



Vibrant internal communication takes root at Woodland Trust

Woodland Trust is an environmental charity for the protection and development of woodland in the UK. Spread over five offices and work-from-home locations, the staff are involved in a variety of work, from hands-on woodland maintenance to active fundraising to office-based administration.

The Trust wanted an internal communication tool that would allow all users - regardless of location, technical capabilities or nature of work - to feel connected to the organization and each other. With an intensely passionate workforce, they wanted a place where everyone could be heard.

Since adopting Jostle's **People Engagement**® platform, the Trust has seen a significant improvement in communication. Participation levels have remained above 90% since implementation two years ago. The new intranet has helped surface the passion and commitment of the Trust's workforce.

Company:	Woodland Trust
Size & Locations:	450 employees across six offices and at-home offices in the UK
Sector:	Nonprofit
Interviewees:	Anne Lightowler, Head of HR Ian Teague, Head of IT
Participation:	81% weekly 94% monthly

Who is Woodland Trust?

Woodland Trust is a large UK-based woodland conservation charity. Their aim is to protect Britain's ancient woodlands and encourage people to visit them. They focus on managing current woodland, creating new woodland, and inspiring people across the nation to visit forests and plant trees. They interface with a variety of people, including private and corporate landowners, central and local government, voluntary groups, schools, and the general public.

Woodland Trust has roughly 460 staff, over half of which are based in their headquarters in northern England. The remaining staff work from home or one of the Trust's five satellite offices, which are spread across England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. Together, the organization manages over 1,000 pieces of woodland across the UK.



Woodland Trust currently plants over a million trees a year

Why did they need an intranet?

With such a large percentage of their workforce working remotely or from small satellite offices, Woodland Trust needed an online platform where they could communicate with staff effectively, ensure essential material was reaching people, and improve connections and conversation throughout the organization. They also needed a space where the organization's community and culture could thrive. The organization's workforce comprises passionate people who deeply care about what they do but are often working in isolation. Although these individuals had a desire to be heard and share their views with others, there was no mechanism for them to be engaged, connected, and recognized.

Woodland Trust previously used a Sharepoint intranet, appropriately named "Twig". It hosted official documents, news items, and policies. Leadership found it was often hard to communicate using Twig; staff had to dig deep to seek out important information, rather than it being easily accessible. While staff knew there was a lot of information out there, they frequently didn't know where to look for it or why it was relevant to them.

"Prior to the Jostle® platform, we had a Sharepoint intranet. It was full of things that were not relevant. Not updated. Not current. It was very difficult for people to find what they wanted. It was an out-of-the-box Sharepoint intranet - lots of lists, lots of documenting."



Ian Teague
Head of IT

More importantly, Twig only served as a one-way communication tool. Even if staff did find the information they needed, they weren't able to comment, provide feedback or communicate their own ideas. Communication only came from the top of the company. "It wasn't very interactive. It was very much a here-it-is, do what you want with it, and very little else," said Anne Lightowler, Head of HR at Woodland Trust. "It was a barren kind of place to be in terms of communication. Woodland people are passionate and need a place to voice share their ideas and views with other like-minded people."



In short, Twig didn't seem to be cutting it. In a 2010 employee engagement survey, the effectiveness of internal communication ranked as one of the lowest scoring categories across the company. In 2012, it had sunk even further. It was after this second survey that Woodland Trust realized that they needed to devote more time to internal communications. There was an entire workforce that felt they weren't being communicated with or included.

It was important to the Trust that staff were not only receiving important information, but that the conversation went two ways. They wanted to have a space where their staff could get involved, and for it not to feel like the leadership team was simply telling and not listening.

With such a dispersed workforce, in which some people can complete their work from home or in isolation, the Trust recognized that improving their online community would be essential to better communication and better connectivity at all levels of the organization.



Raising funds and awareness at public events

A new way forward

Equipped with the knowledge that communication was minimal and the current intranet was clunky and challenging to navigate, Woodland Trust set out to find a tool that would be dynamic, clear, and easy for everyone to use. They needed a platform that everyone could understand and engage with, regardless of how basic their technological skills were. The Jostle intranet was precisely what they were looking for.

“We have quite a wide spectrum that we cater for, which sometimes causes problems from an IT point of view. One of the things that we liked about the Jostle intranet was the technology threshold that you have to overcome in order to use; it was so low that we thought that everybody could do it.”



Ian Teague
Head of IT

On the back end, it was also important that the platform be easy to implement and manage. Woodland Trust doesn't have a large HR or IT team, so the platform needed to function without draining precious time whilst satisfying the requirements of both the IT and HR departments. “One of the things we were looking for was something that would be, in effect, self managing and would require minimal supervision and administration from me or the IT team,” said Ian Teague, Head of IT at Woodland Trust. “That's what was so attractive about the Jostle platform. It could remain active and vibrant without HR and IT having to do much work to maintain it.”

Before rolling out the new intranet, Woodland Trust were mindful of striking a balance between raising excitement for the new tool and raising hopes that one tool could resolve every issue for every member of staff. They wanted staff to embrace the new tool, but they didn't want them to expect too much. “We didn't say ‘This is the solution that's going to end world poverty and create world peace’,” Ian told us. “We said ‘This is so much better than what we've had before. Try it.’”



In preparation for the launch of the Jostle platform, Woodland Trust pre-populated their Jostle intranet with information, prepared a few articles that would be ready for posting, and sent out a short user-guide to all staff that explained what to expect from the new platform. They also ran a 'Jostle's Coming' campaign, which featured well-received cake on launch day.

As things got up and running, the platform administrators monitored the pages for any questions from staff and responded with answers and solutions to their queries. They also started an online conversation about the new tool in the DISCUSSIONS view on their Jostle platform. They asked staff what they would like to see on the platform and what they could improve on. From the beginning, they invited people to converse, giving them a voice and a way to become involved.



Woodland Trust created a short and simple user guide before rolling out their new intranet

What are the results?

From the outset, the new intranet experienced extremely high engagement rates. It consistently achieves over 90% employee participation across the 28-day cycle, and has done so since their launch. Woodland Trust staff are logging in from all over Britain to find out

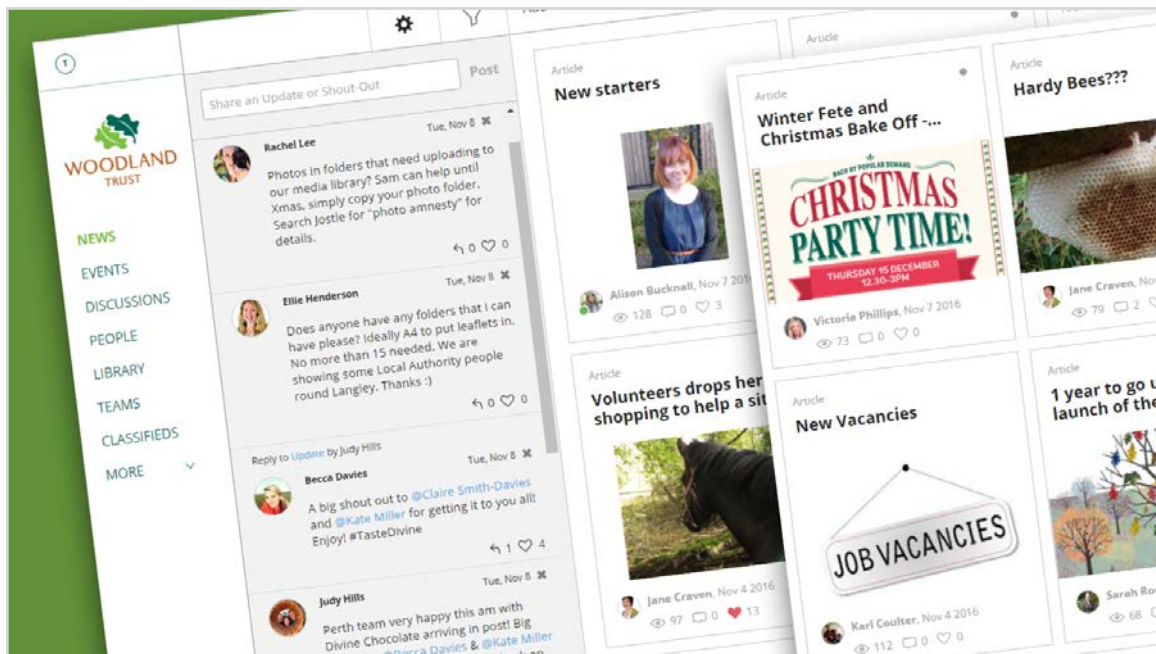
what's happening at head office and what their peers are involved with at the other side of the country. Multi-directional conversations across the organization are finally possible, community and interaction have blossomed, and it's no longer a chore to stay in the loop with the organization's news.

The easy and encouraging uptake of the Jostle intranet has been a pleasant surprise for the leadership team. Despite the fact that many of their staff could easily exist in isolated bubbles and complete their day jobs without interacting with their peers, they're logging on to read and to share. Corporate culture is no longer something to wish for; staff are involved, interested, and contributing.

"The Jostle platform is absolutely the most visited site in our organization. Not even Google can compete."



Anne Lightowler
Head of HR



Woodland Trust's NEWS is active with contributions from employees around the country



Leading by example

While the staff's uptake and interest in the new intranet has been organic, Woodland Trust's leadership played key roles in setting the tone for using the Jostle platform. Their CEO, Rebecca Speight, is an advocate for the platform and uses it to post a monthly update called 'Beccy's Blog'. In a casual style, she writes about what the senior team has achieved during the previous month and what the organization's aspirations are for the next month.

Anne said: "It's where, if you want, you can get inside the head of our Chief Executive; it's where you naturally go to see what she's thinking and how she's feeling about the organization. Her blog is consistently one of the most read articles. People are clearly engaging in a way I haven't seen before."

Communication and culture are growing

As much as their Jostle intranet is the place to find out what's going on in the organization, it's also the place for staff to post anything they think is important to their peers. The number of contributors to the NEWS section of the site has grown exponentially since the intranet launched as more people are looking to get involved, share, and celebrate their work. In fact, over 10% of the organization are NEWS Reporters with the ability to contribute and share content and ideas as they choose. This exemplifies the open and inclusive culture at Woodland Trust. Ian said: "People are very proud of what they've done and what they're doing. They want to make the rest of the organization aware of that. The Jostle platform is the place for that news to get spread."

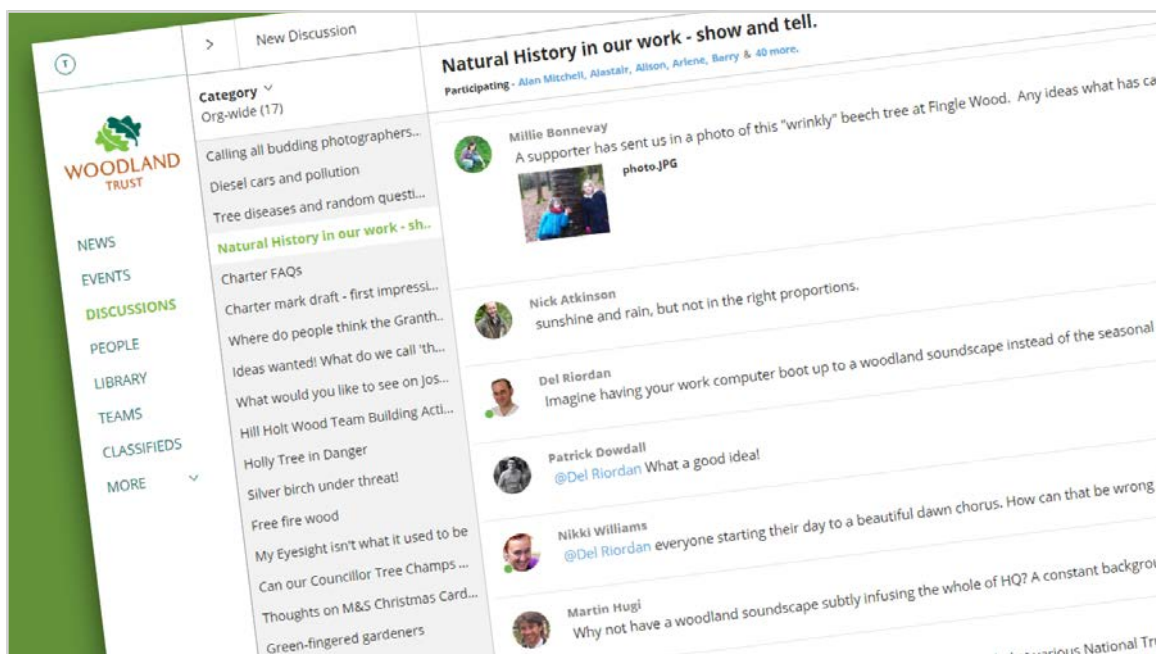
Not only are staff engaging with messages from the leadership team, they're volunteering their own stories, commenting on posts, and actively engaging in Discussions. "I see some of our more ardent environmentalists - and this is about their personal views as much as their work views - really contributing to some of the Discussions with their pictures and stories," said Anne. "It's a joy."

Woodland Trust are also noticing that there's a wider catchment of people getting involved. "The Jostle platform has given a voice to people who wouldn't have been engaged in anything else that was going on in the organization prior to the new intranet," shared Anne. "They're very comfortable interacting through the Jostle platform as opposed to actually



speaking up in person.” The new intranet is providing a forum that allows some of their more introverted staff members to contribute to company culture and truly become part of the fabric that makes up the company.

Ian shared: “One of the most active discussion groups is one called “Natural History - Show and Tell”. We have lots of supporters who send us pictures of interesting flora and fauna that they have found in our woods and ask us to identify them. These are posted in the Discussion and what’s remarkable is that the responses don’t just come from the known experts within the Trust. The Jostle intranet has allowed people who wouldn’t normally be consulted to display their wide range of Natural History knowledge. We could never have done that this using our previous intranet and therefore, as result of implementing the Jostle platform, we’re able to provide a better service to our supporters.”



Discussions connect people across the company: they provide a place for people to chat and learn from one another

Listening to feedback

Woodland Trust has taken its collaboration a step further and is using their Jostle intranet Discussion - Greening the Trust - to gather ideas from their staff about ecological improvements they would like to see within the organization. These ideas get collated and addressed at a quarterly meeting, in which management assesses what's possible and effective to implement. The minutes from the meeting are posted publicly in the Discussion.

To date, this approach has resulted in real and tangible changes, as the Trust has switched to an electricity supply provided by 100% renewable resources for the organization's headquarters and is planning to introduce electric vehicles. The real outcome? A transparent organization that's able to hear what its staff has to say, clearly show that they're listening, and make the changes that matter to its people.

"I think the Jostle intranet has definitely changed the way we interact. It's definitely brought the organization closer together."



Anne Lightowler
Head of HR

What's next?

Implementing a 10-year strategy

At the end 2015, Woodland Trust launched their ambitious new 10-year strategy. They plan to grow threefold and to plant 65 million trees in the next decade. To put this into context; Woodland Trust has planted 35 million trees in the past 30 years. They'll go from planting just over a million trees a year to 6.5 million trees a year.

When rolling out these goals and managing the changes that accompany them, it's vital for information to reach all of the staff. "We're talking about strategy here," said Anne. "This is the stuff our staff need to know. This will impact how they do their jobs."

Rather than using long emails or a complex Sharepoint intranet, Woodland Trust relied upon the Jostle platform for their 10-year strategy announcements and details. With the new



intranet, Woodland Trust was able to make sure everybody had the same information, at the same time, and in the same format. Also, due to the high engagement rates, they knew this was the best avenue to get the information in everyone's hands. They could be sure that the workforce was reading the information and staying abreast of changes within their organization.

“It was very powerful to be able to clearly state: ‘This is information from your CEO about the next 10 years at Woodland Trust.’ We were able to use the Jostle intranet to make sure that everybody had this critical information.”



Anne Lightowler
Head of HR

Helping new employees branch out

For new employees - of which there will be many during this growth period - the new intranet is playing a large role in their early days at the company. Their induction to the organization is seamless and the information they require is easily accessible. Due to the dynamic online community, new employees are immersed in the culture of the company from day one, regardless of their location. They can find out who's who, understand their place within the organization, the importance of their role, and see common-minded people accomplish things together. "It's about making sure we're using our internal communications, for which the Jostle intranet is clearly key, to help embed new people in to get them up and running," said Anne.



Woodland Trust's team from Scotland

Measuring change

In Autumn of this year, Woodland Trust will have their first employee survey since the implementation of the Jostle platform. While the leadership team cannot predict the feedback they'll get from this survey, they feel they're in a much stronger place regarding internal communication. "I'm excited and scared" said Anne, "but I feel what we've been experiencing is internal communication at its best. We're in a much better place than we were two years ago."

Where the organization once had a one-way flow of unengaging information, they now have an easy-to-use platform that has improved company-wide communication and allowed for a vibrant community to take root. The Jostle intranet has become the place where you can listen and be heard. It hosts everything from employees' personal stories to the company's announcement on their Brexit stance. It's common knowledge - if something is happening within the company, it's happening on the Jostle platform.



The energy and engagement surrounding this digital meeting place suggests Woodland Trust have successfully transformed their communication across the company and established a strong foundation upon which they can continue to grow. We're excited to hear the results of their upcoming survey, and to further support their ambitious expansion and inspiring corporate objectives.



Woodland Trust works with schools to educate children about the importance of the UK's woods and forests

About Jostle Corporation

Jostle's People Engagement platform is helping organizations around the world become extraordinary. It creates connected and vibrant workplaces by connecting employees, enabling communication, and driving workplace culture. We make it easy for companies to engage their employees. This allows our customers to achieve employee participation rates of over 85% — that's over 5X industry norms. For more information contact info@jostle.me or visit us online at www.jostle.me.

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