

# Cracking Big Business Advantages

## Our work with Alliance & Leicester's Group Intranet Team

### Background

Alliance & Leicester is one of the UK's major financial services groups. It offers a broad range of financial services to personal and commercial customers and maintains a large branch network. Alliance & Leicester has been a member of the FTSE 100 index of leading shares since 1997, when it converted from its original mutual building society status.

The Alliance & Leicester Group Intranet was launched in 2000 and grew rapidly for some years. As the site began to mature, the Intranet Team began working on initiatives to restructure the site and had successfully focused on:

- making the Intranet an essential tool for communications in everyone's working life
- implementing best practice standards for accessibility and usability.

Feedback from Alliance & Leicester staff praised these changes, saying that they felt more included and part of the Company. But the feedback was also showing that some content was hard to read.

*"If a cashier or a sales person can access the right information and understand it quickly in, say, 90 seconds, while selling to, or serving, a customer, then we're giving faster service and we're giving an informed service."*

**Audrey Philbrooks,  
Group Intranet  
Manager.**

### Requirement

The Intranet Team realised they needed to move from just *communicating* to staff to actually *informing* them. Like all financial organisations, Alliance & Leicester are highly regulated. People need to know what the rules are and how to do tasks in a certain way.

'Communicating right is one thing,' says Audrey Philbrooks, Intranet Manager. 'But you don't crack the big business advantages until you get the informing right.'

Alliance & Leicester asked Pacific Blue to help them move from a communications intranet to an information intranet.

### Solutions

Pacific Blue worked, over a period of 15 months, with Alliance & Leicester on a number of initiatives. We used Information Mapping to support our approach. Some of the results are described below.

### Document definition

We helped the Intranet Team and Alliance & Leicester Managers to define the document types they had and the document types they needed.

We drafted standards for each document type, working within the corporate styles and standards already in place but adding the precision that Information Mapping provides to content analysis.

'Pacific Blue easily adapted to our working patterns', described Audrey Philbrooks. 'They were an extension of our Team rather than separate consultants.'

## Templates for bulletins

The Intranet allows bulletins and branch communications to be published online each week. But writing and editing the content took time and the output was often difficult to read.

We designed templates in MS Word and MS PowerPoint that stepped writers through the writing process. And we built a workshop to allow Alliance & Leicester trainers to roll the new templates out to the Group's authors.

'Our branch staff have been quick to praise our new communication style. With Pacific Blue's help, the new templates have made it easier for staff to quickly understand key messages and then take appropriate action.' Doug White, Communications Manager, Retail Network Development

## Corporate governance

Alliance & Leicester reviewed all their Group Policies as part of an initiative to ensure that legislation surrounding corporate governance was properly responded to.

We restructured the Group Policies, using Information Mapping, so that they could be referred to effectively both online and on paper.

'Pacific Blue engages everyone in setting objectives and brings them with them throughout the project. This turns people around because they feel the work is theirs. There are no issues relating to working relationships between external consultants and internal people,' says Audrey Philbrooks.

## Compliance and support

We supported an initiative to review all compliance manuals. We used Information Mapping to restructure the compliance manuals so that rules, policies, guidelines and procedures were clearly defined.

'Pacific Blue applies high attention to detail, even joining up disparate projects', explained Audrey Philbrooks. 'This is resource efficient because we did not have to spend time following up issues to ensure full compliance coverage.'

## Customer services

We rewrote user guides that described how Alliance & Leicester's frontline systems worked. Using a task-based approach and analysing precisely where and when a user needed support, we designed usable, friendly, modular content that can be used online by novices or for 'just in time' requirements.

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## Training for the future

We trained Alliance & Leicester staff to be editors and authors, using Information Mapping, so that all the content can be kept up to date and to a high authoring standard.