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Developing a Viable Intranet Site

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DEVELOPING A VIABLE INTRANET SITE

Wendy C. Glidden, B.S.

**An Abstract Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate
School of Lindenwood University in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Degree of Master of Corporate Communication**

ABSTRACT

This thesis will focus on establishing consistent guidelines in developing a successful corporate intranet website.

Office intranets are often neglected due to popularity of electronic commerce, and the company's investment in their public website. Standard instructions on how to develop a viable intranet site are not easily found and not likely taught.

With intranet development being a relatively new field, site expectations are very subjective. A site's perceived correctness largely depends on specific goals an organization has established for its site. There are generally high expectations and low budgets for intranets and if usability goals are not kept close at hand, design standards can become a political issue.

This study attempts to identify the main components that contribute to a viable intranet site. The objective is to determine how non-technical employees can create successful sites for their department, detailing one such employee's experience. The following chapters contain: current usage of corporate intranets; identification of research resources; guidelines for creating a dynamic intranet; the result of a first attempt at developing a site and finally, an evaluation and recommendation for future improvement of the site.

Research and analysis determines four categories to consider when planning an intranet site: content; design; usability testing; and promotion.

In order to positively impact employee communication and productivity, intranet sites must be carefully planned, written, and tested. Establishing intranet site development guidelines will help ensure a consistently positive outcome.

DEVELOPING A VIABLE INTRANET SITE

Approved by Professor Michael Carter

Department of Business Administration

Approved by Professor Michael Carter

Wendy C. Glidden, B.S.

Approved by Professor Bob Williams

Wendy C. Glidden, B.S.

A Culminating Project Presented to the Faculty of the
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Degree of Master of Corporate Communication

2001

COMMITTEE IN CHARGE OF CANDIDACY:

Associate Professor Michael Castro,
Chairperson and Advisor

Associate Professor Michael Kramer

Associate Professor Bob Williams

Wendy C. Glidden, B.S.

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

All members of an organization have an inherent desire to know what is occurring in their workplace. Researchers have identified five basic formal and informal internal channels of communicating in organizations.

Formal channels are planned and established by the organization. Downward communication, flowing from management to employee through written word, is the most common form. Upward Communication provides management with feedback about current issues and problems from subordinate to manager and can be verbal, non verbal, or written. Communication between manager and peers or between coworkers is called horizontal communication. This usually involves problem solving and coordination of workflow between peers or groups. Because there is limited control by management, information can be widely spread and quickly exchanged.

Informal channels allow information to be carried outside of the formal channels. Word of mouth, or the "grapevine", is primarily created to meet organizational members' innate need for information. Although information is often incomplete, it's 70-90% accurate and travels at an extremely rapid pace.

Networks are the second informal communication system in an organization. Workers forms strong bonds by taking breaks together and socializing outside of work. Networks are reflective of small groups, with members serving as opinion leaders, gatekeepers, and bridges to other networks (Hershey 352-354).

Unfortunately, many large companies have convoluted communication channels, where people sit isolated in their cubes and do not know what happens in other departments. It is obviously beneficial to understand the formal and informal communication channels used to disburse information in order to appropriately use them to reach employees.

Fortunately, a vital new tool of information sharing called an intranet has emerged from the evolution of information technology. In it harbors the opportunity to make use of the full mix of the identified communication channels. An intranet is a website a company creates that is accessible only to its employees. It has the power to coordinate and feed each described communication channel-- yet it is a centralized, neutral medium for information sharing.

While the intranet supports downward communication by making executive decisions, statements, and strategy easily available, it mainly impacts and improves horizontal communication. Put simply, the intranet makes it possible for employees to get information without bothering anyone. This produces a more aware and educated employee. Intranets also have a

democratizing influence on the workplace. They empower the employee, promoting upward communication. The intranet is a viable means of breaking down barriers that have stood for decades between divisions, departments, and workgroups.

According to the International Data Corporation, in August 1999 more than 50 percent of large-size and 32 percent of medium-size US organizations had corporate Intranets. They are mainly used for information sharing and publishing, email, document management, electronic forms, and corporate directories (An Intranet Renaissance 24).

In the first major independent study of Intranets, published by Creative Networks, Inc. in 1997, more than 70 percent of companies interviewed cited information-sharing or communications-collaboration needs as the driving force for intranet development. The survey involved 52 companies that average a minimum of 5,000 intranet users. It showed that the average cost of training on intranets is 2.4 hours or \$46 per user annually, as compared to 4.4 hours and \$85 for comparable training on traditional client server messaging systems. Annual per user cost of downtime is \$66 on Intranets as compared to \$162 on client server systems. "This is the first study that documents the cost and value of intranets," says Nina Burns, CEO of the Palo Alto, Calif.-based Creative Networks and architect of the study, "The payback is definitely there." (Corp Intranet Use 15).

By using web-enabled applications, corporations can expect:

- Reduced costs- printing, paper, software distribution, mailing, and order processing;
- Reduced telephone support expenses;
- Easier, faster access to technical and marketing information;
- Easier, faster access to remote locations;
- Increased access to competitive information;
- A more thorough research base;
- Easier access to customers and partners;
- Increased accuracy and timeliness of information;
- A consistent interface to learn and use;
- Just-in-time information; and
- Just-in-time training (Cimino 52)

To reduce reliance on paper for distributing employee-related information, a national student loan servicing company called UNIPAC launched an intranet in the spring of 1996. Results were positive- UNIPAC found its Intranet not only reduced paper consumption (and associated printing and postage costs), but also increased the productivity in its human resources department. Rather than have HR spend time delivering needed forms, the intranet allowed employees to get their own updated HR data, combined with the appropriate forms, all with a point and a click. UNIPAC's Intranet has since grown to accommodate "internal and external newsletters, employee briefings on corporate projects, branding and trademark information, phone lists, organization charges, letter head and fax

templates, internal job postings and more. It even includes a company store” (Bort 40).

In another testimony to the monetary value of corporate intranets, Mark Johnson, president of The Understanding Business, recalls a bank that was forced to create a 15-person call center to handle repeated questions about its latest employee benefits program. “In a free-wheeling discussion with senior management, Johnson led the group in calculating that the company had spent almost one million dollars in staffing, equipping and supporting this department over two years. Johnson asked for \$100,000 to design a new communication package that, when completed, would allow the client to eliminate the call center and collect \$900,000 in savings” (Layton 22).

While an intranet can play an important role in getting your company to work together and distribute information, it can also become a disorganized mess that’s hard to use and doesn’t provide anything meaningful. Many are generally under-funded and, to some extent, neglected (An Intranet Renaissance 24).

The cost of poor intranet designs and navigation is high: at least 10 million dollars per year in lost employee productivity for a company with 10,000 employees. Worldwide, the cost of poor intranet usability will grow to about \$100 billion by the year 2001 unless better navigation systems are built and much stricter internal designs enforced (Nielson 274).

Case Study

This paper focuses on the intranet developed for a physician based health care service and hospital organization located in St. Louis, Missouri. Two hospitals are the hub of the business, but many other departments support and provide service to the hospitals and to the public: claims/billing; disability evaluations; counseling; physician offices and urgent care centers; human resources; materials management; finance; planning & marketing, and hospice services.

In early 1998, partnering hospitals had recently entered into the business agreement that created one organizational entity. However, many workers held on to their former hospital identities and continued to operate independently. Upper management wished to bring together the separate entities and enforce workforce affiliation. At this point the intranet was identified as one tool that could be used to centralize communication. Prompted by physicians vocal in expressing their need to have one site containing practice forms and patient education material, and departments creating personal web pages that seemed uncoordinated and contradicting, the organization was concerned enough to decided to invest \$160,000 in IBM to help develop the intranet.

The primary target audience for the Intranet is hospital employees. The secondary audience is physicians affiliated with the hospital, especially physicians

who are members of hospital's Medical Group. Volunteers are also targeted to a limited extent.

The employee population is diverse in their education, job duties, and work environment-- many do not have frequent access to PCs. Workers are geographically dispersed throughout the greater St. Louis community.

According to the Corporate Communications Manager at the hospital, the initial identified goals of the intranet were to:

- Provide employees with information and tools to increase their productivity
- Maintain and improve positive communications with employees
- Promote a culture of oneness throughout the organization
- Enhance relationship with physicians by providing them access to valuable information and services
- Build a foundation for future Internet site, which will be used for consumer health information and marketing purposes.

The following content was developed with the audience and goals in mind:

- HOME PAGE
- ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION
 - Map(s) of locations
 - Statistics about hospitals
 - Corporate brochures
- NEWS ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION
 - Newsletter

- Medical Staff Update
- EMPLOYEE INFORMATION
 - Benefit summary
 - Job listings
 - Application forms
 - Change of status forms
- PHYSICIAN INFORMATION
 - CME listings
- CALENDAR OF EVENTS
 - Health and wellness events
 - Employee events
 - Training schedules
- EDUCATION
 - Medical library
 - List of classes
 - Request for documentation
 - Request for information
 - Library hours and location
- PHONE DIRECTORY

Though it took only four short months to complete the site, it took almost two full years to convince administration to launch the site. The leadership in place was very authoritarian in nature and feared allowing employees access to the World Wide Web. They felt workers would use this access for personal matters or Internet “surfing” on company work time. The struggle continued until March 29,2000-- the date the Intranet was launched.

An extensive promotion roll-out was initially established. However, upper management again voiced their concern over Internet abuse if employees became too interested in online communication. The communication plan was

asked to be “toned down”, eliminating demonstrations, training classes, giveaways and prizes, posters, and informational brochures/flyers to physicians offices having network access.

Though intranet promotion has been limited and content is mainly unchanging or “static”, the marketing department is satisfied with employee usage of an average of 200,000 hits per month.

The most popular category is human resources, with the job postings getting the majority of attention, and employee benefit information a close second. Usage tracking and evaluation is determined through log file analysis.

As awareness of the intranet’s communication potential grows, so do ideas for its specialized application to departments like Family Medicine, which is currently piloting its residency program online. Doctors in medical residency log on the password- protected site for rotation schedules, as well as test results from tests taken and graded online.

The medical library is also expanding, creating a search method for articles and books. Likewise, physician practices of the Medical Group have enabled their site to contain download practice management that can be downloaded for employee use.

If computer kiosks were installed in hospitals for non-PC users, educational information related to specific disease now stored in three-ring binders at various hospitals and departments, could be accessed online allowing more timely service, patients and less headaches for health professionals.

The organization's Communication Manager wants to see the intranet continue to blossom to its full potential. She cited several areas in which the intranet could improve:

- New publishing software-- Lotus Notes is currently used but it is not user friendly, there is no staff expert, training is limited, it required two different platforms for related Internet and Intranet sites. Plan is to convert to Expedio in the fiscal year beginning July 2001
- Navigation- sites have not been evaluated to test ease of navigating
- Current live, timely information-- information is mostly static-- does not meet goal of being a exciting communication method
- Management support- buy in is now estimated to be at 50%
- Access-- a large portion of hospital employees do not have computers-- computer kiosks are a suggested answer to this need
- Marketing efforts for continued usage
- Q/A standards identified and developed
- Tracking-- more thorough usage evaluation
- Project Prioritization

The creators of online content, sometimes known as "Content authors" play a large role in the success or failure of an intranet. Nearly all the areas for improvement mentioned by Ms. Miramouter (specifically, appropriate software,

current information, navigation, and Q/A standards) all either rely on or impact Content Authors. Authors either volunteer or are chosen by each department to write and maintain department information. Because they are usually not paid for their efforts, engaging their intrinsic commitment is a must.

Companies can experience all the intangible and tangible benefits of their intranet if it is well planned out, organized, and monitored. The extent to which attention is directed toward end users' needs is the difference between success and failure.

As a Content Author for the organization's Employee Assistance Program, I have grown to understand that Authors specifically impact the end user's experience. Content Authors are responsible for populating the site with useful information, acting as filters determining what will be posted. Organizations must train Content Authors on proper content, design, software usage, and importance of usability testing. Likewise, the content itself must be evaluated to ensure that it meets the needs of its audience.

The following chapters explain current usage of corporate intranets, the details of creating an dynamic intranet, the result of my work on the intranet EAP site, a critique evaluation of the EAP site, as well as recommendations for improvement.

Chapter II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The project of developing an intranet site can be overwhelming. How does one even begin? Research can help. Has anyone established guidelines for successful sites? What have intranets been used for in the past, what is being done currently, and what possible uses does the future hold?

My first reaction was to surf the web using search engines like <http://www.google.com> and <http://www.dogpile.com> to look for competitor internet web-sites in order to find out how they were promoting Employee Assistance Program (EAP) services. Though the target audience for an intranet is not the same as a public internet site, it still served as an idea generator for categorization and uses.

With the goal of getting our EAP site up and running as soon as possible, I hastily planned out the content I felt to be necessary to convey our services to employees. A couple of weeks later, the EAP site had been loaded onto Lotus Notes (the intranet software used by Unity) and was available to be viewed by employees! Our communications department assured me that the site could be tweaked and changed as I saw fit in order to improve online material provided to employees.

Though I was relieved to have general information posted for employees

to view I wondered, with my limited computer knowledge, how I could make the site better. Was the content clear enough? Had I written it in the appropriate style-- what was online style supposed to be anyway?! I also wanted it to be more interesting and interactive for the reader.

It concerned me that the general employee perception of the organization's Intranet seemed negative. I spoke to an MCI Worldcom employee to see how her company promoted their intranet's use. When relating about the EAP site to our Communication Manager, I was told about Jakob Nielsen, who is known as the "guru" for internet and intranet content and design.

Nielsen's recent book Designing Web Usability: The Practice of Simplicity is to be "the" guide for creating sites that met the needs and expectations of online users. The book segments discussions of Web usability into page, content, site, and intranet design. I found it to be an excellent source of information, particularly regarding basic functionality questions. His thought is that sites are most effective when they are kept simple. This put to rest my concern that the EAP site should have fancy graphics and eye-catching color. Nielsen most strongly influenced my idea of what a professional intranet site should be. His recommendations for writing style and design are a major focus for discussion in Chapter three.

For information on how intranets fit into the flow of corporate communication, I turned to a book used in my graduate studies called Management of Organizational Behavior by Hershey, Blanchard and Johnson.

Another helpful research tool was the Internet-- specifically the site of the Internet Design Magazine , a biweekly technical online periodical containing news, features, and reviews for corporate web sponsors. Surfing through its content helped orient me to cutting-edge issues in intranet development. This is where field experts post their experience, research and findings. The site features articles on everything from getting started to complex case studies on specific problems- it even has a full section on development languages. I can confidently say everything you need to know how an intranet can be found on this site.

Because intranets are relatively new phenomena, interesting and pertinent information was found in periodicals such as: Communication World; Public Relations Tactics; Training & Development; Communication News; Computerworld; The Economist; Corporate Meetings & Incentives; ColoradoBiz, and Electronic Buyers' News. Main topics included public relation issues, intranets as a productivity tool, statistics on use, usability testing, design, and human resource issues.

Area Business Journals like the Memphis Business Journal, St. Louis Business Journal, and San Diego Business Journal also had valuable articles on the impact of intranets on employee training, benefit information, and corporate communication.

Based on information from the research sources aforementioned, most of the literature found about intranets can be separated into two categories: uses for intranets (employee productivity and communication improvement) and actually building a useful site (content, design, usability, and promotion).

Human Resource information with its benefit information and internal job postings tends to be the most popular site on a corporate intranet. The site positively impacts both the department as well as the end user.

Benefit information is often the first to be posted on corporate Intranet sites. Not only does this save corporations money, it taps into the intangible benefits of an Intranet. Employee requests related to HR issues resolved in less than one day received a "very satisfied" rating by 50% of employees, while those that were processed in one to three days received a "very satisfied" rating by only 20%. HR managers provided the following reasons to post HR information on line:

- A. improves service to employees (84%)
- B. raises level of communication (81%)
- C. enhances employee communication (81%)
- D. and gives employees more direct control (69%).

(Bersch 8)

A "Content Author" in the Human Resources department for the hospital organization I work for stated that the intranet empowers employees to find information on their own. They are able to download benefit forms from their PC and research benefit nuisances and job opportunities independently. The "Job Opportunities" section is by far the site that receives the most "hits" in a month. Employee inquiries to HR representative are now more in depth-- superfluous questions having been satisfied via the Intranet. It is Fritz's opinion that this

increases employee satisfaction of both HR employees and the workers they support.

Jim Canterucci author of "The Organizational Impact of Intranets" and owner of Transition Management Advisors in Westerville, Ohio surveyed 1800 new intranet users. In the study, 44 percent of respondents said they access the corporate intranet at least daily, and 40 percent said they access their sites at least hourly. Accessing the company stock price, calculating the value of personal retirement funds, checking job openings and reading company and industry news ranked as the most popular intranet based activities(Linafelt 7).

One simple, but efficient, benefit is the ability to do insurance-related paperwork online. Having employees complete and send forms online makes much more sense than passing paperwork around the office before mailing it. According to John O'Bryne, Vice President of Information Technologies for Robert D. O'Byre & Associates, Inc., companies would be wise to develop hyperlinks to healthcare providers and insurance carriers. Often information will have to come from those sources to provide employees with all the data they need (Linafelt 7).

The ability to obtain personal information is critical to repeat usage. User comfort levels with the Intranet increase, opening the door for employers to introduce new concepts in usage.

One such new concept is online training. For a growing number of workers, training in the year 2000 and beyond will mean never having to leave

their desks. They'll learn company procedures, attend live class, and take tests and review material online via their intranet.

The hospital organization for which I work understands the value of this. Educating employees about infection control and OSHA requirements is currently an extra cost and inconvenience, as it requires workers to come in for training on their scheduled day off and costs the hospital thousand of dollars to pay employees to do so. Online capabilities would enable employees to log on to the Intranet to complete these types of trainings and tests, saving employees personal time and the hospital extra expense. Developing online training is cited as a priority for future development (Miramouter).

Although both virtual meetings and face-to-face meetings have their place, large organizations claim they just can't do classroom programs any longer- they have too many people and too many locations. After careful analysis of the situation, on-line training, for them, has become the best approach to learning (Tomorrow's Challenge 15).

The Boundaryless Workforce, a study from Ceridian Employer Services (Minneapolis), surveyed senior executives, human resource managers, boundaryless workers, and their direct managers on the challenges and benefits of the new work arrangements. Online training (46%) made the top-five list of technology, resources, and programs that contribute to the success of boundaryless work arrangements. Not surprisingly, boundaryless workers and their direct managers are two to three times more likely than senior executives

and HR managers to advocate investing in technology and training to support their work arrangements (Grates).

“Typically companies with more than 100 employees and \$20 million in annual sales find it cost-effective to create custom, computer-based learning programs, says Gary Smith, President and CEO of Spin Communications.

Another way of looking at it, Smith says, is that if a company is large enough to have a training department, then it’s big enough to use this method of training.”

“The key to successful use of Intranet training is to use tools to keep students interested, Smith says. More and more companies are using video, sound and animation to make the learning experience interesting to help the test-takers better learn the information,” he says. “You’re working with the television generation. You’re trying to keep someone’s attention with hopes of improving retention.”

“Another key element,” Smith says, “is to incorporate interactive elements. For example, the test-taker is asked a question about the process. If he or she gives the wrong answer, the video tells the test-taker it’s wrong and automatically re-loads the section of the video where the correct answer can be found.” (Thompson 28).

In addition to these uses, it is also important to recognize the intangible benefit that improved communication can bring. “As companies become more fragmented and workers more geographically dispersed, managers need a way to rally the troops. In particular, they need a way to build a corporate culture; that intangible something that binds employees together and teaches them to

understand instinctively the defining qualities of the business and the appropriate way to respond to any issue that confronts them.” The Intranet provides the means to do this (Talking to Each Other 10).

Jim Canterucci, author of The Organizational Impact of the Intranet states “Intranet users felt more trusting of their organization. All things you tell your employees to believe- that the company cares about its employees, that they are well-informed and empowered- they believe after using the Intranet” (Linafelt 7).

Companies are finding that the Intranet is effective when faced with crisis situations. It gives communicators another tool to use as they try to manage employee concerns, rampant rumors, and intense media focus (Anderson 15). Frequent, timely update can help ease tension and prevent the spread of rumors. Intranets can communicate this information with less effort and greater effectiveness than many traditional tools of crisis control.

Take, for instance, this example by Cox Communication in San Diego:

“The boss is coming back from an extended assignment out of town. The plan is a noontime Friday barbecue in the parking lot. All employees invited. This situation isn’t a problem for a company with 40 employees. But if you were the communications officer at Cox Communications-- a firm with more than 2,000 employees in a dozen offices throughout the country--expensing your cable bill would be easier. Instead of running to the nearest photocopier with Scotch tape in hand, Roya Jackson, communications specialist of the local cable carrier, logged on to the firm’s Intranet and electronic billboard, and publicized the get-

together welcoming the general manager back to San Diego. "We barely had any food left, Jackson said after the party was over" (Coffy 15).

Despite these optimistic accounts of success, it is also important to note that I found a backlash of sorts in my research. Technology is still viewed by some as the great divider.

Even though we have "progressed from a basically agrarian society to a dynamic industrial society, with a higher level of education and standard of living than was ever thought possible" (Hershey 5), complaints are made that "face to face" time is the most significant casualty of today's hectic work place. For a variety of reasons, there is less human contact than ever before between supervisors and employees. Employees are scattered around the world and people are constantly on the move. Flex-time arrangements, telecommuting, shift-work, and part-time employment- all factor into potential alienation.

Companies are discovering that the printed employee publication may be one of the last tangibles that employees will fight to hold onto. The argument asserts that a printed publication is unique: "Employee publications have personality---indeed, if they reflect the personality of the organization," notes a senior communication executive. "There's just something about a well-written newsletter or magazine that gives you a real feel for an organization---it's not a feeling you get with e-mail or a fax or any of the more immediate types of communication."

Trust is cited as another important reason to keep publishing the employee newsletter. The majority of employees still consider newsletters and other printed

publications to be among the most reliable, accurate and credible sources of information.

A printed publication also has a greater sense of permanence---employees can take a newsletter or magazine home to share with their families or post articles on their bulletin boards at work. In the words of one communication expert, "When you need to infuse a more human quality into a company, printed publications are hard to beat." At many organizations large and small, not all employees have access to the most immediate forms of communication, including the company intranet, e-mail or even voice mail. Many communication and HR experts are concerned that the split between PC-dependent employees and hourly workers is widening rapidly, challenging organizations to determine the best ways to reach those diverse groups.

Heavy reliance on paper communication may seem outdated, but may actually meet employees' needs better than electronic versions. While I definitely support the use of online communication, my workforce is an example of where this assertion can ring true. Only one third of the organization has desk jobs. Most nurses, doctors, and medical support staff don't have time or access to computers during their daily routine. For them, obtaining information via our Intranet is virtually impossible. When the publication is printed, every employee gets a copy. It gets into their hands and in front of their eyes. There's no guarantee they'll read it, but they can't help but be aware of it. (Why the Employee 27)

According to the 1998 Intranet Research Report by KPMG Management Consulting, almost one half of respondents ranked information overload as a substantial problem of online communication:

Biggest Drawbacks of Intranets

Security	8%
Training	21%
Management of Personnel	6%
Cost of Implementation	10%
Don't know	7%
None	4%
Information Overload	44%

(Trommer 98)

Mark Twain once said, "The only person who likes change is a baby with a wet diaper." Changes in technology have enabled organizations to communicate voluminous information a short period of time. Sometimes too much information can be a bad thing. Online information must be written and evaluated carefully in order to ensure user acceptance.

Surprisingly, I found a void in advice specific to writing for online readers. Content authors--defined as workers in various professions who are responsible their departments site content, style, and design-- seem to be the most neglected Intranet contributors. Research is generally geared toward technical "IS" individuals with topics discussing advanced uses and programming methods for Intranets. Content authors for corporations are usually non-technical

professionals and may need simple, basic “do’s and don’ts” in order to effectively begin their site.

The research found in Chapter III explains the need to understand your audience and gives guidelines for successful content writing and design, as well as explains methods to both evaluate and promote your site. This information most decidedly influenced my plans for improvement regarding the EAP site.

Current studies find several understated facts regarding Web page use. First, only 10% of Web pages are visited more than once. This is not surprising since most Web pages are “one-time” visitors. Second, 90% of Web pages are visited only once. This is not surprising since most Web pages are “one-time” visitors. Third, 90% of Web pages are visited only once. This is not surprising since most Web pages are “one-time” visitors.

Some of the reasons for this are that most Web pages are not designed to be visited more than once. This is not surprising since most Web pages are “one-time” visitors. This is not surprising since most Web pages are “one-time” visitors. This is not surprising since most Web pages are “one-time” visitors.

Reading from the Web site, I found that about 25 percent of Web site visitors do not return to the page. As a result, it is important to design Web pages that are easy to navigate. This is not surprising since most Web pages are “one-time” visitors. This is not surprising since most Web pages are “one-time” visitors. This is not surprising since most Web pages are “one-time” visitors.

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Chapter III

SELECTIVE REVIEW AND EVALUATION OF RESEARCH

Content authors first need to understand their audience. Web users are general busy and impatient. They want answers immediately and don't appreciate "cool" features, mission statements, or "marketese"- the self-promoting writing style. Also, credibility suffers when users clearly see that the site exaggerates. (Nielsen, n.p.)

Successful content is measured by how many readers find what they need quickly, how useful they find the document, and how efficient it is. Research has shown that readers can find material in correctly written sites in half the time it takes to find it in incorrectly written sites.

Reading from computer screens is tiring for the eyes and about 25 percent slower than reading from the papers. As a result, users don't read on the Web, they scan the text. Additionally, the online experience seems to foster some amount of impatience. Users scan text and pick out keywords, sentences, and paragraphs of interest while skipping over those parts of the text they care less about.

Some amount of personality ("the author's voice") makes sites more attractive. Users don't like bland impersonal corporate sites.

At the same time, users also feel that websites take themselves too seriously. Even so, humor should be used with great caution on the Web. Because users scan the text, they may not realize when you are being humorous or sarcastic, and they may take statements at face value. Users are also so goal-driven that they often prefer “just the facts, thanks” without spending extra time on material that doesn’t help them get in and out as fast as possible.

The following content writing tips were compiled of data obtained from the web sites Jakob Nielsen’s Web site www.useit.com and Bricklins techniques from www.gooddocuments.com.

- Keep text and pages short. Write 50 percent less text than a print publication or document would require.
- Write clear headlines that do not require guesswork. Headlines should be able to stand alone if they’re removed from the article and indexed in other pages. Use meaningful rather than “cute” headings.
- Include subheads. These internal headings serve as pointers and guide readers through a document.
- Use the inverted pyramid style of writing. Start with the conclusion to give readers a quick gist of the article.
- Limit each paragraph to one main idea. Clearly state the main point of the paragraph in the first sentence.
- Use bulleted lists. Lists help to break up long chunks of text into more manageable, easy to read sections.
- Be concise. Skimmers are attracted to active verbs and meaningful statements.
- Use highlighting and emphasis to make important words catch the user’s eye. Colored text can also be used for emphasis, and hypertext anchors stand out by virtue of being blue and underlined.

- Use hypertext to split up long information into multiple pages. Long and detailed background information can be relegated to secondary pages; similarly, information of interest to a minority of readers can be made available through a link without penalizing those readers who don't want it.
- Keep information current

Many employees spend hours each month reading or researching material on their Intranet and writing correctly can save very large sums of money.

Nielsen's example, "The Value of an Editor", brings to light the importance of appropriate writing:

"What is the impact of violating the guidelines for writing the headline for a news item on an intranet home page? For a company with 10,000 employees, the cost of a single poorly written headline on the intranet home page is almost \$5,000." The preceding estimate was based on the following five assumptions:

1. All employees spend five seconds more than necessary pondering the headline because it is not sufficiently communicative.
2. The poorly written headline causes 10 percent of employees to click on the headline even though the story is useless to them.
3. People spend on average 30 seconds reading the story before they decide to back out because it is useless.
4. The company has 10,000 employees using the intranet.
5. The value of an employee's time is \$50/hour. (Note that the value of an employee's time is much more than his or her salary- it also accounts for benefits, overhead, and contributions to the company's bottom line. Therefore a person who makes \$25/hr usually ends up costing the company \$50/hr)"

Quality writing is only one of the two most important determinants of web usability. The other is site design-- whether users can find the page and the information they are looking for.

Of course mechanics aren't everything. It is also important to have a pleasing intranet design. The style of the intranet is a prime opportunity for communicating corporate spirit and attitude to all employees.

Acceptance of the design is important so that workgroups are encouraged to use it for their own department pages. Organizations may choose to increase the users' level of involvement and their feeling of being part of the design process by taking a vote.

It is recommended to use two different visual styles and two different sets of templates for the intranet and the external website. This makes it easier for employees to understand when they are seeing external information and when they are seeing internal information that may need to be kept confidential.

(Nielsen, n.p.)

Consistency is especially important concerning design. Pages need similar convention for where to find information and for how they use links.

Navigational structure and presentation is particularly important to standardize in order to speed users on their way and prevent them from getting lost.

The intranet is typically split across multiple sites, each managed by a different department. So, who decides what goes into the intranet? Which departments control which areas? How will a corporate look and feel be maintained?

One answer is to create a site design that has a corporate shell around spaces that are set aside for user-generated content that's created through a

common authoring package. This will provide some sort of integrity to the overall design but will give end users some site control.

The head of the intranet team, or Webmaster, must be able to enforce corporate standards for site appearance, such as fonts, style, colors, and graphics. Content contributors should not be able to change the look and feel of the intranet- inadvertently or otherwise (Rogers, 2).

For intranet designs, efficiency, memorability, and error reduction become the most important usability attributes. Because employees may use the intranet every day, they soon become experienced users, and the efficiency with which they can navigate the intranet and get their work done will impact their productivity (Nielsen 274).

Here's a list of ten design elements that will increase usability:

1. Place your name and logo on every page and make the logo a link to the home page (except on the home page itself, where the logo should not be a link: never have a link that point right back to the current page).
2. Provide search if the site has more than 100 pages.
3. Write straightforward, simple headlines and page titles.
4. Structure the page to facilitate scanning-- for example, use grouping and subheadings to break a long list into several smaller units.
5. Use hypertext to structure the content space.
6. Use product photos, but avoid cluttered and bloated family pages with lots of photos.
7. Use relevance-enhanced image reduction when preparing small photos and images- zoom in on the most relevant detail and use a combination of cropping and resizing.

8. Use link titles to provide users with a preview of where each link will take them before they have clicked on it.
9. If applicable, ensure that all important pages are accessible for users with disabilities.
10. Test your design with real users. People do things in odd and unexpected ways, so even the most carefully planned project will learn from usability testing.

(Nielsen, n.p.)

11. Keep the site fresh--don't let your site go stale. Continue to update and input relevant information and archive old information.
12. Change the site's cosmetic design every one or two years to keep users interest. Because the Web changes so rapidly, redesign must occur to avoid an outdated look and accommodate changing user expectations. The most common changes are new stock graphics, new headerbars, new navigation buttons, or new icons. Maintenance of these design resources must be budgeted. (According to Jakob Nielson, the annual maintenance budget for a website should be about the same as the initial cost of building the site, with 50 percent as an absolute minimum.)
13. Avoid "under construction" signs. If is not ready, do not put it up. It is frustrating to the users to see the same sign over and over again. If a section of your site says "coming soon" provide a date and stick to it.

(Tao, 3)

The usability impact of bad intranet designs directly translates to the bottom line of a company because any usability problems mean an immediate loss of employee productivity.

The question is how to evaluate if a site is effective. What research methods can be used? It is suggested to first identify exactly what you need to know. Have a clear purpose to your testing or observations. What do users need to do and how do they prefer to interact with the intranet?

Intranet user testing requires involving everyday employee users as test participants and having them perform intranet employee tasks. Ideas for recruiting employee participants include: asking people in different departments to recommend participants from their group; posting announcements on the intranet, break room or cafeteria; stopping people in the halls to have them comment on a page or an icon. (not recommended for larger studies because it tends to produce a less diversified set of participants); and, asking new hires to serve as a source of “novice users” to compare your intranet to their previous employer’s (Neilson p290).

After recruiting test participants, there are several types of tests that can be administered: focus groups; clustering & labeling exercises; screen mock-ups; verbal protocol method; observation & logged data; and questionnaires, polls, and feedback mechanisms. These testing mechanisms are fully described in the paragraphs that follow.

Focus groups work best to get at users’ opinions and attitudes, how their daily work interfaces with the intranet, the nature and frequency of use, etc. Two points to note:

- 1) Focus groups are best led by an outside, disinterested party. If Web developers are in the room, participants may either be hesitant to critique the site or may use the time as a chance to raise all sorts of issues. Developers may want to defend a particular choice, rather than focusing on understanding what the user is trying to explain. It is recommended to tape and transcribe the session and review it several times.

- 2) Carefully write your questions and thoroughly examine what participants are. Michael McCarthy, President of Web Publishing, Inc., said, "Users don't know what they want, can't articulate what they want, and articulate things different from what they actually do want based on how they later act when you give them what they thought they wanted."

User scenarios help build a clear profile of the typical users. By describing what the typical users do on the site, you can start to look at the areas where the greatest use occurs. Scenarios help to envision what the end result should ideally look like. It helps to focus on the user experience rather than just on the nuts and bolt, i.e., content, menu and functions.

Clustering and Labeling exercises take various bits of content identified for the site and are recorded on index cards. Users group and label this content as though it was on their hard drive or shared file server for their department or company. The challenge of this exercise is making sense of the results because everyone uses a different mental model. Look for patterns that emerge as well as for areas of confusion and dissonance. This is very useful in the site development stage and is an effective tool for working on site customization and personalization projects.

Screen mockups are effective in testing employee's expectations of where things are on a screen. With this technique, take your existing site or new design mock-up and change all the words on the screen to a foreign language unknown to users. Then ask them to identify where they expect to find some of the common elements on the page and see what their success rate is. Just like users know what

parts of books are and how they work together, so should your intranet be in sync with other sites on the Web.

With the verbal protocol method, users perform various intranet tasks while talking aloud about what links or actions they're choosing, what they see happening on the screen, and their reaction. This method is considered by some to be a more efficient way of gather data for usability analysis. While this method yields high quality data, it requires more time and preparation than some of the other techniques due to gathering a representative sampling of users, developing specific and appropriate tasks for them to perform, perform the testing, and do the analysis.

Observing and logging data involves watching an employee doing his or her job. The goal is to be as unobtrusive as possible so that users will perform their work and use the intranet in the same way they normally do. Note how they select, interact, navigate and respond to the intranet. This technique often gives you insight into small changes that would make everyone's life a lot easier.

Log analysis tools allow you to create user profiles and examine Web site visits. What are people searching for over and over again? Where do users usually enter the intranet, and where do they exit? What do they search for and how many search results do they examine?

Questionnaires, polls, and feedback mechanisms are tools that reach a wide audience that may be geographically dispersed or segmented by user type. Some intranets carry out an annual survey to measure user satisfaction, frustrations, and demand for new features and services.

Feedback forms can be very useful if the information is tracked. Often feedback forms point to where the intranet fails the user completely. For instance, on one Web site, users had trouble finding a particular registration form.

Redesign and re-labeling tried to address this problem. When the number of feedback emails about registration was substantially reduced, there was evidence that the redesign and re-labeling were effective.

Another simple technique is to ask users to rate a page. Ask how users came to access this particular page, if they found what they needed or not, what they liked about the site/page, what they disliked, and how they would improve the site (Fichter 89).

Using methods to examine how users do their tasks may result in unexpected findings that turn into candidates for interesting redesigns that support additional uses of the intranet.

While content, design, and usability testing are crucial to developing and maintaining a dynamic intranet, engaging users is also key. "Build it and they will come" only works if they know what you've built. Employees need to be aware of material available on their Intranet and how using it can benefit them.

According to the Communication Manager at the hospital organization, the promotion plan for intranet roll out included the following:

- Memo to managers announcing intranet launch and policies
- Presentation at managers' meetings
- Content author "start up" packet- publishing procedures and policies; training schedule; enrollment form

- Articles in company newsletters
- Addition of URL to existing internal forms, publications

Employee usage statistics of the hospital organization's intranet is deemed acceptable, but the Communication Manager explained that there were initially plans to do more promotion that included classes on navigating the Intranet, prizes, and posters. Unfortunately, at the time of roll out, directors were fearful of excessive Internet use if online communication was promoted heavily. Though acceptance is now growing, support from upper management is still only estimated at fifty percent.

This brings to light the need to target not only general employees, but upper management as well. Some may need to be "sold" on the idea that the Intranet will increase-- not decrease-- employee productivity. Measurable improvement (like decreased calls to HR) should be reported. Reinforce that the intranet is their communication tool, too. Encourage management to communicate their vision for the company and to use the intranet as a forum to hear ideas from their employees. "A major selling point when trying to get buy-in from senior management is that an Intranet is dynamic. It grows, can be modified to suit changing needs, is searchable, and can contain one thing that a magazine cannot...multimedia. Why read the CEO's quarterly report results when you can watch and hear the actual presentation on your Intranet site with the click of a mouse button" (Tao, 3).

Another hidden target audience is the content authors. Because most will not be monetarily rewarded for their work, ways to recognize their efforts need to

be developed. Some ideas are to write an article about them to be published in the company internal newsletter, to plan trainings, team meetings, or awards for best work.

The most obvious target audience is general employees. This group will determine if your efforts are a success or failure, so organizations are wise to concentrate on an effective promotion plan. There are many creative ways to engage users. According to Michelle Good of MCI Worldcom marketing, her staff organized an employee scavenger hunt of sorts- geared to finding specific information listed on their Intranet- that resulted in a prize. A system wide email is sent to employees to draw attention to new sites.

The website for M&M Computer Resources features a section called "Marketing Suggestions" that lists of creative ideas to promote Intranet sites:

- Hold an event dedicated to the Intranet. This involves a cook-out, contests, prizes, and free give-aways.
- Publish a newsletter every month dedicated to the Intranet. Introduce new sites, have tips for publishing, highlight the web page of the month, include a puzzle which involves utilizing the Intranet to find answers.
- We had customized post-it notes printed with the URL on it.
Submitted by: Susan Cook, Ontario Systems Corporation
- **Poster** - make a large poster and cut it up into puzzle pieces. Place one piece of the puzzle in place one day a week before your roll out date.
Submitted by: Kim Hewitt, DSHS State of Washington.
- **T-shirts** - one of Americas favorite marketing tools, with logo and URL.
Submitted by: Gerry Mowrey, M & M Computer Resources
- **Bookmark** made out of card stock with the URL and information about the site.
Submitted by: Larry Hewitt, Hewitt Consulting.

- **Inter/Intranet Goodie Bag** - make up a small paper bag with some kind of goodies promoting your site. Cookies with the URL on it in frosting might be a suggestion.
- **Buttons** with site name and URL on it.
- **On site training** with users. Volunteer to walk them through the site so they know what kind of information is available on the site and where it is.
Submitted by: unknown.
- **Personal Page Contest** - Have a personal page contest among the users and offer to lend them assistance in creating their pages. Prizes for the winners.
- **Set the users default** start up browser page to your sites URL.
- **Secretaries and Administrative Assistants** - talk with them and show them the site, after all, they are the ones that really know the company and what's going on.
- **Talk to users** and see what they like and don't like about the site. Actually show them the site and see what they have to say.
- **Have the President** of the company hold an on-line discussion about the vision of the company and other subjects.
- **Trivia questions** on the site, a new one everyday with the answer from the previous day and the people who guessed correctly. People love to show off their intelligence and like to see their name in print.
- **Publish** some sort of information that is not available in traditional methods. Conference rooms with pictures and equipment available might be an example.
- **Chat systems.**
- **Brown Bag Lunch** - 1 hour a week on line chat with the company president and staff asking questions about the company.
- **Question of the week** - something in the news or at work. Take a poll and post the results.

It would be valuable for the hospital organization I work for to offer classes training new content authors on these general principles in developing a useful intranet site. According to Ganz, a resource center that offers training

classes, best practices examples, templates, and consultant directories may keep intranet sites from becoming “political football” as far as who controls the content and look, as well as assist the editors who “gate-keep” department content (33). If I had initially learned general content, design, usability, and promotion principles, I wouldn’t have been as unsure and confused when I first began the EAP site.

Chapter IV

RESULTS

To get started on the EAP Intranet site, I first printed off directions from our Intranet on "How to Publish Material on the Intranet". It indicated step by step how to begin-- discuss with supervisor, fill out publishing request form indicating use of and content description, receive approval from marketing, attend software training class, enter info on test site, and after final reviews load content to live server. A document called "Intranet Publishing Policies and Procedures" outlined design standards. I attended one group training on a content application called Lotus Notes and also received one on one instruction on the basics of maintaining and updating the site.

It took me approximately two months to develop the content, obtain approval, and have the information loaded and available to employees. The results of my work are the main focus of this chapter and will be shown in the pages that follow.

The EAP Intranet "Home Page" was written to address one of my major goals-- to be sure that the definition of the Employee Assistance Program was easily conveyed. The program's name does not easily convey the fact that the program is mental health counseling for employees and family members, as well as a tool for supervisors. I know this to be a fact, as we often get inquiries about financial loans and grants or human resources related information. I added the subtitle "Welcome" as I felt employee's looking up the site were probably experiencing some sort of personal crisis and may need extra encouragement and kindness, however small it may be.



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Welcome

Everyone experiences problems in their life at one time or another. An EAP counselor helps determine what is adding stress to your life, offers guidance and support in resolving the problem, or focuses on improving your coping skills.

Assessment and confidential, short-term counseling are available for coworkers and their families at convenient times and locations. Our experienced staff is composed of licensed professionals who hold master's degrees in the mental health field.

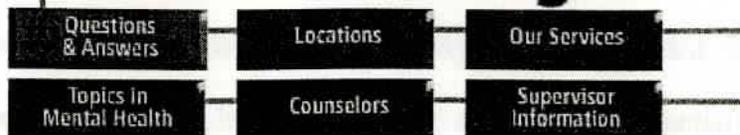
EAP counselors also provide consultation and training for supervisors and human resource professionals. When mental health problems are suspected, counselors assist with intervention to address deteriorating work performance.

Call today! 314-729-4650 or 1-800-413-8008 #2

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Solution Focused, Brief Counseling Questions & Answers

Q. How do I contact the Employee Assistance Program?

A. Simply call 314-729-4650 or 1-800-413-8008 #2 Monday-Friday 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. to obtain authorization and schedule your appointment. We have many locations throughout the greater St. Louis area.

Q. Who may use the counseling services?

A. Coworkers and family members living in coworkers' households are eligible for EAP services.

Q. What are the costs of the counseling sessions?

A. EAP services are free of charge and are provided to you by your employer. However, if more extensive services are needed, your counselor may coordinate with community programs or your major health benefits to find a resource that better fits your needs. Any cost outside of the EAP services will be your responsibility.

Q. How can I be sure the services are confidential?

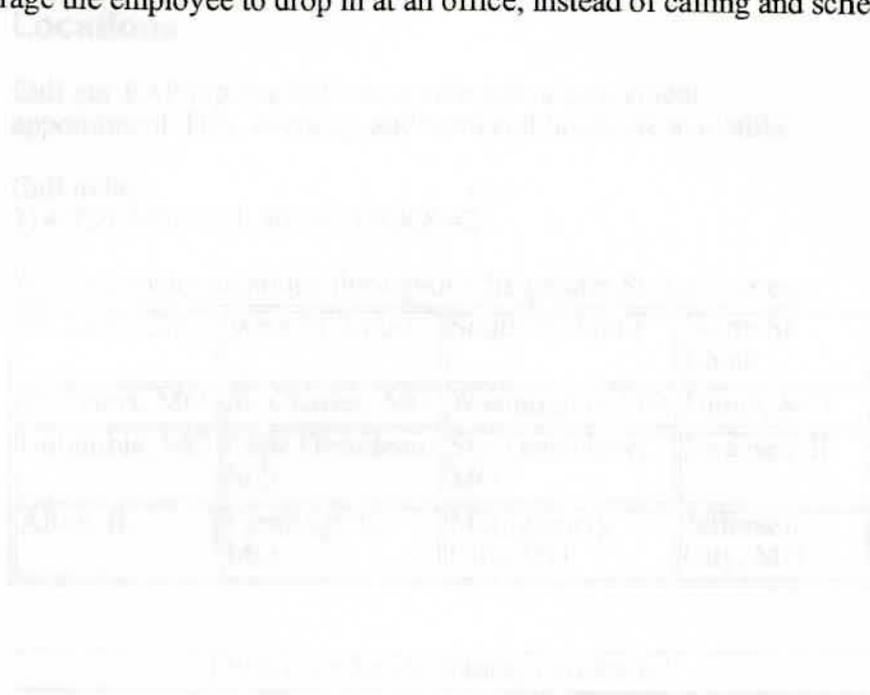
A. Confidentiality and comfort are of the utmost importance in the program. Only you and the counselor will know of your involvement in the program unless you are a supervisor referral, have given written permission, or it is mandated by law. Utilizing EAP services does not threaten your job security or promotional opportunities.

Q. How can the EAP help me?

A. Seeking help is often the first step to take toward making positive changes in your life. Our staff of licensed, experienced clinicians assist with problems such as job-related stress; marital, family or other relationship problems; adolescent/child problems; financial stresses; alcohol & drug use; and life adjustment issues.

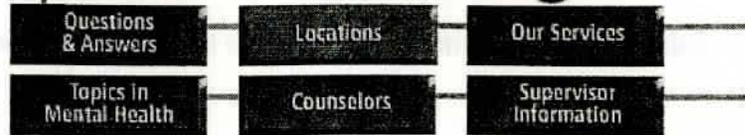
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The location section should communicate the many locations a client can go to for EAP counseling. I wanted to convey that employee care, as well as convenience, was important to the EAP. I was originally going to link the locations to specific directions, but decided not to as that could potentially encourage the employee to drop in at an office, instead of calling and scheduling first.





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Locations

Call our EAP representatives to schedule a convenient appointment. Day, evening, and weekend hours are available.

Call today:
314-729-4650 or 1-800-413-8008 #2

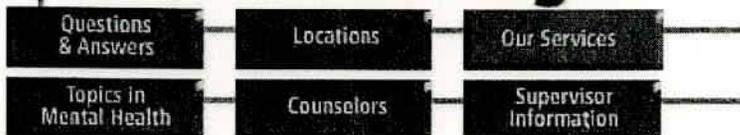
We have many locations throughout the greater St. Louis area:

St. Louis City	West St. Louis	South St. Louis	North St. Louis
St. Peters, MO	St. Charles, MO	Washington, MO	Union, MO
Columbia, MO	Cape Girardeau, MO	Ste. Genevieve, MO	Swansea, IL
Alton, IL	Farmington, MO	Montgomery City, MO	Jefferson City, MO

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Our Services

In addition to face-to-face assessment & counseling, the Employee Assistance Program offers the following services:

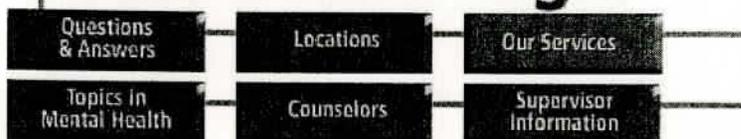
- [Critical Incident Debriefing Program](#)
- [Management/Supervisor Consultation](#)
- [Mental Health Seminars](#)
- [Substance Abuse Professional Evaluations](#)

Call 314-729-4650 or 1-800-413-8008 #2

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Critical Incident Debriefing

Critical incidents are defined as situations faced by individuals that cause an exceptionally strong emotional reaction that could possibly interfere with an individual or department's ability to perform normal functions. The EAP has assisted groups grieving the sudden loss of a coworker, witnessing a tragedy, or being involved in a potentially life threatening situation. The focus of the program is to support colleagues exhibiting reactions to critical incidents.

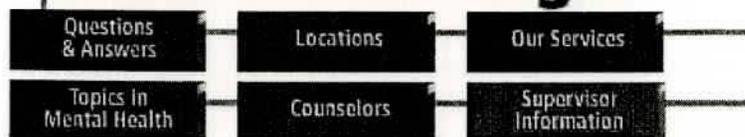
CID services include:

- Needs assessment with designated company representative
- On-site CID team response
- Meetings with affected groups and individuals
- 1-1 assessment and referral as needed

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Supervisor Information

Supervisors play a critical role in the effective use of the EAP. As a manager, you are in the best position to notice changes in a coworker's performance.

When job performance problems persist, it is often an indication that the coworker is experiencing a personal problem. Supervisors do not, however, have to know the cause of poor performance to suggest that a coworker seek help from the EAP. Your proper role is to be aware of deteriorating job performance and make a referral to the EAP.

Supervisor referral appointments are arranged by calling the EAP. Supervisors will consult with EAP professionals to provide relevant information regarding the referral.

Call 314-729-4650 or 1-800-413-8008 #2.

Please note: EAP is not an alternative to disciplinary action. Whether or not a coworker follows EAP recommendations, disciplinary measures are followed according to company guidelines.

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Mental Health Seminars

A variety of seminars ranging from formal training to brown-bag workshops are available through the Employee Assistance Program. The focus of the content can be tailored to fit your department's need.

Topics include:

- EAP Introduction Training for Supervisors and Coworkers
- Balancing Work and Family
- Dealing with Difficult Teenagers
- Anger Management
- Team Building
- Healthy Relationships
- Sexual Harassment in Workplace & Schools
- Signs of Alcohol & Drug Problems
- Dealing with the Difficult Customer
- Change, Stress & Communication
- Improving Group Communication
- How to Recognize Depression

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Drug Testing Evaluations

Coworker functioning in accordance with Department of Transportation requirements are eligible to receive substance abuse professional evaluation and follow-up as mandated by DOT guidelines.

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“Topics in Mental Health” offer tips that employees or managers can print and read on their own time. Though the list of flyers is not extensive, it is something free that they can take with them from their intranet.

Topics in Mental Health

Informational handouts promoting mental health wellness are available for your personal use.

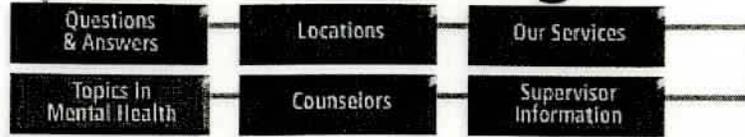
- [Get Your Company's Culture Right](#)
- [Mental Health Day](#)
- [Healthy Workplace Strategies](#)
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Topics in Mental Health

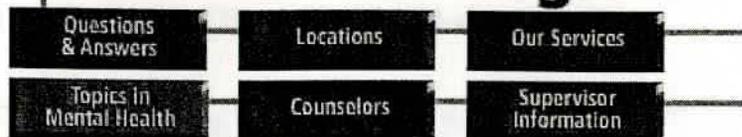
Informational handouts promoting mental health wellbeing are available for your personal use:

- [Are You a Compulsive Gambler?](#)
- [Managing Anger](#)
- [Healthy Relationship Tips](#)
- [Reducing Stress](#)
- [Talking to Your Teen](#)

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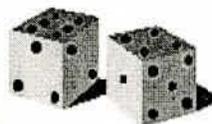
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ARE YOU A COMPULSIVE GAMBLER?

Recognizing the Syndrome

There are specific behavior patterns associated with compulsive gambling. Gamblers who recognize these patterns can cope with their addiction and recover a life free of gambling.



An Addictive Disorder

Compulsive gambling is an addictive disorder. Experts speak of it as a "disorder of impulse-control. Compulsive gamblers are unable to control their chronic gambling. An emotional dependency exists. Such gamblers are impulsive, obsessive, and irrational. They will gamble against all odds. For a compulsive gambler, to roll the dice, pick a number or play a hand becomes more important than family, home or work.

Not all people who gamble are addicted. There are some characteristic behaviors that may help you recognize when gambling has become compulsive. Do you:

- *Spend a lot of time gambling or thinking about it?*
- *Increase your bets to "catch up"?*
- *Boast about your winnings?*
- *Gamble to feel good?*
- *Have frequent or unexplained absences?*
- *Experience mood swings- high when winning, low when losing?*
- *Keep hidden funds or take out secret "loans" from family bank accounts?*

The Addiction Process

People who are becoming compulsive gamblers go through three phases of addiction: Winning, Losing and, finally, Desperation.

The Winning Phase. Gamblers win, lose, and break even ---often. In this phase, the winning and losing seems an adventure. Gamblers get their "thrills". Excitement predominates. Worries disappear.

The Losing Phase. Gamblers begin losing more than they win. Self-esteem ebbs. The gambler may borrow money to "get even." More time is spent gambling to recover losses and repay loans. A roller coaster ride begins: the stakes and the takes increase; but the losses come faster, and the ride down is a fearsome thing.



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Managing Anger



"Feeling" angry is normal. The key is to understand our anger and express it properly. The first step in managing anger is to examine our own emotions. Here are some tips...

Know your triggers

- Identify situations that make you angry
- Avoid negative thoughts that begin with must, never & should
- Work through irrational thoughts such as "nobody likes me" or "I'm always picked on by the boss"

Reduce tension

- Breathe deeply to relax
- Take small breaks or time away from the situation

Be assertive, Not aggressive

- Listen to what you say and how you say it. Are you too loud?
- Make requests, not demands
- Step back...count to 10 before saying anything

Take control

- Don't let things build up
- Practice problem-solving

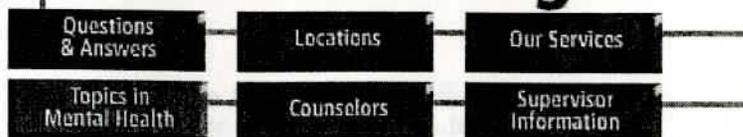
Anger management doesn't mean hiding your anger; it means learning effective methods that promote solutions & a win-win situation for all!

**For confidential help call:
Employee Assistance Program
314-729-4650 or 1-800-413-8008 #2**

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Healthy Relationship Tips

- ♥ Don't sweat the small stuff - choose your "battlegrounds" carefully
- ♥ Promote the positive in your life
- ♥ Approach life as a continuous process of learning and relearning
- ♥ Appeal rather than demand
- ♥ Concentrate on solutions; avoid looking for someone to blame
- ♥ Accept compliments as a verbal gift
- ♥ Restore relationships by asking forgiveness of those you have hurt. This can relieve guilt and be of great benefit
- ♥ Forgive those who have wronged you in your heart - not for what it will do for them but for what it will do for you
- ♥ Say thank you, express gratitude
- ♥ Look for opportunities to praise privately and in front of others
- ♥ Admit when you are wrong
- ♥ Remember, we can't change people but we can change relationships
- ♥ Take time for yourself
- ♥ Value the relationship as #1 - spend time together on a regular basis, "date night" at least once per month, trade off who initiates planning
- ♥ Always avoid taking the other for granted
- ♥ Use humor - laugh together; remember that how we choose our words and our voice tone will influence how our message is received
- ♥ Give "surprise" presents - a note, chocolate kiss under the pillow



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Stress

Tips for Reducing Its Impact on your Life!

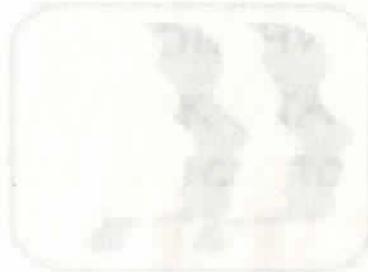
- Call your EAP to talk to a licensed professional counselor.
- Prepare for the morning the evening before.
- Jot everything down - do not rely on your memory.
- Make duplicates of house, office, & car keys.
- Practice preventative maintenance on a continual basis.
- Do one thing at a time.
- Plan ahead. Do not wait until the last minute to do things.
- Get things fixed when they do not work right.
- Always allow 15 minutes of extra time for meetings and appointments.
- Always set up contingency plans "just in case."
- Relax your standards - be flexible.
- Practice "Pollyanna Power" - count your blessings, not your problems.
- Ask questions and repeat things to ensure your understanding of what is expected.
- Know when to say "No"!
- Unplug the telephone when you want some uninterrupted time at home.
- Turn your "needs" into "preferences." You only *need* food, water and shelter.
- Tell your problems to your pets - they never criticize you.
- Reward yourself after an especially stressful day, but avoid overeating or drinking.
- Say you are sorry when you feel sad about something you did.
- Wear earplugs if you need quiet. Listen to relaxing music at home.
- Avoid bringing work home all the time.
- Plan for fun, relaxation or recreational times on a regular basis.
- Recognize when you are under stress - inventory your reactions, feelings and thoughts, and remember that "this too shall pass."
- Consider what you can do to increase your control over the situation. Think about the worst thing that could happen as a result of this stressful event.
- Use environmental cues, e.g., answering the phone, pouring a cup of coffee, etc., as a reminder to monitor your tension level.
- Prioritize activities and tasks. Save smallest time-stressors to complete during least productive work time.
- Take a time-out! Temporarily leave the scene of your stressors until you can relax and collect yourself.
- When irritation begins to build, slowly count to three while inhaling from the soles of your feet. Smile inwardly and repeat to yourself, "Alert Mind, Calm body." Exhale through the mouth.

- Practice relaxation techniques, e.g., meditation, progressive muscle relaxation, or visualization on a regular basis.
- Make sure you get enough sleep! Most people need 7-8 hours of sleep each night.

Our EAP counselors are here to help! Call your Employee Assistance Program today!

314-729-4650 or 1-800-413-8008 #2

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We are here to help you manage your stress and improve your overall well-being. Our EAP counselors are available to provide confidential support and guidance.

If you are experiencing stress, it's important to seek help. Our counselors can help you identify the causes of your stress and develop effective coping strategies.

We offer a variety of services, including individual counseling, group therapy, and stress management workshops. Our goal is to help you regain control of your life and improve your quality of life.

Contact us today to learn more about our services and how we can help you.



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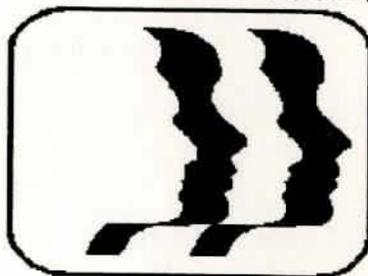
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Talking to your Teen



- Set aside and safeguard time alone with your adolescent to enjoy new or favorite activities. Have fun!
- Busy, active lives prevent problems. Sports and work are great examples of positive problem prevention.
- Be sure rules and expectations are clear. Negotiate these with your adolescent and put them in writing. Have all involved parties sign them. Post them. Set an example by following all agreements exactly.
- Let your adolescent experience the consequences of his/her behavior and decisions. This is how he/she will learn!
- Make no promises or threats that you cannot fully complete.
- Be generous with your praise. Praise his/her efforts, not just accomplishments.
- Know the difference between issues of style and issues of substance. For example, don't make a weird dress a big issue. Decide what issues are worth a fight.
- If there is more than one parent, meet and be clear about the rules and regulations. Do not fight in front of your son/daughter. It is critical to present a united front.
- Learn about your child's interests. You don't have to love the same things. Yet an awareness of his/her favorite music, literature, friends, movies, etc. will help you understand how he/she sees and experiences the world.
- Do not store up a checklist of grievances. Begin each day with a clean slate and a new relationship. Adolescents change so rapidly that this may not be hard.
- When you need help, seek family counseling or the assistance of another expert. Adolescents need to know that you are committed to your expectations and that the world supports parent's reasonable and safe efforts to raise their children.

Advice from a licensed, professional EAP counselor can help you resolve family difficulties. Call today!

314-729-4650 or 1-800-413-8008 #2

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It was originally planned to have the "Counselors" section obtain photos and brief professional information about the main EAP counselors. I soon found that pictures and professional biographies were not easy to obtain, and questions were raised about possible safety issues for the counselors. Therefore, information is basic- just enough to convey that counselors are masters level, licensed professionals.



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EAP Counselors

Our EAP counselors and affiliates have at least five years of professional counseling experience with a minimum of master's degrees in counseling, social work, or psychology.

Counselors are trained to handle a wide range of problem issues ranging from family/relationship to substance abuse.

Call the EAP at 314-729-4650 or 1-800-413-8008 #2

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“Supervisor Information” was developed for management to access information on how the EAP can be a tool to assist them in dealing with problematic employees.

Supervisor information

Supervisor information is a critical tool for managers, which is the best point of intervention in performance.

When an employee has a performance problem, the supervisor is responsible for identifying the problem, determining the cause, and providing the employee with the necessary support and resources to resolve the problem.

Supervisors should be trained to identify and address performance problems, and to provide the necessary support and resources to resolve the problem.

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Supervisor Information

Supervisors play a critical role in the effective use of the EAP. As a manager, you are in the best position to notice changes in a coworker's performance.

When job performance problems persist, it is often an indication that the coworker is experiencing a personal problem. Supervisors do not, however, have to know the cause of poor performance to suggest that a coworker seek help from the EAP. Your proper role is to be aware of deteriorating job performance and make a referral to the EAP.

Supervisor referral appointments are arranged by calling the EAP. Supervisors will consult with EAP professionals to provide relevant information regarding the referral.

Call 314-729-4650 or 1-800-413-8008 #2.

Please note: EAP is not an alternative to disciplinary action. Whether or not a coworker follows EAP recommendations, disciplinary measures are followed according to company guidelines.

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Warning Signs of Personal Problems

Call today at 314-729-4650 or 1-800-413-8008 #2

Absenteeism and Tardiness

Arriving late, leaving early
Absences before and after paydays/holidays
Frequent breaks
Long lunches
Unexplained absences
Absences due to accidents

Job Performance

Increase in errors
Task irresponsibility
Increase in accident rate
Unsatisfactory work quality and output
Lost time on the job, daydreaming, and procrastination

Interpersonal Interactions

Sudden emotional outbursts
Mood swings
Overreaction to criticism
Blaming others
Inappropriate remarks
Increase in complaints from coworkers, customers, suppliers
Isolation
Forgetfulness

Physical Appearance

Ignoring personal hygiene
Slurred speech
Shaking, nervous twitching
Glazed red eyes
Sudden weight loss or gain

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Chapter V

DISCUSSION

The current EAP site does an acceptable job of informing employees and supervisors of services available through the Employee Assistance Program. It gets an average of 88 hits (mouse clicks on site) per month and has been identified several times as the “referral source” when patients call in for authorization. I believe it would gain Jakob Nielsen’s approval in that it is simple and straightforward and covers important details about the EAP. The text and pages are short, and most headlines and subheads are self-explanatory and meaningful. Though it is not flashy or exciting, text skimmers can easily understand what the EAP is and how to contact us for services.

Of course, there is room for improvement. The biggest drawback I see is that it doesn’t have a lot of personality. While I certainly wouldn’t want the seriousness of the EAP service to be downplayed, I would like the site to be more interesting and useful. It does not keep users “coming back for more” as the information is static and will become stale.

The EAP site, as well as the whole hospital organization’s intranet, needs better promotion to spur user interest. Though promotion is currently non-existent, there are many creative ways to engage users.

Another problem is that there is no user testing done to evaluate sites, which is unfortunate as feedback is needed in order to enhance and improve the user experience. Because there is no funding or designated employee to support this function, I personally am responsible to obtain any critiques or input regarding the EAP site.

I recruited Andy Bundenson to help me in this endeavor. Mr. Bundenson works as a Grant Developer/ Technical Advisor for the Hospice program. He created the Hospice Intranet and Internet site, and his Internet site ranked in the top 17% of sites submitted to the St. Louis Post Dispatch column entitled "Sites in the Spotlight".

Mr. Bundenson's critique is shown in Appendix A. In it, he stresses the need to give the most info in the shortest amount of time and space. He suggested listing the bullet points of services on the home page. Another valuable insight related writing for the common user-- I had listed a service as "Critical Incident Stress Debriefing", obviously forgetting that this was departmental "lingo". He suggested changing it to "Dealing with Personal Tragedy". Grammar mistakes were also found, showing the importance of editing with a fresh pair of eyes. Both the Marketing Editor and myself had missed these mistakes!

Re-evaluation and critique spurred ideas for change and development of the EAP Intranet site. For one, informational content needs tweaking. For example, the "Locations" section does not provide specific information and may leave the user wanting more. Though the original idea to have directions to counseling sites and list hours and phone numbers was good, further thought

produced worry that patients would not call the main EAP line for authorization and would simply go straight to the EAP counselors. Lack of authorization would cause problems in claims payment and decline in utilization count, thus having a negative business impact. I think it best to do away with the Locations link and replace it with something more worthwhile.

The section "Mental Health Topics" can be made more interesting by loading a new flyer each month. (example: October is National Depression Awareness Month and a monthly flyer would correlate with this topic.) Further changes would include altering this sections name to "Online Resources" and include applicable links to online Internet website resources related to parenting, mental well-being, support groups-etc., as well as suggested books and support group contacts.

"Supervisor Information" content could be expanded to contain specific information about how to make a supervisor referral, and could further stress confidentiality and cost factors.

Finally, the "Counselors" content is too general. I would like this area to have personality and establish more of a connection with users. A group picture with an accompanying list of names would further this goal.

Taos' advice in Roadmap to a Successful Intranet states to keep the site fresh. Interactivity is key in this. Online professional counseling is a marketable service may and could eventually be a money maker if made available to the general public via the Internet. The EAP's online counseling could have a name, perhaps EAP-Link, to further define this as an additional service for employees.

Online surveys would be an easy, affordable way to explore user opinion. Clients could comment on counseling services which, in turn, could be converted to EAP site testimonials. A separate survey to evaluate the site itself would meet the need for user testing.

Lastly, an Intranet promotion plan needs to be developed and followed. Options listed in Chapter III from M-n-M resources "Web Site Marketing, Promotion and Roll Out Ideas" show fun, creative ways to engage users. I particularly like the ideas of a scavenger hunt for information, training classes for users, and meeting room reservation planning via the Intranet. Since promotion cannot be done realistically on a departmental level, promotion success would require upper-level management agreeing to fund a dedicated employee specific to carrying out promotion plans.

The intranet is a powerful tool, but trying to navigate a poorly designed intranet is as stressful as finding phone numbers, sharing documents, and learning how to use PowerPoint the old fashioned way. Organizations must evaluate site effectiveness through close examination of content, design, usability, promotion, and support if ensuring viability of their intranet is a priority. Fortunately, research and studies in this new field are helping to develop standards in making site success a more exact science.

Appendix A

TO: Wendy Glidden
FROM: Andy Bundesen
RE: **EAP Intranet site**

Overall, the site looks good. Lots of helpful information and encouragement to the visitor to use the info. Here are a few things I picked up on or have learned in my experience with websites:

1. In most info-driven sites, less is more.
While information is good, too much information will drive people away. Try to make the site inviting without giving the visitor everything you have to offer.
2. Most visitors to sites, even sites they like, will spend a maximum of 9 seconds on the first page – YIKES! The more info you can give in the shortest amount of space and time – that is the key to drawing you visitors in to the rest of your site.
3. Internet/Intranet space is widely available but it doesn't mean it all needs to be used. If you have two pages to say one page worth of info, try to say it in half a page. Then use the remainder for another item to peak the interest. For instance, combine onto one page the sections entitled, Our Services, Topics In Mental Health and Supervisor Information with links to other pages from that one page. The visitor then has only one page to view and find the info he is looking for, instead of 3 pages.
4. Use language the visitor will understand at first glance. You and I and your colleagues may know what "Critical Incident Debriefing" means (I do only because I read the page!), but does John Q. Public know that is what he needs. Probably not. Be creative and think like a person visiting your site for the very first time each time you look at it. For instance, maybe rename the title link to read "Dealing with Personal Tragedy".
5. Go to this website: www.nonprofitwebsites.com They have a VERY helpful e-book to download free of charge. I have a copy of it with my own notes if you want to take a look, but I used a yellow highlighter and that won't show up on the copies. I look at it just about every time I set out to update the Hospice site. Very helpful and easy to read.
6. I'd be glad to continue to help any way I can. Just let me know!

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