

# The Buyer's Guide for an Employee App





# Hi there!

So you want an employee app. That's great news! You're well on your way to making your best internal communications decision yet. But before you get started, there's some things we think you need to know about buying an employee app.

There's a lot of communications software out there, and we want to make sure you find the solution that's best for you. Each section of this Buyer's Guide is designed to help you consider all of things that go into an employee app to make it great:

> We'll start with the core. These features are marked in red and are everything you need to get your app up and running, get your employees onboard, and make sure their first experiences with the app are positive.

> The next set of features are about substance, and they're marked in blue. These are all of the different elements in your app that make it worth using. Everything here is essential to keeping things highly relevant, informative, and fun for your employees.

> The last set are features that ensure that your app is reliable, secure, and able to grow with you. An employee app is a big investment, and these features are like its insurance. They are marked in yellow.

There's a lot in here, so grab a cup of tea, make yourself at home, and let us know if you have any questions!

Happy Reading,

*the Staffbase Team*

# Table of Contents








<b>Versatile User Access</b>	<b>5</b>
Device Availability	5
Login and Onboarding	7
Expert Tip	7
Best Practice Example	8
<b>Custom Branding</b>	<b>9</b>
Surface	9
In-App Specifications	9
Expert Tip	11
Best Practice Example	11
<b>Targeted Content</b>	<b>13</b>
Passive Targeting	13
Active Targeting	14
Languages	15
Expert Tip	16
Best Practice Example	17
<b>Communications Hub</b>	<b>18</b>
Internal Communication	18
External Communication	19
Rich Media	20
Expert Tip	21
Best Practice Example	22
<b>Convenient Knowledge</b>	<b>24</b>
Pages and Documents	24
Organization Information	25
External Source Information	26
Expert Tip	27
Best Practice Example	28
<b>Chat</b>	<b>29</b>
Conversation Levels	29
Notifications and Responsiveness	30
Expert Tip	31
Best Practice Example	31

<b>Engagement and Services</b>	<b>33</b>
Peer-to-Peer Engagement	33
Employee Self-Services	33
Feedback	34
Expert Tip	35
Best Practice Example	35
<b>All-Around Security</b>	<b>37</b>
Provider Security and Compliance	37
Platform Security	38
Expert Tip	39
Best-Practice Example	40
<b>Smart Navigation</b>	<b>42</b>
Search	42
Navigation	42
Expert Tip	43
Best Practice Example	44
<b>Analytics and Control</b>	<b>45</b>
User Management	45
Roles and Rights	46
Analytics	47
Expert Tip	48
Best Practice Example	48
<b>Powerful Integrations and Extensions</b>	<b>50</b>
Standard Integrations	50
Extensions	51
Expert Tip	52
Best Practice Example	52

## Versatile User Access

### Device Availability

With more and more enterprise apps available today, user experience is king. An enterprise app needs to offer consumer-grade user experience and performance to ensure adoption by employees. The number-one risk facing IT projects in internal communications is low adoption. One of the keys to getting employees' attention amidst a sea of alerts from their personal channels is to opt for a native app, which offers a vast array of advantages over a web app, some of which are particularly relevant for internal communications.

	Native App	Web App
Objective Platform	Developed for a mobile device 	Developed for desktop first 
Distribution	Via app stores or marketplaces (i.e. Apple App Store, Google Play Store)  	User enters URL in web browser each time they want to access 
Environment	Installed directly on mobile device 	Not downloaded to mobile devices 

*A native app offers many advantages over a web app especially when it comes to user experience and distribution.*

The following native app features offer advantages that contribute specifically to internal communications:

- 1. Push notifications** — Push notifications are very important for achieving reach, because they ensure that employees see updates and react to them. Staffbase customer research has found that 75 percent of employees read push-notified content within one hour of receiving it.
- 2. Mobile first** — Because they are specifically designed for the mobile platform, native apps are faster, more efficient, and more responsive. They incorporate their devices' OS interfaces, creating an integrated look and feel.<sup>1</sup> This is essential to providing a seamless user experience, which can make or break adoption.
- 3. App store distribution** — Native apps are quality-assured because app stores control the quality standards of the apps they provide.<sup>2</sup> Employees will be more likely to download and use an employee app when its quality is consistent with other apps on their devices.
- 4. Installed on device** — With a native app, users are not required to type in a URL to access it (a step which hinders regular usage).

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://clearbridgemoible.com/benefits-of-native-mobile-app-development/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.ascendle.com/blog/what-are-the-key-benefits-of-native-mobile-apps>

## Login and Onboarding

Small inconveniences can make a major difference in the willingness of employees to adopt an app. Buyers should look for an app that onboards users through a variety of methods and guides them through their first few interactions with the app. For a smooth login and onboarding process look for:

- 1. Options for onboarding** — In order that no employee is excluded because they are out of reach, an app should be able to onboard users through a variety of methods, including personal emails, distribution of access codes, and the integration of existing directories.
- 2. Welcome page/tutorial** — Companies should be able to create a custom welcome page and tutorial for newly onboarded users in order to ensure successful first interactions and set the tone for usership.



### Expert Tip

User onboarding can get complicated for distributed organizations without unified user databanks. These types of organizations can either opt to decentralize user management by giving responsibility to location-specific administrators, or they can use partial CSV imports to combine user data in one large databank.

## Best Practice Example

Some companies will need to consider offering a number of different login options for users. In some cases, only some users are able to use single sign-on, and those who do not have SSO credentials will need to use an email or username to access the system. This can be solved by configuring a login where SSO or manual login is possible.

The image shows two side-by-side login interface mockups. The left mockup is for 'WORLDcomm' and features a 'Sign In' header, a 'Username' field with a placeholder 'Enter your email address', a 'Password' field with a placeholder 'Enter your password', and an orange 'Sign In' button. Below the button is a link 'Having troubles? Contact hi@worldcomm.com' and links for 'Terms of Use' and 'Privacy Policy'. The right mockup is for 'smiths' and features a 'Sign in with work email address' button, an 'or' separator, and an 'I don't have a work email' button. Below these are links for 'Need help? Contact servicedesk@smiths.com', 'Privacy Policy', 'Acceptable Use', and 'Social Media Policy'.

(Left) Manual Login for users without other company credentials. (Right) Hybrid Login to accommodate all user types.

## Checklist for Versatile User Access

All Device Availability	Login and Onboarding
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Mobile <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Native app</li> <li>• Push notifications</li> <li>• Distribution in app stores</li> </ul> </li> <li>✓ Desktop</li> <li>✓ Print-on-demand</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Options for onboarding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal emails</li> <li>• Distribution of access codes</li> <li>• Integration of existing directories</li> </ul> </li> <li>✓ Welcome page/tutorial</li> <li>✓ Registration (identity confirmation)</li> </ul>



## Custom Branding

---

### Surface

According to TechCrunch, as of 2016 smartphone users were accessing over 30 apps on their phones each month, and daily usage had reached 9 apps per day.<sup>3</sup> Apps therefore need strong branding in order to stand out from the crowd and generate user trust. Users are far more likely to download an app with a strong connection to their employer as opposed to a generally-branded third-party app. Branded mobile apps see greater initial download rates, thus generating increased reach from day one. The following surface branding features are therefore essential:

1. **Custom app logo** — Companies can use their existing logos for the app icon and interface, or create new ones that reflect their brand.
2. **Custom domain** — Domain name is important for establishing association with the company; companies should have the option to choose their own.

### In-App Specifications

Employer branding is increasingly important in creating a strong company culture, hiring new employees, and even reducing marketing costs. According to LinkedIn Business Solutions, a company with a strong employer brand decreases cost per hire by 50 percent.<sup>4</sup> A branded employee app doubles as an investment in an employer brand. It creates awareness for companies and thereby sinks costs for advertising and marketing. Branding throughout an employee app improves user experience and brand association. This can include:

---

<sup>3</sup> <https://techcrunch.com/2017/05/04/report-smartphone-owners-are-using-9-apps-per-day-30-per-month/>

<sup>4</sup> [https://business.linkedin.com/content/dam/business/talent-solutions/global/en\\_us/c/pdfs/ultimate-list-of-employer-brand-stats.pdf](https://business.linkedin.com/content/dam/business/talent-solutions/global/en_us/c/pdfs/ultimate-list-of-employer-brand-stats.pdf)

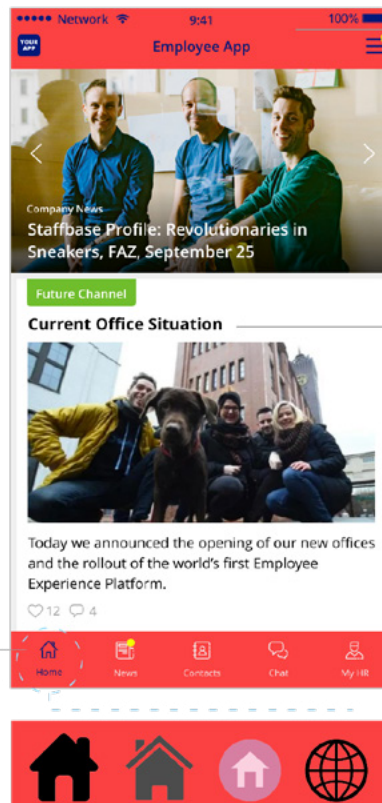
1. **Start page** — Companies can adjust their start pages to meet their needs and reflect their company for the best user experience at each login.
2. **Typography** — Companies can select a font specifically for the app or use a company font throughout.
3. **Icons** — Custom icons can help create brand recognition and speak to the target audience.
4. **Colors** — Color increases brand recognition by up to 80 percent.<sup>5</sup> Wherever possible, companies should look for opportunities to incorporate their colors.

#### Start page

Companies can adjust their start pages to meet their needs and best reflect their company for the best user experience at each login.

#### Icons

Custom icons can help create brand recognition and speak to the target audience.



#### Colors

Color increases brand recognition by up to 80 percent.<sup>5</sup> Wherever possible, companies should look for opportunities to incorporate their colors.

#### Typography

Companies can select a font specifically for the app or use a company font throughout.

A  
A  
A  
A

*Your app interface can be fully customized to reflect your brand.*

<sup>5</sup> <http://info.zimmercommunications.com/blog/20-stats-that-will-remind-you-of-the-importance-of-your-branding>

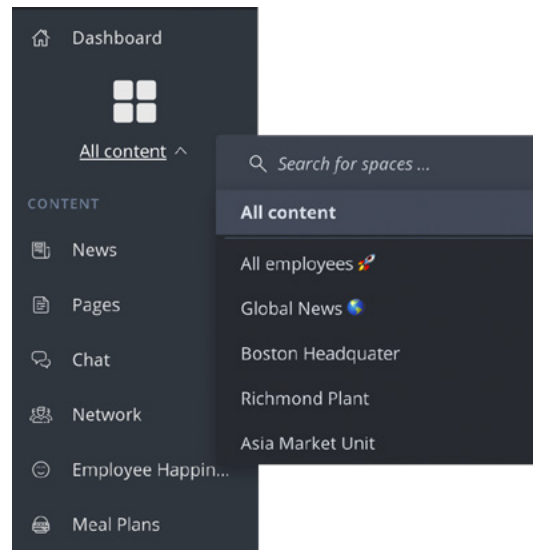
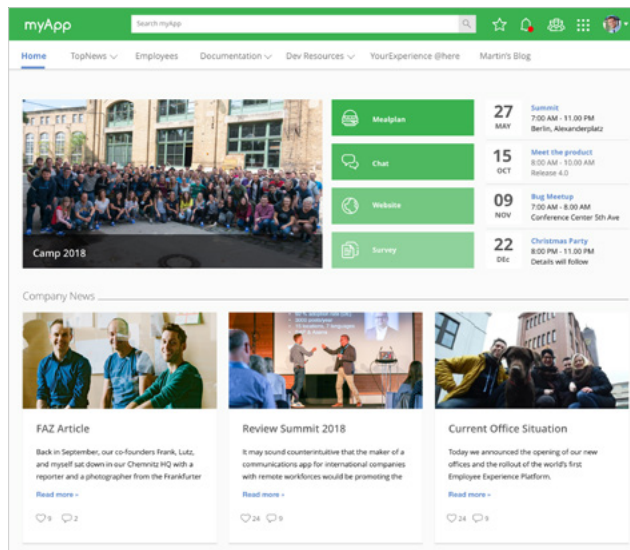


### Expert Tip

In some cases, companies will need to avoid using their customer branding on the surface of their app in order to prevent confusion in the app store regarding the intended user. If your company does not yet have an employer brand, an employee app is a great place to start building one.

### Best Practice Example

Distributed organizations sometimes have subsidiary companies with their own brands. Employees of subsidiary companies usually identify more with them than the parent company. Parent companies that successfully introduce employee apps that include subsidiary companies often create individual spaces for them with their own branding.



*Different colors and logos help boost employer brand recognition and identification.*

## Checklist for Custom Branding

Surface	In-App Specifications
✓ App logo	✓ Custom CSS
✓ Custom domain	✓ Start page
✓ Launch screen	✓ Typography
	✓ Icons
	✓ Colors

## Targeted Content

---

### Passive Targeting

Targeting content helps employers cut through the wall of content coming from other sources to reach employees effectively. Targeting at its most basic level happens when administrators categorize employees based on departments, locations, etc., and then find ways to promote and distribute content to reach employees in specific categories. Targeted content promotes discovery by drawing employees attention to the fact that employers have information that interests them and can help them do their jobs.

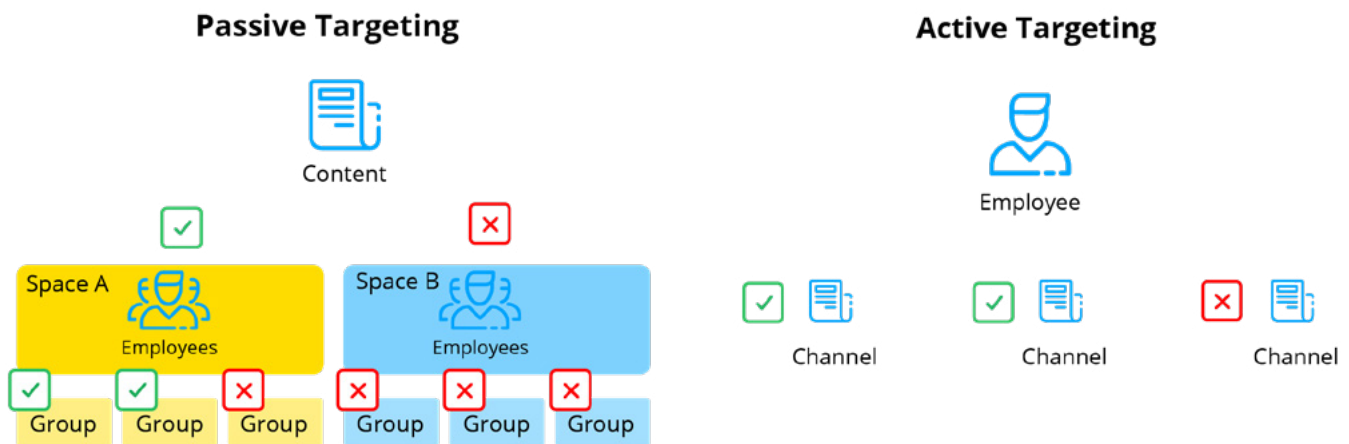
1. **Spaces** — Companies can delegate content management to different sites, locations, and departments and better provide employees with job-specific information.
2. **Groups** — Administrators can manage users in groups (which can often be created automatically by CSV import) so that certain groups see certain content, which helps with content creation and tells employees that their employer “gets it.”
3. **Audience Management** — Administrators can restrict viewing to specific audiences to create maximum relevance for employees by filtering out unnecessary messages.



## Active Targeting

An employee app should not only allow top-down targeting, but also provide employees themselves with a way to opt in to viewing certain content. Message cut-through improves substantially when employees feel they have control over what types of messages they receive. Having channels dedicated to specific groups also reduces the time needed to create content; when content is focused on a specific group, administrators have a better idea of the types of content to create and content creation can be delegated to individuals who hold the relevant information.

1. **Group Subscription** — Specific channels are available to groups for opt-in, filtering out channels with irrelevant information.



*Passive targeting is applied to employees by the administrator to make sure the content they receive is relevant. Active targeting allows the user to decide what content they want to see.*

## Languages

Multilingual communication is often neglected in international organizations. Maybe you have an office in Japan and one in France. While you may translate some essential documents into Japanese and French, in all other aspects your colleagues in those locations remain disconnected from the rest of the organization. The result is that sometimes these locations seem like their own separate entities. Building an internal comms strategy that accommodates multiple languages can be complicated, but employee communications tools with the following capabilities help internal communications professionals rise to the challenge:

- 1. Multilingual Content** — One of the most basic requirements of an enterprise-ready platform is the ability to support content in the most popular languages.
- 2. Multilingual App Interface** — App interface is critical to user experience. If the app is not supported in the users' native language, chances of adoption drop significantly.
- 3. Auto-Translate** — Reduces time and effort of having to organize translation for certain types of content (news, pages, comments, etc.)



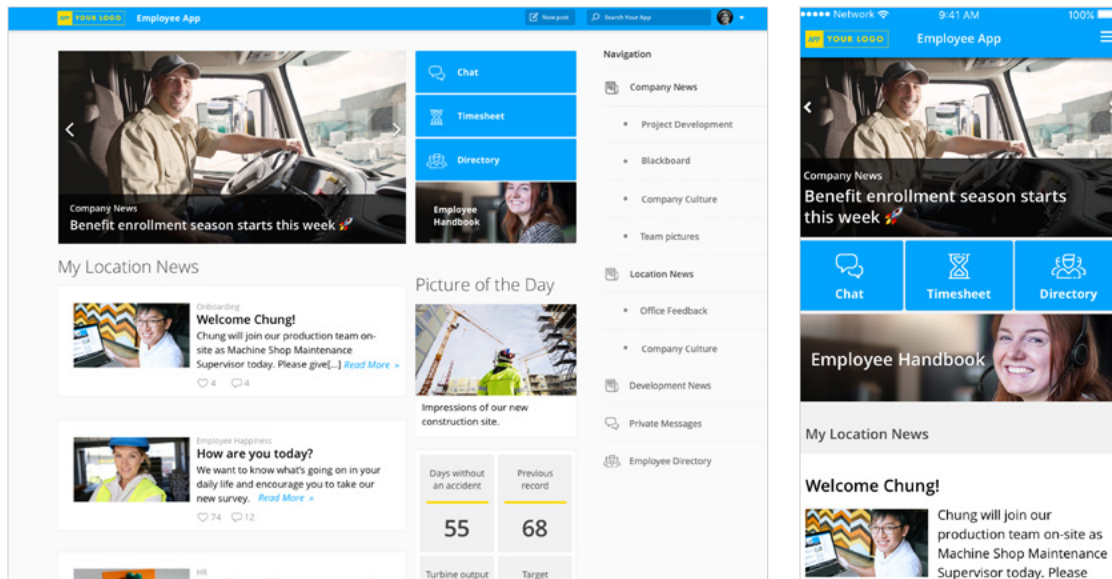
### **Expert Tip**

Don't take languages lightly. Language options are not only relevant for frontend interface, but also for single-instance content. For example, an administrator might need to create a blogpost in English and Spanish. Some platforms offer multiple language settings, but require the creation of a completely new blogpost for the Spanish version, which over time can become cumbersome and difficult to manage. Maximum language support allows an administrator to create one blogpost with multiple versions.

In order to provide unified messaging to all users and enable easy exchange between employees who speak different languages, automatic translation should be available for as much content as possible. Companies should also consider accessibility for employees with visual or hearing disabilities, and look for a platform with options for these users.

## Best Practice Example

Deutsche Telekom AG is a German telecommunications company with over 200,000 employees. The company introduced their “Service Dialogue” employee app in 2016, which has meanwhile grown to include over 400 different channels. The app uses both active and passive targeting. With passive targeting they have enabled middle managers to contribute to platform content and administration of channels in order to keep content highly relevant to employees in their jobs. Despite the complexity of their app, targeting has kept usage simple and content relevant for users.



*By using targeting your app stays clean and simple for users while maintaining the ability to support complex structures.*

## Checklist for Targeted Content

Passive Targeting	Active Targeting	Languages
✓ Spaces	✓ Group subscriptions	✓ Multilingual content
✓ Groups	✓ Channel opt-in	✓ Multilingual app interface
✓ Audience management		✓ Auto-translate

## Communications Hub

---

### Internal Communication

The most apparent use case of an employee app is for internal communication. Internal communication is not an action, but rather a continuous process involving exchange. When looking at internal communication features, buyers should look for ones that support not only easy publishing and the consolidation of employer news, but interactivity and exchange with employees as well. Features should also lend themselves to content creation by individuals regardless of their publishing expertise. Some key features here include:

- 1. News publishing** — For communications professionals, news publishing is essential. With this basic feature, administrators can publish articles with rich content to various channels. A simple and intuitive backend should make this process easy for contributors without extensive publishing knowledge.
- 2. Social wall** — With a social wall, users can publish short updates to certain channels or to a general wall. This makes keeping employees up-to-date faster and easier, and allows employees to connect with one another.
- 3. RSS feeds** — Users and administrators can keep track of many different website newsfeeds in a single news aggregator, cutting down on double-publishing and creating a better overview of current content.
- 4. Interactivity** — Users can like, comment, and bookmark content from the app and from other users, creating a look and feel that mirrors popular communication platforms.



- 5. Notifications** — Send notifications about news, posts, and comments in the platform directly to employee devices. Notifications ensure that information reaches employees by improving message cut-through. 75 percent of users read push notification content within an hour of receiving it.

## **External Communication**

A successful employee app helps businesses integrate internal and external communication to cooperate in favor of company goals. In the same way that an app can communicate with employees, it should be capable of exchanging information with partners and other stakeholders, as well as customers and prospects. Organizations can also use an employee app to solve the problem of guiding employees as to which kinds of information to share, with whom, and how. The following functions support this:

- 1. Public space** — Administrators can set up a public area that is visible to external parties, improving external access to brand messages. Content creators with access to both audiences can more successfully develop unified messaging with similar terms and ideas.
- 2. Sharing** — Content can be marked as externally shareable for users to share to their personal networks, automatically providing a guide for employees for external sharing.

## Rich Media

Studies show that people retain only 10 percent of the information they read; 20 percent when they hear it; and 50 percent when they see and hear the information.<sup>6</sup> In marketing, statistics show that click-through rates for rich media ads outperform standard ads by 267 percent.<sup>7</sup> The same figures are relevant for internal communications professionals trying to get through to employees. The following employee app features are critical to getting users to engage and interact with app content:



*Using rich media in your app is essential to supporting high readership and engagement.*

- 1. Video** — An app should support video in various sizes and formats, and also the embedding of external videos. Video content is essential for boosting resonance and engagement. Research shows that 80 percent of online visitors watch videos while only 20 percent will read written content.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.econtentmag.com/downloads/whitepapers/jun03/tierney.htm>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.workfront.com/blog/rich-media-its-evolution-and-how-it-amplifies-your-message>

<sup>8</sup> <https://web.iceportal.com/12-stats-on-why-rich-media-has-the-best-roi/>

**2. Podcasts** — Podcasts are a fast-growing communication medium. The number of Americans listening to podcasts weekly grew by six million from 2017 to 2018.<sup>9</sup> Companies can easily leverage this medium in an employee app.

---

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.convinceandconvert.com/podcast-research/the-13-critical-podcast-statistics-of-2018/>

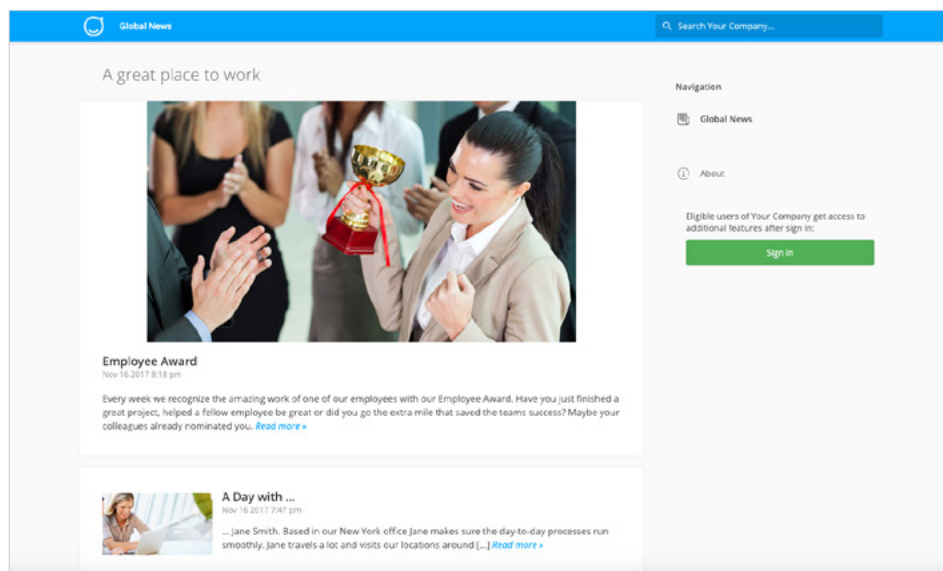


### **Expert Tip**

Many apps have a complex editing environment that requires an expert publisher for content creation and maintenance. But only when anyone can contribute does an app deliver real value. Publishing news digitally is no longer game-changing. The bigger change occurring in corporate digital communication is the enablement of casual participants who can contribute more relevant content without extensive training and publishing knowledge. A successful platform in this sense includes a simple and intuitive backend with various roles for publishing, as well as features that allow users without backend access to contribute.

## Best Practice Example

One powerful way of leveraging an employee app for external communication is to phase out paper communication with retired employees. Viessman Group is an international manufacturer of heating, industrial, and refrigeration systems with over 12,000 employees. They introduced their employee app in 2016, and they have since been able to gain a large public-space audience of retired employees who are digitally able to keep up to date with the company.



*The public space is accessible to users without requiring login and is a great way of keeping in touch with stakeholders.*

## Checklist for Communications Hub

Internal Communication	External Communication	Rich Media
✓ News publishing	✓ Public Space	✓ Video
✓ Updates	✓ Sharing	✓ External video
✓ Acknowledgements		✓ Custom preview picture
✓ Sync SharePoint news		✓ Picture gallery
✓ Social wall		✓ Podcasts
✓ Facebook pages		
✓ RSS feeds		
✓ Interactivity		
✓ News notifications		
✓ Post notifications		



## Convenient Knowledge

---

### Pages and Documents

Several studies show that employees spend an average of 20 percent of their work time searching for information they need to do their jobs correctly.<sup>10</sup> Pages and documents make critical information available conveniently. They are most suitable for storing static information because they support various types of content and can be organized far better than posts or updates. Pages and documents are intuitive for users when searching for information. The following features should be available:

1. **Start pages** — Different start pages can be created and customized for login, different spaces, folders, etc. This improves navigation.
2. **Text, images, and attachments** — Easily design content that is interesting to users.
3. **Multimedia options** — Rich content is the language of digital communication. With multimedia options, administrators can create and add rich content widgets to static content, including videos, file lists, image sliders, and more.
4. **Folders** — Easily create structures and organize documents so that convenient knowledge remains just that—convenient.

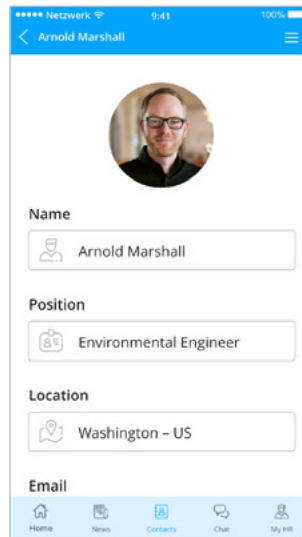
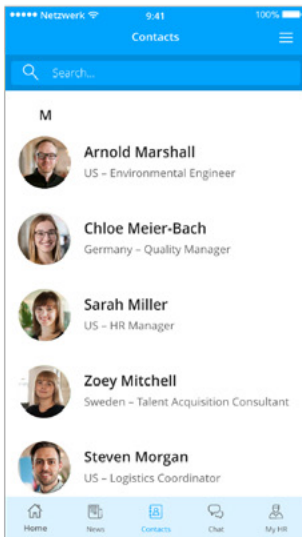
---

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.kmworld.com/Articles/Editorial/Features/The-high-cost-of-not-finding-information-9534.aspx> and <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/high-tech/our-insights/the-social-economy> and <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/workers-spend-too-much-time-searching-information-hung-cao/> and <https://simply-communicate.com/uk-employees-spend-over-a-quarter-of-their-time-each-day-searching-for-information/>

## Organization Information

Information comes in different shapes and sizes which an app can accommodate by providing different formats for information. The following features are essential to ensure that employees don't miss a thing:

1. **KPI Dashboard** — Organizational success indicators or the success of particular activities can be simply displayed in a dashboard.
2. **Calendars** — Inform employees about upcoming events.
3. **Maps** — Help employees find locations in their area and around the world.
4. **Employee directory** — Create an employee phonebook that includes important contact information so that employees can find each other and connect more easily.



## Employee directory

Create a phonebook of employees including their important information so that employees can find each other and connect more easily.

*A directory gives your employees access to your company's most valuable asset — its people.*

*“The employee directory alone is pure gold. We’ve learned that some of the things that seem like small inconveniences of outdated communication are really decisive in how well employees can do their jobs. The employee app addresses a lot of inefficiencies that hinder the day-to-day activities that keep our business running smoothly.”*



Troy Griggsby,  
Communications and  
Brand Manager, USAL

### External Source Information

In the digital workplace, companies are often storing information with numerous software tools and sources. An employee app aims to provide convenient access to the information employees need, which requires it to be capable of including information already residing in other systems. These two features make selected knowledge buried in external sources available to those who need it:

- 1. Embedded pages** — Load an external website directly into your app to shorten the path to information for employees.
- 2. Links** — Add external links to the employee app menu, allowing employees to easily navigate to other sources to locate the information they need.

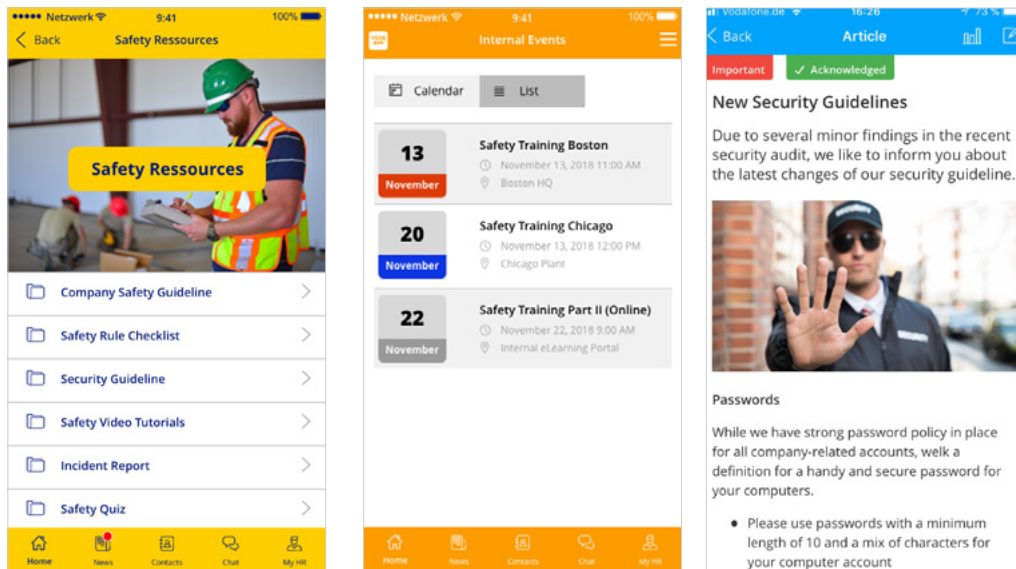


### **Expert Tip**

Practical knowledge is localized. Central communications generally lack the kind of information that is highly relevant and useful to local employees. Authors who are closer to employees have more valuable knowledge. The only exception to this rule is an employee directory, which offers valuable knowledge to the entire organization and can be shared by central communications. An effective platform should offer options for authors closest to employees to digitally create and organize information.

## Best Practice Example

Reinert Logistics implemented an employee app in 2017 and gave process and project leaders a way to communicate digitally with employees close to them. These leaders used the app to create safety videos for their employees that helped them perform daily tasks compliant with safety requirements. The company observed a 15 percent reduction in incidents resulting in damage to company assets within one year of starting this.



*Mobile safety training reaches employees where it matters most - on the job.*

## Checklist for Convenient Knowledge

Pages and Documents	Organization Information	External Sources
✓ Start pages	✓ KPI Dashboard	✓ Embedded pages
✓ Text, images, attachments	✓ Calendars	✓ Links
✓ Rich content widgets	✓ Maps	
✓ Folders	✓ Employee Directory	
	✓ Meal plans	



## Chat

### Conversation Levels

According to Forbes, the open rate of mobile messages is 345 percent higher than that of email; 90 percent of people read mobile messages within the first three minutes of receiving them.<sup>11</sup> Having a mobile messaging app function in an employee app can not only bolster internal communication, but also improve retention rates for the app. In-app messaging has been seen to drive app retention rates three times higher.<sup>12</sup> The following features create a basic structure for a chat feature:

**90 %** of people read mobile messages within the first three minutes of receiving them.



*Mobile chat enables communication in real time.*

- 1. One-to-one conversations** — Employees can contact one another directly, simplifying and improving peer-to-peer communication.
- 2. Group conversations** — Employees can create or be invited to join groups to exchange information with colleagues.

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbestechcouncil/2017/03/30/five-things-you-need-to-know-about-mobile-messaging/#4296db68538d>

<sup>12</sup> <http://info.localytics.com/blog/mobile-apps-whats-a-good-retention-rate>

**3. Managed user group conversations —**

Administrators can create groups for chat based on user groups, allowing administrators to play an active role in enabling communication.

**4. Chatbot —** Administrators can set up automatic responses for many different purposes; for example, automatic Push Notifications for wishing a happy birthday or work anniversary.**Notifications and Responsiveness**

It is apparent that a messaging app needs to be capable of sending and receiving messages between users; however, the user experience of messaging is a persistently decisive factor in retention rates. Messaging apps need to feel familiar to users and be easy to use, while also offering a unique experience. The following features contribute to ease of use and familiarity:

- 1. Mute conversation —** Mute and unmute conversations with individuals and groups.
- 2. Archive conversation —** Users can hide conversations that are not current and maintain access in the future, keeping chat flows organized.
- 3. Chat notifications —** Administrators and users can set up a Push Notification on a phone or in-app sounds for incoming chat messages, mirroring the capability of other common messaging apps.
- 4. Attachments —** Users can send messages with photo or video content.

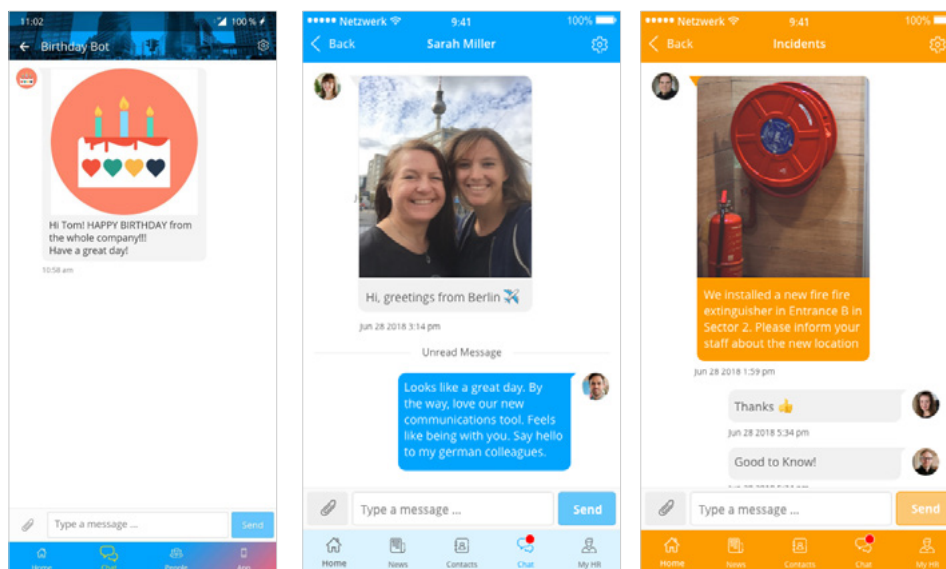


### Expert Tip

Administrators will face use cases where they need to decide whether a news channel or a group chat will be more useful. In some cases, threading (users comment on single objects) will be very important, in which case a news channel would be the most viable option. In other cases, convenience has a higher priority, in which case a group chat is likely more useful.

### Best Practice Example

Volkswagen Slovakia implemented an employee app in 2017 in order to communicate with approximately 14,000 employees. The company wanted to make the app more personal for their users, and started using the chatbot to send employees surprises for their birthdays. The small gesture has been well received by employees and is an example of how a chatbot can make user experience more personal, even when a platform is supporting thousands of users.



*Chat can automate processes and help make the experience more personal for users.*

**Checklist for Chat**

Conversation Levels	Notifications and Responsive Features
✓ One-on-one conversations	✓ Mute conversation
✓ Group conversations	✓ Archive conversation
✓ Managed user group conversations	✓ Chat notifications
✓ Chatbot	✓ Attachments
	✓ Link to user profile
	✓ Timestamps

## Engagement and Services

---

### Peer-to-Peer Engagement

Peer-to-peer feedback, relationships, and recognition drive engagement and substantially influence work experience. A recent TinyHR study found that relationships and camaraderie are highly motivating factors for employee performance,<sup>13</sup> and that 44 percent of employees will offer peer recognition when given a tool to do so. Two functions an employee app can offer to foster this are:

1. **Social wall** — Enables employees to post updates to certain channels or to a general wall and get responses from their peers, promoting feedback, recognition, and camaraderie.
2. **Blackboard** — Gives employees a platform to exchange classified and small advertisements with one another.

### Employee Self-Services

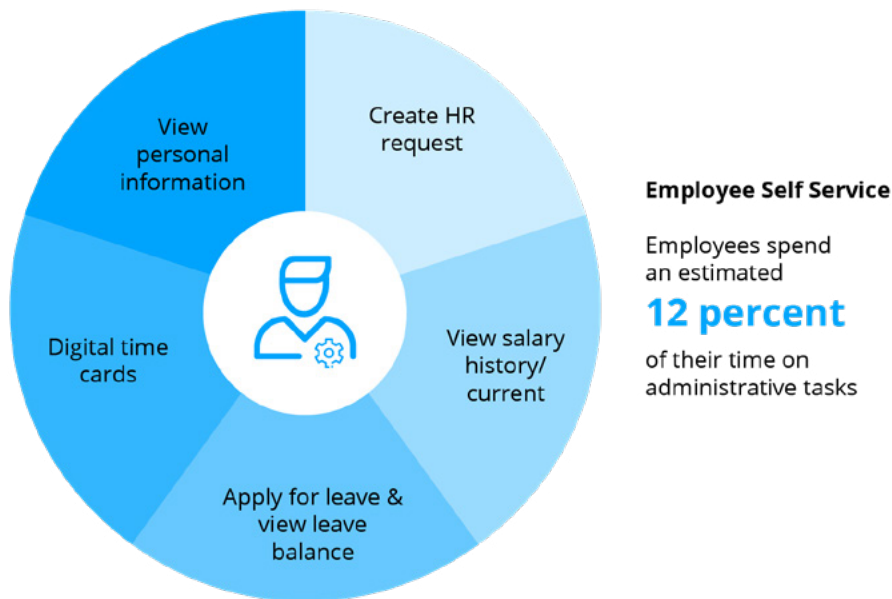
Administrative tasks such as submitting leave requests, filing expenses, and filling out timesheets impede employee productivity and disturb workflows. Employees spend an estimated 12 percent of their time on administrative tasks. Employee apps that offer HR tools and especially integrations for HR tools speed up administrative tasks, particularly for employees without access to desktop computers. These self-service features help cut down on time spent on these tasks:

1. **SAP HR Integration** — Administrators can sync their HR services and tools that are hosted by SAP directly with their internal communications platform.

---

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/241261>

2. **Leave requests** — Employees can submit requests on the go and administrators can manage approvals quickly.
3. **Event registration** — Employees can sign up for events without the hassle of paper forms, emails, or external forms.



*Your employee app can help digitalize and increase access to many kinds of employee self services.*

## Feedback

Providing employees with the opportunity to give feedback helps companies to better themselves as employers and also promotes employee engagement. According to Forbes, one of the top reasons that employees quit is that they report not feeling heard.<sup>14</sup> The following employee app features promote open exchange between employees and their employers and simplify processes for tracking and measuring feedback:

1. **SurveyMonkey** — Allows employers to collect information from employees using an online survey tool that employees are likely familiar with.

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.forbes.com/sites/lizryan/2018/04/17/the-top-ten-reasons-great-employees-quit/#11664eba1cd5>

2. **Netigate** — Allows employers to collect information with surveys from Netigate via weblink.
3. **Forms** — Employers can create custom forms directly in their backend interface and distribute these to employees.
4. **Employee pulse surveys** — Employers can quickly and anonymously track employee satisfaction through surveys and easily share results.



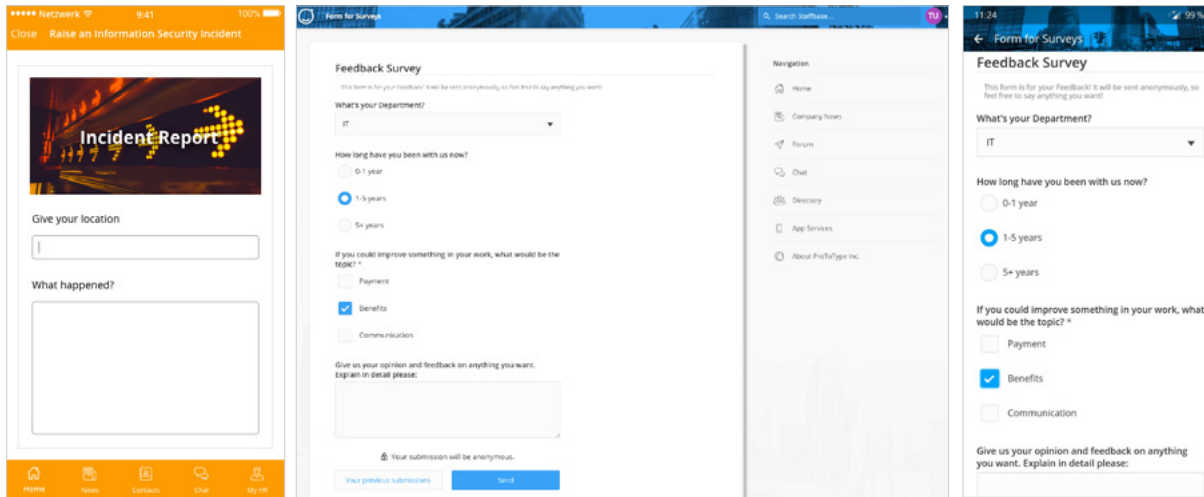
#### Expert Tip

Forms can be a great way to initiate small digital HR workflows and gain more users during the initial rollout of the app. For example, employees could use a form to submit travel costs, sick notes, or other requests. This also makes it possible for companies using paper processes to quickly switch to digital, because forms can be easily tailored to specific purposes.

#### Best Practice Example

T-Systems in the Netherlands implemented their employee app for around 500 employees in 2017 and put the survey tool to use for a good cause. They used a survey to introduce employees to a number of charity projects and let them choose which one they wanted to support as a company.





Surveys and questionnaires distributed through your employee app can give employees a voice on many different topics.

## Checklist for Engagement and Services

Peer-to-peer Engagement	Employee Self Services	Feedback
✓ Social wall	✓ HR Integrations	✓ SurveyMonkey
✓ Blackboard	✓ Leave requests	✓ Netigate
	✓ Event registration	✓ Forms
		✓ Pulse surveys

## All-Around Security

---

### Provider Security and Compliance

Communication professionals looking to implement an employee app from a service provider will be subject to security questions from their companies. By choosing a service provider for the app, companies can save costs and benefit from provider expertise. That said, they still need to closely examine how the provider protects the data its customers share within the app. Some signs of strong provider-side security and compliance include:

- 1. Security training for developers** — Provider developers are trained in secure coding techniques and recognition of threat vectors in web applications.
- 2. Security penetration testing** — The provider works with customers to perform security tests where a tester tries to hack into the app and access data. This helps identify security vulnerabilities that an attacker could exploit.
- 3. Third-party security auditing** — Providers should be certified by a trusted and international third-party auditor such as ISO27001 or SOC 2.
- 4. Certified secure hosting** — The provider should offer hosting by a certified secure server.

## Platform Security

Data security is always a tradeoff. All companies want to protect their data, but they also have an interest in sharing data with their company. Data sharing regarding personal data is usually regulated by law, although companies are relatively autonomous in deciding how and with whom they share their own data. Most companies have security classes for data where they define sharing as confidential, internal, or external. An employee app is intended for sharing internal or external data, but never confidential data. These features certify that data in the app remains accessible only to their intended audience:

1. **Encryption with HTTPS and TLS 1.2** — High-level encryption ensures that even if an attacker manages to enter the system, they remain unable to view its contents.
2. **Application protection** — An app should have shields in place against hacking and reverse engineering.
3. **Configurable password policy** — Administrators should be able to determine the time before passwords expire, as well as password maximum/minimum length and character inclusion.
4. **Personalized legal parameters** — Companies should be at liberty to set their own terms and conditions for the app to ensure compliance with company standards.
5. **App lock** — Even if the users mobile device is not protected by a passcode or fingerprint, the app can be locked in order to secure content.

6. **API security and authentication** — Connection to external servers and databases as well as further APIs should be authenticated and guaranteed secure.
7. **Sessions and parallel sessions** — Administrators can specify the maximum number and maximum inactivity duration for users.

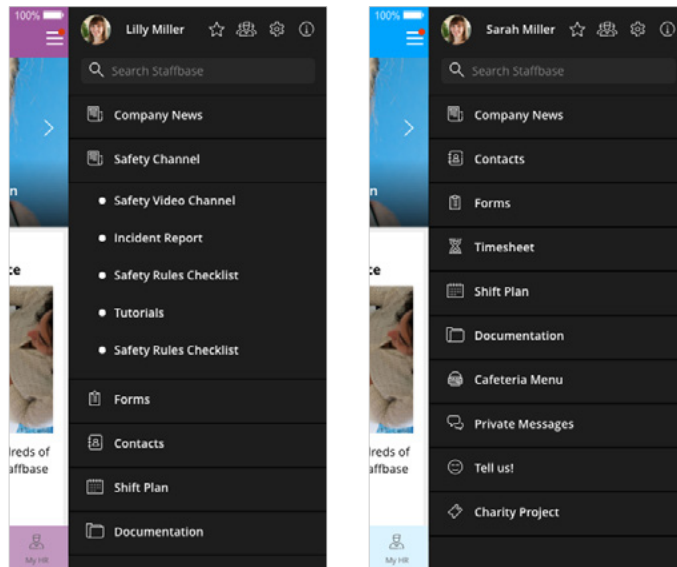


#### Expert Tip

Security and compliance are complex topics with many layers which for a buyer can sometimes be overwhelming. One of the best ways to make sure you're choosing a secure service provider is to choose a provider with one or more third-party security certifications, such as the ISO 27001 or the SSAE 16. Third-party certifications substantially reduce the amount of time and effort needed to put into the administrative paperwork and discussions required before a solution can be approved for your company. ISO 27001 is an internationally recognized risk-based information security industry standard, whereas the SSAE 16 certification is an accounting standard recognized in the US. Providers with these types of certifications go through audits on a regular basis, ensuring that they are continually meeting the security requirements your company needs.

## Best-Practice Example

For data protection purposes and rules for sharing, most companies classify different types of data as confidential or highly confidential, internal, or external. Employee apps should be used exclusively for internal or external data. In the healthcare industry, for example, it is very clear that patient data would never enter an employee app, due to its classification as confidential. Companies that successfully implement employee apps clearly define the type of data that will be shared in the app early on and avoid the potential for confusion leading to security violations.



*No confidential information is made available in an employee app. It's purpose is to communicate internal and external information.*



*As an administrator you will need to pay the most attention to application security. The other aspects are covered by the provider.*

## Checklist for All-Around Security

Provider Security and Compliance	Platform Security
✓ Security training for developers	✓ Encryption with HTTPS and TLS 1.2
✓ Security penetration testing	✓ Application protection
✓ ISO27001 or SSAE 16 certification	✓ Configurable password policy
✓ Certified hosting	✓ App lock
	✓ API security and authentication
	✓ Parallel sessions and time limit

## Smart Navigation

---

### Search

Internal communication doesn't need to bother with creating great content if no one is going to be able to find what they're searching for. Having great search functionality can contribute to user retention and encourage users to stay engaged with the app. Search quality is especially important for large platforms with large quantities of information. For this reason, the following are essentials:

1. **Search Feature** — A successful search feature allows users to search not only for information, but also for people, keywords, and articles, with results displayed in categories.
2. **People Live Search** — The bulk of an organization's information lies in the minds of its people, which is why employees need a search tool specifically for finding them. With people search, all users and their general information can be searched and found.

### Navigation

The foundation of content discovery for users is optimal navigation. A study by CMSWire showed that 70 percent of people start tasks by clicking on links, whereas 30 percent started by using search.<sup>15</sup> Launching users into successful content discovery requires a balance between a clean, organized screen and the visibility of important information in menus. These features are central to successful navigation:

---

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.cmswire.com/cms/web-engagement/usability-navigation-is-more-important-than-search-007349.php>

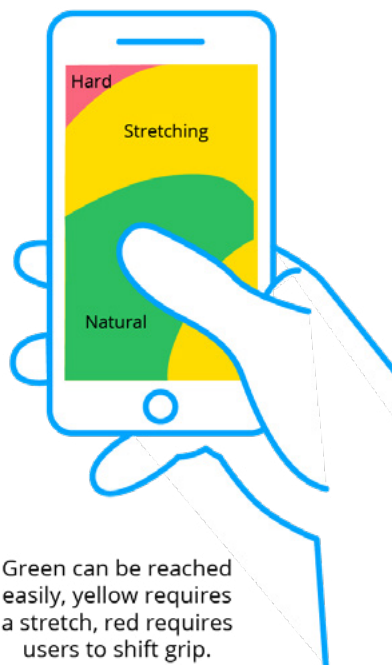
1. **Menu** — Administrators can set up their own menu structures and structure their content within folders. Ideally, notification bubbles should be displayed on folders or spaces containing new content so that employees don't miss a beat.
2. **Bottom Navigation** — Bottom navigation enables quick links for the most important functionalities in the mobile app. Research on mobile device usage show that 49 percent of people use one thumb to navigate in their phones, and buttons at the bottom of the screen are more comfortable to reach using one hand.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.techinasia.com/talk/ux-design-mobile-bottom-navigation>



### Expert Tip

Navigation should start out as simple as possible. One common mistake made in the beginning stages of rolling out a platform is adding too much structure. Even if structures are for the sake of organization, too much detail will overwhelm users. Additionally, companies in the beginning stages of rolling out an app often will not have enough content to fill these structures completely. A strong platform will be flexible enough to grow with your company, so that when you notice you need more structure, you can easily add it.



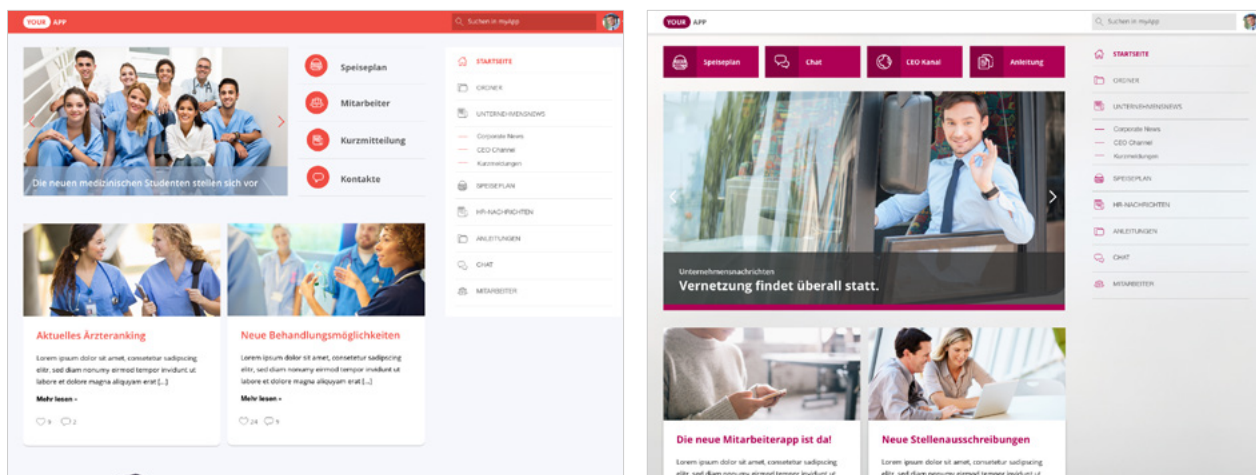
Green can be reached easily, yellow requires a stretch, red requires users to shift grip.

*Bottom navigation can very much improve ease of use for your employees.*



## Best Practice Example

The small size of a mobile platform can make it difficult to decide what to include or exclude in your main navigation. Navigation becomes smart when it is personalized. Companies that master smart navigation in their apps look for insights as to which information or features are used most by employees, and they use those insights to build a structure that is convenient for them.



Customizing navigation points contributes to a highly relevant experience for employees.

## Checklist for Smart Navigation

### Search

- ✓ Search feature
- ✓ People live search

### Navigation

- ✓ Menu
- ✓ Bottom navigation

## Analytics and Control

---

### User Management

As an administrator of an employee app, you will be responsible for creating and assigning users in your organization. After you have successfully onboarded users (see Integrations and Extensions), you will need to make sure your user base remains up to date and that employees in the system are seeing the content they need to see. When your employee app has a very large user base, this can get messy. Look for these features that help administrators keep this task manageable:

1. **Search/filter users** — Administrators can search for and find specific users by filtering results. Filters are essential for especially large user bases.
2. **Conditional user groups** — Because creating groups manually quickly becomes tedious, users should be able to be automatically grouped based on tags. This is possible in concurrence with CSV import, where tags indicate rules for inclusion or exclusion of a group.
3. **Import/export users** — Import/export of users can occur from existing employee databanks manually using CSV imports or LDAP integrations, or with a user REST API. Various options for import/export are critical because organizations often do not have unified employee databanks, so information may need to come from various sources.
4. **Deactivate users** — Administrators can deactivate or remove users in the case of a leave of absence, removal from the company, etc.

- 5. Edit profiles** — Profile fields can be specified to either include certain information automatically or have manual options. Company regulations for data sharing may restrict the automatic inclusion of some information.

## **Roles and Rights**

Most security topics for an employee app are handled by the service provider and IT; however, administrators themselves should also have a hand in making sure access to the platform and its content remains restricted to the appropriate users. Your employee app should allow you to safely delegate tasks within the platform to the right people in line with your company policies, as well as restrict access to content by built-in roles and rights management. This includes the following:

- 1. Delegate responsibilities** — Administrators can delegate authors, editors, and administrators for content. For example, you would like the “Branch A” Team Manager to manage users in their branch as well as lesser roles for platform editing specific to that branch. You should be able to create an admin for this purpose.
- 2. Delegate rights** — Administrators can control backend viewing rights and restrict certain areas based on different roles.
- 3. Audience management** — Administrators can restrict content viewing to specific audiences by grouping users and delegating content to certain user groups.

## **Analytics**

Ragan reports that 74 percent of internal communication professionals are unsatisfied or very unsatisfied with how their organizations measure internal communication, and 32 percent of organizations don't measure internal communication at all.<sup>17</sup> An employee app with analytics can track interaction with content and with the platform in general, which generates numbers that help tie communications efforts to business goals. Analytics also generate numbers that help internal communication professionals understand what their employees are interested in reading. The following features are important here:

- 1. Reports** — Administrators can download in-depth reports on interaction, download rates, viewing, and more.
- 2. Filters** — Administrators can get the numbers they need by constraining results to certain groups or spaces, time frames, user types, and more.
- 3. Dashboard** — Administrators can see results displayed in simple graphs and charts directly in the administration dashboard, and users can see numbers related to their own posts in the frontend as well.

---

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.ragan.com/survey-internal-communicators-dissatisfied-with-measurement/>

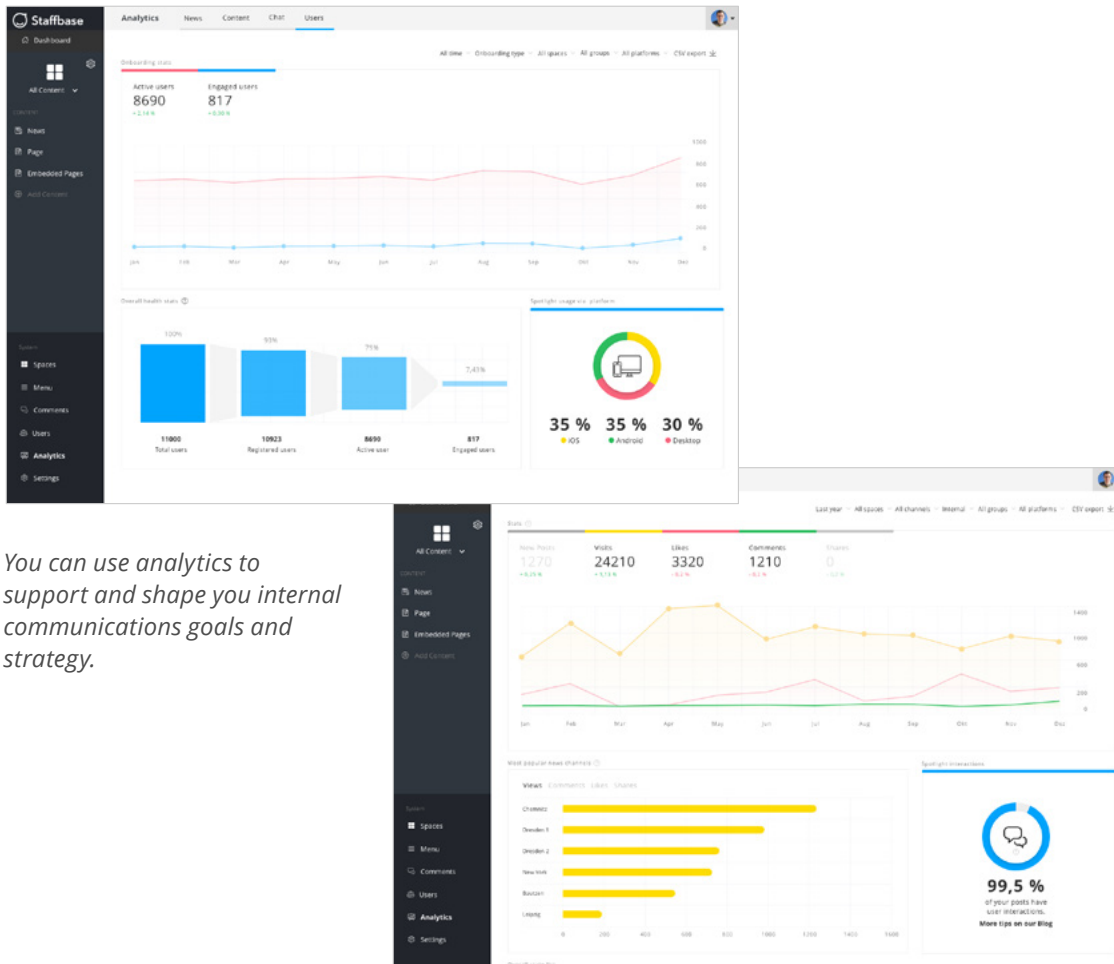


### Expert Tip

Modern analytics provides amazing opportunities for communicators to grow their knowledge about their audiences and to be strategic in implementing communication measures. Whenever you are communicating, you can release information to different groups and use analytics to gain a thorough understanding of engagement with the information. With these metrics, you can learn who to target with more information and gain practical insights about what you should pay attention to when creating content for certain audiences. Analytics help communicators make informed and strategic decisions on where to invest their time and effort.

### Best Practice Example

Using employee app analytics can tremendously help communicators in making strategic communications decisions that lead to positive results. Carsten Lucassen spearheaded the implementation of an employee app for Viessmann Group, an international heating, industrial, and refrigeration system manufacturer with over 12,000 employees, and has made analytics a regular part of his internal communications strategy. Lucassen said, "Data-driven analytics are the key to unlocking communication demands and needs within the company. In other words: Great content and sharing is just one side of the coin - the other is data-based decision making in all communication processes."



You can use analytics to support and shape you internal communications goals and strategy.

## Checklist for Analytics and Control

User Management	Roles and Rights	Analytics
✓ Search/ filter users	✓ Delegate responsibilities	✓ Reports
✓ Conditional user groups	✓ Delegate rights	✓ Filters
✓ Import/export users	✓ Audience management	✓ Dashboard
✓ Deactivate users		
✓ Edit profiles		

## Powerful Integrations and Extensions

---

### Standard Integrations

As system digitalization has rapidly become a common business practice, the ability of IT solutions to integrate and co-exist with one another has become more and more critical. It's important to make sure a mobile internal communications platform is able to pull its weight in the IT infrastructure of your company as a whole, which makes integrations essential. Standard integrations eliminate the need for a heavy investment of time and money from IT to make your solution compatible with the others. The following standard integrations necessary for many companies:

- 1. SharePoint/Office 365 Integrations** - Office 365 usage has risen dramatically over the last several years— if your company isn't using Office 365 now, it might be in the future. SharePoint and other Office 365 integrations make it easy to sync content to and from the two systems.
- 2. RSS Feeds** - This feature enables administrators and users to keep track of many different website news feeds in a single news aggregator, eliminating the need to continually check different sources for updates.
- 3. SAP Integrations** - Sync your tools and services from SAP Fiori to your app.
- 4. User Synchronization** - Administrators can upload users in to the system and keep the system up to date using LDAP/ active directory integrations, CSV imports, or User REST API. This also ensures that the user data in the communications platform does not conflict with that of other systems.

## Extensions

A platform should not only be compatible with existing systems, but should also have features that indicate scalability. Systems are scalable when they don't need to be redesigned in order to support increasing user demands. The provider should have features in place to help the platform grow and change with the user's demand. This can include:

- 1. Development Sandbox** - This allows developers to try out new features, add-ons, and developments without going live.
- 2. User REST API** - An endpoint that a programmer can use to send information about users. Users can be created automatically and updated continually using this feature. The platform can then react the HR in real time and adapt to a growing and changing user base.
- 3. Marketplace** - Companies may identify a need for a feature that is outside the realm of standard provider offerings. To address this, a platform should have a marketplace available for extensions and third-party development.
- 4. Custom Plugins** - With custom plugins, your company's development is able to develop their own plugins, making a platform full-proof in terms of its ability to meet your company's specific needs.



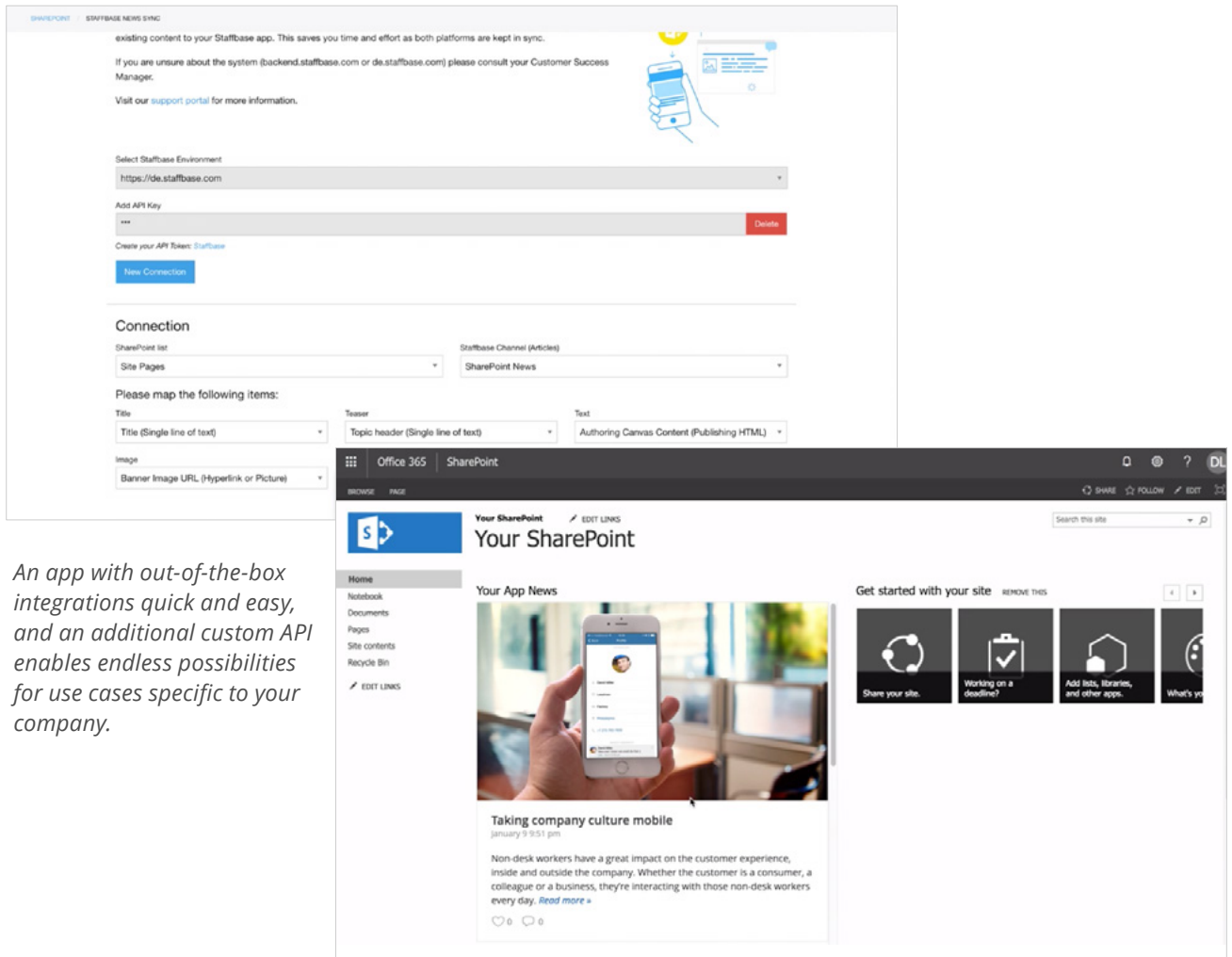


### Expert Tip

In today's rapidly evolving digital workplace, more and more companies are facing the challenge of managing too many tools for collaboration and storing information. Isolated applications are being used to support many different tasks, and companies are starting to recognize that this is hampering productivity, not to mention making life hard for IT departments responsible for keeping track of it all. What IT loves about a platform approach is that it can be expanded and integrated to consolidate tools and create a central access point for them. A platform's ability to integrate with existing systems is a decisive factor in getting IT excited about it.

### Best Practice Example

Some companies have very specific requirements outside the realm of typical platform offerings. When companies identify very specialized gaps they would like to fill, it is essential that they choose a provider with a plugin software development kit (SDK) and application programming interfaces (APIs) that allow their own development teams to interact with the platform and create their own plugins. T-Systems, a global IT services and consulting company headquartered in Frankfurt, Germany, introduced an employee app in 2016. They had some use cases that were outside the core platform's capabilities, and they used custom APIs to develop a number of their own plugins, including polls, quizzes, and a structure for gathering ideas from employees.



*An app with out-of-the-box integrations quick and easy, and an additional custom API enables endless possibilities for use cases specific to your company.*

## Checklist for Integrations and Extensions

### Standard Integrations

- ✓ To-and-from SharePoint news syncing
- ✓ RSS feeds
- ✓ SAP Fiori integrations
- ✓ User synchronizations

### Extensions

- ✓ Development sandbox
- ✓ User REST API
- ✓ Marketplace
- ✓ Custom plugins

## Lingering questions? Get in touch.

Even if you know what you want and need for your new app, you may have some lingering questions specific to your organization. We're happy to help! Fill out the form below to get in contact with our employee communication specialists. We would love to learn more about you and evaluate together if our employee app might be a good fit for your organization.

**Get in touch now**

**We'd love to hear from you. Here's how you can reach us ...**


connect@staffbase.com  
+1 929-900-1500

Staffbase Inc.  
401 Broadway, Suite 808  
New York, NY 10013  
United States





Employee Engagement  
Awards



Corporate & Financial Awards  
Best M&A Communication



Intra.NET Awards  
Best Collaborative Tool



INKOMETA Award Internal  
Communication



# Make the Difference

The mobile-first employee app—  
communication for large organizations