SmartWorkspace@ DHL Group

The digital gateway for 600,000 employees worldwide

How the employee experience platform "Smart Workspace" replaced a complex tool

Approx. 600,000

Bonn, Germany

220 countries

April 1, 2022, was a historic day for DHL Group: It marked the launch of the corporation's Smart Workspace. For the first time, the global company was able to offer 600,000 employees located in 220 countries a **unified digital communication platform as a gateway to the digital world of their business.** Even operational employees such as delivery people without a digital workplace now have access by using their private smartphones, tablets, or PCs. It all started in 2017 as a small pilot project introducing an employee app based on Staffbase. After several expansion stages, Staffbase now serves as both an **employee app and a Front Door Intranet in the Smart Workspace.** The App provides uniform access to information, various collaboration options, and interactions such as employee services and company-relevant apps.

The initial situation: 300,000 employees without intranet access

DHL Group had already been using the multiple award-winning intranet myNet since 2015. This internal digital platform was connecting around 250,000 office employees worldwide. myNet offered information in more than 40 languages, personalized by country and division, an internal app store, and an integrated individual

enterprise social network feed directly on the homepage. It was the perfect introduction to the digital workplace for office employees. But the platform had one huge disadvantage: The corporation's operational employees — including delivery staff and employees in logistics centers (totalling around 300,000 people at the time) — had no access to myNet and were virtually excluded from this digital expansion.

Think big – start small – act fast:
a small project with a big impact

To remedy this, the project team responsible for myNet decided in August 2017 to conduct a pilot project with an employee app in addition to the existing intranet. Three points were most important:

- To be able to reach all employees securely on private and mobile devices.

- To find out whether operational employees such as delivery staff use a company app on private devices at all.

- To provide quick insights without much bureaucracy and have the potential to easily broaden the capabilities further.

Staffbase was chosen as the app provider because its software met all of the requirements (see graphic above). Only a few weeks passed between this decision and the launch of the prototype. The **new employee app was launched for about 3,000 employees in the UK and 800 employees in Denmark under the name "Connect."** In addition, another 150 team members from the company's own "IT Services" in Germany contributed at short notice, in order to be involved in the project from the start.

The operational employees on site in the UK and Denmark received the access data for the app from their supervisors in morning team meetings (performance dialogues). For the first time, they could use an employee app with their private smartphones, tablets, and PCs.

The first successful use cases happened quickly and sometimes quite unexpectedly. From the first day onward, **operational teams weren't the only ones to actively use the new app, but also office employees** who already had access to the existing intranet. The reason: Using the app was fun, easy, and brought great added value. With just one click, much of what was relevant for daily work appeared on screen, for example important information from local supervisors in the users' native language, or strategic information from corporate headquarters. And best of all, this information was personalized by being specifically related to the employees' location. In the case of very important messages, everyone affected by the information received corresponding notifications on their smartphones. This example was proof that a mobile employee app can also be highly relevant for office workers.

Why DHL Group chose Staffbase as an employee app

Reach all employees with one platform for personalized information (incl. push function) and interactivity

Professional customer success organization supporting implementation and further expansion

"Software as a service" solution successfully implemented in mid-size companies

Mobile first paradigm with branded app and broad range of functions (e.g. chat, social wall)

Mobile app should be downloadable from official app stores

Possibility to start with small pilots in parallel to existing Intranet

Enabler of agile step- by-step approach: strategy to convince steering boards

For users and editors it should be as easyas Facebook

Bridge to Digital Workplace — with withstrong players

Let employees use their private devices

The smartphone became the new, well-accepted medium of communication within the company. **Using the new app was as easy as can be.** Once installed from the public app store, it gave direct access to colleagues and offered completely new possibilities for collaborations. Via a **social wall**, it became possible for everyone to exchange information just like on public social media channels. In addition, **a chat function made direct, person-to-person communication possible.** This also had a clear effect on corporate communication: Regular global messages on the myNet intranet only reached about 5% of employees, but the app substantially improved this reach. During the prototype phase, more than 70% of employees clicked on important news sent via push notifications.

In many situations, the new employee app had practical use cases that were not anticipated. For example, a DHL Group driver had a truck accident in Denmark and was unable to get help quickly through the traditional channels. A post in the employee app ensured that several colleagues were quickly at the scene of the accident and helped to transfer parcels to replacement vehicles. Examples like these quickly demonstrated the great operational benefit of the new employee app.
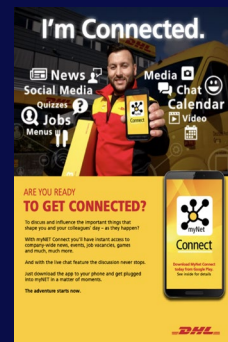
Important during the prototype phase of the app:

- Local news, related as closely as possible to the location

- Important news from corporate headquarters, e.g. corporate strategy

- Social wall for employees to share information (similar to platforms like Facebook)

- Surveys and feedback

- Videos with updates from top management

- Special campaigns, e.g. Employee of the Month or a Christmas calendar

- Chat functions for connecting with individual employees or groups

After only a few weeks, the small agile pilot project turned out to be extremely successful. The questions asked at the beginning of the project could all be answered positively: It was possible to reach employees on private devices in an uncomplicated way. An authentication solution offered by Staffbase was used to clearly identify users as company employees. **Operational staff and even office staff used the app intensively and showed enjoyment — even in their free time.** Most importantly, an employee survey revealed that **staff satisfaction with management's communication had gone up sharply.** The greatest success was how regional managers recognized the new app as their favorite internal communication medium and used it very actively.

This success story was presented by the project team of Corporate Communications in the corporation's "Digital Media Steering Group." All divisions and the functions Internal Communications, HR, and IT, are represented in this group. Due to the great success of the pilot, the Steering Group decided to gradually roll out the app in other countries.

Expansion stage 2: Worldwide app rollout during the Covid-19 pandemic

When the Covid-19 pandemic broke out in early 2020, DHL Group quickly needed a **well-functioning internal platform able to reach all employees.** This was a huge catalyst for the app project. Within a few months, all employees had access to the app. A worldwide system of so-called "champions" were put in charge of the app representation and coordination in their individual countries. They worked in close contact with the central project team and ensured that the same standards were met worldwide during the rollout of the app. At the same time, local communication managers always had the possibility to adapt the app to their country — and division specific requirements. This was **made possible by Staffbase's "Spaces" concept**. A "Space" is an area within the Staffbase app where content is only visible to some users. With this functionality, the **app's content can be personalized**. A user in Germany from a certain division may see completely different information than a user in the US belonging to yet another division of the company.

Replacement or adjustment: What would become of the existing intranet?

While the global app rollout was still underway, its great success had already prompted the project team to consider whether a separate intranet would still be needed alongside the new app. For this reason, the team began to gather the requirements the company and the workforce had in mind for the "Digital Workspace 2025." To this end, extensive surveys and design thinking workshops were conducted with managers from the various divisions. The result was clear: The path taken with the intranet myNet toward a modern digital workplace for all employees would be continued. But from then on, things would be different: **For the first time, employees would be able to use this unifying gateway to reach all digital aspects of the company. They would have access to all the information, apps, services, and interaction options relevant to them personally.** The project would work on all devices (including privately owned ones) and meet the highest security requirements. **The original app project had evolved into a Digital Workspace Vision.**

With an extensive list of requirements, the DHL Group project team began looking for possible technical solutions. After a multi-stage selection process, a clear favorite emerged. **The Staffbase solution already in use offered the optimal combination. Staffbase would serve as an entry gateway (Front Door Intranet) that would allow content to be dispersed individually (personalization).** Crucial in DHL Group's decision was Staffbase's continued strategy to develop from an app provider towards a

375,000

active Users
(Smart Workspace)

60%

of the group
are registered
with SmartConnect

5M

Clicks in Smart
Center since launch in
May 2021

front-door intranet provider and to meet the requirements set for improving the employee experience within the company. Aside from general intranet content, this included employee services, personalized apps, and interaction options.

Expansion stage 3: Smart workspace goes live

Once the software for the new Digital Workplace Solution had been selected, the next step was to implement it. To accomplish this, DHL Group launched the Smart Workspace program in close collaboration with HR, IT, and Internal Communications, as well as the corporation's business division. The goals and expectations were even higher than for the app project. The successor to the existing intranet in combination with the app was to generate a significant increase in employee engagement and at the same time be more efficient in operation.

During implementation, three main elements of the new Smart Workspace became crucial:

- **A Staffbase-based front-door intranet** called "Smart Connect" — an evolution from the previously launched employee app

- **A digital workplace tool** with many applications and cloud services for office employees

- **Integrated employee services**

DHL Group placed particular emphasis on the possibility of displaying personalized content to employees on an individual basis, displayed when it's most relevant. Example: Newly hired employees need a quick and easy way to understand information in order to start their new jobs smoothly.

Smart Workspace, with its customized content, is intended to be a decisive aid in this regard. Since DHL Group hires tens of thousands of new people each year, **improved and shortened onboarding times** can save considerable costs. At the same time, employees feel better integrated and satisfaction with the company increases. The Smart Workspace also offers additional potential through the **digitization of employee services** (e.g. sick notes, payroll, etc.); functionalities which will be implemented over time in the coming years. To this end, the project team developed an Employee Services Guideline. This guideline ensures that all employee services within DHL Group are compatible with the Smart Workspace and generate the greatest possible benefit for everyone.

Use Cases:

> Office employees who use a collaboration tool as their central work tool can **access the Smart Connect intranet with just one click.**

> The **Smart Connect intranet has an internal app store** that allows all internal applications to be opened with just one click. These apps can be saved as favorites in the **Staffbase Launchpad**. This allows employees to create their own area for their internal apps.

> While classic intranet content is stored in the Staffbase system Smart Connect, **user group-specific information and documents are stored in a cloud-based content management system.** For users, this difference is not noticeable because both systems are designed and operable in the same way.

Active in over 220 countries, the delivery service DHL Group is the world's leading logistics provider. Its service portfolio includes mail and parcel services, express delivery, air and sea freight, and contract logistics. With almost 600,000 employees, the corporation is one of the largest privately owned employers in the world.

Last but not least: The global engagement concept

The most important aspect in the introduction of new digital solutions is enabling employees. After all, it is their continued use that ultimately determines success. Many sophisticated IT applications fail during their introduction because the users don't understand their application possibilities. Sometimes they simply don't understand them correctly and are therefore unable to use them effectively. For this reason, DHL Group launched a global engagement project for the new Smart Workspace that consisted of four modules:

Smart Campaign: DHL Group used a global communication campaign to generate awareness among the Group's 600,000 employees prior to the launch and during the rollout phase of the Smart Workspace.

Consistent Messaging

A single storyline within our campaign that has a central information area in both the old and new intranet.

Look-and-Feel Design

The campaign design features a light blue scheme with honeycomb elements so that all materials are immediately recognizable to our colleagues.

Gamification Elements

Small doodle games help to get our message across in a playful way.

Smart Curriculum: Virtual live language sessions and eLearning formats have changed the learning experience for the better.

Virtual Live-Trainings & eLearning Modules

Offering live language sessions in German and English delivered by the in-house training department, as well as eLearning formats for a targeted learning experience.

Smart Connect Sessions

Smart Center: All Smart Workspace information and use cases can be found here in 20 languages — by the end of 2022, this repository included over 600 use cases with more than five million clicks since its launch in May 2021.

One Resource for the Whole Company

All business units focus on common end-user materials to avoid overlap and to take advantage of the group's scaling effects.
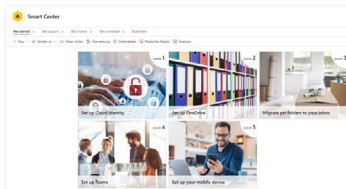
Focus On Use Cases

Hundreds of pages contain enablement material based on use cases

Handling Different Languages

The Smart Center desktop is generally available in 20 languages, all start-up videos are subtitled accordingly, and all use cases are offered at least in German and English.

Smart Communities: In order to share experiences with each other, there are communities and interactive events regarding many areas of the Smart Workspace; for example, from the approximately 500 Smart Connect Champions worldwide.


By and for Colleagues

Our findings, as well as exchange with other companies, have shown community building to be one of the most important factors in the sustainable empowerment of our employees.

Making Connections at DHL

Colleagues enjoy learning more about applications from other colleagues. This engagement is voluntary and happens after consultation with the respective supervisor.
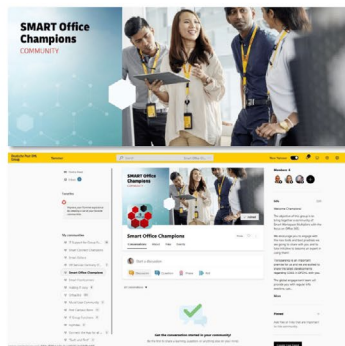
The launch of Smart Workspace was a complete success. More than 60% of the entire Group has now activated their account on Smart Connect. According to an internal representative survey, 96% of office employees are familiar with the portal.

75% of employees say they have sufficient knowledge to use Smart Connect for their daily work — this compares to just 8% who are not yet sufficiently enabled. And with regard to Smart Workspace and the digital workplace tool, 70% agree that it has changed the way they work in a positive way.

Critical success factors for the smart workspace

Holistic solution: Integrated Employee Experience Platform replaces widespread tool usage.

Simplicity: Staffbase as a unified Front Door Intranet, employee experience platform, and gateway to the new Smart Workspace — optionally personalized content for everyone, both mobile and independent of individual devices (e.g. global news on company strategy, a global employee survey, local content in local language).

Global empowerment campaign: Enabling through videos, training, and forums.

Shared responsibility for content creation: Professional editorial team at corporation headquarters supported by editorial members in separate countries.

Open discussion culture: All employees are allowed to publish their own content under their real names — critical and factual discussions are expressly encouraged.

Professional project management: Central, agile project team from HR, IT, Internal Communications and the divisions supported by champions in the different countries.

How does the journey continue?

With Smart Workspace, **a new digital era** has begun for DHL Group. Finally, the company is able to reach all employees digitally. This ensures a **much higher connection with and within the company.** The easy flow of information gives DHL Group a great opportunity to provide all of their employees with relevant content to make their daily work easier. To this end, the Smart Workspace offers entirely new possibilities which can be expanded even further. Examples include an improved search function, more sophisticated user profiles, and greater personalization of content according to user groups.

The moderators responsible for the DHL Group Smart Workspace project and its **development acknowledged that they will have to continuously monitor the project in the years to come.** Only by diligently working on the long-term project can success be ensured. The most important learning has been that a program of this scale can only be successful through close coordination between HR, IT, Internal Communications, and the involvement of the business units. Ultimately, **employees and the employee experience should always be at the center of strategies.** Only when as many employees as possible are able to derive benefits in their daily work can a digital workplace be considered successful.**The launch of Smart Workspace was a complete success.** More than 60% of the entire Group has now activated their account on Smart Connect. According to an internal representative survey, 96% of office employees are familiar with the portal.

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This case study was written by Norbert Schäfer, who introduced the Staffbase platform at DHL Group and developed the strategy for the Smart Workspace together with a team from Internal Communications, HR, IT and the business divisions of the Group. At the beginning of 2022 he founded the strategy consultancy "We-Experience."

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