

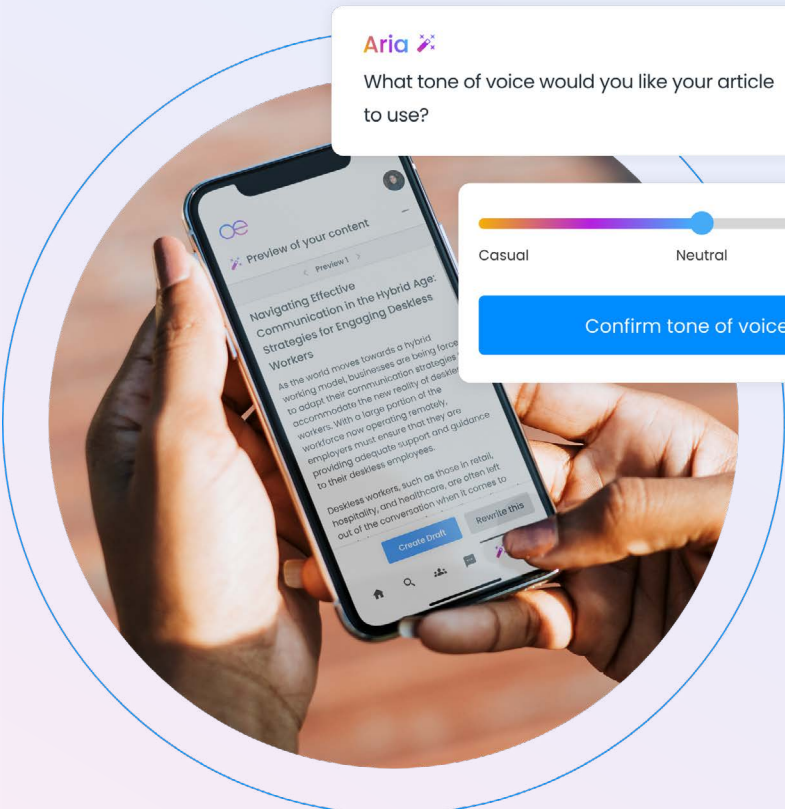


Connecting and engaging with deskless workers

The internal communicator's complete guide to reaching colleagues at all corners of the business.

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Aria ✨

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Confirm tone of voice

Reaching deskless workers

When you have a dispersed workforce, whether they're working across multiple sites or countries, in varied roles and different shift patterns, there's often no one-size fits all approach to sending and receiving company communications.

For a start, many deskless or frontline workers will have no access to a work-issued laptop, never mind a company email address, so how can they be expected to have the same digital workplace experience as their office-based colleagues?

With differing shift patterns and a percentage of the workforce on the road or on the store floor most of the time, you need to consider when you expect each employee to find the time to absorb any company updates or communications you share. You also need to consider how they access them. Misalignment at this point can often lead to skewed understandings of how successfully a company is communicating with its dispersed workforce.

Luckily, here at [Oak Engage](#) we've got you covered. We've helped a huge amount of employees in deskless and frontline roles to feel included in the company culture and keep their finger on the pulse. This has helped them to stay up-to-date with important news and create long lasting connections with other employees. We've created transformational internal comms solutions for [Burger King UK](#), [ScS](#), [NatWest](#), [Aldi](#) and many more.

In this guide, we offer practical tips for reaching and engaging your deskless workers, enabling them to easily access the resources and tools needed to carry out their jobs. We also cover how you can make your communications more tailored so employees only receive the information that is relevant to them, as well as creating a fun and useful digital workspace.



The challenge

Boston Consulting Group reports that 80% of the global workforce is made up of deskless workers. Modern workplaces are often tailored much more favourably to desk-based employees, with emails and web-based intranets at their fingertips, at any time of day. In these settings, where colleagues have office-based interactions, there are opportunities for chatter and news to spread, which might not reach their deskless colleagues for days or weeks to come.

Out of sight, out of mind?

Away from Head Office, whether they're in a restaurant, on an assembly line, on the road or out in the community, it can be easy to forget how little communication from central management your deskless workers might have. Despite this, they are expected to be informed of updates and continue on with their job, day in, day out.

The impact

For many deskless employees, communication is restricted to functional tasks, leaving them with little or no connection to leadership or the broader company culture. This can leave them working in an environment with minimal contact with their managers, no easy way to ask questions and no sense of belonging.

This lack of recognition or visibility contributes to higher levels of absenteeism, turnover and productivity, as well as increased risk of safety incidents or defective products – issues that have been well-documented in terms of their financial impact.



Defining the deskless workforce

Yes, it might sound obvious – the clue’s in the name? Depending on the industry you work in, there may be many different types of deskless colleagues, each with their own requirements to get their job done.

As you can see from the table below, there is a huge variety in job types with different role requirements that would impact the ability and frequency with which people can look out for, or access, company updates.

With this in mind, workplace tech needs to allow people in all roles to see the latest information that is relevant to them, at a time that suits them. Equally, information that is not relevant to each user, for example what is meant for desk-based colleagues only, should be filtered out to allow for an optimal, focused user experience.

Industry	Deskless colleagues
Construction	Builders, foremen, site managers, apprentices, drivers
Hospitality	Chef, waiting staff, front of house, bar staff, restaurant manager, barista, barback, supervisor, team member
Supermarket	Shelf stacker, customer assistant, checkout staff, team leader, butcher/baker/fishmonger/cheesemonger
Manufacturing and transportation	Warehouse operative, driver, factory operative, quality control, packing

“Once upon a time we had to rely solely on line managers to cascade information. We didn’t really have any other option, did we? But those days are gone. We are so lucky now to have mobile-first employee comms apps and technology to give us a new way to reach deskless workers effectively – and we can reach them directly, rather than having to go through layers of leaders and managers.”



Joanna Parsons, Internal Communications Consultant
at The Curious Route

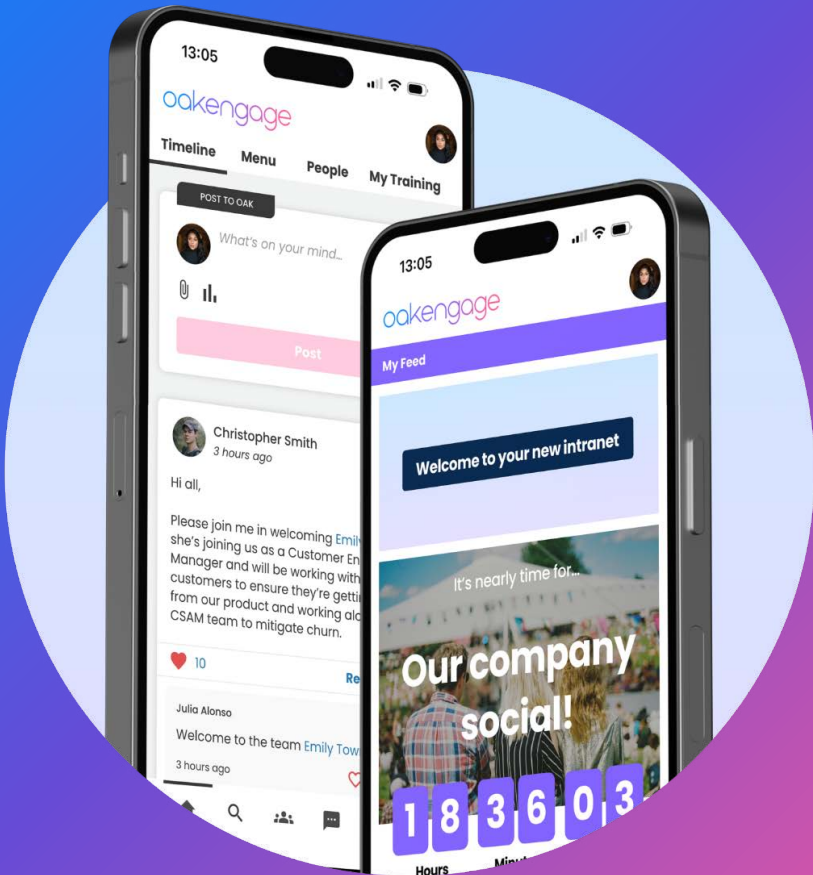
Mobile-first is the way forward

Yes, 80% of the workforce may not sit at a desk every day. Most of the working population will, however, own and be familiar with how to use a smartphone. They will understand the functionality and simplicity of a range of apps that get us through daily life, whether it's social media, online banking or scrolling our favourite shopping apps.

It seems second nature that an app should be the obvious solution to reaching deskless workers. That's when it's done right, of course.

How often have you downloaded an app and it glitches, feels dated, clunky and doesn't seem intuitive at all? That's not what we're going for.

Our mobile-friendly intranet works cross-platform, so whether your deskless workers are checking in on the app or your office-based staff are logging in from their laptop, they will see the same content in an intuitive layout that streamlines and surfaces the most important information for them.

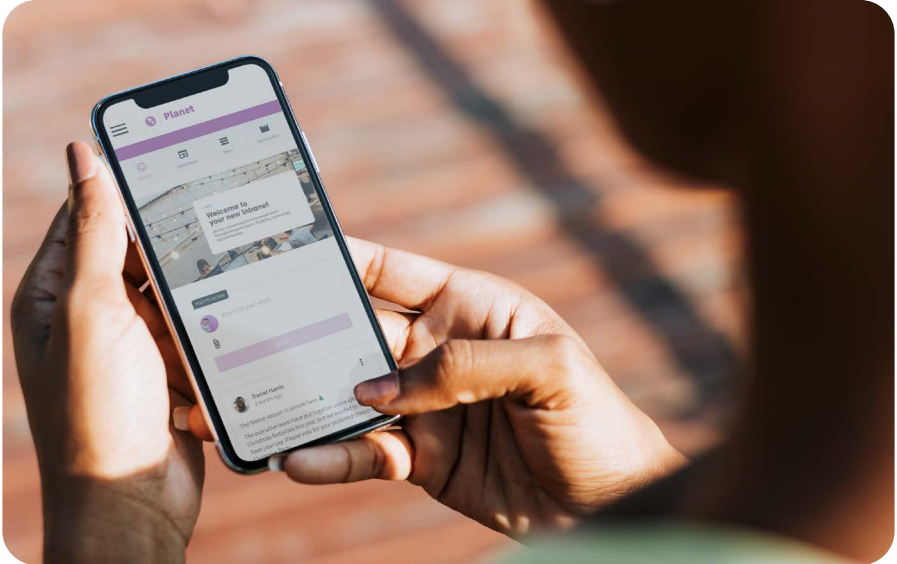


Video

Your deskless workers are often only able to check their devices on breaks, so when they do get downtime, they want updates quickly, so they can eat their lunch and chat to their colleagues.

Providing content that is quick and easy to absorb in a format that appeals to your dispersed workforce is crucial. Colleagues could be more inclined to watch a 30 second video in their feed than to click and read a full article on the same subject.

Sound off, sound on, it doesn't matter. Either way, you can add subtitles to videos for maximum accessibility. Plus, the subtitles can be translated for different geographical regions, so the user experience remains strong no matter where or how your people are accessing company updates.



Personalise the experience

Streamline the employee experience by just providing content that is of interest and relevance to the individual. With a personalised feed, each employee should see updates and news related to their location, job type and department, meaning they're not scrolling through meaningless updates on the occasions when they are able to check their app.

Your people can also have the opportunity to opt-in to topics of interest if they're members of [Hubs or Communities](#). This allows them to see all of their updates in one single personalised feed, whether it's a policy update, the next fundraising event, a football tournament or a message from the CEO.

🔍 Search for a Hub



Pride



Pride



COMMUNITY HUB

A community to support our team members from the LGBTQ+ community

Latest activity: 15 days ago



Access HUB



Access HUB



COMMUNITY HUB

We want this to be a place for everyone, and we're improving all the time to make our jobs...

Latest activity: 4 days ago



“When you’re thinking about the content and updates on your app, please remember these three words: lead with value. Your content for frontline employees should be valuable to them. It should help them do their job or avoid confusion or save time. Keep the content relevant and valuable to encourage regular use of your new app. To do this well, you need to invest time and energy into understanding the content your audience needs and wants. Try to also understand what kind of content will frustrate or annoy them, this will be helpful in your content planning process.”



Joanna Parsons, Internal Communications Consultant
at The Curious Route

What do your deskless employees want from work?

- To enjoy it! Boston Consulting Group found that deskless team members feel significantly less connected to their organisation and colleagues, less supported by their managers, have lower levels of pride in their work and perceive less fairness in their workplace
- An opportunity to connect
- To feel seen, heard and involved
- To have something else to look forward to when they clock in
- See the company values in action and experience the company culture like other areas of the business



Profiling your deskless employees

Understanding the wants and needs of each sector of your workforce is crucial to figuring out how best to communicate with them.

Create personas to help put their day-to-day reality into perspective, which will enable you to better cater to their needs. You can segment your workforce into groups and then review employee engagement survey data and invite feedback from each persona group to understand more about their challenges and wishes for the outcome of this project.

Consider the following:

- 1 Demographics such as age, tenure, job title, department, seniority, location**
- 2 Goals and motivations at work**
- 3 Frustrations and challenges at work**

From this information, you can create a persona, like we have done over the next few pages.

Foreman Frankie



Age: 42

Job title: Foreman

Day to day responsibilities: Scheduling, co-ordinating and supervising the work of all site operatives, managing equipment and materials required for the job. Also has to ensure company and legal regulations are adhered to, including ensuring all required documentation is completed as necessary every day.

Goals and motivations: Ensure the team sticks to schedule, that no materials go to waste but that there is enough for the team to work through each week on site.

Tech-savviness: Fine with the apps on a phone or tablet, not usually on a computer.

Main challenges:

- He and the team are hands-on all day long but HQ says they need to be keeping up with weekly leadership updates - there's no computer on site and he rarely gets a chance to sit down and check his emails
- The marketing team keep hounding him to share the documentation he uses for his compliance and regulatory adherence so they can rebrand it, but when will he have the time for that? Can't they check the system themselves?
- The staff in the office are always doing fun things for charity or just for fun; word never reaches his team until it's over with
- It would be nice to have a way for the young ones on site to connect with people across other sites and other areas of the business so they know what progression opportunities might look like for them

Waitress Whitney



Age: 20

Job title: Waitress

Day to day responsibilities: Customer service, taking orders, front of house, taking payments and cashing up

Goals and motivations: Whitney works here 3 days a week alongside her college studies. While she's mainly here for the money to support her social life and cover her bills, she likes the people she works with and enjoys their company. She's never met anyone from any other restaurant site, though.

Tech-savviness: Mobile-first

Main challenges:

- In a city centre site, it's always super busy, so sometimes the updates at the start of a shift are very brief and it's hard to absorb all the important information
- Work has banned the use of WhatsApp and Messenger for communicating with colleagues about work-related stuff, so the social side of work isn't as fun as it was
- She often gets roped into making coffees and supporting in the kitchen, but she's not confident with how all the machines work
- There are regularly new additions to the menu and it can be hard to keep up when she's not living and breathing it every day
- Notice board in the staff room is full of old posters so she never really checks it unless she needs to check the rota

Driver Darren



Age: 58

Job title: Delivery driver

Day to day responsibilities: Transporting goods from the warehouse to customer homes, helping customers manoeuvre heavy items into their homes, on time and to standard.

Goals and motivations: Darren likes driving, he's worked for the company for almost 10 years so he knows the roads like the back of his hand. In his line of work he doesn't see many colleagues once his van is loaded up, he usually keeps himself to himself and is keen to get the work done and get home to his family.

Tech-savviness: Uses a tablet for order delivery tracking and has a smartphone.

Main challenges:

- His shifts start very early, he gets in, grabs a coffee and checks in with the warehouse manager before getting the van ready, there's not much time for morning briefing
- The software he uses for order delivery tracking is so outdated and often once he's done all his deliveries he has to manually check off what he's done on another system
- If the team needs to contact him while he's out, they can only call him and he can't answer when driving or helping customers move the deliveries into their homes
- Management keeps sending out employee surveys but he's given up doing them as nothing seems to change



Reaching your **entire** deskless workforce

Once you have outlined all of the personas of each type of deskless colleague you have, the next step is to understand how they consume information.

For example, an app might be helpful for Foreman Frankie and his team who can log in on their phone and have a scroll through the latest updates on their break.

His team can also have opportunities to connect with others on different sites and have a peek at the work they're doing. Plus, if someone's going to be late or there's any news from HQ, they can drop him a message on the app which he can pick up whenever he gets a quick break. Take a look at what we've done with [Miller Homes](#) to keep their staff connected and engaged no matter which building site they're based at.

What about Waitress Whitney who can't be seen using her phone in front of customers on the restaurant floor?

[Pizza Express](#) resolved this by installing iPads at each restaurant where all staff can take a look throughout their shift to stay up to date with the latest news. Another genius thing Pizza Express has done is to add QR codes to restaurant equipment so that people who aren't sure how to use them can scan the QR code with their

phone and be taken straight to the instructions housed on the intranet.

For Driver Darren who can only check his app when he's parked up, he would really appreciate important alerts or breaking news through push notifications, when used sparingly, of course.

It only takes a second to read a push notification on his phone, but if he does have a few minutes to spare, he can check his personalised timeline for other relevant news. Plus, when he needs to log updates or issues in his courier route delivery platform, he has easy access to it through his [employee app](#) thanks to useful integrations, so there's less paperwork to complete in the van. We have enabled breaking news banners, streamlined documentation and dramatically reduced paperwork required for [Halfords' predominantly deskless workforce](#), which can save on-the-go employees so much time.

Mastering retention of deskless workers

The positive impact that an engaged deskless workforce can have on productivity, morale and retention is huge. Alignment with company culture and a sense of belonging, feeling seen, heard and appreciated will do wonders for employee engagement, and the ease with which this can be implemented is impressive.

[33% of people have reported that their place of work does not recognise employee achievements](#), and without a digital hub to do so, this figure is likely exacerbated for deskless workers who can often feel undervalued or expendable compared to their desk-based colleagues. Segmenting your workforce to understand what each type of employee needs to effectively do their job and stay engaged will see a real impact.

Providing channels for leadership to communicate directly with the deskless workforce will reinforce that they are valued just as much as any other colleague. They will also feel their work is respected and feel part of the bigger picture of your organisation. Over time, this can lead to improved job satisfaction which will positively impact your employee retention.

Speaking from **experience**

We have worked with some of the world's biggest brands to ensure they reach and connect with employees far and wide, putting their people and culture front and centre of everything. With an engaged workforce, you pave the way to stronger results.

Here is a snapshot of key stats from some of our customers:



95% active mobile users

[Read more >](#)



97% active mobile users

[Read more >](#)



97% monthly engagement



32% reduction in turnover



40% reduction in new starter drop-out rates

[Read more >](#)



86% mobile usage

[Read more >](#)

Connect your deskless workforce **with Oak**

With a platform that's tailored to the needs and wants of your colleagues, leaders and strategic objectives, you can be confident that even when no deskless colleague has a company email address, they can enjoy the same level of employee experience as your Head Office teams.

Get this right and watch engagement, retention and employee satisfaction keep on climbing. Stop relying on the manager cascade and get the relevant information to the right people at the right time.

The results that we have achieved with our customers demonstrate how much we understand the challenges that all kinds of companies face and we have the perfect solution that can be tailored to the needs of your business.

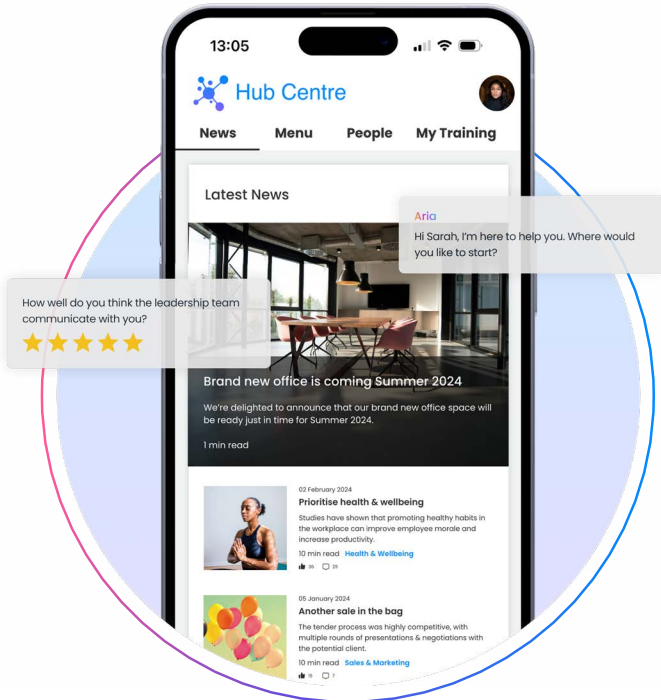
If you would like to know more about how an employee app can transform how you engage with your own deskless and frontline workers, we would love to show you what we can do. Explore more resources on our website, or contact us directly to book a demo with the team.

An award-winning employee app and intranet solution

Oak Engage empowers your teams to get the right message, to the right people, at the right time.

We're here to make communication simple. We believe there is a better way to use technology to engage employees, cut through the noise, and inspire action that puts people at the heart of organisations.

The customer is at the heart of Oak Engage, with an attentive support team on hand to help with any customer queries.



Trusted by the world's biggest brands



Ready to get started?

We offer a free and personalised demo service,
showcasing our intuitive and easy-to-use platform.
Tailored to meet your specific needs.

Scan this QR code to book a demo.

