



Kreg Tool Company

Launching an Internal Communications
App During a Global Crisis

The Situation

50% of employees work on the plant floor every day



Nearly 50% of the employees at Kreg Tool Company work on the plant floor every day. Because of the nature of their work, this portion of the workforce did not have easy access to company email or the Intranet, creating many gaps in internal communications. This left plant employees to find out important company information from their line supervisors and/or communications kiosks, but each posed challenges and weren't always used regularly.

"We had daily start of shift meetings where information was shared with plant employees, but depending on who was delivering that message, we couldn't guarantee that they were communicating the appropriate information in the way it needed to be received," says Melany Stonewall, Strategic Communications Manager at Kreg Tool. "And because those employees weren't being fully kept up to speed or fully aware of everything that was going on in the company, it started to impact their overall engagement."

Stonewall would even attend some of these start of shift meetings just to observe and get a sense of what was being said and while there were some supervisors and leads who did a great job, others would not accurately convey the messages. To engage and connect all Kreg Tool employees, they realized they needed a solution that would allow them to deliver the same message at the same time to all employees, regardless of where they worked.

"A mobile solution was always in the back of our minds," says Stonewall. "But one thing we really needed to determine was if our employees would even use a communications app. While it was a no-brainer to us and completely made sense, we needed that confirmation. To obtain this, we did a survey early on in the process. We received a lot of great feedback that indicated people would use an app and were excited about the potential of having this technology available to them to stay up-to-date on company information."

This, combined with the fact that nearly everyone at their organization owned a smartphone and were familiar with mobile apps, made the decision to pursue an internal communications app the obvious choice.

The App: The Mobile Toolbox

Kreg Tool launched their app in March 2020, right at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. And the proof that an internal communications app was right for them became apparent right away.

The pandemic created a hunger for information among Kreg employees. There were so many unknowns and things were changing rapidly around how the company was going to navigate the pandemic and continue to keep employees safe, while considering other needs and concerns they may have. For the first time, Kreg was able to communicate the same message at the same time to all employees, both deskless and desk-bound. The app allowed Kreg to share all kinds of COVID-19 information with their team members ensuring that those individuals could access it on their phones any time they needed it.

And then, if the pandemic wasn't enough, in August 2020, a derecho swept through a portion of the Midwest. This hurricane-like storm damaged some of Kreg's facilities and knocked out the power for three days, shutting down their operations.

"Even though we had to shut down operations and were without power, we were able to use the app to communicate with employees and keep them up to speed on what was going on and when they could return to work," says Stonewall.

An example of how engaged their employees were on the app came during the derecho. At one point, Kreg had shared that a new update would be posted at 2pm on a particular day. Due to a number of factors, at 2:05pm, the message still hadn't gone out. At that time, employees began commenting in the app, asking when the update would be shared. These comments proved just how much their employees were relying on the app to provide them with the information they needed.

Throughout their first year using their internal communications app, they have begun to go beyond just crisis communication. They use it quite frequently to share video communications from the executive leadership team, especially the CEO. Prior to the app, they did not have an easy way to produce and push out video messages so all employees could see them, and it has now become a preferred method of communication for both senior leadership and employees.

"We've found that these videos actually get the most likes of all our content that we post on the app," says Stonewall. "And another benefit is that these videos don't have to be overly produced, and that's okay. Our employees have really found them to be more authentic, especially when it's just the CEO sitting at his desk in his office by himself recording the video."

Gathering Employee Feedback

Kreg Tool has seen tremendous success with gathering employee feedback to support initiatives and drive their content strategy. Their whole journey toward mobile began with a survey, and they conducted another survey (this time through their internal communications app) in December 2020 to gain more insight into what their team members enjoyed having available to them on the app and where areas of improvement were needed.

From this survey, they have gauged the interest in starting a podcast for employees.

"According to the survey results, our people seem intrigued by the idea of a podcast, especially our operations team who are working on the plant floor. They are allowed to have their phones with them while they work to listen to music or other content (in one ear only). So, while they're doing their job, they can listen to the podcast versus having to read updates, which they obviously can't do while they're working," says Stonewall.



Successes:



" The app is now our primary communications method for all employees. While we still post messages on our Intranet and occasionally send company wide emails, we know that we are reaching the majority of our team members with important updates through the app, which is our overall goal.

— Melany Stonewall, Strategic Communications Manager

As a result of launching a tool that all employees could use and using it to share crisis information, Kreg Tool has seen great success in their first year:

- 90% adoption (the number of employees who have downloaded the app and logged in)
- Great content opens: 50% of the audience opens each piece of content on average. Leadership videos often see a higher open rate, with many employees viewing more than once.
- Nearly 100% of employees opened the app in July 2020 at least one time during the derecho.
- Employees access The Mobile Toolbox EMPLOYEEapp more than 2x per week on average.

Company Background:

Kreg Tool Company is a growing, employee-owned, manufacturing company headquartered in Huxley, Iowa (soon to be Ankeny, Iowa). Kreg manufactures a wide variety of tools, accessories, and equipment for woodworkers and do-it-yourselfers, including the Kreg Pocket-Hole Jig®, Precision Routing Systems, Precision Machine Accessories, Cutting and Measuring Tools, Clamping Tools, Deck Jigs, and more. Kreg products are available throughout North America and in select international locations through local dealers, home centers, and online retailers. To learn more, visit www.kregtool.com.



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