Google

Case Study | Google Apps

Consumer electronics retailer Dick Smith creates an informed workforce using Google Apps and Google Sites

dick smith

At a Glance

What they wanted to do

- Replace aging messaging infrastructure and insufficient message storage
- Broaden email access to all employees
- Improve communications with retail stores
- Build a flexible intranet with mobile access

What they did

- Deployed Google Apps to improve messaging
- Chose Google Sites to easily launch and maintain intranet

What they accomplished

- Gave every Dick Smith employee a Gmail address, creating a better-informed workforce
- Used Google Sites to launch new intranet that's now accessible on mobile devices
- Significantly improved storage for email messages
- Adopted email, calendar, and intranet solutions that are updated and innovated constantly

"Google has created important efficiency across our entire business network, helping to create a transparent and streamlined communication culture through our two major channels, email and intranet."
Nick Abboud, CEO, Dick Smith

Business

Dick Smith is a leading retailer of consumer electronics in Australia and New Zealand. The Chullora, New South Wales-based company has 4,000 employees and 359 stores, including electronics departments in David Jones department stores and one MOVE store, as well as an online storefront. In 2012, the company was acquired from Woolworths Limited by Anchorage Capital Partners, and in 2013, Dick Smith went public.

Challenge

The acquisition of Dick Smith by Anchorage Partners, and its debut as a public company, increased the need for faster, more easily accessible communications for everyone in the business – from corporate executives to store managers to part-time and casual employees, both in Australia and internationally in New Zealand and Hong Kong. It was also about shining the spotlight on the importance of undertaking best practice communications to create an informed and engaged workforce.

Most communication took place through email – but not every employee had their own email account. "There was only one email address for each store, and that email was usually accessed by the store manager who would then print out messages or read them to employees," says Evan Ang, IT project manager for Dick Smith. "Compounding the problem was a lack of storage for email messages, which meant email boxes would quickly fill up and prevent people from receiving new messages."

The company had a basic intranet for showcasing news about the business and useful info for employees, like forms and phone directories. However, "the intranet was difficult to update and was only accessible on the internal company network," Ang says.

Solution

As the company transformed, it required faster tools with broader reach. "We needed to find new ways to engage employees and share important information about how we were evolving," says Katie Sultana, internal communications manager for Dick Smith. "We couldn't afford delays in delivering important information, especially for maintaining engagement levels and keeping our employees informed."

The first step was to find a better email solution: By choosing Gmail, Dick Smith was able to give every employee his or her own email address. "There's even the option for all employees to easily read emails on their mobile devices if they choose, so they see important messages on the go," Sultana said.

Dick Smith also decided to use Google Calendar, which has user-friendly functions such as an interactive interface with easy-add options for booking meetings and resources.

About Google Apps for Business

Google Apps is a cloud-based productivity suite that helps you and your team connect and get work done from anywhere on any device. Google Apps includes Gmail, Google Calendar (shared calendaring), Google Drive (online content storage and sharing), and Google Docs, Sheets and Slides (document creation and collaboration).

For more information visit
www.google.com.au/apps

Next up was the rollout of Google Sites for a new intranet, and Google Drive for document storage and sharing. “Now it’s much easier to post information on our intranet, and it means employees don’t have to rely only on email to find out our recent announcements,” Sultana says. “It’s also a central one-stop shop for all information and is easy to access because it’s a part of the wider Google solution.”

Benefits

Faster, wider access to company information has boosted Dick Smith’s transparency as a business, and also helped create a knowledgeable workforce. “With their own email addresses, every employee feels like they’re a part of the Dick Smith family,” Sultana says. “From a communications perspective, bringing Google on board has brought about a complete transformation.”

Employees also have the option to view the new intranet on their mobile devices, says Sultana. “The intranet has changed the way we communicate, especially to our store network – now there’s a single place where everyone can read news and important information as soon as it’s posted,” she says.

While the initial outreach about Google solutions focused on Gmail and Google Calendar, Dick Smith employees are also discovering the benefits of using Google Docs and Google Drive. “We’re already seeing a big uptake of people using these products,” Sultana says. “They love knowing that they’re always working with the latest version of a document, and that they can log in once and access everything they’re working on.”

Going Google has also solved the company’s problems of aging infrastructure and insufficient storage. “If we had chosen to install similar products on-site, we would have had to make significant investments in hardware and software,” Ang says. “We also would have had trouble scaling any email solution to give everyone an address – it wouldn’t have been practical. With Google, we don’t have constant capital outlay, and we don’t have to worry about disk storage. Google constantly upgrades and evolves its products, without any impact on our IT team.”

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