



brandworkz®

Integrated Brand Management Software

What to base your Brand Portal on: SharePoint, custom build it or buy Brandworkz off- the-shelf

From time to time we hear variations on the following from potential clients:

“We already have **Microsoft SharePoint** running on our intranet so shouldn't we just use this for our Brand Center as it's **free**”

“We have very **specialised requirements** for our Brand Management system so we need somebody to **build from scratch** so we get what we want”

“We can get our IT department to build our Brand Portal **in-house** and this will be **cheaper** since it's just an internal cost”

Let's evaluate these scenarios from these important angles:

- **Functionality**
- **Support & Updates**
- **Timescales**
- **Costs**

1. Using Microsoft SharePoint

Functionality

SharePoint has rich Intranet functionality out of the box, and for general Intranet use it's great. However, a lot of Brand Management functionality does not fall into this type of use so there are a number of serious drawbacks.

We have a client who tried for a long time to get their Brand Portal to work for them in SharePoint but eventually gave up and implemented Brandworkz - and they had one of the largest SharePoint installations in the world, with all the resources and know-how which comes with that!

Top functionality drawbacks:

- **Rudimentary Digital Assets Management:** Some Digital Asset Management functionality is available (ability to manage images, videos, artworks, logos, etc), but this is very poorly implemented. For example, only rudimentary image transformation is possible, so ROI will suffer as mundane tasks such as changes between many image formats, colour depth and resolution must be done manually in Photoshop instead of being done automatically in the system. All assets are stored inside SQL databases, not on the file system. This means that as soon as you have a large library of high-res files, your IT department will find it difficult – or even impossible – to manage and back up these databases and you will be forced to restrict the growth of the library.
- **Basic, generic Interface:** As long as you use one of the built-in interface themes everything is fine, but as soon as you try to customise the look and feel to your own branding – even just the colours – things become extremely hard, fraught with trial-and-error and very time intensive. We know because we tried it once! We spent £40,000 employing an expensive SharePoint developer for 4 months to implement a custom look-and-feel for a SharePoint system. By comparison, we could have done this interface customisation in around a week in Brandworkz.
- **No Macintosh users:** If you have any Macintosh users – and most Brand Management systems do because creative agencies are Mac users – you can forget about giving them anything else than read-only functionality because much of the administration functionality only works in Internet Explorer on a PC.
- **More Hardware needed:** SharePoint is very CPU intensive and typically needs multiple servers to run properly, whereas Brandworkz will happily run on a single server for most uses.
- **Difficult customisation:** Theoretically it is possible to implement virtually any new functionality that can be thought of, but in reality it is time consuming and expensive. This is because SharePoint developers are expensive and it's very easy to break core functionality by implementing the smallest change. The application is so vast that there is probably nobody in the world who has a full overview of it – even Microsoft has no less than four separate development teams producing it! In addition, if you do any significant functionality customisation to your Sharepoint Brand Portal, you will find that you can't run this on the same servers as your general intranet because many changes are server wide and can't be limited to the Brand section – cue another bill from your IT department for more hardware.
- **No web-to-print templates:** SharePoint doesn't have any functionality for setting up artwork templates which can be customised or localized through the web-interface, a feature which can provide very high ROI if available.
- **Lack of external access:** This one is not the fault of Sharepoint, but most intranets, which are positioned inside the corporate firewall for security purposes. It will be difficult or even impossible for external parties like your agencies to access the system. While internal access is of course important, external access by partners, agencies and suppliers is typically more important. Most Sharepoint Intranets require all users to have something called an Active Directory or LDAP account to log in, something that your IT department may be unwilling to set up for your external partners.

Support and updates

- Microsoft typically releases a new version of SharePoint every 3 years. This doesn't mean that you necessarily have to wait this amount of time to get a bug fixed (of which there are many in SharePoint as it's such a sprawling application). However, when we did SharePoint development a couple of years ago we waited 1.5 years for a bug to be fixed, and this practice isn't changing!
- The developers of SharePoint will be completely disconnected from your company and are also not focused on branding and marketing, so the direction of future releases and new functionality will not be targeted at your department's specific issues and may be irrelevant to you.

Timescales

If all you want to do is to store a couple of logos, PDFs and templates then SharePoint is great and you can do this pretty much instantly - assuming of course that you have a system running already. However, this is unlikely to actually help you achieve a consistent brand image, educate all your stakeholders about what your vision and values are, help you start building up brand value and make your company worth more.

To implement something useful, you are looking at a *minimum* of **6 – 12 months**. We know this because we have tried it ourselves on previous jobs and some of our clients have also tried this before coming to us.

Costs

Typical costs for a brand portal using Sharepoint – *beyond* the cost of the core software and hardware needed – is **£100,000 - £300,000**.

Then you have to add the hidden costs of:

- Less user productivity because the functionality is not specifically for what you are using it for
£50,000+ yearly
- The loss of value to the business of not having a Brand/Marketing Management system for an additional 6-12 months
£100,000+

2. Custom build software from scratch

Functionality

It can be tempting get a Brand Management system developed from scratch – either in-house or with a 3rd party development company – as you then get exactly what you want, or at least that's the theory.

It's true that some companies have a combination of requirements that are so specialised that no Brand Management vendor in the market can satisfy them with their standard offering, but even then the drawbacks of going down the road of custom development almost always outweigh the advantages.

Top drawbacks:

- **Untested functionality:** You may have spent a long time gathering requirements and have these down to a tee, so you are ready to properly brief a development company on your requirements and they start building it. However, it's virtually impossible to think about all eventualities up front so you will find that it won't be long before you need to change or improve the functionality because of scenarios that were not thought of at the time of build. In comparison, commercial software with a long track record has already gone through many iterative improvements because of broad customer use, and the multitude of snags that will invariably crop up in bespoke software will have been ironed out.
- **More bugs:** Regardless of how much testing is done, it's impossible to develop software without bugs. Commercial developers - and their clients - have spent many man-years using the software and thereby finding and fixing most of these bugs. When you have software built from scratch, your users will be the ones finding the bugs. This is not only costly in terms of the core fixing of the actual bugs, but will also have a big negative impact on the productivity of your users – not to mention their frustration level.
- **Limited functionality:** Since you have to pay the development company in full for every single feature they develop, you will end up with a system with much more limited functionality than a commercial solution. This functionality may be exactly what you originally anticipated to need, but sooner or later you or your users will ask for more. A bespoke application is programmed to the original specification, but down the line you will need to make adjustments to the setup (e.g. permissions, navigation structure, tagging fields, etc). This will highly likely require new coding whereas in Brandworkz this can be achieved by simple configuration changes.
- **Lack of documentation:** A bespoke system will typically not have detailed user documentation available unless this is commissioned at significant cost – and maintained at significant cost. New users will therefore take longer to get up to speed or to figure out how to do tasks than a well documented system.

Support and updates

- **Expensive updates:** Once your custom-built system has launched and the corks have popped, it is only a matter of time before you have to spend money updating it. There will be new versions of web browsers, new file formats, changes in user expectations, new security loopholes or speed improvements to be made because your system now holds more assets than when it was launched. You have to carry 100% of that ongoing cost, whereas a company selling commercial software can spread that cost between their clients and therefore provide several magnitudes more bang for your buck.
- **Lack of continuity:** A bespoke system will typically only have a few people – often the original programmers themselves – that can support the system and fix bugs or develop new functionality. Over time it can therefore be difficult to use the system, especially if it isn't updated and maintained on an ongoing basis. Some issues will simply be impossible to solve without new development. For example, if the system wasn't designed to be compatible with iPhones/iPads, and you now have people using these devices (that don't support Flash and Java).

Timescales

Realistically you are looking at 9 – 12 months to do anything sensible. This is because you need to:

- Write a very detailed functional spec so the developers don't go off course when programming (1 month)
- Design the user interface (1 month)
- Code the actual application (4 months+)
- Test the application with a small internal user group (1 month)
- Fix all the bugs and issues that your initial user group found (1 month)
- Populate the system with assets and content (1 month)

Costs

Typical costs for a brand portal built from scratch is £100,000 - £300,000 (with significantly less features and flexibility than Brandworkz).

Then you have to add the hidden costs of:

- Less user productivity because the functionality is much more limited than a commercial system
£50,000+ yearly
- Much more expensive ongoing support/upgrade costs
£50,000+ yearly
- The loss of value to the business of not having a Brand/Marketing Management system for an additional 6-12 months
£100,000+

3. Buy off-the-shelf eg Brandworkz

Functionality

We don't have the very extensive, general Intranet functionality that SharePoint has. We also can't do extremely niche functionality that you could potentially get if you built from scratch. However, the advantages of buying a platform which is developed specifically for marketing and brand managers far outweighs the alternatives.

What Brandworkz offers is:

- A platform that is built from the ground up over many years by brand marketing and technology experts.
- Fit-for-purpose, tested functionality specifically for Brand and Marketing Management that's easy to use.
- A market leader in User Interface and User Experience. Research proves that a simple UI encourages greater take-up of the system by your internal teams.
- A very high degree of configurability on our functionality. We will likely be able to achieve 95% of your requirements purely by configuring our application to your needs.
- Ability to skin the interface so it reflects your brand and therefore immediately starts educating users when they log in about what your brand stands for and how it should look.
- Single Sign-On so users access the system direct from the company intranet without requiring separate log-in details.
- SaaS model, cloud-based system so you can get up and running almost immediately depending how many users you have.
- ROI Calculator to give you an indication of the savings you will see across your marketing function by implementing Brandworkz.

Support and updates

Our standard support is business hours but we can extend this to 24/5. You will also be speaking to people who know the software intimately and know you.

Timescales

Most of our functionality is ready to use out-of-the-box.

We will usually customise your Brandworkz portal for your needs, populate it with content, create an on-brand interface and give you training which can take a short time, but it is possible to get going almost immediately. We can also help you with migration of assets from your current system. Please let us know if you would like to see our migration best practice document.

Costs

Starts at **\$700 per month plus consultancy/setup.**

NB: With both Sharepoint and build-your-own, you don't have the option to spread out your costs through monthly payments, you will be forced to make a large investment up front.

Contact us NOW and we will show you the benefits! <http://www.brandworkz.com/contact/>