

Case study: Preference

BOMBARDIER



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ONLINE BENEFITS

Thomsons Online Benefits

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Situation

Bombardier is a manufacturer of innovative transportation solutions, employing a largely blue collar workforce of 4,000 across multiple locations in the UK.

Five years ago Bombardier implemented a paper based flexible benefits scheme. Heavy administration and no overall reward brand meant flex selections were declining.

In 2006 they decided to find a new supplier who could move their scheme online. The aim was to improve administration and engage employees in the concept of total reward, rather than salary only through unique communications.

The Challenges

Bombardier faced some unique challenges:

- A very diverse population meant the scheme and the communication strategy needed to be targeted to appeal to each individual;
- A largely manufacturing workforce with limited internet access and varying levels of computer literacy;
- A number of acquisitions meant some benefit entitlements were not consistent across the organisation, which presented an additional communication challenge.

Action

In May 2007, after conducting employee focus groups, Bombardier launched their new scheme 'preference', the first stage in a two year implementation plan with new supplier Thomsons Online Benefits.

In 2008 'preference' was moved completely online. The scheme was re-launched to employees using a unique communication campaign to appeal to their diverse population.

Bombardier felt that 'preference' needed to bring together their many business areas under a single reward brand. The communications used images of real Bombardier employees to convey a family feel, a sense of belonging and pride.

To promote the scheme posters explaining each benefit were displayed around the office. A personalised leaflet was sent to employees' home addresses outlining the benefits available and how to logon to the website, along with a z-card featuring a step-by-step guide on how to make selections.

With the majority of employees having only limited access to the internet, computers were made available at each site, along with a helpline and clinics to assist employees with the selection process.

Result

The communication of the scheme has raised awareness of 'preference' throughout the organisation. Take-up rates rose to 74% in 2007 and 81% in 2008. In addition 'preference' performs well above the industry average:

- Employees 'flexing' their benefits was 15% higher than the industry average;
- Holiday buying was 5 times the industry average;
- Travel insurance take up was 5 times the industry average.

As a result of the launch, Bombardier has seen retention rates increase and the voluntary leaver rate reduce by 4%.

"We are very pleased with the decision to move our scheme completely online. The challenge in a manufacturing environment is inspiring employees to take the time to make their selections. We now have more people flexing their benefits than ever before, the communication campaign was clearly a great success."

Sally Nix

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