



How Does the "Schweb" Help Old Charles Make More Money?



Edgardo Donovan
Touro University International
ITM 503
Dr. Tom Swanson
Module 4 – Case Analysis
Monday, June 5, 2006



How Does the "Schweb" Help Old Charles Make More Money?

"An intranet created by Charles Schwab & Co., known throughout the company as the Schweb, enables Schwab's 23,000 employees to access detailed information about benefits, training, computer support and scads of company information. The genesis of the intranet was the introduction of Schwab's White Pages, an employee directory that was Web-enabled at a time when a lot of companies had not even launched home pages for their Internet site. " (Hoffman)

Intranets, as demonstrated by the Charles Schwab & Co. Intranet "Schweb", can add to an organization's bottom line by providing an efficient way to share information within a company, automate administrative processes, reduce paper expenses, and minimize the need for time consuming meetings. Created initially as an online directory and human resources informational source, Schweb has now evolved as the chief training vehicle for the company as well an automation nexus for processes ranging from human resources to customer relationship management.

An Intranet is an internal organizational oriented web site which is meant to be used solely by employees as way to remain connected about organizational news, organizational policies/procedures, and to access a wide range of varying media documents. An Intranet is most useful in large organizations because it can facilitate communication through employee directories and by publishing advice on who to speak within the organization to regarding different issues.

The advent of Intranets have made it possible for organizations to rely less on a corps of information oriented middle managers who in the past would have been charged with disseminating corporate information via meetings and to save a substantial amount of money that used to be invested in printing documentation in support of meetings.

"Expectations for intranets are sky-high -- from driving up employee engagement to helping employees reach the mythical state of "collaboration." Here are five steps on how to write a comprehensive strategy: 1. addressing user needs, 2. addressing contributor needs, 3. information, 4. technology, and 5. governance. The overall objective of the strategy process is to develop a concise statement of the role of the intranet in the organization and the steps that are being taken to ensure that it remains an effective business support application. But the exact structure of the strategy will need to take into account practice within your organization." (White)

•
•
•
•
•
•
•

If used effectively, an Intranet can be used as a conduit not only for information to flow from management to the front lines but vice-versa as well. Through a variety of tools such as email, online polls, and feedback forms management can quickly solicit feedback on a variety of issues and have it readily accessible within a retrievable database format so that statistical analysis may be performed if necessary. An Intranet can be extremely valuable also from a project management perspective when used in combination with software applications like Microsoft Outlook and Microsoft Project. Meetings can be arranged while taking inconsideration of all team member schedules via Outlook. Real-time project deliverables can be published, viewed, and modified by individual team members with appropriate access to ensure that everybody is on the same page regarding the status of interdependencies among team members.

Charles Schwab & Co.'s Schwab does not serve as a mere corporate directory or online human resource employee handbook but has evolved into a corporate nerve center tying in a variety of legacy systems and databases with their online equivalents so as to provide a viable platform for workflow automation for many internally focused and customer relationship related tasks. In particular, Schwab connects to one of the corporate customer Extranets where Schwab employees interact with customers in an attempt to better understand customer trends in an effort to improve responsiveness to customer needs.

"Charles Schwab & Co.'s Schwab intranet is being used to help marketers better understand customer trends in an effort to improve responsiveness to customer needs. Schwab has installed Epiphany Inc.'s Clarity, a Web package that can extract information from numerous sources, both legacy systems and external repositories. Epiphany's EpiCenter Extractors provide direct connectivity to all the leading ERP and sales force automation systems. " **(Schwartz)**

Charles Schwab & Co. Intranet success is attributable to management's ambitious vision for the use of this new medium. More importantly, effective follow through in implementing their Intranet strategy probably determined in large measure the success they are having today. It is not uncommon for companies to have similar ambitions who do not see them materialize for a variety of reasons: staff may contribute content as a hobby because intranet support isn't in their job description not taking the desired level of time and care, there may be no senior-level ownership or sponsorship that provides a sense of business direction, content may only be found if the user happens to know the department that owns it, pages are may not be updated because the content owner has left the company, etc. **(White)**

Charles Schwab & Co. does not seem to have fallen prey to the productivity tradeoff that sometimes takes place with popular Intranet sites. Sometimes technology can become a distraction whereby employees could potentially use Intranet and other Internet related technologies to chat and write emails to each other about issues that have nothing to do with achieving organizational objectives while appearing to be working on their computers.

Intranets, as demonstrated by the Charles Schwab & Co. Intranet "Schweb", can add to an organization's bottom line by providing an efficient way to share information within a company, automate administrative processes, reduce paper expenses, and minimize the need for time consuming meetings. Created initially as an online directory and human resources informational source Schweb has now evolved as the chief training vehicle for the company as well an automation nexus for processes ranging from human resources to customer relationship management.



BIBLIOGRAPHY

I. Works Cited

White, Martin. Developing a Comprehensive Intranet Strategy. Strategic Communication Management, 2006.

Schwartz., Jeffrey. A Marketing Epiphany -- Start-Up's Data Analysis Package Powers Schwab Intranet. InternetWeek, 1998.

Hoffman, Thomas. Intranet Helps Workers Navigate Corporate Maze. Computerworld, 2001.

II. Works Consulted

White, Martin. Developing a Comprehensive Intranet Strategy. Strategic Communication Management, 2006.

Schwartz., Jeffrey. A Marketing Epiphany -- Start-Up's Data Analysis Package Powers Schwab Intranet. InternetWeek, 1998.

Hoffman, Thomas. Intranet Helps Workers Navigate Corporate Maze. Computerworld, 2001.

Stewart, Thomas. Knowledge is today's capital: Strategy & Leadership., 2003.

Malhotra, Yogesh. Knowledge Management for the New World of Business. Brint.com 1998.

Barclay, Rebecca. What is Knowledge Management. MediaAccess.com.1997.

KM-Forum.org. What is Knowledge Management. 2002.

Santuos, Megan, Srmacz, Jon. The ABCs of Knowledge Management. CIO Magazine 2001.

Wilson, T.D. The Nonsense of Knowledge Management. Information Research, 8(1), paper no. 144, 2002.

Choo, Chen Wei. The Knowing Organization. 1999.

Shein, Esther The Knowledge Crunch. CIO Magazine, 2001.