

Most innovative deployment of HR technology

Winner

Mitchells & Butlers

It takes a brave, bold organisation to hold its hands up when things go wrong, and to turn the most tragic of circumstances into a seminal moment and an opportunity for change. But this is exactly what Mitchells and Butlers (M&B) has done, which led the judges to commend its bravery for sharing such horrific events and for its subsequent turnaround.

In 2015, 33 diners fell ill with food poisoning – with one later dying – after eating Christmas lunch in one of M&B’s restaurants. The company was fined £1.5 million for placing unsafe food on the market, after the court’s ruling that it had fallen short of appropriate standards.

Rather than waiting for the negative press to simply pass, the organisation made a commitment to improve the quality and measurement of learning and development (L&D) and to engage learners. After analysing the current situation, it became clear that training was inconsistent across sites, and was trusted solely to team managers to deliver correctly. L&D needed to be centralised and standardised. With an organisation consisting of 46,000 employees across 1,700 pubs or restaurants and 15 brands, this was no small task. The approach taken was to develop an innovative digital learning platform.

Key to the development was the creation of a dedicated digital learning team responsible for the project. The new platform then took 18 months to research and develop, before being launched in July 2017. MABLE (Mitchells And Butlers Learning Environment) is, in the words of the entry, ‘a true engagement engine’, providing a ‘one-stop shop’ for the learning needs of leaders and employees. Senior leaders can monitor progress and identify



any skills gaps among employees, and employees can share ideas, ask questions and give feedback to one another on a social learning platform. The philosophy of the learning is now ‘bite-sized’ with employees able to access it anywhere and anytime, enhancing user experience. A real shift was its innovative use of gamification, whereby the principles of this were aligned with learning principles. Employees ‘earn and accumulate points’ and ‘interact via the social features of MABLE’, techniques which have boosted engagement and have encouraged more social learning.

Shortlisted

Costain

EVO

GBG

Purple Cubed

Wiltshire Council

To avoid past mistakes, a critical part of the platform is its agile design that allows content to be refreshed and updated. For instance, with UK cases of norovirus on the rise, subject matter refresher training was quickly built and launched; 86% of the required population had completed the training within four weeks, something that helped prevent potential incidents.

Engaging employees to use this new technology has, of course, been paramount to its success, and so an innovative comms campaign was also rolled out to launch it. MABLE was given a persona as a ‘sassy, older personal trainer’, designed to speak to and engage employees.

Through MABLE, M&B has truly engaged its workforce around L&D – 64% of employees say they log into MABLE via a mobile device at least once a week, and 74% say MABLE is engaging. But, aside from the benefits to employees, most importantly customer safety has improved. The number of businesses needing to close for a deep clean following a norovirus outbreak halved following the norovirus refresher, despite cases of the stomach bug increasing 56% year-on-year nationally. Food quality is also up 5% and allergen-related incidents down 12% on trend predictions.

Other than the human aspect of the story and the impressive turnaround of events, the judges also praised the fact that 90% of the content was created in-house, rather than being outsourced. One judge said: “Making skills and training consistent across a non-desk-based branch network is difficult, but they had a clear business need to do this, and they have really delivered.”