

At a Glance

Business Objective

Weight Watchers wanted to improve internal communications and encourage engagement among corporate employees by bringing together multiple fragmented sources of information with a single intranet.

Solution

Microsoft SharePoint 2010

Benefits

- Staff feel informed as they now have a consistent, reliable source of corporate news and information
- Increased relevancy of information is benefiting employee engagement
- A centralised document library of policies and procedures ensures Sarbanes Oxley compliance

SharePoint ensures that good communications contribute to a healthy workplace at Weight Watchers

Weight Watchers is the most successful weight-loss organisation in Australia and New Zealand. For almost fifty years the company's focus on education and support has proven to be a winning recipe with consumers seeking a healthier body weight.

Aware of the importance of easy, accessible communication with clients, Weight Watchers provides support across a range of channels including telephone, online, face-to-face meetings and retail centres. It also offers tailored corporate health solutions, and maintains publishing and food licensing businesses.

Communication among geographically dispersed staff

Within Australia and New Zealand, Weight Watchers has approximately 140 corporate staff while out in the field it employs almost 700 weight-loss consultants and 1,500 support staff. For some years a global intranet has been one of the company's key tools for keeping all staff in touch with the latest company news and information.

A local initiative however, identified a number of opportunities to improve internal communications processes for corporate employees. Declan Coady, Weight Watchers' Director for HR and Training explains, "We have around 80 staff in an office in Broadway [Sydney] and another 60 or so spread out across Australia and New Zealand. We found there was little focus on communications for corporate employees, and much of what did exist was fragmented and inconsistent. There were lots of bits of paper floating around and a large volume of emails being sent out but there was no one source to turn to for information or updates."

A corporate staff engagement survey confirmed the problem. “Communications were identified in the survey as something that needed to be worked on. People wanted to have a better view of what the executive team was up to. We offer lots of career opportunities for staff but they were saying they didn’t know when vacancies were coming up,” Declan notes.

At around the same time, management was also looking for a way to centralise access to policy and procedure documents. In line with compliance requirements for all U.S. listed companies, Weight Watchers had to ensure fast, easy access to current policies and procedures. As Declan points out, “This was a problem when we had paper files on peoples’ desks as you could never be sure what version they were looking at.”

An intranet is born

Declan realised that an intranet could provide an effective solution to both the internal communications and compliance requirements. An intranet would overcome any problems arising from the geographic spread of corporate staff, plus it would create an up-to-date, centrally controlled, readily available information source.

“*SharePoint suited our needs. All we had to do was brand and customise it.*”

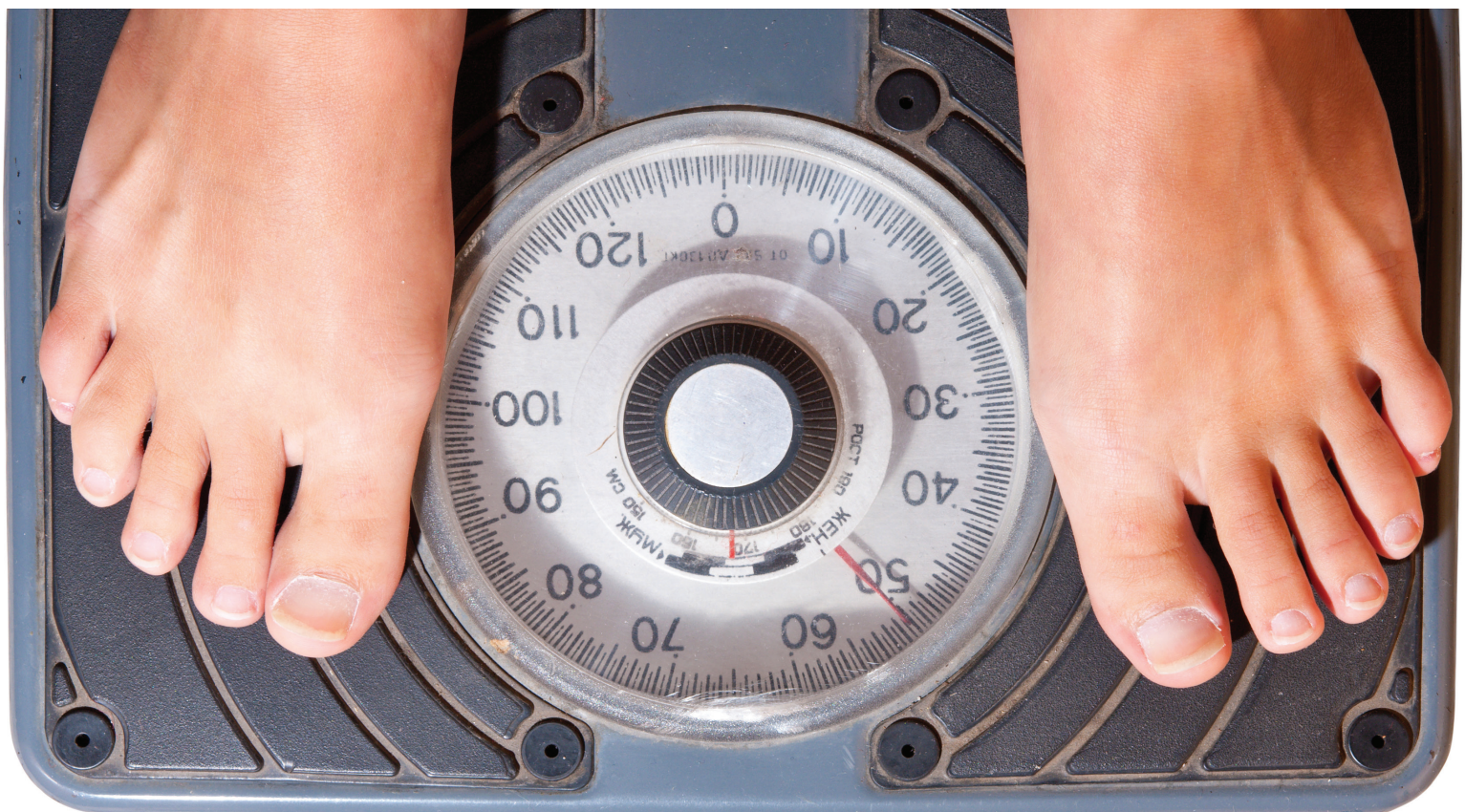
To help develop the intranet, Declan turned to Professional Advantage. “We met with a few providers but we already had a relationship with Professional Advantage and they understood our needs. They were enthusiastic about the project despite our relatively small budget,” Declan smiles.

To ensure a representative, useful intranet design, the company brought together a focus group of stakeholders from different departments. Together they decided what Weight Watchers needed to get out of the project, what the intranet should look like and how it should work. They defined the sections and structure to a Professional Advantage consultant who, over the next six weeks, turned their vision into a reality.

Meet The Hub

Weight Watchers launched “The Hub”, its new, dedicated corporate staff communication channel. The Hub landing page is the first thing employees see as they log on to the company network each day. It contains everything from news and announcements to reminders of when the next stationery order is required, and the company’s history, philosophy, vision and values.

A “Working at Weight Watchers” section outlines employee benefits and health and safety requirements. It’s become an integral part of the induction process for all new staff.



Also contained within the intranet is a document library that holds the definitive version of all of the company's policies and procedures. The system includes workflow processes that allow each department to upload, approve and manage its own policy documents.

The Hub also offers a "who's who" of staff in each department, employee profiles, social club news and photos from past events such as the fun and educational "Lunch and Learn" sessions held monthly. There's a guide to the local area surrounding the corporate office identifying services such as banks and restaurants. Good news stories, sometimes sourced from the global intranet, help connect staff with clients. "People love reading stories of clients who have had a turn-around in their health," Declan points out. "It's a big engagement driver for us."

An internal communications employee conducts minor content updates every few days depending on the availability of news, followed by a major update once a fortnight.

Employees have responded enthusiastically to the new channel. Declan says, "Rather than having your inbox clogged up with 50 emails every week that may or may not be relevant to you, now we have a fortnightly email newsletter which contains all the information we want to highlight. From there, people know to go to The Hub to get more information."



A gateway to other systems

Declan is aware that other departments are interested in extending The Hub so that it becomes a gateway to other corporate systems. "We're thinking about making it more like a portal so that for example, finance or IT have their own sections where they can roll out dynamic reports to field managers."

In the immediate future however, his priority is to conduct a review of the intranet. "We want to evaluate how it's working for people and to see what content they are using." He's also keen to develop more opportunities for staff engagement. "We've been trying, from an internal communications point of view, to develop The Hub as a two-way street. We've put in some basic functionality around being able to ask questions of the Managing Director. While we're only in our infancy with this, it's something that we definitely want to do more of in the future." he says.

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