

Delivering the message is only half the battle

The need for clear and concise communication within businesses has never been more important. This year, the sheer quantity of information to pass on was extraordinary - employees needed to be kept abreast of the latest developments on remote working, the pandemic and Brexit uncertainty, as well as the everyday updates as businesses navigate changing landscapes.

As a result, we saw many businesses feeling the pressure to update everyone all the time, without pausing to think about whether their messages were relevant to the audience they were reaching. Collectively, we need to make sure we don't make the same mistake again in 2021.

Sending blanket updates to everyone in the business offers no guarantees that the people who actually need to view and understand the information will actually engage with it. In fact, bombarding teams with content that isn't relevant to them actually serves the opposite purpose - people tend to read updates less thoroughly, and ultimately stop checking them altogether.

With blended and remote working set to continue well into the new year, it's absolutely vital to be aware of how to ensure the right messaging is disseminated to the right people across your business in order to achieve effective internal communication.

The businesses which communicate most purposefully are those where team members are accountable for the information they receive and are united in working towards shared objectives. So how do we do that?

Less is more

Employees are far more likely to engage with content which is directly relevant to them. At [OurPeople](#), one of the most common mistakes businesses make is that they send everything to everyone. While this certainly means everyone *has* all the information, it doesn't mean they're reading it. Short, targeted, more infrequent pieces of information are the most effective at catching people's attention.

With employees becoming increasingly accustomed to 10-second TikTok-style bursts of information, attention spans are likely to be shorter than ever. Gone are the days where people are happy to wade through enormous newsletters at the end of the week – information now needs to be presented in small, manageable chunks, specifically curated for the individual or team that is reading it.

Instead of a weekly newsletter containing every update across the business, for example, what about sending one quickfire important daily message, differentiated depending on their role. Via the OurPeople app, managers can send bespoke 'cards' directly to people for whom the information is relevant. Shorter updates – a 10-second video from a manager, a single image or a short 250 character message – targeted at fewer individuals based on their location, job title or skill, for example, are far more effective and engaging.

It's better to know than assume

It's one thing sending a briefing out to a team. But being confident that they've read it is a different matter entirely. On the whole, people just don't read emails – both deskless workers and traditional office-based staff. This means that vital information is missed, without managers even realising. What's more, with no accountability for absorbing information, the engagement among staff is likely to dwindle.

Ideally, the loop on team communication will always be closed. Information goes out, the sender knows who has read it, and employees know the sender knows they have engaged with it – and so on.

Not only is it great insight for managers but engagement will continue to improve as companies promote individual accountability for viewing key materials.

Simply enabling employees to immediately confirm they have seen the message they need to see can make the world of difference. This is where having the right communication platforms becomes invaluable. It's always better to *know* the right people have read information than to assume the content will have found its way to them.

Separate the professional and the private when remote working

When employees use the same device to receive their work communication and their social messaging, it's understandable that the line between professionalism and their personal life can get a little blurred.

More importantly, sending updates on big social messaging groups, where numerous recipients will undoubtedly have their notifications switched off, is highly ineffective in ensuring the information will be engaged with.

Clearly, mobile-first methods, which are familiar to young, tech-savvy workforces are the ideal way to keep remote teams in the loop. But without the ability to target messaging to groups of staff you want to reach, information is likely to get mixed up with personal notifications and lead to 'ping fatigue'. Floods of irrelevant updates each day are too time-consuming for employees to constantly scroll for important messages – and engagement levels suffer as a result.

Instead, use professional platforms which are fit for purpose and are of course GDPR -compliant – with robust data security to protect both personal employee details and sensitive company information.

In the process, you'll be able to target the right person with the right message at the right time – the holy grail of having streamlined communication targeted to the relevant people without the distractions of background chatter.

We might breathe a collective sigh of relief that 2020 is behind us, but 2021 will bring similar and new challenges for businesses. The pandemic will still exist and many of our 'desk-based' workers will remain in a desk-less situation. So, let's take the learnings and challenges of communicating in 2020, and give 2021 a more productive and transparent outlook.

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