

**white paper**

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**Corporate Infrastructure:  
The Corporate Infrastructure Portal  
How an Intranet can support Best Practices**

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**L U M I N A N T**  
WORLDWIDE

# Contents

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I. What is a Corporate Intranet? .....	3
II. Overview of a CI Portal .....	4
Goals .....	4
Features .....	5
III. Core Modules - The Digital Channels .....	6
Home Page.....	6
Administrative Services .....	6
Around & About .....	7
Corporate Page .....	7
Communications .....	8
Executive Reporting.....	8
Help Desk.....	8
Human Resources .....	9
Knowledge Center .....	10
Operations Management.....	10
Personal Page .....	10
Training and Employee Improvement .....	10
Work Management .....	10
II. Getting Started .....	12
II. Conclusion .....	15
About the Authors .....	16
About Luminant Worldwide .....	16

# I. What is a Corporate Intranet?

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A corporate Intranet is a technical platform that takes advantage of the transportability and ease of distribution of thin-client (browser) technologies. The Intranet enables businesses to transmit company news, data, analysis, and other applications and information on a low-cost, near real-time basis. In the past, this information often could not be made readily available to employees due to technology limitations, manpower, efficiency, and/or cost constraints. Apart from improved informational flow, other reasons for implementing an Intranet include:

- Guarantee a consistent internal message throughout the corporation
- Foster branding and a harmonious “look and feel” across business units
- Establish a communications platform for faster and better business decision-making
- Facilitate access to frequently used forms, reports, documents, and information
- Offer a means of user directed self-help
- Create a greater sense of “esprit d’ company,” or team
- Streamline and expedite processing of administrative requests
- Reduce operating costs

The implementation of a corporate Intranet can have a profound impact on the delivery of infrastructure services within an organization. It facilitates management, communication, and the execution of business processes – the backbone of effective infrastructure management. An Intranet utilized in this manner soon becomes pervasive in the organization and the primary interface to the Internet. When this happens, it is called a portal. A Corporate Infrastructure (CI) Portal has the ability to drive office automation around a unified tool that promotes a quick and tangible flow of information – and an efficient service delivery mechanism.

Leading edge companies are using this technology to distribute new processes that radically improve how they function, enable them to gain full access to their employee’s capabilities, and give them the speed of response they need to compete in the now prevalent high-speed business world.

## II. Overview of the CI Portal

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The CI Portal creates a new universal space for knowledge transfer, collaboration, and information access. It provides a medium that takes the immediacy and spontaneity of electronic communications and combines it with the detail previously only associated with hard-copy communications. It isolates the company's most critical and costly asset –people - from tasks that form barriers to the effective and efficient performance of their jobs. The CI Portal provides a single, focused method for accessing various administrative, management, and infrastructure systems through a common, consistent, and user-friendly interface. The portal stores and categorizes key company data and enables employees to utilize that data in different ways, depending on their needs. Users are always assured they are accessing the most current information available.

### **Basically, a CI Portal addresses four broad goals:**

- The portal automates routine business activities - administrative and paper intensive processes such as benefits administration and employee relations, can be turned into a self-service type of application.
- The portal improves customer service - one of the biggest challenges companies encounter today is putting a common face forward to their customers. For example, the facilities management or human resources departments may not effectively communicate the status of a particular employee request. If the requesting employee - your customer - has ordered a service, they expect everyone in the organization, regardless of who they are dealing with, to understand their specific needs. They expect to be kept abreast as to the status of the request. Unless a consistent set of information is available to all potential customer touch points, then the risk is high that communication will fail and the employee will feel frustration with the process.
- The portal makes information available when and where needed - through personalization and segmentation, employees can dramatically reduce the overload of information experienced today. Without a clear way to navigate and find information, employees can waste even more time searching for information than they did prior to owning a browser. A properly built Portal can minimize the "noise" and better direct the flow of information to those who really need it.
- The portal inherently facilitates communication - employees get most of their information through the people they deal with on a daily basis. It is very difficult to converse with the CEO, but often times executives of a company have important news they wish to convey to their employees. In addition, information that is passed via phone is not recorded, so it is useless once the conversation ends. With a central area to post and retrieve information, key data can be disseminated universally and retained as long as it is needed.

## **A successful corporate intranet incorporates the following features:**

It contains at least three types of information:

- Published data - information that is "pushed" to the employees. Typically this is data deemed important enough by the company that all employees should see it regularly, such as overall company performance to goals or newsworthy events.
- Gathered data - information available to the employees through some sort of navigation path or search engine. Many times this is the bulk of the knowledge capital a company has in the form of documents, business applications or existing data stores.
- Transacted data - information that deals with an interaction between the employee and the system, such as completing benefits forms or a business process workflow managed by the intranet.

Encourages personalization. Informational Personalization, a concept pioneered by Yahoo! with "My Yahoo!," allows each user to determine individually how his or her view into the site will look. To maximize its value to each employee, this same concept should be applied to the intranet. Not only will employees be more inclined to use the intranet, it can improve the information flow to because they determine what is important to them based on their role in the organization.

Focuses on usability. Too often designs of browser-based applications adopt a "style-first" approach. While aesthetics certainly are important, experience shows that, above all, the site must perform to meet the dual needs of the users and the company, and must do so in a manner those users find straightforward and simple. Intranets that fail this test lose value. In our view, the drivers for site appearance are information structure, presentation, input and navigability. Prototyping should not be performed without a clear understanding of these pivotal factors.

Distributes content management to affected business lines. Content owners should be responsible for content management. In most every instance, a company's I/T department cannot effectively perform this function. To ensure maximum viability and effectiveness, clear update and approval processes must be mandated, and the tools used to perform informational updates should be as easy to use as possible. For example, users should not have to code HTML, but rather should be given a framework that is familiar to them for editing and managing content.

Incorporates or leverages as many of the company's current investments and standards as possible.

Begins to take advantage of the new tools in the portal space that allows for proactive user interaction. Specifically, as these tools mature, the user should not have to search for all of their own information by plodding around the site or its search engine(s). The new breed of Portals will actually begin to anticipate what a user is looking for by understanding search patterns, and will suggest places to look or actually point the user directly to the end product. This will help the user in two ways: 1) it will reduce the search for non-existent information, and 2) it will help the user find related information with one search, instead of several discreet searches. Ultimately, the Portal should behave like a seasoned librarian, answering questions like "I know something like X exists but I can't remember exactly what it was or who wrote it," or "I need to write a report, what sources of information would be most helpful?"

## III. Core Modules – The Digital Channels

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### Definition

Digital Channels - Electronic means by which a company can communicate to, solicit information from, and conduct business with its employees. A Digital Channel could include e-mail, a benefits information, customer information, etc., or any of the discreet pieces of information (or threads) that make up the tapestry of information owned by the company.

Digital Channels provide an electronic means for a company to communicate, solicit information, and conduct business with different audiences. In the context of a CI Portal, those channels are identified through categories of services that allow employees to:

- Communicate needs to key area service providers
- Solicit information as needed from the appropriate source, at any time
- Conduct business with multiple departments through a single step

### The Home Page

The Home Page becomes the main point of access to the support services of the company, for every employee. To meet the specific needs of an individual employee, this page is typically customizable. In addition to standard navigational elements, it usually displays dynamic pointers to specific channels of interest for the day. A Company quote of the day, news feed or topic spotlight can assist in maintaining interest in the homepage from day-to-day.

The Home Page can provide navigation to numerous customizable Digital Channels, such as:

### Administrative Services

Employee check-in & checkout - This administrative tool is an automated version of the employee check-in and checkout white boards or time clocks commonly used by companies. It is an informational system that tracks the location of each employee. This feature is beneficial for a company with employees who travel to off-site locations on a regular basis. It can also be used to request vacation time, as well as provide access to holidays, training schedules, etc., via the company calendar.

Reservation System – This feature allows for the easy review and reservation of facility assets, such as conference rooms, shared equipment, company automobiles, etc. It can also facilitate other services associated with the reservation, such as food service requests and other special needs, like conference room layout.

Forms Manager - The Forms Manager is an essential office management tool that categorizes and stores company forms for accessibility to the entire organization. Because these forms are often critical to the company's core processes and procedures, the module can include a "counter" to the level of utilization. This helps an organization identify procedures that need

automation or outdated forms that should be removed. Maintenance and editing are typically conducted through standard document management processes to assure accuracy and access to the newest version of a form.

Contact Manager - This module can function alone as a company "rolodex" or be linked with other digital tools to serve as a comprehensive contact management application. This application allows employees to remotely access to their contact records and synchronize data.

Procurement Management – This capability provides full web-based access to procedural controlled supplies requisitioning and equipment procurements.

## **Around & About**

The Community - This page focuses on the community (or communities) where the company has locations. It links to local attractions, restaurants, etc.

Travel – This area provides links to on-line travel management sites to schedule air travel, car rentals and hotels based upon the corporate policies and procedures.

Weather – Provides weather channel links for the community, as well as any other potential travel site.

## **Corporate Page**

“Who is (company name)” – This section displays the corporate vision, mission and culture. It provides an overview of major company business drivers, stock prices, regulatory information, performance versus the competition, etc.

“Find It” – This feature allows an employee to find a specific location within a company (particular office, department, building, etc.) through an interactive map-based gaming environment.

Bulletin Board -This page functions as the company bulletin board, presenting the latest company "News-Flash," or any other important updates. It can be updated as often as desired. Historical and current pages can be easily accessed for employees to view. Users can automatically access the latest news upon login to the system.

Company Store – Provides online ability to purchase company logo items.

Food Services – If the company has in-house food service and/or catering capability, this module displays the available menus and enables users to place catering orders for meetings, etc.

The Print Shop – This option gives an employee the ability to submit print jobs to an in-house or contract outside service provider for printing, binding, and delivery, within the parameters of corporate policies and procedures.

Corporate Calendar - This feature displays all corporate wide activities, holidays, meetings and date-related items of interest (such as staff birthdays, etc). It also provides access to employee vacation schedules and calendars.

Corporate Citizenship – Opportunities exist in this module to encourage employees to “find their fit” within the company, check out peer groups, or find opportunities to work on community service projects.

## **Communications**

Email – Provides an interface to the corporate email system directly through the web portal.

Message Board – An electronic bulletin board is used for viewing announcements, informal employee postings, etc. A sub-set can be created for “Personal Ads” to sell, trade or promote personal requests.

Suggestion Box - The Suggestion Box collects, tracks and routes employee suggestions for company improvements and cost savings. These suggestions are collected for management tracking purposes, and are routed and escalated, based on predetermined criteria (i.e. dollar value, category, etc.). Routing pre-determines the individuals who consider and react to suggestions, as well as automatically sends feedback to the individual with an answer to their suggestion. Suggestions are saved and automatically routed to the individual employee's file for consideration during performance reviews and appraisals.

Courier and Express Delivery – This link provides the ability to submit and track package pick-up and delivery through the company's approved procedural control.

Discussion (Chat) Groups – Internal employee group forum for discussion topics of interest. Formal chat topics with management can be organized to give employees an opportunity to converse with senior personnel within their organization.

“In The News” – Automatic presentation of newsworthy events, stock quotes, and company press coverage.

Communications Management - This module allows for the solicitation of items of interest for internal and/or external communications. This tool is used to manage postings on the company's electronic bulletin board, such as internal newsletters. This module allows for automatic document routing for peer and editorial review, as well as scheduling the information for release.

## **Executive Reporting**

This channel gives restricted access to highly detailed and specialized management reports, providing real time status reports for such items as financial performance, benchmarking/performance measurement, customer satisfaction, and asset utilization.

## **Help Desk**

The Help Desk is the “place with the answers.” This channel provides a single point of access to all corporate services through three tiers of help:

Q&A On-line – On-line ability to search out answers to previously identified questions such as how to get business cards, change a telephone voice message, or upgrade a computer.

Automated Assistance - This automated feature allows employees to request assistance from various internal support groups, such as IT, H/R, facilities management, etc. It processes requests for automatic routing and escalation of critical requests.

On-line “Warm Body” Assistance – If an employee is unable to gain the answer required from the previous two tiers of help, then this feature gives the employee direct access to someone trained in the specific area under discussion.

Service Requests – When an employee needs an asset repaired, moved or adjusted, they can submit a single work request through the portal. This request initiates the appropriate process for approval and workforce scheduling to make sure it is handled in an efficient and effective manner. Examples include adjusting the temperature in an office or moving a telephone line from one location to another. In the case of an employee's relocation, multiple departments and outside trades may need to become involved. When an employee indicates a desire to move from one office to another, this process may require approval from his/her management and from the facilities management group. If approved, it may involve space planners, IT and telephony personnel, movers and furniture vendors. Regardless, the process is all handled automatically and is initiated with a single selection from the CI Portal.

IT Clearinghouse – This section provides a single point of delivery for software patches and updates, plus routine data updates (such as anti-virus data files) for all approved corporate applications.

Customer Satisfaction Survey – In addition to automated customer satisfaction reporting after submitting a work request, an employee can also provide immediate feedback as to the responding group's performance.

## **Human Resources**

Employee Survey - Employee surveys for such things as management effectiveness, peer reviews or overall job satisfaction can be automatically routed, collected and analyzed with minimal effort from the employee.

Timesheet and Expense Reporting - This feature interfaces with the company's project management and/or H/R systems. It provides automatic routing for approvals, as set up in the employee profile.

Employee Skills/Certifications - This module is used to track a summary of employee skills, specialties, education, and areas of expertise. It allows immediate identification of specific resources or expertise areas. This tracking system is used to quickly locate and schedule employees for projects and/or focus questions, or requests for information.

Resume Tracking - This feature enables an employee to track resumes received from both internal and external sources in a common database. Internal resumes (for active employees) are entered by the employees themselves and can be automatically routed for review/approval before being posted for public viewing/use. External resume submittals (job applicants) can be received by fax, Internet, or scanned from hard copy and then sorted by name, skill, department, or any other user-specified criteria. When a candidate is hired, this capability electronically forwards the original resume to the new employee, providing a good starting point for submission to the internal resume and Employee Skills databases.

Recruiting – Internal job openings are posted, providing employees with an opportunity to apply for position before public recruiting is considered. This site is also used for tracking candidate referrals and referral bonus payments.

Interview Management – This module provides easy access for employees involved in the interview process for automating the receipt, routing, tracking, conducting and rating of potential candidates. It interfaces with the Resume Tracking and Recruiting features of this channel.

Staff Resource Management - The Staff Resource Management Module automates the process of requesting staffing for a project. Through this module the request will be described and categorized by skill set and duration of the need (or possibly by the name of an actual employee), and then routed to the appropriate department or person for execution.

The system could route requests for the appropriate approval levels and authorizations. For example, if a new hire is required and approved, the system will launch the new hire process. That process will include all of the necessary forms, equipment, scheduling of training and the entire pre-defined orientation process. This module would track staff assignments for H/R staff leveling and could be linked to the Project Task Tracking module.

## **Knowledge Center**

The Library - The Library contains workbooks, handbooks and manuals that document company processes, procedures, and methodologies. Information stored in the library is routed for review and approval to ensure consistent, accurate, and current information is available. As with all modules, the library is easily accessible from local or remote locations.

Document Management – This area links to an underlying records or document management capability, which provides full search and retrieval potential for all corporate documents over the web, within the limitations set by security and policy limitations.

## **Operations Management**

This section provides access to all underlying work management, asset management, procurement, etc by the operations staff that supports the work processes automated through this CI portal.

## **Personal Page**

“Your Department” – This section provides the same type of information available on the Corporate Page, but it is specifically focused on the employee’s work group. Team organization, project assignments, peer groups, etc., are all covered here.

“Your Benefits” – The employee has the ability to access his or her specific benefits package through this module. This includes up-to-the-minute reports of their 401k, healthcare coverage, beneficiary information, or expense reimbursements.

## **Training and Employee Improvement**

Training Management - This section works with the corporate calendar and provides the ability to view the training catalog, sign-up for and track training opportunities, and monitor individual training compliance requirements. It contains upcoming training opportunity announcements, the class synopsis, pre-requisites and approval requirements. It automatically routes sign-up approvals and adds the employee to email announcements (class notifications, cancellations, etc.). Upon successful completion of the class, the system automatically posts a completion notice to the employees skill database and personnel.

On-line training – Interactive, web-based training classes are placed on this site to allow employees to hone skills and obtain required certifications at their leisure.

Career Management – This feature provides the ability for an employee to create, manage and track their career development. This includes routing and obtaining input from counselors for project performance reviews. This site automates the process of setting career goals and encourages a proactive procedure for ensuring optimum career opportunities.

## Work Management

Mission Critical Task Manager - This feature facilitates a "critical activity watch list" of tasks that are defined as crucial to the successful operation of the business. Tasks are assigned to an individual or a group and monitored until completion. Tasks may be entered as a one-time or recurring event with scheduled reminders of impending deadlines.

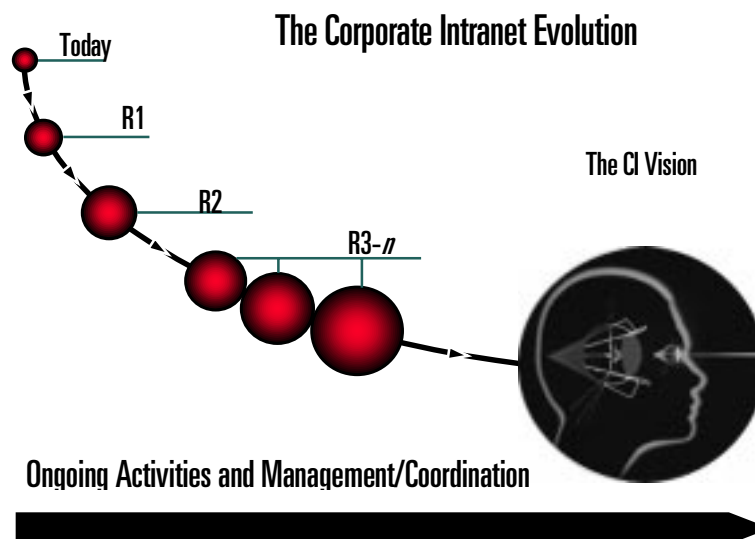
Issue Tracking & Discussion Groups - The Issue Tracking feature provides an easily accessible central location for company issues. It is a common area for sharing internal and technical information with everyone in an organization. Once an issue is closed it is automatically stored in a discussion database and available for future reference.

Project Task Tracking - This module facilitates effective project management, and tracks project related activities. The tracking begins with the initiation of a new project and continues until completion. Specifically, the application tracks the project action items, deliverables, critical dates and project milestones and staffing requirements.

### III. How to Take Advantage of this Revolution—Getting Started

It is important to use a strict methodology to ensure the proper approach to developing and implementing a new intranet for your employees. You need a multi-disciplined team of strategy, technical, and creative specialists that all work as a cohesive unit to deliver a single product.

We believe the best design and implementation process is iterative, one in which the company's ultimate vision is achieved through a series of incremental rollouts to the organization. An intranet cannot be completed in a "big bang" style, but rather is an evolving entity within the organization that grows with the company. We highly recommend the formation of a corporate Steering Committee to manage the process. The Steering Committee should be comprised of key business unit or departmental representatives who can set the intranet vision and promote corporate-wide adoption.



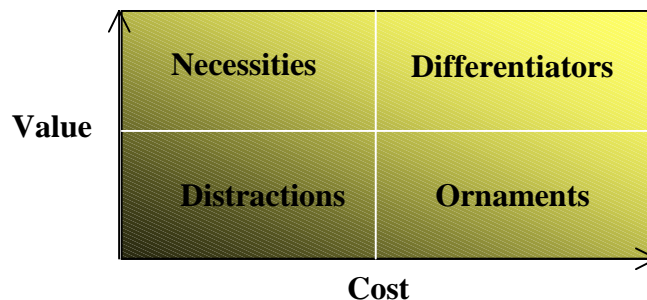
#### Visioning Phase

The process begins with a visioning phase, where the goals for the intranet are established. Three very important activities occur here:

1. Define the "V-COMPASS." The V-COMPASS is a set of guiding principles and processes that help develop a company's intranet site. Elements of the V-COMPASS could include:
  - The Intranet Vision – An overview of the intranet's purpose and intended service.
  - Communications and Training – A bilateral plan to heighten employees' awareness of the intranet's development and the company's attainment of important intranet developmental milestones; to solicit and funnel employee feedback and recommendations

to the intranet team; and to ensure proper employee training accompanies the site roll-out and upgrades.

- Online Incentives - A program to encourage employee use of the site.
  - Measures - A set of objective criteria designed to help the company measure the success of its intranet and the value of its investment.
  - Processes – Processes to govern employees' abilities to input, approve and disseminate information via the intranet. Content management is vital to a healthy, useful site. Since content management is perpetual, these processes should be well reasoned, intuitive and carefully crafted in advance.
  - Architecture - A set of technical standards for all intranet-related development and content. Whenever feasible, the site's architecture should build upon the company's existing investments in technology.
  - Skills - The intranet may require the company to develop additional skill sets within its employee base. A staffing and training plan should be developed to allow the company to build and operate the intranet site.
  - Support – The site's value is intertwined with the organization's commitment to the intranet. The absence of concerted support would tend to erode the benefits of the intranet to the organization.
2. Identify and prioritize the Digital Channels. The company must prioritize its Digital Channels, the discreet pieces of information. Prioritization can be based on several criteria, but most commonly are business value, employee value, and effort to convert and build. To achieve this focus, it is appropriate to break down factors or company goals into “Necessities” and “Differentiators,” and “Distractions” and “Ornaments” (see below).



- High Value - These are items that get frequent and widespread use by the employee base. They are worth their investment because they offer competitive advantage, having significant work process efficiency gains, or positive employee morale effect. The two high value categories include:
  - Necessities - Those items that are typically easy to enable because they already exist in the corporation, and are used by a wide range of employees (such as some HR data and communications channels).
  - Differentiators - May be more expensive but can often be the elements that make the site indispensable (such as a corporate-wide customer information system).
- Low Value - The company must avoid the temptation to rank all ideas in the High Value category just because there is a strong champion for each one or it "sounds neat". A disciplined eye must be applied to valuation of Digital Channels to properly cull out the ones that fall into the following categories:
  - Distractions - Items which do not take long to build but have a limited audience or frequency of use. They are called distractions because they pull the development team away from high value development, and they distract employees away from navigating the important areas of the site.
  - Ornaments - The most enticing area. These can be dangerous because they are typically appealing ideas to the end user, but the effort to development them or make

them available outweighs the benefits they provide. The Steering Committee may be asked to review items that have a high cost of development associated with them to ensure they are properly classified as Differentiators vs. Ornaments.

3. Agree on the Look and Feel of the site. Once the content (Digital Channels) is identified and prioritized, the relationship of the Digital Channels to one another should be understood. It is very tempting to develop a site's Look and Feel early in the process, since that is the most visually appealing characteristic of the site, and it sells well to the decision-makers. But we cannot emphasize enough that the navigation and data relationships ultimately determine a site's success, not the look, and so the Site Map and content positioning should be solidified before any artistic development is attempted. Once the information design is complete, then the Look and Feel is ready to go. Once the site is designed, construction can begin!

## IV. Conclusion

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Many companies already have some form of an Intranet running today; most likely it is a first release primarily aimed at pushing information to employees with an accompanying search engine. Therefore, we are not proposing that the concept of a Corporate Intranet is revolutionary. However, through experience and maturity, we have come to learn the true power of Intranets is just now beginning to be realized. And we feel it will take a more disciplined approach, building on the experience of successful implementations, to really achieve the level of value that executives are expecting out of their IT investments into Corporate Intranets.

In order for companies to be successful in their next attempt, they will need to be more diligent about deciding what value they are trying to derive from their Intranets, and what the primary purpose for the sites' existence will be. Only then will companies be able to look back upon their investment in labor and money and determine whether they achieved the quantum leap they first expected out of their Corporate Intranets. If executed properly, the corporate intranet will become the pervasive means of access to corporate knowledge – and a portal will be born!

## About the Authors

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Jeff Skiba is a Principal Consultant for Luminant Worldwide, with over 11 years experience in strategy, management, design and delivery of client/server and internet related business solutions. Prior to joining Luminant, he held positions with Andersen Consulting, BSG and Cambridge Technology Partners. Mr. Skiba is responsible for the client relationship and delivery quality for various customers. His industry knowledge includes financial services, food service and distribution, oil and gas, and engineering and construction, as well as a rich background in document management and imaging related implementations. Mr. Skiba holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Chemical Engineering from Rice University.

Philip Wales is a Principal with Luminant Worldwide Corp. and is responsible for the company's Corporate Infrastructure solution practice. He has 21 years of experience, garnering a national reputation as a visionary leader in applying creative solutions to complex business problems. Whether in real estate, infrastructure management, or applied information technologies, Mr. Wales has helped numerous clients identify strategic opportunities and implement creative business solutions. Mr. Wales graduated from Texas A&M University and holds Bachelor degrees in Science and Environmental Design as well as a Masters of Architecture.

## About Luminant Worldwide Corp.

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Luminant Worldwide Corporation is a leading provider of Internet and electronic commerce professional services to Fortune 1000 companies and Internet-based companies. The company focuses on enabling businesses to develop and expand Internet and electronic commerce business models. Through its integrated practice areas, Luminant specializes in providing strategy consulting, creative solutions, technology solutions and value-added services for more than 100 clients in a diverse range of industries.

Based in Dallas, TX, Luminant has principal locations in Houston, TX, Larchmont, NY, New York, NY, Reston, VA, Atlanta, GA, San Francisco, CA and Seattle, WA. The company's 720 employees are located in 17 states throughout the US. These former companies were acquired by Luminant in 1999: Align Solutions Corp., Brand Dialogue New York, Free Range Media, Inc., Integrated Consulting, Inc. (known as i.con interactive), InterActive8 Inc., Multimedia Resources, LLC, Potomac Partners Management Consulting, LLC and RSI Group, Inc.

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