



Wittner collaborates ideas and information using the Forums tool

Wittner has a strong employee culture and communication strategy within their business. The company has integrated World Manager® forums and online discussions as part of daily communications. There have been thousands of posts in the first 6 months alone. Utilizing the Forum tool has meant Team Members can communicate nationally and share ideas and information directly to the Support Office.

Company

Wittner's is a leading women's footwear label, established in 1912. Today the 3rd generation family business operates 76 locations spanning 7 states countrywide.

What were your objectives when you decided to launch this tool?

To connect Team Members across stores, regions and states and provide them with a quick and easy way to share ideas and information that could improve our business. Our Support Office is based in a central position and we really wanted to reach out to our interstate teams and make them feel closer and more connected with our brand vision. We were also very aware of the wealth of knowledge, experience, creativity and ideas everyone had to share and saw this as way to tap into that.

Did you achieve those objectives?

Absolutely, the teams' right across the country feel more connected and inspired to share their ideas. They now feel like they have an effective platform where they can be heard. It's amazing how encouraging other Team Members can be and how peer recognition can play such an important role in staff engagement. The tool has really helped each store team feel more a part of the broader Wittner community and helped them to empathize and understand some of the differences and similarities across our varied locations.

Did you already have a process in place for Forum's before World Manager®?

To some degree! We had a suggestion sheet that stores could submit to the Support Office and email was used a lot more frequently. While we have always encouraged open communication across all levels of the business, the forum tool has enabled that culture to thrive, making it quicker and more accessible for everyone. From a Support Office point of view, it has made it easier to follow things up with the workforce at large rather than spending time repeatedly dealing with the same issue.

How long did it take you to launch this tool?

This was one of the first and easiest tools to get up and running and required little explanation to staff. All we needed to do was consider which forum categories to set up and target them to the appropriate groups to contribute. The categories then evolved somewhat over time.

How much prep work did you need to launch this tool and what value is the Forum for employers?

Literally about half an hour! It's simply a matter of coming up with some useful categories for your business and targeting them. We now have 22 categories in total but we started out with only a handful. The suggestions for additional categories for the most part have come from feedback on the forums and they take less than 5 minutes to set up.

How useful has the collected information been?

The feedback we've received through the forums has been most useful to the Operations Team in helping us provide the information and resources our teams are wanting. It's real benefit though, I have to say has been in the way it engages our staff with one another and fosters a real community where anyone is able to put up their hand and be heard.

Any advice or comments you would like to provide to other users of World Manager® about this tool?

- Keep the categories to a minimum to begin with to encourage lots of interaction and contributions across a few areas. Once you get a feel for how your company can take full advantage of the Forum tool, start to branch out into more specific categories that you know people will use regularly.
- Assign someone from your Operations Team to be responsible for facilitating the tool. It can get quite overwhelming for people when they feel as though they need to read and respond to every single post. The teams will sometimes get frustrated if people aren't responding quickly enough so even just having someone responsible for saying "Thank you for sharing your suggestion, I will pass this on to..." makes them feel like we are listening.
- I would also advise to communicate some basic common sense guidelines or reiterate your business' social media or communications policy at the time of the launch just to highlight the importance of anti-discrimination/bullying culture in your workplace.