

Deskless, but not disconnected

NP provisioneronline.com/articles/110179-deskless-but-not-disconnected

The digital communication revolution has arrived for frontline employees.

By [Daniel Sztutwojner](#), [Beekeeper](#)



Though frontline jobs on the packing or processing floor are often assumed to be devoid of technology such as email or instant messaging, “deskless” shouldn’t mean disconnected. Today, emerging technology solutions can be applied to the industrial workforce to ensure frontline workers are reachable, improve their preparedness and independence on the job and improve worker safety.

The need to stay connected

The onset of the coronavirus pandemic created a crisis situation for frontline teams, as companies faced a sudden and urgent need to reach their distributed teams more quickly. Protocols and staffing have begun to change almost daily, and food-processing companies need to communicate about schedules and procedures in real time.

Following social-distancing guidelines, plants have been forced to move away from traditional staff meetings. The ability to reach an entire remote workforce is no longer optional; it is critical.

The pandemic has accelerated the adoption of digital solutions to reach teams at the front line, where safety protocols crucial. When these workers are reachable via a single app or on a mobile device, management can swiftly deploy updates such as new procedures and other important announcements.

Benefits of digital communication

HyLife, Canada's leading pork producer, recently faced a need for a comprehensive solution that would improve communications among their diverse workforce. The company opted for a mobile communication infrastructure to develop a unified channel for up-to-date, real-time communications that would support and protect its staff.

Prior to this, HyLife shared employee information through an intranet site. To convey larger company-wide news, HyLife relied on payroll stuffers distributed by mail. Under the previous system, some barn sites also used legacy technology such as fax machines to communicate.

Posters were used to share health and safety tips, company guidelines and social events. These methods, common for many processing plants, were neither timely nor effective and left the management team unable to reach its collective workforce.

In the wake of COVID-19, digital communication has allowed HyLife to share critical updates. Staff engagement has soared and new employees are now onboarded more efficiently. Consistent, real-time communication has been integral in the company's ability to maintain continued success during the pandemic.

Implementation strategies

Similar to the digital transformation that took place at HyLife, other food processing companies can use digital communication technology to better equip their workforces for change. The first step is to identify the company's specific communication needs.

Food processing companies may have unique needs compared with other frontline industries and are held to high regulatory standards. Communicating operational procedures, changes and news is vital to the safety of both workers and consumers.

Increasingly, food-processing company executives who view their operation as excluded from the workplace technology revolution are beginning to recognize the role digitized solutions can play in their company's long-term success. And the "deskless" employees who may have

previously thought digital tools were “not for people like them” can confidently discover that, in fact, they are. **NP**

Daniel Sztutowojner is chief customer officer and co-founder of Beekeeper. For more information, visit www.beekeeper.io/en.