

Affinity Sutton Case Study



Since implementing Interact Intranet, Affinity Sutton's IT department have saved £75,000 and the HR department have seen general enquiries reduce by 50%. Staff communication and collaboration has been transformed using Enterprise 2.0 tools including blogging, micro-blogging and open forums.

The Company

With over 55,000 homes and a one hundred year history, Affinity Sutton is one of the biggest providers of affordable housing in England. It provides a range of housing and community focused services across more than 120 local authorities from Newcastle upon Tyne in the North East to Plymouth in the South West.

Their company approach is to put customers first through minimising bureaucracy, creating efficiencies and maximising opportunities.

Intranet Objectives:

- Overhaul internal communication and connect the 1,500 work force
- Implement an easy-to-use intranet that can be easily managed by non-IT staff
- Ensure all staff can adopt the intranet from the onset
- Unlock knowledge from the 1,500 workforce
- Boost productivity

The Problem

In early 2007 Affinity Sutton were going through a company merger which meant that three different businesses were joining together, all possessing different 'home-built' intranet systems that couldn't be integrated.

Only IT staff were able to update information on the intranet or change the sites branding, which placed excessive pressure on the IT department and led to lack of intranet adoption by staff.

Internal communication for the 1,500 staff who work across 200 Affinity Sutton sites throughout the UK was problematic and bulk emails were being used as the standard way to communicate, leading to rife knowledge silos.

Goals

Affinity Sutton needed a solution that was going to overhaul internal communication and connect the 1,500 work force.

They also required an easy-to-use intranet that could be managed by non-IT staff to ensure all workers would adopt the intranet from the onset.

Reducing the strain on the internal email system was a major target as vast amounts of information was constantly lost in inbox's. The successful intranet needed to be able to unlock and share knowledge effectively.

Research

Affinity Sutton researched a number of intranet software products in the market and found Interact Intranet was the best solution for them due to it's simple to use content management system, its flexible architecture and the extensive collaborative features.

Jo Warburton, Intranet Manager at Affinity

Sutton commented:

"Interact Intranet was the best software option by a long way. We liked how flexible it was and how easily it could be controlled by non-technical staff as well as the Intranet Manager. Its ease of use was a major pull for us also - it's simple to train our super users and anybody can easily create a landing page after just a one hour training session."

Launch

Affinity Sutton first launched Interact Intranet into the company in 2007. To ensure staff really embraced the new intranet system and got familiar with its functionality, Affinity Sutton removed their global email address book facility meaning employees were pushed to the intranet.

Jo continues:

"This was a shock tactic but it really pushed people to the intranet as they needed to find peoples' contact details. People then got used to using the intranet and became more and more aware of the features it offered."

Affinity Sutton also set up the intranet so that it automatically opened whenever an employee logged onto their computer. This further pushed people to the intranet and ensured they didn't miss out on any important information that may have been posted.

In 2009 Affinity Sutton upgraded to the latest version of Interact Intranet to strengthen their company rebrand launch, using many of the new features and widgets now available to them.

Affinity Sutton utilised the bespoke design

For more Information

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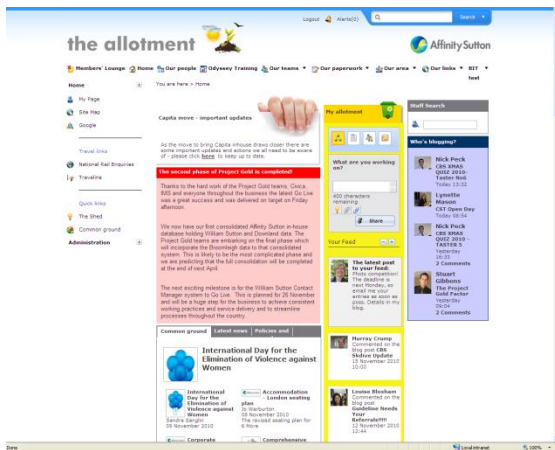
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elements of Interact Intranet to change the look and feel of their existing intranet. The adaptable design elements within Interact Intranet mean that companies can easily incorporate a design that reflects their brand guidelines or use one that is fun and personal to the business.

Affinity Sutton were then able to engage their employees further by running a competition via the intranet to decide on a new name and theme for their intranet. They chose the name, 'The Allotment' as it encapsulated the company's vision: 'Helping People Put Down Roots.' This also enabled Affinity Sutton to have fun with the design and structure of other areas of the intranet, continuing the allotment theme.



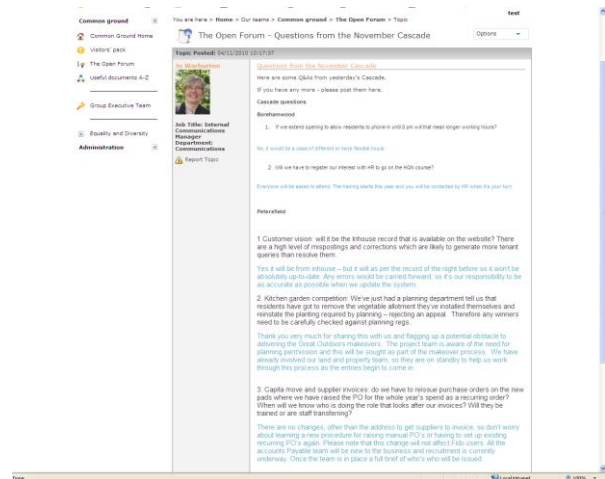
Jo comments:

"The blogging tool is on the portal page of the allotment, where the latest four posts are displayed. The topics are diverse and frequently changing.

We believe that mixing social and business topics draw people to the intranet and reflect the Affinity Sutton culture."

As well as being used regularly by authors, the blogs are always well read and authors perpetually receive great responses from posts.

The open forum widget on Affinity Sutton's intranet is another feature that has boosted collaboration with Affinity Sutton's workforce.



Communication and collaboration

Interact Intranet's blogging tool has been one of the big successes on Affinity Sutton's intranet. This has resulted in increased collaboration by all levels of staff within Affinity Sutton, enabling them to unlock and share knowledge.

Affinity Sutton make sure their blogs are both fun and business related to keep all staff engaged.

"We use the Open Forum for corporate communications, congratulatory pages and social events and have seen great success with it.

Our open forum is in the 'Common Ground' area of the allotment and is where we aim to bust knowledge silos and enable collaborative working."

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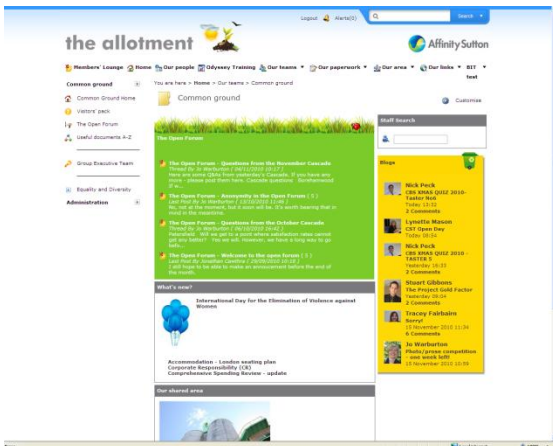
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Comments on documents is another feature of Interact Intranet that has been successful in increasing internal communication and productivity within Affinity Sutton.

Jo explains:

“This feature is used a lot by Affinity Sutton. During the cascade meeting where we do a face to face briefing, the comments feature allows people who are not office based or missed the briefing to ask questions or make suggestions. We then respond to the comments and questions and post them on the ‘Common Ground’ Forum for all to see.”

The Clever Linker feature on Interact Intranet has enabled Affinity Sutton to create dynamic links to the content on their intranet and increase content findability.

“The Clever Linker has become intrinsic to how we use the intranet. On home pages, people link to business cards for key staff and to key documents. During campaigns we use the clever linker to refer back to relevant blogs and documents. I can’t remember how we coped before the Clever Linker was introduced!”

SUMMARY

Staff communication and collaboration has been transformed in Affinity Sutton through their use of Enterprise 2.0 tools including blogging, micro-blogging and open forums. The three full-time members of staff previously devoted to the intranet functionality have now been redeployed to other IT duties, saving Affinity Sutton c£75,000 in manpower.

The biggest time saving has been for the HR team who developed an A-Z list of issues in their intranet section, which led to general enquiries dropping approximately 50% in the first six weeks. This not only saved them time answering simple queries, but meant that staff could get reliable HR information in just one click.

Key Benefits

- IT staff saving of c£75k in manpower
- HR team saved huge amount of time by developing a strong A-Z in their section, which saw general enquiries drop by around 50% in the first six weeks of implementation
- Internal email traffic significantly reduced
- Knowledge silos have been unlocked through the use of collaboration tools including the blogs and forums
- Company information is kept relevant and up-to-date by using the statistics and search analytics
- Employee time saved and productivity enhanced by the use of the Interact Recommends feature, which is powered by Interact Intranet’s intelligence store

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