



LGPro VICTORIA  
Public Relations Network

## **BENCHMARKING SURVEY #4**

**July 2011**

### **Intranets and Internal communications**

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Please verify the inferences and insights to your satisfaction before taking any business critical decisions on the basis of this report.

## INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

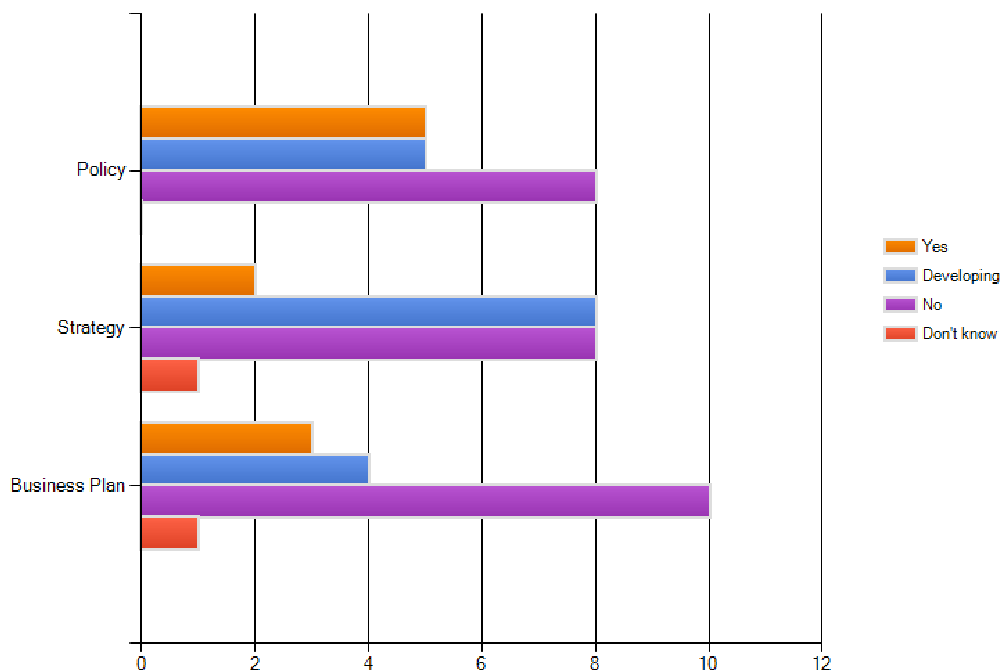
### GUIDING DOCUMENTS for internal communications

Just over half respondents have or are developing internal communications policies, and the proportion is similar for IC strategies, though most are in the 'development' camp.

A much smaller proportion have this down to the business plan level, though you would expect that as policies and strategies come into play, this will increase.

The 'don't know' response is a little perplexing.

**GUIDING DOCUMENTS** Does your department or organisation have formal documents (policies, strategies or business plans) that guide internal communications activity?

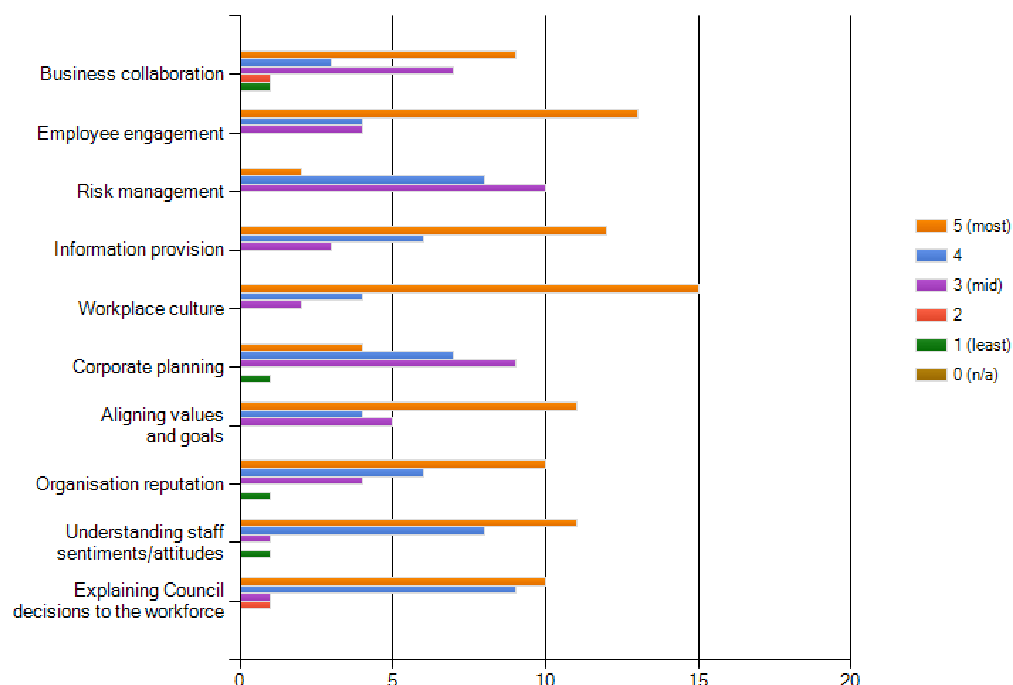


## PITCHING FOR INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS RESOURCES

The hierarchy of arguments you might use for getting corporate investment into internal communications appear to be:

1. Workplace culture and employee engagement.
2. Providing information (around the workplace).
3. Understanding staff sentiments, and aligning values and goals.
4. Reputation and explaining decisions.
5. Surprisingly (to the author), no Guernsey for corporate planning, though this might be implied by the second part of #3 above.

**DRIVERS OF INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS** Please rate how important you think each of the following are in terms of arguing for investment in internal communications. 5 = most important to 1 = least important; 0 = not applicable



This is all well and good, but traditionally, communications departments are not entrusted with driving workplace culture. That is an organisational development (OD) role, including the work of the human resources department.

Ergo, I'd suggest these arguments are a little empty without communications and OD working as one.

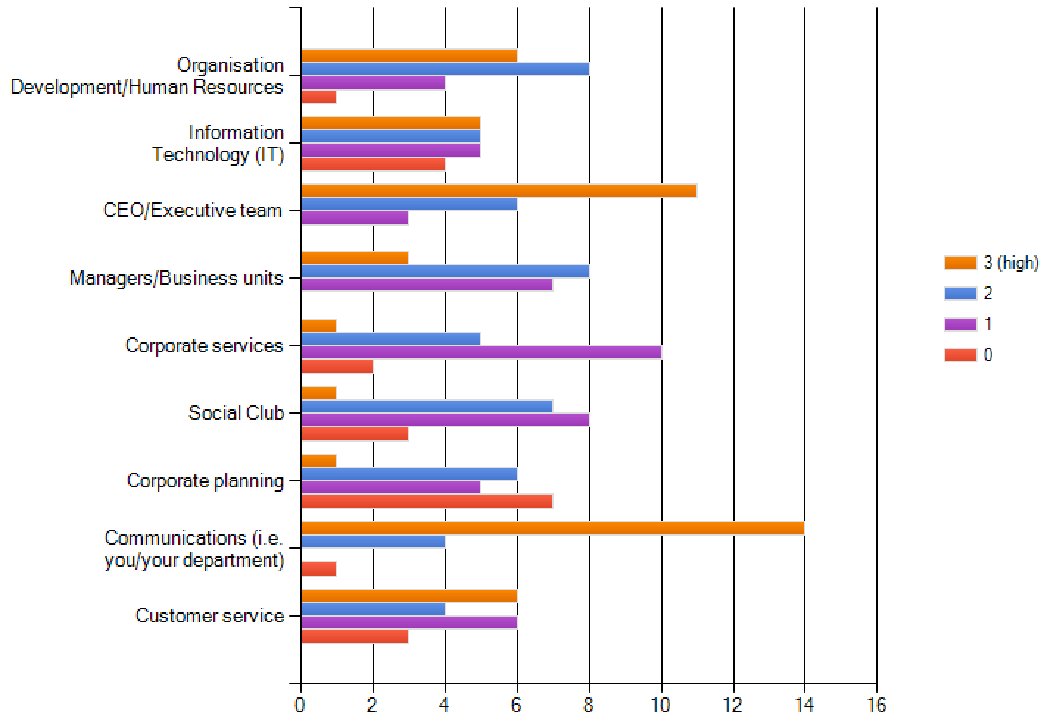
The next section fleshes things out a bit.

## STRATEGIC PARTNERS

Pitching the case will be in the context of who your most relevant partners are.

This chart indicates that, besides ones own department, top partners are in order: the CEO and Executive; Organisation Development; and Customer Service. No surprises there really. That IT is not at the top is encouraging.

**INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS PARTNER** Thinking about other parts of the organisation that have a role in internal communications, please rate how influential they are on what your department does. 3 = high, 2 = mid, 1 = low, 0 = no influence



One respondent also noted:

- Given the number staff working off-site, there is particular focus on ensuring connection with those departments and teams.
- Also, the executive assistants are an extremely important group.

## OUTPOSTS AND CENTRES

This was an open ended question. Comments are listed here (one bullet = one council), some of which stray a little from the question's topic.

This sector of the workforce can be easily overlooked, or at least low on the priority list in the broader scheme of things. These comments suggest a high awareness of the problem, and present a few comments on how communication happens with non head office or non desk bound staffers.

Taking into account that councils talk a lot about social inclusion in the community, you wonder why this is not seen as equally important for the workforce.

## COMMENTS

- We have a number of staff who don't work on computers and have literacy problems. We find staff meetings work well - although we can sometimes use this method too many times.
- Really difficult area. A lot of outdoor and 'non office' staff intimidated by the main building. Need to provide different ways of communicating - particularly as most don't have office based email. Looking at things like computers in depot lunch rooms, messages to hand held devices. Currently print out staff newsletters and also email to home addresses.
- Direct mail to home. Being aware in all communications that there are people who are not coming into the office so acknowledging this when writing so that if they read they do not feel excluded.
- Often important information is attached to the pay slips
- Posting them a hard copy is a good way to keep them up to date on general council news. Also making sure that their team leader and manager filters down any important information
- Some need hardcopy print outs as they don't have access to computers or the skills to access the intranet... others don't care about what's happening so it's trying to not overload them with information but still have it there so they can access it if they need to. You really need to toe the line and find a balance between social and corporate information, and still keep people interested and engaged.
- It really comes down to the filtering of information from management - which more often than not - doesn't happen.
- Email works. Visits by CEO and senior Management works (as it's so rare)
- All of staff meetings - we close service centres twice a year to ensure all can attend. (formal process) Managers visit outdoor / indoor staff located external on regular basis (informal process)
- Attending outdoor and external staff/team meetings and visiting them onsite is very beneficial for both parties. Email doesn't work well as many staff do not have access to computers or only work part time/casual.
- Staff team meetings.
- Site visits are the best way to catch up with staff - usually informal catch-ups rather than meetings (no likes meetings) and activities (like lunchtime bbqs).
- Often important information is attached to/printed on the pay slips.
- Staff meetings, forums or workshops specifically for staff at the venue or centre they work in - rather than expecting them to attend the head office. Department newsletters or emailed news and information from Managers.
- There seems to be a block at times between the Corporate Management Team and the rest of the staff.

## EFFECTIVENESS OF INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS MEDIUMS

The survey canvassed opinions on how effective internal communications tools and methods are perceived to be.

The table here may be clearer than the chart below. It presents a calculation of accumulated ratings divided by number of respondents, hence an overall rating across councils. Zero responses are also measured, i.e. councils that don't use the medium at all.

*Effectiveness of internal communications tools and methods - league table.*

*NB: ZERO responses = this tool/method is not used.*

Tool or method	NON ZERO RESPONSES Accumulated score / responses	ZERO RESPONSES as ratio of accumulated ratings
Weekly intranet news	3.9	67%
Department/team meetings	3.9	0%
Intranet daily messages	3.5	45%
Specially printed staff newsletter	3.5	29%
CEO/Executive messages	3.5	5%
Corridor talk	3.5	0%
Informal catch-ups	3.5	0%
All-of-staff meetings	3.4	24%
Staff workshops	3.4	19%
Intranet news print-out	3.3	71%
CEO/Exec staff meetings and forums	3.2	15%
Forums/presentations by senior mgt	3.1	14%
SMS	3.0	81%
Collaboration tools	2.9	54%
Email (to distribution groups, or all-user)	2.9	5%
Events and activities	2.9	0%
Social media tools	2.8	62%
Cascade comms (down the line)	2.2	15%
Flyers, brochures, hand-outs	2.2	5%
Posters	2.1	5%
Noticeboards	2.0	10%

### Top of the list for effectiveness

The table is listed in decreasing order of perceived effectiveness by those councils actually using the medium.

Clearly the intranet rates very highly, which is a good argument for why one should have an intranet.

Department meetings also rate highly, but it is interesting that 'corridor talk' and 'informal catch ups' are seen as more effective than the engagement communications provided by senior management and other such forums. Go figure.

Other methods noted as effective in comments were:

- Cross organisational working groups.
- On computers we often upload an electronic 'poster' that sits as an image on the screen. These are good visual reminders - as soon as you turn on or off your computer or minimise a document, the image is visible. The concept works best when integrated with other communication tools.

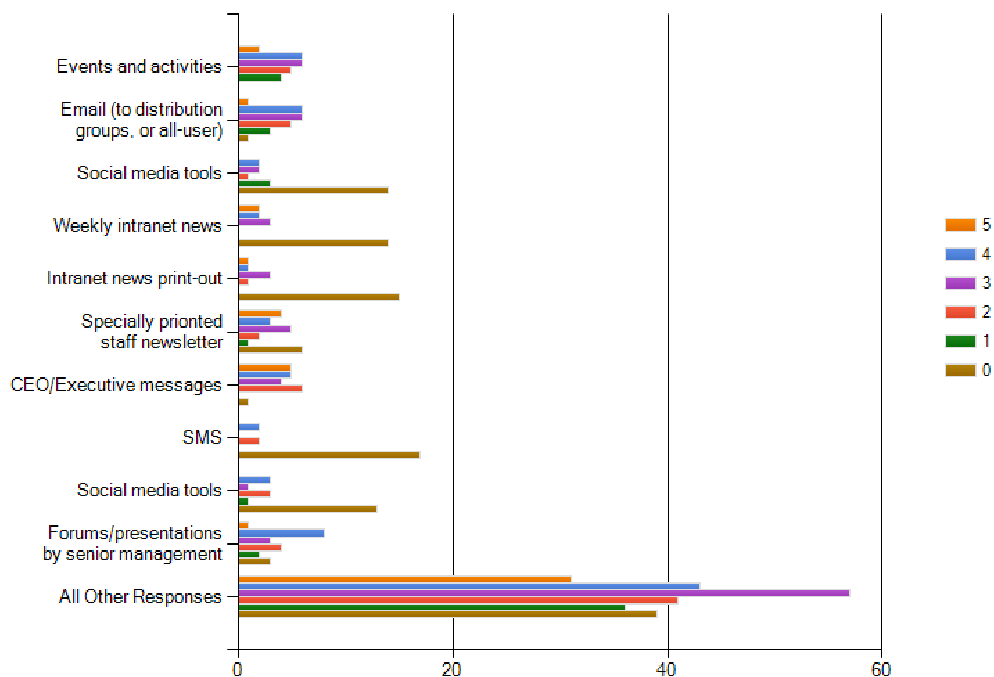
### Zero responses

A number of tools/methods gained high scores for non usage (i.e. scored as zero). This is not to say they are not used by councils, but on average they are low on the league table. These are shown as shaded in the table above.

### Effectiveness chart

Here is a chart of the raw data for the visually minded.

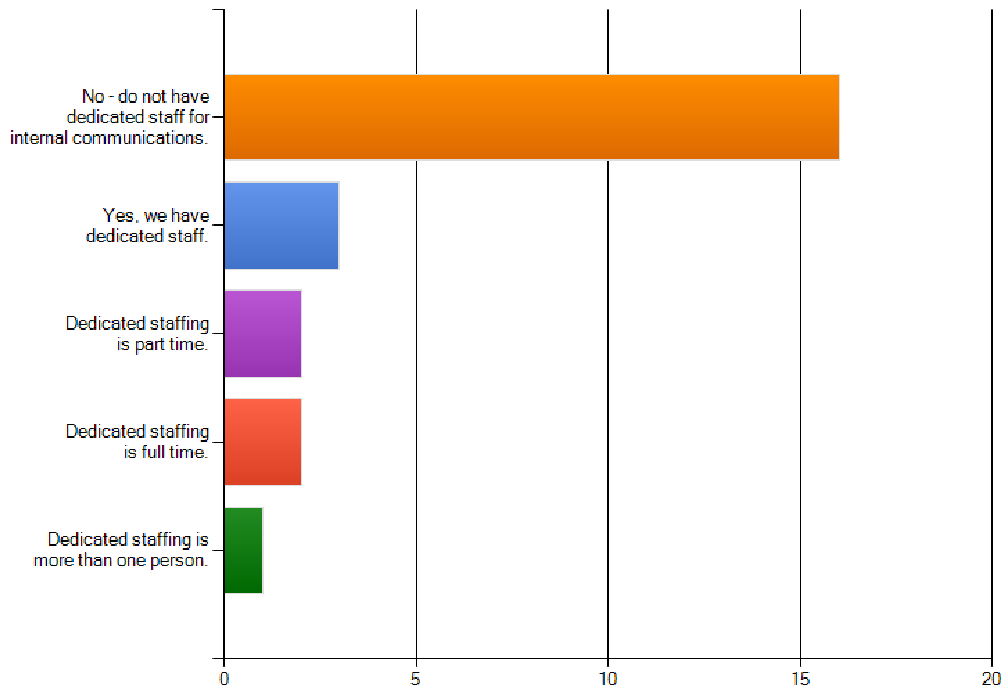
**EFFECTIVENESS OF METHODS AND TOOLS** Of the following ways to communicate internally, please rate how effectively you think each is in your organisation? 5 = very effective to 1 = not at all effective; 0 = not applicable/you don't use this method.



## STAFFING

Probably no surprise, but internal communications has a long way to go as a dedicated function.

**INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS STAFFING Part 2** Do you have staff dedicated to "internal communications", and if so, indicate the quantum and type as prompted.

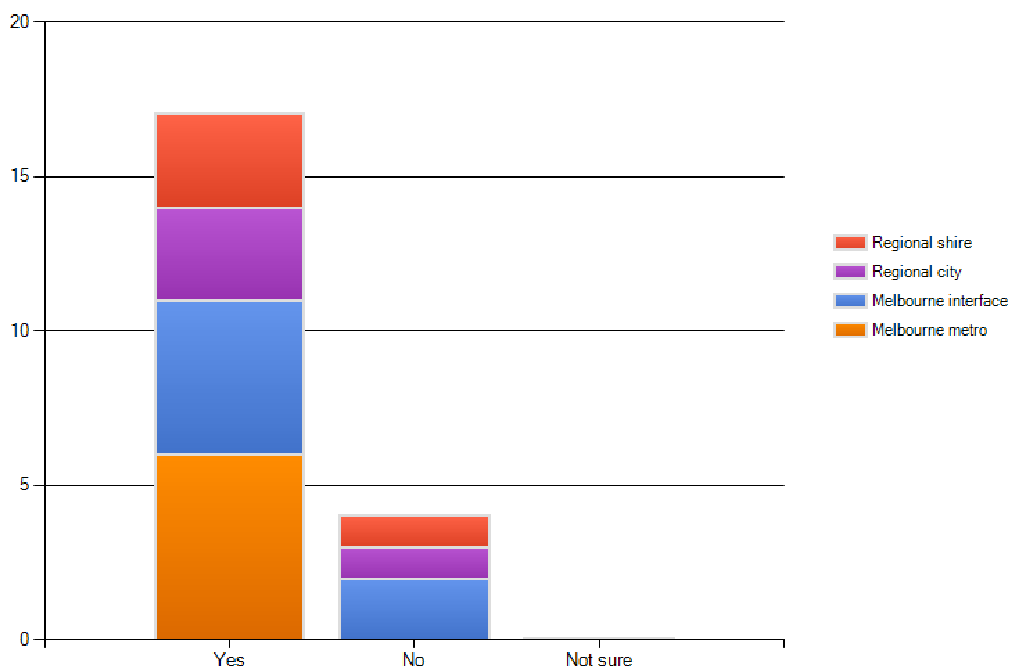




## INTRANETS

The author’s earlier assumption that everyone has an intranet is incorrect of course. All metro respondents do however. Thankfully, no one is ‘not sure’.

**DOES YOUR ORGANISATION HAVE AN INTRANET?** NB: The assumption is that all councils do have an intranet, but we need to ask the question. However, if you don't have an intranet please continue - you will still be able to complete the next section on Internal Communications.



### NAMING THE INTRANET

A few intranets have no name at all. Those that do are listed here.

Metro/Interface	Regional
SmartNet	City Web
BAZ (Boroondara a-z)	Our Space
Webstar	AUSTIN
Connect	No name x2
StaffRoom	
CityNet	
Banyule Central	
Our Space	
Erik (e-services rock in Knox)	
No name x3	

## INTRANET FORMATS AND CONTENT

The table and chart on the next page indicate the following:

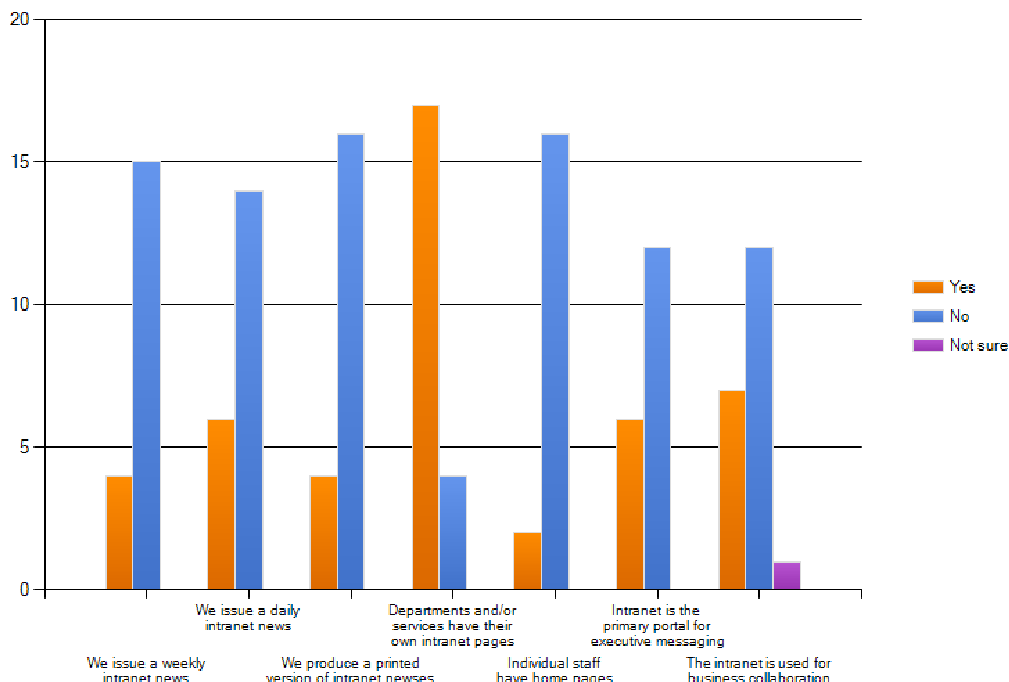
- There is a significant metro/regional difference in how intranets are used, with metro and interface councils at the high end. This may simply reflect resource limitations.
- Intranet newses (daily and/or weekly) are in general use.
- How many of these are also produced in printed form is surprisingly low - you wonder then just what proportion of staff get the news (e.g. staffers without work stations). This might be covered in councils which have dedicated printed staff newsletters. (If readers are keen to know the relationship, the author will need to do some further spreadsheet analysis).
- Providing intranet platforms for individual departments is very common, not so for individual staffers.
- As a portal for messaging and business collaboration, intranets are clearly not primary.

## COMMENTS regarding the intranet's usage

*The most popular and/or functional aspects of our intranet are:*

- Careers Links to SmartEmails (organisation wide emails), internal newsletter, staff directory.
- How do I section, phone book, intranet weekly news and daily news.
- Buddy - internal unit and telephone referencing facility. Exchange - of ideas and goods. Social Scene pages - social club.
- News updates - Social Club updates - Phonest.
- Online forms, policies.
- Team sites and as a central information point (first point).
- Forms, telephone list.
- News items. We also use Sharepoint. Team Sites which are quite popular with some staff.
- Staff directory.
- The classified noticeboards.
- We are not able to access any quantitative data on this however informal research shows HR & Payroll information is most popular, followed by our classifieds and then our policy and procedures register.
- Gaining access to common forms (ie leave, petty cash, etc) and Positions Vacant.
- Who's In? updater, staff directory, IT updates, policies and procedures, manuals (HR, QA, etc), forms, vehicle booking system, tips and information.

**FORMATS AND CONTENT VIA THE INTRANET** Please check any below which apply.

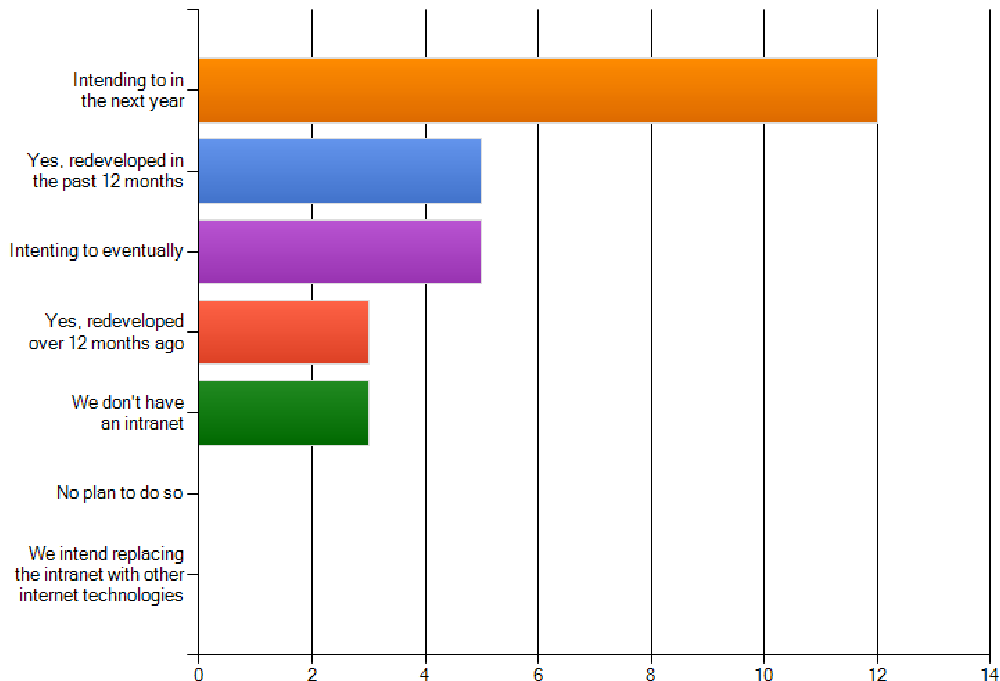


	Melbourne	Regional
<b>We issue a weekly intranet news</b>		
Yes	4	0
No	8	7
<b>We issue a daily intranet news</b>		
Yes	6	0
No	7	7
<b>We produce a printed version of intranet newses</b>		
Yes	4	0
No	9	7
<b>Departments and/or services have their own intranet pages</b>		
Yes	13	4
No	1	3
<b>Individual staff have home pages</b>		
Yes	2	0
No	9	7
<b>Intranet is the primary portal for executive messaging</b>		
Yes	5	1
No	6	6
<b>The intranet is used for business collaboration</b>		
Yes	4	3
No	8	4

## INTRANET DEVELOPMENT

By the looks of it, intranets are slated for an overhaul amongst a large proportion of councils. It must be said though that this reflects metro more than regional - for instance, "intending to eventually" is an entirely regional response. Resource issue?

### INTRANET REDEVELOPMENT Have you, or do you intend redeveloping your intranet site?



### COMMENTS regarding intranet development

- Currently in process of redevelopment, should be complete by year's end.
- Change to look, reviewed site map, made home page more interactive and gave departments their own sections and daily news boards.
- Considering options for replacing Intranet with internet technologies such as Yammer.
- We have just decided on a new content management system and will redevelop our intranet for launch to staff by June 2012.
- It's practical but not friendly - there's room to improve the level engagement with staff.
- Redeveloped intranet is more engaging, with rolling news stories that change regularly - and was developed through much consultation with staff. Key issue was - and still is - accuracy of information re staff names, phone numbers, etc.
- Our intranet has a lot of potential but is very under utilised. While management recognise it is important, updating our intranet (and internet) is not a priority for resource allocation at present.
- Currently completing an IT Strategy - the outcome of which may determine whether it is redeveloped as is, or replaced with something else.

### INTRANET REDEVELOPMENT BUDGETS

There were only eight responses to this, with figures ranging from \$20,000 to \$250,000. Those at the higher end include the cost of work on the external web site at the same time. Excluding the quarter million dollar response, the average spend is \$67,000.

## SOCIAL CLUBS, STAFF AND THE MAYOR

### SOCIAL CLUBS

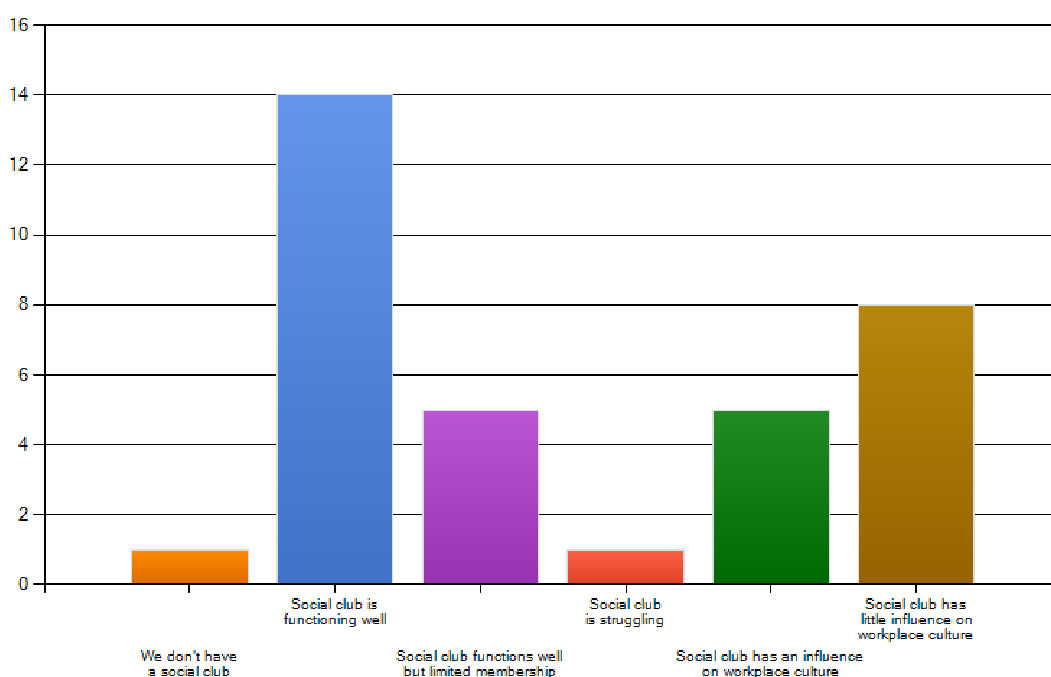
The relevance and activities of social clubs is possibly an indication of engagement levels amongst staff, or some other factor in workplace culture.

The charts on the next page suggests quite a bit of variance between councils in how social clubs fare, though over half have social clubs “functioning well”, albeit some that could do with better leadership.

Regarding how social clubs communicate, the intranet is used by just under half of respondents.

### Social club functionality

**STAFF SOCIAL CLUB - Activity** If your council has a social club, please check below as applies.

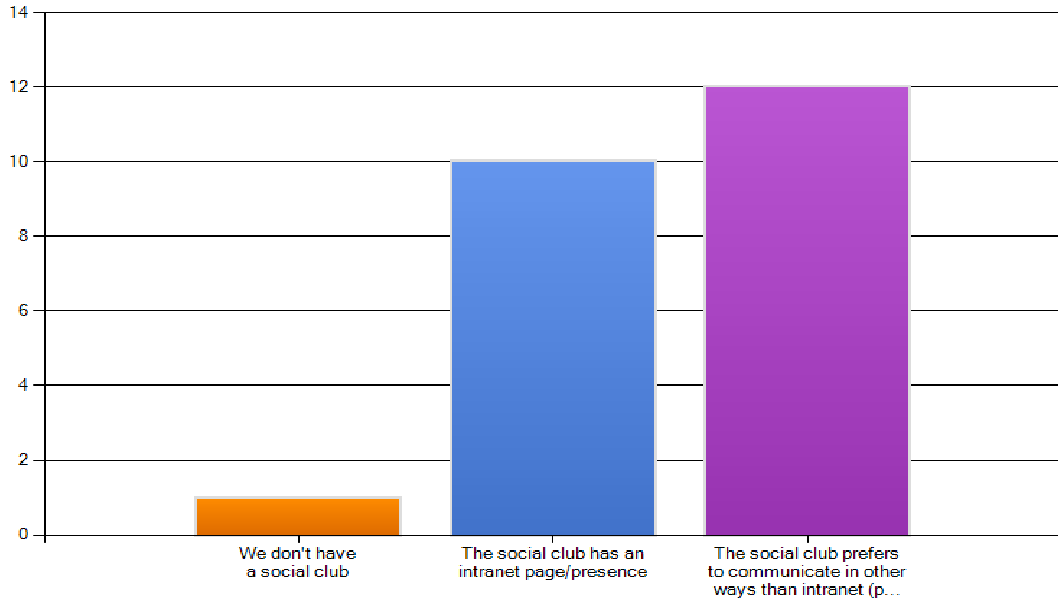


### COMMENTS regarding social club functionality

- Our Social Club in the main office works well and holds regular events. Unaware of how the outreach ones are going.
- The big hitter is the end of year social function.

## SOCIAL CLUB COMMUNICATIONS

**STAFF SOCIAL CLUB - Communications** If your council has a social club, please check below as applies.



### COMMENTS re social club communications

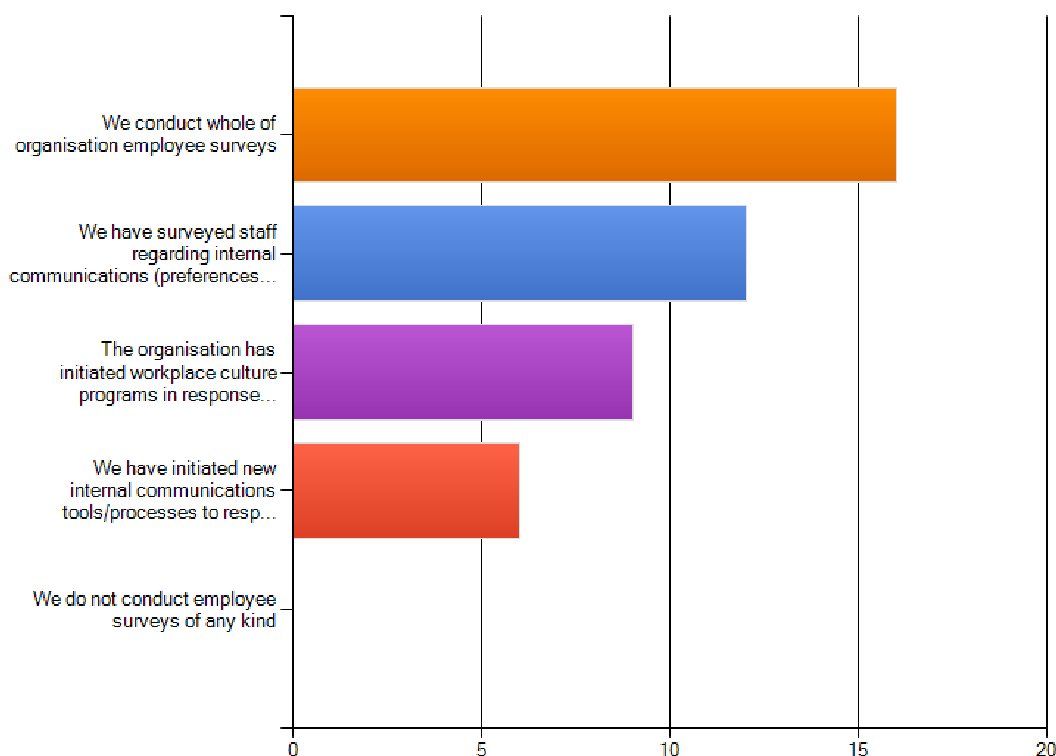
- They will have a presence on the new intranet.
- Information included in newsletters, all-user emails, other material as needed
- The social club tried an intranet, but without a main intranet to attach to it never got off the ground. They do all staff emails, posters, information on pay slips and signs on the back of the toilet stall doors :)
- We would prefer the social club to utilise the intranet as their main means of communication, and are currently exploring options to allow them to do so!
- E mail. We have separate social clubs for various workplace locations.
- Social club uses emails and staff newsletter.
- The Social Club created an intranet page that never really got off the ground (probably because Council does not have a main intranet).
- Mostly via all staff emails and posters. Effective but they're not making an effort to involve new people.
- Group emails/Posters.
- All staff emails are preferred by the social club.

### STAFF SURVEYS

Around 70% of respondents conduct whole of organisation staff surveys, and just over half have surveyed the internal communications component.

The proportions decrease though for doing something with the survey information.

**STAFF SURVEYS** Please check any here that apply.



### RESIDENT STAFF

As an aside, the proportion of council staff that also live in the municipality is often overlooked as an important resource for communications output, community research and community engagement.

- Do these staffers learn about hot topics and breaking news from you, or when they read the local paper, or get a communication in the letterbox?
- Are they treated as a segment of the community when doing community research or engagement?
- Are they utilised as an “easy access” resource for developing communications and media strategies, or indeed, corporate and community planning?

As it is, resident staff make up a significant proportion of council workforces, even in metropolitan Melbourne. Predictably, the proportion increases the less metro the landscape becomes.

*Proportion of council staff who live in the municipality (22 respondents)*

Melbourne 37%      Interface 55%      Rural City 74%      Rural Shire 89%

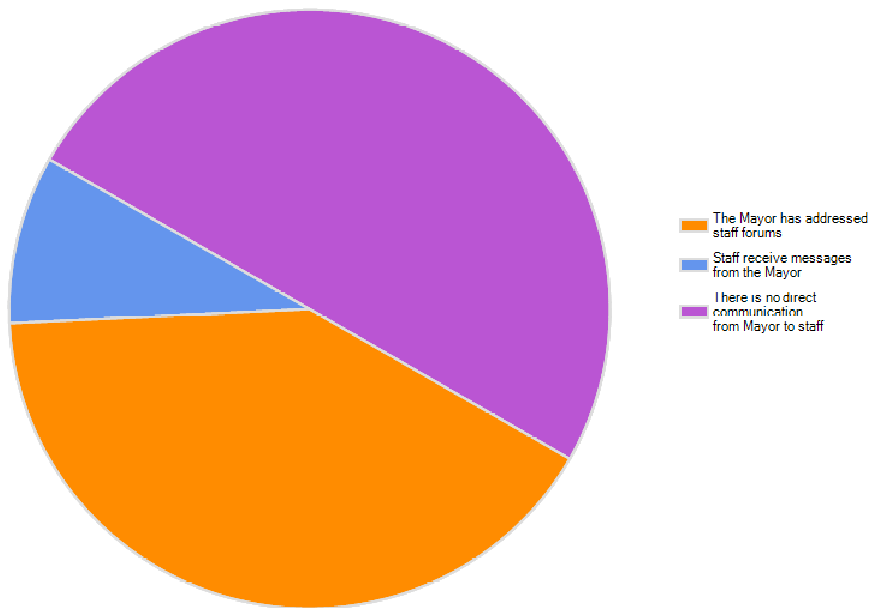
## THE MAYOR

The reason for this question was to gauge the degree of engagement between the political level and the workforce at large. Although not a critical factor, the fact is that the Mayor not the CEO is the true leader of the organisation, in principle at least.

How the Mayor and Councillors are regarded by the community and workforce will have some influence on workplace culture and attitudes.

The results are split 50/50.

**MAYORAL ENGAGEMENT WITH STAFF** Please check any that apply.





## FORTHCOMING SURVEYS

### PRN benchmarking

The plan is to conduct five PRN benchmarking surveys all up, so there is one to come. The 5th will differ from the rest in a fundamental way - surveys to date have focused on whole departments requiring one response per council. The final survey will be a 'free for all', and I do hope department heads encourage individual responses from their staffers. There is no tracking at that level, and no individual or council will be identified.

The questions will be of two types:

- Professional and career - e.g. peoples' qualifications, education, time in the job, career intentions, specialties, etc.
- Attitudes and opinions - e.g. about peoples' lot, visions, preferences, aspirations, views on local government, etc.

### Visiting Friends and Relatives

Some of you will be aware of or participated in Destination Melbourne's Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR) project.

Earlier this year, I did work for Destination Melbourne to develop a case (and toolkit) for why councils should take this tourism market seriously.

The fact is, most of your tourism dollars come from people visiting their friends and relatives, i.e. your own residents.

This survey will assist us all in understanding this piece of intelligence, and will test the propositions and arguments which were developed on behalf of Destination Melbourne.

If you are interested in reading up on the topic, go to these links:

- [Visiting Friends and Relatives Project](#) page.
- [Discover Your Own Backyard VFR Campaign](#) page.

A downloadable version of the **toolkit** I referred to can be found at the latter link.

### Enquiries

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