



Ghent University Hospital improves communications with new website and new intranet

Ghent University Hospital always puts people first in everything it does, not just in its healthcare provision. The results of an intense collaboration between the hospital's ICT and Communications departments are testament to this. Patients and visitors can now find information about healthcare services, visiting hours and other practical details much more easily on a new website. And employees can contact each other and find the information they need faster thanks to an updated, user-friendly intranet. Both are based on Microsoft SharePoint and have been implemented by IT partner Realdolmen, selected because of its experience in the healthcare sector.

DISABILITY-FRIENDLY WEBSITE

Realdolmen has built Ghent University Hospital a brand new, user-friendly website to help patients and visitors find the information they need faster. Improvements to the navigation and search function have made this information much clearer and more accessible. It was developed very quickly: a first version was ready for testing after just two months. The new website is also accessible for all users, including people with a disability, and so has been awarded the AnySurfer quality label.

At least as important as the outside world are Ghent University Hospital's employees. "University hospitals provide an extremely wide range of services", explains Eline Verdyck, Portal Project Manager from Ghent University Hospital ICT Department. "There are outpatient clinic, day clinics, surgical wards, services for long-term illnesses, services focusing on academic activities, and so on. And employees move between various departments a lot too. It's not always easy to find the information you need quickly and to share news with your colleagues in a complex environment like this, so we wanted to do something about it."

A MODERN PLATFORM FOR A MODERN HOSPITAL

The existing intranet was ready for upgrade. "We submitted a project proposal for a new portal to the hospital's board, strongly emphasising the importance of a good information and communications platform, built using sound, future-proof technology. And they gave us a green light for a new website, intranet and extranet", says Christiaan Polet, Head of Business Applications for Ghent University Hospital ICT Department.



Microsoft SharePoint 2013 offers the optimum solution – a logical choice considering the hospital already uses lots of Microsoft technology. Realdolmen installed Nintex for the intranet, an add-on that makes it possible to integrate forms and workflows, and it's all linked securely to the personnel database using reliable authentication software.

"The aim of this project was to simplify our channels of communication and speed up access to information to improve the quality of healthcare", explains Verdyck. "We can do this now because we're spending less time looking things up."

"The information on the new intranet is divided into different subject areas", says Ingrid Nelis, who is responsible for communication matters in this project. "You no longer need to know exactly which department has a particular piece of information or service, and the new search function is really useful: you can search web pages, documents and linked keywords, and then there are more filters too."



OUR APPROACH

HEALTHCARE EXPERIENCE



Realdolmen was selected to implement this project for four reasons, explains Verdyck: “The main reason was that Realdolmen was clearly familiar with healthcare organisations, which we’d already noticed in an earlier collaboration”, Verdyck explains. “We like their project approach too: they pay lots of attention in the

preparation – with workshops for users – and in the constant transfer of knowledge to the hospital’s technical team. It’s also an attractive price for the most complete solution for authentication permissions. Ghent University Hospital employs around 6000 people, so it’s not really possible to manage everyone’s access rights manually, for example. We wanted changes in the personnel database to automatically lead to the changes necessary in terms of permissions too. Realdolmen understood this and that gave us added confidence straight away.”

But even the experienced experts from Realdolmen were a little surprised by the complexity of the project. “The hospital has 200 departments. Good communication between these departments is crucial for good patient care. But sometimes you don’t know exactly who you need from another department. You can only look up people’s telephone numbers in classic ‘Who’s who?’ databases, but we had to use this same tool to search by department, location or even job title”, Verdyck continues. “Luckily all this was discovered in preliminary workshops, and not mid project.”

“Lots of attention has been paid to the aftercare too”, says Verdyck. “A number of personnel have for example been given brief but effective training in the new system’s possibilities. They act as content owners and are each responsible for their own section (department, service) on the intranet. A team from the hospital also followed the development and installation of the system closely, to get to know it in detail. So we don’t

need to call on Realdolmen all the time for small modifications, which saves us lots of time and money.”

“Sharing news is much easier on the new intranet too. The home page is much clearer and structured better: more important news and less important news look different now”, Ingrid Nelis affirms. “Sharing information on the intranet is much more efficient than always sending emails round.”

The new intranet will play a role in Ghent University Hospital’s accreditation process too – a kind of quality label for hospitals. “An important criterion for the audits is that documents can be consulted quickly and easily”, says Verdyck.

INTEGRAL COMMUNICATIONS PLATFORM

“Now that all the informative aspects have been set up, the main challenge of using the intranet as a fully-fledged communications platform can start. SharePoint 2013 offers lots of possibilities for sharing and collaborating on documents, sending brief messages, targeted newsletters and much more. We’ll only be able to fully benefit from the added value this platform offers when we’ve explored it more over the coming months. We want to do it step by step because it’s a big change for lots of users, and they need time to adapt”, Verdyck concludes.

