



FINDING A MODERNIZED METHOD

A.S. Watson Benelux needed to update their company communication to better connect with their younger workforce and reach their on-the-go retail employees more effectively.

MangoApps provided a reliable, modern, and mobile-friendly company communication platform, helping employees throughout A.S. Watson Benelux successfully access information and collaborate together.

“A.S. Watson recognized that it needed a new way of communicating with employees,” shared Jan Kees Fokkens, an A.S. Watson Benelux Social Intranet Project Manager. “A large number of the employees work in a store, and there was hardly any way to communicate [with them] directly.”

COMPANY:

A.S. Watson Benelux

HEADQUARTERS:

Renswoude, The Netherlands

EMPLOYEES/STORES:

27,000 employees / 1,700 stores

OVERVIEW:

A.S. Watson Benelux is part of the international health & beauty retailer A.S. Watson Group and is active with the brands Kruidvat, Trekpleister, ICI PARIS XL, Pour Vous and Prijzmepper. The stores are located throughout the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg and France.

To better connect with their younger workforce and reach their on-the-go retail employees more effectively.

As management considered how to best communicate with the in-store staff, they soon discovered that inventive employees had created their own communication channels. “They were using Facebook...which inspired us to create a corporate social platform,” Fokkens said.

The use of social media provided important insights into how employees wanted to communicate. Management needed to find a social, but internal and safe way of connecting employees and sharing important information. “We wanted to provide our employees with the same experience that say Facebook or WhatsApp provided them but in a more secure environment,” recalled Jan Carel Uylenberg, A.S. Watson Benelux HR Director.

A.S. Watson Benelux also wanted to cater to the interests and experiences of their younger employees, by offering them a modern and technologically innovative solution. “The far majority of [our employees] are youngsters,” Uylenberg said. “The average age is about 25 years old. So, we wanted to provide them with a far more attractive and modern way of communicating.”

So management set out to find the perfect communication system. “Obviously, we knew about MangoApps from our sister company in the UK,” Uylenberg shared. “Although choosing MangoApps was never a given.”

“We wanted to make sure that everybody would get a platform that they would be able to use and

would love to use so we had a very extensive list of requirements,” Fokkens said. “In the end, we made a list and we tried to look at which platform had the best fit for our requirements.”

“We wanted to provide them with a far more attractive and modern way of communicating.”

- Jan Carel Uylenberg
HR Director



ENGAGING YOUNGER EMPLOYEES

For A.S. Watson Benelux, MangoApps helped management effectively bridge the communication gap with their younger employees. “It’s far more attractive and appeals far more to the way our young store staff wants to communicate,” Uylenberg said. “It works very intuitively, I’d almost say it’s more or less like you’re using WhatsApp or Facebook.... So people use it just as if they are using any other social application. You don’t need a big manual in order to find your way through.”

“It wasn’t hard,” agreed Vera Scherff, an Kruidvat Store Manager. “The employees immediately understand how it works.”

For Fokkens, MangoApps’ modern and intuitive style even made onboarding a pleasant surprise. “We provided employees with a couple of quick reference cards where the basic functionality of

MangoApps was explained,” Fokkens recalled. “And I don’t think any employees used the quick reference cards. It was so intuitive they created their accounts before even meeting with the store managers, and shared information without even having to check the reference cards.... I think over 80% [of employees are] active users on the account. So most people took to it quite quickly.”

“Don’t spend too much time thinking about how to explain the functionality to the users,” Fokkens advised. “Especially with younger users. They have Facebook, they have WhatsApp, they know their mobile phones, they’re used to working with platforms like these so it’s pretty self-explanatory.”

As A.S. Watson Benelux Manager of Internal Communications, Marjolijn Scholmes has also seen firsthand how MangoApps is exactly the kind of communication younger employees need. “[MangoApps is] a more interactive way to inspire each other,” shared Scholmes. “To check your work schedule but also to post different forms of content and information. We have a very young population in the stores, and they can now share content in different forms. [There’s] more attractive audio-visual communication. That’s a very important thing to get connection with them.”

EMPOWERING THE STORE STAFF

A.S. Watson Benelux also understood that the constant on-the-go nature of a retail environment presented store employees with some unique communication challenges. “We wanted to empower employees,” Fokkens remembered. “We wanted employees to be able to get the information that helps them in their daily job directly. Not indirectly via the one pc in the store or via their store manager. We wanted them to be

able to access their work schedule, information on new products, or information on anything else that’s happening in the company.”

“Our previous communication was one-way communication and it was mainly in writing,” Uylenberg added. “So a lot of the communication was being distributed via a sort of cascade model. First toward the store manager and then toward the store staff.”

Thankfully, MangoApps’ comprehensive and easy to use smartphone app was the perfect answer. “There are 16,000 employees in Kruidvat,” Fokkens said. “And they all use the mobile app to access MangoApps.”

With instant mobile access, A.S. Watson Benelux store employees can quickly find information, reach out to coworkers, and see store updates, wherever they might be. “The absolutely killer application for us is that we offer employees their working schedule online,” Uylenberg remarked. “Every employee, 24/7, on their mobile devices, on their way to the store, can actually look at their schedule to make sure they know what the plan for that day is like. And that is the absolute number one for our employees.”

“There are 16,000 employees in Kruidvat, and they all use the mobile app to access MangoApps.”

–Jan Kees Fokkens, Social Intranet Project Manager



“[Before MangoApps] I took a picture of the schedule and I posted it in WhatsApp. But sometimes people lost it or deleted it, so they had to come into the store or text me the night before,” Scherff said. “[Now] they can open the app, click on the schedule, and see when they have to work this week, or next week, or the week after that. They never contact me anymore with questions, they can see it themselves...it saves me a lot of time.”

“In the stores changes to the work schedule happen frequently,” Fokkens explained. “So the fact that they are able to have it on their personal device is great for them.”

Even in the corporate office, Uylenberg has found that he tends to rely on the mobile app. “99.9% of the time I look at what’s going on online via my telephone,” Uylenberg said.

MangoApps provided ASW Benelux with an easily accessible platform, where employees from different stores, brands, and even countries could successfully come together.

BUILDING A CONNECTED COMMUNITY

But incorporating innovative communication at A.S. Watson Benelux wasn’t just about updating old technology. It was also about establishing lasting connections and building a supportive company culture. “In our office organization you’re all in one building, you have Outlook, you can find each other,” Fokkens remarked. “But the store employees didn’t have a way to find other employees outside of their own store.

Sometimes they met them in a district meeting or a training, but they didn’t know their colleague.”

MangoApps provided A.S. Watson Benelux with an easily accessible platform, where employees from different stores, brands, and even countries could successfully come together. “We chose to have the app branded in the AS Watson colors and the AS Watson look and feel so that there’s an instant recognition with all of our employees,” Fokkens said.

“When I open [MangoApps] I can...very quickly see the information I need but I can also just surf around and scroll the newsfeed. I see inspiring things, or new things, or questions that are answered, and that’s what I like,” Scherff shared. “As a store manager, you’re mainly only focused on your own shop. But now you’re able to see other shops and other store managers and what they’re doing. So it makes this big company feel more personal.”

“For instance, a few weeks ago for Christmas, I arranged a Christmas lunch,” Scherff recalled. “I posted a picture of it for our colleagues on [MangoApps and] I got reactions from all over the country. That gives a really good energy.”

“[We use MangoApps] for celebrating and sharing our successes,” Scholmes agreed. “I think it’s important for A.S. Watson to exchange company pride and show employees who we are as a company. I think [MangoApps] is really a very good communication tool to show your pride and share successes with the aim to involve colleagues at the organization.”

“They share the fact that they got flowers or a thank you note from a customer, or they share parties they have, or if a mystery shopper has given them a perfect score,” Fokkens observed. “They share almost everything.”

And the MangoApps community isn't just for in-store employees. "[Sometimes] there's a disconnect from the head office and the store," Fokkens explained. "This platform gives us a chance to see what's happening and what's on the mind of store employees. We can check what's going on anywhere in the company at any time and get a feel for what's happening there."

Uylenberg has seen MangoApps improve his relationships with store employees as well. "It gives me a perfect and instant sense of what's happening in our business, what the emotions or the trending topics are. It's the perfect way of getting to know what's going on within our stores."

CREATING LATERAL COLLABORATION

One of the biggest changes MangoApps helped A.S. Watson Benelux embrace was encouraging peer-to-peer communication, helping employees throughout the organization share their experiences and learn from each other. "From the start, our aim was to let employees share their knowledge because we know there is so much knowledge among our store employees," Uylenberg said. "Ever since we started using MangoApps, that's absolutely what has happened and we're very happy with that."

"There is all of this information in the heads of employees and it's retained in those siloes," Fokkens agreed. "They had no way of sharing it,

but MangoApps gave us a way to open up that resource of information."

*"It's not just a tool,
it's a changing way of
communication. It's
a culture change, a
culture shift"*

- Jan Kees Fokkens, Social
Intranet Project Manager



"I think the way that people can provide specific and instant feedback about what they see and what they experience in [MangoApps] is absolutely fantastic," Uylenberg went on to say. "I'll give you an example. One of our colleagues from supply chain made a little vlog about... wrapping the pallets with plastic that we send to the stores. One of the colleagues in the stores saw that and instantly gave feedback, asking that 'If you're wrapping it in plastic, can you wrap the top as well?' Because every now and then pallets stand outside and [that would] protect them from getting wet if it rains... [Before MangoApps] that wouldn't have been communicated."

For Scherff, peer-to-peer communication means discovering new ways to create in-store success. "You can directly ask other colleagues 'How are you doing this?' Or you can post pictures and inspire each other," Scherff observed.

"It's not just a tool, it's a changing way of communication. It's a culture change, a culture shift," Fokkens reflected. "It's not just top-down communication, but it's communication everywhere."

*"peer-to-peer communication means
discovering new ways to create
in-store success."*

People had to adjust to that, but they took to it like wildfire. They loved it. If I look at the interaction that's happening now on MangoApps, it's huge. It's better than I expected."

"I'm really proud of it," Scholmes agreed, "and that we are doing so well."

AN UNQUESTIONABLE SUCCESS

MangoApps' expertise in innovative and mobile-friendly communication lets employees throughout A.S. Watson Benelux stay connected both on the sales floor and across country lines, while their modern and intuitive user interface is the perfect communication tool for today's tech-savvy employees. MangoApps and A.S. Watson Benelux truly are an outstanding team. "In this era where everything is visual... a modern, interactive, attractive way of communicating is absolutely mandatory," Uylenberg said.

"I'm very glad A.S. Watson has [MangoApps]," Scherff agreed. "Like I said before, I feel like this big company is getting a little smaller and more personal."

"[Before MangoApps] I took a picture of the schedule and I posted it in WhatsApp. But sometimes people just lost it or deleted it, so they had to come into the store or text me the night before. Now they can open the app, click on the schedule, and see when they have to work this week, next week, or the week after that."



- Vera Scherff, Kruidvat Store Manager

"We now use a more interactive way of communicating," Scholmes shared. "I think it's just the beginning of a new way of communicating and it's part of a digital transformation within A.S. Watson as a company. I hope that all of the colleagues of A.S. Watson use the advantages [MangoApps] can offer and want to be part of this digital transformation."