

World's Finest Chocolate: Finding fun and purpose in employee communications

Running a successful chocolate company sounds like fun. And it is! But, like any business, it requires a dedicated and motivated workforce. Just ask the people at World's Finest Chocolate (WFC), which has been crafting world-class chocolate from a cherished family recipe for 82 years. This mission-based business, known for youth fundraisers and giving back, has helped customers raise over $4 billion for schools and organizations.

The company lives by its mission: To deliver extraordinary value with fun and purpose, with their CEO, Eddie Opler, encouraging employees to incorporate "their secret (chocolate) sauce" into everything they do. WFC's founder, Eddie's grandfather, used to say, "We don't make chocolate. We make the world's finest chocolate, and it's made by the world's finest people."

When WFC's employees had the opportunity to connect with their colleagues through a vibrant app—incentivized by gamification—participation went through the roof.

92%
EMPLOYEE ADOPTION RATE

96%
MOBILE ADOPTION RATE

83%
MONTHLY ACTIVE USERS

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VALUES FROM THE TOP

All of these good vibes start at the top, with a respected CEO and leadership team that exemplify the company's mission and values. With their enthusiastic support, the internal communications team wanted to make sure the workforce of 300 internalized the same fun and purpose every day—a particular challenge during the worst of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Connecting with a dispersed workforce

WFC needed an employee communication platform that would help them address the unique challenges of their dispersed workforce, who work both onsite and remotely. As it turned out, the "WFWorks" app seems to fit the bill, providing meaningful, ongoing digital engagement with and for their team.



"Before the pandemic, we didn't have an immediate, company-wide way to communicate with our employees," says Raleigh Decker, WFC's Senior Director of Communications, who almost single-handedly created this new and unexpected way to capture and share the spirit of this family-owned company.

The challenge: As a traditional manufacturing company, the company never had an intranet—and half of its employees, who work in the plant, don't have a work email address. "And because of COVID, we were apart for 15 months, thinking initially it would be only 2 weeks," Raleigh explained.

"We knew it was important to reinforce what makes WFC so special—our culture, our people and our mission, which includes the word fun!"



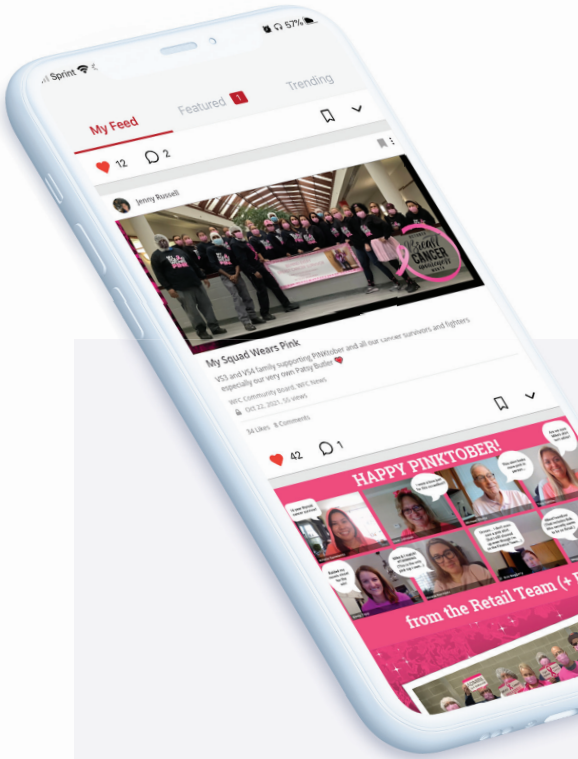
RALEIGH DECKER
Senior Director of Comms
WFC

Continuous engagement

With the launch of the app, change was brewing and people were connecting in new and better ways, despite the challenges presented by the pandemic. The key was continuous engagement from the company and among employees.

Planned content—a snappy mix of text, videos and photos—is spread out through the week, including employee-generated announcements, personal stories, comments and suggestions, surveys, team photos, job postings, service awards, milestone recognition and a thematic calendar that keeps participation high all year.

Teams make and post their own videos using guidelines for consistency and fairness. One team made a video with many on-camera testimonies to honor a colleague celebrating a 40-year milestone anniversary with the company. Senior leaders were taught how to record and submit their own videos each month, with managers doing so once a quarter. Videos, as well as monthly online town hall meetings (up from twice a year), have been particularly useful in connecting leaders with the entire staff.



HIGH PARTICIPATION, EMPLOYEE-GENERATED CONTENT



CELEBRATION AND APPRECIATION

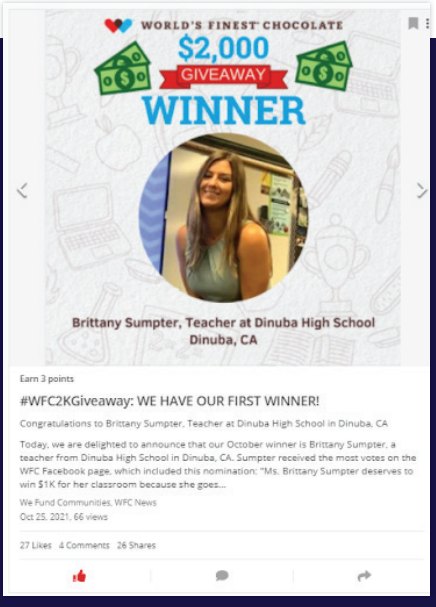
Pinktober, a celebration in October of National Breast Cancer Month, is a cause WFC supports after an employee who is a survivor began encouraging others to wear pink once a week. Now, departments come together to take team photos, with many teams having special t-shirts made to show support for WFC's survivors and warriors. Pinktober provides WFC employees an entire month to share their thoughts, ideas and experiences with their co-workers.

The inspiration of gamification

Launched in the fall of 2021, gamification helped engagement take off considerably, even after the platform launched with positive results and solid employee interaction. With gamification, employees are automatically awarded points for various actions on the platform: submitting a photo or video, liking comments on a post, sharing job openings on personal social media accounts, participating in a survey, etc.

With accumulated points, employees have the chance to win fun prizes, such as gift cards and professional sports tickets, every month. The company's leaders also set up custom leaderboards for specific campaigns, such as sharing specific hard-to-fill job postings or nominating teachers who deserve classroom grants. Gamification has created some fun competition among employees who not only post and comment, but more importantly respond to one another's comments—strengthening employees' sense of digital community.

"With the labor shortage we're encountering right now, efforts like these are more than just "fun." They have to be helpful in retaining employees and encouraging our people to talk about their experiences working at WFC," says Eddie Opler, CEO of WFC.



NOW EVERY EMPLOYEE IS ON THE COMMUNICATIONS TEAM

The app is built for social sharing, including discussions about open job positions, which strengthens the company's culture and reinforces that WFC employees are all in this together. Everyone, in effect, has become part of the company's communications team, a huge accomplishment with so much good content coming from across the company. Not bad for a company with a one-person communications department.

Ongoing community building

With so many ways to connect, share, support others, learn and earn prizes, the platform has increased employee engagement significantly. Employee discussions, for example, increased by 215%, and more than 1,100 comments were posted during a span of 30 days.

“Informative, real-time information is now at everyone’s fingertips, thanks to this platform,” says Raleigh. “And it’s inspiring to see how much more connected everyone feels, even with many of us still working remotely. People who were uncomfortable with social media now see how easy it is to be part of our digital community.”

To make sure the early success of WFWorks continues, Raleigh says the company will conduct a survey about what people like best and what might be improved—with points for gamification. Of course.



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