

Steps for building governance into Office SharePoint Server 2007

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The benefits of implementing an intranet by using Microsoft® Office SharePoint® Server 2007 to enhance collaboration and maintain consistency throughout your organization are clear and well-documented.

However, without proper governance, even the best planned intranet can eventually become out of control and lead to chaos.

What can you do to prevent this and get the most from your Office SharePoint Server 2007 investment?

Many companies don't plan for a corporate intranet initiative. Instead, intranet projects bubble up from various departments, resulting in multiple separate deployments, each with its own server farm.

Often, no forethought is given to managing development and deployment processes. As more departments add content, the result is that the intranet grows organically across the company and the user experience grows more and more inconsistent.

If users are unable to find the content they need, for instance, due to poor information architecture (IA) or a lack of an enterprise search strategy, the value to intranet users is almost entirely lost.

Furthermore, most deployments lack governance in enterprise content management. Without proactive planning in Web content management, [records management](#), and [document management](#), not only do employees have difficulty locating information, but unauthorized access and reuse of digital information occurs more frequently and inappropriate document retention—keeping documents too long or disposing of them prematurely—is more likely to happen.

Companies often neglect to consider brand consistency across their Office SharePoint Server 2007 implementations, resulting in confusion about whether they are still on the enterprise's intranet or somewhere external. Controlled site provisioning, which includes creating user policies, guidelines for appropriate applications and content, and a plan for how these issues will be reviewed, is frequently an afterthought.

More often than not, companies fail to plan for adequate testing of the site prior to launch, resulting in everything from broken links to a site that doesn't meet the original business stakeholders' goals.

Finally, organizations typically fall short in adequately [training](#) employees for using or creating content for the intranet, once again severely reducing its ongoing value.

What specifically can you do to eliminate chaos and build a better intranet from the start? Use [Office SharePoint Server 2007](#) to create a managed, single environment and include plans for governance at the start.

Create a Governance Plan

Developing an Office SharePoint Server 2007 [governance plan](#), a guidebook outlining the administration, maintenance, and support of your corporation's Office SharePoint Server 2007 environments, is essential in getting corporate-level buy-in for your intranet project.

A governance plan is a powerful means of gaining early support from key stakeholders across organizations. It forces consensus and designates ownership for numerous key deployment considerations. Ultimately, a governance plan is a critical tool in avoiding [intranet chaos](#).

View the [sample governance plan](#).

Governance roles and responsibilities

As you set up your intranet, it's important to consider the roles, responsibilities, and lines of communication for the administrators and managers. Figure 1 identifies the typical roles and lines of communication involved in an intranet implementation.

Fig. 1: Typical structure for Office SharePoint Server 2007 intranet governance.



Site management is typically responsible for managing the Office SharePoint Server 2007 intranet environment for a group of sites within a portal or site. The site manager may lead a business team or a virtual team (v-team) composed of IT personnel, graphic designers, editors, or other specialists. The size of the team and roles included will depend on how much of the portal administration is centralized. In addition, the site manager is responsible for communicating to all roles about the portal status and development.

Business or content owners of the site collections or sites within the portal will need training, publishing and technical support from the site manager, and regular updates about the development of the environment. In return, they will offer their business requirements and justification for features and functionality of the sites they will use.

Executive stakeholders oversee the portal administration and monitor the benefits to the business. Site managers and content owners each may have their own set of executive stakeholders, and the relationships may be non-hierarchical and distributed throughout the business. Because the interests of content owners may compel them to build their intranet presence elsewhere, it's important for the site management team and their stakeholders to clearly communicate and prioritize features and functionality.

IT may fulfill the site management role or may partner with that role. In any case, they will likely have their own relationships with various executive stakeholders, content owners, and users (for general technical support).

Users are the most important part of the equation. After all, the portal exists to increase their access to relevant, accurate information and to enhance their collaboration and productivity. Site managers should plan regular and proactive communications with both content owners and users to ensure that they can get the most out of the intranet.

Governance planning for implementation

As a business stakeholder, you need to ensure that, at a minimum, your governance plan takes into consideration:

- Information architecture (site structure)
- Taxonomy (consistent naming conventions)
- Branding (correct use of company imagery)
- Provisioning (consistent site usage and user policies)
- Search (users can find what they need)
- Testing (consistent use of sites and content)
- Training (all users are trained)

Use the checklists in each of the following sections to help stakeholders across the organization gain clarity about what needs to be considered today, so that 180 days from now, your organization will have already created the governance plan necessary for a successful enterprise-wide intranet

deployment. And, you can help design an intranet worth the financial investment because employees will actually find what they need and get more done.

Fig. 2: Key Issues in Governance Planning

Information Architecture	Is information structured and presented in a user-friendly way? Are users able to view information from different sources in a single view? Do subsites reflect the structure of parent sites? Does the most frequently used content have the most visibility on sites?
Taxonomy	Which group owns and manages the taxonomy? What is the change control model for updating terminology? Is your taxonomy structure enabling a better search experience?
Branding	Are there layout or site templates available for publishing use? Are all the necessary branding elements visible on the sites? Do publishers have guidance on brand usage?
Search	Is there a plan to keep taxonomy and metadata up to date and relevant? Is there a search team in place to prioritize key terms and search results? Do search filters allow for user self-service? Are users directed to other relevant resources to search for information?
Testing	Are business owners enabled to test their own content/sites? Is there an online mechanism for collecting and managing feedback? Do test plans include all necessary functionality?
Training	Are training costs and chargeback models included in the budget plan? Are there a variety of training options built into the plan? Are training support materials such as FAQs easily available to users?

Determine the Information Architecture of Your Site

<p>Information Architecture Checklist</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure an understanding of what IA is. <input type="checkbox"/> Hire an IA professional. <input type="checkbox"/> Build wireframes for 4-5 most popular pages. <input type="checkbox"/> Create a site map to plan the overall structure. <input type="checkbox"/> Build content types for popular departments, regions, or businesses.
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Without planning proper information architecture from the beginning, users will not find what they need. If a bank, for instance, has a clean, clearly defined site structure, users can gain access to information faster. On the other hand, if information is scattered and unstructured, a bank teller, for example, must struggle to find information for an impatient customer in several different

databases and network locations and is unable to provide top-notch customer service.

So, how do you avoid this problem? Make sure stakeholders understand what [information architecture](#) is and why it's critical. If you don't have a professional information architect on your team, hire one to do the analysis and help bring consensus around the organization's content needs early. And, be sure to take advantage of the [Downloadable book: Planning and architecture for Office SharePoint Server 2007](#) available on the Microsoft TechNet site.

Build wireframes

Make an effort to build wireframes for your most important, popular pages. Identify 4–5 key pages that you must have to launch the site, such as a Home page, a Policies and Procedures page, a Department page, and a Search Results page.

Also, design simple sketches for each page, and then add links, content, and full functionality later. Don't worry about getting all the details for page functionality in your initial wireframes such as all the related links.

Create a site map

To plan out the overall structure, create a site map. The site map doesn't have to be very detailed at first. Get an overall structure for your site to meet business needs, such as making sure there are sub-sections for popular groups or departments like HR or Payroll, and then build out lower-level sections such as Project sites.

Build content types

Identify and build content types for popular departments, regions, or businesses. Most sites have similar needs, like quick access to the same information (phone numbers, FAQs) or links to high-traffic areas, such as a product catalog or favorite sub-sections.

Structure Your Site through a Taxonomy Framework

Taxonomy Checklist

- Give one group control over the taxonomy.
- Hire a professional taxonomist.
- Use the taxonomy for consistent labeling of the site.
- Build one set of taxonomy labels prior to finalizing your wireframes.
- Update taxonomy to provide useful search metadata.

Taxonomy is a structured way of ordering words, labels, tags, and so on for a Web site. It's similar to a vocabulary list with a set of guidelines for definitions and usage. Taxonomy helps to define and control the way a Web site is organized, what things are named, and how people find information. In short, taxonomy makes it easier to organize and find things on a Web site.

Determining a Web taxonomy framework early is essential to structured Web content and therefore enables easy and accurate information

access. To learn more about taxonomy, see [Determine the information architecture of your site](#) on the Microsoft TechNet site.

Become familiar with the following general taxonomy guidelines.

Determine taxonomy ownership

Give one business group control over the taxonomy. Taxonomies are hard to create and even harder to maintain. Get one business group to sponsor the taxonomy, and then have other groups contribute ideas and terms.

Unless you have trained taxonomists on staff, it's worthwhile to hire a vendor to build and maintain your taxonomy. Taxonomy maintenance can be very difficult without the right people doing the work.

Label consistently

Use the taxonomy to provide consistent labeling across the entire site. Taxonomies can be used to standardize what everything is called on a Web site.

Get at least one taxonomy for labels built before your information architect finalizes the wireframes. Not all groups will agree on all labels, so plan to make some labels generic, at least in the beginning, until you can validate what to call something based on how your business users enter search terms.

Expect to update the taxonomy

Update the taxonomy to provide useful search metadata. Ask your vendor to update your taxonomy at least every three to six months, depending on the size of your company and the volume of your information. Product companies that get new items frequently need more regular updates than banks, for example, that change terminology infrequently.

Use Consistent Branding to Optimize the User Experience

Branding Checklist

- Create and manage a master page gallery.
- Ensure that your site's visual designer includes some sort of branding in all content creation.
- Require use of templates on higher level pages to enforce brand consistency.
- Remember to allow room for sub-branding of individual teams or project brands.

Providing a consistent look and feel across the entire site is essential to letting users know they're on the company intranet. Office SharePoint Server 2007 enables use of a gallery of master pages that control how sites look and what kinds of content can go on pages.

However, as you plan an intranet, you'll see that each group wants to own and be in control of its own subsite. You will want to provide a consistent look and feel, but you may see that owners have something else in mind.

It's critical to gain consensus on branding and to include it in your governance plan. But how?

Take advantage of master pages

Create and manage a [master page](#) gallery in Office SharePoint Server 2007. Once you create these master pages containing the page design and layout elements that must be shared by all pages—such as navigational controls, company logos, and copyright notices—they can be efficiently updated in one place rather than on each individual Web page.

Incorporate branding throughout the site's visual design

Make sure that the visual designer for your new site includes some form of branding in all content creation. This may be as simple as a logo at the top of a page and a disclaimer in the footer.

Require that at least some templates be used for "higher level" content pages in order to enforce brand consistency. Tell owners that they can improvise on lower-level, detailed pages, but they have to use templated pages at the introductory level. Also, remember to allow room for sub-brand placement. Give site owners the chance to place their brands—such as their project or team brand—on a page.

Handle Provisioning Issues Proactively

Your governance plan needs to include information about what kinds of applications the site is designed to include, spell out whether or not users can create their own site, and provide usage guidelines, including applying security settings to certain types of sites.

Handle these issues proactively with the following tips.

Provisioning Checklist

- Determine an approval process for compliance and auditing.
- Establish and document user policies, including securing restricted areas.
- Publish guidelines outlining appropriate application and content types.
- Consider prohibiting confidential data on your site.
- Clearly define remote access policies to ensure security.

Determine an appropriate approval process

To ensure compliance with many of the issues that need to be addressed in your governance plan, it's best to implement an official approval process. In this process, stakeholders would review compliance and audit applications prior to broad release. Sometimes an initial consultation is warranted to ensure that Office SharePoint Server 2007 is the appropriate platform for an application under consideration. To be effective, reviews must be performed rapidly so that they don't delay application deployment.

Create user policies

To prevent sites from growing out of control, you need to establish and document user policies in your governance document. During the design phase of a project, before the site is completed, create user policies that lock down the areas that require more security so no one can create rogue pages or sites in those areas. In the policy, describe what roles can and cannot create content in the areas designated as higher security.

Publish usage guidelines

Proactively provide guidance for the types of application and content that are appropriate for the Office SharePoint Server 2007 site and that types that are better implemented elsewhere. Having this information documented helps ensure consistent decision making as new questions arise down the road.

Baseline guidelines might include establishing a policy that forbids sensitive data such as customer information or confidential project information about their Office SharePoint Server 2007 site. Additionally, many companies avoid using Microsoft Windows SharePoint Services sites for more complicated processes that require cross-department integration. Define these guidelines in writing.

Remote access policy and other infrastructure issues

As more workers are working online from a variety of locations and time zones, it's critical to determine a remote access policy for mobile workers that follows your security policy yet provides access to critical information when needed.

If a company has a need to access Office SharePoint Server 2007 sites for mobile workers, for example, there needs to be standardized methods of creating and deploying those Office SharePoint Server 2007 third-party add-ins to ensure that security policies are met.

Make Search Functionality a User Perk, Not a Pain

Search Checklist

- Assign workflows for content creation so only the best information is available for search indexing.
- Integrate your taxonomy with search planning.
- Use hit highlighting, best bets, and people search.
- Incorporate alternative content forms such as blogs and wikis into your search results.
- Use Business Data Catalog functionality in Office SharePoint Server 2007 to enable search on customers, products, and more.

If there's one thing users will notice right away, it's that they can't find the information they need. (On the other hand, they probably won't notice search functionality if it works properly.) Make sure to consider [search](#) functionality in your governance plan. It's critical to define a structure for how sites will be organized and to develop a linking strategy between different types of sites, such as enterprise, divisional, or departmental.

Everyone talks about search, but how can you improve overall search on your site through governance?

Assign content-creation workflows

One helpful tip is to assign workflows for content creation to make only the best information available for search indexing. By controlling the life cycle of the content—from creation to deletion—you can provide your users with only the best search results and keep out unwanted junk or old results.

Integrate taxonomy with search planning

You've spent all that money on your taxonomy. Now, get some value by integrating taxonomy into your search planning. Keeping up with your customers means reviewing search reports and revising your taxonomy for content tagging during uploading to keep your metadata up to date.

Take steps up front to improve user results

Some easy ways to improve results are by using hit highlighting, best bets, and people search. Get your search team to decide on key terms and prioritize what search results people should see. (Don't have a search team? Create a v-team immediately with important stakeholders from critical business divisions to work with any design resources inside or outside the organization.)

Another way to improve results is to build search filters to enable users to self-serve results and to encourage common search requests. Who knows what they want more than the users who are entering the search term? Let them decide what results to show by letting them filter the search results. Talk to your design team about this.

Remember less obvious content forms

Incorporate wikis, blogs, and other alternative content forms into your search results. Don't simply settle for searching more traditional Web pages or document content. A lot of useful information is now contained in these new mediums.

Also, be sure to take advantage of the Business Data Catalog (BDC) functionality in Office SharePoint Server 2007, which integrates business data from back-end server applications into Office SharePoint Server 2007 without any coding. Users gain the ability to search across business systems for information about customers, partners, products, and more.

Build Testing Into the Schedule Early So You Don't Have to Skimp Later

Testing Checklist

- Prior to launch, require site owners to test their own content.
- Offer a convenient mechanism for site owners to provide testing feedback.
- Create thorough test plans and let site owners know specifically what you want them to test.

Building a strong user acceptance testing plan up front will help business stakeholders see for themselves that the project objectives have been met before the intranet is widely available.

Make pre-launch testing mandatory

Require site owners to test their own content prior to launch. Set up schedules for them to review content every other day during the testing cycle.

To make it easy to hear back from these testers, provide an online form or similarly convenient way for site owners to provide feedback during testing. You need to get feedback fast to make changes, so don't get bogged down in massive spreadsheets.

It's best to create test plans that test all necessary functionality, such as links to other programs. Provide site owners with a specific checklist of exactly what specific functionality you want them to check. If you make the assumption they'll just know what to do, you may be disappointed with the results.

Training is Essential for User Adoption

Training Checklist

- Include realistic training costs as part of your earliest estimates
- Spend 25% of your budget on training those authoring and publishing your site and 75% on user training.
- Hire an outside training consultant for a nimble training program.
- Take advantage of diverse training opportunities for diverse learners.
- Provide separate training for site managers, application designers, and users.

Without a training plan, you might as well not spend the money on this project. Just because you build it, don't assume users will know how to use it.

Invest appropriately in training

Include training in your earliest cost estimates. Don't let training expenses come as a surprise later. Set a realistic budget for this at the start and decide how training will be paid for and whether it will be charged back to the various organizations.

Most companies find it's worthwhile to hire an outside training consultant to do the work. Even though you might have staff available to do the training, outside consultants oftentimes deliver training more nimbly and often have access to cutting-edge training content. Remember to plan for both internal (authoring and publishing) training and external (user) training. Spend 25% of your training budget on internal

training and 75% on external training. Users won't just "figure it out." User training is essential to user adoption.

Differentiate instructions to meet diverse roles

Adult learners do best in a variety of different environments and need instruction geared toward what they need to accomplish in their jobs.

- Use classroom, [online](#), and self-guided training materials, and plan for diverse training opportunities.
- Create FAQs, training materials, brown bags, and Web sites to address training.
- Take advantage of the free, online information Microsoft offers on the Office Online [SharePoint Server 2007 Help and How-to](#) page and ask developers, administrators, and users check out the [SharePoint Products and Technologies Community](#) pages.
- Train site managers to create Smart sites, follow the agreed-upon taxonomy, use the designated templates, and help enforce access and security policies for your intranet site.
- Teach application designers how to integrate line of business applications, how to use Office SharePoint Server 2007 state-of-the-art CSS editing tools, and more.
- Train users to use Office SharePoint Server 2007 features that help them work smarter. For example, teach users how to collaborate efficiently by taking advantage of Office application interaction. Show them how to increase productivity by connecting to sites from home.

On top of all this, be sure to allow time for unstructured training. Informal get-togethers frequently are the best way for both publishers and users to learn from each other about what's been successful for their particular workgroup.

Consider policy training, too

Include training on policies in your overall training plan. Document corporate policy information for the intranet in your governance plan. Widely communicating that training not only spreads information about Office SharePoint Server 2007 functionality, but also information about corporate-defined policies. Documenting and providing training on policies is absolutely essential to the manageability and consistency of a large, enterprise-wide site.

Conclusion

You will enjoy greater success with your Office SharePoint Server 2007 site if you develop and enforce governance standards early and often in as many different areas of your business as you can. By using the checklists in this article, you will improve your company's chances of launching an Office SharePoint Server 2007 site that users will use and owners will appreciate.

Creating a written governance plan covering everything from usage policies, information policies, and guidelines for business involvement in the

deployment sets expectations up front with business owners and provides a tool to help drive communication of those expectations to the rest of the organization.

To avoid intranet chaos, business stakeholders need to emphasize the ease of use of Office SharePoint Server 2007 while at the same time suggesting that maintaining a reasonable amount of control will benefit everyone in the long run.