

Meet OurPeople, the communication platform helping you to help your team navigate the new normal

As part of our quickfire questions series – or QFQs – we spoke to Ross McCaw, CEO and cofounder of OurPeople, about short, targeted internal communications and maintaining team engagement in the hybrid environment.

Temps de lecture : minute

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What are the biggest communication challenges facing businesses this year?

The biggest challenge is undoubtedly the sheer quantity of information that businesses need to pass on to their workforces at the moment. It's imperative that employees are kept abreast of the latest developments surrounding COVID restrictions, work from home guidelines, safety measures and the usual daily updates that are necessary to help businesses navigate the 'new normal'.

The pandemic has changed how we work and millions of traditionally desk-based workers have needed to become 'deskless' for the first time. Therefore, there has never been a more important time for businesses to be sure that their workforce has read, engaged with and understood the information that is shared with them.

What are the common mistakes businesses are making when it comes to their internal communication? Is there a right or wrong way?

We see businesses making the same mistake over and over again - the tendency to 'send to all'. While this does mean everyone *has* the information, it doesn't necessarily mean they *see* the information. Instead, this increases alert fatigue - where needy technology wants to alert us about everything - which makes teams feel on edge and can lead to workers becoming desensitised and overwhelmed by an ever-growing 'to do' list. As a result, employees miss or ignore the alerts or delay their responses, which causes teams to disengage and reduce productivity.

Short, targeted and infrequent information alerts are the most effective way to communicate important messages to your workers. Being able to share information with the relevant people in this format, such as a short 10-second video from a manager, a single image, or a short piece of text, is far more personal and engaging.

Another big error is making assumptions. Many managers often assume that because they've sent a message to the right person at the right time, the target will engage with the information. But, there is no real way to be sure unless managers chase via email, adding to inbox clutter.

Having a centralised mobile-first platform where employees can actively engage with personally relevant notifications minimises the opportunity for missed information. For managers, this is also an effective way to monitor which employees have engaged with the information without having to chase or be physically present.

In what way do you think how we communicate internally has changed over the last year and do you see this as a permanent change?

One of the most prevalent changes, which has been brought to the spotlight during the pandemic, was the need for businesses to have absolute certainty that key information has been read by employees.

This became particularly important for frontline deskless workers, such as the NHS. One of our clients is an NHS trust in Bristol and they wanted to find a solution to ensure their daily briefing was reaching all workers. We worked with them to produce a streamlined version of our product which allowed the sender to detect if someone hadn't installed the OurPeople app on their phone, and if they hadn't the messages were delivered via SMS - making miscommunication and missed communication near impossible. The ability to identify which workers hadn't read the most up-to-date information became a valuable asset to many of our clients throughout the pandemic.

We have also seen a growing trend in which businesses are delivering information in a similar style to social media platforms - smaller bite-size chunks in multimedia formats.

Video has been a popular way of showcasing this. Sharing company updates and information in this concise, specific and engaging format, increases efficiency and employee sentiment while also avoiding miscommunication. Allowing employees to access this information via

their mobile ensures everyone in this scenario stays informed and connected, no matter how diverse their working patterns may be. This functionality also has an important part to play in harnessing team culture. In what can often feel like a disconnected world, a centralised platform for communication unites the team and ensures no-one is left out.

How will hybrid working impact company culture and the way employees communicate?

The pandemic has caused a huge shift in the world of work and a return to the status quo, being 9am-5pm five days a week in the office, looks very unlikely. We are set to continue with a blend of remote and deskless working, with employees flexing between their homes and the physical office. However, while there are real benefits of working from home and it has been welcomed by many, it is also important to be aware of the pitfalls associated with less physical contact with colleagues.

Short digital questionnaires where employees can provide anonymous feedback on working practises allows managers to deal with potential issues before they become a problem. Additionally, this enables employees to solicit suggestions on what they think could improve their employee experience e.g. Early Friday finishes, team lunches, no-meeting hours etc.

It's also a great way for employee recognition whether it be a birthday, an achievement or an anniversary. Using digital platforms to enhance the in-person relationship between employee and employer can help build trust and rapport which is key for long-term success of the business. It also ensures managers have a deep understanding of their workforce to be able to lead with confidence.

Ross McCaw is CEO and cofounder of OurPeople.

Article by Ross McCaw