

How Sunbelt Rentals Sharpened Their Tools and Transformed Their Internal Communications

Inform. Educate. Engage.



"I can't say this enough, because everything's so visual on the app, and the opportunity for feedback is there, which it wasn't before: everyone's game is up. Everyone works a little bit harder. Which is quite fascinating, and in fact great to see."

— **Chris Nicholls,**
National Communications Manager, Sunbelt Rentals

Sunbelt Rentals is the UK's leading supplier of plant, tools, and specialist equipment hire for the construction, events, and infrastructure markets. As part of FTSE100 Ashted Group plc, Sunbelt Rentals has over **3,700 employees across 200+ locations nationwide**. Most impressively the group has deployed solution services for the government on practically **every NHS Regional Testing Centre across the UK, helping provide vital testing facilities for COVID-19**.

The Challenges

Over the last seven years, Sunbelt Rentals, previously known as A-Plant, grew at an exponential rate through the acquisition of a number of specialist businesses. Each had their own brand identity, culture, and strategy. This ultimately caused a communication gap as there was no single point of contact and no

single method to communicate throughout the 20+ businesses. A number of employees didn't have access to company email addresses, desktops, or the internet, with the main source of information coming from direct mail, bi-annual magazines, and line managers.



After completing an employee engagement survey, it was clear that their workforce didn't understand the company's values and that change was necessary. **Sunbelt Rentals made the decision and took on the objective to merge 20+ brands into one**, and in parallel close the communication gap. The aim was to transform the business to have one clear brand, mission, and vision, as well as one single source of truth to ultimately improve employee trust and engagement.



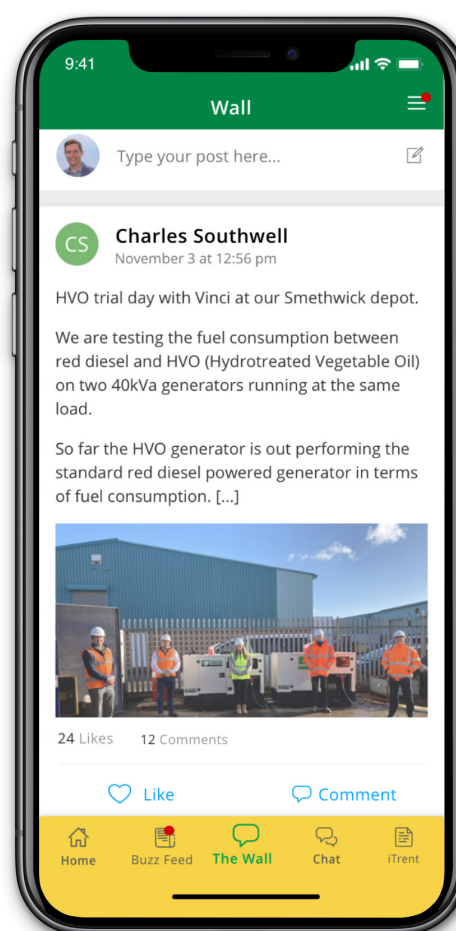
The Solution

From the very start of their search, the Sunbelt Rentals communications team knew they needed to opt for a **mobile-first solution**. They were looking for a way to align the newly merged company and allow the team to communicate effectively. Nicholls says *“An app ticks all the boxes. Even if they don't have a company mobile phone, they're able to download it on*

their personal phone, so it gives us the ability to communicate with everyone and to also improve employee engagement.”

Sunbelt Rentals needed a **mobile-first solution that was user-friendly, had a sophisticated content management system, and could be pushed to go live in a short amount of time.**

The team narrowed their options down to three providers. After receiving a recommendation from a current customer and seeing their ability to build a fully customised and branded app, the team knew that Staffbase could create a platform that would reflect the new values, mission, and vision of their company.



The Success

"Interaction," Sunbelt Rental's employee app, was launched in September 2019 alongside the implementation of Single Sign-On (SSO) so employees can sign into their app with the same login credentials used for any other system at work.

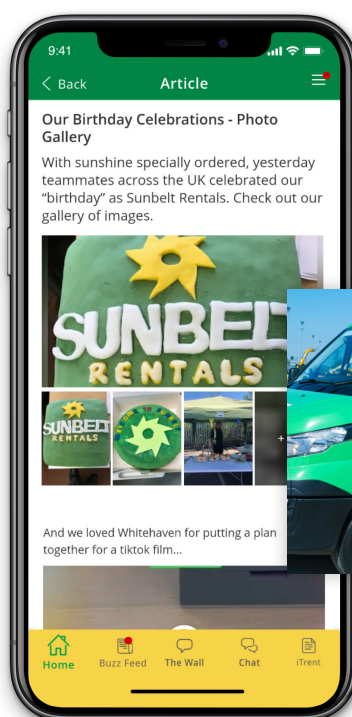
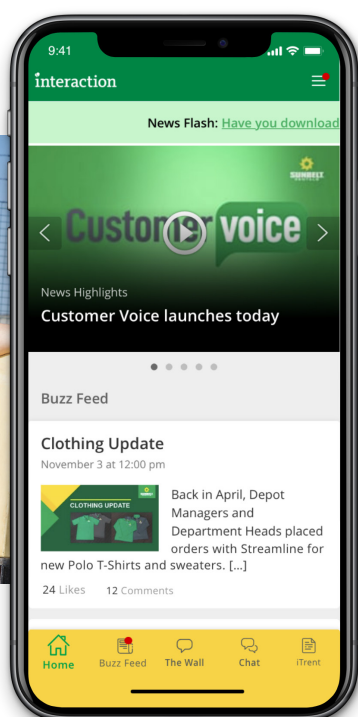
In December 2019, Chris Nicholls, National Communications Manager, was put in charge of the project to create relevant and engaging content and to ensure the new communication solution was aligned with their newly-transformed brand. **Since its launch, 2,240 employees have downloaded and regularly use the app, with 1,325 weekly active users.**

The most popular channels within the app are the BuzzFeed and Recognition channels. **Using the analytics tools in the app, Nicholls shared that the views received range from 600-1,000**

per post. Employees can now recognise each other for a job well done and the comms team is able to share powerful employee stories and successes within the entire organisation.

Nicholls feels as though a community has been created to recognise those who deserve it; however, the most powerful part of these channels is their mix of communication styles. *"We're not just creating content in written format, it's sometimes in video format and we're doing podcasts. We're always searching for new ways to communicate and asking our audience to send in their own content. Our people oriented content is always the most popular,"* says Nicholls.

By June 2020, Sunbelt Rentals merged the 20+ brands and the app had fully been developed and rolled out. Nicholls and his comms team created another employee engagement survey,



this time with an 80% engagement score.

“Last year we were a little below the benchmark in terms of engagement and now we’re higher than what we’ve ever been before. I think through our new comms strategy, the app, and our rebrand, we have improved employee engagement massively,” Nicholls reports.

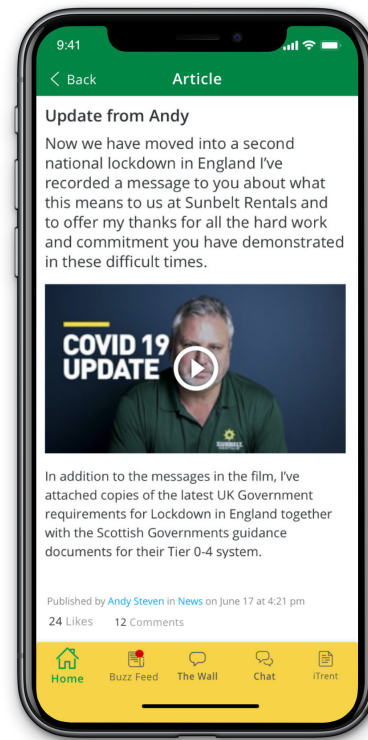
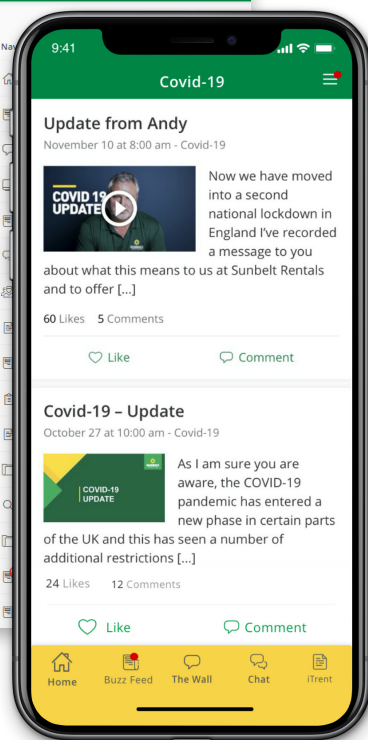
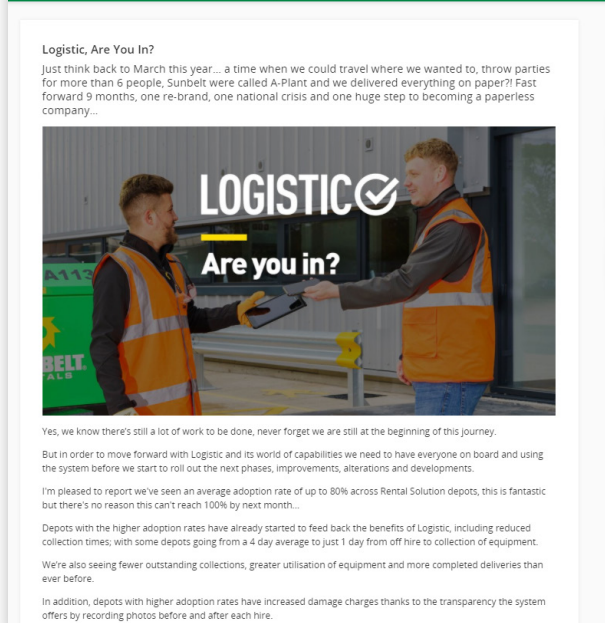
One of the biggest unexpected benefits has been the ability to communicate and use the app for crisis communications during the COVID-19 pandemic.

As the world went into lockdown in March 2020, employees were a willing audience that demanded a huge amount of content to address their need to know and understand what was going on with the business.

The internal comms team prepared daily updates for their workforce to keep them informed with the ever changing government regulations

nationwide. Nicholls felt this was a time to give their workforce immediate information. Deemed to be key workers, Nicholls insisted that they use the app to not only share critical information from senior management, but to also boost employee morale. The team worked on creating content that would ensure the entire company knew how pivotal they were to the pandemic response through the deployment of almost every NHS Testing Centre for COVID-19.

“We changed our messaging to promote our people and to focus on why they’re key workers and what they have achieved during COVID-19, whilst at the same time supporting key utilities and construction projects to produce these testing sites. I am proud to belong to Sunbelt Rentals and I wanted to shine light on who we are as a business and what our people do,” says Nicholls.



"With the help of an employee app, we've been able to introduce a centralised process on how we communicate with our workforce. We now communicate in plain English to suit our huge range of employees, from drivers to sales managers and those out in the field. We're now consistent in how we speak and communicate which always comes back to our vision, mission, and values."

— Chris Nicholls,
National Communications Manager, Sunbelt Rentals

Summary

Transforming and merging 20+ brands into one is not an easy challenge for any communicator. However, the implementation of a **mobile-first solution** has allowed Sunbelt Rentals to help close the communication gap they once faced. Interaction has been able to inform, educate, and engage with Sunbelt Rentals' workforce by providing them with relevant information—especially during the coronavirus crisis.



Bridging the Digital Communication Gap for Non-Desk Employees



3 out of 4 employees are non-desk workers underserved by technology on the job



85% of non-desk employees said the communication they receive while on the job is not enough



45% of non-desk employees have no access to intranet at work



1/2 of non-desk employees said communication helps them to perform their job

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