

Faster than a Speeding Email

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Today's manufacturing organizations require new solutions to maintain safe, adaptable, and well-connected teams across their frontline workforce—and the need is imminent. The United States is home to over 152 million frontline workers, and the return to work as lockdowns lift has aggravated certain procedural issues across manufacturing industries. By leveraging technology to improve the way manufacturing teams communicate with production workers, management can improve efficiency and agility, and shorten the time it takes to deliver vital information down the chain to the front lines.

Delivering Fast Updates to Teams on the Floor

Many manufacturing organizations are concerned about the ability to rapidly update frontline teams to changes in policies and procedures. Often, in companies with a distributed global team, managers must rely on legacy methods of communication.

Take, for example, the technology overhaul implemented by Holcim (Schweiz) AG, a leading building materials and solutions provider. Holcim needed a mobile platform for operational communications across global manufacturing plants, quarries, and service areas with more than 1,500 workers across 70+ locations. For years, like many companies, Holcim relied on standard email, paper notices, and phone calls to deliver updates to workers. This process could be very time-consuming for company executives as they had to prepare and disseminate multiple levels of communication.

The key to cutting through the logistical challenges of getting updates from the CEO to every worker on the factory floor was the centralization of information. Holcim accomplished this by rolling out a mobile communication and operations platform to support secure instant messaging, a digitized employee magazine, and sharing critical safety information. By delivering updates instantaneously to employees' smartphones, teams onsite have the most accurate information at any given moment.

In addition to videos that demonstrate warm-up exercises for construction and plant workers before beginning their work at a jobsite or factory, Holcim shares health and safety tips. These safety guidelines include what to do in extreme heat conditions when working outdoors, and other tips that contribute to a safe working environment.

Plant managers and staff also share updates on equipment maintenance, such as new acquisitions or improvements to existing construction infrastructure.

Making Sure Critical Information Is Read

While safety and procedure updates are always paramount for manufacturing teams, regulations and company mandates are changing faster than ever. Team leads today need to be able to cut through the noise and get the most important updates delivered fast.

For many manufacturers, the information overload can have a negative impact on their workers, especially their email inboxes (if employees are even given corporate email addresses). With an onslaught of regulatory updates and company notices, managers are also often left with no way to track which employees have seen important policy updates and lack the ability to flag the most relevant ones.

To prevent time-sensitive safety updates and policy changes from becoming lost in the shuffle, manufacturers can utilize mobile technology with real-time knowledge sharing and push notifications.

These types of apps and notifications offer an alternative to the typical email logjam. Rather than waiting until employees return from the job site to check their flooded inboxes or paper fliers, managers can send out an immediate update that workers will see as soon as they glance at their phones. They can even require read receipt confirmation for any message and follow up with those haven't confirmed.

Checking in on Employee Health and Morale

In manufacturing, the reality of the pandemic is that one sick employee can derail an entire team's operations. Manufacturing leaders want to know how their teams are coping and keep close track of the health and well-being of their workers, and human resources teams must be equipped with tools to keep up.

As is the case in many large manufacturing operations, HyLife Foods, one of Canada's largest pork producers, faced challenges in delivering communications across its diverse workforce. Critical updates passed slowly down the chain of command, and HR notices were sent as mailed fliers attached to paystubs, creating a lacking sense of community and little transparency between management and their teams.

Today, with the added pressures and uncertainties of COVID-19, those methods are all but effective. Today, many manufacturers are introducing technology solutions, like app-based chat services and notification systems, equipped with instant multi-language translation.

These types of tools can be critical in communicating health and safety information, both for management and for workers. HR updates are imperative during the pandemic, or any crisis, and equipping employees with a way to check in frequently and have their questions answered quickly reduces anxiety and helps managers to keep a pulse on any health risks.

By implementing a mobile platform that gives all employees, especially those on the front lines, access to the people, processes, and information they need, managers can empower their teams to resolve issues more safely and efficiently.

Daniel Sztutowjner is chief customer officer/co-founder of Beekeeper.