

MAY 2026



ClearBoxCONSULTING



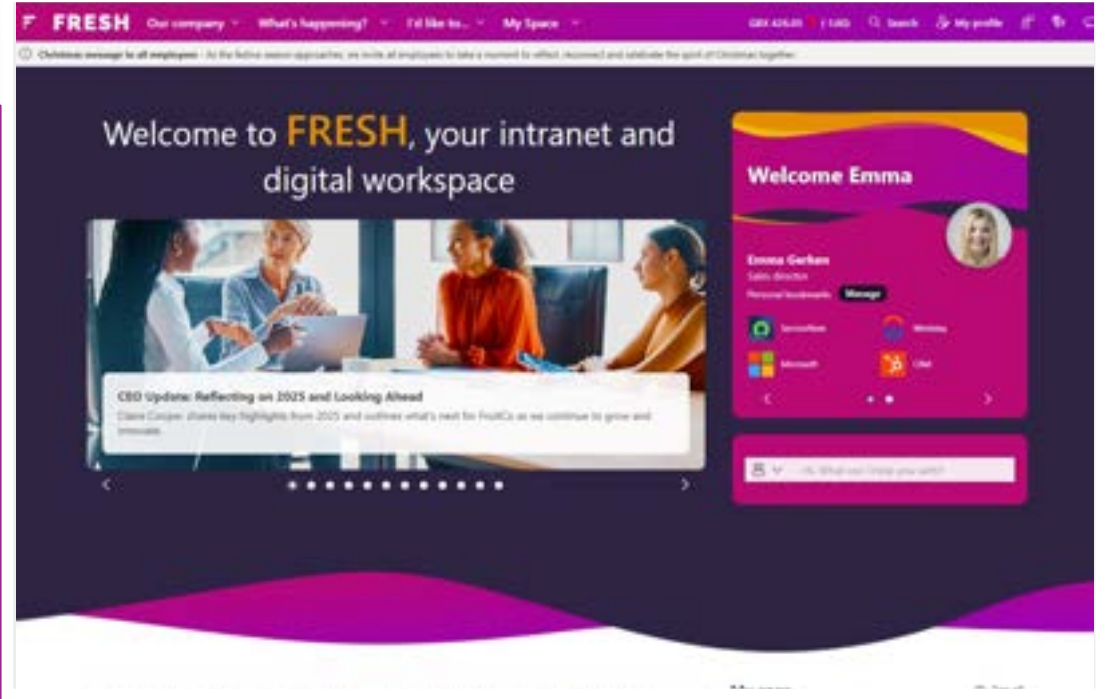
INTRANET AND EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE PLATFORMS

Reviews of the best products on the market



FRESH

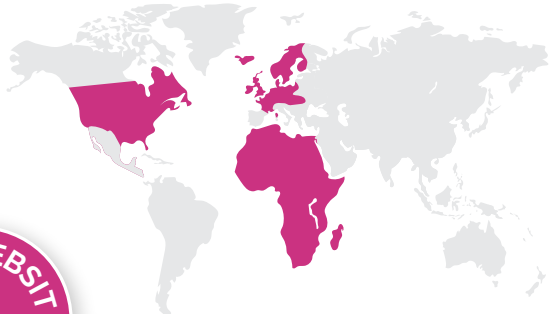
- FULLY STANDALONE
- REQUIRES SHAREPOINT
- FRONTLINE FOCUS
- OTHER



Typical deployment:

5,000 to 10,000

Company locations:



The product in a nutshell

Fresh is a mature intranet in-a-box product that will appeal to medium to large organisations that are looking to maximise their investment in M365.



SUMMARY

Fresh, launched in 2015, is one of the more mature SharePoint intranet in-a-box products in this report. It is owned by Advania, a large IT services headquartered in the UK with significant presence across Europe and USA. Although reliant on Microsoft 365 in the back end, Fresh significantly enhances standard SharePoint capabilities, through a comprehensive communication and content toolset that supports the full content lifecycle.

The editorial calendar, content creation wizard and bulk governance features allow editorial control and consistency across multiple sites. FreshMind, Fresh's AI feature, provides generative AI capabilities during page creation. It also provides a natural language approach so that employees can query authoritative document sources, supporting knowledge finding. Fresh's search and knowledge

management features are strong overall, too.

Fresh offers strong capabilities to bring information into the intranet experience and signpost users out to systems and tools, but organisations looking to support complete tasks inside the intranet will find some additional Power Platform configuration is required. Similarly, Fresh relies on Microsoft's offering for mobile support and some community functionality, which might not be extensive enough for some organisations.

Fresh is ideally suited to medium to large Microsoft-centric organisations and those looking to support complex requirements like multiple brands. Those in sectors with majority desk-based knowledge workers will also find Fresh appealing. Additionally, for organisations that are interested in Copilot, Fresh is an excellent complement.

Pricing

PRICE BAND

1,000 users	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
5,000 users	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
20,000 users	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
50,000 users	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$

These prices are indicative, offering a comparison of the products featured in this report only. Please contact the vendor for a bespoke quote.

PRICING MODEL

Subscription – price band based on number of users.

DISCOUNTS

Multi-year commitments, frontline users, healthcare, government/public sector, schools and educational institutes, charities and non-profit organisations, businesses over 1,000 users.

COSTS TYPICALLY

Slightly higher at the start of the term, but generally spread.

PRICE INCLUDES

All available modules. Additional services from implementation partners are available if required.

Product type



Branding opportunities



Base systems

Fully standalone	Requires SharePoint	Other

Sectors

Public administration and defence	Transportation and storage	Financial and insurance activities	Wholesale and retail trade	Construction



Voice of the customer

We asked the vendor's customers to share their thoughts and experiences of the platform via a simple survey. We collated the responses and have summarised the common things or stand-out feedback for you:

We received a high number of responses about Fresh, where customers were highly positive. They frequently called out "its visual appeal and user-friendliness", where one customer said, "When content production is not technically difficult, energy can be devoted to higher-quality content." People also consistently praised the "Additional features on top of standard SharePoint" while "Still being integrated in the eco-system of Microsoft." One customer summed up nicely: "Fresh allowed us to start over with a fresh adoption of SharePoint and staff don't feel or know that they're still using SharePoint!"

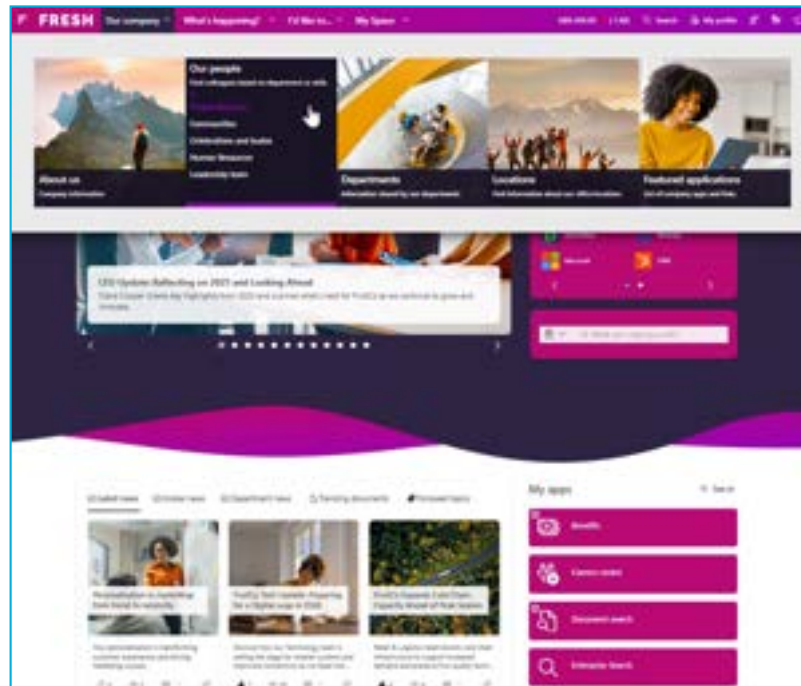
Requests for changes were mixed, but "Better documentation and training" came up a couple of times for publishers and technical admins. Enhancements to elements associated with the look and feel were also raised, such as "image and thumbnail editing tools", "more flexibility in the layout and design of web parts", and "a simpler way to change site or page colours" away from SharePoint which was described as "limiting". More "analytics features / options" was also raised a handful of times. Other requests included "Better mobile usability", more automations, and further integrations with Copilot and Power BI.

The relationship with the vendor was described as a strong partnership defined by responsiveness and care. It's noteworthy that there were no negative comments, particularly given the volume of feedback. A long-term customer said, "The cooperation with the vendor has always gone well, and we have been working together for several years." While another said, "There is real care in helping you get the most from Fresh and that is so helpful in the often resource poor world of intranet / knowledge management at most firms." Another customer was very enthusiastic and said, "I truly love the Fresh team."

SCENARIOS AND SCORES SUMMARY

Please see the Scenarios section for more on each of these.

SCENARIO AND SCORE	KEY BENEFITS	IMPROVEMENTS / CONSIDERATIONS
 1. Employee Experience 	SharePoint at its core, but much improved user experience overall.	Needs improved first time UX (e.g. guided tours). Notifications and translation workflow are basic.
 2. Communications Management 	Excellent content creation, templating and scheduling tools. Built-in newsletter.	Metrics are currently simple. Range of external channels reached is limited.
 3. Community & Engagement 	Strong Kudos and Badges features.	Community features rely heavily on Microsoft's offerings, such as Viva Engage.
 4. Digital Workplace Integrations & Services 	Seamless integration across M365 stack. Nice 'quick links' experience.	Limited two-way integration outside of the M365 suite.
 5. Knowledge & Content Management 	Strong metadata management including bulk updates across the intranet.	Lacks some essential analytics.
 6. Information Finding & Search 	AI simplifies access to knowledge, and people finding is particularly strong.	AI analytics and AI-generated answer in search is missing.
 7. Mobile & Frontline Support 	Leverages core Microsoft platforms and apps.	Little flexibility of access options for frontline workers.
 8. Platform Management 	Adds granular control over M365. Fixed SharePoint global navigation flaws. Supports multi-brands and languages.	Analytics are limited to basic usage and simple engagement metrics.



Fresh builds on the SharePoint user experience with improved navigation, branding and design options.

Fresh offers an easy to use and modern user experience that builds on the underlying SharePoint platform. Underpinned by an intuitive set of content creation tools, Fresh allows admins to maintain a high-quality and consistent experience. Overall Fresh delivers a pleasant experience, but we'd like to see support for new or infrequent users (such as a welcome tour).

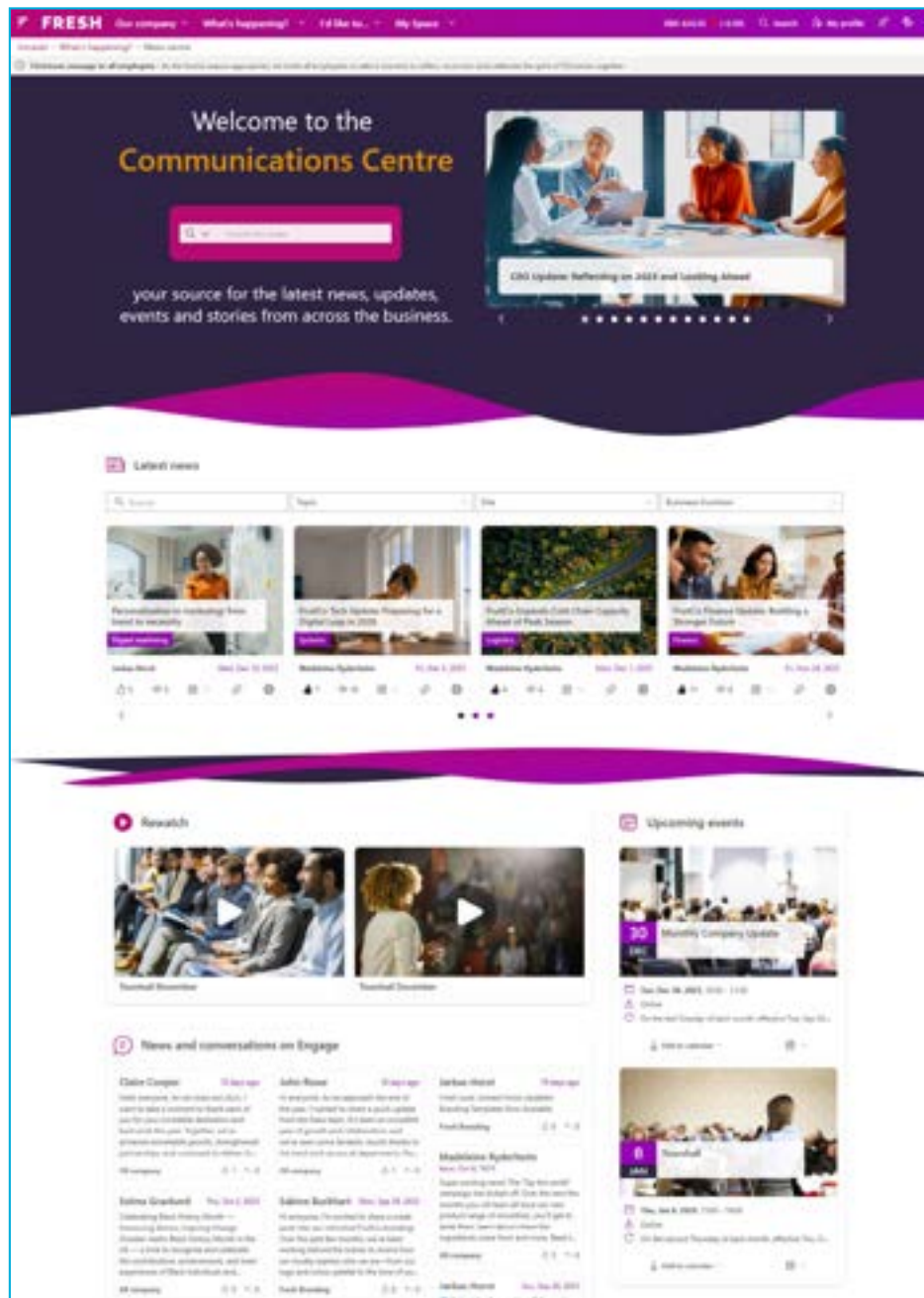
Fresh features use M365 audience targeting, Microsoft Entra ID groups and user profile properties to support personalisation. This provides a secure and well-governed approach but managing Entra ID groups would require coordination with IT teams to setup or significantly change. Helpfully, employees may add or remove topics of interest.

Employees have options to personalise their homepage and to add personal links to tools and bookmarks into their profile. They can also opt in and out of features like celebrations (see Scenario 3 for more). Navigation can include personalised options, such as frequently visited pages, and menus can be built dynamically from queries or rules such as audience targeting or popular content. See Scenario 2 for more on personalisation.

Notifications are only available via an 'Announcements' feature. Information can be displayed as a 'Blocking Popup' that must be dismissed, or through a prominent banner below- or a notification banner within-the global navigation. Audience targeted notifications can be sent to Microsoft Teams, which in turn provide a push notification for mobile users. Admins will need to be thoughtful about managing the overall noise of these notifications, as employees can't opt out or postpone these – though the vendor says this feature is coming soon.

Fresh supports all languages accommodated by Microsoft. Beyond standard SharePoint features, Fresh adds a useful 'OnDemand' machine translation tool in the global header, enabling end-users to translate page content on the fly. Content creators can also leverage an AI translation assistant before publication. However, once published, each page must be updated separately, as there is no sync workflow to keep translated versions aligned with the original source.

Multimedia support is available through dedicated web parts that can surface video from Microsoft Clipchamp (formerly Stream), Vimeo or YouTube. Videos play directly within the web part on the page and support manually added closed captions in multiple languages. Image support could be improved, as requested by customers.



A News Centre highlighting news, events and trending content.

Fresh provides a comprehensive suite of tools that significantly enhance SharePoint's default capabilities at every stage of the communication publishing lifecycle. Issues with SharePoint intranets often come from the difficulty in creating a coherent and consistent experience across SharePoint sites that make up the intranet, plus balancing site / content owner access with the ability to establish central editorial control and design standards. Fresh addresses this through core templates, a content creation wizard, a central editorial calendar, and intranet-wide engagement analytics.

Unlike standard SharePoint, Fresh's page templates are managed centrally and synchronised out to multiple selected sites. These standardised layouts maintain a consistent look and feel plus save content creators significant effort. The writing and tagging of content is also streamlined through a central 'Content Creation Wizard', which was introduced in late 2025. This feature offers a single route into publishing through a guided experience. Publishers select the appropriate templates, add essential metadata, define publication dates and select the target sites or channel(s) for publication.

At the end of the Wizard the 'create' step posts a draft page into the target site, which can then be edited and content added. Here, opening the conversational interface for an AI page assistant offers helpful support. The AI suggests prompts to help draft the content as well as suggesting a title, metadata or tags to add, providing a summary description, or even generating a page thumbnail image.

The screenshot shows the 'Content Creation Wizard' interface for 'Campaign news'. The interface is divided into several sections:

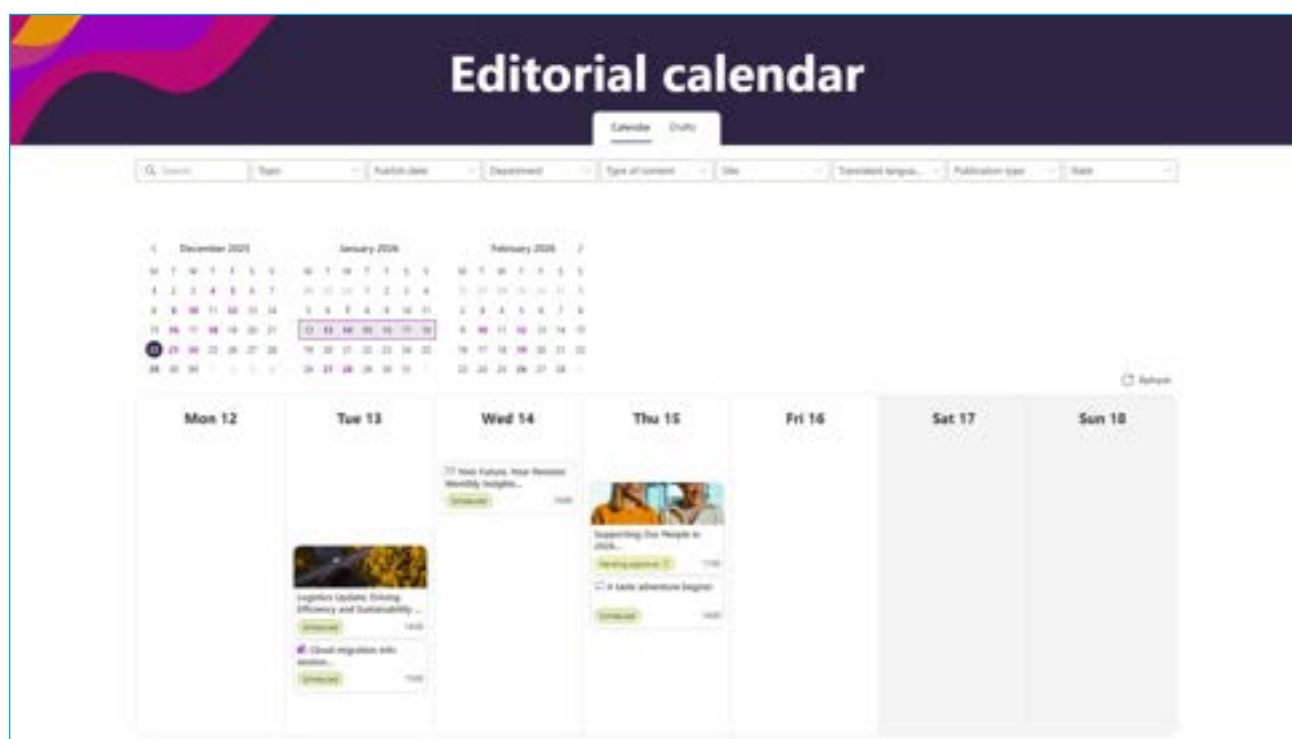
- Target site ***: A dropdown menu showing 'News centre' with a search icon.
- Title ***: A text input field containing 'Thrive at FruitCo - Campaign update January'.
- URL**: A text input field containing 'thrive-at-fruitco-campaign-update-january'.
- Edit URL**: A link to edit the URL.
- Description**: A large empty text area for the article description.
- Thumbnail**: A text input field containing a URL, with a preview image of oranges in a bowl.
- Content owner**: A dropdown menu showing 'Mary Edwards'.
- Audience**: A text input field for specifying the target audience.
- Template preview**: A preview of the final page layout, showing a header with 'Campaign news', a date 'OCT 2025', a heading, a sub-heading, a photo of a woman, and a section titled 'Mark your calendar' with dates 15 Oct, 22 Oct, and 28 Oct.

At the bottom right, there are two buttons: 'Previous' and 'Add tags and dates'.

The 'Content Creation Wizard' guides publishers through every step of creating a new page or article and ensures the required metadata is added.

The page's metadata underpins the personalisation mentioned in Scenario 1 by mapping content to goals, interests and audiences. This also ensures content appears in the right web parts, sites, navigation and 'Campaign Hubs' using audience targeting such as location. Campaign Hubs are sites that group related pages, events and other content under a theme. They provide dedicated spaces for employees to discover and follow information, such as for major initiatives or internal programmes. While Campaign Hubs provide a structured, templated, space that ensures consistency and prevents critical updates from being lost in the news archive, they lack the depth of campaign functionality we've seen elsewhere.

An 'Editorial Calendar' provides a unified dashboard of all content – news, Announcements, newsletters, and even Viva Amplify campaigns – giving communications teams a clear view of the upcoming schedule. Communicators can manage and amend scheduled articles and move content through approval workflows, with any approvals being shown in the site notification tool. Filters offer easy options to see upcoming communications by topic, site, type, and even to understand what has been translated and what's currently in draft. This offers a lot of flexibility around what is displayed on the calendar, but we think having the option to save specific views or sets of filters would be a helpful addition. Being able to annotate or "block" certain dates would also be useful for managing news flow.



An editorial calendar gives oversight of all draft and published content across the intranet.

There's good support for multichannel publishing. Intranet content can be surfaced in Viva Connections cards or pushed as announcements into the Teams app. A fully featured 'Newsletter' offers a viable alternative to dedicated email newsletter tools. It allows existing articles, documents and events to be curated into a single email and displayed in a choice of flexible layouts, including configurable header and footer options. There's the ability to set organisational recipient lists based on distribution lists or M365 groups. Metrics provide open and click-through rates as well as target audience reach.

The vendor said they have consulted with customers as to whether they would like support for more channels, such as digital signage or employee advocacy, but hadn't found demand among existing customers. We feel this could still be a gap for potential clients that wish to reach employees outside the Microsoft ecosystem.

There's a set of communication statistics available to show content effectiveness, such as engagement, via likes and comments. There are helpful dashboards to identify peak view times and help optimise future content scheduling. Peak time, engagement, page view and newsletter analytics can all be further refined using user profile properties to understand who and where your audiences are. While there are no advanced analytics features, such as sentiment analysis or user journey tracking, all data can easily be exported to Excel for custom analysis. We think deeper insights for communicators would add value, a sentiment echoed by customers who wanted to see more analytics features.

We think this scenario is a great example of Fresh meeting their strategic promise to "fill the gaps" that M365 leaves. Overall, used well, this toolset offers a loop of content, distribution and measurement that can support continual improvement and ongoing relevancy across multiple audiences and channels.



A 'Campaign Hub' groups all information related to a topic for communicators to come and work together, but also for users following the campaign to come and learn more about it.

Newsletters

Add newsletter

RECENT

- 01 FruitCo People Insp... 07 Feb 2020
- 02 Cognitive Capable De... 20 Jan 2020
- 03 Your Future, Your Pe... 04 Jan 2020

SENT

- 04 FruitCo Sales Pulse 14 Dec 2020
- 05 Newsletter Update... 27 Nov 2020
- 06 Strengthening Our ... 08 Nov 2020
- 07 Leading through W... 02 Nov 2020
- 08 Supporting Our Peo... 01 Oct 2020
- 09 Quick Update: Peo... 01 Oct 2020
- 10 A Thank to the Mem... 01 Oct 2020
- 11 Your Future, Your Pe... 02 Oct 2020
- 12 Building moments... 28 Sept 2020
- 13 Keeping FruitCo Mi... 25 Sept 2020
- 14 FruitCo Cognitive Ne... 24 Sept 2020
- 15 Your FruitCo Experi... 21 Sept 2020
- 16 Fresh Team Insp... 21 Sept 2020
- 17 A Fresh Wave of Th... 19 Sept 2020
- 18 FruitCo Sales Pulse 18 Sept 2020
- 19 Sales & Retail Upda... 07 Sept 2020
- 20 A Note from the... 18 Sept 2020
- 21 People First. You... 01 Sept 2020
- 22 The latest from the... 01 Sept 2020
- 23 Request watch-up 01 Sept 2020
- 24 A Letter from Clare... 01 Sept 2020
- 25 My watch-up 02 Jun 2020
- 26 February news meet... 04 Feb 2020

Newsletter settings and scheduling

Send subject *
Your Future, Your Passion, Monthly Insights

Sender *
Internal communications@fruitco.co.uk

Recipients *
Newsletter - All company employees

Scheduled send date *
Wed, Jan 14, 2020

Enable tracking of analytics
 Yes

Header, footer and layout

Title *
Your Future, Your Passion, Monthly Insights


Background colour
#000000


Introduction text
Welcome to the second edition of Your Future, Your Passion. We know retirement planning can feel overwhelming, but it doesn't have to be. Each month, we'll share simple tips, updates, and resources to help you make the best of your pension and secure the future.

Layout *
 Single Alternate Cards Letter (Block text without border)

Items (3)


Insights

- 

5 Practical Tips to Boost Your Pension Engagement and E...
Planning for retirement can feel overwhelming, but taking small, consistent steps today can make a big difference tomorrow. Recent studies show that 60% of employees are unsure if they have enough saved for retirement, and 77% believe they may never...
[Read more](#)
- 

Why Pension Plans Are More Than a Perk: A Key to Your ...
Pension plans are not just another benefit - they're a cornerstone of your financial well-being. Here's why they matter: Consistent savings for the future is generally possible a predictable income stream after you retire, ensuring stability when you're...
[Read more](#)

Upcoming event

- 

Pension UK's Annual Conference
The pension industry is entering a defining period, being challenged by consolidation, the focus on investment in growth assets, and an urgent spotlight on the need for people to save more. To understand what their retirement savings are worth and to be supported and empowered to use them...
[Read more](#)

Send out a preview **Send** **Show options**

The newsletter editor provides a form interface to add content into predefined templates.



Kudos and badges offer a social, gamified route to recognition.

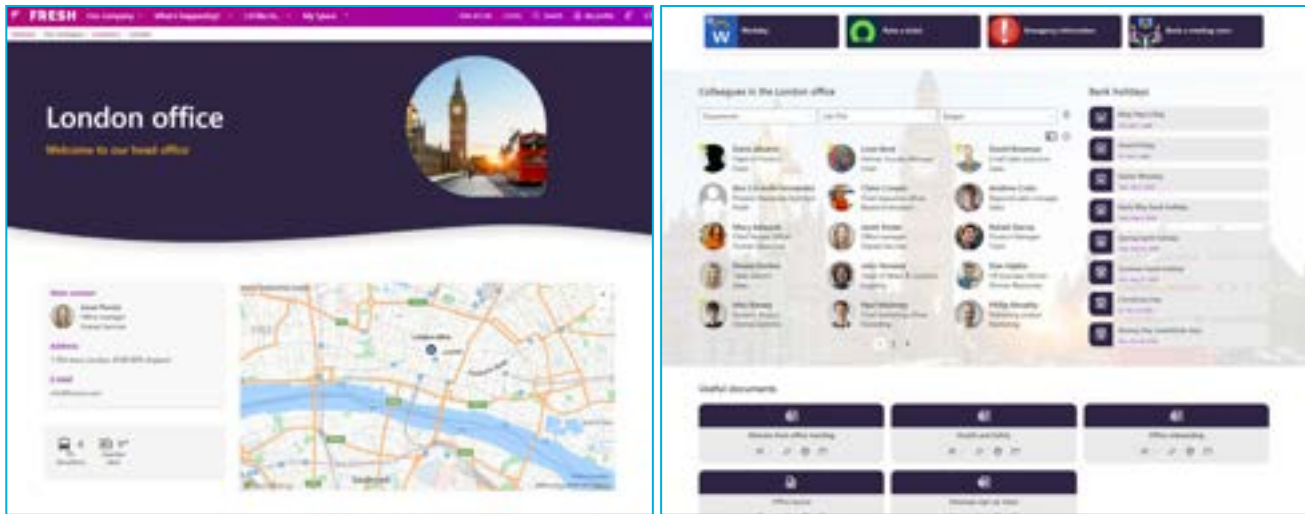
Fresh works with Microsoft 365 tools such as Viva Engage and Forms to provide much of the core community and engagement capabilities, but with some improvements. Fresh provides a 'Community Homepage' and directory that can be filtered and searched to help employees find what they are looking for. From here they can also request a new Community via a form that helps manage the provisioning process. The form asks for some basic details including who the owners and members will be and if the Community is to be public or not. The request goes through automatic or manual approval and then the site is provisioned automatically. People can see the status of their request (pending approval, completed etc.) via a list.

A nice touch is that the process sets up a SharePoint-based 'home' for the Community and connects it to Viva Engage. This provides extra context and functionality for the Community such as showing Community leaders, documents and events. Fresh also provides a web part that can surface relevant Viva Engage discussions in SharePoint.

Standard social feedback mechanisms, such as likes and comments, are handled natively through SharePoint. There's also a Fresh web part to highlight and encourage liking, sharing and pinning (save to read later) - standard SharePoint functionality that's often lost or hidden that can be placed prominently on a page.

The vendor recommends Microsoft Forms for surveys, polls and data collection. For site and feature feedback there is a form integrated into the site navigation that captures the 'area' (e.g. search, a site, a page) and any provided user feedback into a central actionable list. We also like the 'Action Checklist' web part that can be used to help walk users through multistep processes, such as orienting new starters.

One social engagement feature we were particularly impressed with was the 'Kudos' web part. This allows colleagues to give praise, highlight achievements or share anniversaries based on custom lists or profile attributes. Managers can add formal recognition through the use of 'Badges', which are visible in the people directory and can signal key roles (e.g. fire marshal or first aider) or achievements and skills (e.g. Data Analysis expert or customer champion).



Fresh pulls information from connected systems into its web parts using Copilot connectors configured in search.

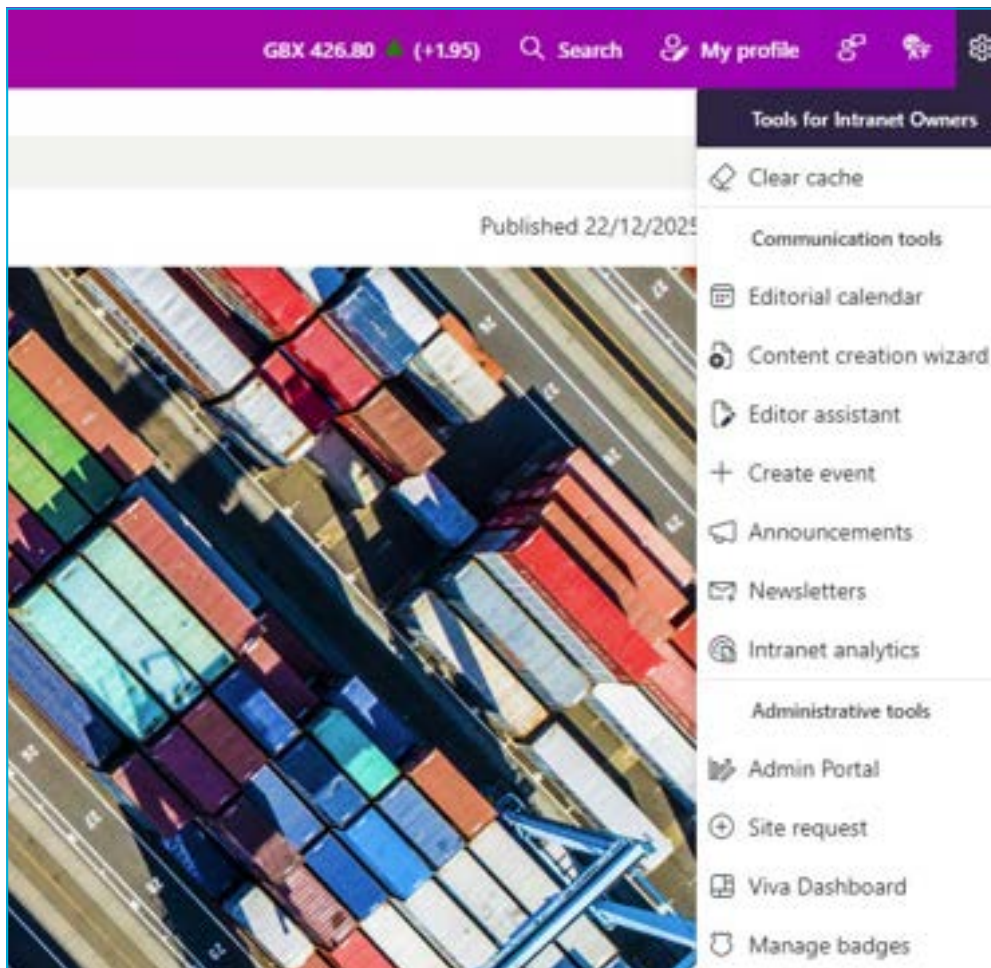
As Fresh is built on top of SharePoint it offers extensive integrations into Microsoft systems. In turn, this architecture allows Fresh to leverage M365's extensibility options, such as Copilot connectors (previously known as Graph connectors). This makes Fresh very capable of surfacing tasks, guidance or information from other systems, but limits two-way integration into other tools and offers little for users of M365 competitor apps like Slack or Zoom. Using Copilot connectors, business system data can be made available through Fresh web parts and pages, as well as consumed by 'FreshMind' AI (see Scenario 6).

Beyond the Copilot connectors, Fresh includes 'generic cards' web parts, which primarily provide one-way integrations. These cards pull external data into pages for viewing, targeting and personalisation, but don't include out-of-the-box support for transactional integrations; this means completing actions or updating data will require the user to leave the Fresh experience. For example, a generic card can display real-time train disruptions, while other integrations, such as a Maps web part, natively show maps and directions to help users plan routes and highlight key locations.

To mitigate this potential user experience challenge, organisations can choose to open third-party tools in a modal window or can use additional development in the Power Platform to provide more deeply integrated experiences. This is a nice touch and does give a more coherent feel, but businesses that want to allow users to update or create data in other business systems without feeling like they're leaving the intranet will have work to do.

We like the 'My Tiles' component that aggregates a range of information from Microsoft 365 services relating to the employee. For example, the component can show how many Teams notifications they have, unread emails, pending tasks etc. Clicking on these enables the employee to see more information via a side panel and then go to the source application to take action as needed.

Application quick links are managed through a central link library and displayed in a Fresh web part. This provides multiple display options and uses audience targeting to filter the applications shown. Finally, administrators can extend the analytics capabilities through simple integrations with third-party products like Google Analytics and Microsoft Clarity.



The Fresh 'Tools for Intranet Owners' menu provides access to a comprehensive set of tools to support every stage of the content lifecycle.

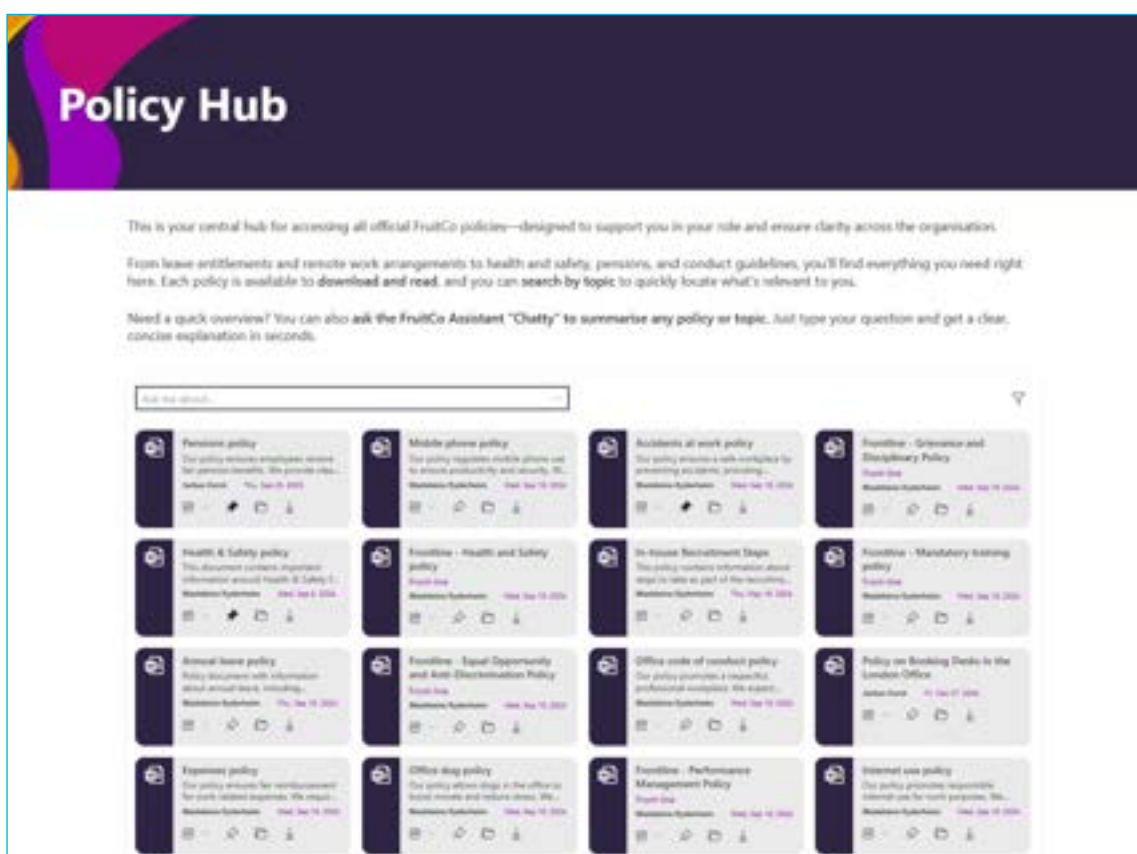
Fresh's knowledge and content management features are a key strength. They build on Microsoft's underlying content management capabilities and plug several gaps that the SharePoint site-centric model often causes. These thoughtfully designed additions allow multiple SharePoint sites to be seamlessly brought together as a cohesive platform.

Firstly, Fresh have a variety of 'Document Cards' that allow content to be surfaced onto a Page web part in a variety of ways. The files shown within a Document Card are dynamically displayed and can be configured to show specific documents or libraries, or be search-based and pull content from across the intranet. These web parts are supported across all page types, for example allowing you to display content like policies within a Community.

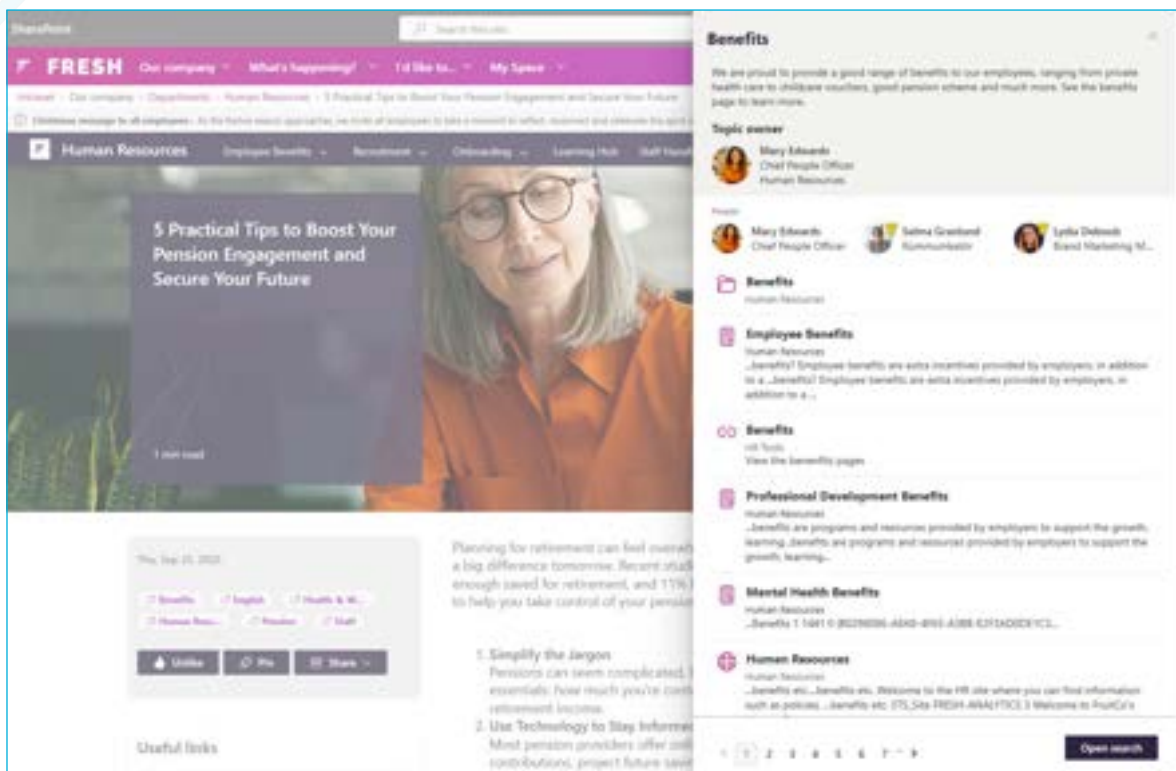
FreshMind is Fresh's AI tool that enhances expertise and knowledge finding (covered in more detail in Scenario 6). There are dedicated FreshMind web parts to create a roll-up of content in documents and pages that relate to specific subjects (metadata-based) or are of a specific type, such as policies. The information can be located anywhere across the intranet in multiple sites, and the web part will aggregate this information. Filters can also be set up to further narrow results by business function, topic etc.

A 'Topic Explorer' feature leverages metadata tags to make them more powerful and interactive. Tags can have additional information associated with them including a topic owner and description. Tags relating to content are shown in a web part on the page. Clicking on a tag shows a side panel with the owner and description as well as other content and people tagged with that term. Topics and associated information are maintained manually in the admin centre; this makes it more straightforward and visible than via the term store. Information for each topic includes an owner, a brief description and a link to a more detailed topic page.

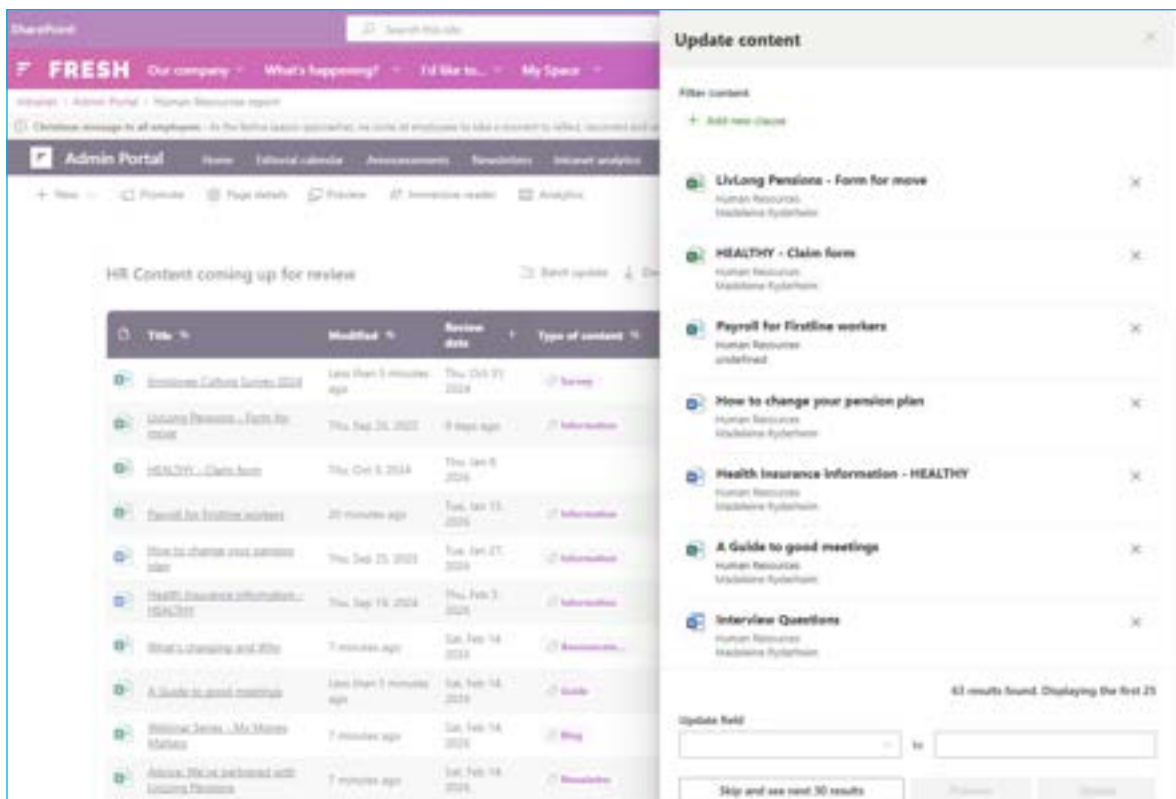
A particular strength of Fresh is its feature set to manage the lifecycle of content, from creation to publication through to deletion or archive. The Editorial Calendar (discussed in Scenario 2) provides a single filterable view of all content while metadata enforced through the Content Creation Wizard establishes a baseline for accountability. FreshMind supports page and document management at scale through a 'Content Reports' admin web part. This allows content to be managed in a central location, filtered by owner, author or review date. It's also possible to update content in bulk if, say, the contact or owner of a specific topic has changed, or export the report for analysis in other tools. While lifecycle management works well overall, we'd like to see more capability for automated content reviews and alerts. These can be created using Power Automate flows but would be better as core functionality.



Document Cards dynamically display specific files or libraries in a simple web part.



Tags defined as topics are assigned an owner and description, and provide a rich method to navigate around related information.



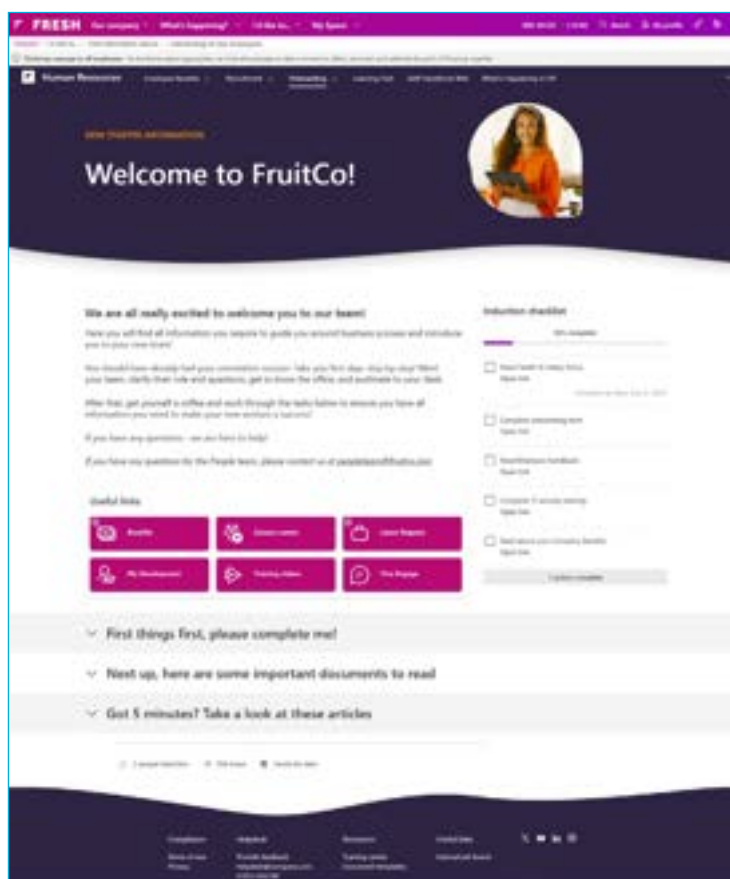
The Content Report gives key metrics for various content types and offers option to filter, sort, download and bulk update.

For updates and critical communications, Fresh has options to suit different needs. For the most urgent messages, a blocking pop-up notification prevents users from any further action until the pop-up is dismissed. Less intrusive attention-grabbing options include using the notification banner that appears under the global navigation. Fresh also supports push notifications through the Teams app, to ensure users get alerts on their mobile devices.

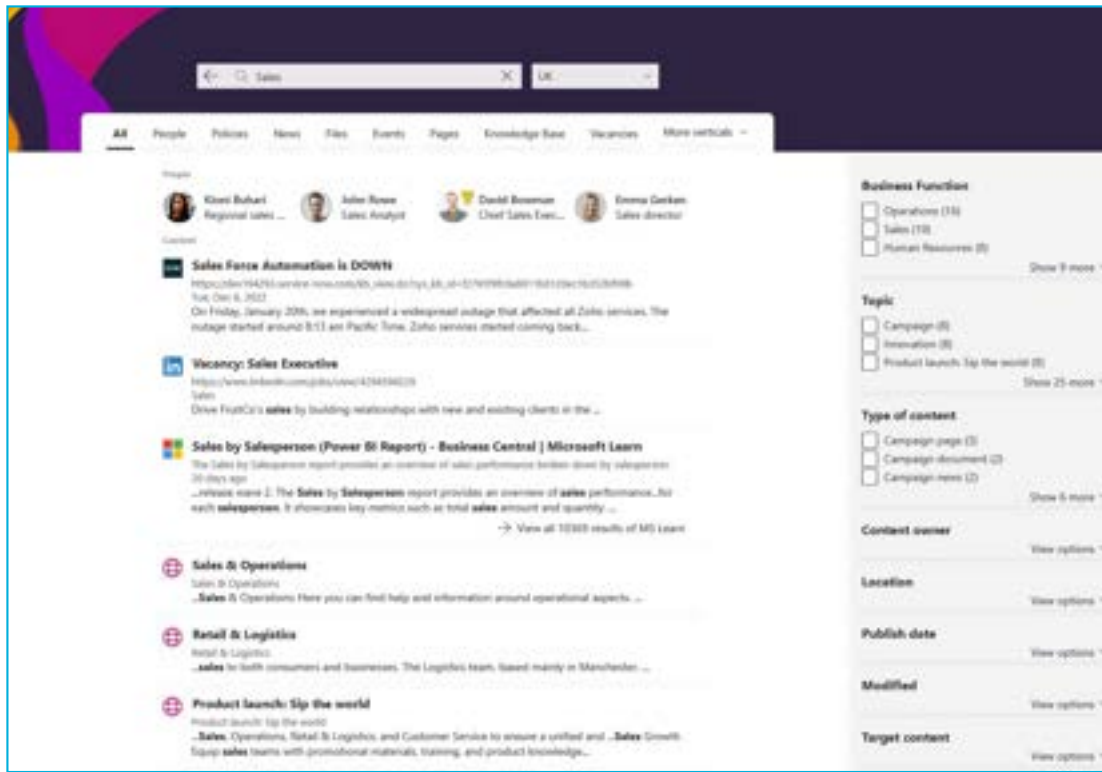
For less urgent yet still important messages, an 'Action Checklist' web part can be configured as a 'must read' feature, where content is targeted to specific users who must confirm they have read the page. Admins can then generate a report to show who has or hasn't completed the action, though any workflow or automation to automatically chase or remind people needs to be built in Power Automate.

There are metrics and statistics to support basic content reporting, such as top performing pages, top tools accessed, as well as 'time viewed' metrics that can help identify the best time to publish. Newsletter analytics track open and click-through rates, to support measurement of engagement. The filtering options support profile properties, so audience specific insights can be found, and custom date ranges allow reporting on campaigns or monthly cycles. Metrics are also available for individual pages, so content owners can see whether their reference material is being accessed.

Overall, we'd be keen to see more intelligent recommendations from the insights collected and perhaps more behaviour or sentiment-based reporting to help communicators understand if their message has driven the desired action and feeling. This could also expand to reference pages, to provide guidance to owners to make improvements such as to make content more digestible. This sentiment and the work the vendor has already done to improve, was regularly referenced in the feedback we received from customers too.



The Action Checklist web part can be used for mandatory read content.



Fresh uses Microsoft 365 search and brings in content from across any connected system.

The Fresh search experience is a significant strength of the platform, acting as a powerful user-centric layer built on top of Microsoft Search capabilities. It combines custom Fresh web parts and a highly configurable FreshMind AI experience to deliver relevant, role-based and contextually-aware results that improve significantly on the standard M365 experience. Employees can initiate a search from multiple locations: the global navigation search bar, dedicated search web parts on any page, and through search cards in Viva Connections.

The Fresh global search box appears below the SharePoint global search box, which might be slightly confusing for users at first. The Fresh search is scoped to only the intranet and offers some improvements over the standard SharePoint search behaviour. There are type-ahead suggestions, spelling error corrections and a set of suggested searches offering recent, saved and trending searches. There is also a 'promoted items' section that might be a useful option for communications teams needing to highlight otherwise buried content.

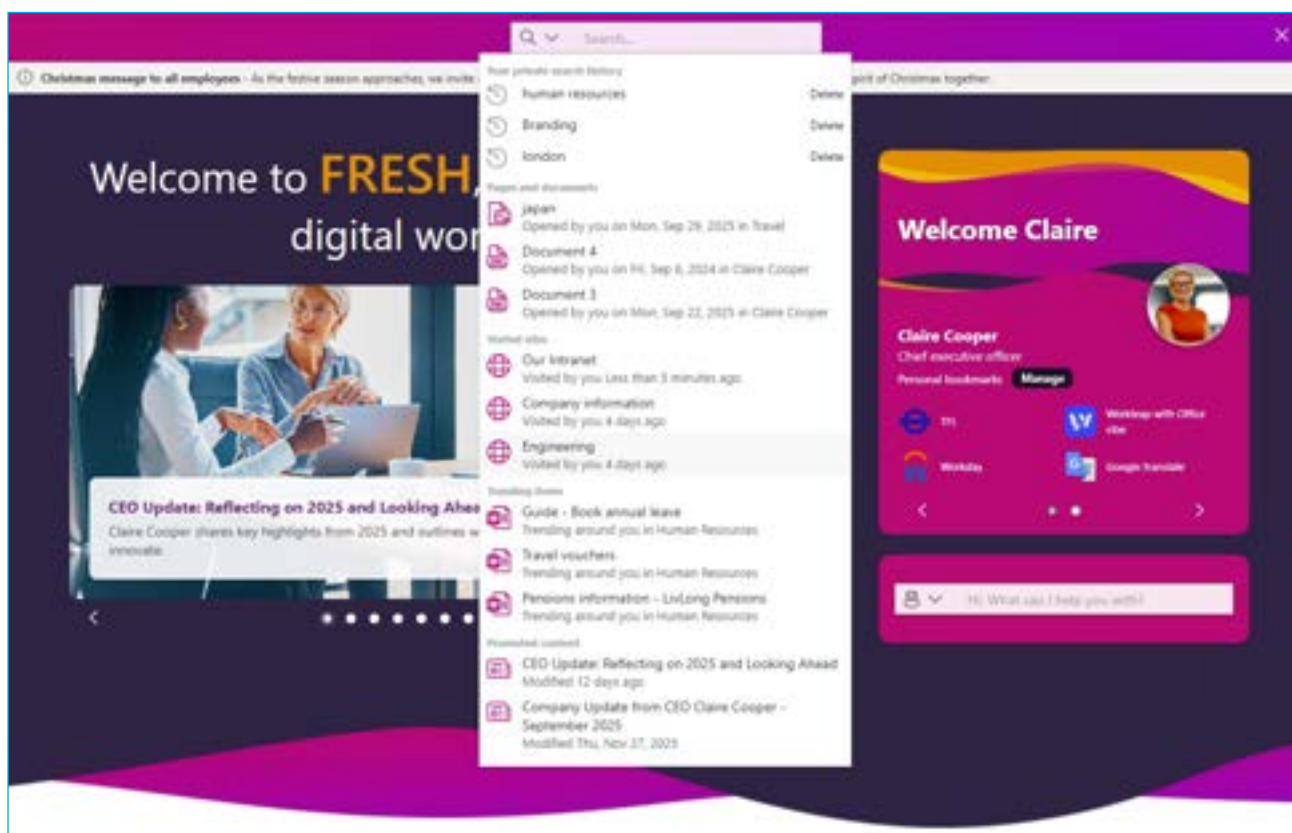
The results page highlights people matches as well as content and offers a helpful set of refiners to allow advanced search filtering using metadata. Result types are differentiated by icons; we think the icons can confuse, but generally the results are well-presented, and the verticals and filters are easy to use. There is no AI-generated answer, which we think employees will start to expect from business systems.

For searching external systems (e.g. ServiceNow, Workday, or your corporate website) Fresh surfaces results indexed via Microsoft Search and Copilot connectors. This is relatively straightforward if the system you want to integrate is supported by one of the many preconfigured connectors available through the Microsoft admin centre. If it's missing, there may be a need for custom development to connect bespoke or on-premises line of business applications. This process can add cost, complexity and reliance on external partners, especially for older non-SaaS systems.

All Fresh content web parts use search functionality, allowing them to be configured to show up-to-date results based on preconfigured queries. It's this feature that's used, for example, to highlight all news related to a specific topic on a Campaign Hub, or pull documents that mention a specific topic from across the intranet into a central site. There is also a web part for displaying topic metadata that can be used for searching, please see Scenario 5 for more.

FreshMind plays a key role in enhancing the user experience around finding information and people. Whereas M365 Copilot references all your M365 data (emails, meeting transcript etc), FreshMind is configured only to reference official intranet content and offers a more controlled experience. Configuration also allows for significant customisation including adding pre-configured prompts to adapt the tone and content of responses across key topics.

For example, the AI could be configured to work with a specific set of authoritative documents relating to a knowledge topic (e.g. employee benefits) or information type such as policies. This could be presented as a web part or in a chat-style interface. Employees then ask natural language questions relating to the subject, and the AI will summarise information from the corpus and provide links to the source documents for further information. Notably, results are security trimmed. A nice feature is that it is easy for admins to configure suggested prompts to get employees started using this tool with some practical examples.

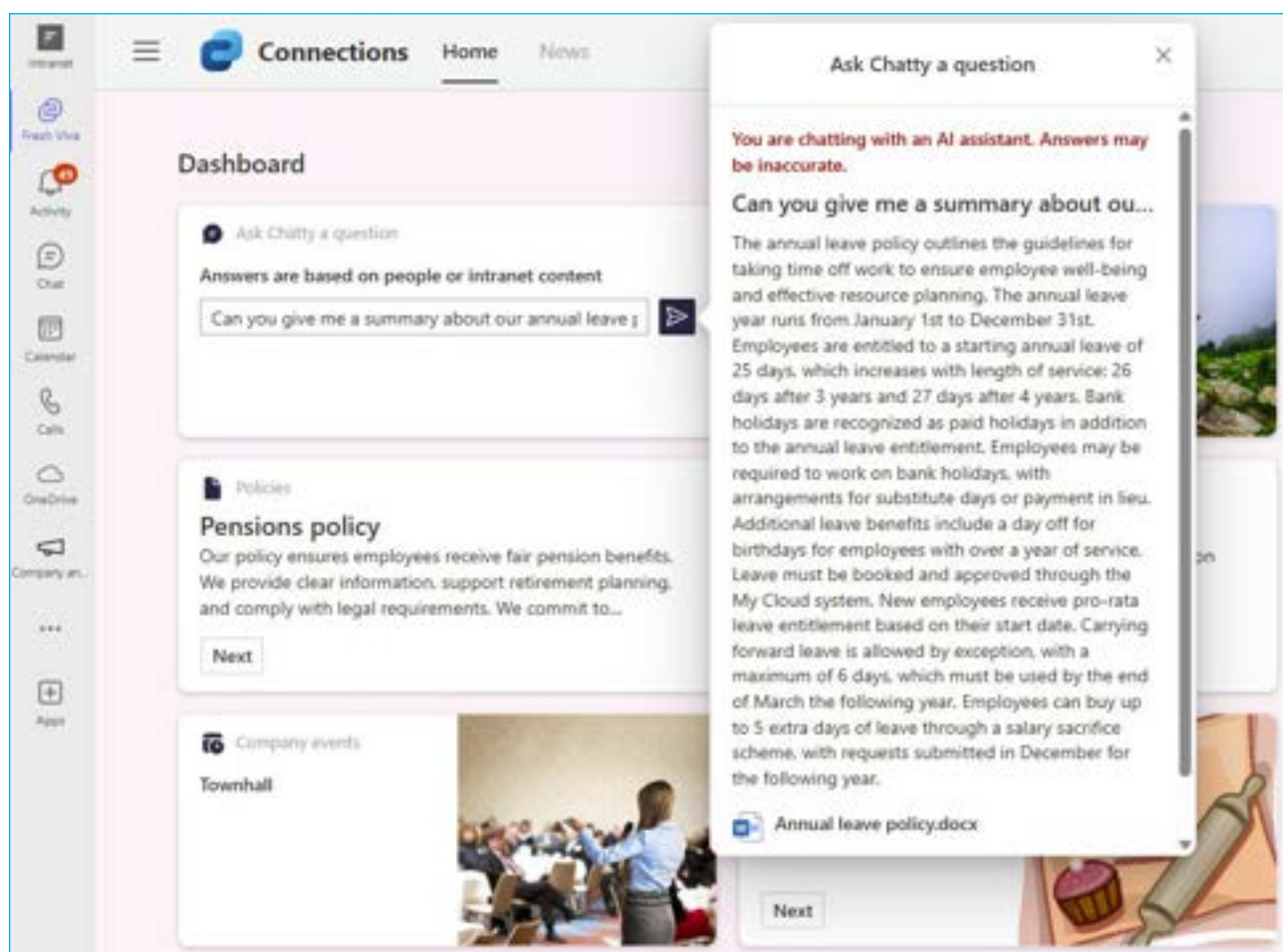


The global search box has some useful suggestions.

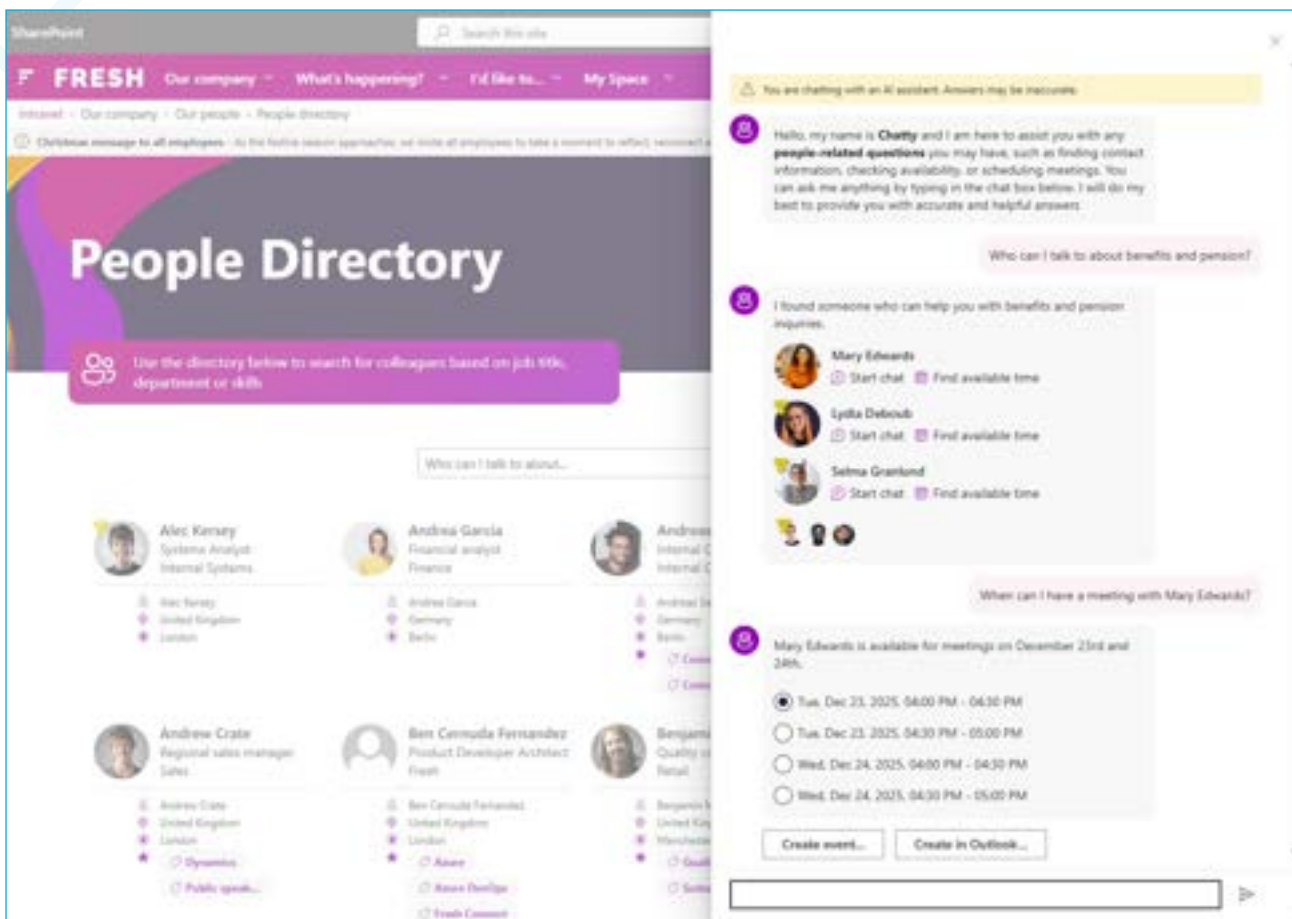
FreshMind is also strong when it comes to looking for people. For example, using natural language to find colleagues based on all profile attributes (e.g. 'who is an expert in topic'). When a person is found, FreshMind offers the ability to start a Teams chat or book a meeting, checking both calendars for an available time. Alternatively, the non-AI people search web part is highly configurable and can help identify people by skills, department or organisation hierarchy. There are options to filter who the web part will or won't return, allowing admins to, for example, exclude contract staff from results.

Admins can configure verticals (tabs in the results that filter by content type or key attributes) to scope results and define available refinement options. Each result type can be fully customised to display the desired information. There are also options to promote or demote results (for example, hiding images or list items from the results). Promoted results can be managed in Fresh, and we like that it can also work with the Microsoft Search settings for Bookmarks and Acronyms.

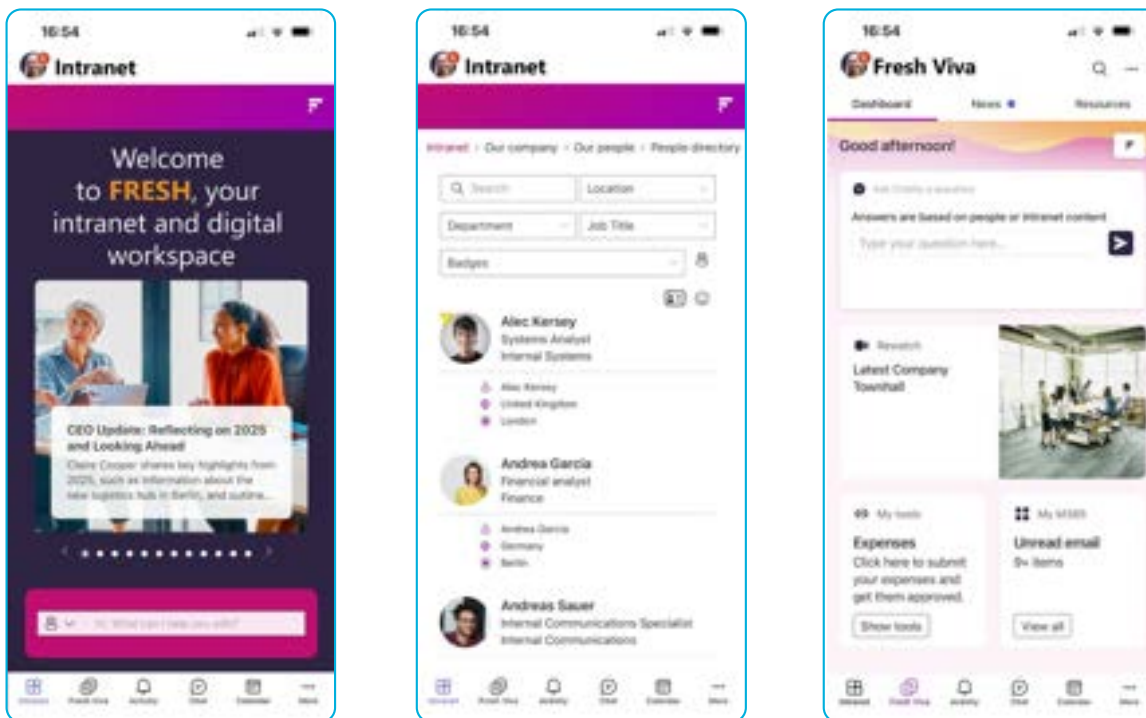
There are search metrics to show overall search usage, top queries and start points, and data to show queries with no results or where results have been clicked through. However, there is currently no analytics to support observing the performance of the FreshMind AI's use or responses. Given how useful and deeply integrated FreshMind is into the overall experience, this is a gap that the vendor is planning to address in the coming year.



The FreshMind card inside Viva Connections provides answers from relevant resources.



FreshMind embedded into the people search page with suggested prompts aimed at common expertise finding and people finding scenarios.



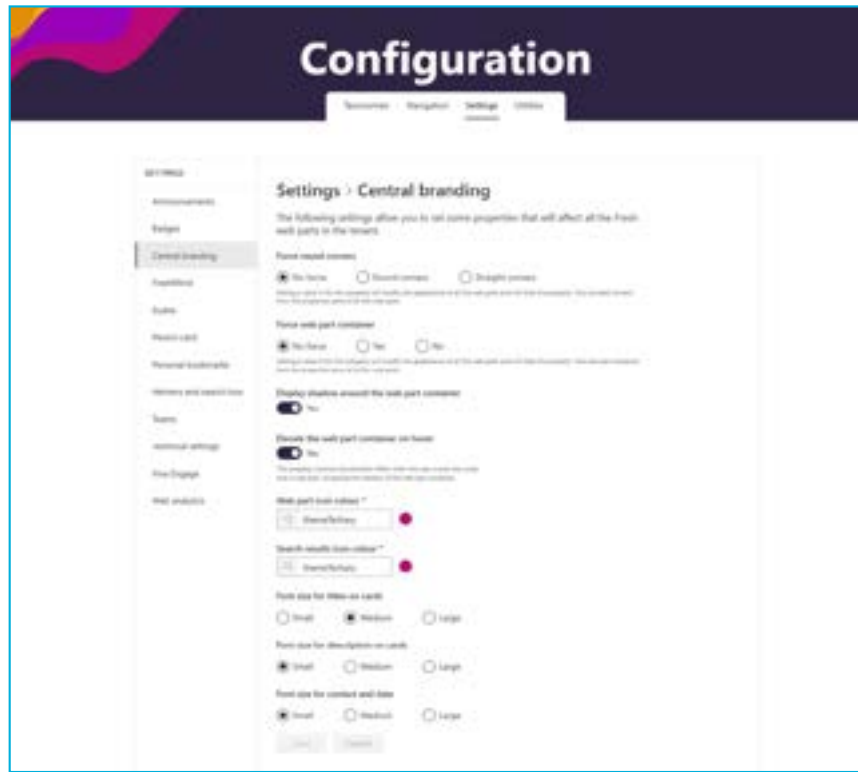
Fresh uses responsive design and will resize content for a mobile browser, or can be launched as an app in MS Teams or the SharePoint app.

Mobile access to Fresh is supported via responsive components that work in a mobile device browser or SharePoint mobile app. Customers that are using Viva Connections can also provide access via the Microsoft Teams mobile app with the added benefit of support for push notifications. Fresh does not provide its own mobile app and employees log in via their Microsoft 365 credentials. There's no support for alternative log-in methods and all employees need a minimum of Microsoft F1 licenses to access intranet content.

The mobile experience is consistent with the desktop, albeit adapted for the smaller screen. Branding and design elements are translated as you would expect. The navigation adapts to work better on the smaller screen with a simplified view. Fresh's targeting system allows for different content and components to be shown on mobile devices versus desktop, if there is a need to make specific changes. For example, the page header can be removed to leave more space for content. Otherwise, the full intranet experience is available on the mobile device. Alternatively, the 14 adaptive card components for Viva Connections work perfectly on mobile.

While there are no specific features for frontline employees, the flexibility of the system does support some relatively simple scenarios. For example, a FreshMind web part targeted at frontline workers on mobile could point at key policies and give suggested prompts that answer common frontline topics such as shift, policy or leave queries. Introducing two-way integrations would be a welcome addition for the frontline, such as to swap shifts easily.

Overall, Microsoft-centric organisations that are already comfortable with M365's administration controls and integrations will benefit from the Fresh offering. Organisations seeking a fully bespoke mobile experience or requiring non-M365-licensed access for all employees might find the setup restrictive. Improvements to mobile is something customers have requested, too.



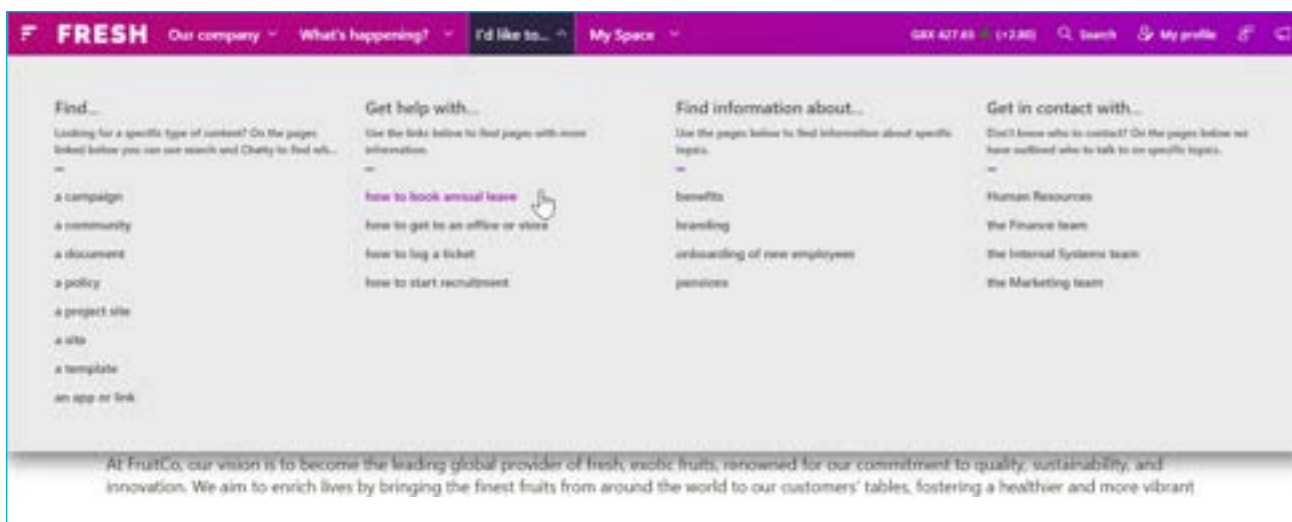
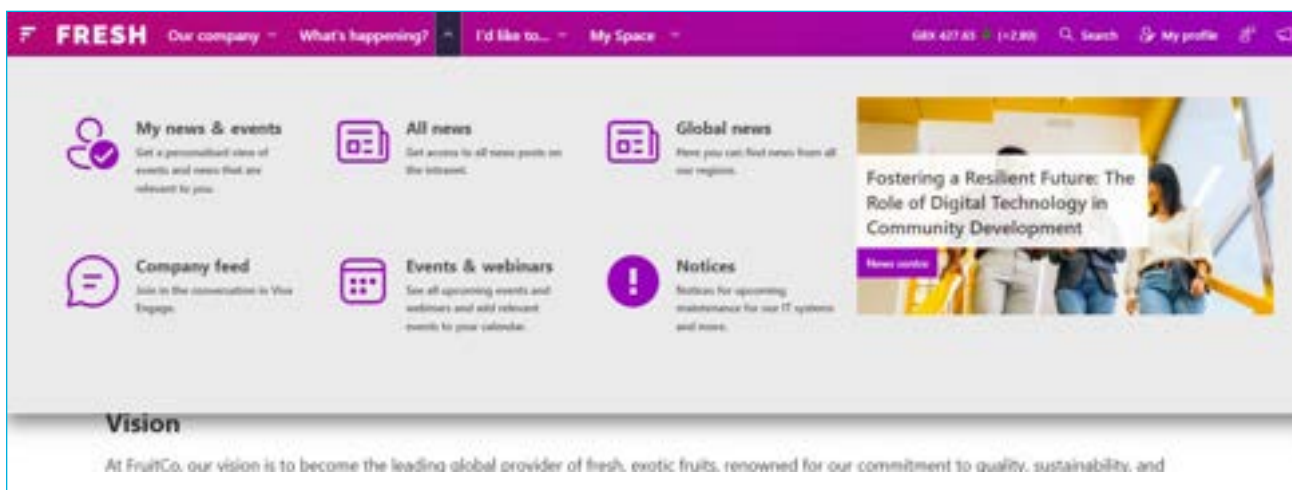
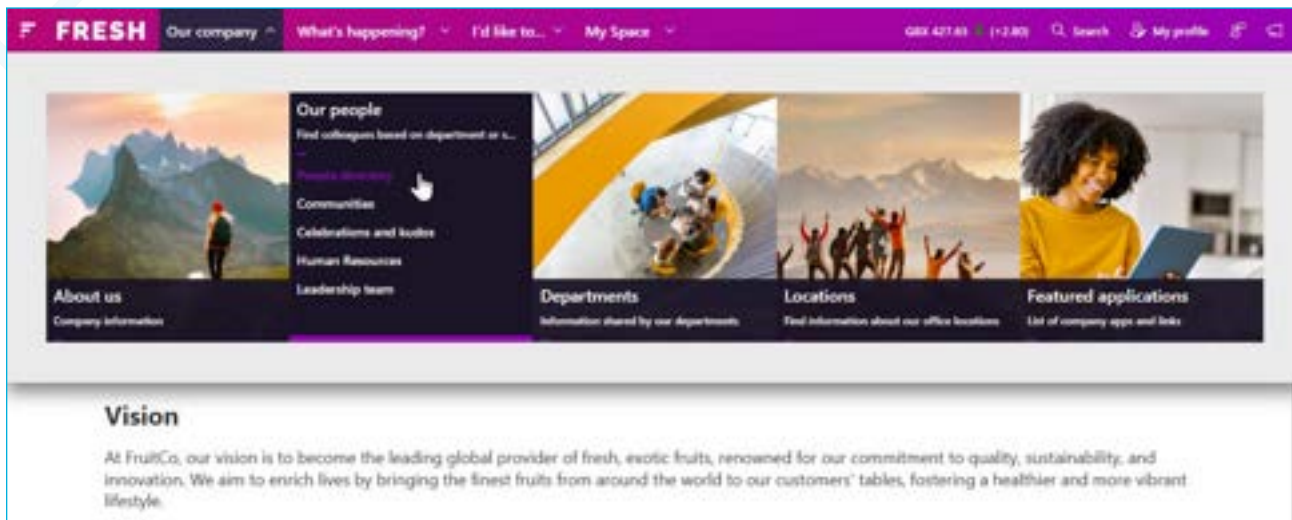
The Intranet Admin Portal offers thoughtful configuration options that build on and improve the underlying SharePoint controls.

Fresh significantly enhances the standard SharePoint experience, enabling managers to deliver a consistent, usable and organised platform. It addresses some of the fundamental limitations of native SharePoint, enabling administrators to enforce consistency and governance across the multiple sites that make up their intranet. Many features do still rely on M365 or SharePoint configuration, with the Fresh Admin Portal focusing on branding and the additional capabilities Fresh brings. While the panels are well laid out and understandable, there isn't any guidance or contextual help such as tooltips, which might frustrate less technical admins.

The administrative controls overcome Microsoft's restrictive 'site by site' setup and focus on intranet-wide consistency and the ability to apply changes at scale. Centralised templating provides a core set of layouts to standardise pages or articles across the intranet. Once configured they are synchronised out to every site, ensuring content creators maintain a consistent look across the organisation with centralised control maintained.

There is an easy-to-use interface that sits over the SharePoint term store and simplifies the management of tags and metadata. The tools to apply bulk updates of this metadata will be invaluable for large intranets or in response to organisational restructuring. See Scenario 5 for more information about tags.

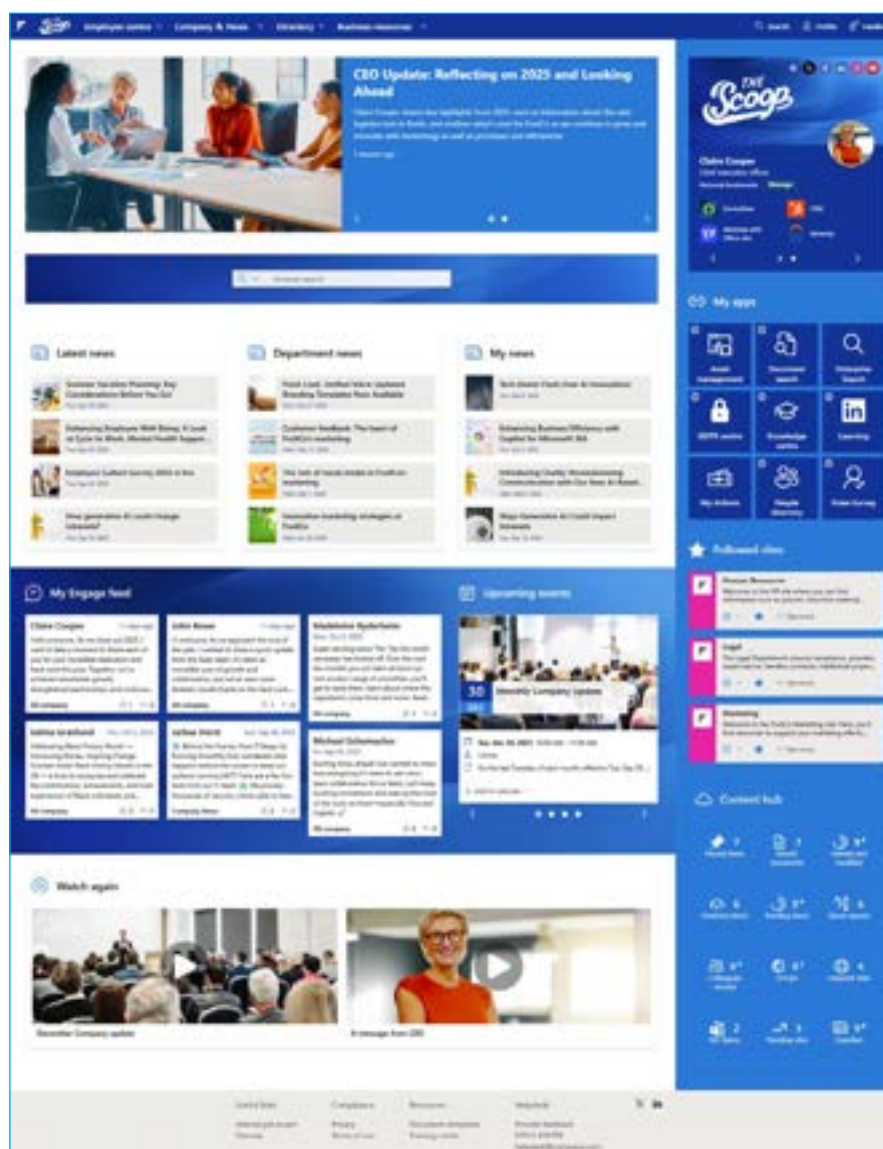
Navigation is both powerful and easy to administer. There's an impressive variety of menu layout options that all support audience targeted and personalised link menus. We particularly like the tile-based mega menu that uses imagery to provide quick visual cues that reveal further links when hovered over. There are icon-based and plain text options. Menus can be dynamically built from queries, ensuring employees see personalised relevant links and reducing the overhead of needing to manually maintain them. The global navigation is managed through a simple hierarchical tree view and supports translations, imagery and targeting and a breadcrumb trail is provided to help users maintain context.



There are a variety of global navigation designs to choose from.

Fresh has been thoughtfully designed to fully support everything SharePoint can offer – including the new flexible sections and design options – while adding options for customisation that let organisations express their brand and improve usability. All this provides a surprisingly significant impact to the overall page feel. Customers describe the product as feeling “modern” and we would agree that the visual elements of Fresh do give it a contemporary, consumer website-like experience.

There's an option to replace the default clunky SharePoint header with something more customised and over seventy Fresh web parts to improve page design. Every Fresh web part has an intuitive control for design and visual behaviour, including rounded corners, drop shadows, space and colour gradients. Each Fresh web part is also built to exploit the metadata captured and enforced by the Content Creation tool. Additionally, Fresh supports complex branding scenarios such as multiple brands and sub-brands all within the same tenant. The Fresh licence also allows you to create multiple Fresh instances with different configurations, all within the same M365 SharePoint tenant.



There are flexible controls to help create attractive and multi-brand intranets.

Reports detail overall usage (page views and peak time) and engagement (popular pages ranked by likes and comments). The analytics can be filtered by user profile properties, allowing, for example, news pages viewed by a specific department and the newsletter analytics tracking open and click-through rates, add another dimension to communication effectiveness management.

Administrators can opt to retain these analytics forever, which as well as allowing for long-term tracking of change, supports the ability to track and compare annual events and trends. For example, the impact of holiday seasons or reactions to annual financial results.

As mentioned in Scenario 2 and in the customer feedback, there's room to improve the insights and metrics provided. The lack of oversight of FreshMind and generative AI may cause particular challenges for governance teams managing the risks associated with AI and may make it difficult to gauge the overall ROI. The current capability establishes great usage metrics, but organisations requiring detailed analytics on content performance, employee behaviours or the effectiveness of FreshMind will need to make use of Fresh's ability to integrate with tools like Google Analytics and / or Microsoft Clarity. We'd like to see some of this capability out of the box and can see opportunities to extend the excellent functionality of FreshMind toward the administration experience to create actionable recommendations and improvements.

Overall, intranet managers will need the support of SharePoint and M365 administrators for many of the more complex or unusual configuration and setup. However, for day-to-day management Fresh delivers a strong, user friendly enhancement to SharePoint: dynamic navigation, powerful metadata management, rich visual customisation. All while respecting accessibility and enterprise constraints.



It's easy to administer Fresh when compared to SharePoint, yet it retains the power of Microsoft 365 behind the scenes.

THINGS TO BEAR IN MIND

Fresh customers benefit from how the platform maximises existing investment in Microsoft 365, but its deep reliance on the Microsoft ecosystem presents inherent limitations. The architecture ensures seamless integration and high availability but means all users will require an M365 licence (F1 minimum). Combined with the comparatively basic approach to mobile, this might be too much of a limitation for those with many frontline employees. Note too that some Fresh modules rely on Azure, so associated costs will need to be factored in.

Integration with non-Microsoft products and business systems is limited, often providing one-way integration and lacking any out-of-the-box support for transactional two-way interactions. This means employees will need to leave the Fresh experience to complete tasks, potentially introducing friction. The FreshMind AI tool has potential to fill some of these gaps and, should the vendor develop the tool in this direction, it would provide an AI agent experience that's becoming more common across the industry.

We also saw persistent gaps in analytics and reporting capabilities. While basic metrics are provided, the platform currently lacks advanced features for insights such as sentiment analysis or user journey mapping. There's also a lack of analytics around FreshMind, which might be a problem for organisations hoping to address AI risks and concerns through clear oversight and visibility of its interactions. This sentiment was shared by customers in the feedback we received, and we were encouraged to hear that the vendor has improvements on the near future roadmap.

Overall, Fresh extends standard SharePoint functionality in many places while respecting the helpful features behind the scenes. Fresh comes at an attractive price too, making it a good option to explore for SharePoint customers.

Why choose this product

Fresh is a compelling choice for organisations seeking a powerful intranet in-a-box solution that addresses the common complaints and limitations of a standard SharePoint experience. It is particularly strong in news and content management and provides good support for communities as well. Fresh has made good use of AI capabilities to add value to specific use cases such as editorial support and answering questions on controlled topics. Fresh will appeal to medium to large organisations that have a significant investment in Microsoft 365 and want to further gain advantage from the platform.

You may also be interested in...



Vendor roadmap



Roadmap image provided by Advania.

COMPANY AND PRODUCT



Company

Fresh, an Advania brand



Company founded

1939



Product launched

2015



ISO 27001 certified

Yes



Data residency

N/A



Typical client size

5,000 to 10,000



Company locations

Advania UK: London and Manchester, UK (HQ), South Africa, Advania Group: Sweden, Norway, Iceland, Finland, Denmark, USA. Please [see their website](#) for more information.



Partner locations

Sweden, UK, Norway, Finland, Denmark, Iceland, USA, Netherlands, Austria. Please [see their website](#) for more information.



Customers

Clients include: Brown & Brown, Metropolitan Police, [TD Bank](#), Wawa, Hays, KPMG, Bristol Airport, McCann WorldGroup, M&G, and DLA Piper.



Largest deployment so far

140,000 employees, 15 countries



Environmental / sustainability certifications

Advania UK is committed to achieving Net Zero by 2045, with a 28.5% reduction in carbon emissions predicted by 2028. The vendor holds ISO 14001 accreditation, and their Environmental Management System aligns with its standards and industry best practices. Their policies reflect the UK Government's 25 Year Plan and the UN Global Compact Sustainable Development Goals. Advania promotes circular economy practices through responsible e-waste management and equipment reuse, integrating sustainable practices into our hardware resale operations. The vendor also helps clients, such as by helping them track and reduce the climate impact of modern technologies, including AI.

[Back to index](#)

Product and technical details

Name of product

Fresh

Deployment

Client on-premises	Client private cloud	Microsoft Azure	Amazon Web Services	Vendor-hosted	Microsoft 365 tenant	Google Cloud	Other
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Authentication supported

Entra ID	ADFS	Okta	Open ID	Oauth	Google Workspace	SAML 2.0	Other
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App deployment

Google Play store	Apple store	MDM	MAM	Other
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Accessibility

WCAG 2.2 AAA conformant

Document library sources integrated

Box	Dropbox	Google Drive	SharePoint	OneDrive	ServiceNow	Other
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Optional integrated enterprise search engines

Coveo	Elastic	Microsoft	Sinequa	Open API available	Other
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User interface multi-language

Machine translation	Pre-configured	Editable	Right to left script supported	Other*
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*Any supported by Microsoft

Content multi-language

Machine translation for publishers	Machine translation for end users	Editable machine translation for publishers	Manual creation for publishers	Right to left script	Other*
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*Any supported by Microsoft (and on-demand translation via Azure AI Translator and page translation powered by Azure OpenAI).

Set-up and support

Set-up process for new clients

There are three approaches for Fresh implementations, varying by implementation partner and customer size:

1. Installation of pre-set configuration and training for the client's core team. These projects typically last 1–4 weeks.
2. Fixed scope implementation which provides customers with core workshops and activities typically required to set up an intranet in Microsoft 365. Following a deployment into the client's tenant these projects typically last 2–8 weeks.
3. Short discovery phase focused on stakeholder and end-user engagement to tweak and adjust a standard implementation model. These projects can include business change and adoption, customisations, content migration or Microsoft 365 service enablement. Typically, these projects are upwards from 8 weeks.

Product updates

Major updates every quarter.

Product update process

Customers decide timing and can opt out. Along with supporting documentation (release notes, build guide), updates are made available for clients to download and either install themselves, or supported by a delivery partner.

Reverse-out options

Nothing, all data resides in SharePoint lists and libraries.

Technical support

Email support	Phone support	Chat support	Online portal	24/7 support	Office hours only
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User community

Fresh Perspectives event series – [please see their website](#) for more.



Voice of the vendor

Advania says: “Fresh Intranet is an enterprise-class solution that enhances internal communication, collaboration, and knowledge sharing across modern organisations. First launched in 2015, Fresh was developed by Advania, one of Northern Europe’s leading IT services providers with over 5,000 employees. It transforms SharePoint into a powerful, AI-driven intranet tailored to real-world business needs.

Designed to run entirely within your Microsoft environment, Fresh integrates seamlessly with Microsoft 365, Teams, Viva, and SharePoint. This ensures full alignment with your organisation’s compliance, security, and technology standards. Fresh is built around actual usage scenarios, not just features, making it a practical and scalable solution for hybrid workforces. With a strong focus on accessibility and user experience, Fresh helps organisations connect employees, streamline communication, and surface trusted information quickly. Its intuitive interface and personalised content delivery keep teams informed, engaged, and aligned with company goals. FreshMind, the platform’s suite of AI-powered features, takes productivity even further. It enhances SharePoint search with generative AI, enabling natural language queries that help users find colleagues by skills, projects, or location. Document Chat delivers fast answers from internal content, saving time and reducing friction. FreshMind also improves metadata quality with intelligent suggestions and supports content creators with tools for translation, summarisation, and image generation.

Fresh is trusted by leading brands in over 26 countries and supports more than one million employees worldwide. Every feature is shaped by Microsoft’s roadmap and customer feedback, ensuring that Fresh evolves alongside your digital workplace.”

[Back to index](#)



SECTION FOUR

INDUSTRY TRENDS AND HOW TO CHOOSE A PRODUCT

Section Four: Industry Trends And How To Choose A Product

CLEARBOX CHOICE AWARDS	★	891
SCENARIO DEFINITIONS AND FINDINGS		894
AI TRENDS		917
ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS		925
PRICING FINDINGS		927
FOUR PRODUCT APPROACHES		930
USING THIS REPORT TO CHOOSE A PRODUCT		935
A NEW INTRANET – BUILD OR BUY, SHAREPOINT, ADD-ON OR INDEPENDENT?		937
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS		940
BECOME A CLEARBOX REVIEWER		944
CLEARBOX SERVICES		945

Need help choosing a new intranet?
We can help - please [get in touch](#) and one of the team will get back to you.



UPDATED



NEW REVIEW ADDED

[Back to index](#)

CLEARBOX CHOICE AWARDS

**The one question we're always asked is, "Which platform is best?"
And our response (as classic consultants) is, "It depends."**

It depends on what you want to achieve, the landscape of your existing digital workplace, and what matters to your organisation both strategically and tactically. In the past we've highlighted those platforms we expect to see on many shortlists, but we feel this hasn't reflected the potential across many of the platforms we've reviewed to meet your needs and the needs of the next reader.

We're now awarding more Choices as a way to signpost which platforms meet different needs. We've explained what each one is and which platforms have won which award, plus you'll find the badges on the individual reviews too.



Top 5 score

This category is for those platforms that have the top five overall scores, including ties. Note that when considering total scores we exclude 'potential' points, as we want to reflect what's available without additional effort or cost.

- Interact
- MangoApps
- Oak
- Omnia
- Staffbase
- Unily



Best for value

This category reflects where the platforms' average price is 3.5 dollar symbols or lower and where the total score is high. This is useful for those on a budget who are looking for effective solutions.

- Appspace
- Flip
- Involv
- MangoApps
- Oak
- Omnia
- Powell
- Workai



AI innovator

[Four themes have emerged](#) from current AI trends across the platforms we assessed, and many vendors' marketing channels are full of AI functionality. With this badge, we wanted to highlight those we felt were doing something unusual and truly beneficial at the point of demonstration.

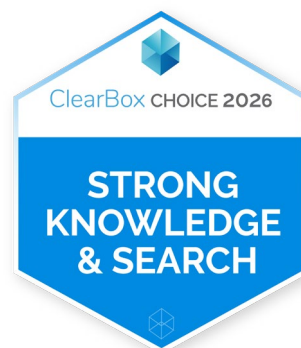
- Appspace
- Atlas
- Flip
- Fresh
- Interact
- LumApps
- MangoApps
- Oak
- Unily
- Workai



Comms excellence

[Internal communicators](#) have become a key audience for these vendors and we know many people reading the report are part of this function too. So this award reflects where we feel vendors have understood this group's needs and are offering a strong set of features to help people manage their communications.

- Firstup
- Interact
- Staffbase
- Unily
- Workvivo



Strong knowledge & search

The handling and retrieval of reference or evergreen content is often a core use-case for an intranet and can make or break the overall success of the platform in an organisation. In this award we recognise those platforms that deliver a strong experiences in the [Knowledge and Content Management](#) and [Information Finding and Search](#) scenarios.

- Atlas
- Fresh
- Interact
- Omnia
- Unily



Frontline & mobile focus

Everyone deserves to have a good experience, whether they're on desktop or mobile. Frontline workers in particular are likely to need mobile access and functionality specific to the demands of their roles. This award reflects those platforms that performed particularly well in the [Mobile and Frontline Support](#) scenario.

- **Blink**
- **Firstup**
- **Flip**
- **Staffbase**
- **Workvivo**



Community builder

Giving employees a place to come together digitally for work and / or social purposes can be valuable for knowledge transfer and building relationships. This award reflects those who performed best in the [Community and Engagement](#) scenario.

- **Blink**
- **MangoApps**
- **Oak**
- **Workvivo**



Highly commended

Many of our awards use our scoring to select our winners, but there are some excellent platforms in our [Product Overview](#) section that deserve recognition. These platforms are fully featured and / or offer valuable services to organisations, so are worth exploring for your longlist.

- **Accelerator 365**
- **Akumina**
- **Beekeeper**
- **Poppulo**
- **Sociable**

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one of the team will get back to you.



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INTRANETS | COLLABORATION | SHAREPOINT