
SUCCESS STORY

Keeping Connected During COVID-19

HOW EFFECTIVE ENGAGEMENT
ENABLED PAUL UK TO SWIFTLY ADAPT





SNAPSHOT

Their Story

Paul UK, an artisan bakery, boasts a 37-stong estate and offers a taste of France with its delicious pastries, cakes and coffee. Faced with mandatory closures due to the COVID-19 crisis, Paul UK are a forward-thinking operator who have led the way in successfully diversifying their operating model and offering to meet demand.

Challenges

During the COVID pandemic, Paul UK was struggling with how to effectively communicate with and engage their team of 500+ employees.

Solutions

A digital communication approach using Fourth Engage.

Results

- Engagement transformation across the company, and an intent to carry the approach through post lockdown as the sector gradually returns to the 'new normal'
- 84% of the entire team are now accessing the digital communications
- 60% accessing these multiple times throughout the week

An extremely passionate advocate for the hospitality sector, Dawn Humphries has spent many years in hospitality operations as a restaurant manager. For the last 18 months, Dawn has been responsible for training, learning and development at Paul UK. The artisan bakery boasts a 37-stong estate and offers a taste of France with its delicious pastries, cakes and coffee. Faced with mandatory closures due to the COVID-19 crisis, Paul UK are a forward-thinking operator who have led the way in successfully diversifying their operating model and offering to meet demand. We spoke to Dawn about the fundamental role that communication played in this journey, enabling Paul UK to engage with their employees throughout, quickly mobilise teams and safely staff 13 of their sites, all with the aim of providing for local communities.

Rethinking Strategies

After the initial lockdown of all hospitality businesses, set in place by the government on 23rd March, Paul UK saw the supermarket supply challenges and struggles to meet customer demand, so they revisited their offering to see if they could safely meet these needs by converting to sell groceries direct to the consumer. Dawn revealed, "Paul UK adapted and stripped back the offering to its fundamentals - offering bread to the community which we have been doing for over 130 years. We then added essentials, such as milk and flour to the offering."

FORWARD-
THINKING



DAWN HUMPHRIES

Paul UK's Learning and Development Manager

"I'm very happy with these incredible results and seeing the teams connecting despite the fact that many are temporarily furloughed and at home."

Communicating Pre COVID-19

"As is often the case in hospitality businesses, effective communication with a team of 500+ employees is a challenge" Dawn said. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, communications were predominantly email-based, which was fine for managers but challenging with team members on-site. Many emails were going unread. Weekly communications were printed and pinned to notice boards but they were not confident that these were getting the right level of engagement. Dawn continued, "We were actively seeking a way to overcome these everyday challenges, and then COVID-19 hit. We knew that effective communication would be even more important, so we looked to a digital engagement approach moving forward."

Adopting a Digital Engagement Approach

With site closures making notice boards obsolete, and ongoing challenges with emails, Paul UK sought an online and mobile channel to communicate with their employees. They adopted Fourth's Engage solution to deliver regular communications to their entire team in order to keep them updated on the latest company news, whilst also holding regular social events via video calls to boost morale. Communications targeted both furloughed and working employees and include weekly updates from the CEO, video updates from the Operations Director and anniversary acknowledgements, as well as the more jovial Wellbeing Wednesday and Foodie Fridays. Reflecting on these weekly features Dawn says, "Think yoga, activities to involve the family in, or what can I make with the ingredients in my fridge, and where would I most like to go for dinner when restaurants reopen?"



DAWN HUMPHRIES

Paul UK's Learning and Development Manager

"Digital communications have been vital to addressing the challenges COVID-19 presents and bringing our teams together..."

The Results

Managing Paul UK's communications, Dawn has seen immediate results. Eight weeks in, the digital approach has transformed engagement across the company, and Paul will carry the approach through post lockdown as the sector gradually returns to the 'new normal'. Dawn noted, "Across the company, 84% of the entire team are now accessing the digital communications, with 60% accessing these multiple times throughout the week."

She continued, "It's clear the new digital approach has been well-received by the teams working in the shops, who have been actively posting updates, including what they are doing in the shops and how they are supporting key workers and the NHS. These peer-led posts are the



most popular and have received the most engagement, ultimately bringing the Paul UK community closer together despite these challenging times.”

Dawn reflected that without the new digital approach, the furlough process wouldn't have been possible. She stated, “I'm very happy with these incredible results and seeing the teams connecting despite the fact that many are temporarily furloughed and at home”.

“Effective engagement has been vital to bringing team members back from furlough,” explained Dawn. “Of the shops we have been able to safely reopen, these have been staffed by team members who have seen the communications about a handful of our sites reopening. They have been actively engaging

with their team members throughout and have volunteered to come back to work.”

The Future

Despite these unprecedented times, Paul UK were able to swiftly and effectively adapt their operating model thanks to effective communications. Dawn and the team are encouraged about what the future holds, concluding that, “digital communications have been vital to addressing the challenges COVID-19 presents and bringing our teams together. We are excited to see how this strategy evolves as we come out of lockdown and as operating requirements continue to evolve. Our aim is to see our entire workforce engaging via our digital communications and navigate these challenges together.”