



VMware Socialcast Streamlines Telenet's Internal Communications

CHALLENGE

Telenet wants to move away from its e-mail- and meeting-oriented culture, and is seeking a swifter and more efficient way of communicating internally. The company also wants to make it easier to attract talented, new staff and to create a better work/life balance for its staff. It's also fast outgrowing its company head offices in Mechelen. An internal work group is devising 'new ways of working' as solutions to these challenges. All relevant departments are involved in this process – HR, marketing, communications, and IT.

SOLUTION

Three tools are being implemented: Microsoft Lync, Microsoft SharePoint, and VMware's Socialcast. VMware is providing expertise and personal assistance as part of the Socialcast project.

RESULTS

VMware Socialcast streamlines internal communication by making it faster and more efficient. Good ideas and initiatives can be identified more easily, and they also gain greater support from within the organization.

Telenet provides media and telecommunications services to businesses and consumers in Flanders and Brussels (cable television, broadband internet, and landline/mobile telecommunications). As well as head offices in Mechelen, it also has contact centers in Herentals, Sint-Truiden, and Aalst. The company employs some 2,200 staff across a variety of disciplines including sales, marketing, help desk, call center, consultancy, technology, and IT.

Rethink

In 2011, Telenet embarked upon a far-reaching rethink of the way it operated. This was prompted by demand from its own staff for an improved work/life balance, as well as management's wishes to address improved mobility and sustainability. The HR department was also looking for an easier way to attract talented, new staff.

Patrick Hendrickx (IT Architect, Telenet) explains, "Our organization was extremely e-mail- and meeting-oriented. We hardly ever used the phone. Consequently, internal communication was quite inefficient. We were also fast outgrowing our head offices in Mechelen. A combination of wanting to attract talented, new staff and create a better work/life balance prompted us to investigate whether mobile working was the answer. The time had come to readdress the way we worked and communicated."

Work Group Provides Driving Force

The HR, marketing, communications, and IT departments joined forces to create a multidisciplinary work group.

They devised a solution based on three different tools. For collaboration purposes, they chose Microsoft Lync – instant messaging, chat, and audio/

video calls – and for centralized data management purposes, Microsoft SharePoint. Lync reduced travel, saving both time and money. SharePoint centralized data management, reducing the time spent searching for the right information.

Only one requirement remained – an internal social media platform for more efficient internal communications. An important selection criterion was local accessibility due to security and integration issues. It also had to be fully compatible with the SharePoint platform that Telenet was using for its intranet. VMware's Socialcast satisfied all these requirements.

Concerns

VMware carried out all technical matters – quickly and easily installing and integrating Socialcast alongside the other tools.

Meanwhile, the work group had been addressing several human factors. How would we get staff, unfamiliar with social media, involved? How would we get staff to create and share information that provided a benefit to all? How would we allow staff to respond? Would we make it use mandatory? Would we give everyone access? As an organization, how would we deal with feedback? Answers were found to all these questions that worked within the context of Telenet's culture.

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Patrick Hendrickx (IT Architect, Telenet)

VMWARE IN PRACTICE

- VMware Socialcast

Hendrickx continues, "Besides having been convinced about Socialcast, we also discovered VMware to be a truly invaluable partner who helped us and gave us numerous practical tips, both technical and management-related. Both of these aspects played an important role in determining this project's success. VMware urged us to let HR lead the entire project. It was critical that it wasn't seen to be an IT project. This was welcome advice that we took to heart."

Clear Step-by-Step Plan

Internal communications initially played the most important role. This started with a competition whereby staff could choose an original name for the new internal social media channel that they'd be using. The winning entry was fittingly 'De Gele Draad' ['The Yellow Thread'].

Once the name was set, flyers and posters with practical information were printed and posted throughout the entire company. Several fun ploys attracted a lot of attention for 'De Gele Draad' (Socialcast). At a later stage, employees were again informed online and via social media channels. This made everyone quite curious and eager to find out about this new way of working.

Ambassadors

Fifty Telenet ambassadors were appointed. They fulfilled a dual role. Firstly, they promoted Socialcast within the organization and secondly, they corrected their colleagues, as and when necessary. For instance, they pointed out that using a photo of their pet made them unrecognizable to their colleagues, or intervened when they used inappropriate language. The number of interventions ultimately turned out to be very low. Staff were automatically attuned to what was appropriate, and what was not, within this internal social media environment.

Pilot Project

Starting a pilot project proved an ideal way to get fast feedback from users.

Patrick Hendrickx (IT Architect, Telenet) explains, "The pilot project surprised everyone. Staff were so enthusiastic about 'De Gele Draad' that their enthusiasm became infectious. It spread like wildfire throughout our entire organization. Other staff members soon started asking whether they could use Socialcast too. 'De Gele Draad' was adopted and put into use throughout the entire organization very quickly with a series of information sessions and training courses."

Hendrickx continues, "Currently, 2,700 employees with wide-ranging profiles are using Socialcast to inform others and to be informed. I have to admit that Socialcast really lit a fire under our organization and boosted the efficiency of our internal communications tremendously. We're sending far fewer e-mails, and we're helping one another far more efficiently." He adds, "Good ideas and initiatives are also getting far more support from within the organization. Before, they often didn't make it through our old, convoluted internal processes. Now, good ideas rapidly acquire the support required to get them implemented."

As an added bonus, staff who perform exceptionally well, or who help others in need, can be put in the limelight far more easily. After all, what they do is far more visible within the organization.

Hendrickx finishes, "As an innovation company, we can't afford to become complacent. We're now working on making Socialcast accessible from mobile devices. This is perfectly aligned with how we currently access information. Staff often need to check Socialcast or share ideas on their lunch breaks or after work. This will be possible very soon."

