



Category: Best Publication

Company: BBC Birmingham

Entry title: Spotlight

Brief and objectives:

At a time of great change for both the BBC and the media sector, there is more need than ever for internal communication professionals to develop effective publications capable of addressing employee needs.

Our internal communications team linked up with Poppulo, an internal communications software company, to create a comprehensive digital publication for BBC colleagues. We wanted to achieve a number of things:

- Reduce organisational noise and build a trusted channel
- Combine existing ebulletins to achieve a unified communication, reflecting 'one BBC'.
- Increase personalisation of content
- Improve engagement levels among front-line staff, remote workers and non-desk-based staff
- Ensure a strong sense of employee voice to reflect employee experience
- Enhance two-way engagement
- Integrate our Enterprise Social Network (ESN) offering on Yammer
- Double our average open rate so we can reach more people
- Celebrate our successes: incredibly important at a time of immense change, uncertainty and external press scrutiny
- Improve visibility of all staff, including leaders

Spotlight is a publication capable of delivering a personalised communications experience to every one of our 21,000 members of staff, no matter which part of the organisation they work in. It was a considerable challenge, but we think the outcomes speak for themselves.

Rationale behind publication, including research and planning:

With over 21,000 staff, producing a single email publication capable of addressing the needs of so many stakeholders was a challenge.

Looking at our analytics, we knew there were a number of critical parts of the organisation which were not engaging with our previous weekly email publication. The average open rate of 25% meant it simply wasn't performing effectively.

Feedback also showed our top-down approach wasn't striking a chord with colleagues and was unable to provide them with information relevant to their area which could help them do their jobs more effectively.

Another challenge facing the team was the number of eBulletins across the organisation. If we were going to see our vision of 'one BBC' reflected within our content, we needed to consolidate these existing email communications into a unified channel.

Outside work, we're used to receiving personalised communications from companies. The question we asked ourselves was: why can't our internal communications do the same thing?

Strategy and tactics, including creativity and innovation:

We decided to create a new, weekly publication called Spotlight, the finished product includes a number of unique features that really set it apart from other channels (see tactics section). Although the email is sent to all BBC staff, the content is fully tailored to the recipient so that no two emails are the same.

We set out to integrate the publication with our HR database so that we would be able to link in data from colleagues about their roles and provide them with relevant articles. For example, their location or department.

Given the size of the organisation, channels overload is also a very real risk. This is why we were so keen for Spotlight to reduce the number of existing publications and integrate with Yammer to help streamline our channels mix and provide a platform for two-way communication.

There was also a need to meet a number of accessibility needs for colleagues. Every edition of Spotlight needed an accessibility mode and full online microsite to fit the needs of colleagues with different disabilities.

By drawing upon the local knowledge of colleagues we would also be able to include staff-driven articles with an informal tone and more relevance to local areas. This meant more articles covering events and development opportunities, which are popular with colleagues.

We think we've created a corporate channel that doesn't feel 'corporate', whilst retaining all of the credibility that we needed to instill. Plus, it's the BBC – so everything needs a little bit of glamour, plus the robust editorial standards that our journalists expect.

Implementation of tactics:

Each week, communications colleagues from across the BBC add their articles to the publication directly within the Poppulo system, streamlining what was previously a complex process.

By giving access to a shared platform and working with stakeholders across the BBC, we consolidated all the existing disparate communications into one, weekly publication.

It means that a dispersed internal comms team is now working collaboratively, providing a consistent employee experience across the BBC without sacrificing any of the local flavour that really helps Spotlight resonate with our staff.

On average, the full version of Spotlight contains 50 articles a week. However, thanks to a carefully managed filtering process, the average colleague will see an average of 15 articles targeted specifically to their department, location and job role.

This helps us address information overload and personalise the employee experience. This collaborative approach has also helped put a renewed focus on our work with parts of the organisation which traditionally had lower engagement rates with email communications.

For example, people in HR now get their own dedicated section within Spotlight. This has helped to increase the average open rate from 35% to 63%. This is critical to ensuring that HR is well-informed to support the organisation and generate a sense of community in the team.

Another important aspect to Spotlight is integration with our Enterprise Social Network (ESN) on Yammer. Colleagues can now find a weekly selection of the topics and hashtags that have been generating the most conversation with colleagues on Yammer over the past week.

Lastly, we've worked to introduce functionality in Spotlight which supports our drive towards more two-way communication. Every article offers a comment option, this is a great way for us to respond to staff enquiries and gain a better understanding of colleague concerns.

Measurement and evaluation, including engagement of target readers:

We've been running Spotlight for just over a year, and the impact it has had on engagement has been considerable. Our previous staff email publication averaged just 25% open rate, sometimes dropping to as low as 19%.

Spotlight now frequently hits a 50% open rate and, thanks to our collaborative approach, we've been able to effectively double levels of engagement in less than a year.

When accounting for monthly reach (the proportion of colleagues who have opened Spotlight or read at least one article), the figures are even more impressive. During May 2018 our monthly reach hit 70%, compared to 48% at the same point last year.

We've also studied the engagement patterns to establish the best day and time to send Spotlight. Our research showed that sending early on Friday morning generated the best engagement return, so we changed our send time accordingly.

Ultimately, we think Spotlight goes to show what can be achieved by effective, collaborative internal communications and listening to your target audience.

Budget and cost effectiveness:

Design costs: £1,500

Poppulo licence fees: £2,700