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Genesis: Launching in Lockdown

The world's changed a lot since we first started working with Emma-Kate Greer and Tamara Sallis from Genesis, an energy company in New Zealand. Genesis has over 1,000 employees spread across the country in a wide range of roles including retail, wholesale operations, delivery and customer service. It's an essential service provider, so work continues for the Genesis team even under lockdown conditions - the electricity must flow.

This week Emma-Kate and Tamara launched Joyous across Genesis, and at the same time started sending out Covid-19 check-in questions to the entire team. So to see how well the launch went we caught up over Skype from our respective homes - five year olds and small dogs included.

The need for Joyous

The Genesis team turned to Joyous after experiencing a lot of challenges in their most recent engagement survey. Unhappy with the once-a-year format, Emma-Kate and Tamara wanted more regular feedback, and were looking for something that could provide them with additional context.

“We’d receive feedback and need just a little more information, but because it was anonymous you couldn’t go back and ask for it. So we knew we didn’t really want another anonymous tool.”

“Joyous was the only platform we could find that meets all our needs.”

Because Genesis was already set up to send Joyous’ standard questions, the decision to include four Covid-19 specific check-in questions was an easy one.

“We saw other companies sending the same check-in questions out to their people every day - they just become wallpaper. We had Joyous ready to launch anyway, so we had the opportunity to use it to meaningfully check in with our people.”

Launching in lockdown

New Zealand is in total lockdown for a month due to the current Covid-19 situation, so launching Joyous quickly was even more important - mission-critical even - for Genesis. Where it might once have been just another project, now Joyous was an important way to connect with people across the organisation while everyone was in isolation.

While Tamara and Emma-Kate say launching under lockdown didn’t present any unusual difficulties, the launch looked a little

different due to the restrictions. Genesis couldn't do a gradual roll-out of weekly questions as planned, and instead ramped up the cadence to send out the Covid-19 check-in questions quickly.

And where they'd usually hold a Lunch and Learn session for people leaders, the team had to turn to Skype for this one. "We had a far higher participation - over 130 leaders joined, which was phenomenal." Although they laughingly admit the high engagement was probably partly due to interest in Joyous and partly the convenience of joining from home.

Engaging the team

Within the first seven hours of the first question going out, over 62% of the organisation was engaged and responding on Joyous. Tamara was surprised at achieving that level of engagement so quickly, "but also so proud of our leaders and the way they've responded so tactfully and with so much empathy. It's a level of empathy that I didn't expect."

Because Genesis has such a diversity of roles, Emma-Kate and Tamara say that people leaders having the ability to directly respond to and act on feedback is extremely important. Leaders understand their team's unique position in the company, and are perfectly placed to respond to individual needs. Tamara tells of one leader who offered to collect an office chair for a team member who couldn't. "You can never achieve that personalised response on a blanket scale. It's been really heartening to see."

And they're not just seeing action on the individual level. Leaders are picking up themes and discussing them at team meetings. They're seeing business unit themes as well as organisation-wide themes; the communication team can now identify topics people are concerned about, and make sure they address those in their communications.

The need for conversation

Previously, communication was organisation-wide and flowing in one direction: the corporate team was sending advice out and relying on the leaders to run team meetings and one-on-ones. Joyous has helped enable two-way communication on a much bigger scale.

“Joyous identifies if someone’s got a specific problem that means they’re finding it hard to work, or if they’re struggling emotionally in terms of isolation. It’s just a much more meaningful way to get the data and give it to the people who can make a difference with it- who can act on it on an individual level.”

Emma-Kate and Tamara get the sense a lot of organisations are still dispensing advice in one direction at the moment, which means they’re missing the opportunity to hear the voice of their people and understand their reality.

“Without some kind of two-way communication tool, you just don’t know how people are really feeling. You’re kind of blind to it.”

So while it’s early days for Joyous at Genesis, they’re already seeing the benefits of conversational, open feedback. We’ll check in again with them in a few weeks (hopefully outside of lockdown!) to see how things are progressing.

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Open Employee Feedback

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