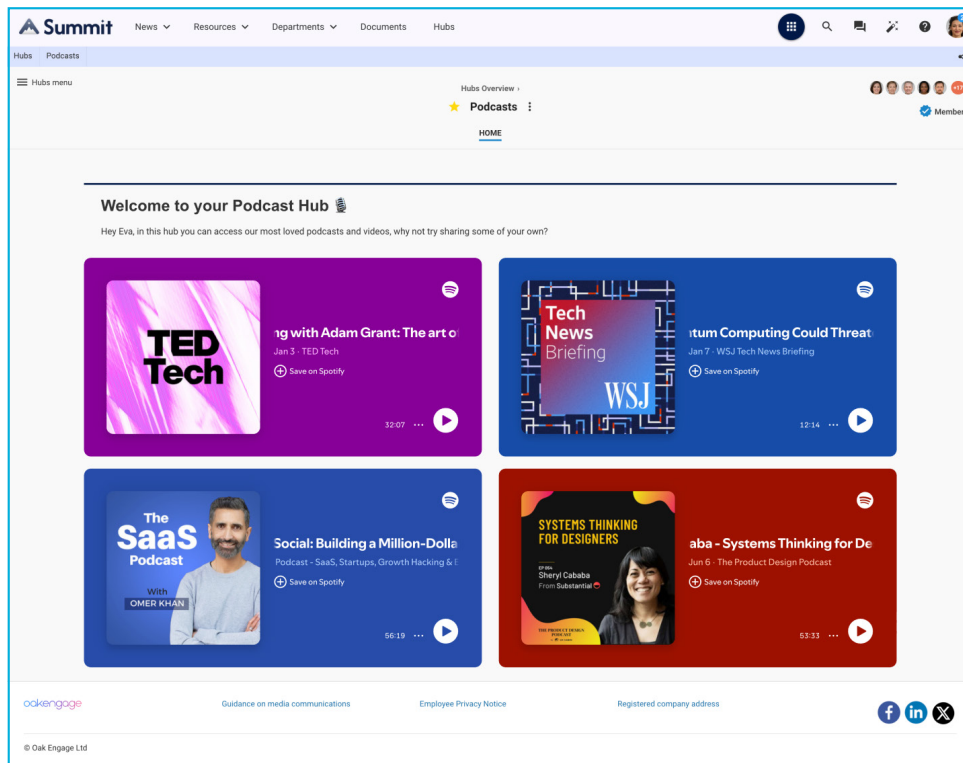
Multimedia support is strong and it's easy to create a podcast and video hub.

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, for example 'Manage Areas' feels somewhat unwieldy when compared to the front-end of Oak, but developments are on the roadmap. Access to a 'knowledge base' via the top menu that opens as a side-panel is excellent. This allows any user to explore Oak help pages, log a support ticket with Oak and submit feedback.

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 introduces an element of fun to a business tool.

Content life cycle is managed in a couple of places. The first is via Oak's legacy reporting area 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. Alternatively, 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 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.

Video and audio content is handled well, where it's easy to replicate a Spotify or Netflix approach, which the vendor says a client has done. Videos include features such as subtitles and searchable transcripts, which can be edited and even translated.
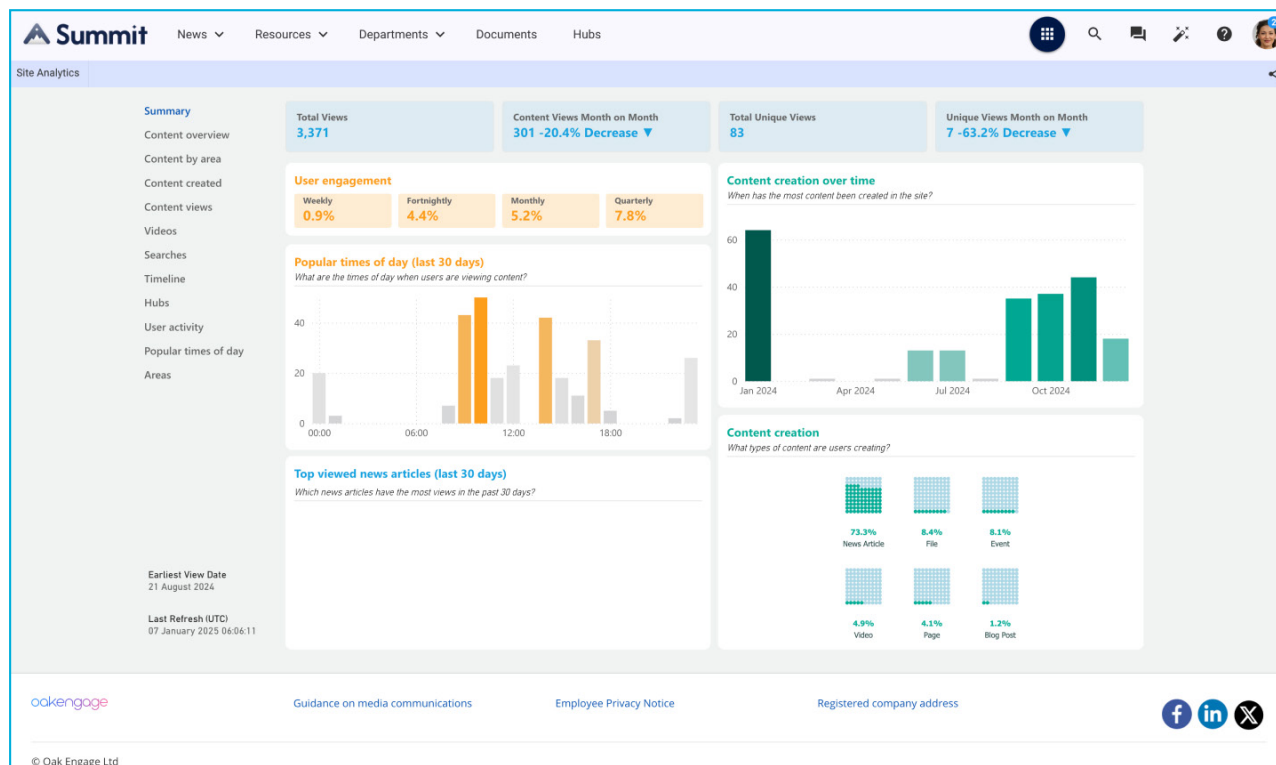
*Oak's analytics present a good range of helpful data.*

Oak's 'Reporting' screens include data on a range of content and activities. By using PowerBI in the background (with licensing covered by Oak), Oak can easily extend the range of available reporting on request – they mentioned more advanced search analytics as an example. Data is presented as tables and charts, some of which are simple while others are more sophisticated. For example, some reports, such as 'Content Created' analytics, include interactive charts where clicking refines the displayed data.

A 'Summary' screen provides an overview such as top five news articles, with helpful labels depicting the timeframe the summary is referring to. Within the different report screens there are filters for elements such as timeframe, or content type. We like the 'Popular Times of Day' analytics that includes helpful heat map charts and the simple 'Search Terms' report. 'Content Overview' lists everything the person has permissions to edit, with filters and sorting to reduce the list. Helpfully, each page includes a more detailed report showing its performance, which can be accessed from here or from the page itself.

Each Oak feature, such as an individual campaign or the expenses module, has its own analytics. These would benefit from restyling and being linked from the Reporting menu to make them easier to find. 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.

'Monthly Engagement Reports' are automatically generated and presented to relevant admins. The Monthly Report is a PDF file that collates a snapshot of the intranet's performance over the previous month. We're impressed by the use of AI here, which generates a narrative around the data and makes recommendations for improvements or to repeat success. We think the application of AI here is excellent and look forward to seeing the sophistication of recommendations increase.

Overall, Oak has made significant improvements to analytics in recent years, and it is now an effective tool for admins. There are planned developments, such as with search reporting and to offer quarterly Engagement Reports, which will bring further improvements to an already strong offering.
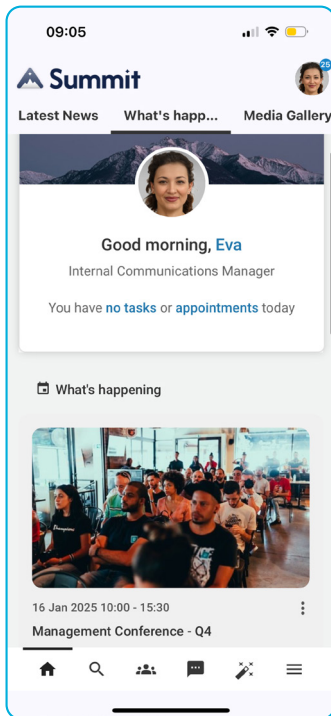
There's the option to present a simplified experience on mobile through dedicated home pages.
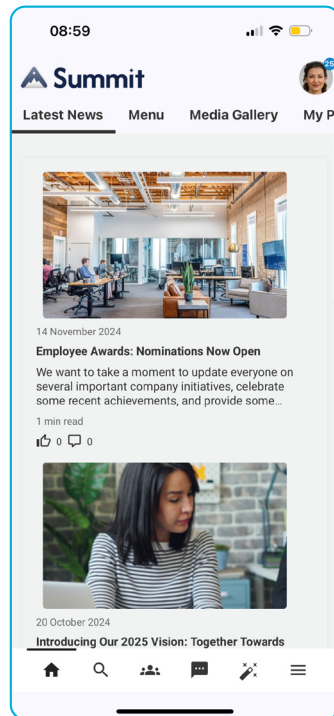
News stories work well on mobile.
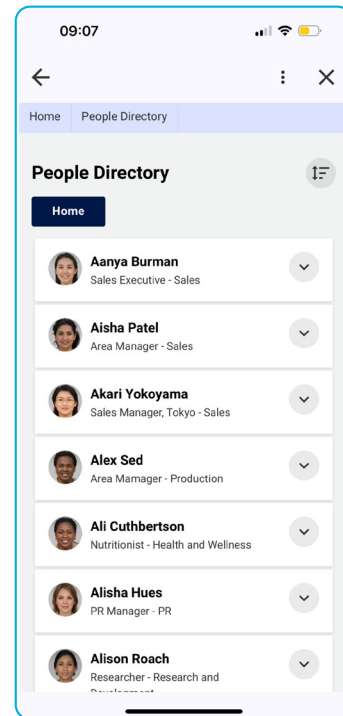
Employees can call a colleague from their entry in the directory.

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 (for relevant publishers) 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 tools found solely on the app, the features covered in Scenarios 3 and 4 translate well to the small screen environment. In-built tasks, rotas, time off and Help Desk tools are particularly useful for the frontline. An integration with payslip systems is also robust, requiring biometric or similar authentication before it'll be displayed.

It's worth highlighting that the 'AI Targeting' 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, but this is on the roadmap. Customers requested offline reading / save for later tools for content, which we think would be helpful additions here too.

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 mean frontline employees 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.

Overall, Oak's app reflects the easy-to-use experience from the desktop. There are places where the experience could be enhanced but we think it is effective and would meet most business needs well.

THINGS TO BEAR IN MIND

There is a lot of flexible functionality across Oak and it is largely easy to use. We think there are some places where admin experiences could be simplified and / or styling improved to make it look more contemporary, however. There are some unusual approaches to functionality that organisations should carefully consider, too. For example, the 'AI Targeting' approach to content delivery is innovative but may not suit all communicators, although can be switched off. Similarly, the search experience works well but is atypical and some may not like it. The options surrounding integrations are good, but it will rely on technical expertise in the organisation. Also, while they have global customers, the vendor is based in the UK only and this may be too restrictive for some.

Oak does a good job of providing foundational capabilities across our scenarios, though those organisations with advanced requirements may find some of Oak's capabilities disappointing, as they lack sophistication at times. While we wouldn't want to see the experience complicated by adding advanced features that aren't appropriate for their clients, Oak has already shown that it can offer complex features in a simple manner. The vendor has also 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.

We have reviewed Oak for several years now and have seen the product develop in sensible directions in that time. Strong areas have become stronger, and they have listened to feedback to make real improvements to areas that needed strengthening. Oak therefore has a lot to offer, particularly at a lower price for an independent intranet solution, so it is an excellent option for organisations that want to offer employees a flexible intranet with an easy-to-use interface.

Why choose this product

Oak's high level of flexibility, content targeting capabilities and ease of use enable organisations to deliver an intranet that meets many employee needs. Deskless workers are well served with a strong mobile app, while desk-based employees will appreciate the clean user experience. There are excellent publishing and community features for employees and admins alike. Integrations with other business systems work well, with a comprehensive developer framework for those who wish to build deeper two-way integrations. Overall, Oak delivers a strong employee experience, at a competitive price point.

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Vendor roadmap

Selection	Description
Integrations	• Add SharePoint and Google Drive directory browsing, allowing site owners to add SharePoint and Google Drive directories to various parts of their site • Microsoft Teams app, bringing Oak's personalised feed to users within Teams
Search	• Leverage AI for greater search capabilities
Reporting	• Deeper Campaign insights • Leverage AI for a faster reporting experience
Content	• Richer experience for video/audio consumption • Reach users when they are offline
Mobile App	• Improved messenger experience for front-line workers • New and improved homepage experience

Roadmap images provided by Oak Engage.

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