Creating a Manageable Food Program for a Growing Company

Maintaining Control while Feeding Creativity

Double Negative Visual Effects
Peri Friend, Facilities Manager

double negative visual effects

The Challenge

Double Negative Visual Effects (DNV), a film visual effects company, was founded in 1998 with a staff of 30. Today, the company has more than 1,000 employees, making it Europe's largest provider in its field. As part of DNV's growth, they have remained astutely focused on retaining their talented staff and making sure that they have the necessary resources to feed their creative minds as they work tirelessly around the clock. A growing company means an increase in clients and projects and the job of accurately tracking food-related expenses to bill out to clients became more cumbersome but ever more important. Detailed records were critical for DNV to ensure they could bill out correctly and management of petty cash was impossible.

Peri Friend is the Facilities Assistant at DNV. "I had been with the company for just a short time when I was tasked with finding a better evening food-ordering system," Peri recalls. For her London Soho office of 1,000 employees, this was a large task that meant revamping a system that had been in place for years. Ordering rules at DNV were fairly straightforward: if you stayed at work past 19:00, the company would pay for and provide you with dinner. What was less straightforward was the existing ordering process.

DNV had been using a service that provided little in the way of food variety so employees were stuck eating the same thing every night. "While the company was offering something valuable to employees for their hard work, it didn't feel that way when it came in the form of repetitive and greasy food," Peri said. On top of that, the ordering and expensing process was disorganized, manual and chaotic.

DNV had set up a point system for their food ordering. Upon receiving the menu from the food provider, they would allocate a certain point value to each menu item. The menu would then be distributed to the employees, who were each allotted 10 points to use toward that day's meal order. After deciding what they wanted to eat, the information was handed over to the tech department who entered this information into their own intranet to ensure that employees were not exceeding their points. After tracking the points, IT then sent in the order for that day. The total time spent across departments to track down, manage and allocate spend was hours and hours of time that could be better spent on more productive initiatives.

The Seamless Solution

In early 2012, DNV opened a Seamless Corporate Account to address the issues with their current process. They put in place a formal late-night ordering policy that was both automated and simplified.

"The best part about Seamless is that it is so easy to use. I can keep an eye on everything easily through the various reporting features and I feel like I have complete control. On top of that, my employees are just so happy to be eating better quality food."

The Group Order stood out for DNV as one of the greatest benefits of switching to Seamless. Every day, employees receive an email inviting them to participate in that day's Group Order if they are going to be staying late. Participating employees click on the restaurant from which they'd like to order and choose whatever they would like to eat. At the close of the Group Order, all of the orders are aggregated and sent to the restaurant for a set delivery time.

"The total orders per night can vary very dramatically," explained Peri. "On quiet nights, we have about 15-20 people ordering from 2-3 restaurants. On the busier nights, we have around 200 people ordering from 7-8 restaurants. Everyone loves that they can choose whatever they want from a selection of restaurants."

With Seamless' billing platform, DNV is able to implement budget rules and restrictions. Each employee has a budget of £11.50, and is required, for tracking purposes, to specify on the checkout page what project they're working on.

The speed of the invoicing process increased exponentially as well. "We no longer have to check each spreadsheet against an invoice," Peri said. "Our receptionist goes into our Seamless account every day, downloads the previous day's orders and is quickly able to verify everything."

The Result

Since opening their Seamless account, DNV has seen a wide range of benefits including:

• Increased restaurant selection and variety
• Enforced rules and restrictions for late-night ordering
• Easily trackable projects and associated spend
• Consolidated billing and invoicing
• Reduced need for petty cash

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