

# ConocoPhillips strikes “oil” of the digital age: usability

## Intranet redesign eliminates help desk calls

ConocoPhillips is the largest oil refiner in the United States and fourth largest globally. It operates in more than 40 countries with over 35,000 employees and assets of \$86 billion.

### Challenge: Merging companies, merging intranets

In 2002, Phillips Petroleum Company and Conoco completed their merger. The new management team of ConocoPhillips deemed it critical to centralize the two companies' servers and move towards “self-serve” intranet portals.

This posed numerous front-end usability challenges. Many existing intranet applications were overly complex and had inconsistent, unorganized navigation. Such was the case with its *HR Express* intranet site: ConocoPhillips inherited a disparate set of HR-related applications loosely connected by a single menu.

### HFI's Approach: A user-centered design standard

HFI collaborated on a redesign to create a one-stop HR portal. The goals were to:

- Create an expandable architecture that could accommodate new functionality and tools in the future
- Provide one location for employees to view information and respond to alerts
- Give managers a simple dashboard to monitor their teams

The screenshot shows the HR Express intranet homepage for John Smith. At the top, it displays basic information: Employee # 123123, Manager GIS, Address 1234 Johnstone Street Building 1, Bartlesville, OK 74004, and Emergency Contact Jane Smith. Below this is a navigation bar with links like Log Out, Summary, Benefits, Total Compensation, Total Wealth, Savings, Retirement, Stock Options, Stock Program, Deferred Comp, Insurance, Vacation, Payroll, Check Overview, Manage Taxes, Duplicate W-2, Direct Deposit, My..., Personal Info, Training, Performance, and Resume.

The main content area is divided into several sections:

- Total Compensation:** Shows Current Annual Salary (\$43,603.00), Bonus (\$4,840.00), Insurance (\$750.00), FICA (\$1,020.00), Retirement (plan name: \$22,000.00), Savings (401k) (\$3,850.00), and Stock Options (\$1,555.00). A pie chart visualizes the breakdown of these components.
- Total Wealth:** Shows Savings (\$34,929.00), Retirement (\$125,000.00), Portfolio (\$74,500.00), and Total Wealth (\$234,429.00).
- Check Overview:** Displays Check Dated (07/30/2003), Earnings (\$4,269.51), Adjustments (\$562.15), Deductions (\$20.00), Taxes (\$540.07), and Net pay (\$2,822.60).
- My...**: Shows Last training (Emergency Drills), Last review (12/01/2002), and Resume updated (10/15/2002).
- Announcements:** Includes links to Payroll, 2004 Training, and other notices.
- Life Events:** Lists events like Last job hired, Married, Divorced, Baby, and Leaving the company.

ConocoPhillips' new HR Express intranet site provides users with summary views that answer their most frequent questions

After conducting data-gathering sessions with the affected user groups, HFI led a committee-driven standards project, which helped secure acceptance from ConocoPhillips' diverse teams. This user interface standard was delivered in the form of reusable templates, promoting consistent page designs within the new, simplified navigational framework.

### Outcome: Timely completion, immediate ROI

HFI has observed that typical corporate standards projects last over one year—and the standards rarely get implemented! By contrast, the standards project at ConocoPhillips took just three months to complete and was put to use immediately in the HR Express redesign.

Everyone benefited from the new HR site, which offered:

- Summary screens that answered the majority of people's questions
- Easy access to all functions
- Simplified data entry/editing
- Related information automatically displayed (based on users' location on the site)
- Reduced number of secondary browsers opened

ConocoPhillips' HR Express help desk historically received 300 calls per week. Immediately after the redesigned site launched, help desk calls literally disappeared—zero calls/week for the first three months running.

Plus, ConocoPhillips enjoyed the ongoing benefits of a user-centered design standard:

- **Developers save time:** Instead of revisiting the same design decisions, developers can simply refer to the standard; ongoing maintenance and content management are also simplified.
- **Users are more efficient:** Because designs are consistent, users can generalize their knowledge of how one screen works to all the other screens of the same type.

You could say ConocoPhillips struck the biggest “oil well” of the digital age: usability!