

Intranets vs. Extranets

What's the difference?

The background of the page is a dark blue gradient with several large, overlapping, semi-transparent shapes in shades of purple, yellow, and blue, creating a dynamic and modern aesthetic.

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Intranet and extranet software have similar names and benefits, but there is one huge question that will determine which platform is for you.

Do you want to strengthen knowledge sharing, collaboration, and communication with internal employees or customers and partners? Sometimes, the answer is both. Let's take a look at the differences between intranet and extranet software and the essential tools each platform should have.

What is the difference between intranet and extranet?

An *intranet* is a network where employees can create content, communicate, collaborate, and develop the company culture. Meanwhile, an *extranet* provides controlled access to authorized customers, vendors, partners, or others outside the company.

For many, understanding the difference between an intranet and extranet can be confusing—especially for those who have never used them before.

Intranet and extranet software supports two different areas in a business, but has similar goals: to improve how employees work with clients and each other. Sometimes they are combined in the same software, other times, separately.

Once integrated into a business model, these portals can make day-to-day activities more efficient, more streamlined, better connected, and more productive.

But let's not get ahead of ourselves. Before you plan on implementing extranet or [intranet software](#), you need to understand how these platforms work, what their features do, and how they will benefit your business. The better you grasp these concepts, the more likely you'll reap their advantages.

What is an intranet?

The background features several overlapping, glowing, organic shapes in shades of purple and yellow against a dark blue background. The shapes are semi-transparent and have a soft, ethereal glow, creating a sense of depth and movement.

The prefix *intra* means within or inside. Therefore, an intranet is the company's digital workspace that centralizes employee data, documents, tools, conversations, and projects in your company.

The major difference from an extranet, however, is that an intranet is used internally. An intranet allows employees and colleagues to work together in a virtual space to communicate, collaborate, and access documents and resources—for the most part, no outside parties are involved.

Businesses use intranet software for a variety of reasons, like extranet software, a [company intranet](#) streamlines daily activity, organizes people and data, improves internal communications, and increases employee engagement. It also solves many challenges for remote teams and large organizations by connecting staff with colleagues, information, and projects, no matter where they are.

Strong intranet software is packed with features that improve three main areas in your business: communication, collaboration, and connectivity. When you prioritize all three, your staff will work better, smarter, and have the resources to make informed decisions on the spot. Let's take a look at how these features work.

The benefits of implementing an intranet.

There are many reasons why it might be beneficial for your business to implement an intranet.

1. Improved internal communication and alignment.

Communication is key. According to a [Pumble study](#), 86% of employees and executives cite the lack of effective collaboration and communication as the main causes for workplace failures. With strong communication, teams can complete tasks efficiently, grow as individuals and departments, and become more aligned with your organization.

An intranet [improves communication in the workplace](#) because employees

have an intuitive, organized, and clear way to check in with each other. Rather than relying on email, users have access to numerous communication channels where discussions are tracked and all team members are alerted when a new discussion takes place. Because intranet platforms are built for flexibility, all three levels of internal communication have a place to move initiatives forward: leaders to teams, teams to leaders, and teams to each other.

2. Streamlined project management.

Projects and goals are how your teams and organization evolves. An intranet gives directors, managers, and employees a secure and automated platform that keeps everyone on track. The ability to co-edit allows employees to work from any location, and task management abilities ensures managers can set deadlines, priority settings, and reminders to teams.

3. Centralized information that connects members.

Communication and collaboration requires access to relevant information. If employees have to shuffle between platforms, run into confusion because they don't know where anything is, or have to rely on another person to find an easy answer, productivity, morale, and engagement hinders.

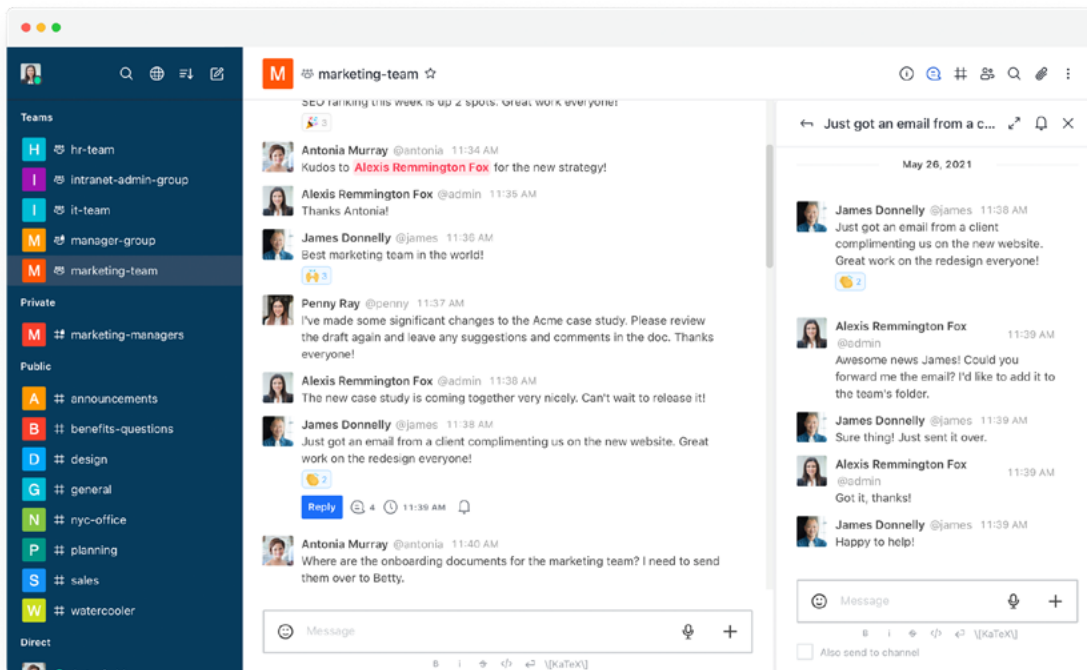
An intranet becomes the single source of truth for employees. It stores and organizes all internal data, delivers targeted information, and is the document management system that employees rely on. The ability to integrate with third-party tools, like Google Workspace and Microsoft Office 365, centralizes important systems, accelerates projects, and provides employees with one place for all resources.

Essential intranet features.

What are the features that drive the benefits of intranet software? Let's take a look.

1. High impact communication tools.

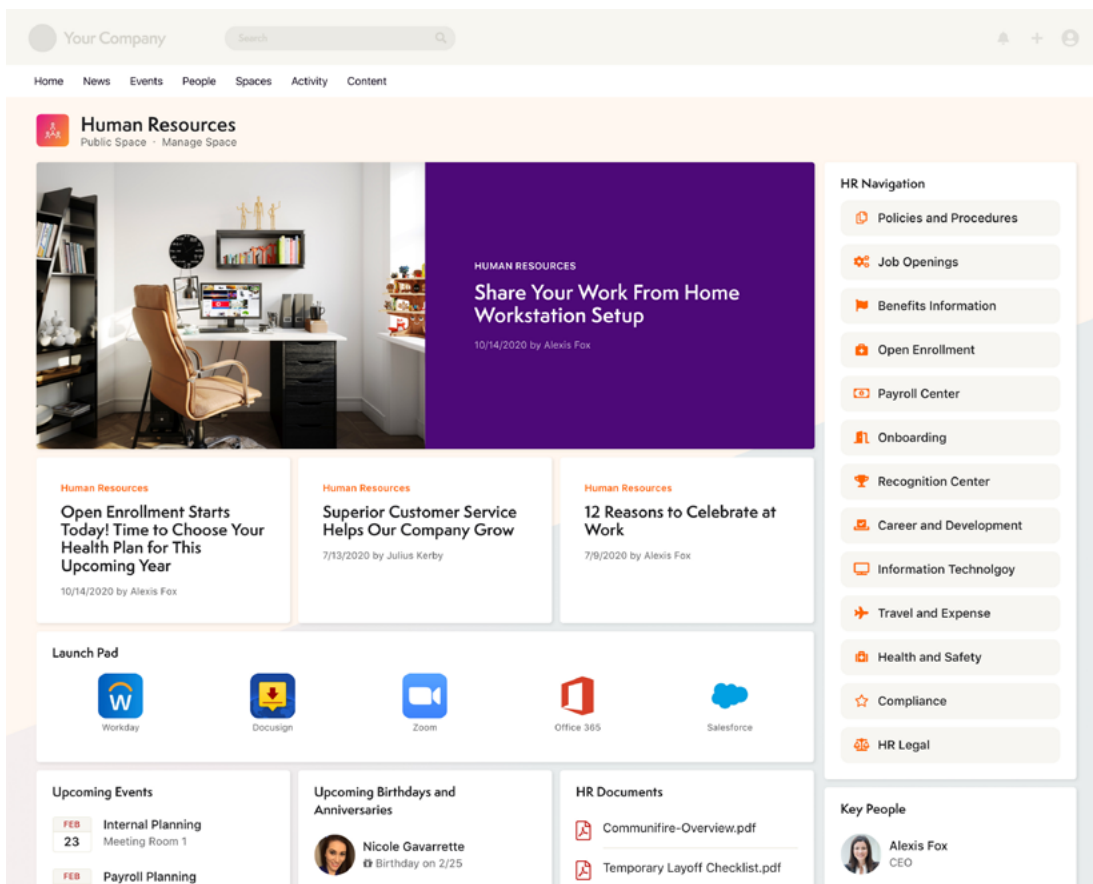
Fluid conversation spurs creativity and productivity. Direct messenger, comments, activity streams, notifications, and workspaces are specific [intranet features](#) that improve communication in the workplace and across your entire company.



Let's say you're in a meeting and your CEO has a question but a team member who has the answer is not present...or maybe you need to access a document but you do not have time to stop at your colleague's desk to get it before a conference call. With an intranet, you can ask your peer(s) instantly and directly without sending a single email. People can even drag-and-drop files and create group threads on the spot—eliminating the time it takes to send large files or dig through clogged email threads and inboxes.

2. Knowledge discovery.

Accessing and distributing department information is also important. With online workspaces, departments and internal groups have their own livable homes in your intranet. Everything imperative to that department—employee directory, documents, calendars, articles, news, etc.—exists in one dedicated area in your intranet and is accessible for a select team of members or can be open to everyone. Users receive alerts whenever a space moderator shares information—another method of communicating without sending emails that could get lost, unread, or take up unnecessary space.



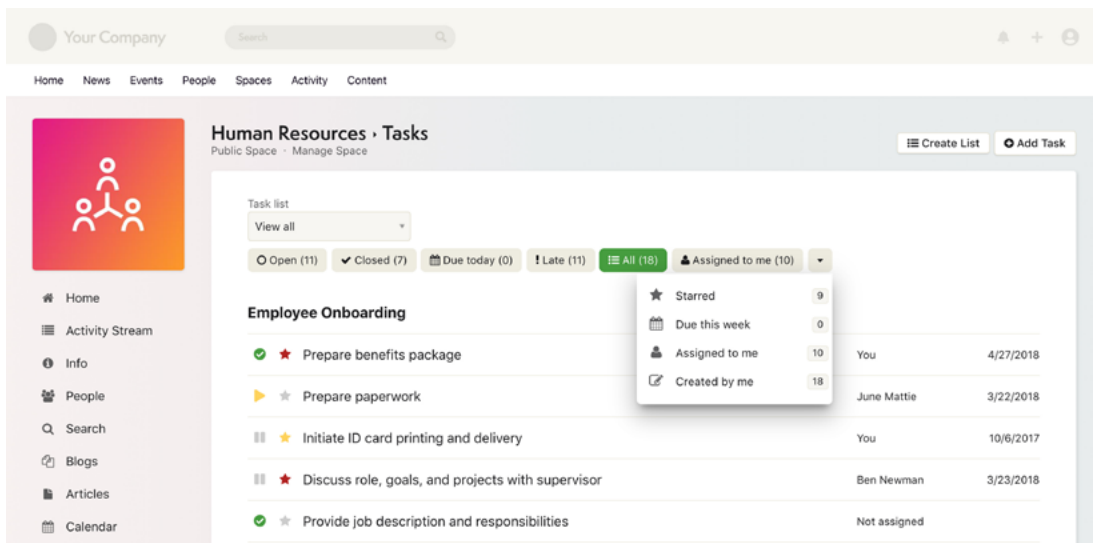
Furthermore, an intranet comes with an elastic search where files, third-party documents, people, and conversations are searchable. Make documents private to a select group or public to everyone with fine-grain permissions.

3. Relevant information, always.

The intranet becomes the ultimate company [knowledge base](#) where your entire staff receives company-wide announcements, asks general questions in Q&A forums, or accesses internal documents. By dispersing knowledge, you set every employee up for success. You also align staff with your company's goals and people.

The information you share must be useful, which means it must be relevant. Your intranet ensures content is both. Alert authors to update documents by specified dates, add expiration dates for content, and make sure employees are reading important information with a Required Reading tool (this feature notifies recipients when content is mandatory reading by prompting them to hit a "confirm" button after completion.) This way, you never have to worry if content is outdated or unread by teams. And your intranet is always the source for current and important information.

4. Efficient project management and workflow systems.



Have you ever managed a project but had a difficult time tracking your team's progress? It's no secret: how your staff executes projects will affect your company's overall success. An intranet will assist your employees and

managers with every stage of a project through organized and easy-to-use features. If a director wants to assign a task, for example, he or she can alert team members within seconds and share assignment details. Every aspect of the project will be recorded in a task management tool and trackable through an activity stream.

Team members can also comment in discussion forums, digital workspaces, and files. So long are the days of confusion for team players and leaders. The intranet keeps everyone on track and makes project collaboration an engaging experience.

In short...

The intranet is your digital workplace where employees chat directly with colleagues, access department information, and collaborate on projects as efficiently and successfully as possible.

When you provide your business—no matter the industry—with modern tools to streamline these efforts, you create an informed and connected staff, which in turn, optimizes your company's success.

For more details on intranet software, uses, and benefits, check out this article:

[What is an Intranet?](#)



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What is an extranet?

The background features several overlapping, glowing, translucent shapes in shades of purple, blue, and yellow against a dark blue background. The shapes are curved and fluid, creating a sense of motion and depth. A prominent yellow and purple shape curves from the bottom left towards the top right, while another purple shape is positioned below it. The overall effect is a modern, abstract digital aesthetic.

If an intranet is a digital workplace for internal communications, an extranet is a digital platform used for external communications.

Think of it this way:

“Extra” refers to any contact outside of your business, such as clients, vendors, and suppliers.

Therefore, an extranet is a private network where these individuals, like clients, vendors, suppliers, partners, etc., can communicate with you and your employees in a closed digital workspace. Extranet software serves an extremely important role, because it supports private communication, collaboration, knowledge sharing, document sharing, and data transfer between partners and organizations.

An extranet is designed to streamline a variety of needs. Large volumes of data can be exchanged between parties via extranet software, for example, thus facilitating easy collaboration. These [collaboration tools](#) are particularly useful for companies that need to brainstorm or communicate frequently with clients and customers. It saves hours of time in comparison to email and phone. Extranet software also monitors potential issues that can occur with a company’s products or services—almost like built-in quality control.

The benefits of implementing an extranet.

There are many reasons why it’s beneficial for your business to implement an extranet.

1. Streamlines repetitive business processes.

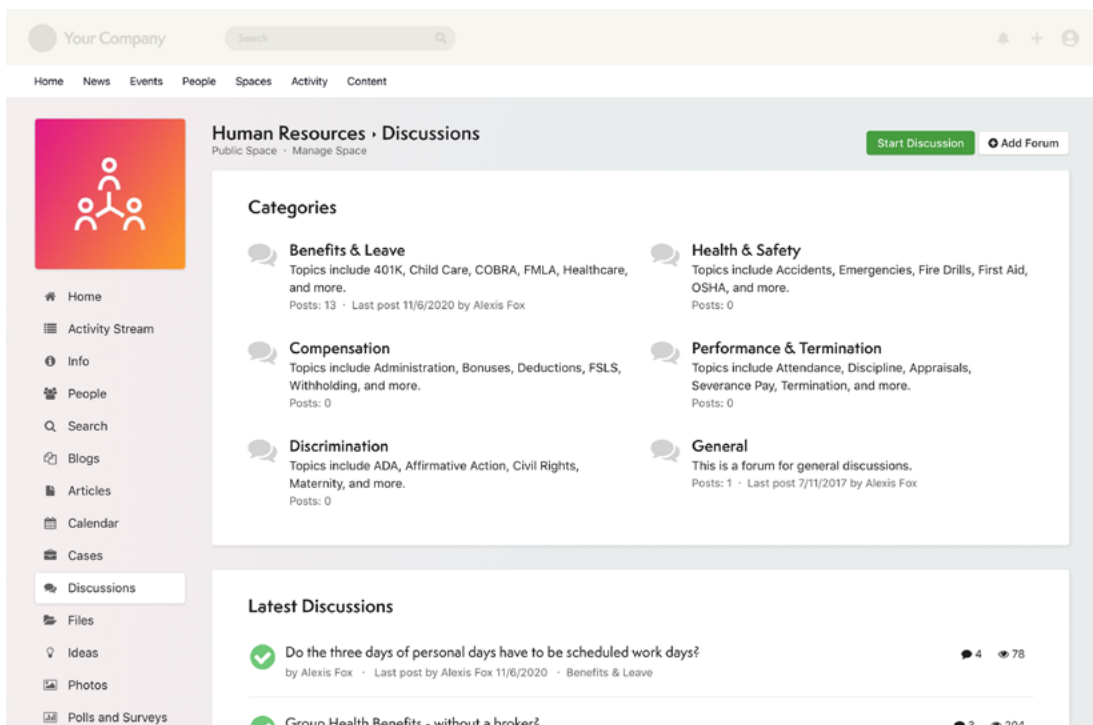
Let’s say you order from a particular vendor on a regular basis using email or phone. With a well-designed extranet, all of your ordering can take place via your secured private network in a virtual space. Interactions with vendors occur in real-time, and you can store invoices, along with other pertinent information, in one place. This makes referring back to prior purchases easier.

What is an extranet?

Storing everything in one virtual space not only saves time, but accelerates B2B interactions.

2. Increases customer satisfaction.

One of the key benefits of an extranet is the accessibility 24/7 for you and your clients to work together.



Customers want to find what they need quickly. Depending on what your business model looks like, a powerful example of an extranet benefit is the ability to create a self-serve helpdesk. In fact, see how an Axero client [saves \\$120,000 a year in hiring costs](#) by leveraging extranet features.

For situations where clients and your employees work closer together, extranet platforms allow customers and employees to collaborate in one interactive place. Users can freely and securely upload documents, ask questions, or approve designs/concepts around the clock. Regardless of where employees and partners are located, everyone can work together.

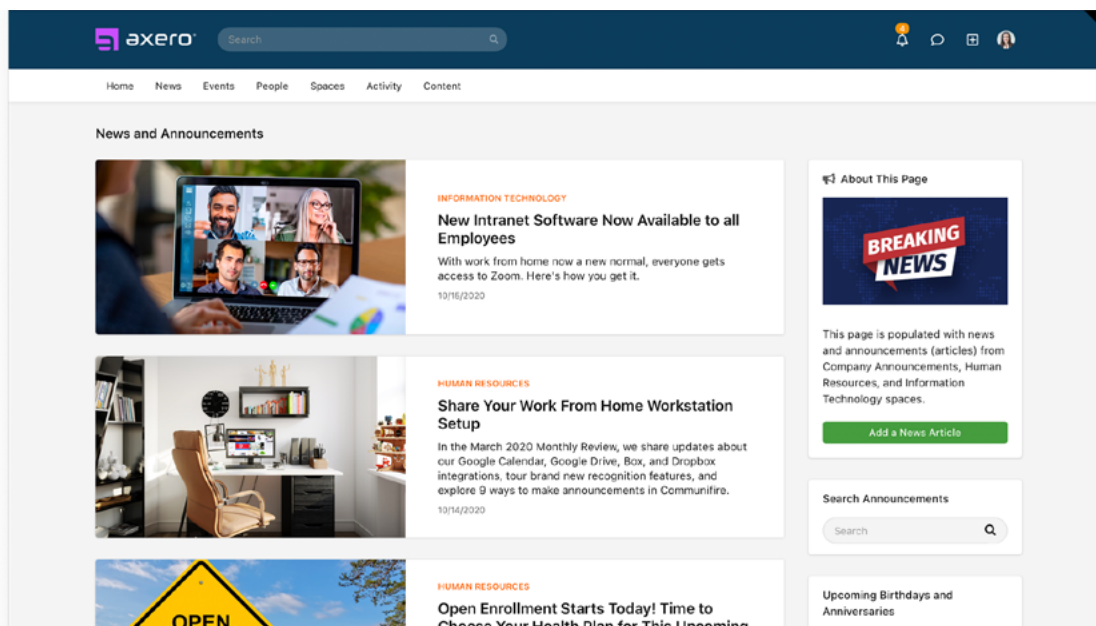
3. Highly secure when properly designed.

In some industries, such as healthcare and insurance, security is of the utmost importance and a breach could be disastrous. Email and other tools used to transfer documents lack the security to avoid potential breaches. Modern extranet software is designed to ensure these concerns are not an issue and sensitive information is protected.

Essential extranet features.

For an extranet to deliver, it needs key features to support your goals. Here's a list of the top extranet tools you should be looking for.

1. Enhanced deliverability of information.



You need to get information out to your customers—and they need an easy way to find what they're looking for. Extranet software allows you to create a public space to share information with customers and interact with them, too. Similar to how spaces give internal teams a homebase to receive targeted

announcements, messages, and resources, a public space sets the same experience for external parties.

Launch a blog with publishing tools, automate announcements, create forums for customers to interact with each other and build a community, or designate a FAQ page for customers to find answers to their questions. Flexibility for communication is a huge extranet advantage because it improves customer experience.

2. Robust collaboration.

Easy-to-use collaboration tools empowers internal and external parties to work together seamlessly. Collaboration with customers means different things for different organizations—and luckily an advantage of extranet software is the variety of collaboration tools that support different kinds of projects.

If you work with freelancers, for example, an extranet gives you a digital hub to co-collaborate on documents in real-time. You can also centralize handbooks, policies, calendars, and guides specific to your freelancers. Other times, collaboration can mean interacting with clients to troubleshoot issues or [crowdstorm ideas](#). With discussion forums, polls, and surveys, you can collect feedback and gather intel from your target audience.

3. Data security.

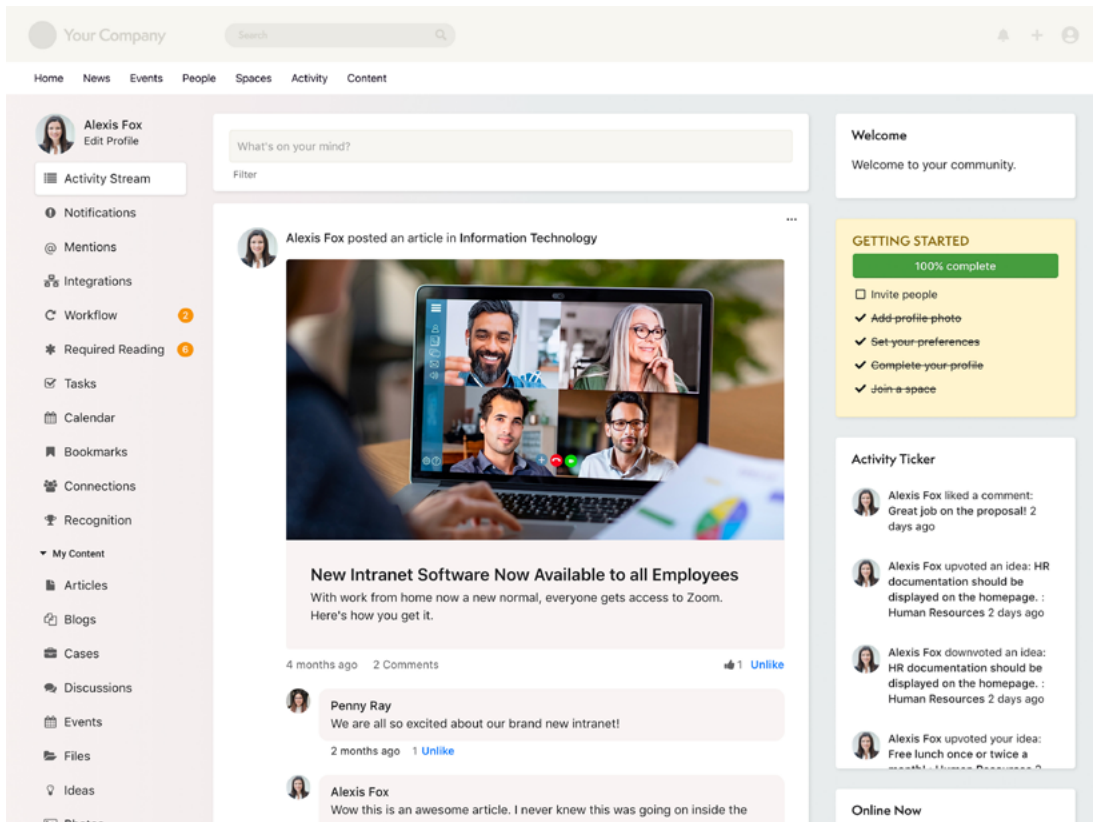
Customer information needs to be protected. Secure extranet platforms are built with data encryption and application security to ensure confidential information is protected. With a wide variety of permission settings, you can restrict different groups of people from accessing files and areas in your site.

4. Branding and customization.

The extranet is a place where clients can interact with your company and brand. The ability to customize and [design pages](#) to match your colors, logo, and culture sets a positive user experience that strengthens customer loyalty and

What is an extranet?

satisfaction with your product and company. With Axero's Page Builder, you can easily drag and drop widgets to make your customer-facing pages match your vision. Permissions also allow you to open up parts of your site to the public, and keep other areas private to internal users. You can pick and choose what your pages look like and who has access to what.



In short...

Extranet software plays an integral role for companies that conduct business with other organizations. Sharing large bulks of information, collaborating on projects, and discussing private information with individuals outside of your company can be accomplished with an extranet. This streamlines projects and creates a pleasant experience that increases client and partner retention.

**Intranets and extranets of the
past vs. today.**

The background features several overlapping, glowing, semi-transparent shapes in shades of purple, blue, and yellow against a dark blue background. The shapes are curved and fluid, creating a sense of motion and depth. The lighting is soft and ethereal, with the colors blending into each other at the edges.

Although intranet and extranet software is relatively new, these two mega platforms have advanced rapidly in the last 20 years.

Frontier Technologies was the first major company to release an intranet platform. Back in 1996—seven years after the invention of the internet—Frontier Technologies launched Intranet Genie. Intranet Genie was the first platform to combine document management and messaging to support a more modern and effective way to approach [internal communication strategies](#).

Though Intranet Genie was a revolutionary step in advancing how companies worked internally, it was a clunky platform, difficult to download and even more difficult to navigate.

Intranets and extranets evolved from networks that were simplistic in design with minimal augmentation or tweaking capabilities. Companies and their clients or vendors could communicate and share small documents, but that was the extent of it.

So, what can you [expect from your intranet these days](#)?

Modern intranet and extranet platforms look and function entirely different than what existed years ago.

Today's platforms are far more versatile and flexible. Intranet and extranet software has multiple communication options, project management tools, document storage and [knowledge management tools](#), and integrations.

Sharing large files is easier than ever, real-time conversations are possible, and two-way sync calendars keep everyone on the same page. Intranet and extranet software are full-fledged digital, interactive, collaborative communities for you and your customers. Every action is intuitive. Every feature supports your people. It's easy to distribute and manage knowledge for different groups.

**Tying it all together with
modern intranet software.**

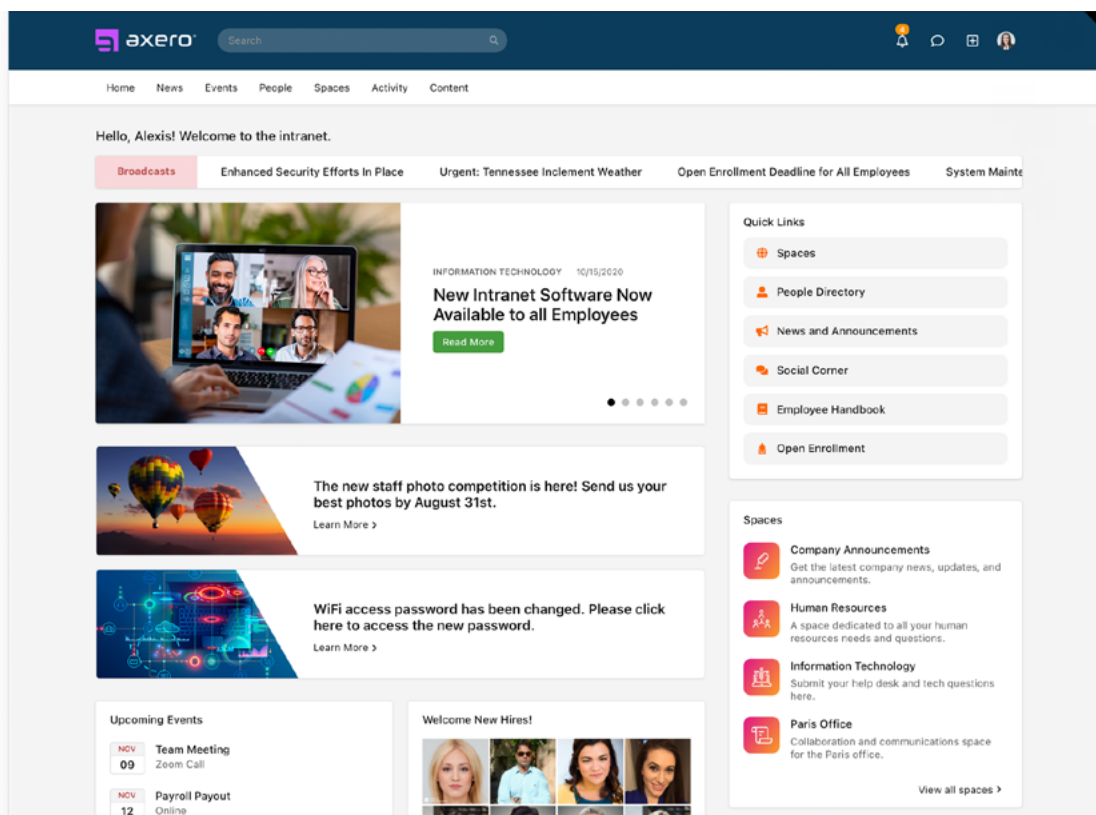
The background features several overlapping, translucent, curved shapes in shades of purple, blue, and yellow, set against a dark blue background. The shapes are layered, creating a sense of depth and movement. The text is positioned in the upper left quadrant of the image.

Typing it all together with modern intranet software.

In the past, intranet and extranet software were two separate entities.

Multiple programs were typically involved, and getting them to communicate and integrate was next to impossible in many cases.

Today, intranet and extranet software live in harmony as part of modern intranet software—one of the biggest advancements to hit the professional sector in recent years.



One of the top benefits of intranet software is that it combines intranet and extranet into a single package, cutting out communication and integration issues of different software platforms. Platforms such as [Axero](#) are equipped with features that enable collaboration with internal employees and external stakeholders.

This way, you can communicate with clients, vendors, employees, and colleagues all in the same place, which saves time, money, and energy. Other internal

Tying it all together with modern intranet software.

processes such as sales and marketing are also incorporated, with the end result being a “one-stop-shop” digital workplace where you can address a variety of different business needs.

Intranet and extranet software are no longer mutually exclusive, and they’re highly beneficial when properly implemented. With modern intranet software, you can ensure that both internal and external processes are carried out smoothly and efficiently.

Learning how to use intranet software is easy, and the sooner you get started, the more your business will benefit. Download the free guide below to learn more about launching an intranet for your organization.

Next step: Learn how to launch your intranet.



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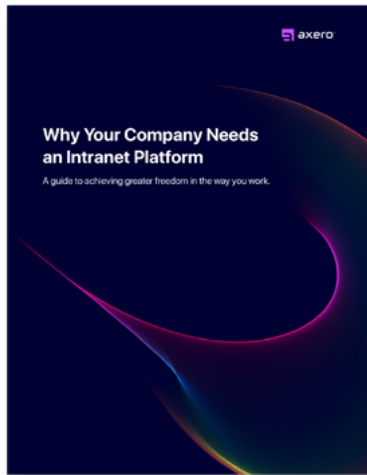
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