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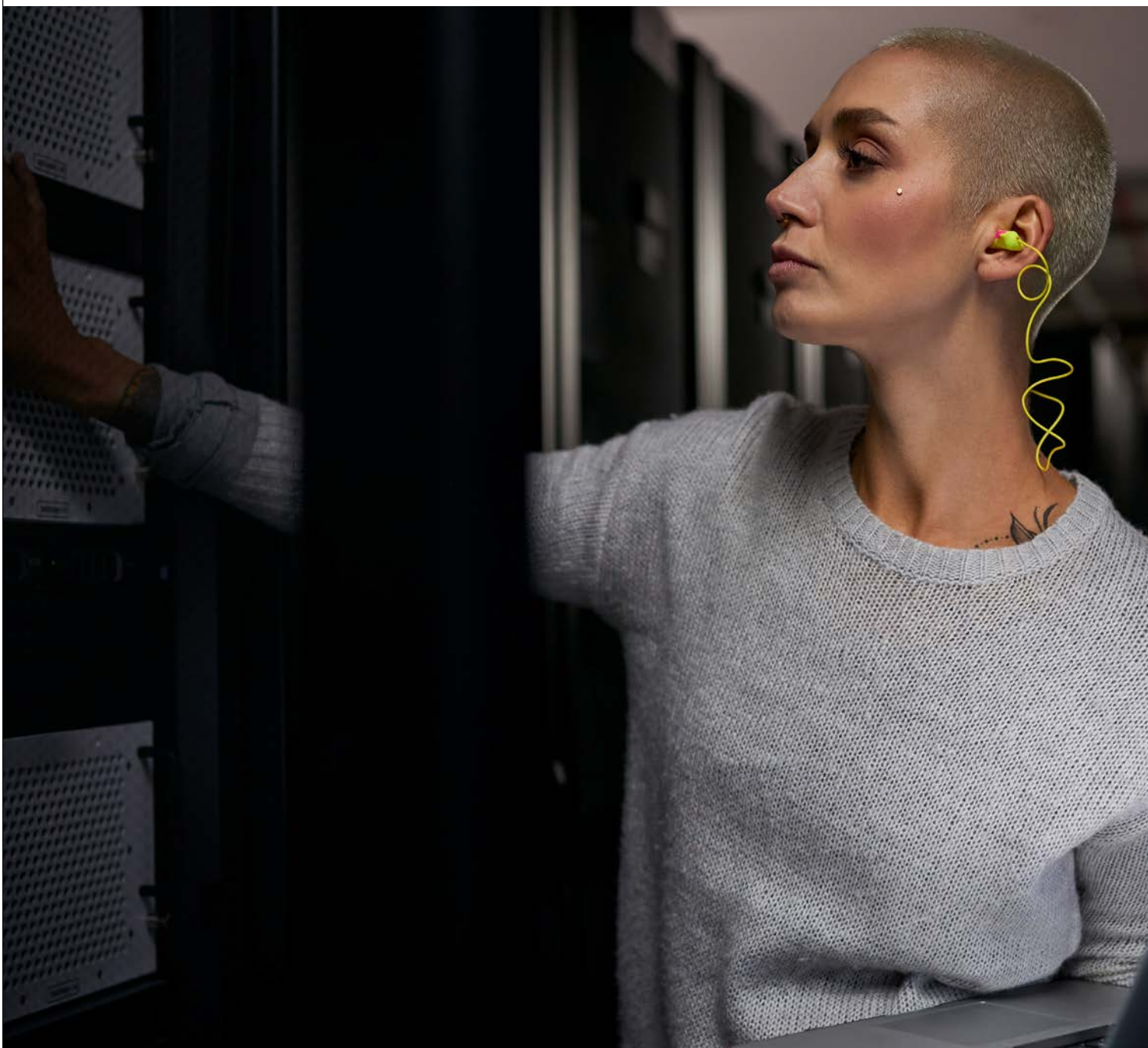
# 5 IT trends shaping the digital workplace in 2023



RESEARCH

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# Foreword

The state of the digital workplace is changing, with technological advances and corresponding challenges shaping the landscape shift.
How could they not? Between 2019 and 2021, remote workers in the U.S. alone tripled from 5.7% (roughly 9 million people) to 17.9% (27.6 million people), according to the 2021 American Community Survey (ACS). This change has left underprepared organizations scrambling to adopt technology to help manage the workplace.

And much of that pressure is put on IT. Technology is both a focus and a flashpoint as more employees work remotely. Employees *want* better tools to help them do their job more efficiently, and according to Apple Must, "20.8% will stick with or join an employer who provides them with the best tech for the job." Employees understand that they can only perform exceptionally well when they have top tech supporting them, and organizations are recognizing this need as well.

This perspective is pervasive, as Future Forum reports, "Employees who work for organizations they describe as technology innovators report 1.5 times as much productivity and 2.2 times the sense of belonging as employees who work for organizations they describe as technology laggards." And it's stats like these that have IT departments most interested in making their digital workplace engaging, high performing, and a reliable source of truth.

Organizations aren't expecting the old ways of doing things to accommodate today's digital workplaces. Today's organization goals prioritize community, flexibility, autonomy, efficiency, and accountability. And new goals require new technology to meet these demands.

As the digital workspace evolves, its impact is felt on IT teams everywhere:

- According to Gartner, with users that are much more technically savvy than 20 years ago, IT departments must provide modern technology to match modern times. Ignoring this leads to disengaged employees.
- As Atos shares, "employees expect a completely frictionless working environment and one that closely mirrors their own personal use of devices and software."
- Deloitte explains in their analysis Reimagining Digital Workplace Productivity and Elevating the Human Experience Through Digital Workplace Improvement: "the workplace must be redesigned to operate in synchrony and connect all workers to those that they work with when, where, and how they need it—regardless of location, device, or time zone."
- And G2 reports that 53% of business leaders think IT teams should be at the forefront of digital adoption.

That's a lot of pressure for IT! But these teams are answering the call for a better workplace experience by adopting new ways to engage employees and doing their part to design a digital employee experience that jibes with today's modern digital workplace.

There are five trends we'll explore specifically:

- **Trend #1.** Deliver frictionless access to information
- **Trend #2.** Bring the digital workplace to life
- **Trend #3.** Accelerate new hire time to productivity
- **Trend #4.** Create a single source of truth for knowledge and information
- **Trend #5.** Staying ahead of cybersecurity concerns

# Trend #1. Deliver frictionless access to information

Digital tools connect employees to the workplace, with their digital experience tightly interwoven with their employee experience. And today's employees expect a frictionless experience overall, with a platform that allows them to seamlessly travel through a series of connected apps that they use to get things done.

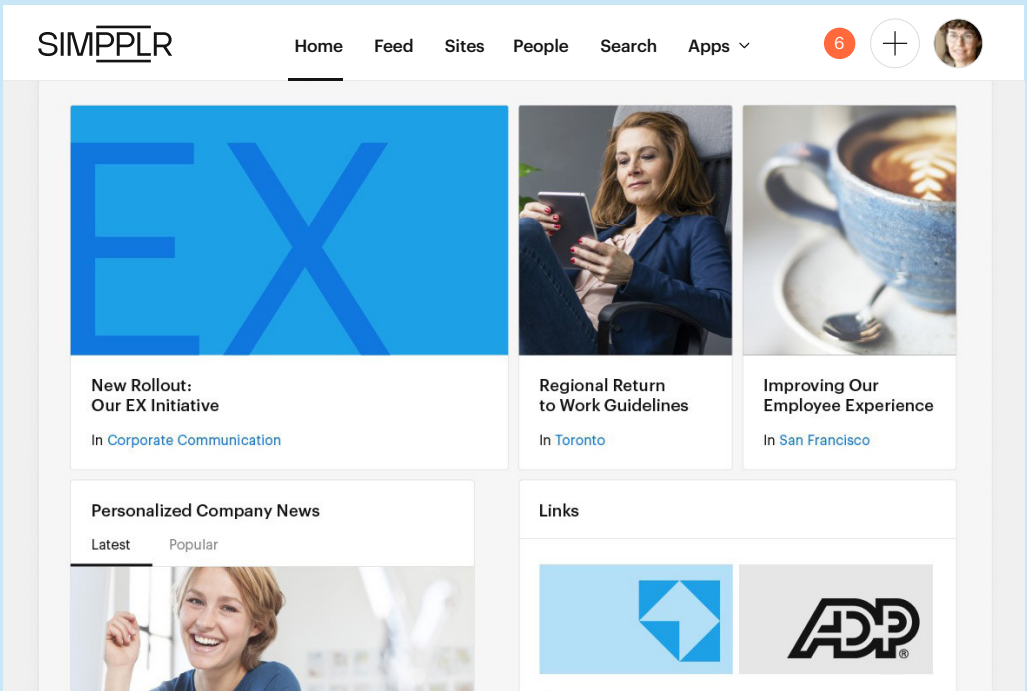
Attention spans have decreased all around over the years and frustration levels skyrocket when people are forced to waste time using unsophisticated technology in our otherwise fast-paced online world. By providing employees with the access they need, when they need it, they are more engaged whether working from home, on the road, or in the office.

Leading organizations will continue to use advanced AI models to create a unified, personalized, and frictionless experience, with a richer, connected dataset, made available to a distributed workforce.

This access and understanding of their needs delights users and enhances adoption rates. And this creates a symbiotic circle, with more engagement leading to richer insights, and in turn leading to a superior employee experience as organizations evolve and grow along with the workforce.

Reworked reports that more organizations are turning to AI to support efforts to increase employee experience and eliminate friction points in the digital workplace. And there are several AI-driven, friction-fighting capabilities set to pop up on organizations' wish lists in the coming year, including:

- Adaptive personalization that creates a unique experience for every employee, serving them relevant information automatically.
- Integration with other employee apps that offers a single sign-in, so there's no wasted time logging in and out of various tools.
- Auto governance engine that keeps things running smoothly by deleting or archiving expired content. Employee dashboards are free from files they don't need, streamlining their work and reducing frustration.
- A modern org chart that brings employees together across time zones, sharing interests and expertise and creating an approachable team that's accessible across continents.
- Smart search surfaces federated search results using metadata, auto-completion, auto-correction and stemming. It searches across documents, intranet content, and even people, using profile information and expertise tags. It integrates content management systems like Google Drive, SharePoint, Salesforce, and many others, spanning multiple languages. And it refines results by site, content type, author, and publish date to cut out the noise and find exactly what is needed—fast.



# Trend #2. Bring the digital workplace to life

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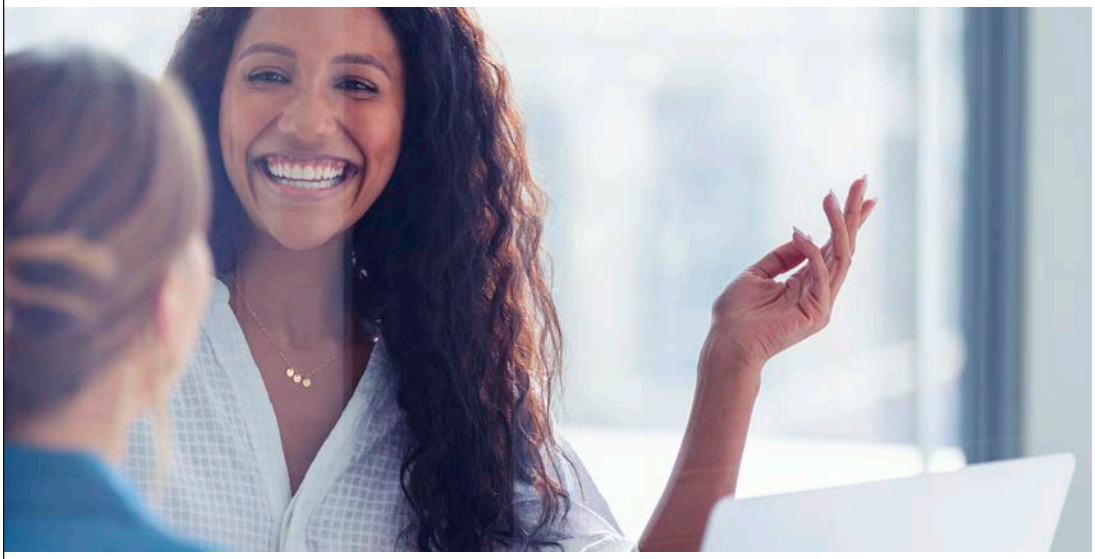
Deloitte explains that workforce experience "reflects the sum of a human's life experiences at work and how the workforce feels about their organization." And further, they assert that providing an excellent digital experience in the workplace requires organizations to look at the bigger picture. They need to examine how their tools interact with employees and the value they add to the work they do, as well as the sense of belonging they engender.

In sum, the digital workplace is really only engaging when it offers a rich EX layer and this will be a focus in 2023. To bring a workplace to life, organizations are seeing the need to go beyond offering productive capabilities to creating a sense of community.

Community building will become crucial, in fact. As eLearning Industry points out, "strong digital workplaces cultivate interpersonal relationships, giving each employee an equitable and open opportunity to form real connections." Organizations can build a cohesive organizational culture and nurture an engaged employee community with the following tactics:



# 1

## A virtual watercooler

Creating a virtual water cooler is one of the most significant additions organizations will add to their strategy to improve employee engagement in 2023. The concept of “watercooler conversations" brings to mind images of gossiping employees, but that is not the case. It’s the place where employees connect via casual conversations about TV shows, local events, and weekend plans—and it’s also where employee activists and ambassadors are born.

Providing an area to have these honest chats helps build lasting bonds across teams. And building camaraderie is among the top reasons non-executives want to spend time in the office, according to a study by Future Forum. It’s the kind of interaction that convinces current employees to not bother looking elsewhere, and it attracts new talent through industry whispers about the supportive and energizing environment the organization offers.

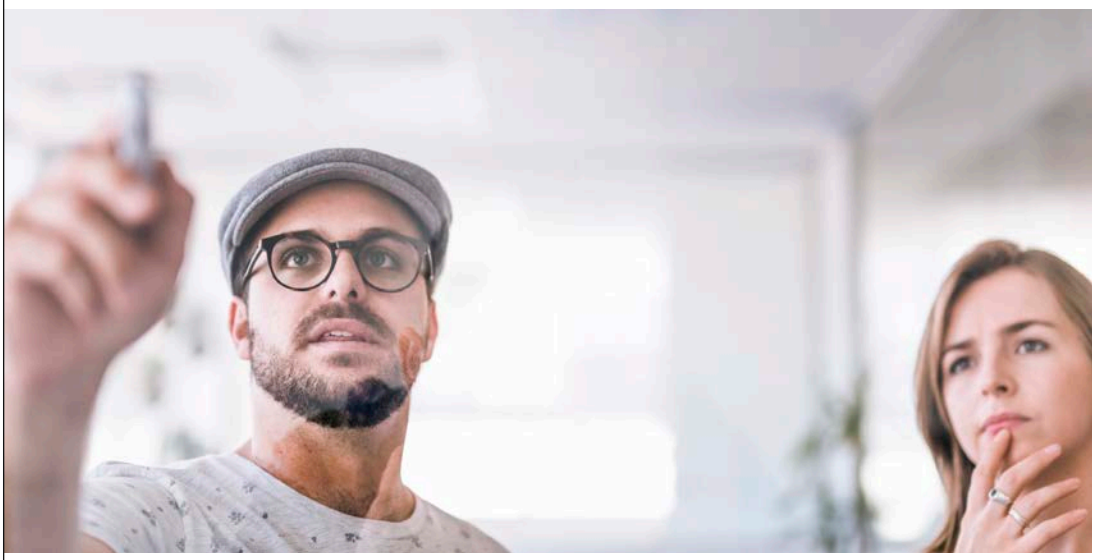
# 2

## Two-way communication

A study by LinkedIn shows that employees want to be heard and that not listening to them hurts business. That same LinkedIn study revealed that 63% of employees want to share feedback with management and make their voices and opinions heard, and 52% want to drive positive change.

Although organizational communication is traditionally top-down, organizations are listening more. They're hearing conversations about hybrid work desires and diversity concerns, for example, and they're adapting as needed.

Organizations are realizing the importance of staying on top of how their employees view the workplace and their place in it—and they're making changes to improve employee experiences by creating increasingly positive and engaging interactions. Two-way communication helps organizations spot gaps in knowledge and alignment and this understanding strengthens their overall brand and messaging.



# 3

## Collaboration

Collaboration in the workplace promotes problem-solving, spurs innovation, connects teams, boosts learning, and so much more. As such, collaborative tools will be increasingly important in the coming year, including asynchronous access to documents, calendars, contacts, customers, and other shared information. And with information that is automatically updated and always relevant, cross-functional teams located worldwide—and individual contributors—will *simply flourish*™ in these organizations.

# 4

## Interactive newsletters

Today, the primary way organizations communicate is through email or email newsletters. Earthweb found that 100-120 work emails are received each day, in fact. But how effective are these communications?

That same analysis reported that it could take over 20 minutes to concentrate on a task after getting interrupted by an email. And this lack of concentration can ruin someone's otherwise productive day. This doesn't mean that organizations should eliminate email. It means organizational communications need to be streamlined and support, instead of destroying, workers' productivity.

Organizations are realizing an interactive employee newsletter can help here. It's a place where employees know they can find critical information, specifically relevant to them, in one spot. It does away with inbox bloat offering easy audience management by helping IC teams target audience segments. And it creates a much more manageable data retention monster for IT!

# 5

## Staff forums

Forums have emerged as excellent tools for sharing knowledge with coworkers, resulting in faster problem-solving and enhancing employee engagement as they offer a supportive environment for asking and answering questions. These forums should be purpose-built to support various departments as well as specific underserved communities requiring a little TLC.

# 6

## Remote access

With the number of remote and deskless workers continuing to grow, organizations in 2023 are moving toward advanced "anywhere work capabilities" with robust mobile options. There's really no way to bring a digital workplace to life if it's inaccessible to a significant portion of an organization's workforce.

# Trend #3. Accelerate new hire time to productivity

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Since work went remote, there's been a shift towards better digital onboarding experiences as poor onboarding experiences affect overall EX. For example, Gallup reports that a poor onboarding experience "puts performance and new hire retention at stake." That same report says that only 12% of employees report having a good onboarding experience, and only 29% of new hires say "they feel fully prepared and supported to excel in their role after their onboarding experience."

> "An engaging virtual onboarding program is intuitive, interactive, interconnected, and iterative."
>
> –Gartner

For most employees, the organization and delivery of the onboarding were the elements they found most valuable. They were the pieces that had the greatest impact on their onboarding journey. Organizations are pivoting to offer exceptional digital onboarding experiences and this work will undoubtedly continue in the coming year.

According to LinkedIn, a proper onboarding experience

1. Builds trust, connections, and engagement
2. Shows how to provide feedback or offer innovation
3. Grows the performance of individuals and your business

Organizations need tools to designate onboarding content at various levels, including company-wide, departmental, and by specifical roles and regions. Each employee dashboard must offer quick access to current and relevant data and files that they need to settle into their new roles, including guidance around the organization's culture and values.

There's a reason why an empowered employee onboarding process tops many leading organizations' to-do lists for 2023—it can improve employee retention by 82% and increase productivity by over 70%. And those are impressive stats in any context!

# Trend #4. Create a single source of truth for knowledge and information

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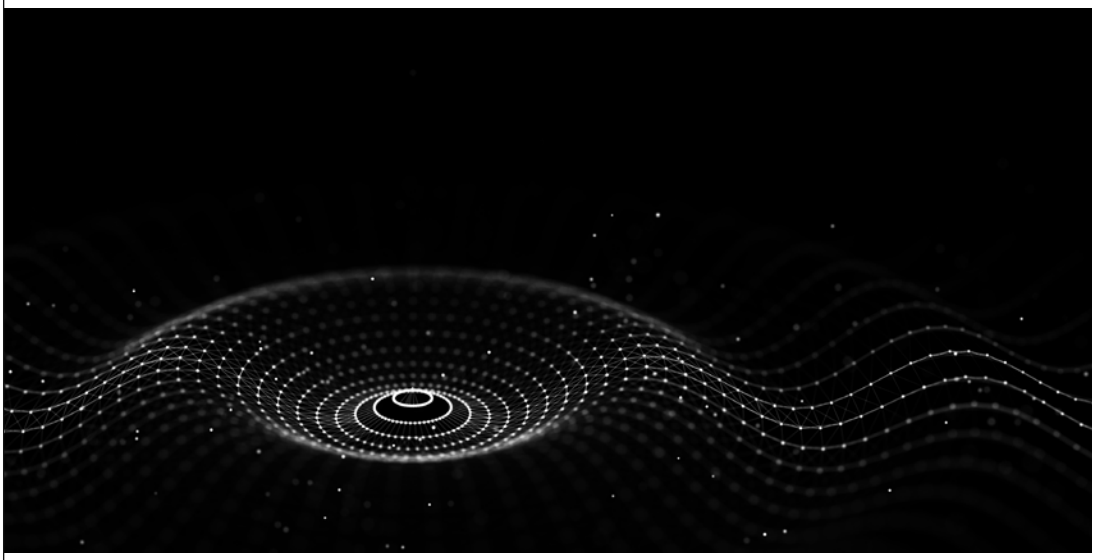
A single source of truth is precisely that—a one-stop shop for everything an employee needs to know. HubSpot defines it as "a philosophy for collecting data from across the enterprise and aggregating it into a central repository." And it is a philosophy, as it's a way to operate that requires a commitment to the process, which includes confidently adopting the right tool to manage it.



When organizations align themselves with this philosophy, they can break down information silos, eliminate duplicate data, increase productivity, and help employees feel confident in their communications about your products or services. In short, a single source of truth enhances knowledge sharing by providing easy access to credible resources and help.

One can see why this is trending. Consolidating accurate intelligence in one place is powerful. Searching all over creation and logging into endless content repositories is challenging—and impractical.

In a survey on why intranets fail, a sizable number of respondents reported having multiple sources of truth, and that this was a contributing factor to an intranet's demise. And we all know that intranet dumping grounds do not work. Less is more. And eliminating silos is part of this work, enhancing the ability to share and have visibility into what other teams are doing organization wide.

Leading businesses that will rule 2023 will have their single source of truth logistics locked down.

# Trend #5. Staying ahead of cybersecurity concerns

5

Security is always a concern. And as we continue to adopt new technologies, this risk increases. Research shows that with growing remote offices and employees accessing systems and data on corporate networks and in public clouds, we are "creating opportunities for cyberattacks by exposing new entry points and unsecured devices, data, and applications."

This observation is particularly true for highly distributed enterprises. They must secure systems and data living in remote operations, headquarters, the cloud, and elsewhere. Every inch must be protected and continuously monitored to detect and mitigate attacks.

Organizations must guard their intranets as well—and there are a few essential intranet features you'll need to have in place to ensure this is happening. Here are questions to ask your provider as you dig into cybersecurity planning in the coming year:

- Is my data backed up? A modern intranet will provide real-time data backup secured in its own instance, and only you will have access. Organizations should physically back up data on a rotating incremental and full backup schedule. These backups should be cloned over secure links to a secure archive and never transported offsite.
- How is data transmitted? A secure intranet will use encrypted links to ensure that all data is transmitted securely. This encryption is necessary because it protects your data and your privacy. And it prevents unwanted third-party spies. Additionally, only registered users in your organization have access.
- Does my intranet have data recovery capabilities? It should. Emergencies happen, and your intranet needs to handle them accordingly. Providing real-time replication to disk at each data center and near real-time data replication between the production data center and the disaster recovery center is crucial. What does this mean? In any event of data loss or an emergency, your data will be recovered and restored to its current state.
- Does my intranet follow certified, secured coding practices? Again, it should! You should have efficient, scalable code that minimizes the risk of breach and technical debt. When technical debt accumulates, it becomes increasingly difficult to implement changes and updates.

Other ways an intranet should protect data and privacy is by offering two-factor authentication, a virtual firewall, password policies, identity verification, and SSO integration (single sign-on). Data shouldn't be reviewed, shared, distributed, printed, or referenced elsewhere. And the ability to securely export intranet data anytime it's needed is essential as well. And these are all capabilities that organizations are racing to have in place ahead of whatever the New Year brings!

# Conclusion

IT departments are laser-focused on amplifying their digital workplace outputs in 2023, adopting new ways to accommodate today's increasingly distributed digital worker—and it's a workforce that's rapidly growing. With organizations seeking to enhance community, flexibility, autonomy, efficiency, and accountability, technology is tasked with meeting these extensive demands while keeping data safe. It's a tall order and working smarter is a must.

Modern times call for modern solutions and keeping an eye on trends in the digital workplace helps IT navigate what is on the horizon. And a modern intranet offers a much-needed assist in many of these areas during these challenging times. If you're ready to design a digital employee experience for a modern workforce, or to explore the potential as you being planning, be sure to reach out for a demo!

# About Simpplr

**Who we are**

Simpplr is the modern intranet that transforms the work experience for all employees — wherever and however they work. Simpplr is the only platform that unifies employee engagement, enablement and services, leveraging state-of-the-art AI models to deliver a seamless, cohesive and personalized employee experience.

Trusted by over 700 global brands, including Moderna, Snowflake, Splunk, Penske, Eurostar and AAA, Simpplr customers achieve significant improvement in their employees' productivity, retention and overall satisfaction. Headquartered in Silicon Valley, CA, Simpplr is backed by Norwest Venture Partners, Sapphire Ventures, Salesforce Ventures, Tola Capital and Still Venture Capital. Learn more at simpplr.com

**Benefits**

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- Ready to use in weeks, not months
- Built for business users
- Unified, engaging experience across mobile and the web
- Powerful integration
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