

**ADAS INTRANET**

*(<http://www.adas.co.uk>)*

Paul MFairbank

Senior IT Specialist, ADAS IT Centre, Government Buildings,  
Whittington Road, Worcester, WR5 2JZ UK  
([Paul\\_Fairbank@adas.co.uk](mailto:Paul_Fairbank@adas.co.uk))

**Abstract.**

This paper addresses the user requirements of a corporate information system. It focuses on the design criteria of the system and the steps taken to design and build a Corporate Intranet. A review of the potential benefits of the Intranet is included.

Keywords: Intranet, Browser, Corporate, ADAS, Management, Information, UK, Network.

## **Information Systems**

"Knowledge is power" is an old saying. Those who possess superior knowledge also possess power. The need for an efficient method of distributing business information and technical reference literature to staff located around the UK has been a major business objective for ADAS for the last 10 years. As more staff become home based the need for effective electronic communications increases. Users require access to the software systems that will normally be available in an office environment.

The provision of the up-to-date information is of critical importance to many businesses. For example trading companies need immediate access to the current stock prices; marketing companies need to be aware of current trends and products. Those companies that have access to current information critical to their business will have a competitive advantage over companies who do not. This advantage may result in the generation of revenue or the prevention of losses.

ADAS sells consultancy to land based industries located all over the World. It is critical to the success of the business that front-line consultants have access to the latest technical and business information. The ADAS Intranet allows information to be loaded at a central point under controlled conditions ensuring that the consultant can then be sure that the information provided is the latest version and of the appropriate quality.

Information provision in ADAS can be classed as follows:

- Technical Information used by consultants.
- Business information made available to all staff.
- Business information generated by the strategic management Information systems and used by senior management to control the business.
- Discussion groups within ADAS

The Intranet provides all of the above in an efficient, user-friendly way.

## **INTRANET DESIGN**

The design of a corporate information system must be based on a clearly defined set of business and user requirements. The user requirements for the ADAS Intranet were obtained from brainstorming sessions carried out with selected ADAS staff. These sessions allowed users to present their perceptions of what information they required and the formats it must be delivered in. A previous information system provided some historic evidence on the type of information that is required by ADAS users.

The technical platform for the ADAS Intranet is a Compaq 500 server running Windows NT and Enterprise Server 2 software. The browser chosen for each user is Microsoft Explorer version 2. These products were chosen as they are tried and tested "off-the-shelf" products that do not require any expensive bespoke work.

It was critical to the success of the project that all users have quick and efficient access to the Intranet by whatever connection method they chose.

The access routes to the Intranet server are as follows:

- Access through LAN connection
- Access through ADASnet (Leased line connection)
- Access through public telephone network.

A pilot system based upon the results of the brainstorming sessions was created by the ADAS team and rolled out for a selected group of users to try. The pilot review highlighted that although the basic principals of the Intranet were proven the layout and design needed to be addressed.

The graphical design skills needed to build an Intranet were not available within the ADAS IT department and so ADAS used a design house (AmxDigital) who have had experience in designing Internet pages for major companies such as Guinness and Malibu. A set of requirements together with a proposed navigation map was prepared by members of the ADAS Intranet team and presented to Amx.

The requirements for the new system ensured that:

- The system will be icon and menu driven.
- The navigation to the different information areas is as logical as practical and the number of clicks required to reach them are minimised.
- The access screens must be simple without any "clutter"
- No technical jargon was included within the navigation screens.
- The colours of the screens within the Intranet had to reflect the ADAS corporate identity.
- The system had to be able to deliver pages of text, spreadsheets and graphics to the user.
- The file size of images and pictures held within the system were made as efficient as possible to minimise the time needed to download them on to the users PC.
- The system can be expanded and customised by members of the ADAS team.

Amx produced a structure that was loaded on to the ADAS Intranet server. Information was then placed in to the structure and testing of the navigation and facilities carried out with pilot users being encouraged to test the system and provide comments on its usability.

Where ever possible the Intranet presents the available information to the user in a way that avoids the need to use a technical search screen. The information is displayed in such a way that the user can select from dynamic document lists.

Examples of this facility are the ADAS Quality Management System pages. The QMS document list pages present the user with a list of the current documents held in selected directories. The page allows the user to select an HTML introduction to the paper or the user can load a copy of the original Word version. If there are any images linked to the document then these are also listed on the same page and can be accessed by clicking on the file name.

## **COMMON LAYOUT**

All section pages used within the Intranet adhere to a standard layout and as such all have common features.

- Notice board, which allows users to post notices, which can be read and answered, by any Intranet user.
- A search facility which allows the user to carryout a word search within prescribed directories. The search generates a result screen, which displays the titles of documents containing the search criteria. The user can then select a document.
- The facility to list all documents contained within a prescribed directory.
- The facility to list all documents within a directory which have been amended or added within 5 days of the current date.

The "Whats New Facility " is a key feature with the system. This function allows the user to find documents that have been loaded within certain time frames. This feature can be triggered from the Home Page or within section pages so allowing the user to find new pages without having to move through several screens to an appropriate page.

## **FEED BACK**

The ADAS Intranet went live in December 1996 and so there has not been time to see if all of the potential benefits envisaged at the conception have been realised. However the feedback from users who have accessed the system has been encouraging and there have already been many requests for additional applications on the Intranet:

- Access to a staff database
- Access to the ADAS management information systems
- Internal marketing of different areas within ADAS.
- Create an open forum for non-work related items.

Users within ADAS appreciate that a system which allows documents to be loaded at a single point is easier to manage than creating a document and having to distribute it to 1400 staff located all over the UK. The version management of information is also made easier when there is one master copy mounted on the server. Access to appropriate directories will be granted to the information owners who will then manage the contents.

## **BENEFITS**

The potential benefits of using an Intranet to distribute information can be classed in two areas:

### *Tangible benefits.*

The reduction in admin costs and postal charges of sending documents out by post.

### *Intangible.*

- The potential benefits of providing consultants with the most accurate and up-to-date information in the fee earning activities.
- The provision of discussion groups will allow information to be disseminated quickly through the business.
- The moral of staff is improved by a quick and efficient system of providing information on what's going on within a business. The Intranet allows all users access to the latest business information.
- The Intranet gives new members of staff access to a vast amount of information that will help develop their skills. In the past a new member of staff may have been confronted with a mountain of paper work both business and technical. The Intranet will give the user access to the same information in a more controlled manner.

## **CONCLUSION**

The ADAS Intranet will provide a cost effective method of providing information to all ADAS staff who have access through the network to the Intranet server. Information held in the system will be as diverse as from the latest stock prices to developments in Research and Development to the latest ADAS travel and subsistence rates.

As the Intranet use increases new applications will be created for users to help them in their day to day activities.