



The Communications Playbook for Manufacturing

An Eight-Step Process to Give a Voice to the Non-Desk Worker

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Who Are the Non-Desk Workers?

These are the people making the product, delivering the services, and interacting with customers.



Production, Warehouse, and Back Office Workers

Key for product quality, cost efficiency, process improvements, and work safety.





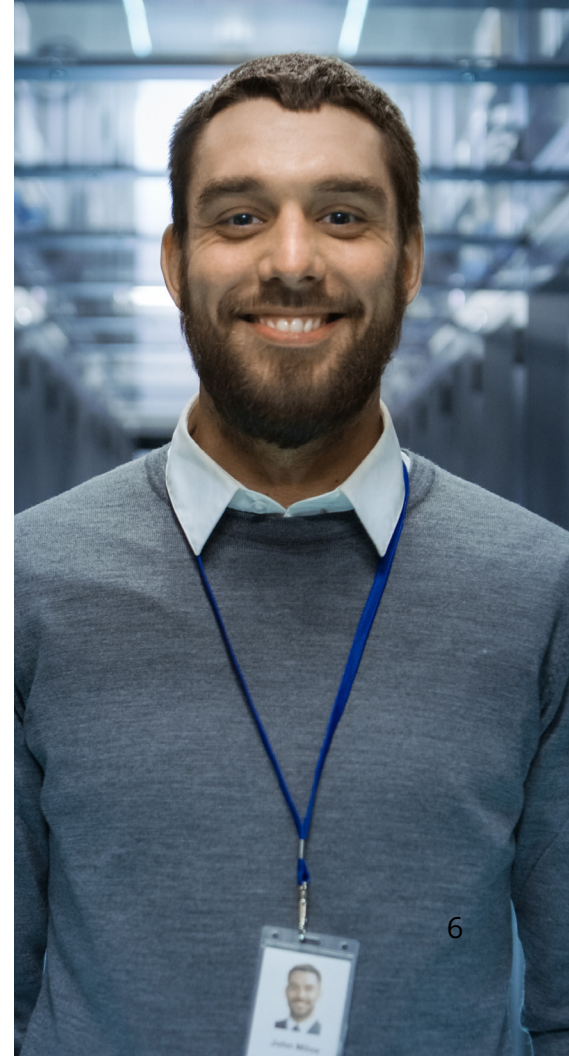
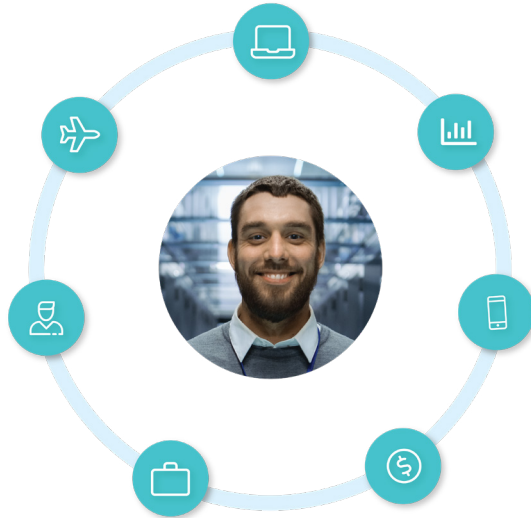
Customer Service Workers

Key for customer experience satisfaction, service quality, cost efficiency, and continuous service process improvements.



Sales and Service Workers

Key for sales, customer relationships, new markets, and opportunities.



The Current State of Things:

The Forgotten Employee

Non-desk workers in the manufacturing industry account for roughly 427 million individuals globally - these are your engineers, technicians, operators, inspectors, and line workers. More often than not, however, these valuable employees lack the unified information-sharing and communications systems most desk workers have grown to expect: email is non-existent, pay stubs are printed or accessible only via laptop, vacation requests get lost in a sea of HR paperwork, and open enrollment for benefits is confusing. These are **The Forgotten Employees** whose sole connection to

According to Gallup in their “State of the American Workplace” report, **only 25% of these workers are actually engaged at work - a full eight percent lower than the national average**,¹ making it the least engaged occupation across the U.S.

1) Gallup Inc. “State of the American Workplace,” December 12, 2019. <https://www.gallup.com/workplace/238085/state-american-workplace-report-2017.aspx>.

corporate exists via printed newsletters, the rare face-to-face meeting, a kiosk/ shared terminal, or a bulletin board. Further, as organizations grow, so do the problems plaguing The Forgotten Employee. This leads to inadequate corporate culture and extremely costly turnover. In this playbook, we've outlined the best practices for engaging your non-desk workers with a modern internal communications strategy, developed in conjunction with our most successful manufacturing customers, whose workforces range anywhere from 1,000 to 500,000+ employees.

Without a proper communication plan in place for **all** employees, more growth means more problems.



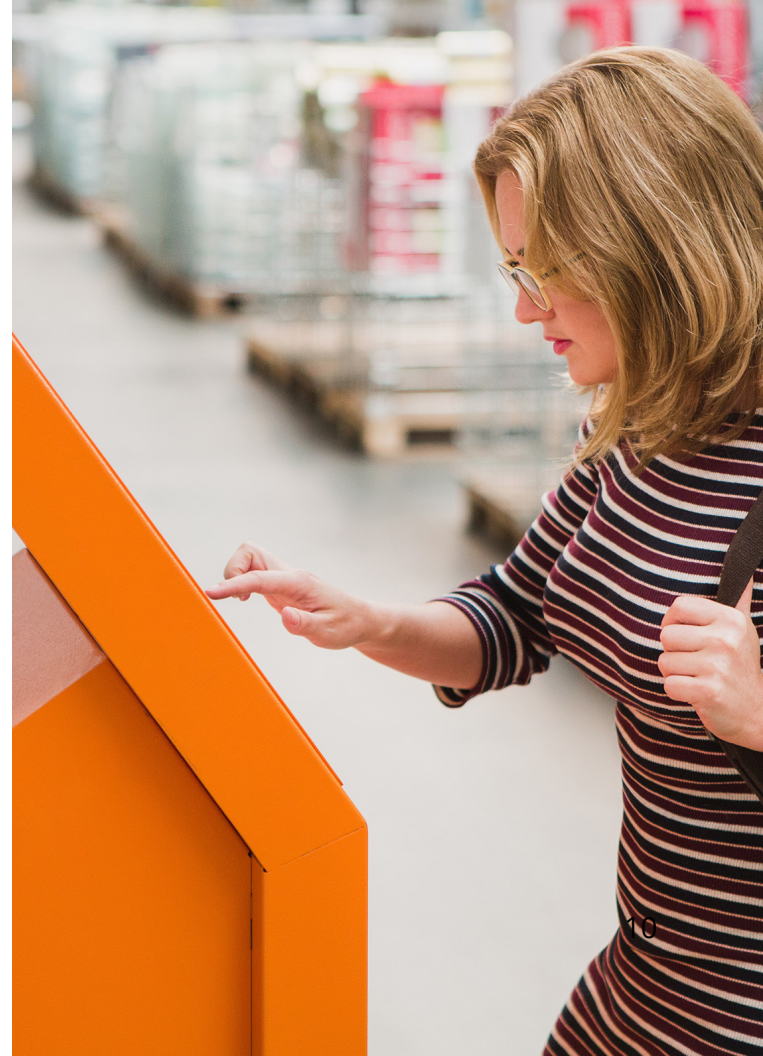


**Why are Your Non-desk
Workers Struggling to
Hear and Be Heard?**

Outdated Shared Terminals & Kiosks

Public-access employee terminals or kiosks often play a major role in existing internal communications on the factory floor, allowing access to HR materials, time reporting, company calendars, and more. However, these machines are inherently flawed - the connectivity they provide is only temporary and lacks continuous access to the tools employees need to be successful.

Furthermore, these kiosks only engage on-site employees, taking time away from work. Older, less tech-savvy workers are challenged by the technology, while those more comfortable with it are frustrated by its limited accessibility.



Cumbersome Safety Protocols

When something goes wrong on the factory floor, it's vital that safety protocols are easily accessible and always up to date. Many manufacturers, however, still rely on the old-fashioned "binder-in-a-drawer" technique.

Not only is this single source of information easily misplaced and prone to being out of date, but it's solely a **responsive** method of emergency preparedness. These binders offer little by way of **preventative** capabilities of alerting a workforce to potentially hazardous conditions.

Lack of Local Community

The greatest pain point for manufacturing leadership is speaking to their employees: **more than four out of five (82%) said that speaking to their employees was difficult or very difficult.**² This attitude lends itself to an isolated and disconnected local workforce that lacks the opportunity to engage with company culture despite the proven business value of a more engaged employee.

Without a system in place to facilitate a local-specific culture, non-desk employees - and the business as a result - are stopping short of their true potential.

2) "PDP Blog - Walking the Talk." PDP. <https://pdpsolutions.com/manufacturing-executives-1-fear-communication-with-plant-floor-workers>.

An Aging Workforce

With 75% of manufacturers reporting a moderate to severe shortage of skilled workers, a large population of current workers nearing retirement age, and a traditionally negative image of manufacturing work among young people, the manufacturing workforce is getting smaller and older. What's more, this demographic lacks the digital intuition needed new communications technologies that might improve internal comms.

Between 2018 and 2028, an **estimated 2.4 million manufacturing jobs have the potential to go unfilled in the US due to a shortage of new, qualified workers.**³

3) Giffi, Craig. "2018 Deloitte and The Manufacturing Institute Skills Gap and Future of Work Study." The Manufacturing Institute. Deloitte, January 2018. http://www.themanufacturinginstitute.org/~/_media/E323C4D8F75A470E8C96D7A07F0A14FB/DI_2018_Deloitte_MFI_skills_gap_FoW_study.pdf.



Reflection & Consideration

- ☐ Outdated processes endanger both two-way comms and the safety of your employees.
- ☐ The skill gap in the manufacturing industry has the potential to leave 2.5 million jobs unfilled by 2028. What are you doing today to prepare?
- ☐ If you were looking to work on the floor at your company, what information would you want to know? Who should be your advocate to champion this?

Notes:



How Comms Can Find and Help these Forgotten Employees?

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Mutual Awareness of Vision and Values

Help everyone stay connected through unified messaging.

It's likely your walls are plastered with helpful information. Some of it might be from OSHA. Maybe the daily lunch menu. A cheesy motivational poster or two.

Gallup reports that only **"41% of employees strongly agree that they know their company's values."**⁴

4) Dvorak, Nate. "Three Ways Mission-Driven Workplaces Perform Better." Gallup.com. <https://www.gallup.com/workplace/236279/three-ways-mission-driven-workplaces-perform-better.aspx>.

How many, however, reflect the values of your company?

Do you know your company values? If so, does your team? If you tapped someone on the shoulder at lunch and asked, could they answer?

If you answered no to any of these questions, you're not completely aligned with your company values. And you're not alone. However, it's the role of the communicator to make it known.



"EEX is also about ensuring that in today's often-fragmented organizations, employees feel connected to their work and their colleagues, understand the organization's mission and their place in it and can easily find the information they need for tasks ranging from making benefits choices to furthering their development."

Josh Bersin

*President and Founder of
Bersin & Associates*

Reflection & Consideration

- ☐ Do you know what your company stands for?
- ☐ Are your core values part of your hiring process?
- ☐ Are your company values in alignment with your messaging?
- ☐ How can you help become your organization's value champion?

Notes:

Modernize Safety Protocols

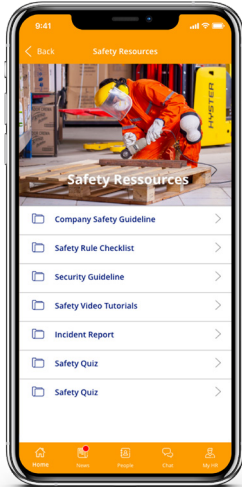
Say goodbye to the binder.



One of the most important applications of a modern internal comms strategy within a manufacturing setting concerns **emergency preparedness**. Gone are the days when someone should need to physically retrieve potentially outdated security protocols from a drawer in the event of an emergency. Improving your safety culture is an ongoing process that requires a substantial commitment on behalf of the entire company - everything from alerts about dangerous conditions,

updated protocols, and phone numbers for external agencies need to be frequently updated and immediately available to all. This effort improves both the safety culture and efficiency of your non-desk workers. Timely and careful communication is key to mastering an internal or external crisis. The way that your employees and external stakeholders view an incident (negatively, neutrally, or positively) is a major factor in whether or not the incident develops into

a full-blown crisis. However, crisis research from the **Institute for Public Relations**⁵ has found that managers often communicate significantly less with employees during a crisis.



5) Frandsen, F., & Johansen, W. (2011). *The Study of Internal Crisis Communication. Corporate Communications: An International Journal*, 16(4), 347-361.

Reflection & Consideration

- ☐ Are you still using a physical binder when it comes to safety?
- ☐ Educate employees on the importance of reporting injuries, first aids, and near misses. Prepare for an increase in incidents if currently there is under-reporting. It will eventually level out.
- ☐ Everyone should be in the same boat when establishing goals and objectives for their safety culture.

Prepare for the Next Generation

Gen Z is coming to fill the Blue-collar skill gap.



Between 2018 and 2028, an estimated 2.4 million manufacturing jobs have the potential to go unfilled in the US due to a shortage of qualified workers. With 75% of manufacturers reporting a moderate to severe shortage of skilled workers, a large population of skilled workers reaching retirement age, and a traditionally negative image among young people, this skill gap in the talent pool over the next decade has a potential economic impact of roughly 2.5 trillion dollars.

We predict that **Gen Z will be the generation to fill the gap.**

Gen Z-ers were raised in a time of economic crisis, and they're widely characterized by their financial pragmatism. With the rising cost of four-year undergraduate degrees combined with a lifelong exposure to technology, they have the opportunity to become a new type of worker with the potential to reinvigorate the manufacturing industry. **Enter what IBM has coined the "New**

Collar” worker. Interest in New Collar roles among Gen Z is growing. According to the 2019 **L2L Manufacturing Index**, an annual measurement of the American public’s perceptions of US manufacturing, it was found that compared to the general population. However, Gen Z also brings some distinct needs to the workplace: constant managerial feedback, digital connectivity

Gen Z-ers are 7% more likely to consider working in the manufacturing industry and 12% less likely to view it as being in decline.⁶

6) “The 2019 L2L Manufacturing Index.” L2L. <https://www.l2l.com/leading2lean-manufacturing-index>.



with peers, and a mobile-inclusive approach to internal communications. If your company isn't equipped to meet these expectations, it will become extremely difficult to retain this valuable talent, as they are already among the employees with the highest turnover rates with **61% planning to leave their current role in the next two years.**⁷

7) "Deloitte Global Millennial Survey 2019." Deloitte, May 24, 2019. <https://www2.deloitte.com/global/en/pages/about-deloitte/articles/millennialsurvey.html>.

Reflection & Consideration

- ☐ Does your comms plan anticipate the needs of younger generations entering the workforce?
- ☐ These workers:
 - Are social media masters
 - Love texting and videos
 - Start swiping from day one
 - Demand constant access
 - Travel more
 - Have their own style

Design a Comms Plan for Everyone

Not just a select few.



A successful internal comms platform is accessible to all, unifying both non-desk and office workers with a consistent corporate experience. While this unification is of great importance to employee happiness, **it's also vital to maintain retention rates in the current hiring climate.**

"The war for talent is over and the talent has won," goes the popular

saying. If you don't value the employee experience - from their first encounter with a company until their last- recruits will look elsewhere and employees will leave. With the right strategy, you can give them both a way to connect on their own terms and feel 100% aligned with the company's purpose.

Reflection & Consideration

- ☐ Are your Non-desk workers missing out on what the desk workers have?
- ☐ What would it take to distribute a message that was personalized for every employee?
- ☐ Seek opportunities to have members of HQ to visit the factory floor.
- ☐ Gather information from employees quickly and paperlessly through surveys and in-person events.

Notes:

Offer a Local Feel

Local wins. Every...single...time.



A lack of managerial communication lends itself to an isolated and disconnected local workforce that fails to engage with company culture despite the proven business value of a more engaged employee. Without a system in place to facilitate a local-specific culture, non-desk employees- and the business as a result - are stopping short of their true potential. Giving employees a local experience through internal communications is a valuable way to keep them engaged within the global landscape of a large

The greatest pain point for manufacturing leadership is speaking to their employees: **more than four out of five (82%) said that speaking to their employees was difficult or very difficult.**

manufacturing company. Appoint an individual tasked with distributing relevant, local-specific content to break down the perception of worker “silos.” Make sure your non-desk workers are familiar with their colleagues.



There are many tactics you can implement to offer this local flavor. Listen to employees, give them the ability to easily provide feedback, involve the entire workforce in company culture, use video to humanize communication, tell stories, cheerlead successes, and provide an easy way to take care of essential tasks. Modern employees have little patience for lengthy, irrelevant comms emails in their busy inboxes. Segment your audiences to provide relevant, region-specific content to ensure their engagement.

As Ragan points out, **“There’s no substitute for giving employees a chance to meet face-to-face with top management, and it’s particularly meaningful to non-desk employees.”⁸**

8) Baskin, Elizabeth Cogswell. “4 Ways to Communicate With Those Essential Front-Line Employees.” Ragan Communications, 17 Oct. 2018, www.ragan.com/4-ways-to-communicate-with-those-essential-front-line-employees/.

Reflection & Consideration

- ☐ Celebrate the achievements of your employees through regular biographical pieces, safety recognition programs, or contests that highlight employee performance.
- ☐ How can we help management be a familiar face versus a name we may (or may not) know?
- ☐ Consider local polling opportunities to have departments or groups make decisions (e.g. lunch menus, snack machines, etc.).

Notes:

Determine a Content Distribution Method

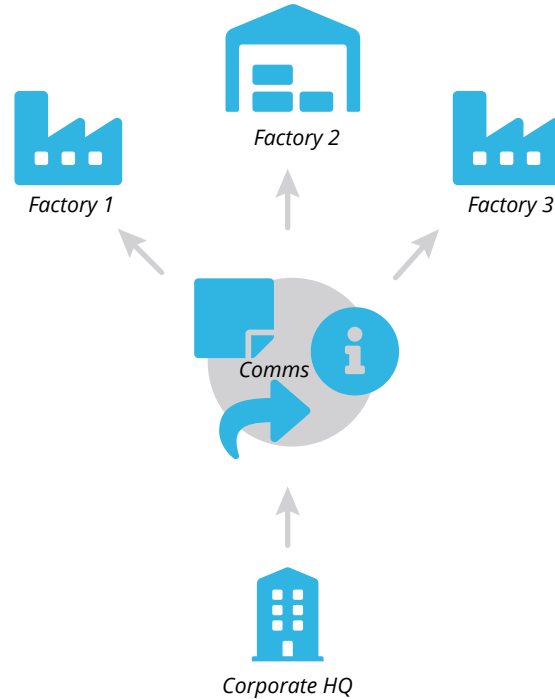
Centralized vs. Decentralized

When you work for an organization that has more than one member on the internal comms team, **any effort to decentralize communication is a step in the right direction.** For example, corporate internal comms could focus on topics like strategic or administrative content while others focus on regional-specific content.



Option 1: The Centralized Approach

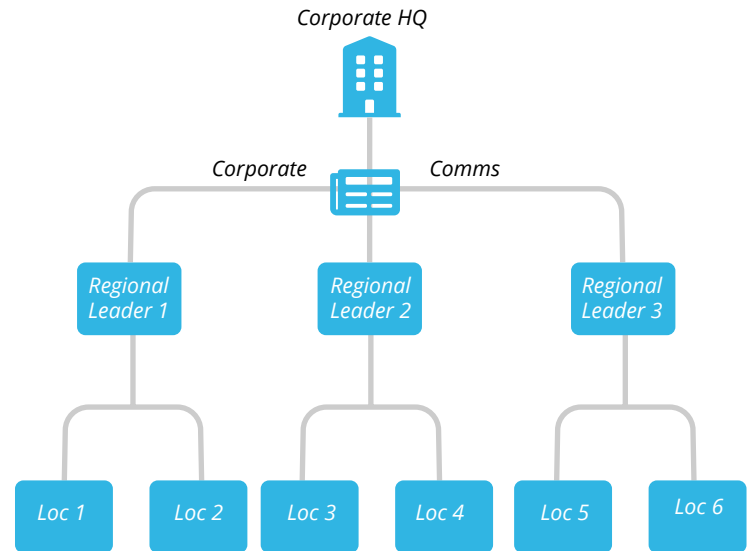
In a centralized environment, the comms department is the gatekeeper for all information sharing. They will manage, distribute, and approve all messaging from corporate and other departments (e.g. HR, IT, Sales, etc.). This “central hub” method is typical of smaller organizations with smaller comms teams, or those that require a tight grasp over confidential information.



Option 2: The Decentralized Approach

In a decentralized environment, corporate comms will distribute a small portion of information to a regional leader who then customizes and distributes messaging to subregions where the content is refined even further. By the time it reaches the employees, they are consuming locally-relevant information more likely to capture their attention.

This process is far more effective for large and globally dispersed companies - particularly those with employees speaking different languages - than that of the centralized approach. **While HQ retains some basic control, there is room for customization without bottlenecks.**



Reflection & Consideration

- ☐ Find your champions and involve them in your communications strategy.
- ☐ 82% of managers don't know how to communicate with their non-desk workers.
- ☐ Determine if you want to operate in a centralized or decentralized comms plan.
- ☐ What type of information do I need to be distributing to my non-desk workforce?

Notes:

Digital Means Mobile

Terminals, kiosks, and signs no longer cut it.



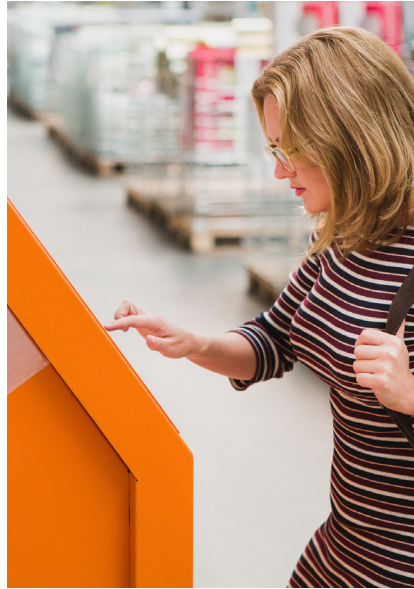
Employee computer terminals and kiosks play a major role in many existing internal communications on the plant floor, allowing access to things like HR materials, time reporting, and company calendars. However, these machines have the inherent flaw in that the connectivity achieved is one-dimensional—**they don't allow for continuous connectivity to the**

tools that employees need to be successful. Employees are only engaged when they are on site, and therefore distracted from work. Further, even when offered access to this limited technology, less tech-savvy workers remain challenged to use it for any length of time while those more comfortable are frustrated by its limited accessibility.



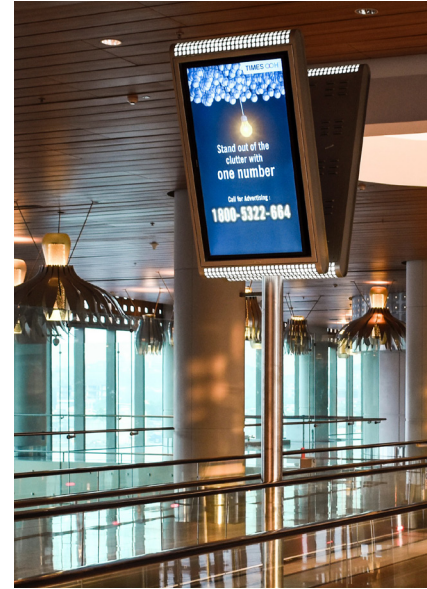
Security

Physical folder/binder filled with business critical safety protocols.



Shared Terminal/ Kiosk

Access point for one employee to access personal work related content.



Digital Signage

Top Down Messaging to share corporate news, events, and happenings.

The best way to reach the non-desk workers and millennials who make up 70% of the workforce is using **mobile technology**.



4.388 Billion

Total number of active internet users



57%

internet users as a percentage of total population



3.986 Billion

Total number of active mobile internet users



52%

Mobile internet users as a percentage of total population

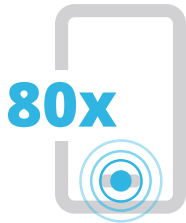
Modern forms of communication are first and foremost digital, and today “digital” means mobile. In order to successfully engage your non-desk workers, adapt to changing workplace expectations by investing in a platform that prioritizes the experience of your people. This also means that digital signage, with respect to communicating with a workforce, isn’t enough.

67% of business leaders say their company will no longer be competitive if it doesn’t become significantly more digitized by 2020.⁹

9) “Improve Employee Experience With Consumer-Centric HR.” Gartner. <https://www.gartner.com/smarterwithgartner/improve-employee-experience-with-consumer-centric-hr/>.

It's vital for the flow of communication to run in every direction. For the bottom up, things like regular surveys that collect input ensure constant engagement in corporate conversations. Target it with practical questions to ensure engagement, and poll for feedback on a quarterly basis (any more often is overwhelming). Top-down messaging is only available for those who happen to be logged

in, one-at-a-time, and in the case of relaying information through managers to the general workforce, poor or weak communication can dilute an important message to the point of inaccuracy. Information can easily fall through the cracks, and frontline workers may even feel undervalued if company leaders fail to prioritize top-down transparency.



Americans check their phones **80 times** a day



10% check their phones **every 4 minutes**



More than 3/4 keep their phones within reach

Reflection & Consideration

- ☐ Ask your people: How do you feel on Sunday evening?
- ☐ Listen, respond, and follow up.
- ☐ What information is shared bottom-up versus top-down?
- ☐ Is there a better way to reach ALL your staff?
- ☐ How many terminals/kiosks would it take to immediately share a business-critical message to all your non-desk workers?

Notes:

Outline Your Success

Ideas are great, but plans are actionable.



Design a list of must haves. This list should be everything you've desired to change or make better with how your team distributes information.

BE BOLD. BE LOUD! Gain an informed perspective by consulting with those around you - preferably those who are **not** a part of your immediate team, but instead part of the group you're sharing information with.

Again, according to the PDP Blog, "**over 82% of manufacturing executives said that speaking to their employees was difficult or very difficult.**"

Reflection & Consideration

- ☐ What is the minimum amount of information every plant should receive?
- ☐ What are the must-have changes we need to improve?
- ☐ Are there any business-critical integrations missing between departments?
- ☐ Are there any corporate policies that must be met before making any changes?
- ☐ How can we involve leadership to be more active and advocate the importance of communication?
- ☐ What type/amount of training (if any) will be necessary for the staff to be successful?
- ☐ With whom do we need to develop a workflow in order to ensure its success?

Wouldn't it be nice to have a tool that could make all of this easy?

Wouldn't it be nice to have a tool that could make all of this easy?

How an Employee App From Staffbase Can Help

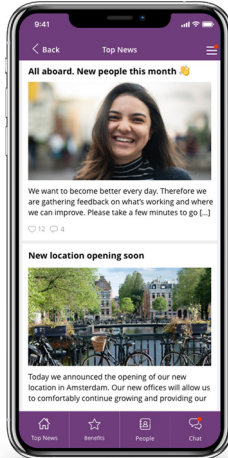
One simple app. One meaningful employee experience.

Our aim is to create a positive, engaging, and ultimately human experience for all employees.
We put people first.

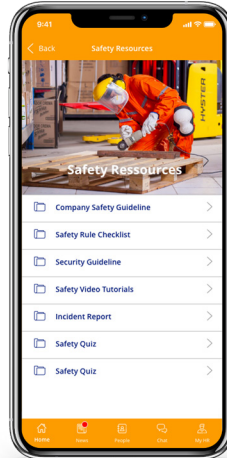
The best way to reach all of your employees is already in their pockets.



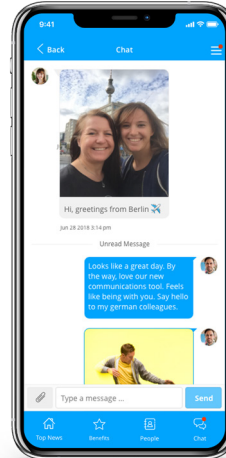
A branded, mobile-first channel to communicate with all of your employees. Customize logos, colors, icons - even your start page!



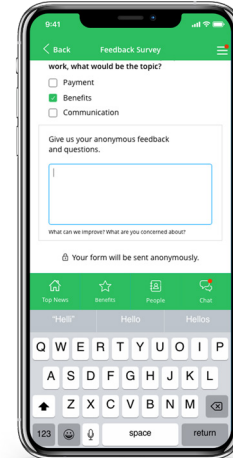
*Always Local
Communication*



*On-Demand Safety
Protocols*



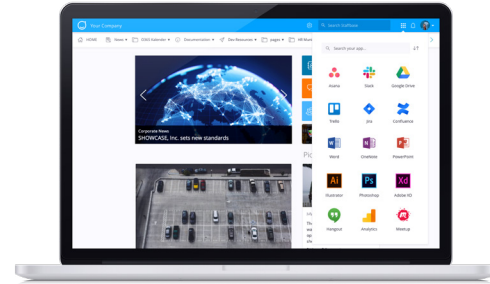
*Instant Access to
Management*



Employee Feedback



Onboard all of your employees, including those without access to company email.



Out-of-the-box integration with user directories and SharePoint API for custom integrations.



Full-featured Content Management with targeting, powerful analytics, and enterprise-grade security.

Rapid Adoption by Worldwide Industry Leaders

Customers across the globe, in an array of industries, trust Staffbase as their own mobile internal communications app.





VIESSMANN

“Finally, we’ve found a way to reach our employees in production and logistics, too.”



*Albrecht von Truchseß
Head of Corporate Communications, Viessmann*



"Staffbase goes well beyond the communication platform and brings together so many of the resources we need to put in front of our employees - from Communications and Employee Health Management to HR and Finance. When we used email as our main communication tool, an average of only 20% of employees even opened them. Now, 70% of our employees actively engage with the app on a weekly basis."



*Tiffany Elle
Global Communications
Manager Versum Materials, Inc.*



It's crucial to align the benefits of an employee app with the goals of your team and organization.

Here are some resources for helping you do just that.



18 Reasons Why Internal Communications Is More Important Than Ever



How HR Can Use an Employee App for Every Step in the Employee Lifecycle



10 things That Your Employees Should Know About Their Job



If You Care About Customer Satisfaction, Talk to Your Frontline Employees!



Digital Transformation for Non-Desk Workers - A Major Challenge for CIOs and CDOs



The Employee Experience Platform

staffbase.com