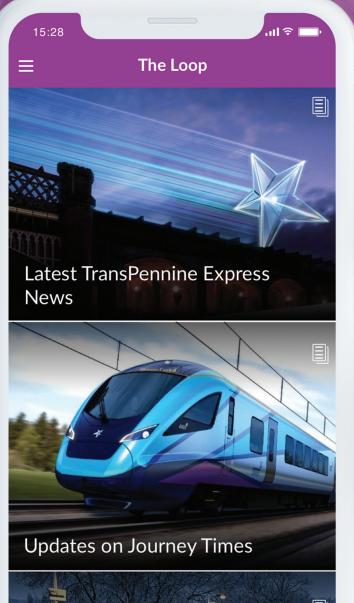# TransPennine Express

How the British train company use an app to extend their communications reach and form the basis for a new, streamlined mobile intranet

15:28

The Loop

Latest TransPennine Express News

Updates on Journey Times

TransPennine Express (TPE) is a British train operating company owned by FirstGroup running intercity train services linking key cities and major towns in the North and Scotland. TPE run around 238 services daily, serve 83 stations (of which 19 are directly managed by them) and carry an average of 61,000 customers every day.
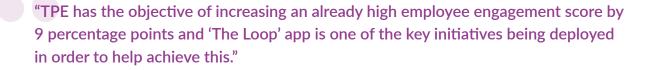
The Problem

TPE currently directly employs 1100 staff (referred to as colleagues). The company also has a number of key contractors such as cleaning and catering services whose staff clearly have a significant direct impact on customer experience.

TPE's vision is to take the North further by bringing people, businesses and cities closer together and helping the economy grow. TPE has embarked on an ambitious transformation programme including an investment of more than £500 million over the next four years. There are five key areas of the

transformation plan namely customer experience, transformation and growth, people and sustainability, health and safety and business management.

> "TPE has the objective of increasing an already high employee engagement score by 9 percentage points and 'The Loop' app is one of the key initiatives being deployed in order to help achieve this."

Catherine Unsworth
TPE Internal Communications Manager

The Challenge

TPE recognise that during periods of significant change it is vital to communicate with all staff on a frequent basis. In the past, TPE have relied heavily on email as the primary communication mechanism. However, not all staff have company email addresses, for example, the 300 train drivers, and some share email addresses, for example, the station staff.

Train conductors, who are one of the key target audiences for retail information such as ticket special offers etc, are inundated with operational emails from central control and as a result, important promotional and safety messages don't always get read.

The Solution

One of the key criteria in selecting Thrive for the project was that it must be easy to update the content and according to Catherine Unsworth, TPE Internal Communications Manager, this has proven to be the case. "I wanted it to be really simple to use, which it is", commented Catherine. The app was launched in April 2016 coincident with the start of the new franchise. Front line staff were given smart phones preloaded with the app although a lot of TPE colleagues had already downloaded the app on to their own personal phones as well.

The app is a blend of news items and some simple, useful tools to help staff do their job on a daily basis. For example, TPE run services to and from Manchester Airport but many passengers don't know which terminal they should be headed for on arrival. The app includes a link to a website so that staff can direct passengers to the right terminal based on their flight number. There are also links to a journey planner, so that if there is some disruption passengers can be given the appropriate advice.

The Results and Benefits

From a learning tools perspective, TPE are trialling usage of the app to include a two minute automated video walkthrough on how to use the new conductor ticketing machines currently being rolled out. Because The Loop is a native app, the video doesn't require an internet connection to be accessed and therefore can act as a refresher as and when it is needed.

> **"I wanted the app to be really simple to use, which it is."**
>
> **Catherine Unsworth**
> TPE Internal Communications Manager

The use of the app has grown organically such that there are now around 500 regular users. Latest news snippets are published regularly and each month an innovative sixty second video is published via the app which summarises progress on each of the five key elements of the transformation plan. Push notifications are used once or twice per week to encourage employees to seek out sections of the app as well as highlighting new "news items" and important safety notices.

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"Feedback on "The Loop" has been very good" said, Catherine. Employee feedback collected through the app when asked "why did they find the app useful?" includes:

> **"The app allows access to info I otherwise wouldn't know" (train crew)**

> **"It's a good source for lots of info from various sources without being reliant on emails"**

> **"Easy to use. Push notifications for new content"**

> **"Useful info for colleagues, namely drivers and for customers"**

> **"Convenient place to have information or passengers. Easy to access"**

Although not part of the original objectives, TPE have found that they have made savings as they no longer need to print as many posters, leaflets and staff booklets. They are also changing the format of their printed magazine to make it solely feature based and drive traffic to the app as the primary source for news and information.

Moving Forward

Future plans for the app include using it as a tool to collect ideas and suggestions for innovation and using more bi-directional features such as colleagues uploading pictures and video clips. The end game is to drive usage up to a target figure approaching 75%.

thrive

Interested in learning more? Get in touch.

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