

Lloyd's Register and the FoWlab Jam

Why did Lloyds Register want to use social media to access employee voice?

Lloyd's Register is a global engineering, technical and business services organisation. Tracing its roots back to 1760, it employs over 9,000 people in 78 countries. Given the industries Lloyd's Register works in, technical excellence, research and innovation are essential to their business. Engaging effectively with employees and promoting employee voice is seen as crucial to this.

In 2015, the energy team – constituting 2,500 employees globally – embarked on a business transformation Programme to move from a regional matrix structure, to a global service line structure which would allow for easier information flows and better meet clients' needs for a consistent global service.

Whilst there was a pressing business need to make the change quickly, there was a recognition that they needed to involve staff extensively in the detail of the new organisation design. This was important both to make sure the new processes reflected local needs, and also to foster collaboration and employee engagement. Annette Holmes, Change and Engagement Manager at Lloyds Register explained, *'it's impossible to do re-structure on this scale without consulting people and getting them to input.'* While Lloyds Register has a number of existing voice channels, there was seen to be a need for a platform that could engage a large and geographically dispersed workforce in a focused discussion to inform and guide the change. It was for this reason that Lloyds Register opted to undertake a Jam.

What did they do?

The Future of Work Lab (FoWlab) Jam is a social research tool – owned by Hotspots Movement – which allows large groups of employees to collaborate in developing solutions to identified business issues. Harriet Molyneaux, Head of Digital Engagement at Hotspots Movement explained that their purpose is *'to raise the voice of the employee and make sure that people feel engaged and included in the major decisions being made in the organisation.'* John Nicolson, Energy HR Director at Lloyds Register explained, the Jam was *'an integral part of our wider Organisational Change Programme that reflects the increasingly global nature of our business.'* It was billed as the opportunity for employees to have their say and shape the process, to identify concerns, challenges and solutions.

The tool is accessible online and participants – or 'Jammers' – have named accounts. Having the accounts named is seen as important in ensuring contributions are professional and constructive. It aims to be simple and accessible; the appearance is similar to LinkedIn or Facebook, with a feed featuring all the posts.

The process started with a strategic meeting between the FoWlab team and Lloyds Register to define the aims and outcomes of the process. They identified a number of questions or 'provocations' to allow managers to frame the debate. However, the process also allows employees to raise their own issues and questions – which often turn out to be the most popular and incisive – ensuring that it is also user-generated. This was seen as being one of the key differences to staff surveys, as Harriet Molyneaux explained, *"with an employee engagement survey, you're only going to get the answers to the questions that you've asked. What if there are matters on your staff's minds that you weren't aware of?"*

A Jam is live constantly for 72 hours. This allows it to be accessed by employees across the world in different time zones, but generates a sense of urgency. Within eight weeks, a

full report is produced with descriptive analytics on what the key themes, who the key contributors were, the key trends and recommendations.

Jams are intended to be a way of getting intensive involvement and collaboration on a specific challenge, offering greater structure and an output-focus. This enables Jams to combine both the broad reach that social media offers to be combined with a more intensive focus that some platforms struggle to deliver. They are not intended to be an alternative to other forms of social media, and many employers who have used Jams also use other platforms such as Yammer or Facebook at Work. As Harriet Molyneaux of Hotspots Movement explained, whereas some originally assumed that you only needed one social technology, *'actually you need the right social technology for what you're trying to achieve.'*

The Jam is supported by facilitators – normally journalists who are trained by Hotspots Movement and work in shifts around the clock while the Jam is open. The facilitators post the provocations in order to encourage and frame the debate and draw out the key insights. Facilitators can also moderate comments if they are deemed inappropriate, but this is very rare. In all of the Jams conducted, with tens of thousands of comments, only two have had to be removed. Harriet Molyneaux believes that employees can be trusted to behave responsibly in the vast majority of cases; *'a combination of the marketing prior to the Jam, the facilitation and the existence of profiles means that employees remain professional and are empowered to have challenging conversations.'*

The conversation starts on the first day with discussion around a broad set of issues, which are refined on the second day before developing actionable solutions – rather than just things which aren't working – by the end of the third day. As Harriet Molyneaux put it, *'this isn't the standard sort of social media tool where the outcome the actual experience and engagement, this is very output focused.'*

One of the key perceived challenges was in getting sufficient participation from employees to make the process worthwhile and the results meaningful. Lloyds Register were worried that they wouldn't get sufficient participation in the Jam given the novelty of the technology and the older demographic of the company, many of whom weren't necessarily familiar with social media. This challenge is familiar to Hotspots Movement who recognise that, in order for the Jams to be successful, they often require a lot of work to set them up and prepare the ground.

In order to ensure that there was a good take up, there was extensive preparatory marketing work; *'we pretty much threw everything at it'* Annette Holmes explained. The Jam, branded as 'Get Live', was promoted through emails, messaging from senior management, a video, and line managers. They also took care to design 'provocations' covering important challenges and that were relevant to their work.

Senior leaders played an important role in driving the process, both in terms of driving participation, taking part themselves – 12 members of the senior leadership team were involved – and committing to act on the outcomes. In addition, over 30 line managers volunteered to be coaches – helping encourage registration and also active participation from their teams. According to Harriet Molyneaux of FoWlab, *'leadership involvement is fundamental... they have to make some form of commitment in the communications in advance to say that "this is an issue we take seriously... and we are committed to acting on the solutions".'*

The work seems to have paid off. Out of 3,066 employees who were invited to take part, there were over 1,275 active users posting 1,400 comments. John Nicolson identified this participation rate as being *'absolutely fantastic.'* Allowing for active participation and collaboration among large groups is seen as one of the key strengths of the tool.

What have the results been?

Supporting collaboration, innovation and voice

The Jam was effective in encouraging collaboration among the workforce. Annette recalled how as conversations developed *'it was fascinating to watch the momentum build on specific topics and to see genuine collaboration and innovation of ideas across boundaries and in real time.'* Staff were seen to be co-creating ideas and projects together, identifying valuable insights for the organisation and the change process that were then captured and utilised.

This collaboration from employees across the organisation was seen as supporting innovation. As Harriet Molyneaux explained, *'when you have many different voices from different capabilities, different countries, different job titles, different levels of seniority, when they all come together, that's when that innovation and creativity can really happen.'* The Jams claim to offer *'meaningful iterative discussions'*, allowing employees with the help of facilitators to build on each other's ideas and generate deep and often unexpected insights.

Lloyds Register also sees an impact on engagement and perceptions of voice. According to Annette Holmes, staff that took part *'felt genuinely consulted'*, seeing it as a new way of working. Harriet Molyneaux echoed this point, saying that as well as providing valuable business intelligence, *'you've given [employees] a voice and they're engaged, so when the solution comes out of the Jam, they're not surprised as that's solution they've identified themselves.'*

Distributive leadership and Change Champions

The process delivered a number of *"unexpected insights"* for the leadership, including that the organisation was seen as excessively hierarchical. There were concerns among the workforce around this hierarchy and the extent to which the new organisation design would genuinely remove siloes, or just re-create them elsewhere.

However, as well as identifying this challenge, the Jam has also helped address it by identifying staff members with a potential to help change status quo. The report following the Jam shows whose comments were the most influential, allowing informal leaders to be identified. According to Annette Holmes, they were able to identify *"natural leaders and situational leaders, rather than positional leaders, influential people who had the energy and the appetite to get involved and contribute."*

As a result of this, they built a network of 400 Change Champions across the business who were willing to take a more pro-active role in communicating messages to staff, feeding information and views back up, solving problems and driving forward initiatives. This has helped with their leadership development too, identifying key influencers who are likely to make great leaders of the future. As Annette Holmes explained, *"the ethos of the Jam – to get engagement and wide input – is still with us now and alive through the Change Champion network."* Harriet Molyneaux reflected this point, saying that the Change Champions *"has helped empower employees and improve organisation agility. The global network operates in support of the line manager hierarchy and is helping them to tackle challenges in a completely different way, bringing faster and more effective results."*

Where are they now?

Running the Jam demonstrated the power of social communication and the appetite among the workforce to participate. Lloyds Register had been planning to include an element of social technology in their internal website, but the Jam convinced them to go much further and really to embrace social communication. The new website, based partly on the Jam platform, has been a success, with 1,900 members, 67 specialist groups and over 450 comments a week from across the global workforce.

A key lesson for Lloyds Register has been the importance of acting on staff feedback and suggestions. Using this feedback from the Jam, the Energy Team launched a business improvement programme with seven streams, all informed by the results from the Jam. They produced a roadmap to show how the feedback had helped shape the process, allowing employees to see clear and tangible results from the Jam.

This was seen as important not just in terms of harnessing the valuable information that came out of the Jam, but also in helping close the feedback loop and build trust. As Annette Holmes explained; *'I think that's quite important – if you're expecting people to give up their time, you need to do something with it.'* Harriet Molyneaux echoed this, observing that Jams are more effective when they are part of a wider change programme, and that Lloyds Register *'really used the insights from the Jam to change how their organisation works'*

Key Lessons

- Social technology can allow for collaboration across large numbers of employees working across different sites.
- Social media platforms work best when they have high levels of usage. Success requires preparatory work, a focus on key work-related issues, and a commitment to act on suggestions.
- By bringing together employees with differing expertise and experiences, you can access the 'wisdom of crowds', generate insights and drive innovation.
- Allowing staff to collaborate online and influence decision-making can promote a sense of engagement and voice.
- Having a short, time-limited discussion with facilitation can ensure that the discussion is focused and that it generates usable outcomes.
- Senior leaders should encourage participation, take part themselves and commit to acting on the responses to encourage the use of social media as a meaningful way of consulting with staff.