

Employee Engagement for Today's Workforce

Unpacking how to better connect,
recognise and support your people

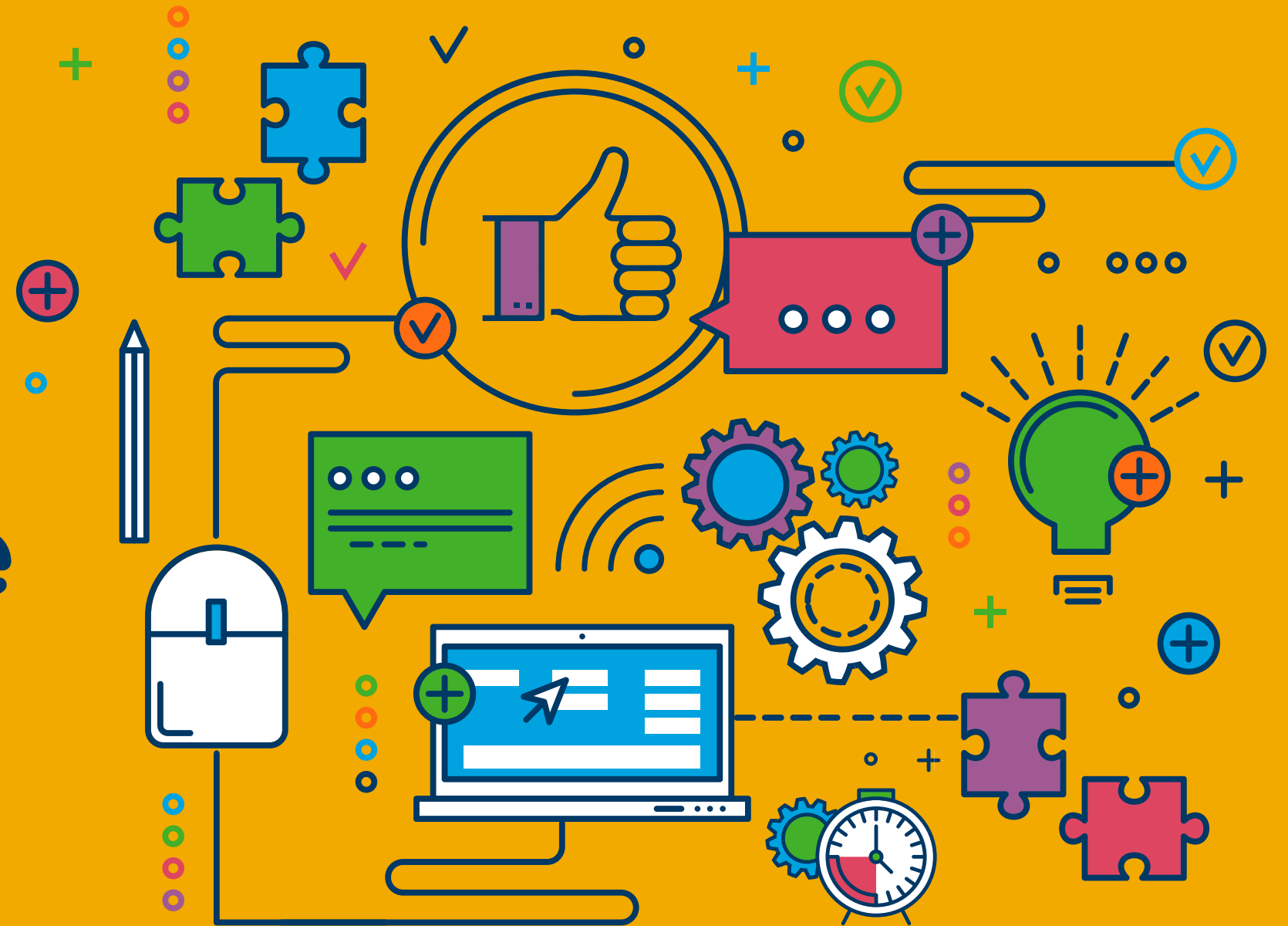


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Hi there,

In what seemed like the blink of an eye, we've had to reconsider how we engage employees. The COVID-19 pandemic has forced many employees to work remotely, while others are working in unfamiliar and high-pressure environments to serve their communities. This new way of working has challenged HR leaders with the need to keep people connected, while also connecting them to a larger purpose every day.

Back in May of 2020, Gallup reported a record high in global employee engagement. But one month later, they saw the most significant drop in employee engagement since 2000. Given the stress and speed of change introduced in a matter of months, it's no surprise that the largest decline in engagement was among managers and leaders, and the drop affected on-site and frontline workers more.

What does this mean for our organisations?

It's key that our managers and leaders openly communicate during challenging times, to shine a spotlight on hard work and to connect people back to their 'why,' especially when everything else is uncertain and you've lost the connection of physical proximity. **All of these elements will help boost a sense of community, productivity and motivation, while helping transform company culture now and well into the future.**

Working with more than 1,900 companies has taught us that the new way forward is about being agile and listening to your people to uncover what they really need. This rang true particularly throughout the pandemic, and those organisations that have adopted a flexible approach are more likely to stand out as a top employer in their industry.

Introduction

In this eBook, we'll walk you through:

- What the new landscape of employee engagement looks like
- How the right tools can help you reach your people
- Tips for evolving and refining your employee engagement strategy

I hope you find this eBook full of useful information to help you figure out which turn to take next and how to meet the changing needs of today's workforce.

Let's take this journey together,

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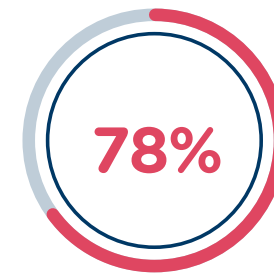
A New Era of Employee Engagement



Having a dedicated focus on employee engagement has never been more important. We know that companies with engaged employees outperform those without by 202%, and that highly engaged businesses benefit from a 10% increase in customer ratings and a 20% increase in sales (Gallup). Engagement has always been more than ping pong tables and free lunches, even more so now that people are no longer face-to-face and social cohesion is harder than ever – it's about creating an environment and a culture where employees thrive.

This has become all the more apparent as employees have turned to their leaders to connect, recognise and support them in the changing world of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Throughout the pandemic, employee trust and expectations changed – the 2021 Edelman Trust Barometer showed that:



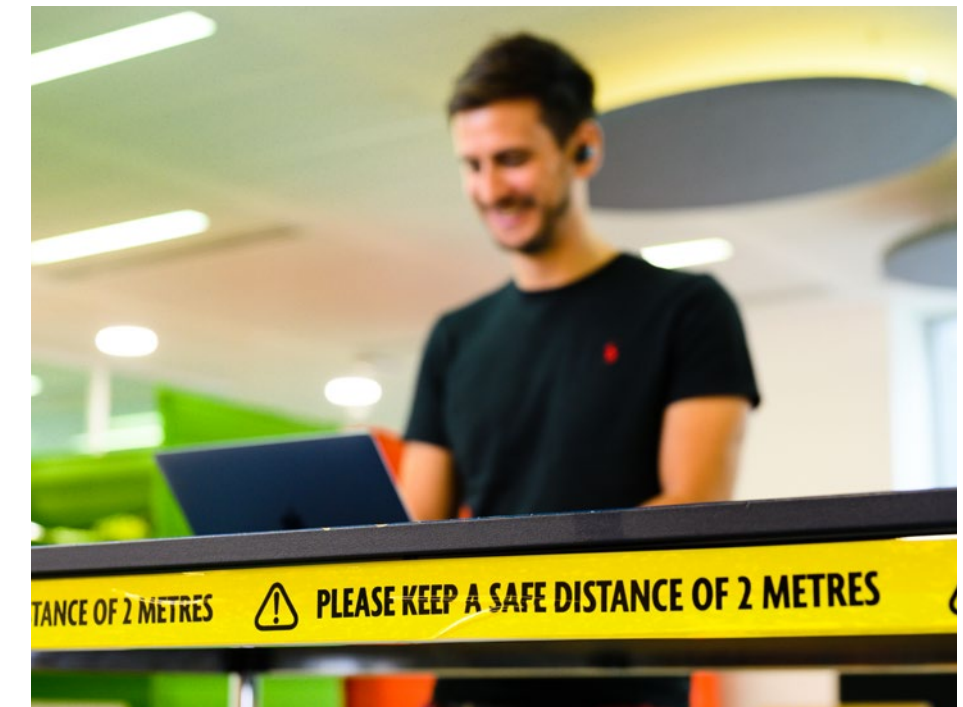
of **Australians** trust their employer over business generally



Regular employee communications increased in importance by 44 points, making it just as critical as job skills training.

During the initial crisis, leaders often stepped up for their teams. But how do we keep that going?

In an ever-changing environment, how can you make sure engagement is at the top of your list when there are so many other competing priorities?



The benefits of engaged employees

Strategic HR teams have an opportunity to impact business results when solutions are put in place that reinforce the right behaviours, connect employees and create an environment where employees are motivated, productive and engaged.

Employees have to feel connected to their company’s overall mission, purpose and values, realising how their contributions can impact the recovery and growth of the organisation. In the face of adversity, employees will only continue to give their best when they know their efforts make a difference and when they feel connected to and supported by the business.

An engaged employee is someone who understands and believes in the direction the organisation is going. They understand how their role affects and contributes to the organisation’s purpose, mission and objectives. And lastly, they genuinely want the organisation to succeed, and feel shared success with the organisation.

While employee motivators have changed due to the pandemic, so have employer desires.

Companies want to better connect, recognise and support their people for three key reasons:

1.

Engaged employees make better decisions for their companies and clients because they understand more.
2.

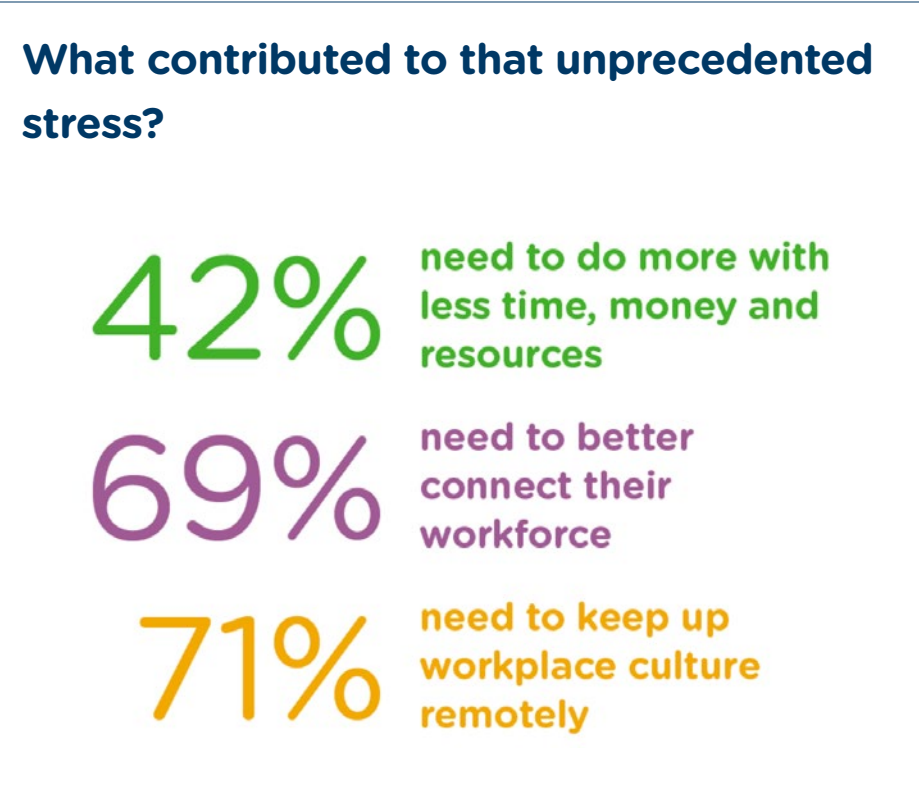
Engaged employees are more productive because they like or love what they are doing.
3.

Engaged employees innovate more because they deeply want their organisation to succeed.

Focussing on improving employee engagement will have a ripple effect on other parts of your organisation as well. It’s the company that has an engaged workforce that will not only survive, but thrive into the future beyond COVID-19.

Given the pandemic-related financial stress many companies are experiencing, employers have to do more, with less. HR has never worn so many hats – improving the employee experience, streamlining processes to positively impact budget, exploring new ways to connect leaders and employees and implementing strategies to increase productivity, just to name a few!

In a recent survey of 751 HR leaders from companies across the UK, U.S. and Australia, 71% agreed that 2020 has been the most stressful year of their careers.



And while HR is feeling the stress, so are employees.



How can already stressed HR leaders prevent unwanted turnover? With the right technology and tools at their fingertips, HR leaders can more easily motivate and engage employees to stand out as a top employer and retain their engaged employees.

Supporting employees through challenging times (and beyond)

When lockdown measures forced employees to work remotely, and employees who were unable to work from home were on the front lines of a pandemic crisis, employee wellbeing (rightfully) came into focus, particularly on mental health. How could HR leaders support their people, mentally, physically and even financially to try to help their people get through especially challenging times?

We know that:



of Australian employees agree that employers have a responsibility for the health and wellbeing of their employees

(Source: Metlife)

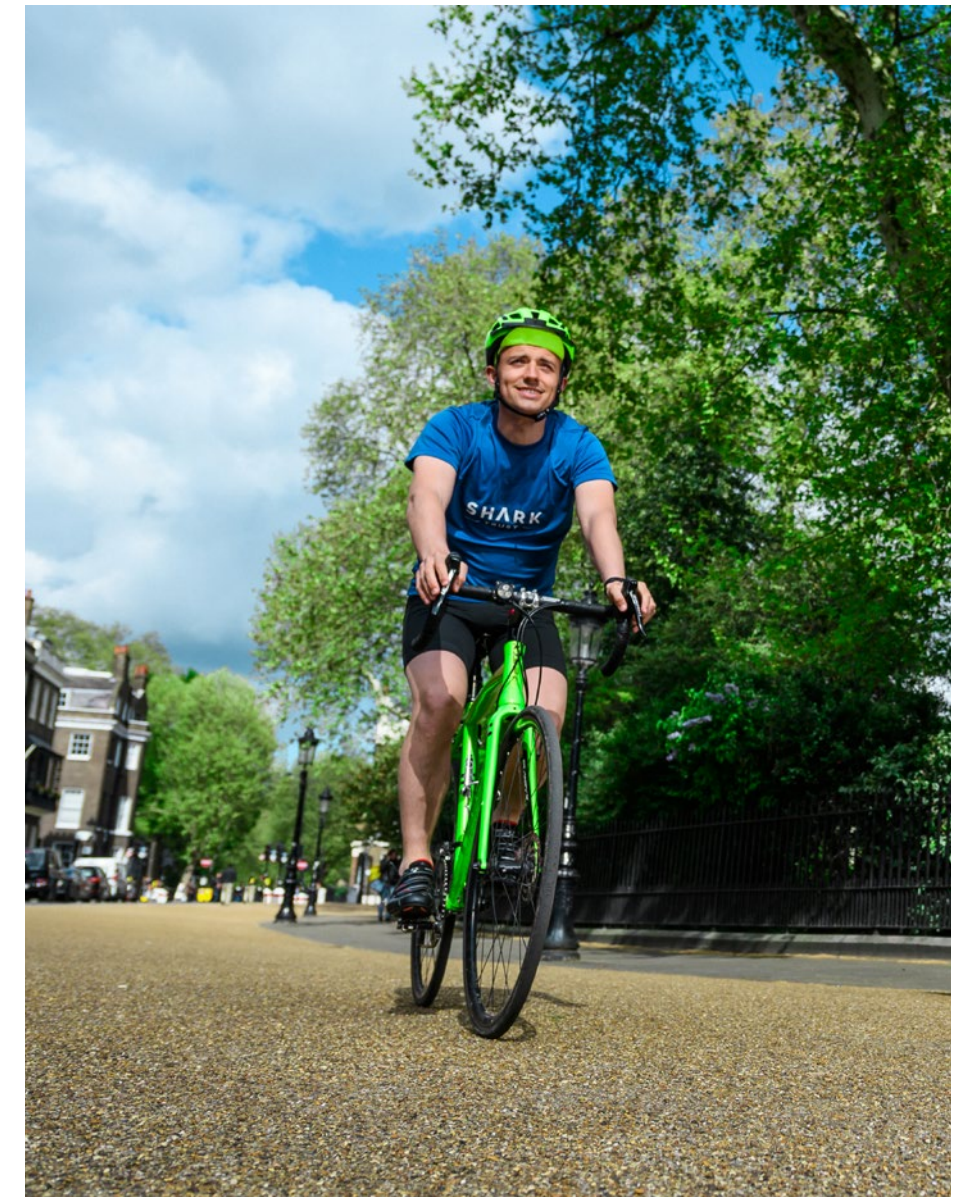


In organisations where workplace health is managed well, financial performance increased by more than 2.5 times.

(Source: healthierwork.act.gov.au)

To better support employees and boost business outcomes, HR leaders need to find ways to innovate their wellbeing initiatives amidst tightening budgets and uncertainty through creative benefits programs that

enhance the employee experience and have a tangible effect on employees' everyday lives.







Budget-friendly employee wellbeing initiatives

A study by Vitality Works showed that in 2020, there was a 63% increase in Australian organisations with a health and wellbeing strategy compared to the previous twelve months.

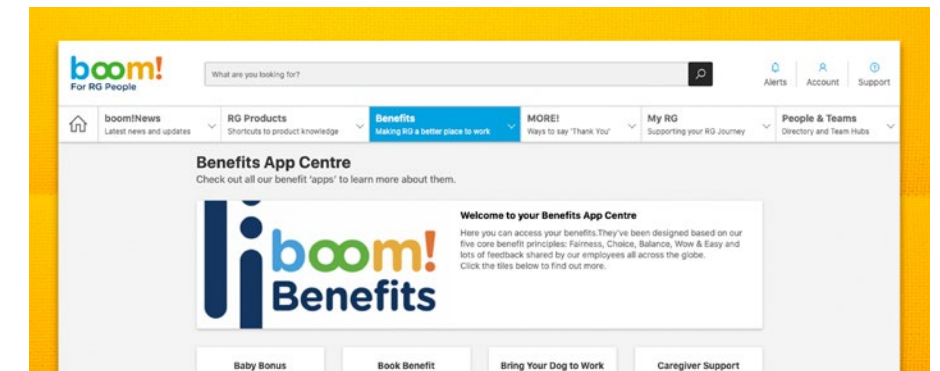
In the past, budgetary constraints were a factor in influencing the purchase of wellbeing products, but a recent focus on mental wellbeing, resilience, team morale and connection has led to organisations looking for creative, budget-friendly ways to deliver practical, scalable support.

Supporting Wellbeing Pillars with Creative Benefits

Benefit	Description	Wellbeing Pillars
 Wellbeing Centre	Offer on-demand videos and expert articles that cover four sections (Mind, Move, Munch and Money) to provide employees with access to better wellbeing anywhere, anytime.	Financial Mental Physical
 Employee Benefits Program	Introduce new ways for employees to save on their own bottom line through employee discounts programs to help them save on popular retailers.	Financial
 Employee Assistance Program	Provide a safe, confidential space for your people to go to help through stressful moments in their life.	Mental
 Reward and Recognition	Spotlight moments of positivity to boost morale across an organisation, and award employees with special monetary or custom rewards.	Mental Financial

Implementing a comprehensive and benefits program that directly influences your employees' wellbeing can provide a tangible, meaningful impact to not only your employees, but also to their biggest influencers – their families.

When these programs are designed to meet employees' real needs, make everyday life more affordable, and support the mental, physical and financial health of the people working in the business, it's a win-win for both employees and employers.



Being employee-driven in a tech-focussed world

A recent survey pointed to a staggering 48% of respondents predicting that HR teams will use technology to create an enhanced and streamlined employee experience as we move to a post-COVID-19 world.

For employees, an elevated employee benefits experience can remove barriers to higher usage, such as endless log-ins and a poor employee experience.

Learn more about the Reward Gateway benefits platform at rg.co/evolvingbenefits

Keeping technology at the centre of your people strategy

Old-school methods of engagement aren't going to break through to our people, who are dealing with information overload. Technology is helping us grow so that HR can continue to make an impact in their roles, and focus on the bigger picture for business continuity and growth.

According to our latest research, **45% of HR Teams anticipate they will become more involved in company-wide digital transformations.**

Technology is helping HR practices and initiatives be more human, especially when employees need it the most.

Let's look at the three ways digital tools are helping put the 'human' into HR:

1. Technology is not replacing your team	Technology is an extension of the HR team, not replacing it. That rationale is pretty easy to justify, too. We need technology in order to do our jobs better, so HR can focus on more strategic objectives and have less administration than ever before.
2. Automation isn't the enemy, it's our ally	Leveraging technology can empower professionals in talent and human resources to increase the impact of their strategies. For example, automation can ensure long-service awards arrive on exactly the right day with the right message, reinforcing how much an employee is respected and valued.
3. Technology allows HR to be a leader and not the follower	HR has done a great job embracing new technology as a way to support their employees during the global pandemic. As a result, it's demonstrated to leaders how critical the role of HR technology is and the impact it can have.

HR is already finding new ways to make the world a better place to work, with technology on their side to do more with less, as we continue navigating the COVID-19 pandemic.

Embracing technology means embracing flexibility

Whether our people are frontline workers (in a hospital or at a grocery store) or remote workers (working from home or otherwise isolated from their fellow colleagues) – they all want to be kept in the loop with company updates, just at different times and in different ways.

All employer-to-employee information has to adapt to this new landscape of not only employee communications, but communications in general. The information we deliver must be engaging and relevant to our people, who are juggling a lot both inside and outside

of work with competing priorities.

Our people are overwhelmed and working more hours than ever before. It's up to HR leaders to share compelling and relevant information that adds value to employees' day-to-day and is accessible on any device, at any time. Help them combat potential burnout by giving them more control over how and when they spend their time absorbing information.

With more and more employees spread out across various locations, it's key that we reach people both at home and at work. Every employee has a unique experience with their company. With the right tools, you can create an environment where that experience produces a more engaged workforce, leading to better business outcomes.



The link between employee engagement and the employee experience

From the time a candidate submits an application for an open position, to the time they are leaving your company for a new opportunity, and every interaction in between, it's key that their experience is positive.

HR and People Leaders create a people strategy that fuels engagement and creates a culture that becomes a differentiator for their organisation. Reward Gateway delivers solutions to help bring these differentiators to life by creating an environment throughout the employee experience where employees can get what they need to be motivated and engaged at work.

Learn more about what our solutions can do for your organisation at rg.co/demo.

It's time to leave the tools of the past behind, and usher in a new era of employee engagement that motivates and inspires.

And that means receiving information on employees' own time and their own schedule. Some might prefer reading company updates in the morning before they log on, others might check in during a 2 p.m. snack break and others might browse right before going to bed at 11 p.m.

But why should employees bother checking in? It all leads back to creating an engaged workforce. Your employees won't care about work unless they feel connected to work and your company mission and values.

Here are some scenarios to help bring this to life:



Newly remote workers who are spread out across many locations, and may not get to speak with their manager every day. With the rise of remote work across various industries, HR leaders need to reconnect these employees to your vision and values through an engagement platform with tailored messages.



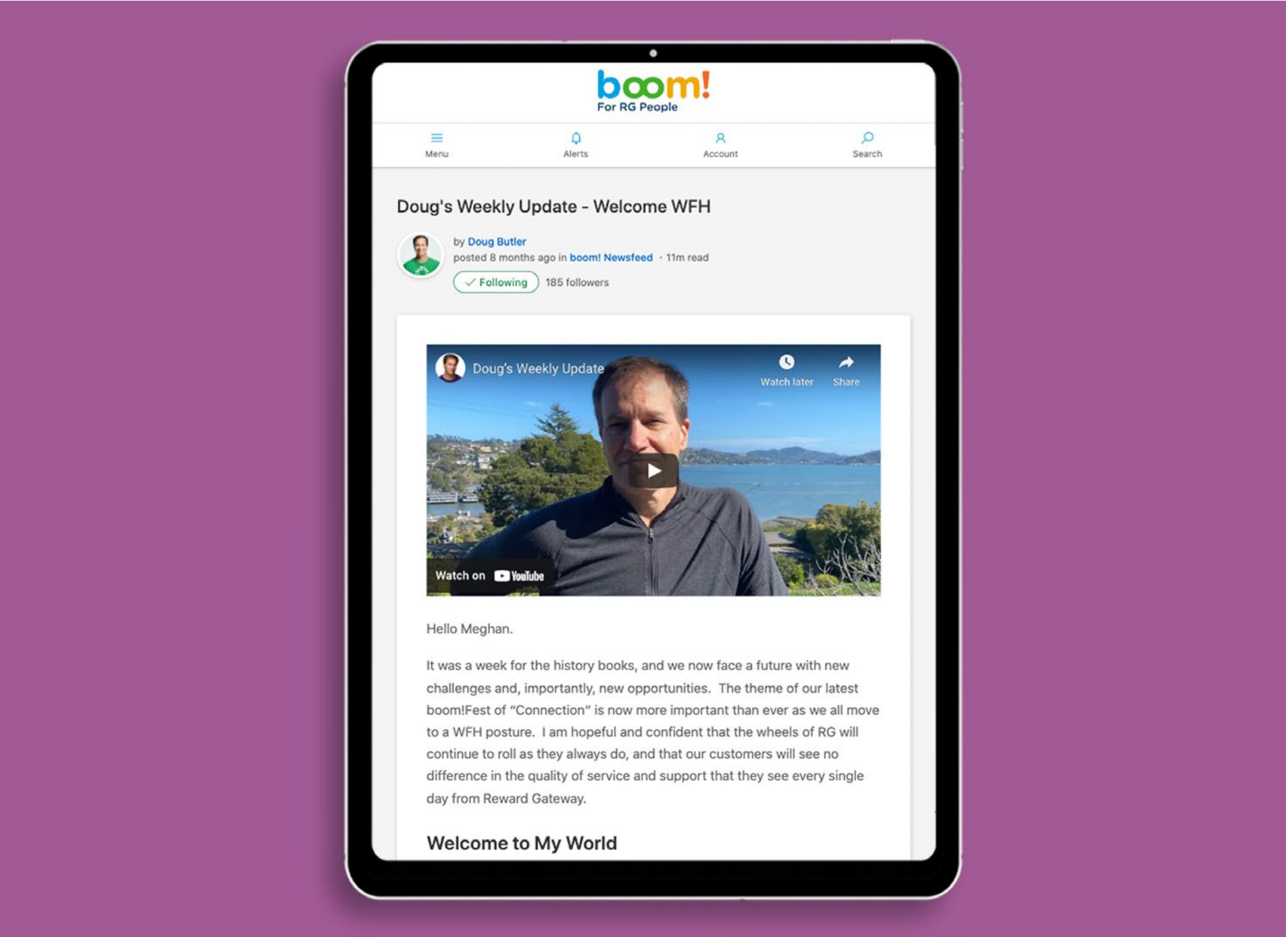
Healthcare professionals who are working on the front lines in hospitals, rehab facilities or aging services facilities, helping patients all day long and occasionally working the night shift. Shine a spotlight on their achievements through an engagement platform and amplify these moments with communication for the whole organisation to see.



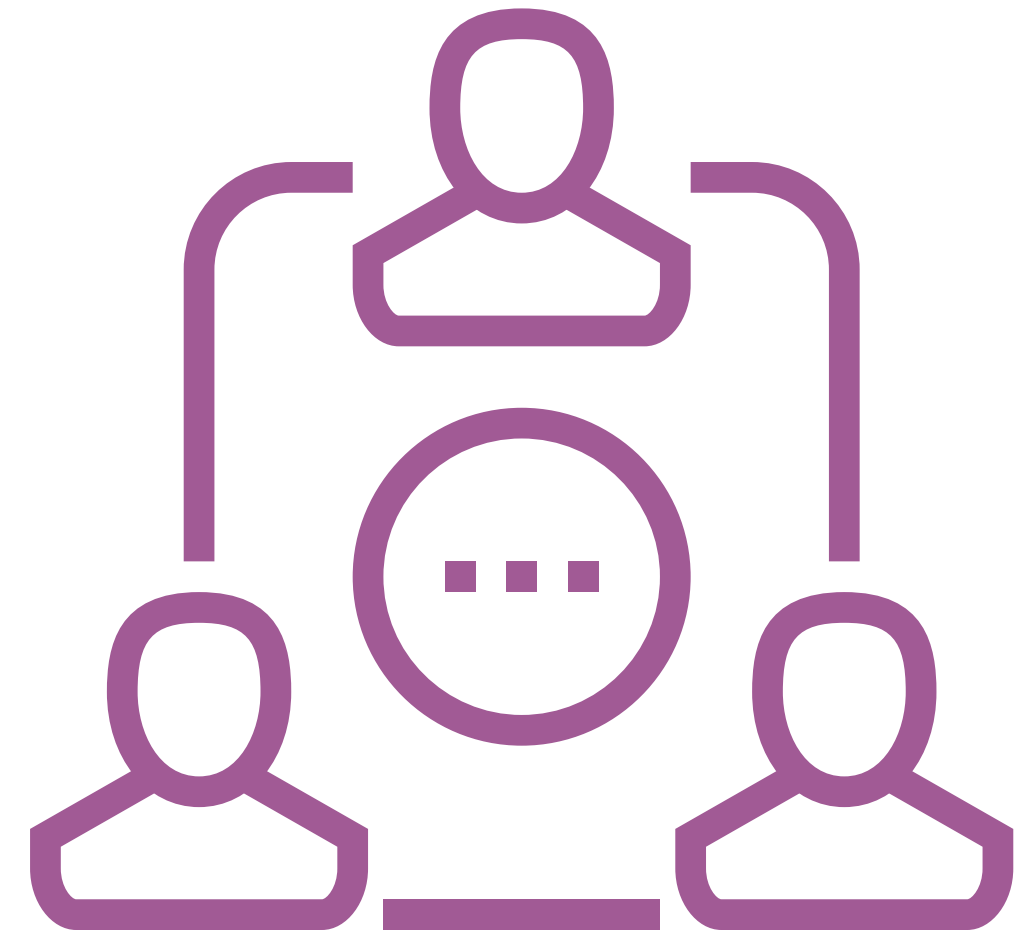
Delivery drivers who are considered essential and on the road for weeks at a time, driving across the country who may need a boost in motivation. When they take a break from driving, connect them back to your organisation and team with relevant, attention-grabbing updates about the company or newsworthy events.

By transparently communicating your company’s ‘Why,’ you’ll start improving engagement and deepening employees’ connections to your organisation. Embrace new methods of communication and recognition, so you can drive a positive cultural change in your organisation.

Reward Gateway’s CEO Doug Butler writes a weekly blog post, called ‘Mission Mondays.’ In these blogs, he connects people back to the company mission and recognises specific individuals who have helped advance it. There’s also an opportunity for others in the organisation to send recognition, directly from the blog post, to continue improving visibility and impact.



Tackling the Employee Engagement Gap



While the COVID-19 pandemic may have elevated HR to be the shining star of the business, the post-COVID-19 employee engagement era offers an opportunity for HR to be the hero their business will continually rely on to survive and thrive. As businesses come out the other side of the COVID-19 pandemic, they will see their employee engagement strategy evolve to one that is:



Agile



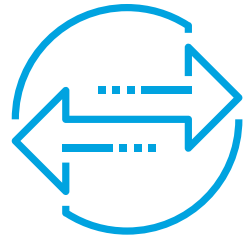
Innovative



Human

This strategy integrates core engagement elements of open and honest communication, purpose, mission and values, and recognition to build bridges in your organisation to drive deep, meaningful relationships between employee and employer. The organisations that will stand the test of time are the ones that can pivot quickly to put in place successful initiatives.





Agile, two-way thinking opens up opportunities

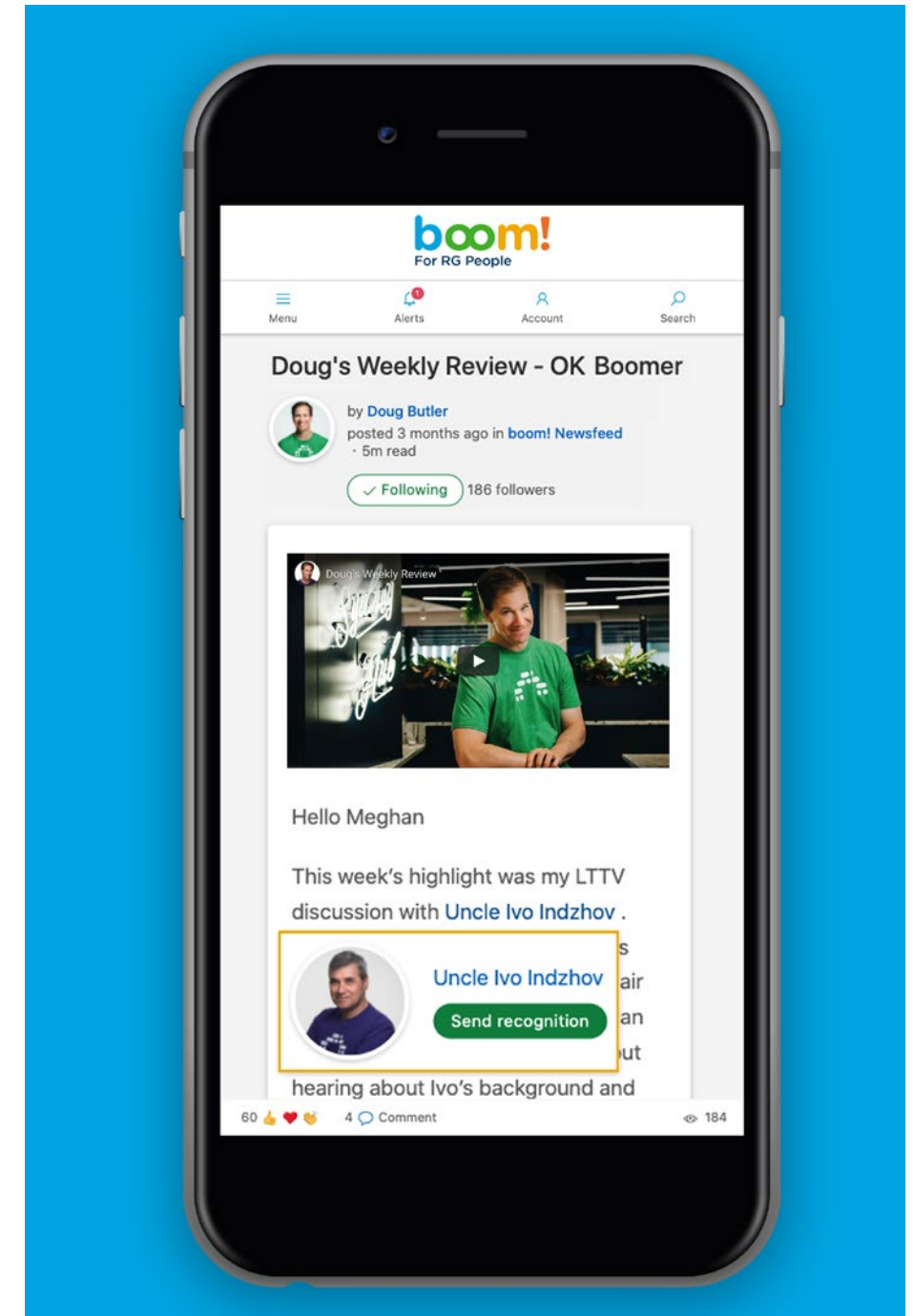
Businesses must take an agile approach to their employee engagement strategy and be willing to accept that their first plan might not deliver the desired outcomes. It needs to be adapted to fulfil the changing needs of their business and their people.

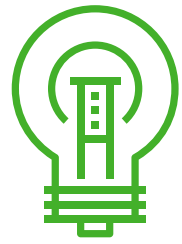
The COVID-19 pandemic has taught HR leaders not to be as scared of the unknown as we once were. With the right tools and teams in place and the ability to pivot quickly, businesses can withstand even the toughest times.

On-the-spot, real-time communication with reactions and comment threads can give opportunities to your employees to speak up and express excitement, encouragement or yes, even disappointment.

Each and every piece of employee input you gather can help your business make more informed decisions, from the top-down, and do it quickly – before it's too late.

Connecting your employees to both your message and to one another by highlighting specific people within your messages – and giving employees in turn an opportunity to recognise them – helps bridge the gap among employer and employee, and also across teams, offices and remote locations.





Innovative employee communications reach people wherever and however they work

A tick-the-box solution that won't flex to your company needs isn't going to move the needle on your engagement strategy, and certainly won't benefit the budget constraints many businesses are finding themselves in.

Say it with me: Communications are never 'done.' Now say it again: Communications

are never 'done.' You can't rely on only one message, so why rely on only one approach? Mobile- and tablet-friendly communications help you bring people up-to-speed on business decisions, especially when people aren't working in the same locations.

Use technology to help segment messaging so you're reaching the right audience, and schedule out your messages to help you reach them at the optimal time. Everyone digests information differently, so make sure you're using a platform for employee engagement that can support everyone's individual style.



Real-time analytics to help you understand your audience

Adapting your internal communications plan to one that you feel confident your employees are engaging with doesn't have to be such a momentous burden. With the help of the communications analytics dashboard, you can use data to gain insights about the effectiveness of your communications tactics, such as:

- Top viewed posts
- Reaction activity (to see how people are feeling)
- Time of day for optimal readership
- Dips in readership
- Opportunities for ambassadors and inclusivity

Learn more about our communications dashboard at rg.co/commsdashboardau



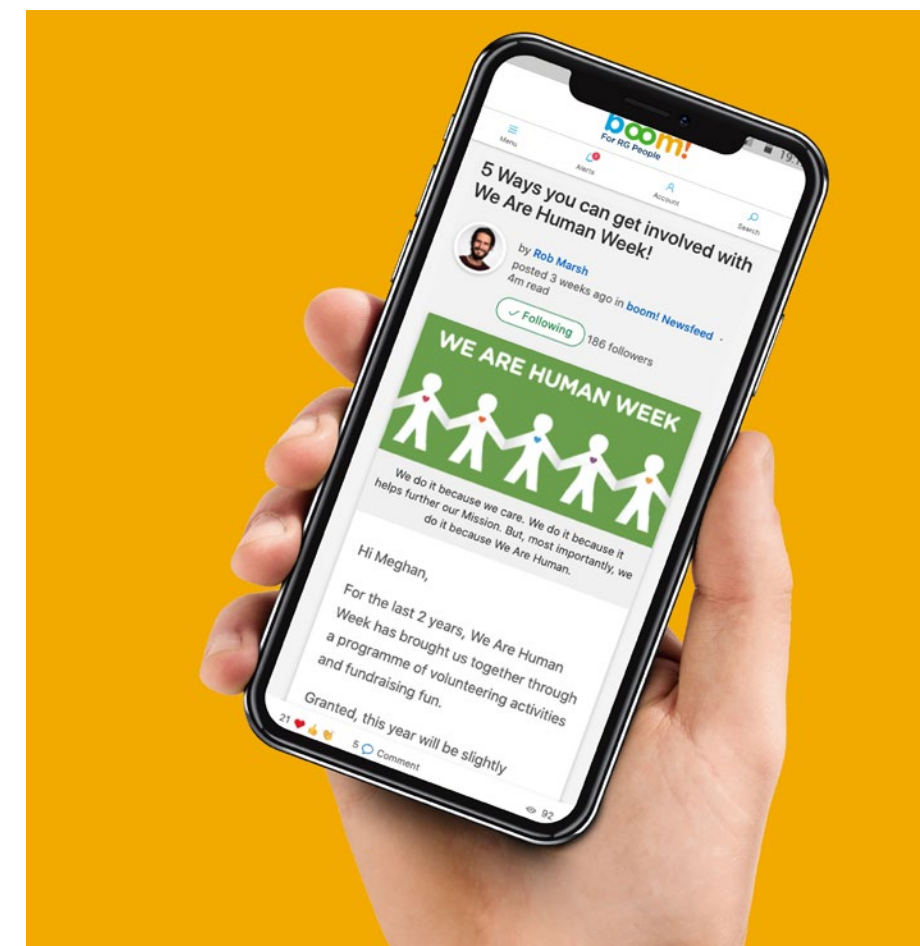
Being human means including everyone because they have a voice to listen to – and to speak up from

How can you include more people in the conversation? Be sure your communications strategy is inclusive and represents as many employees as it can. Giving the power to publish to more employees than just your HR or L&D teams means more voices can be heard. Your ‘team’ is your entire workforce, working together to shout successes,

failed innovations and more, from the rooftops (and yes, you can control what permissions and processes are in place before the entire company reads a post).

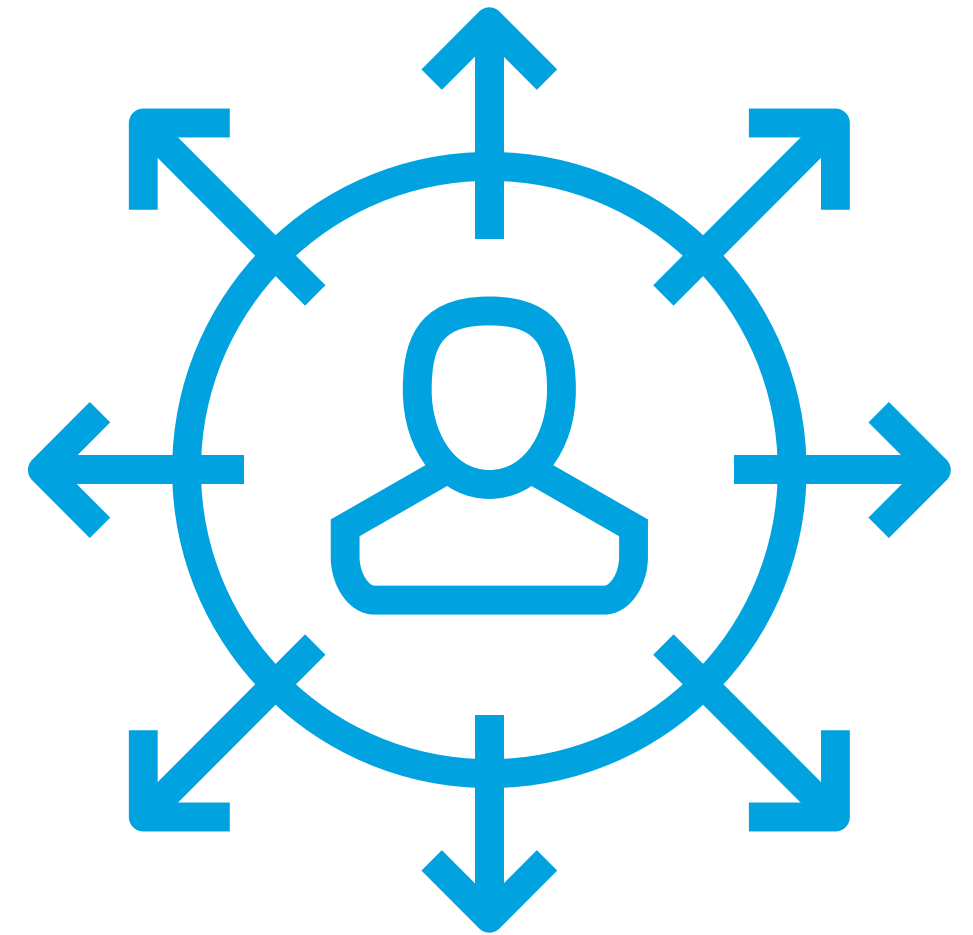
Empowering your employees drives the critical engagement factor which we talked about earlier, and that’s employee motivation. Make individual contributions count even more by linking your people to your purpose and your engagement platform. Being human means highlighting employee successes both inside and outside of work, so let your people shine a spotlight on what’s more important to them during these challenging times.

HR leaders should look for new ideas to maximise time and get the best ROI they can out of what they offer to their people.



More people writing blog posts means more voices being heard across the company. Our Community Innovation Lead shared an update about our values-based initiative, Be Human Week, to inform people about what to expect, how to get involved and know how their actions help support a bigger cause.

Evolving Your Employee Engagement Strategy



5 ways to evolve your strategy

Along with outdated communication methods, the entire world of employee engagement is evolving and this has been amplified by the pandemic. Whether you think of employee engagement as communications, recognition, surveys, wellbeing or other tactics, it's necessary to evolve your strategy as the needs of your people change. Think of ways to combine these elements into a cohesive strategy to foster more engaged employees and do more with less.



The Future of Work



Manual, ad hoc employee
recognition and reward



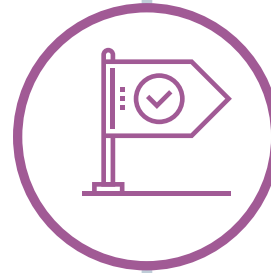
Recognising and
rewarding hard workers
every day, everywhere

Formal, annual surveys
with selective response
windows



Creating an always-on
feedback culture with
real-time reporting and
pulse surveys

Company values rarely
referenced or aligned to
strategic goals



Integrating company
purpose and values into
hiring, R&R and
performance

Work vs. personal life
were separate
(competing) entities



Creating platforms and
opportunities to build
inclusion and impact

Reliance on face-to-face
events for collaboration
and connection



Cultivating 'cultural
fitness' both inside and
outside the office

Just like employee communications should be frequent, interactive and engaging, so should your employee recognition and employee survey programs. Continuous recognition reinforces your connection among employer/employee by showcasing and rewarding employees for behaviour aligned with your purpose, mission and values while frequent, accessible feedback lets you respond to and receive real-time employee feedback through surveys that are easy to administer and analyse.

Doing more with less is achievable when employees only have one, centralised place to go.



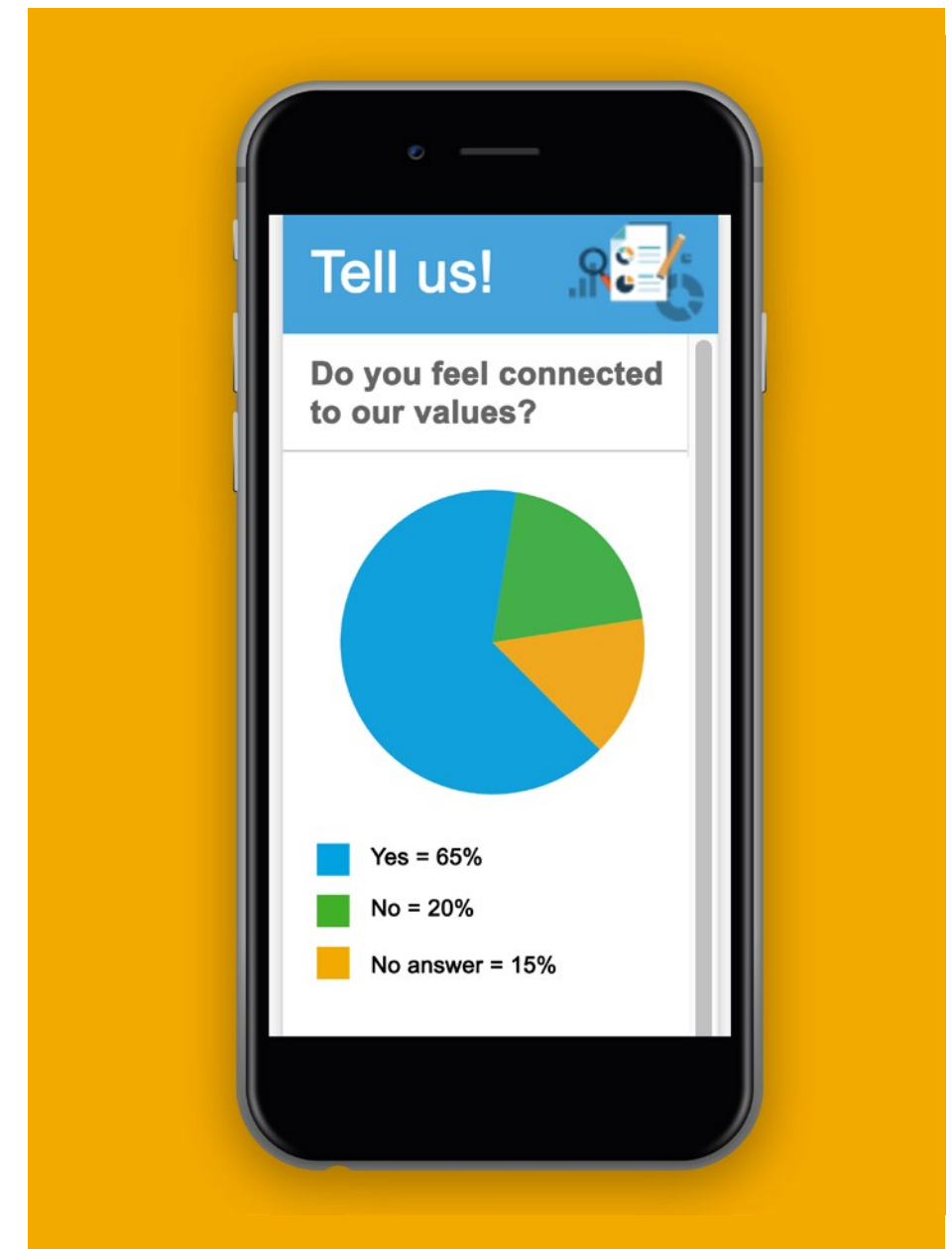
Break down the silos of employee engagement with technology

Your employee engagement technology doesn't – and shouldn't – do just one thing. By weaving in different employee engagement tactics and solutions, such as communications and recognition, you can amplify engagement quickly and easily from one place.

See how simple it can be with this example:



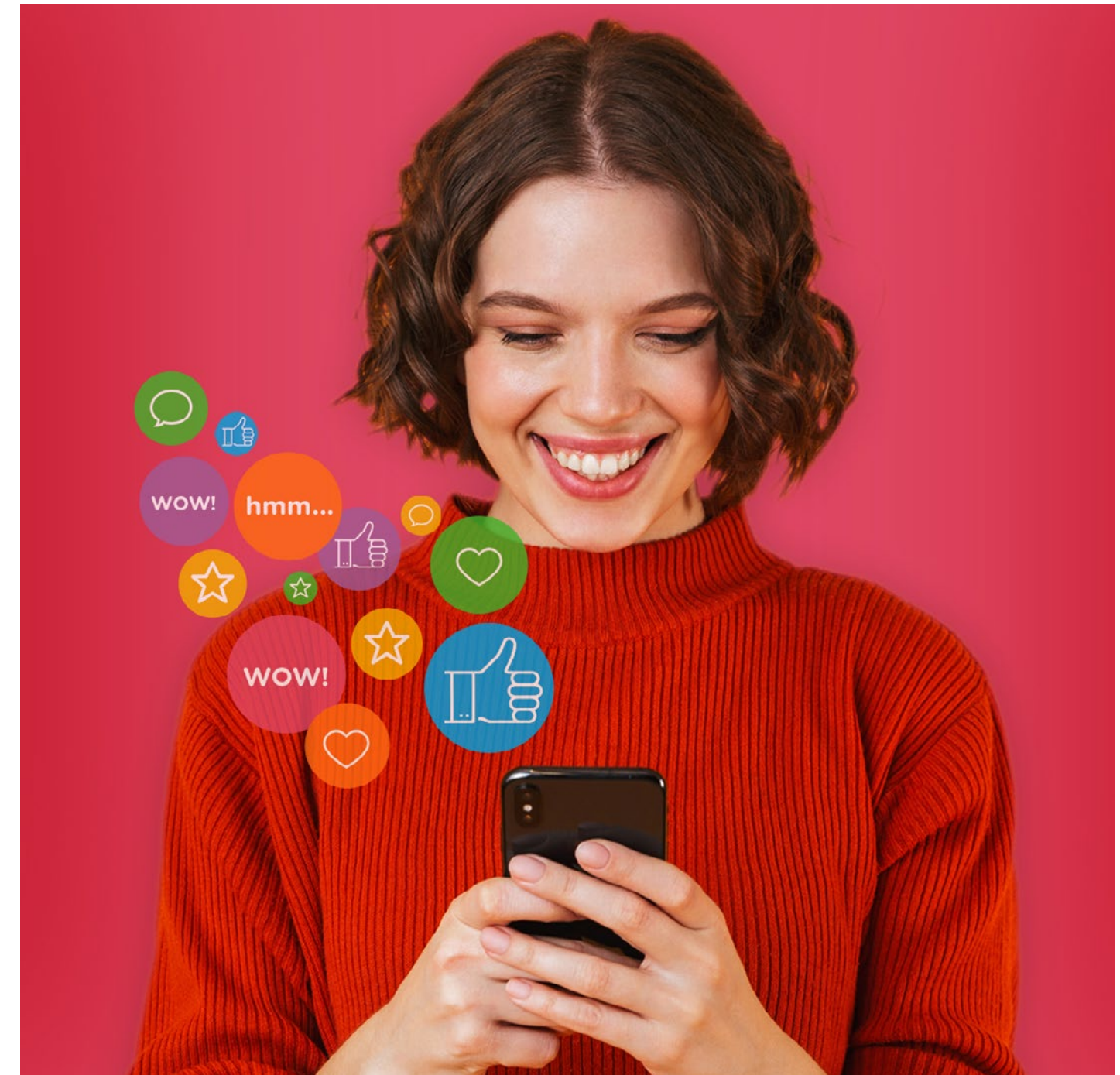
The HR team at a manufacturing organisation puts out a poll, asking employees if they feel connected to the company values. The team then analyses the data and realises that the poll responses have decreased by 15%, showing that employees are feeling less connected.





Announce

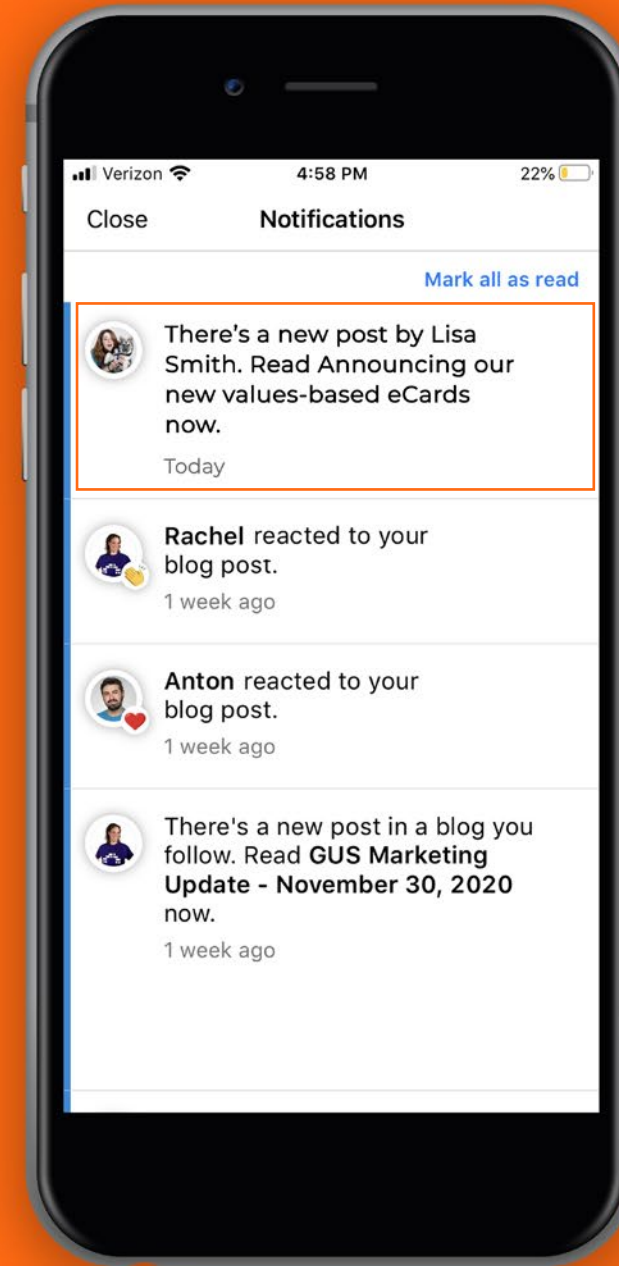
Previously, the organisation had its company values on posters around its manufacturing plants, but with some employees working remotely and others on-site, they needed to digitise the values to connect everyone to them. The team decided to announce a new section of eCards that will be hosted on its employee engagement platform, alongside greetings-based eCards and monetary awards.



Engage

Both frontline and remote workers receive an alert on their smartphones, letting them know there's a new announcement on the company-wide blog. This announcement is written by the VP of HR and tells them about the new values-based eCards. Employees then react to the post and add comments, expressing their excitement for more values-based recognition.

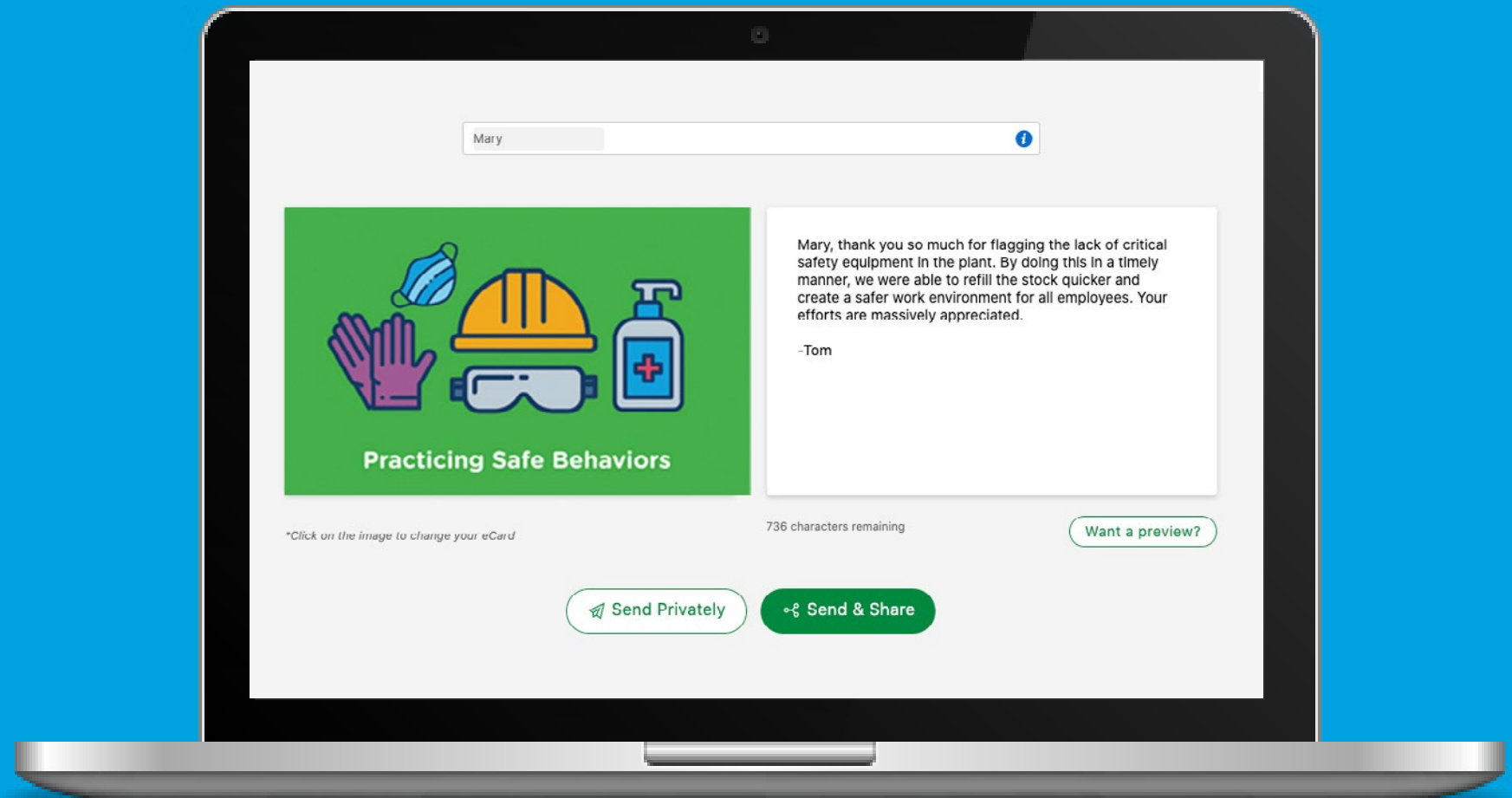
This is the announcement to all employees, available on any device at any time.





Recognise

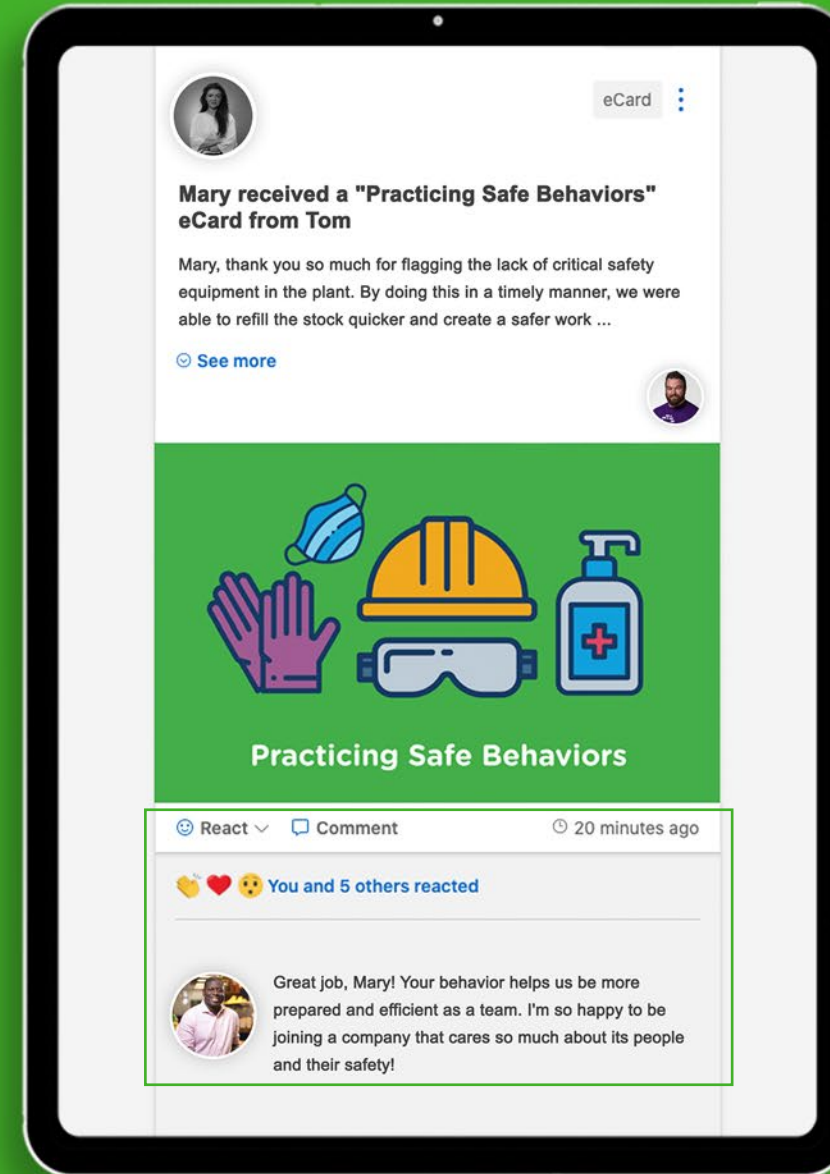
On the same day the eCards are released, a manager in the manufacturing plant recognises Mary, a frontline employee, for alerting her shift manager that they were out of critical safety equipment, which followed one of the company values on practicing safe behaviours. In the eCard, the manager explained how flagging the lack of inventory early on led to a faster replenishment and created a safer work environment, which was shared on the social recognition wall for the entire company to see.



Repeat!

Mike, who's new to the company and works in a different location, sees the values-based eCard on the social wall and adds his thoughts and reactions to continue the conversation. This also lets Mike know what desired behaviour at the organisation looks like so he's more prepared to recognise a colleague in the future.

Here's an example of the social recognition wall – a feed where everyone in the company can see moments of recognition across all locations.



The different kinds of workforces in today's world

Although employee recognition and reward is powerful for on-site employees, it's also impactful for remote workers who aren't getting in-person interaction on a daily basis.

While the five steps above are a great starting point, businesses should adapt this model to fit their needs. Here's another example of how a different kind of business can adapt the steps they take to engage employees:



A technology company adds a one-question pulse survey to its employee engagement platform, asking employees how often they like to receive leadership communications.



After receiving the feedback and analysing the data, the HR team realises they've only been publishing leadership communications once a month. But their people are looking to hear from leaders and managers once a week to feel more connected to the business.



They decide to involve key stakeholders and rotate the schedule, so that each week the employees are hearing from a different leader about something important to business acceleration. Each stakeholder publishes on the blog for the entire company to see, bringing remote workers closer to announcements, updates and other teams.



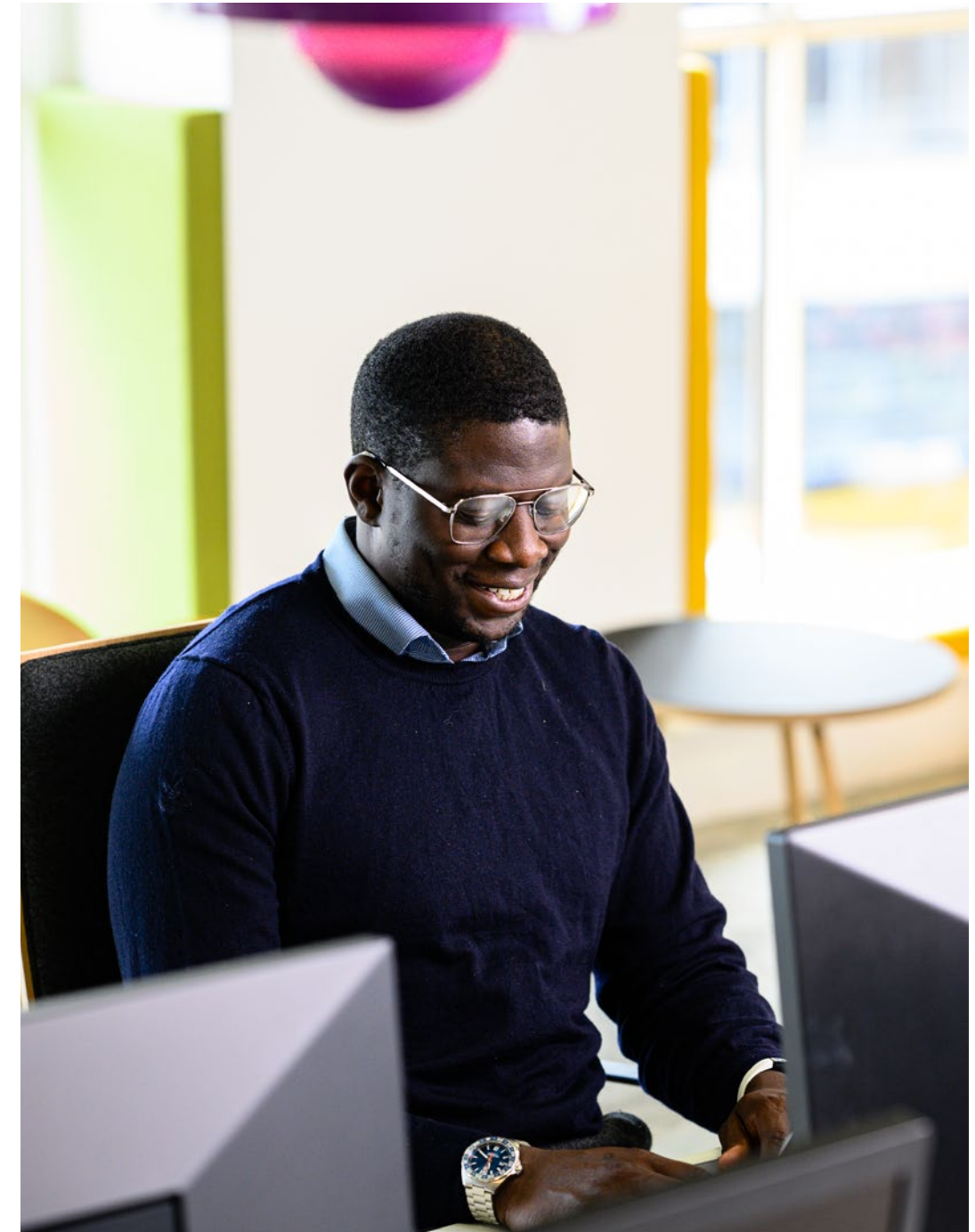
Analyse

A month goes by and the team looks into the analytics to see how they're doing. They see that not only has readership increased by 30%, but employees are reacting to the blogs and leaving comments to continue the conversation.



Engage

Now it's been six months and the HR team can confidently say what type of content performs better, which teams are engaging with it the most and which areas they can still improve in to better engage their people.





Reward Gateway's engagement products in employee recognition, communications, employee surveys and more are powered by a centralised hub tailored to your organisation, giving your employees better access to the engagement tools of the future.

If you're interested in learning more about any of Reward Gateway's engagement products to help connect, recognise and support your people, we'd love to help you get started.

Get in touch:

E: engage@rewardgateway.com



Conclusion

HR is juggling a lot right now and we're here to help. The COVID-19 pandemic has made HR's role in organisations even more important and it's a part of the transformation that's happening.

As Josh Bersin says, "We no longer 'serve the business' or 'sit at the table.' We are central and critical to the company's survival, response and long-term success." It's key that HR and People Leaders make sure to find the tools they need for success so they can better engage their employees and prepare their organisation for the future of work.

I hope this eBook has given you the tips you need to strengthen your engagement strategy for a post-COVID-19 world. The team at Reward Gateway is always here to help you better connect, recognise and support your people as we navigate these challenging times and learn from one another.

If you're interested in learning about more ways to involve your leaders and managers, revamp your engagement strategy or connect your people to your company purpose, get in touch with us.

To better engagement,



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