

How Mobile Technology is Taking the Sting Out of Corporate Communication

[fp foodprocessing.com/workforce/careers/article/11302127/how-mobile-technology-is-taking-the-sting-out-of-corporate-communication](http://foodprocessing.com/workforce/careers/article/11302127/how-mobile-technology-is-taking-the-sting-out-of-corporate-communication)



Welcome to the Food For Thought Podcast, a podcast where we take you beyond the headlines of the food and beverage manufacturing industry.

This week I sat down with Daniel Sztutowojner chief customer officer and co-founder of Beekeeper. During this episode, we talk about how food processing companies have used the tool to keep their employees updated on processes and procedures-- including COVID-specific logistics. We also discuss how mobile technology is actually helping companies become safer and more efficient.

Transcript

Erin: Daniel, welcome to "The Food For Thought" podcast. Great to have you here.

Daniel: Thank you very much, Erin. Thank you so much for having me. It's great to be here.

Erin: Yes. I'm so curious about Beekeeper. I really want to dive right in. Can you talk to me about what Beekeeper is? Is it an app, a tool, and I'm really curious why the name Beekeeper?

Daniel: Absolutely. So, Beekeeper is a mobile-first platform that helps companies digitally enable their frontline in order to boost quality, safety, and agility. So, what does that mean? Think of your frontline workers, so 80% of the workforce population is actually unconnected. We've heard people that are working without access to a corporate email address or communication is still very traditional.

So, Beekeeper becomes that single point of contact for the frontline workforce to be able to access communication, to understand the processes they need to follow, and also to access other systems that they might need to do their work. So, at the end, you see you have the mobile app for the frontline employees and you also have the web platform for the people that are working in front of the computer.

And the name comes from the fact that actually bees are very communicative animals and in order for them to produce the best honey, they need to be able to communicate with each other. They need to be able to coordinate and collaborate in their work. And this exactly what we see that companies need to do in order to provide the best services and the best products to their customers. They need to make sure that everyone in the organization is working together, coordinated, and collaborating with each other.

Erin: Who within an organization is Beekeeper best suited for both on the implementation side, as well as the end-user side?

Daniel: So, Beekeeper is best suited for any company that needs to communicate more effectively with their employees, especially with their frontline employees. Those that tend to be disconnected. From the implementation side, we tend to work with the operations and human resources teams, of course, with involvement of IT since this is the digital platform. And from the end-user point of view, Beekeeper is designed for every single employee. It's intuitive. It has a simple interface that makes it easy for anyone to quickly learn how Beekeeper works and be able to access the information they need across any shift, across any location, and even across any language because they can access the information in their language of preference.

Erin: I was reading recently on the Beekeeper website about how one of your food and beverage clients used Beekeeper to keep in touch with the furloughed employees, as well as the frontline teams on COVID procedures, can you talk more about that? And are you hearing similar stories from other clients?

Daniel: Thanks, Erin. I mean, COVID has really uncovered a lot of new use cases. So, we know already for a while that companies have a challenge to reach their frontline. In order for them to work effectively, they need to reach the frontline. They need to let them know about the new procedures about, for example, their health and safety processes, about the tasks they need to do and when they have to do them. But with COVID, when COVID started, it really brought everything to a different level.

So, two things that we realized because of COVID and this is from talking to our customers, one is that their need and urgency to be able to push information to their frontline became much, much higher, and this was something critical. I mean, they had to change the way they work. Suddenly, they need to implement new health and safety measurements. They need to ensure social distancing to make sure that the employees can work in a safe environment. So, it was a matter of being able to communicate very time-sensitive information to all their employees. So, we enabled to do that. That's where Beekeeper really step up.

And the other side, which you mentioned is communicating with furloughed employees. And that was also something new to us because they had to make sure that, of course, the furloughed employees were doing well, to keep them up-to-date with what was happening in the company and make sure that they're still engaged so as soon as the situation starts improving, they will come back to work.

And what many companies shared with us is actually they were concerned about the benefits that they furloughed employees were getting, because in some cases, those benefits were even higher than the salaries that they might be receiving from the employer. And it was very important to keep that relationship with the employees so then they will be able to come back to work with them. So, that was a very interesting use case. And we see in many situations, especially in the food production, that many of the furloughed employees starting coming back, thanks to the fact that they were still connected and felt part of the organization.

Erin: In the vein of mobile communication, what can you tell me about mobile communication trends for food production or food processing employees?

Daniel: I think before we talk about the trends, I think what is important is to understand how communication works in general with food production companies, and in most of the cases, it's still very traditional. It's based on daily stand-ups or daily briefings on putting information on the bulletin boards, distributing flyers, even a lot of telephone calls. So, if they're doing changes in shifts or they need to notify employees about, for example, the drivers, the truck drivers that they need to take certain special routes that they do everything via phone calls. In some cases, they even send emails to their personal email addresses of the employees or text message if they have the phone numbers of the employees.

So, that's pretty much where we're coming from. And what we see already today in the United States is that 95% of the population already owns a smartphone. And when we look at the demographics that are related to food production, actually more than 75% of the employees own a smartphone. So, actually the fact that the penetration of mobile phones is increasing so rapidly and we see that the communication is changing and they want to be able to reach their employees where the employees live, which is on their phones.

So, we see that employees are leveraging SMS communication or push notifications to be able to share information with the employees. And when COVID started, we saw an incredible acceleration of these trends because suddenly the employers needed to inform immediately about changes in procedures or processes to the employees if the plants were open or were closing. So, that's when we see the usage of mobile technology increasing rapidly. And yeah, I think that will be the main trend, the increase of usage of mobile technology and the fact that pretty much everyone also has a smartphone today, and that companies can leverage that to make sure that employees can access information at their fingertips.

Erin: When you've looked at trends, are there any trends in particular that really stand out to you or have surprised you, whether it be in food production or otherwise?

Daniel: Related to trends, and I would say maybe specifically since COVID started because we see really a change in the industry. I mean, clearly COVID affected everyone and we see that the majority of food producers and processors and packers that, of course, they had to change their business strategy and their operations.

We see that they had to, for example, go back to certain retail channels and instead of servicing maybe food services that they went back and focused on retail business. They also had to make some changes to their products. So, they started focusing more on the top-selling products and how to put on hold the launch of new offerings.

The thing that we saw across the board is really the employee safety. That's something that came across the board and I feel that this trend that, of course, it's getting accelerated by COVID, the employee safety and making sure that employees are working in a safe environment so they won't get in the virus in this case, that they wouldn't have any accidents, and then the plants will be able to continue operating. So, that is the main trend, the focus on safety.

And what for me sometimes is crazy to see that...even we see that the majority of the employees already own a smartphone, mobile technology is very common across the board, that still many organizations are not leveraging entirely mobile technology and the capabilities that that would have to drive them the safety of their employees and making sure that there are no incidents in the workspace.

Erin: Yeah, that's definitely interesting. And it certainly sounds like Beekeeper is incredibly useful from a communication standpoint as well as a safety standpoint, can you tell me what are other ways it can help with operational efficiency?

Daniel: Yeah. And that's right regarding safety, going back to that point. Actually, we feel that companies have to change the way they work, for example, one of the large food producers is one of our customers. It's one of the large food producers in the U.S. but also globally because they had to change the processes, one of the things they wanted to avoid is that employees will congregate around the bulletin board to read information because they

thought that if everyone gets close to the bulletin board and stick together, that will be a way of avoiding social distancing. So, we see the importance of communicating these changes to the employees and making sure that they change the way they communicate with each other.

Interested in being a guest on an upcoming episode of the Food For Thought Podcast? **E-Mail Our Host and Producer** to see if you might be a good fit for Food Processing's Food For Thought Podcast.

Now, looking at operational efficiency is important that if they cannot use the traditional channels for communicating things that in any case were not very successful, because we know from different studies, for example, from the Lloyd and from McKinsey [surveys] that employees have challenges finding the information that they needed to work effectively.

And these studies actually prove that employees are spending up to three hours every week looking for the information they need to do their job right. And this, of course, translates into massive opportunity cost and, of course, dollar value cost for these organizations when it comes to efficiency and safety.

So, where Beekeeper helps to streamline this process and make sure that they can provide...that the employees can access the information they need directly in the palm of their hand. And, for example, by providing them the document that they need on health and safety processes or on how a machine works or on how to do certain tasks, that is an area that we've seen significant gains in operational efficiency.

Another area is on sharing real-time time schedules. So, for example, letting employees know that if a plant is opening or is closing, that was happening a lot when COVID started and employees were a bit overwhelmed, what's going on? Do I need to go to work tomorrow or not? What's going to happen? Is my shift changing?

And a lot of those communications' what's happening and in many cases still happen in via phone calls where a manager needs to inform every single employee about their shifts schedule changes. And this is an area where also we've seen an enormous gain in operational efficiency, sharing time schedules.

And another one that I can think of is regarding anything that so far was a paper process, so, for example, filling out paper forms to request additional working gear or to make any kind of request. We are helping organizations digitalize those processes so that the employees can actually fill those forms out directly from their mobile phones. And then that information is already digitally available for their managers to approve or the correspondent department to approve. And there, there is also a significant time saving from the side of the organization. So, those are three areas where we see the significant increase in operational efficiency thanks to Beekeeper.

Erin: It certainly does sound like a very, very useful tool, especially now during COVID. Before we sign off, if someone listening was interested in getting to know more about Beekeeper for their own organization, how should they go about reaching out?

Daniel: Sure. So they can find us online at beekeeper.io. So, that's **beekeeper.io**. Or give us a call at 844-423-3533.

Erin: All right. Well, thank you so much, Daniel. It was an absolute pleasure talking to you today and learning more about Beekeeper and also that handy little nugget of information about bees and their communication. I didn't know that. So, learned a lot this morning. So, thank you so much. It was great having you on.

Daniel: Thank you very much, Erin. Pleasure was mine. I'm looking forward to being back here.

Erin Hallstrom is the resident geek and Swiss Army Knife of FoodProcessing.com and the author of our Working Wit blog, she's responsible for the digital strategy for FoodProcessing.com including posting content, managing social media, and analyzing reader data. She's a Toastmaster, a Black Belt in Karate, and an Improv Performer to boot. Erin also is a founding member of the **Influential Women in Manufacturing** program, the creator and host of our **Food For Thought podcast**, and is a producer and host of our **Manufacturing Tomorrow's Workforce podcast**. Give her a shout-out or **get in touch with her via email**.