



The Communications Playbook for Healthcare

Three Industry Challenges &
Customer Case Studies





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The Current State of Internal Communication

The number of non-desk workers in the global healthcare workforce is conservatively estimated to be just over 59 million workers, encompassing everyone from nurses to janitorial staff. The bulk of these employees, however, don't have the types of jobs that require them to sit at a desk in an office all day. Medical staff are in hospital wards, consultation rooms, or operating theatres dealing with patients. Others work offsite or provide care remotely, while yet another portion don't deal directly with patients at all.

More often than not these valuable employees lack the unified information sharing and communications systems most desk workers in other industries have grown to expect: emails pile up in overloaded inboxes, antiquated tech like pagers are still regularly used, vacation requests get lost in a sea of HR paperwork, and open enrollment for benefits is confusing.

The sole connection between the non-desk workforce and management exists via printed newsletters, the rare face-to-face meeting, or a bulletin board. Further, as organizations grow or pandemics spread, so do the problems plaguing these dispersed workers. This leads to inadequate corporate culture, burnout, and extremely costly turnover.

In this ebook, we've outlined three strategies for engaging your non-desk workforce with a modern internal communications strategy, developed in conjunction with our most successful healthcare customers, whose workforces range anywhere from under 1,000 to roughly 40,000 employees.

From a group of 15,000 physicians polled from 29 different specialities, **44 percent reported symptoms of burnout:** "a syndrome conceptualized as resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed."

Source: <https://www.medscape.com/slideshow/2019-lifestyle-burnout-depression-6011056?faf=1#1>

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



A Culture That Puts Employees Second

The focus on patient care in healthcare can sometimes limit an organization's ability to see the correlation between happy employees and happy patients. While not every patient outcome will be positive, employees should always feel supported in their efforts to produce positive results and drive the bottom line. **The key to this support is internal communication**, and new strategies are necessary to re-engage a workforce that experiences consistently high turnover.

By failing to prioritize internal communications, healthcare in the United States had an average turnover of 19.1 percent in 2019, up from 15.2 percent in 2016, according to the latest NSI National Healthcare Retention & RN Staffing Report. To put this in perspective, this ranks healthcare's turnover rate second only to hospitality's.

In the UK, things aren't much better. Trusts reported more than 100,000 vacancies in the NHS in 2018, and work-life balance has been cited as a driving factor behind the gap. The number of healthcare workers who said a lack of this balance caused them to leave also increased by two and a half times between 2012 and 2019, amounting to an additional 11,000 people.

Case Study:

Franciscan Children's Hospital

The Franciscan Children's Hospital in Boston, MA, provides care and education for children with unique healthcare needs, helping them find the "courage to reach their full potential with integrity and respect." The hospital is devoted to the promotion of evidence-based practices in pediatric rehabilitation, and the development, evaluation, and dissemination of effective models of caring for children.

The Challenge:

In order for Franciscan Children's to provide the best possible experience for their young patients, hospital employees need to devote themselves entirely to their patients. However, with a workforce busy on the hospital floor instead of at a desktop, communication was becoming difficult:

"Our challenge was that with so many care providers in so many different parts of our organization, we didn't have an effective way of communicating and talking to one another in order to learn what we were all doing. So, we started to look at an employee app as a solution that provides both desktop and mobile options that can reach all of our employees."

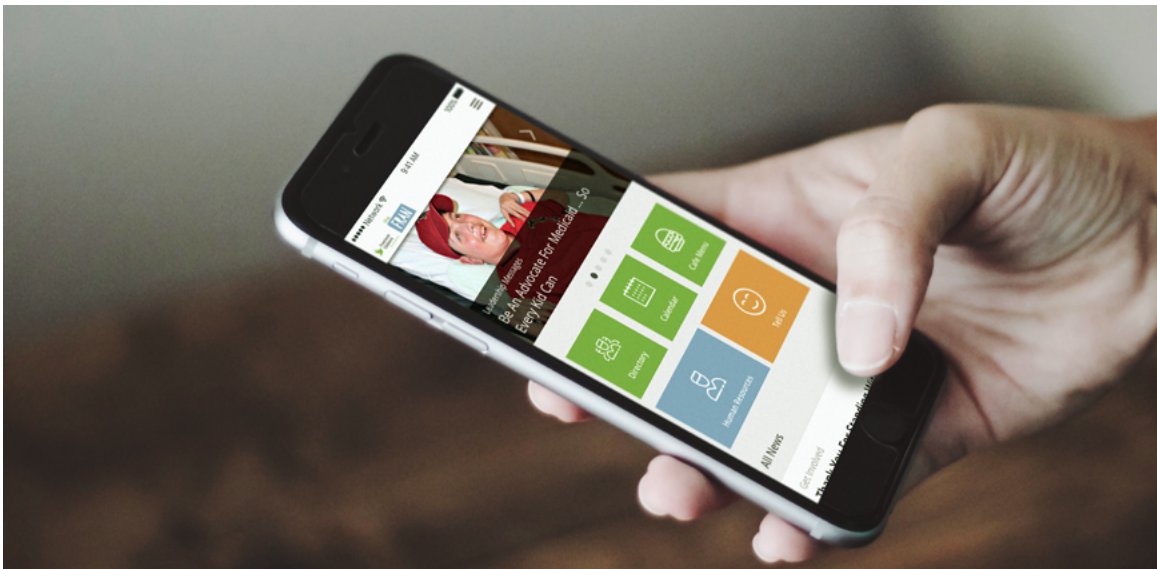


Carla Kath, Director of Communications



The Solution:

In order to ensure that their employees remained in the loop, even when treating patients all day, an employee app from Staffbase called “TheFRAN”—a popular nickname for the hospital—was quickly implemented. The app capitalizes on usage using built-in analytics to push messages at high-engagement opportunities, such as when employees arrive at work or during lunch breaks.



Additionally, the hospital posted “Did You Know?” teasers that lead to bits of interesting trivia about fellow staffers, such as: “Did you know that your colleague plays guitar?” or “Did you know that your colleague was a beauty pageant queen?” The goal of these teasers is to create a culture that supports the exchange of information and feedback. “It’s a way to create an engaging space,” Ms. Kath says, “where we could celebrate our culture and provide recognition for our employees.”

After just two months, 80% of the hospital’s workforce was registered. After four months, the number had risen to 85%. TheFRAN reinvigorated Franciscan Children’s Hospital with a culture that unifies the staff against burnout by enriching their employee experience with genuine value and a sense of community. “It’s a way to create an engaging space,” Kath says, “where we could celebrate our culture and provide recognition for our employees.”



Outdated Technology

The healthcare industry generally lags behind other industries with regard to use of newer communications technologies. For example, nearly 80 percent of hospitals still use pagers, according to a recent study in the Journal of Hospital Medicine.

Even with the advent of the smartphone, pagers still persist today because they work where an iPhone won't, like in areas where walls have been built to prevent X-ray exposure. Pagers are also seen as being more secure than smartphones in their rudimentary functionality and lack of maintenance.

On average, clinicians waste more than **45 minutes per day** using older communications tools, with pager inefficiency cited by most respondents as the biggest time waster.

Source: <https://www.ponemon.org/local/upload/file/2014%20Imprivata%20Report%20FINAL%203.pdf>

However, when employees in care settings are using pagers or other outdated communications technologies, they waste both time and money, according to a report from the Ponemon Institute. While they may be effective in some scenarios, use of older communications technologies costs U.S. hospitals roughly **eight billion dollars** per year in loss of productivity and consequential increase of patient discharge times.

Case Study:

Lower Austrian Provincial Health Agency

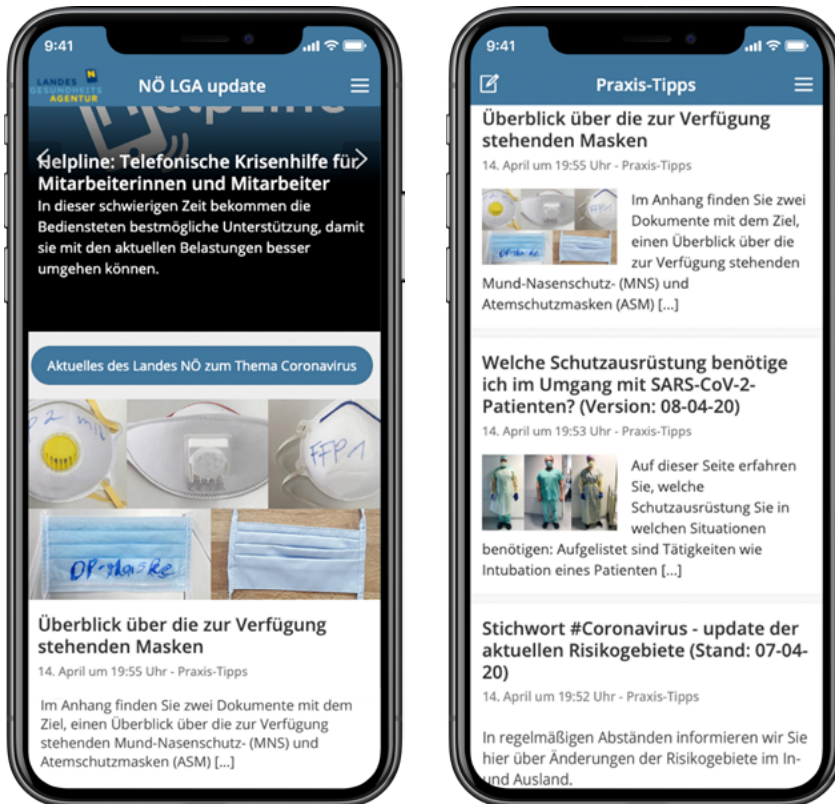


The Lower Austrian Provincial Health Agency (NÖ LGA) has a total of 27,000 employees spread throughout more than 75 provincial and university clinics, nursing homes, and support centers working together to serve three million patients annually.

The Challenge:

At the outset of the COVID-19 spread in Europe, it became clear to the organization's leadership that their old methods for communicating internally were incapable of handling the rapid response demanded from the crisis: management had to work through hospital administrators to spread news to all employees, and the existing intranet was neglected and only worked only for desk workers.

Finding a digital channel to provide trusted and relevant information to everyone in their system became NÖ LGA's top priority in order to promote a sense of security, preparedness, and community. The initiative quickly became one of the company's highest priorities, leading to their decision to partner with Staffbase to roll out a new branded communications app, "LGA Update."



"It was the speed at which this solution could be made available that was a decisive factor for us, particularly in view of developments in connection with the coronavirus, it was imperative for us to ensure that medical and nursing staff were informed quickly and comprehensively."



Matthias Hofer, Head of Communication at NÖ LGA

The Solution:

In the case of NÖ LGA, speed of implementation was major, and so using Staffbase NOW—a lightweight, multi-platform communications channel based on our full employee app—a web version of the app was made available to the company on the very same day they contacted Staffbase. An iOS app was up and running within a week, and full implementation of the app took only twelve days. The digital tool was quickly providing users with the kinds of up to date and trusted information they had been craving.

Timeline

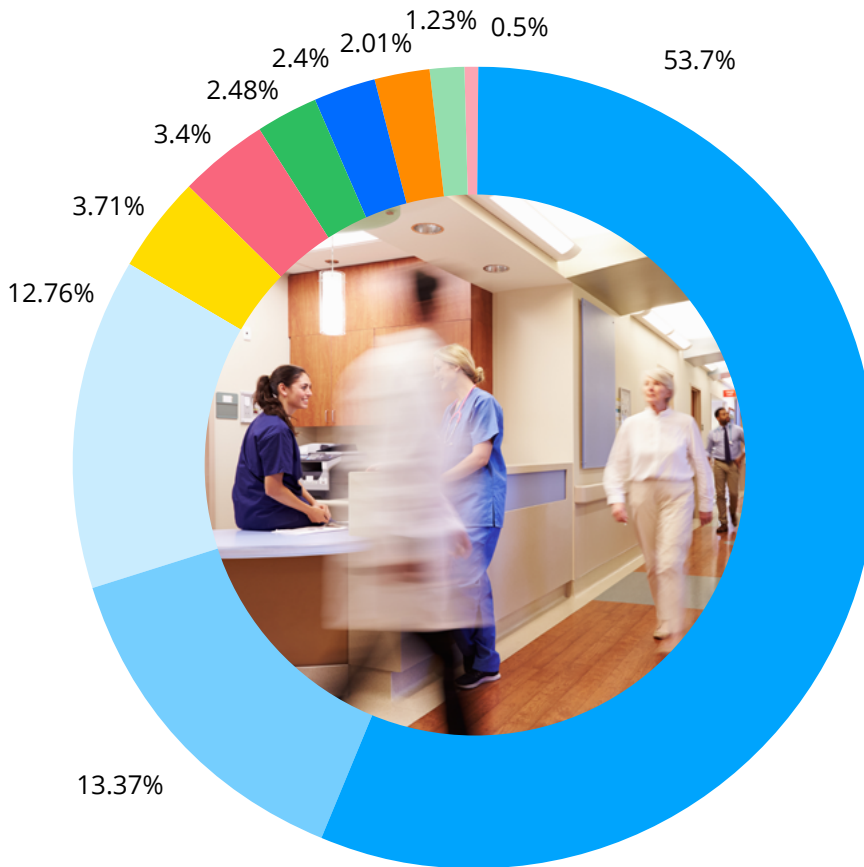
- First contact: March 23, 2020
- Kickoff date: March 23, 2020
- Web version available: Same day (directly following kickoff)
- Branded iOS app available: 7 days after kickoff
- Branded Android app available: 10 days after kickoff
- Full implementation: Within 12 days
- Current user numbers (as of 4/17/20): 8,000 registered users, increasing daily



3 Communicating Across Different Target Groups

A common barrier to effective communication in healthcare is the sheer number of target groups an organization can contain: janitorial staff, clinicians, administrators, etc. Given the diversity of roles that these systems contain, segmenting internal communication by role is an essential way to increase the relevance and effectiveness of your efforts. After all, the same message that might be vital for administrators will be of very little importance for clinicians doing rounds on the hospital floor.

The average hospital consists of:



Source: <https://www.beckershospitalreview.com/hr/what-occupations-make-up-the-hospital-workforce.html>

Healthcare practitioners and technical occupations:

53.7 percent

Office and administrative support:

13.37 percent

Healthcare support:

12.76 percent

Management occupations:

3.71 percent

Building and grounds cleaning and maintenance:

3.4 percent

Food prep and service:

2.48 percent

Community and social services:

2.4 percent

Business and financial operations:

2.01 percent

Computer and mathematics:

1.23 percent

CEOs and other top executives:

0.5 percent

These different target groups also have varying levels of access to devices. If you're trying to reach your deskless employees, for example, sending them a lengthy email with a link to a website they need to log into is going to have a very low open and conversion rate. Conversely, if you know these field/deskless employees are busy and on-the-go but like to receive communications on their mobile devices, it would be more effective to share the message in a bite-size mobile format and trigger them reading it by using a push notification.



Case Study:

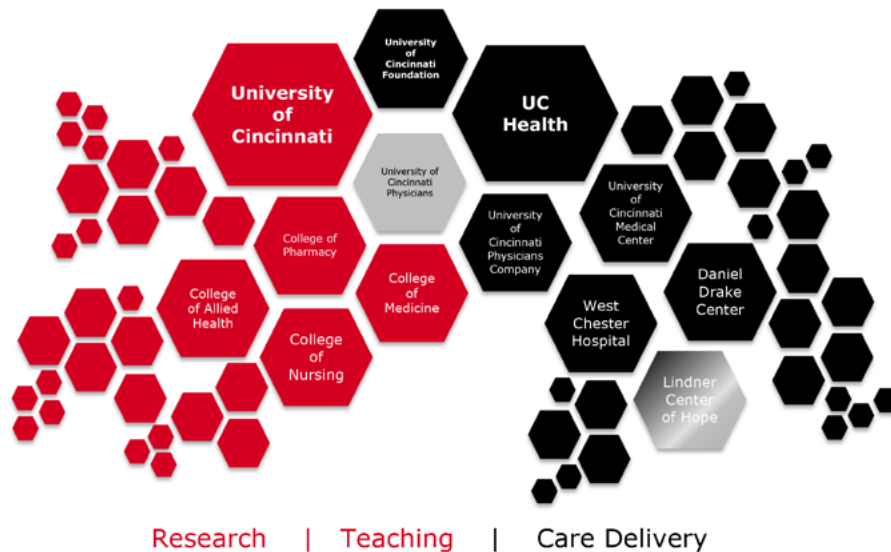
UC Health

From their flagship University of Cincinnati Medical Center to the West Chester Hospital, UC Health delivers the absolute best in treatment to roughly two million people per year through a network of four hospitals and 100 ambulatory offices spread across the of the United States.

The Challenge:

The size and diversity of UC Health was the primary cause of their disjointed and ineffective communication strategies. Structurally speaking, UC Health is partnered with the University of Cincinnati, but remains a separate legal entity with different leadership and communication structures.

Employees at the crossroads of the two received mainly email communication from two different sources constantly, which, when paired with the general lack of comms accessibility for non-desk workers and a Sharepoint Intranet that had effectively become a junk drawer, led to very low engagement scores.



The Solution:

Together with Staffbase, UC Health revamped their internal comms from top to bottom with their new employee app, “The Link.” Using the rallying call of “Lead the Way,” the communications team creatively encouraged internal buy-in, urging employees to actively improve communication and culture in their daily workday using their new platform.

With “The Link,” UC Health was also finally able to segment their large internal audience. Now, messages are sent to the right time for the right people at the right location—a meticulous distribution strategy compared to their previous broad brush email campaigns. Content is now compelling and highly relevant, not just something to be ignored or hard to locate.

As a result, 45% of their workforce—approximately 4,000 employees—were logged in to “the Link” without any mandated participation as of February 2018.



Conclusion

Achieving effective two-way communication between management and employees is difficult. It's particularly challenging for hospitals, with diverse workforces often dominated by non-desk workers prioritizing patient care. Using ineffective and outdated communication strategies is often the norm, and as a consequence, productivity and ultimately profitability suffers.

This ebook draws on three examples of healthcare institutions that were able to successfully address these problems using the flexibility, scalability, mobility, and community-building power of a Staffbase employee app.

With a Staffbase Employee App, you'll also be able to:

1. Organize your staff with a shift plan.
2. Host a cultural hub that creates a sense of belonging and builds employee satisfaction.
3. Reach employees in a timely manner with instant notifications.
4. Ensure a high level of security for sensitive information.
5. Finally reduce turnover and burnout.
6. Provide top-down transparency from management.

Let us help you put your people first.

Get started with a Demo [here](#)



The Employee Experience Platform

staffbase.com