# Oak

## What is an Intranet?

# History of
# **Intranets**

**1960s** — Plato aka Programmed Logic for Automatic Teaching Operations. Developed by the University of Illinois, featured concepts such as forums, messaging, online testing, emails, image language & more.

The term 'Groupware' for collaborative computing was brought up in an article by Louis Richman and Julianne Slovak in Fortune Magazine. — **1987**

**1993** — The term 'intranet' is coined and trademarked by Steve Tellen.

The UK's first intranet software is founded as Orchid Software, now known as **Oak**. — **1994**

**1995** — According to the Forrester group, intranets had been installed by 64% of Fortune 1000 companies, with 32% planning to implement an intranet in 1996.

Publications and case studies about the intranet are published, with advice on how to create an effective intranet still holding true for modern-day intranets. — **1998**

**2000** — Cloud Computing is introduced.

Social media becomes a cultural phenomenon and changes how we connect to family, friends and work. — **2000s**

**2010s** — Intranet companies start to take note of social media technology and implement similar tools such as tagging, following, live chatting, social hubs, and blogging.

Orchid Software turns towards cloud computing and starts Oak Intranet, a cloud-based, social intranet designed for the employee experience. — **2016**

**2019+** — Intranet providers predict future intranet trends in machine learning, gamification, stronger work/life balance, a focus on wellbeing, & content storytelling.

# Definition of an intranet

The intranet is an internal network within a company accessible by a web browser, such as Google Chrome, or mobile app. Intranets can be on-premise or cloud-based, with most modern intranets hosted on the cloud.

An intranet is completely private and protected from public access, with the core goal of supporting communication, collaboration and productivity between an organisations' employees.

Employees within an organisation use this internal network to connect to one another, collaborate on projects, send messages, share documents, access policies, request time off, and more.
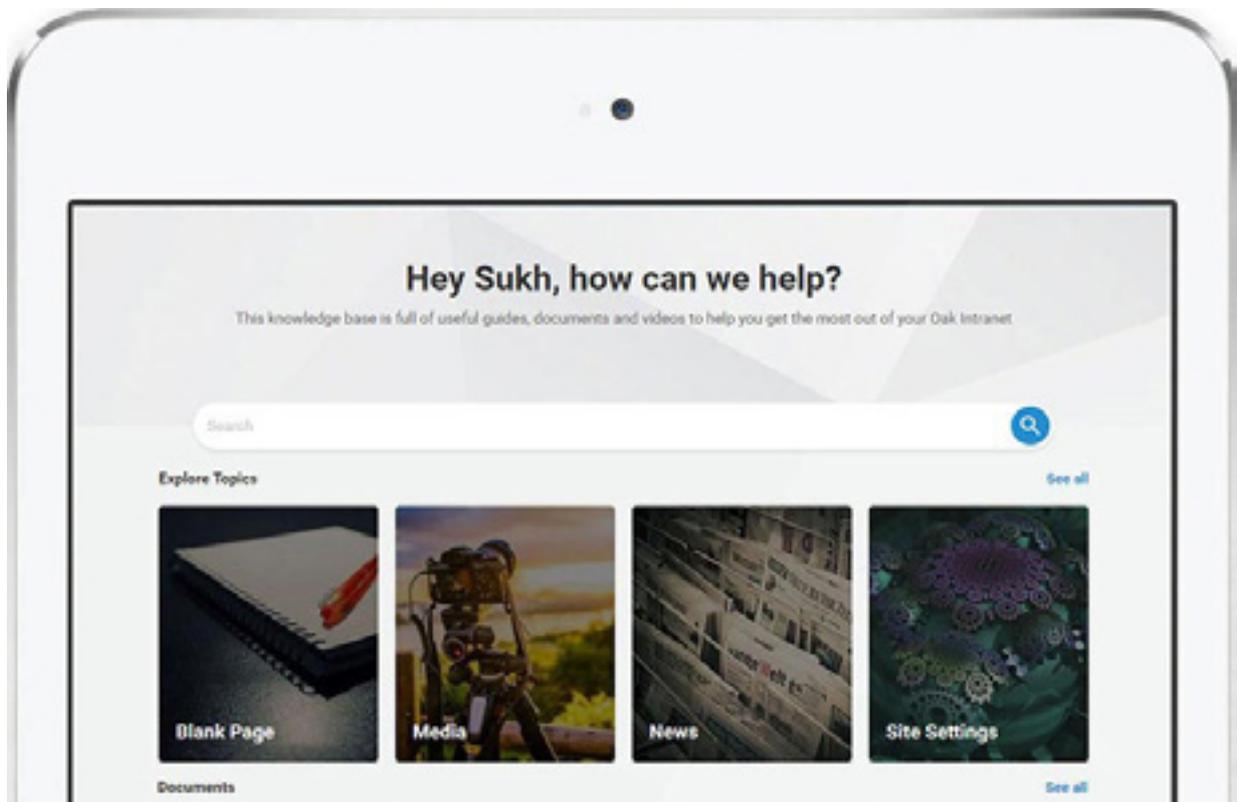
# Your Digital Assistant

Imagine it's your first day at your new job. You arrive early, snagged that sweet parking spot and are ready for what's to come. You're excited, likely overwhelmed.

You're at your desk and someone pops by, says they're your personal Digital Assistant and they're going to be there for you every step of the way.

Need to know who to reach out to for your benefits package? *Here's HR's email.*

Have an idea for a project? *Here's a list of people with the experience you're looking for.*

Curious about the policies and procedures? *Here's where you can find it all.*

The Digital Assistant asks you some questions; What are your skills? What are your interests? As you answer, the Digital Assistant fills out your personal profile, takes a flattering picture of you (how are you so photogenic?) and uploads it to your company's net.

You come to know the ins and outs of your new job, thanks to your Digital Assistant. You know where to find what you need, know who to contact, and even make friends with like-minded colleagues.

And that is what an intranet is. An intranet is your tireless digital assistant, an internal comms portal, and a collaboration source. It helps you every step of the way and helps you do what you do best — **get stuff done**.

# Traditional vs Modern Intranet

Traditional intranets used to be controlled by the few and from the top down, and mainly used as a non-interactive document storage system.

Some rarely offered additional functionality, and at exorbitant development costs, resulting in an oft expensive solution. Difficult to update, with a poor user-experience and a stodgy interface, the intranet of old gained a poor reputation.

With the emergence of social technology, expectations and demands of incoming employees are different than twenty years ago where remote working and instant communication has become the norm.
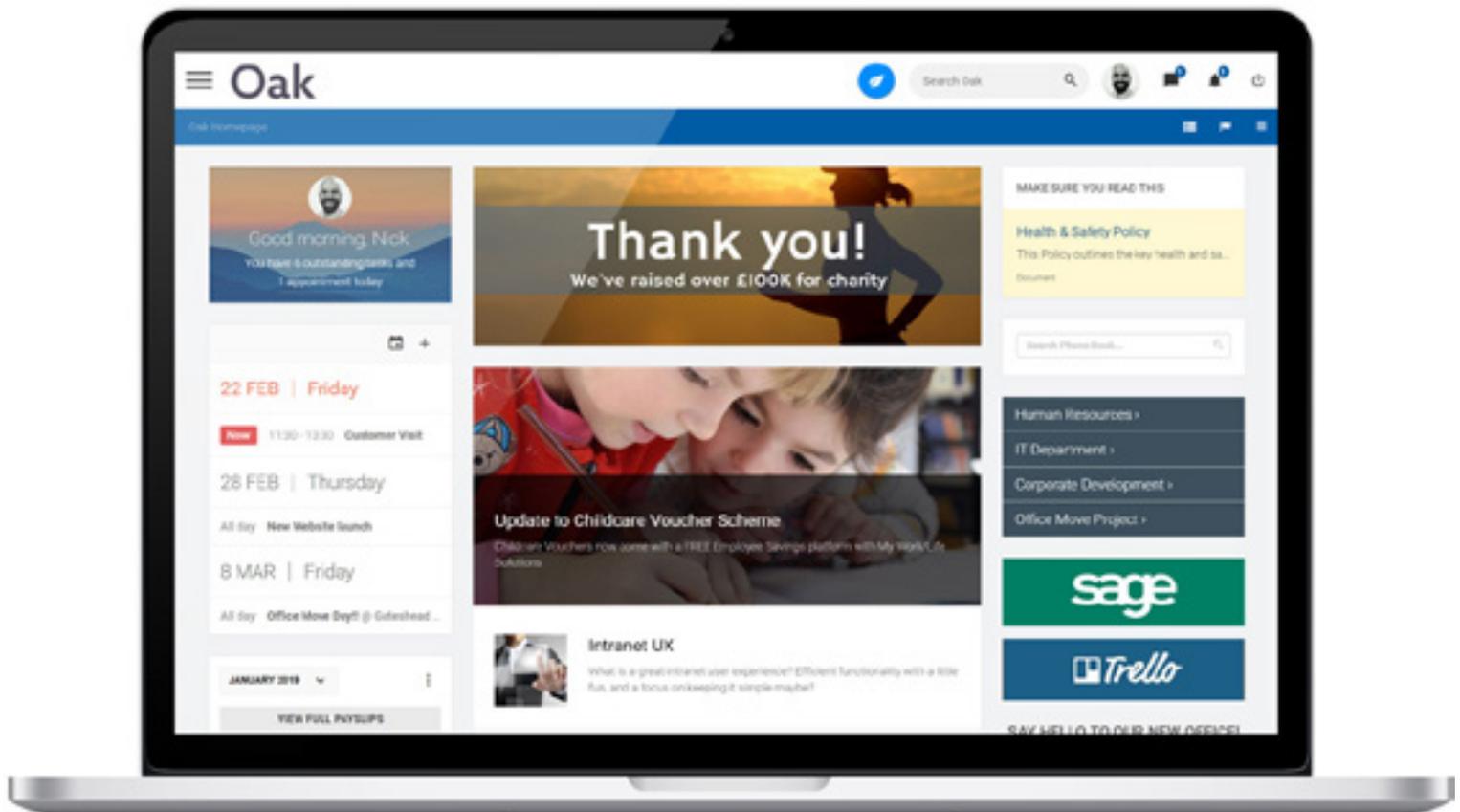
Modern intranets are much more intuitive with a familiar, responsive interface. With the introduction of social tech, modern intranets are quickly becoming a vital component of successful organisations.

**Some familiar features seen on social media platforms can now be found on modern intranets, including:**

- Forums, Q&A, discussion areas

- Blogs and content areas for policies, procedures and employee engagement

- Interactive employee profiles with an activity stream

- Team and project hubs for seamless collaboration

- Instant messaging and other social interaction features, such as @ tag and #tag people and content, Liking, Sharing and Commenting.

However, choosing the best modern intranet for your organisation is not contingent on how many social features it has, but one that successfully ties business tools into employee's social behaviour and psychology.
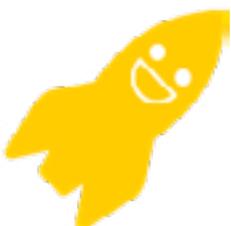
# The Difference of On-Premise & Cloud-Based

There are two kinds of intranet platforms available to organisations, requiring different types of hardware.

**On-Premise** — The intranet is completely hosted on-site of a business on a server managed, updated and backed-up by a dedicated IT team. However, mainly large enterprises have the capability to dedicate resources to the complexity of on-premise intranet maintenance.

**Cloud-based** — Most modern intranets are cloud-based, meaning it's instantly made available online, instead of having to build and maintain on-premise infrastructure.

The cloud-based intranet comes from a dedicated intranet provider, such as Oak. There are less resources required as only an internet connection and computers are needed. Benefits of a cloud-based intranet include easer customisation, optimisation, responsiveness, minimises up-front IT costs with less maintenance and easier management.

A small intranet team with Content Captains are responsible for the management and creation of content to keep the intranet fresh and updated.
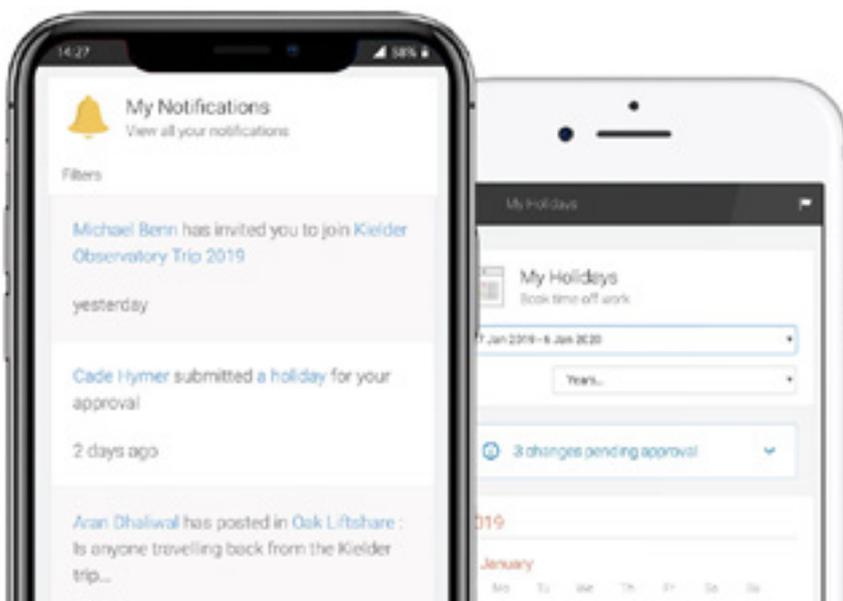
# Differences between an Out-of-the-box (OOTB) Intranet & SharePoint

## SharePoint's primary role is that of a document storage, and is not an intranet.

While SharePoint is a comprehensive set of tools that meet some functions of an intranet, it's not capable of supporting the complexities of a digital workplace and the requirements employee engagement needs to thrive.

In comparison, an **Out-of-the-Box**, or **OOTB,** intranet, such as **Oak**, is designed to enrich your work culture and improve employee engagement. Offering flexibility, personalisation, and ease of information sharing, intranets have modernised to create a more well-rounded experience for employees, benefitting them not only technically, but emotionally as well.

### Some key differences between SharePoint and an OOTB, are:

**Content management** — SharePoint's back-end for site creation is complex and requires tech-knowhow. Intranet maintenance would have to go through the IT department or dedicated experts just to manage infrastructure and content creation. Whereas, an OOTB intranet is intuitive designed with a drag-and-drop interface, making it easier to implement changes without needing an IT background or bespoke services.

**Budget**— With an OOTB intranet, pricing is upfront, based on user numbers and includes all features, functionality and customisation. Training is easy and a small dedicated intranet team can get it up and running within a short period of time.

SharePoint, while part of the Office 365 subscription, has added expenses when building an intranet, and can inflate your budget. Training is extensive, time-consuming, and slow as SharePoint requires more technical resources which can bottle-neck and cause delay in implementation.

**Mobile-access** — SharePoint is unable to meet the needs of Remote and Desk-less working due to static functionality on mobile devices. This leaves behind those in retail and factory floors, in-the-field and warehouses, without access to essential information, creating a disconnect between the head office and those on the frontline.

An OOTB intranet offers a fully responsive mobile experience that allows workers to access all they need without needing to use a desktop. They stay connected with what they need and are engaged with the company.
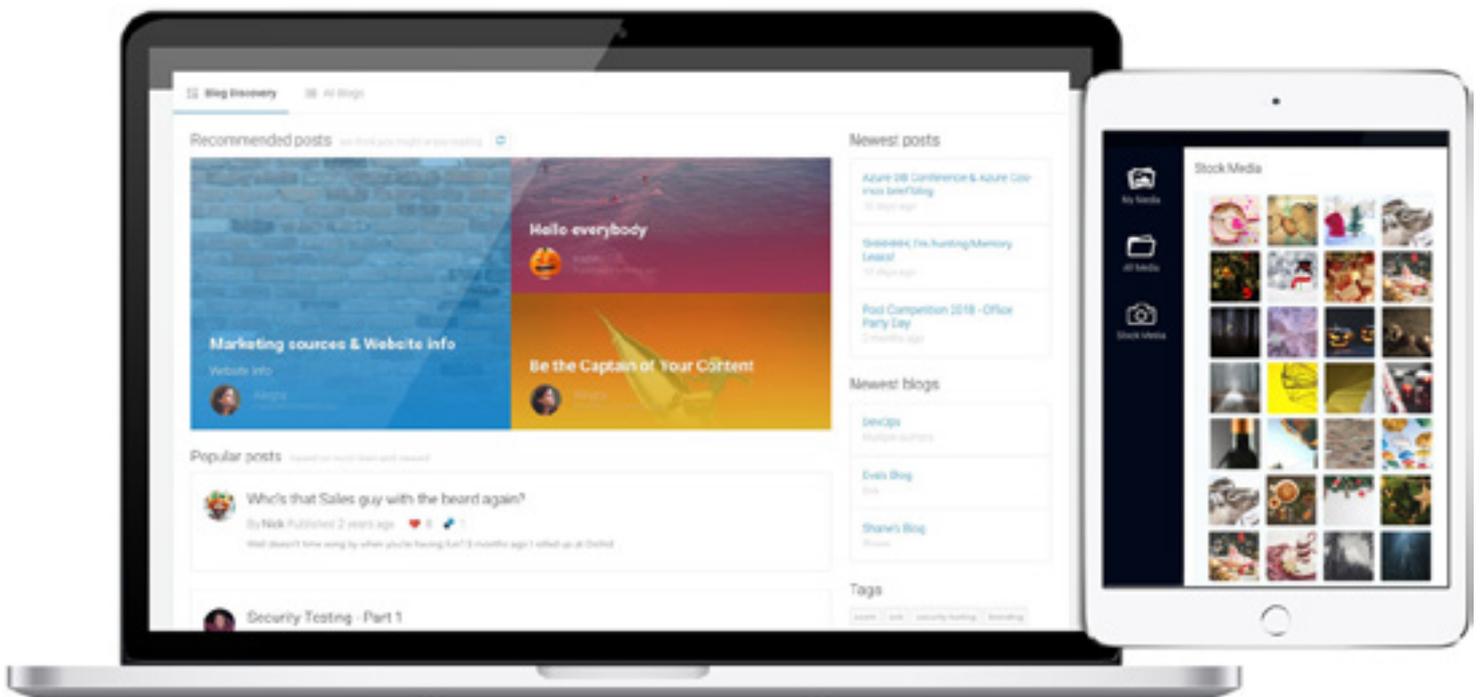
# Advantages of a Modern, OOTB Intranet

Modern intranets are flexible, simple and employee-friendly, and easily adapt to suit an organisation's goals. If your team needs a creative outlet, a collaboration hub, or a digital workplace, that's when an intranet comes into effect to support those needs.

## Core benefits of a modern intranet include:

- **Document management.** Key information important to your business, including policies, procedures, content creation and document management (DMS). Content management (CMS) brings all content into an easily accessible and searchable location.

- **Stronger business collaboration.** Intranets assist in day-to-day business activities, and with the inclusion of social technology, meet the collaboration needs of employees through profiles, live messaging, forums and status updates. Employees can contact the people they need to effectively work on projects and finish tasks.

- **Successful internal communications strategy.** As a central location for content, documents and information, dedicated homepages on your intranet keeps employees updated on the small and large happenings of a company. Communications include blog posts, articles, newsletters, policies, and company training documents.

- **Smoother organisation workflow.** Make better decisions faster as an intranet connects teams to the information and tools they need for an improved workflow experience. Book holidays and absences, file expenses, and view usage analytics.

- **Consistent internal branding.** A great intranet provides the flexibility and ease to customise appearance and reflect the organisation. When an employee logs on, they immediately recognise the brand identity of the company. This acts as a constant reminder of the manifesto, quality and ethos they should work with.

- **Integration and Connectivity.** Communications software has seen a surge of innovative tech, such as Google Suite and Sharepoint. For nearly every need one faces at work, an app or tool has been designed for it. This makes for a software stack that simply don't talk to one another. A modern intranet brings them all together.

- **Mobile access.** While organisations might be understandably anxious about access to work data off-premises, there's the growing demand for a work-life balance, remote-working and flexible hours that is encouraging companies to look for more secure options. Enter mobile intranet access with SSO, SAML, data encryption, compliance certification and data encryption, allowing employees to finally bring the office with them.
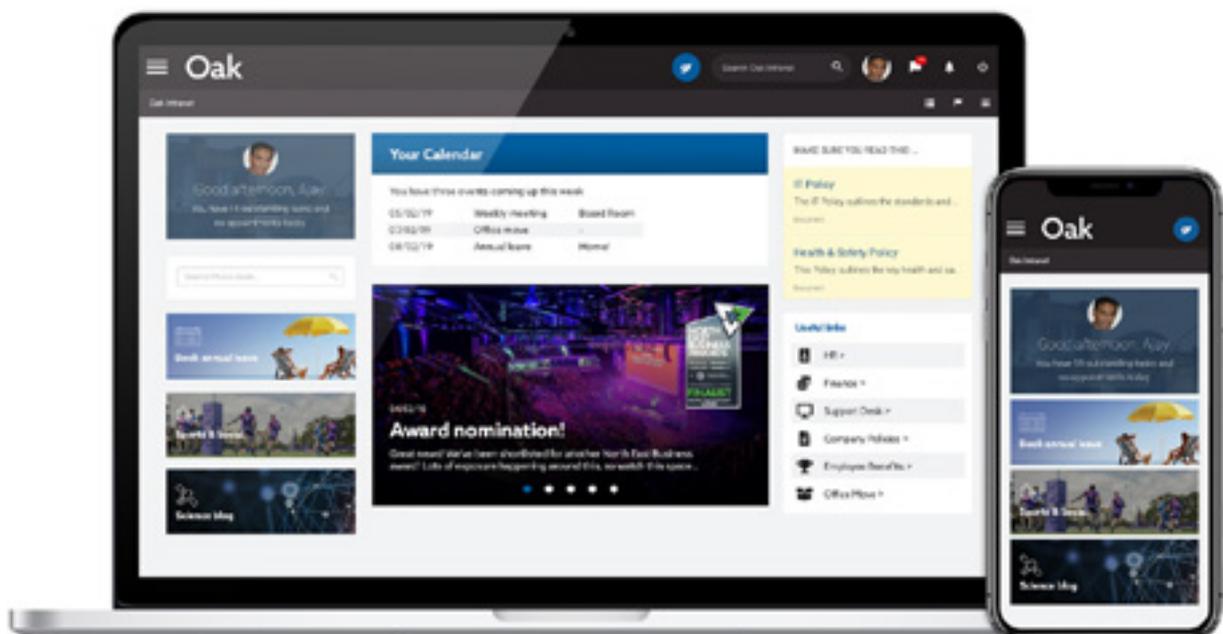
# Mobile Access &
# a Cloud-Based Intranet

## Mobility and ease of accessibility are key to a successful modern intranet.

While organisations might be understandably anxious about access to work data off-premises, there is also the growing demand for a work-life balance, remote-working and flexible hours that is encouraging companies to look for secure options.

According to Powownow, 75% of UK employees favour flexible working hours with a third preferring more flexibility than a pay raise. Not meeting this demand means companies are losing out on top talent and failing to meet the needs of a collaborative office.

### To meet these needs, a social intranet should include:

- **Mobile app** — with SSO, quick and easy access on any mobile device at any time, allows the employee to bring the office with them.

- **Comprehensive Intranet security** — including data encryption, compliance certification, SSO and SAML.

- **Integration —** this includes Sharepoint, Google, Office 365 and other cloud-based systems for easy document sharing and version control.

- **Responsiveness** — The intranet adapts different types of mobile devices

# Social Intranet Software

With the emergence of social media and technology, expectations and demands of incoming employees are different than twenty years ago. People can connect to others easily and immediately, and fully expect to be able to do the same at work.

Traditional intranets used to be controlled by the few and from the top down, and used as a non-interactive document storage system. Some rarely offered additional functionality, but only if you were willing to pay the development costs, resulting in a very expensive solution. Difficult to update, with a poor user-experience and a stodgy interface, the intranet of old gained the reputation of being a waste of time.

With the introduction of social tech, intranets are quickly becoming a vital component of organisations. Social intranets are much more intuitive, familiar, cloud-based, and flexible.

**Some features you're likely familiar with from social media platforms you can now find on social intranets include:**

- Interactive profiles with an activity stream

- Blogs and content areas

- Forums, Q&A, discussion areas

- Team and project hubs for collaboration

- Social hubs for like-minded colleagues to meet

- Instant messaging and other social interaction features, such as @tag and #tag people and content, Liking, Sharing and Commenting.

# End Social Tech Biases

## Many business leaders don't see a need for social technology.

As the common thought is, why do employees need to an instant chat when email and phone is good enough? To put things in perspective, when the computer was introduced into workplaces, it faced heavy scrutiny as well.

### According to an article from 1984:

> *"When the employee both fears the computer and lacks computer knowledge, the computer becomes a symbol of unwanted change within the work place and creates uncertain outcomes… Employees may either covertly or overtly resist the implementation and operation of the computer system within the organization"*

Replace 'computer' with 'social intranet' and 'employees' with 'employers', and it's the similar challenges. As time went on the benefits quickly proved to outweigh negative assumptions. It's now unheard of to have a business without computers.

The assumption regarding social technology is that staff will be less productive. Which is likely the reason that while 72% of companies are using social tech in some way, few reach their fullest potential due to worries from higher-ups such as distraction, maintenance cost, and inappropriate behaviour.

While intranet companies provide the support and tools needed to control intranet usage, the usage of a social intranet leads to trust, and there's only so much that can be done if company leaders don't trust their workforce.

# Changing Minds

Social tools are a necessary part of a modern intranet as they're used to communicate and interact with colleagues, connect offices and departments, and help teams collaborate on projects.

What can be achieved by embracing a modern intranet equipped with social tools? In a connected office, getting work done is finding and sharing information.

Yet, according to the McKinsey Global Institute (MGI), "the average employee spends approximately 28 percent of the workweek managing email and nearly 20 percent looking for internal information or tracking down colleagues who can help with specific tasks."

A social intranet helps by turning all contributions into searchable content, essentially making employees both teacher and student, and it stays put for however long you need it.

Content and messages are added to the knowledge base where keywords are indexed resulting in reduced search time by as much as 35%. This extends to finding the right people for a task and having a searchable database that showcases employees' skills and talents. Suddenly, it becomes so much easier to know who to reach out to.

The MGI elaborates that when using a collaborative intranet, a company's productivity can increase by 20-25%, as employees are more connected which increases work happiness.

To realise the full potential of a social intranet, employees need the information and tools they need to do their jobs well. As a result, they become passionate and active contributors to the company intranet which improves overall Return on Investment (ROI) as well.

To find out more about how an intranet can help you, **book a demo** at www.oak.com or call us at **0191 460 1122**.

# Oak

**The team behind your team**