CORE
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National Autistic Society

CASE STUDY

Replacing out-of-date systems with a new intranet

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The Company

Founded almost 60 years ago, the National Autistic Society is the UK's leading charity for autistic people. Since 1962, they have been campaigning for autistic people's rights and providing support and advice to autistic people and their families. They work to transform individuals' lives through their services and schools, change attitudes through campaigning and developing better autism practice and so create a society that works for autistic adults and children.

More than 2500 National Autistic Society staff work in their schools and providing adult services in the community. Most of the charity's employees work in a variety of settings, which are not office based.

Summary

The National Autistic Society needed a new, cloud-based intranet that would serve as a repository for useful information for staff and could be accessed from anywhere, on any device, at any time.

Results Overview

- Core created a new SharePoint Online intranet
- The intranet could be accessed by staff from any location, on any device
- The solution was a structured repository of company information with powerful search
- Quick and easy company-wide communication was enabled.

The Challenge

The National Autistic Society's existing intranet was based on an old SharePoint on-premise server, which could only be accessed from a network-based PC. With most employees being remote workers, this was impractical and served as a barrier to staff accessing information.

The charity needed a cloud-based intranet built that could be accessed from any location and on any device. "Moving to the cloud and having an intranet that worked on any device, was key to us," said Sean Garvin, IT Business Process Design Manager at the National Autistic Society.

Business Requirements

The National Autistic Society had very specific criteria that the new intranet needed to fulfil.

Firstly, it needed to be a more simplified version of the existing site while still housing all the necessary information. It needed to be flexible, inclusive and user-friendly so that all staff could easily navigate it, regardless of computer literacy level. The charity also wanted to give staff - including junior members - the freedom to update their own team areas without the potential to affect or change other parts of the intranet.

The intranet also needed to be autism-friendly, and so could not include flashy features or gimmicks. To minimise long-term costs, they also wanted a solution that worked with the out-of-the-box features of SharePoint, and one that wasn't highly customised.

The Solution

The National Autistic Society chose Core Technology Systems to design and build a new cloud-based intranet which met their unique requirements and delivered flexibility.

> **"**
> **We met with other suppliers and discussed the pros and cons of different products. Our decision to work with Core was based on cost, value for money and the suitability of the product. "**

Core held a series of workshops with staff across the charity to establish their requirements, held QA site design sessions and created a plan for launch. The pandemic and subsequent lockdown meant that all staff began working remotely almost overnight, so an interim intranet was created to house existing information. The old server was decommissioned and at the earliest opportunity the build was started.

The Process

01
Design and planning workshops

02
Solution Design Document produced

03
Base build and content added

04
Testing and training

The Result

The National Autistic Society has a cloud-based SharePoint Online intranet that can be accessed from anywhere, with a clear taxonomy which makes information easy to find.

Rhiannon Edwards, Interim Internal Communications Lead, commented, "The new intranet is easier to edit and upload to. It's really flexible. Because it is easier and quicker to update, it's become a much more reliable source of information."

Information can be found quickly thanks to the new search functionality. "Even though it's a simplified intranet solution, there is still a lot of content out there in the other SharePoint sites," added Edwards. "Having an effective, powerful search engine has really helped, because our staff are really busy and don't have much screen time."

The new intranet has also made charity-wide communication much easier and given greater visibility across platforms. Edwards provided great feedback from the team, adding, "One of the things that has worked really, really well, is the way Teams can link with Stream, which can then link with news stories. The automated transcripts also make this more accessible and are a valuable feature."

The charity also uses Yammer as a hub of employee engagement. "The fact that we can easily embed Yammer feeds within our intranet pages is a real plus, and we've plans to develop this element of the intranet, so watch this space."

Core greatly appreciated the opportunity to work with such a great organisation making a positive difference and we were very pleased to hear of the excellent results and adoption of the new SharePoint solution. To find out more about autism, visit https://www.autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/what-is-autism.