IGLOO + Microsoft

The Best of All Worlds: The *Microsoft-Optimized* Intranet

How innovations in technology are opening new pathways to the ideal digital destination.

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Executive summary

Deploying a modern corporate intranet requires businesses to make some important decisions. Often, the consideration process raises more questions than answers. Among them:

- What business challenges are we solving?

- What outcomes do we expect?

- How will we measure success? (e.g. KPIs, ROO, ROI)

- How will our solution be operationalized and governed?

- How will we drive employee engagement and adoption?

- What technology is best?

In this paper, we'll focus on the last question: what technology is best? Traditionally, company intranets have been built using one of five approaches, regardless of how the solution is hosted and managed.

01	Microsoft SharePoint, out of the box
02	A SharePoint wrapper or overlay
03	A standalone intranet platform
04	A custom-built solution
05	A collection of point applications

Microsoft tools and technologies continue to dominate the modern digital workplace landscape. One in five corporate employees now uses a Microsoft Office 365 cloud service. Half a million businesses are now using Microsoft Teams, including 91% of the Fortune 100.

And almost 85% of the Fortune 500 are using some form of Office 365 and/or SharePoint[1] as a component in their intranet. Often, the solution has been sanctioned and deployed by IT, but employee adoption is too low to deliver the real productivity and collaboration benefits organizations demand.

As organizations look to modernize and update their corporate intranets, they want to leverage their existing Microsoft investments while maximizing employee adoption. The concept seems simple, but with all of the options and trade-offs on the market today, understanding the best way forward can seem daunting.

Leading organizations are overcoming these obstacles — and making decisions faster, with more certainty — thanks to recent innovations in intranet technology. They're able to leverage their investment in Microsoft solutions to attain the productivity and collaboration improvements they've been looking for.

The path forward for these leading organizations is an intranet for the next generation — one that is fully integrated with SharePoint, but doesn't rely on it the same way a traditional wrapper or overlay does. One that extends to Office 365 and all the personal productivity applications and back-end systems employees rely on; that's backed with consulting and planning services; and that supports customers throughout their digital transformation journey. It's a next-generation intranet solution that maximizes a business' return on existing investments in IT, Microsoft technologies, and people — beyond what was previously possible.

> An intranet should mold to the unique needs of your business. When it does, it can serve as the platform for your digital transformation journey; a destination where people, knowledge, and resources come together for more meaningful and effective work.

Old and new approaches to corporate intranets

Your company intranet should be the cornerstone of your digital workplace. The best solutions drive employee communication, collaboration, knowledge management, and employee engagement. Lesser solutions become dumping grounds for information and create more problems than they solve.

Introduced in 2001, SharePoint quickly became the default intranet choice for many companies. Unfortunately, those implementations were limited in performance, features, usability, design, flexibility, scalability, and integration capabilities. Along with these challenges, they were also expensive to deploy and maintain. Unsurprisingly, competitors soon arrived on scene with alternatives.

Traditionally, there have been five generally accepted approaches for building a company intranet:

01	SharePoint, out of the box
02	A SharePoint wrapper or overlay
03	A standalone intranet platform
04	A custom-built solution
05	A collection of point applications

Options four and five represent the smallest portion of the market. These approaches are difficult to build and maintain, and provide a weak feature set. For these reasons, we'll set these aside to focus on the dominant options — one, two, and three.

From improved corporate branding to external application integrations, people directories, mobile functionality, and more, SharePoint wrappers and standalone intranet platforms have evolved their capabilities far beyond what SharePoint delivers out of the box. Competition between Microsoft partners has pushed the industry forward, but not without several challenges along the way. Let's touch on the benefits and limitations of SharePoint itself, wrappers or overlays, and standalone solutions.

SharePoint, out of the box

Benefits

- **Document management:** This is SharePoint's primary purpose. The platform is built for storing documents and keeping them secure through permission controls, whether you're sharing them inside or outside your organization.

- **SharePoint Sites:** A core intranet feature, Sites facilitate conversations on multiple levels — departmental, project-specific, or interpersonal. Microsoft has added Hub Sites and Communication Sites over the years to provide additional functionality and serve new use cases.

- **Office 365 Integrations:** SharePoint, as part of Office 365 in the cloud, easily integrates with other Microsoft apps, including Teams, Yammer, OneDrive, and the Office suite.

Limitations

- **Complexity:** It's difficult, but not impossible, to customize and mold a SharePoint intranet to your company. Tailoring SharePoint also takes substantial resources (both time and money) — whether these customizations are in UI, design, or architecture. But without these customizations, challenges set in quickly. Power users, for example, will find it difficult to configure and design page elements. Administrators will find it difficult to change the site structure — SharePoint's permission hierarchy means that changes at the file or folder level can cause chain reactions across the rest of a Site, wherein permissions are granted to the wrong users or redacted from the right ones. These problems increase as the business scales, until there are too many pages to realistically manage.

- **Usability:** Usability constraints often mean that governance suffers, and when this happens, SharePoint becomes a dumping ground for documents and information because managing it is too difficult. Users find their search attempts are futile, so they eventually give up, and start using other tools as workarounds, which impacts knowledge management.

- **Rigidity:** SharePoint operates within a rigid structure. Sites and the content within them can't be easily moved or edited; neither can the templates for creating them. The more recent Communication Sites deliver an improved look and feel, but functionality remains rudimentary — a disappointment to employees who are accustomed to the intuitive user experiences in today's mobile apps and online tools.

- **Lack of social and collaborative capabilities:** As work becomes increasingly mobile, organizations realize they need to create a vibrant, digital representation of their company culture. SharePoint-based intranets fall short of creating a welcoming destination that employees want to return to on a regular basis.

SharePoint wrappers or overlays

Benefits

- **Branding customization:** With an overlay solution, organizations can more easily customize their SharePoint intranet to match their brand guidelines. Users can work in an environment with the same look and feel as other company applications or the office itself.

- **Ease of use:** The intranet's design can also be customized to make navigation and general tasks easier and more intuitive. And administrators can more easily manage the structure of SharePoint Sites and content.

- **Added functionality:** Organizations can leverage SharePoint's existing content repository and the built-in benefits of the platform: robust, secure document management, SharePoint Sites, etc. And, they can add or build applications and features that further improve communication, collaboration, and work culture.

Limitations

- **Search:** Finding information across multiple repositories is difficult without a unified search capability. Even overlay intranets are usually limited to single searches within SharePoint or external document repositories.

- **Integration:** Connecting IT systems can be complex, leaving users with separate interfaces and experiences. For example: third-party, non-Microsoft integrations may function as links, taking users out of the intranet. Or they can function as custom-built widgets through third party APIs, which are more complex and expensive to administer.

Standalone intranet platforms

Benefits

- **Integration:** From a development perspective, standalone intranets can be better equipped to integrate with the other external and internal tools that employees use, encompassing all parts of their work in a single space.

- **Ease of use:** Similarly, dedicated software components mean standalone solutions are often easier to build, use, and maintain.

- **A social focus:** Standalone intranets offer more than SharePoint from a social perspective, improving on underwhelming applications like Yammer. A social focus can improve employee adoption.

- **Freedom in system updates:** The development roadmap is independent, driven by customer needs and recommendations rather than by Microsoft's directive to update SharePoint.

Limitations

- **A less robust feature set:** By the very nature of their design, standalone intranets must replicate all the capabilities of a SharePoint intranet — document management, tasks, blogs, forums, etc. — and add more to provide additional value. It takes a significant investment, and when developer resources are in short supply, the result can be a lack of depth across the entire feature set.

- **Degrees of integration:** That same issue — a lack of development resources — may also negatively impact how many tools can be integrated in a standalone solution, or the depth and usability of those integrations.

- **Limited search:** Standalone platforms are often limited in their ability to search external repositories efficiently and simultaneously from within a single search interface. If the content is inaccessible, it offers no value to anyone.

The best of all worlds: a *Microsoft-optimized* intranet

Third-party companies, including Microsoft partners, have revolutionized the corporate intranet, building on SharePoint's foundations as far as they can. So, what's next?

Leading organizations are demanding more, and choosing the platform that combines the benefits of each approach, without the trade-offs. They want a next-generation, Microsoft-optimized intranet that maintains tight integrations with Office 365 and houses a centralized information network that improves productivity and drives innovation, cultivating a working culture fit for the digital era.

Igloo Software: the end of intranet compromise

A strategic partner of Microsoft, Igloo Software provides a digital workplace platform with a portfolio of purpose-built solutions that, when combined with Office 365, drive significant improvements in personal, team, and organization-wide communication and engagement. Unlike traditional SharePoint wrappers, Igloo doesn't rely on SharePoint for core functionality. And, unlike traditional standalone intranets, Igloo maintains a best-in-class feature set that is easy to use, easy to maintain, and meets the scalability and security requirements of the most demanding enterprises worldwide.
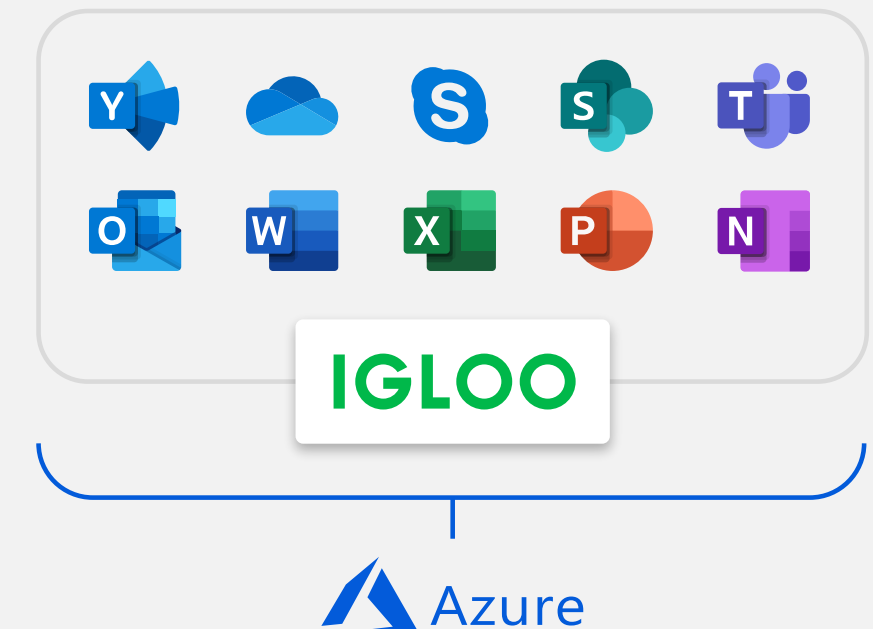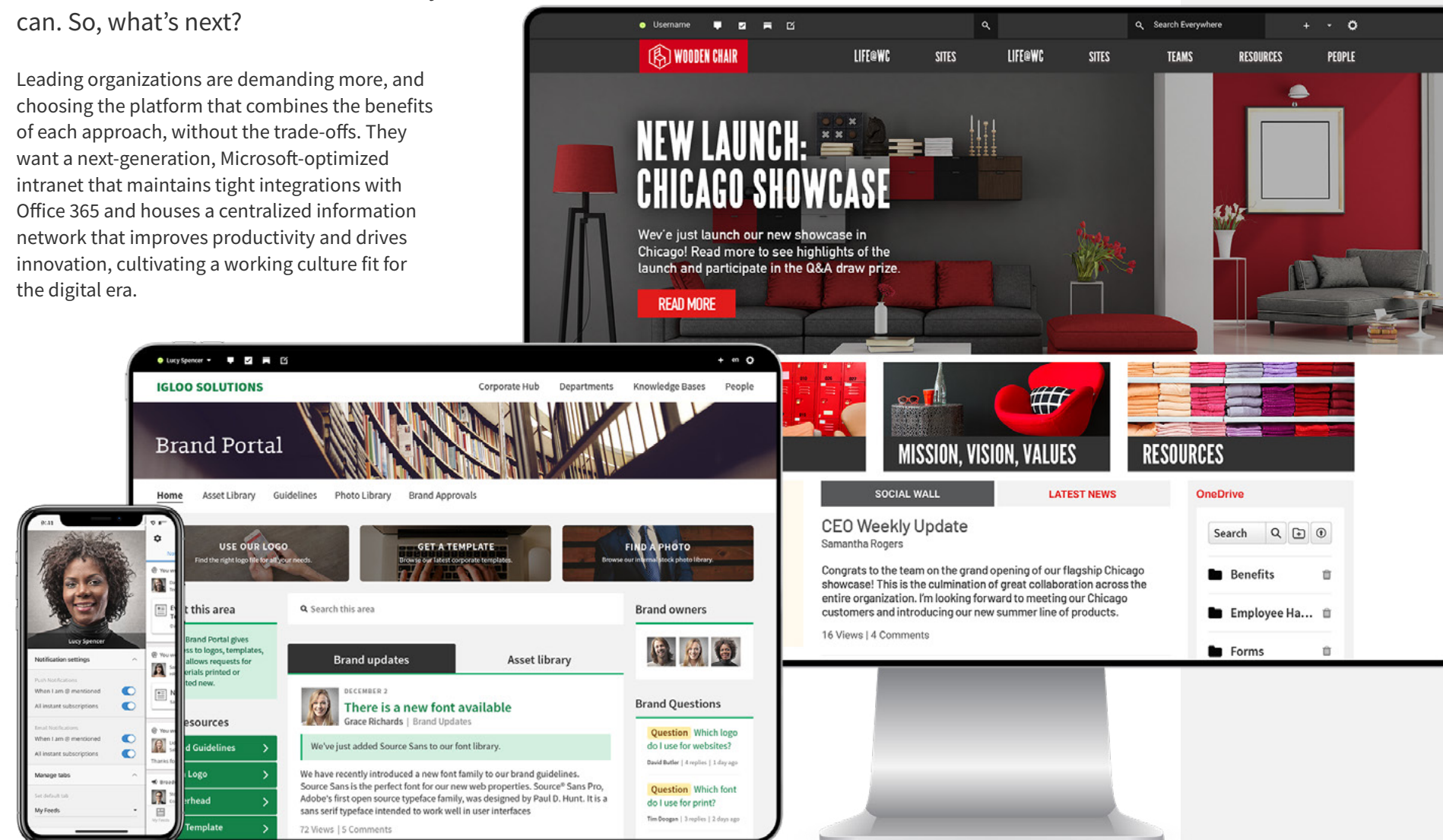
Office 365 integrations: access your favorite tools inside Igloo

Igloo's out-of-the-box integrations with Office 365 make it easy to take full advantage of the benefits these applications offer, and the investment made by your organization. Employees can access, comment, and collaborate on Office 365 content and applications from a single destination — their Igloo digital workplace.

Office 365

IGLOO

Azure
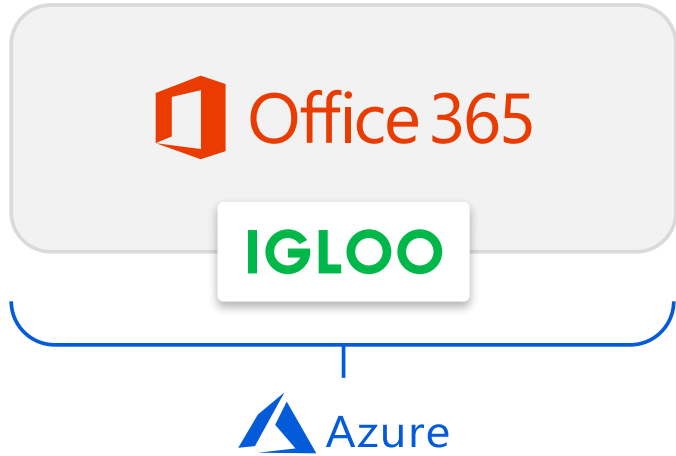
SharePoint Online and OneDrive

With bi-directional integration, files and folders are surfaced with context and managed in Igloo. Users can add new files through the file explorer using drag and drop. Igloo's unified search capabilities enable search across multiple repositories from a single interface.

Outlook

Igloo applications and notifications are email-enabled, so members can access content directly from their email. Members can also respond to emails from Outlook and have them published directly into the appropriate location inside Igloo.

Excel, Word, and PowerPoint

Easily access, edit, and save Microsoft files to Igloo via Windows Explorer — no need to download local copies.

Teams

Easily collaborate in Teams by starting a conversation or sharing content directly from Igloo. And stay connected to your digital workplace with a personal dashboard tab in Teams.

OneNote

Notebooks can be shared and displayed within Igloo pages to let users share information with other members.

Calendars

Outlook calendar events can be surfaced into Igloo or synced with an Igloo calendar.

Skype

Easily enable a Skype for Business session directly from an Igloo profile.

Yammer

A simple drag-and-drop widget brings conversations from Yammer into Igloo — centralizing communications.

Power BI

Enable advanced analytics of your Igloo digital workplace via data feeds ingested into Power BI and Microsoft Excel.

Azure

Securely hosted on Azure

Igloo is 100% hosted on Azure and uses Microsoft technology, services, and networking capabilities throughout its platform infrastructure. Igloo allows user profile sync and SSO via Microsoft's Active Directory to drive higher engagement and to simplify authentication management.

Azure Active Directory

Use Azure AD or Active Directory to manage profiles, provision and remove users, and connect groups for access and notifications. Access a visual org chart view via Azure AD.

The Igloo advantage

Purpose-built solutions

Igloo's pre-built digital workplace solutions are designed to solve specific business challenges. Choose from a growing portfolio of 20+ industry-leading solutions, including a Newsroom, Onboarding Center, Virtual Townhall, or Leadership Corner.

Simple to build and manage

Igloo makes it easy to build, brand, and maintain your digital workplace. With little-to-no technical expertise, you can configure the structure and visual design using a simple drag and drop interface.

Enhances Office 365

With out-of-the box integrations, you can easily combine Igloo's communication and engagement solutions with Office 365 to further improve engagement, app adoption, and the employee experience.
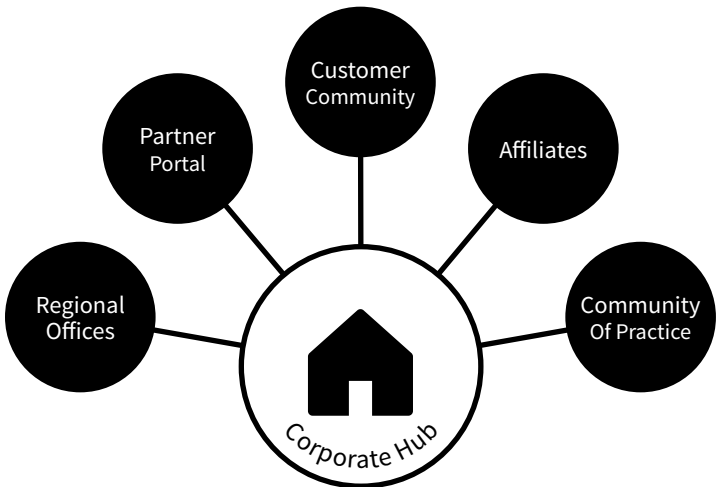

Enterprise-ready

Connect business units, vendors, suppliers, partners, and customers with Igloo's scalable and flexible Networked Enterprise Edition — built on the industry's first hub and spoke architecture model.

Powerful search

With unified search, your employees can quickly find, surface, and access files from a single search interface — no matter where the files are stored, including SharePoint Online, Box, Dropbox, and Igloo.

Platform extensibility

The Igloo platform is highly extensible with a comprehensive library of third-party integration options to enable your organization to drive further value from Igloo solutions and your current technology investments.
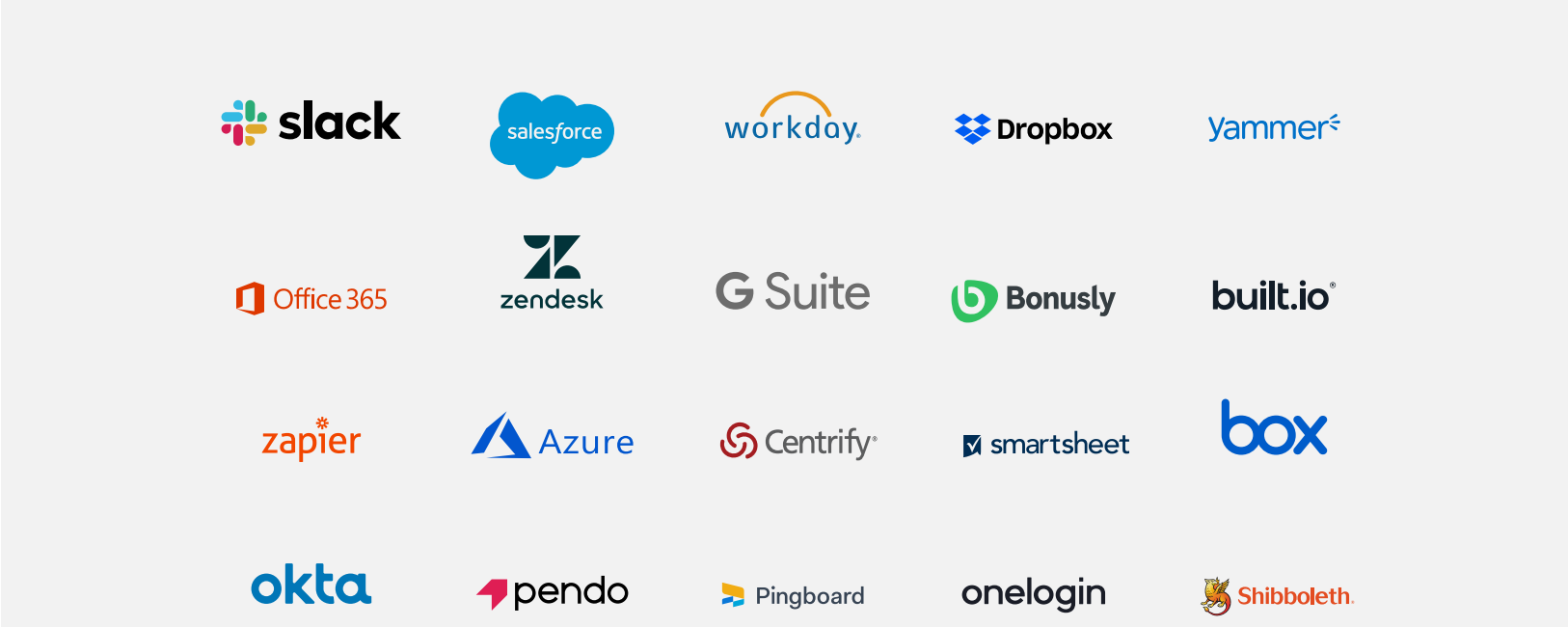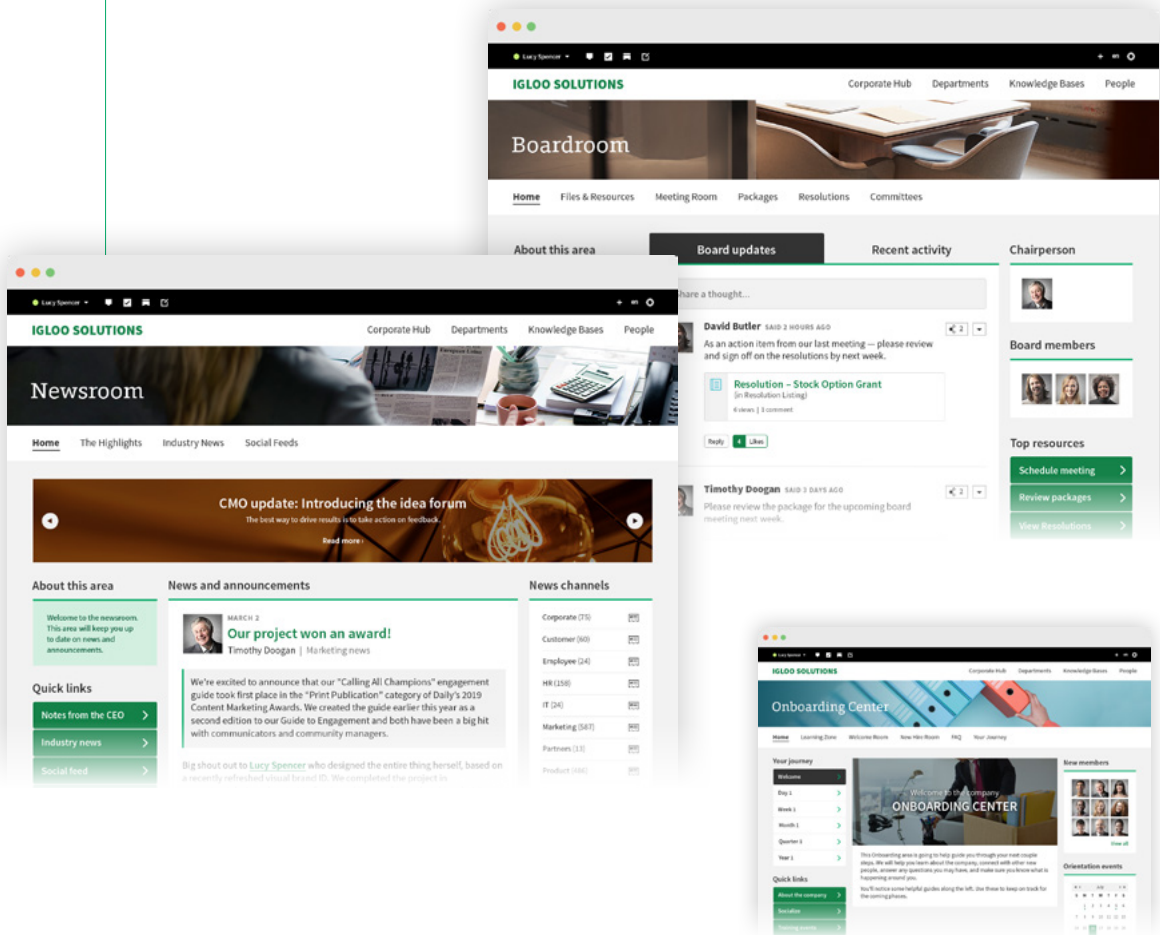
# How to create a digital destination for your entire employee base

85% of Fortune 500 uses Microsoft productivity applications.

Microsoft productivity applications are truly best of breed, so it's no surprise that they've been adopted by 85% of the Fortune 500. That said, a suite of productivity apps is not a corporate destination for your employees.

Success in communication, collaboration, knowledge management, and engagement hinges on creating a compelling corporate digital destination — one that helps establish and nurture the following three connections: people to processes, people to information, and people to people.

Successful organizations put information and knowledge into the context of the work being done. Their intranet goes beyond files and chat — it becomes a destination for work, with key zones where employees can connect and access the information they need to keep work moving.

These best-of-breed digital destinations create structure, hierarchy, and order within an organization to meet the needs of the three corporate personas; the ME (individuals), the WE (teams), the US (the company as a whole).

PROCESSES — INFORMATION — PEOPLE
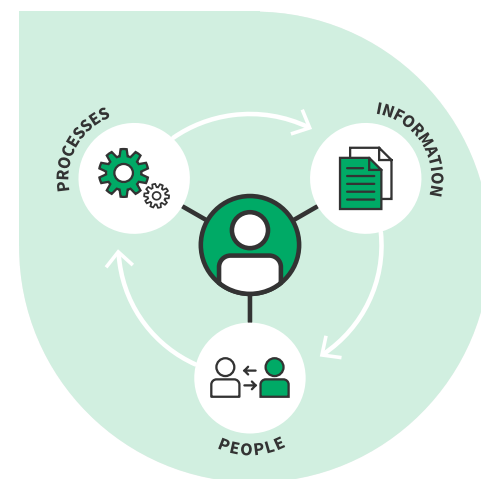
ME Persona

For employees, a digital workplace is all about personalization: how will it help them do their jobs more effectively. The ME persona is looking for digital workplace capabilities that:

- Allow them to personalize the destination according to their role and work style
- Work with their favorite tools and role-based applications
- Are easy to use and navigate
- Provide social features that connect them with their peers
- Are 100% mobile-friendly

WE Persona

For teams (e.g. departments, business units, project groups), the digital workplace is all about collaboration, knowledge management, and group productivity. The WE persona is looking for digital workplace capabilities that:

- Deliver a suite of team collaboration tools (including project spaces, document management, shared calendars, tasks, and workflows)
- Leverage existing tech investments and integrate with the apps and tools the teams are already using
- Reduce duplication of work by making information and expertise easy to find

US Persona

At the organization level, the digital workplace is about bringing everyone together for an understanding of shared purpose. The real focus is on corporate-wide communication, culture, and brand. The US persona is looking for digital workplace capabilities that come together to create:

- An inspiring corporate destination: a place where all employees feel welcome and connected, regardless of location, time zone, or language
- A place to share the company vision, priorities, and KPIs
- A way for employees to build relationships with senior leaders and understand how their work is contributing to the bigger picture
- The ability to recognize employees for going above and beyond, and showcase the values and behaviors that are important to the business
- A way for employees to learn about key aspects of the business (policies, benefits, and more), and a single source of truth for company brand assets

Transform your company with a next-generation intranet

A collection of applications and tools don't solve business problems, solutions do. Igloo solutions, features, and functionality surpass the industry standard. With Igloo, businesses can create a true digital workplace that provides a single destination to address key business challenges while being cost-effective, easy to use, and maintain.

- **Centralized collaboration and communication:** Employees can create, access, edit, and share the content they need to get their work done. They can easily access and configure forums, blogs, microblogs, wikis, and more, in a central location. Foster a connection between every member of the business, creating a place where employees can easily connect and share.

- **Knowledge management:** Knowledge is your company's currency; you should treat its storage and transaction as carefully as any other valuable asset. Most knowledge management platforms are focused on hosting final content, like documents, policies, and procedures. But what about the work in progress: the conversations, lessons learned, and brilliant ideas that never see the light of day? Igloo seamlessly integrates with leading productivity and file sharing apps like Office 365, G Suite, and Dropbox, so that information is always accessible, in every location.

- **Culture and engagement:** Smart businesses are realizing the value of cultivating a people-powered workplace. Your people are your company's most important asset. Keep them engaged and they'll be more productive, creative, and supportive of the company culture, mission, and values. By putting people first, and building an engaging sense of community, you'll create a digital destination that connects your entire organization, no matter where your employees are. Open up lines of communication and foster a rich organizational culture.

- **Seamless integration:** Bring every tool employees use into a single digital destination. A drag-and-drop interface allows you to drag app widgets straight into the page. Dropbox, Salesforce, Zendesk, the full Office 365 Suite, and many more.

- **Unified Search:** Search across all your file repositories with a single search query and receive simple, federated results — from SharePoint Online, Box, Dropbox, Google Team Drive, and Igloo. Everything's searchable, so it's right at your fingertips wherever you are, whenever you're looking.

- **Mobility:** Whether through the Igloo Digital Workplace mobile app or a mobile browser, Igloo is available to everyone, at any time, on any device.
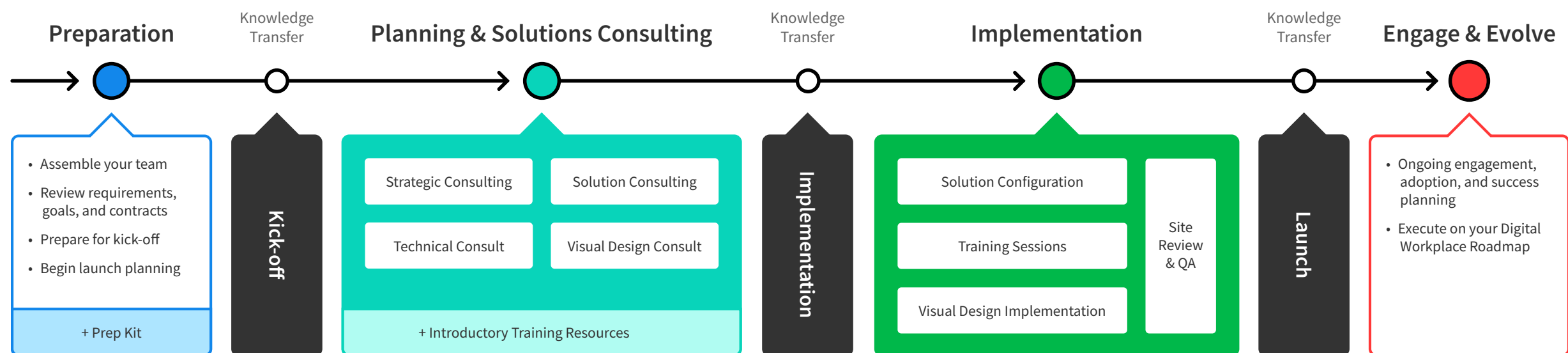
The power of a partner-led approach

Creating a successful digital workplace is about more than just installing the latest, greatest technology. It's a journey that involves many steps, checkpoints, and iterations.

Before embarking on your digital transformation journey, you need a strategy and plan with timelines, resources, and measurable outcomes focused on solving real business challenges across your entire organization. You need to measure the success of these solutions and ensure they result in benefits for the organization, such as improvements in productivity, innovation, and competitive advantage.

Igloo is your digital transformation partner. With a team of digital workplace experts, we're here to help you at every stage of your journey, using a proven six-stage delivery framework.

Preparation
- Assemble your team
- Review requirements, goals, and contracts
- Prepare for kick-off
- Begin launch planning

+ Prep Kit

Knowledge Transfer

Kick-off

Planning & Solutions Consulting
- Strategic Consulting
- Solution Consulting
- Technical Consult
- Visual Design Consult

+ Introductory Training Resources

Knowledge Transfer

Implementation

Implementation
- Solution Configuration
- Training Sessions
- Visual Design Implementation
- Site Review & QA

Knowledge Transfer

Launch

Engage & Evolve
- Ongoing engagement, adoption, and success planning
- Execute on your Digital Workplace Roadmap

*Graphic represents an example of project flow that may have variance depending on services purchased.
**Project delivery timeline varies from 6 to 20+ weeks depending on services purchased and customer needs.

A recognized leader in digital workplace solutions

Igloo and Microsoft share the same vision: to improve workplace experiences and help employees achieve more. Our strategic partnership brings innovative solutions to the market — supporting digital transformation, and addressing systemic issues impacting workplace productivity and employee engagement.

Founded in 2008, Igloo has implemented more than 10,000 digital destinations for customers in over 80 countries.

Gartner

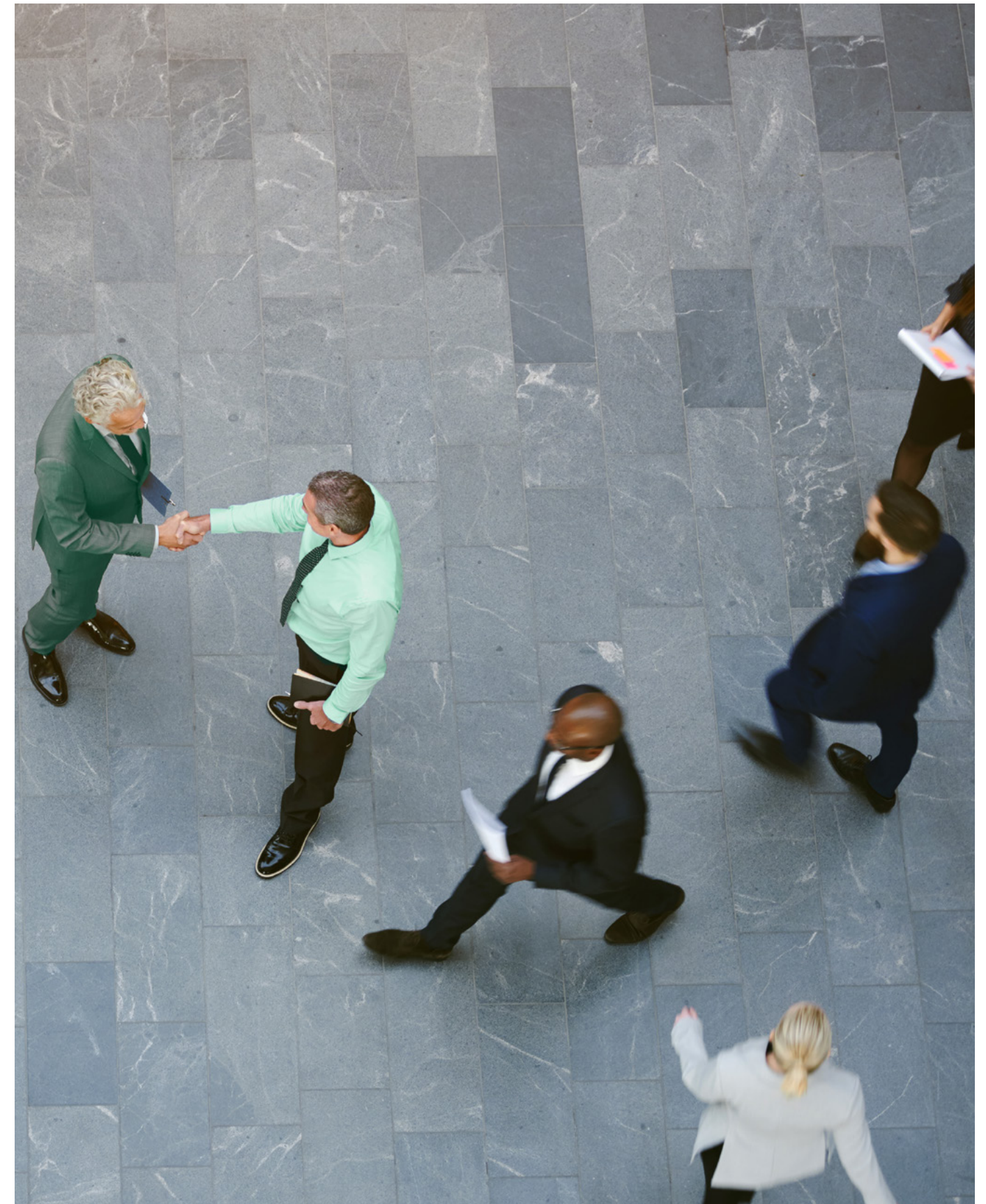Listed in the Gartner Magic Quadrant for 7 consecutive years.

Named a global leader in the 2019 ISG Provider Lens™ report for Enterprise Social Collaboration Solutions.

Gold Microsoft Partner

Earned the highest standard of Microsoft's widely-recognized partnership program.

Named in KMWorld's 2019 Top 100 Companies That Matter in Knowledge Management.

About Igloo

Igloo is a leading provider of digital workplace solutions, helping companies move beyond traditional intranets to inspiring digital destinations that improve communication, knowledge sharing, collaboration, and culture. All Igloo solutions are 100% cloud-based, mobile-enabled, and integrate with the leading enterprise systems and cloud apps your business relies on. By centralizing all information, Igloo provides a single-source-of-truth and enables a more productive and engaged workforce.

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