ENTERPRISE KNOWLEDGE

Global Knowledge & Information Management Services

Transforming an Employee Portal to a Digital Workspace

ADIENT

ENTERPRISE KNOWLEDGE

When is a company both a brand-new startup *and* an established and mature company at the same time?

In November 2016, Johnson Controls spun out its auto seating business, creating a new, wholly independent company called Adient. Adient was born as a fully mature company, with established clients, operations, and market share. But Adient was also born with a strong desire create a new corporate culture of information sharing and collaboration.

How could the new company do both? How could Adient continue to maintain the content and information that was needed to sustain operations, while simultaneously rethinking how employees communicated, collaborated, and exchanged information?

Immediately after the launch of the new company, Adient Communications and Enterprise Knowledge LLC (EK) teamed up to rethink and redesign how the old-style employee portal could be transformed into a new digital workspace.

From the outset, the team identified a set of competing priorities that it needed to rationalize during the transformation process. They needed to:

- Maintain continuous access to legacy information used in day to day operations;
- Clean up the mountain of obsolete information that Adient had inherited from its parent company;
- Make information access and maintenance easier and more intuitive;
- Change the paradigm for how the company communicates to employees;
- Change the dynamics of how employees exchanged information and collaborated, breaking down traditional barriers to information exchange by using a more social model.

The portal transformation team designed a way to gradually transform the portal in real time, rebuilding it while maintaining access to current information. The transformed digital workspace would:

- Disseminate "official" company announcements using social tools rather than email or static content;
- Delineate spaces for all company content vs. team based content;
- Align content access interfaces with how users look for information;
- Align content maintenance interfaces with content owners;
- Enable contextual, search driven navigation to simplify the overall portal architecture and move users to target content quickly;
- Include refreshed – and dramatically simplified – content about company functions and tools.

A New Paradigm for Internal Communications

Instead of using traditional static tools for internal communications such as long form news articles and email announcements, the portal transformation team shifted toward new uses for traditional social tools. The company's social network (in this case Yammer) was redeployed in the service of traditional internal communications by putting in place two innovations:

- **The employee communications "avatar**." The portal transformation team created an employee communications avatar within Yammer and used the avatar for official announcements from the company. Social network style employee announcements were now available both on the portal home page and via the Yammer app. The announcements were shorter, more immediate, and easier to scan; they allowed for employee comments and "likes," and were available

ENTERPRISE KNOWLEDGE

through a variety of user interfaces, both desktop and mobile.

- **Internal "twitter-style" leads for traditional articles.** The team replaced the traditional static "news quilt" on the portal home page with a news stream that essentially served as a rolling inhouse twitter feed. Leads to traditional featured news articles or videos were linked to the full versions of the item, again with access from more interfaces and with more mobility and scan-ability.
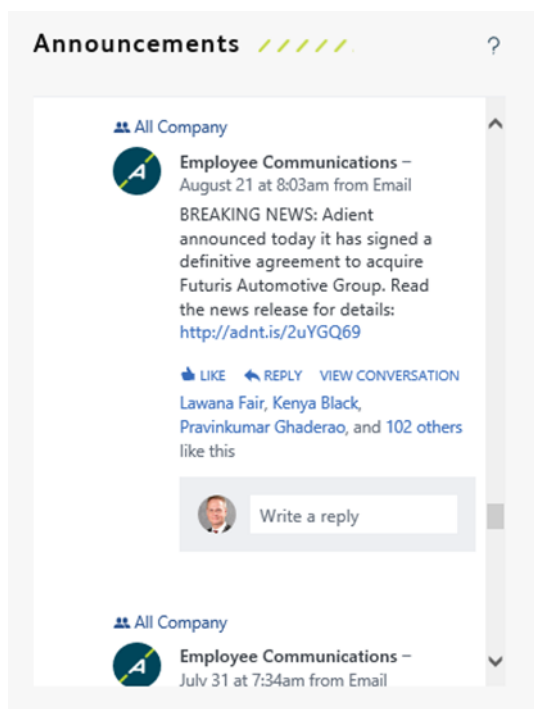
Realigned Search Scopes

To improve search results in the short term, search scopes were adjusted away from the default "index everything" approach, to a more finely tuned set of

search results that returned more reliable content. The revised search scopes:

- Separated the all company facing portal content from team content;
- Focused on destination content rather than landing or index pages;
- Pointed to content that was actively curated by content owners;
- Used "best bets" to match selected content to specific tasks.

Transforming traditional portal content

To transform old style portal content for the full range of company functions, the portal transformation team created three tracks of work, namely:

1. Design and implement a common information infrastructure as a foundation;
2. Segment and prioritize the work to gain control over the tasks ahead;
3. Extend the infrastructure to each functional area and content owner via a standardized process.

Information infrastructure

A common information infrastructure formed the foundation of portal transformation. The infrastructure included enterprise metadata and content types, common search facets, and a patterned approach for portal design that could be repeated for each functional area of the portal.

Search driven navigation at each functional level dramatically simplified the page hierarchy and reduced the level of effort needed to transform each functional area. Each area was now a "content engine," designed
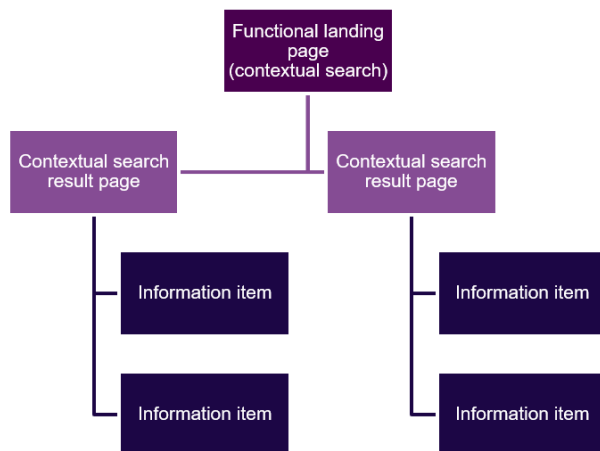
Portal Transformation

to consume content from content owners and serve content to users based on browsable search facets. Content owners were now focused on maintaining content rather than on managing an individually designed portal site.

The enterprise metadata, content types, and search refiners were extended and deployed to each functional area as they were addressed. The common page hierarchy followed the pattern in the diagram below:

Prioritized Approach

Not all functional areas of the company could be addressed at the same time. Prioritizing and then

ordering the transformation of individual functional areas allowed the portal transformation team to transform the portal one functional area at a time. Before engaging with the individual content owners, the portal was segmented by functional area and then prioritized across three criteria:

- End user value and importance;

- Relative size and complexity;

- Readiness of individual content owners.

High value, low complexity areas of the portal were identified using a magic quadrant and then further prioritized by considering readiness of individual content owners to engage in the process.

The result was a prioritized listing of legacy portal sites that began with high value / low effort sites where the content owner was ready and willing to undertake the transformation process.
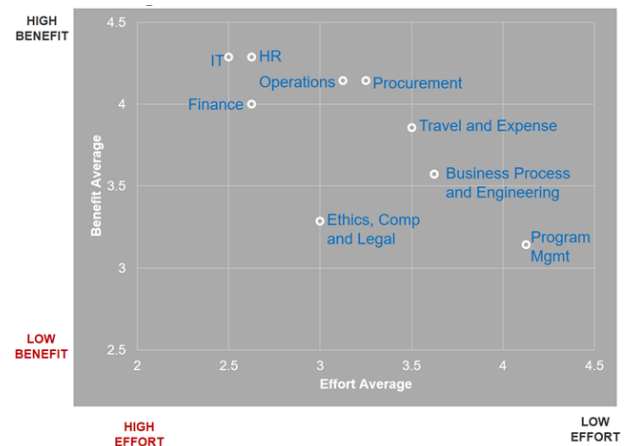
Rolling and repeatable process

For the actual conversion of legacy portal content to the new digital workspace model, the portal transformation team established a process that could be repeated again and again with each new functional area that was addressed. The end-to-end process was highly regimented and could be staggered with different functional areas at different stages in the process at the same time. For a functional area with an average

ENTERPRISE KNOWLEDGE

Portal Transformation

amount of content (e.g. between 100-200 information items) the entire process from engagement to launch took about 6 weeks.

Here are the individual process steps:

1. Engage with content owners to describe the process;

2. Guide content owners through a cleanup of their legacy content, identifying content that should be archived, the content that should be moved to the transformed portal space, and the content that should be moved after modification;

3. Extend the enterprise metadata and content types to accommodate the new function;

4. Build out of standardized information and document repositories for that function;

5. Migrate refreshed content into the new repositories;

6. Build contextual landing and search results pages;

7. Launch and announce the transformed functional area.

Conclusion and Results

The transformation work at Adient is ongoing. Even with this highly structured and repeatable approach, changing an old-style employee portal to a more agile and flexible digital workspace takes time. Structuring the work in this way, using standards and a repeatable process, allows for a sense of momentum and continuous improvement that is obvious and observable by employees throughout the company. Portal transformation is no longer a chore that runs in the background, it is a company-wide initiative that is changing the way that Adient works.