

Launching a Successful Intranet

**Engaging, inspiring and equipping
your franchisees for profitable operations**

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The sale of a franchise isn't the end of the line...it's the beginning of the relationship. Now, it's your job to nurture that new business, and make sure that your new franchisee stays informed and engaged.

Engaged franchisees are successful; they're enthused about the product/service and follow the brand standard.

A good intranet can change culture, reward achievement, increase productivity, and turn strategy into action by engaging, informing, and directing franchisees -- but only if they read it...often.

This guide will help you to design an intranet that keeps your franchisees coming back, learning, collaborating, and succeeding!

*Engaged franchisees are **37% more profitable** than unengaged franchisees.*

*In addition, while 100% of engaged franchisees will recommend the brand, **41% of unengaged franchisees** will not.*

Source: Evan Hackel, InGage Franchisee Survey

FOUR STEPS TO AN ONLINE COMMUNITY

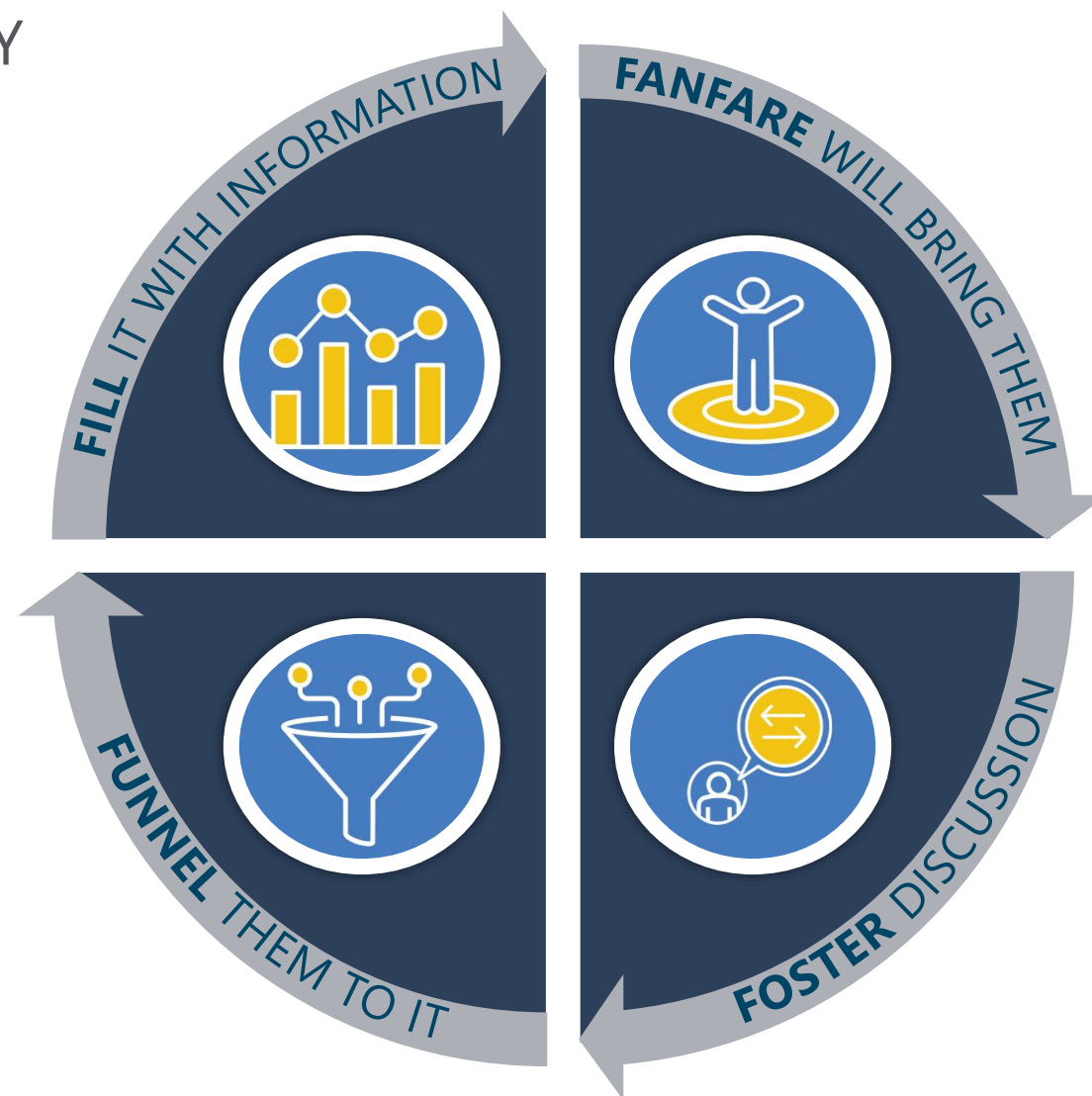
Building and maintaining an online community is cyclical...your Intranet is never “done”! That’s actually a good thing, because it means that it doesn’t have to be perfect before you roll it out. Users can get immense benefit from a work in progress, and some of them will even contribute!

The first step is to gather all of the information that you have available, and arrange it in a way that’s easy to find.

Next, you have to let people know that the information is there – the best intranet in the world is useless unless people read it.

Once information is available, you want to foster discussion among the people who use the information – you already know that they love advice from each other more than from their franchisor!

Some of your franchisees will take to the intranet immediately, but some will be resistant to change, and it’s not the best tool it can be unless everyone goes to it when they need something. So you’ll need to point them to it repeatedly in its first few months.





1

fill it with information

What should be in my Intranet?

An effective Intranet isn't just an information repository – it's a community. If you want to build a living resource that your audience consults on an ongoing basis, **you must address their need for skills acquisition, and for mindset inspiration.**

Skills Acquisition

Of course, you'll need to provide important information your franchisees need, like manuals, training, and resources to run their locations. Examples of items to put into your library include:

Operations Manuals

News bulletins (company response to weather or health news, etc)

Marketing calendar

Instructional videos (demonstrating business-based skills)

Tips and tricks based on your concept's objectives, for example

- themed pretzels for holidays, packaging coffee and two mugs for Valentine's day
- seasonal coloring templates
- location-submitted innovations for securing equipment in trucks

Consider beefing up your “Getting Started” program with your intranet

Most franchisors dedicate LESS THAN 10% of initial training time to sales and marketing.

We recommend that you **devote at least 20% of training time to skills based on creating and keeping customers.**

The most successful franchisors **use a tiered support structure**, often beginning with a “right start” specialist. The individual uses checklists designed to help ensure that proper behaviors are routinely followed until they become ingrained.

You can help new franchisees learn and integrate these practices by making a targeted section for them in your Intranet, sequenced by the skills that they need to acquire.

One franchisor **puts their new franchisees into “success groups”** based on graduating class or open date, and makes a special group for them in their social intranet. Franchisees feel more comfortable with the people they went through training with, who are their true peers in experience, so they gain the benefits of rooting for one another as a team, as well as having a sounding board for ideas and issues.

Making information easy to find

Your audience finds information in your Intranet one of two ways: by navigating to it, or by searching for it.

It's important that the information be easy to find, so you will want to **spend time organizing the navigation in the way that your franchisees will search for it**, not in the way you think of organizing it. For example, putting all manuals together and all forms together may not be as easy for them to navigate as arranging the information by topics – all information about marketing, all information about safety, etc.

You can make information easier to search for by entering a robust set of keywords, to expand the ability to find a document by what is inside it, rather than just what's in the title. Spend some time thinking of ways you would describe more complex documents by what they contain, and **include as many of the meaningful words as possible in the description and keywords attributes of your documents**. The more meaningful keywords, the better! Avoid words that are so general that they will be in nearly all documents, such as *franchise*, *work*, and your brand name.

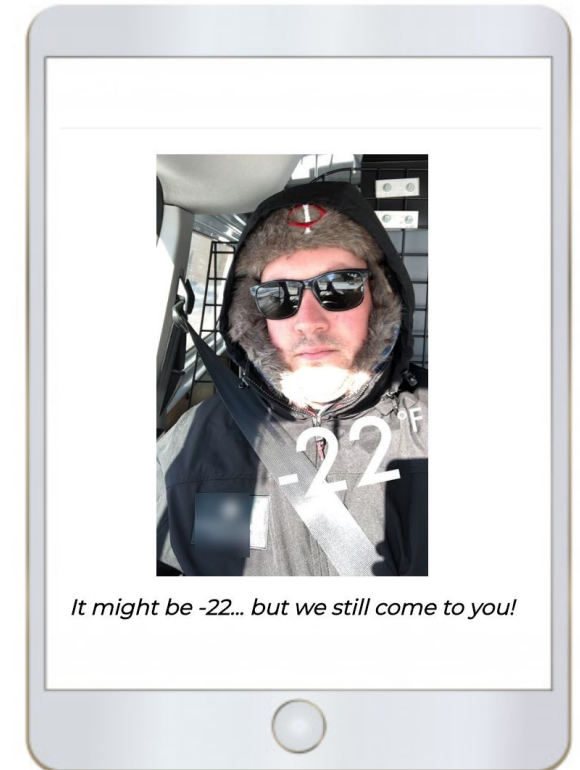
Mindset Inspiration

Raw information is only half of the story – the real power of an online community is its ability to inspire and reward, and share and recognize success. Franchisees love to hear from and about each other, and to see their own accomplishments celebrated.

Your Intranet offers a perfect place to publicize any gamification efforts you have underway – post leaderboards for sales goals, pictures of the creative work of the holiday store decorating contest, and so on. Encourage franchisees to post pictures of their work, and give them an easy place to do so. Post polls for them to weigh in on new initiatives.

You might want to use some of these inspirational items in your Intranet news:

- Personal accomplishments of franchisees (ran a marathon, had a heartwarming customer engagement)
- Location events (trade shows, sports team sponsorships, charity events)
- Your CEO/other celebrity blog, podcast or short message
- Short examples of franchisees living your concept's values (poll them for content)

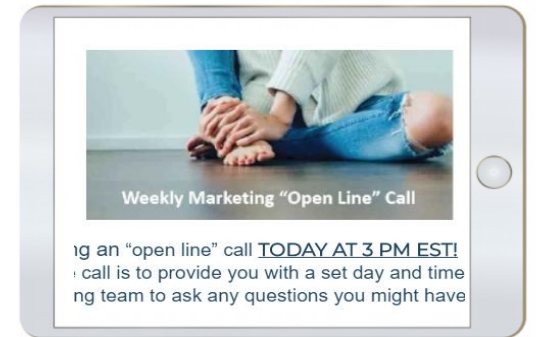
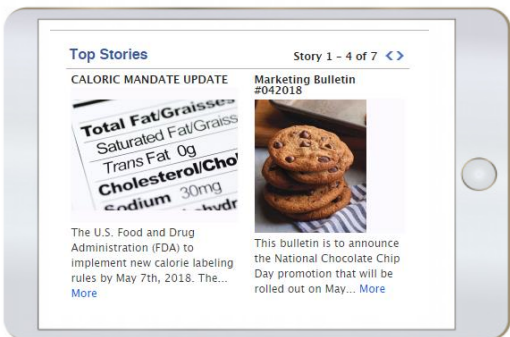



Even small items from franchisees can be news updates that build a sense of community.

Keep the news coming!

If you expect your audience to keep checking back, there has to be something new to find each time they look. Keep your intranet dynamic with a steady flow of stories and pictures, no matter how small, to keep the landscape changing for your readers. Some tips for always having "news":

- Keep a stash of non-time-sensitive items in your collection, so that you can always put something up during a lull.
- Have a calendar of important times of year (holidays, back-to-school, mosquito season), and write articles ahead – you may even choose to pre-schedule them to appear at the right time in your intranet.
- Consider having a submission contest, and let your community fill your pipeline.





fanfare will
bring them to it

2

fanfare will bring them to it

Just because you build it, doesn't mean they'll come.

Like any internal launch of enterprise software, you'll need a communications plan. This will reach out via multiple channels, including perhaps videos, posters, and even branded chocolates!

Step one – ask for help

If internal employee communications aren't already involved in your intranet, it's worth leveraging their skills for the launch. You want to make sure the whole organization knows about your social intranet. To start, **it's wise to enlist two groups of users** – the advocates, who you know will adopt early and spread the message, and the risk users, who will resist change through fear or opposition to your proposed solution.

While it seems obvious to ask for help from your champions, who will be enthusiastic and constructive, you should consider asking some key risk users as well. Often, being part of the solution helps these users understand the new intranet and feel invested in the change. Former risk users can be your best advocates in the long run!

Also, risk users can help you identify stumbling blocks and other users' objections to adoption, so you can mitigate those early on.



fanfare will bring them to it

Create an advocate network

In order to do this, you'll want to identify your advocates. These are enthusiastic and energetic individuals from all parts of the company who act both as local champions to promote the intranet, and as local experts.

Advocate or champion networks play a key role "on the ground" in global or geographically widespread organizations, where it is impossible for the small central intranet team to promote the new platform in every location.

While it may sound difficult in theory to create a network of advocates on top of their day-to-day demands, in practice, it's often easy. There are many outstanding examples of very passionate employees and franchisees whose help has been invaluable in launching a company's new project.

Often you can lean on this group for content creation, loading, and some training and question answering.

Once you've got them, train them right, meet with them regularly, and recognize them lavishly!



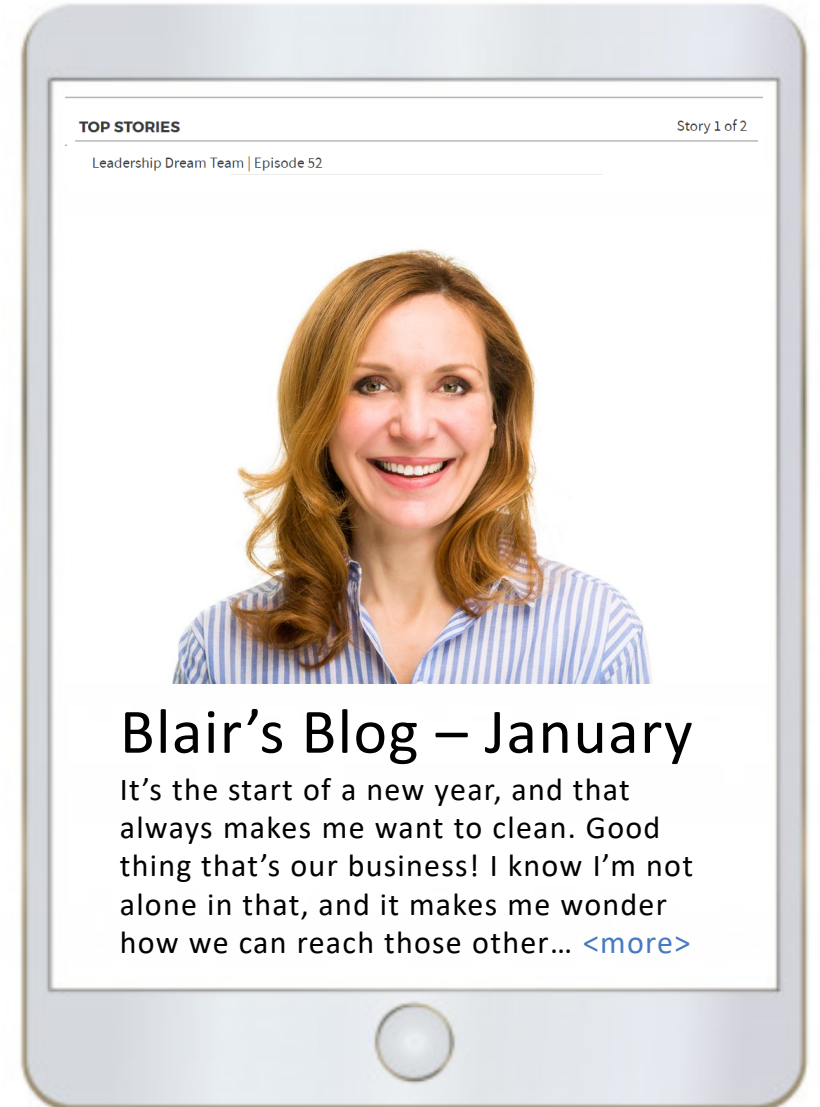
Coach senior management

The experience of most organizations is that having **visible support and participation from senior management is critical** for modern intranet success. This signals to other managers and to employees and franchisees that the intranet is a tool that's here to stay, and it's the place to get information.

You may have already worked closely with senior management to get their buy-in on the intranet. It's now time to carry on involving them so they are comfortable with actually using the tools. Prepare materials and carry out one-on-one sessions if necessary.

It's important that they not only know how to use the tools but also feel confident about appearing online. "What tone should I use? Should I respond to that comment?" are typical questions from senior management.

Based on your interactions with senior management, you could prepare materials or training for a wider group of content managers. Depending on your management's talent for expressing themselves and/or tech savvy, **you may choose to "ghost write" for them**, so that their message gets out in the way that they intend.



fanfare will bring them to it

Tell them it's coming – early and often

Have an announcement schedule, and get on stakeholder calendars early. In-person meetings are best, followed by teleconferencing. **Two-way communication will make it feel like your users are included** in the roll-out, not just having it thrust upon them.

If you have a large corporate user community in one office, put up posters, sponsor cupcakes...whatever it takes to keep your launch top-of-mind.

During all-hands and franchisee meetings, take an opportunity to give teasers for information that will be in your intranet, and nearer launch, consider showing screen shots or brief demos of features that you know they will appreciate. A good buzz-builder is to hold a contest to name your new Intranet.

Stress how this will solve present pain points – always have trouble finding that marketing document? Want to see what your fellow franchisees are doing? Check out the intranet!

“We held an online scavenger hunt with prizes, hung banners and posters in advance of the launch, and more. I presented at various All Hands meetings, met one-on-one with interested groups, and created a blog.

“No one in the company was unaware that we had a wonderful new intranet, and it became the most important vehicle for internal communications by far.”

Make your launch an event

A grand opening or launch event is essential if you want to have high readership of your intranet. Try to make an announcement, ideally with a demonstration tour, at an all-hands meeting. Failing that, make a video tour, and link to it from the CEO or celebrity blog. Foster participation from your audience with a virtual scavenger hunt with prizes, participation in surveys, or a competition for most use in the first time period.

Create a social intranet self-service section

The majority of your users will probably want to just go and explore your social intranet, but there will be others who will want more information about how to best use it and what it can do. It's always best to **create a "self-help" section** where employees can find answers to frequently asked questions, access training resources, and even ask questions if necessary.





3

foster peer-to-peer
discussion

“They’d rather hear from each other than from you...”

As a franchisor, you know that your franchisees love to talk amongst themselves, to get advice and share experiences. If you provide a forum for those interactions, you can have a seat at the table. In order to get this program up and running, you’ll want to seed some conversations.

For each Franchisor, this looks a little different however there are a few best practices to ensure the content is fresh daily. Some suggestions for starting up a discussion board and keeping it going are:

- Assign one corporate person per day to post. You’ll want them to start a conversation or post something that creates engagement.
- Create a consistent day and time when you’re available for Q&A, for example Marketing Mondays, when the Marketing team presents topics and creates discussions about new products, strategies, and successes.
- **Enlist your advocate network to ask questions and post tips**, so that franchisees see that this is a legitimate place to open dialogs.
- Post polls to get them responding. These can include “what types of information would you like to see” and “what facet of the intranet do you like/dislike?”



Develop policies around usage

Above, we noted that you should engage with your risk users early. One of the outcomes of this should be policies around usage of internal social media to minimize the risk of misuse and protect both individuals and the company.

Two central tenets of any social intranet usage policy are:

- Don't allow anonymous posting
- Have a mechanism to report any questionable content.

After that, your company's values will govern the rules of discourse on your intranet, but common ones are around respect for other posters, and not posting unsafe content.

This means you, too – when responding to candid posts about the company's products or practices, **refrain from being defensive or authoritarian**. The poster came to the forum with what they feel is a legitimate point...disagreement is acceptable, fighting is not.



What kinds of discussions should I start?

Typically, in a social forum, users are looking for help or information that lets them run their business better, so discussions around practical aspects of running a location are always welcome. Typical question types are like the following examples.

“Has anyone gone through the process of becoming a vendor for [company/agency]?”

“What kinds of questions do you ask candidates to determine culture fit?”

“We’re looking to outfit our operators with new [equipment]. What does anybody else use for this?”

“Has anyone competed for business against [competitor]? Got any tips for beating them?”



4

funnel them to the
intranet for answers

Once the intranet is up, it should be THE destination

This can be a hard thing to enforce – you want to be as helpful as you can to your franchisees. But you can still be helpful while pointing them to the Intranet for answers...think of it as teaching them to fish. **Once they're used to finding the answers on their own, they will prefer it** as more convenient, with less lag time than calling.

Ease them away from your direct help by first sending them links to what they want on the intranet...then some time later, sending links to the folders to where what they want is, and finally just a link to the intranet.

And of course, if something isn't there when they ask, put it up when they ask and send the link. Eventually, it will all be there.

And so will you.



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