



# Engagement hinges on communication: Blum empowers frontline workers with employee experience app

November 23, 2021

Customer  
Blum

Products and Services  
Microsoft 365  
Microsoft Teams  
Microsoft Viva  
Microsoft Viva Connections

Industry  
Manufacturing

Organization Size  
Large (1,000 - 9,999 employees)

Country  
Austria

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## A trusted company in a new era

When a kitchen drawer glides open perfectly or a cupboard door lifts upward gracefully, you might have Blum to thank. The company is a leading manufacturer of furniture fittings, namely hinges and other cabinet hardware that help modernize our kitchens. Founded in 1952 by Julius Blum, it's a family-owned company now in its third generation. Blum focuses on moving the business forward while always innovating for customers and nurturing company culture.

“At Blum, we deliver solutions that meet customer needs and shape the future with innovations that maximize quality of life,” says Sarah Blum, Employer Branding and Recruiting Specialist at Blum. “We think about the direction we want to go together, which is exciting because it connects all Blum employees. We’re a large company, but it’s still like a family, and we strive to work together closely.”

Blum has 33 subsidiaries and customers in more than 120 markets. Most employees work from Blum’s headquarters in Vorarlberg, Austria, and the company employs a total of 8,800 people worldwide. Of those, more than 2,000 employees work on the factory floor, without desks or easy access to computers and email. These frontline workers used to receive company communications either through a supervisor or a notice board at the factory, meaning they had to be present in person to get important information. Sometimes frontline workers used their own devices to access online materials to complete administrative tasks such as requesting a day off, but Blum wanted to ensure that their experience was consistent and connected them to the larger company.

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Blum

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Transcript



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# Consistent digital experience

Blum already had licenses for Microsoft 365 and Microsoft Teams, which were primarily used by office workers. Wanting to support its entire workforce, the company evaluated options for an employee experience platform and decided to adopt Microsoft Viva. Released in early 2021, Microsoft Viva brings together communications, knowledge, insights, and resources in an integrated platform. Employees access Viva through Teams to see centralized company news, tasks, and conversations. Viva offers four modules as part of Microsoft 365, and Blum started with Viva Connections to focus on connecting and empowering employees.

Blum took part in a proof of concept (POC) as an early adopter so it could provide feedback to Microsoft before rolling out Viva Connections to the wider company. "My department head showed me Viva Connections and let me try it right away," says Tin Buljubasic, Machine Operator at Blum. "I didn't need any major training because the app is clearly structured and intuitive."

With Viva Connections easily accessible via mobile devices as well as computers, Blum's frontline workers use it on the factory floor for a wide variety of information and communication, such as messaging colleagues, reserving time off, reviewing paystubs, and ordering snacks for breaks. This net-new functionality reached an entire set of new employees. "Employees also have a digital copy of their badges within Viva Connections, which they can use for discounts at local businesses. The app's dashboard cards make it easy for employees to navigate to what they need. The primary source for the Viva Connections feed is SharePoint, which fits perfectly with the overall solution and infrastructure.

"When we had multiple places to post company updates, we had to duplicate articles and information," says Markus Meusburger, System Administrator at Blum. "One of our goals for this project was to have

 **Microsoft**  
a single platform for everything and keep it simple for us and the

users. Because Viva draws directly from SharePoint, we don't have to maintain the same content on different platforms anymore, which is much more efficient."

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Blum



# Two-way employee engagement

By making Viva Connections available to all employees, Blum helps equalize technology access across the company. The company uses it to share important information, make administrative tasks easier, and offer exciting perks. “We believe that employees who see their employer’s honest intent to keep them informed and updated will feel more loyal to a company,” says Sarah Blum. “Plus, employees get tangible benefits through Viva Connections, such as discounts and ordering options for food and snacks, which adds a personal touch.”

The company was grateful to have a streamlined way to maintain transparency and real-time updates during the fluctuations and uncertainties surrounding COVID-19. “We wanted to help ease employees’ anxiety related to COVID-19,” says Sarah. “They needed answers to questions like, ‘What impact will the pandemic have on my job? What new guidelines will be implemented at the factory?’ We made Viva Connections the place where they got the information to feel safe and know the company is looking out for them.”

Communication doesn’t only flow from the top down at Blum, however. The company empowers everyone, including frontline workers, to more readily communicate with company leadership and with each other by using Viva Connections. Employees know that if they have a question, they have a channel where they can reach the respective person in charge. “Our values are based on having reciprocal dialogue, so this isn’t just about one-way communication,” says Sarah. “Within Viva, we can have direct conversations with employees and answer their questions, and they feel heard. I think this will be very important for us as a company to retain employees.”

Employees can communicate important incidents to leadership more quickly than before, helping Blum become more agile. For example, a frontline worker like Tin can immediately report any issues and get resolution. “I had a machine that wasn’t working, so I went to the contact list in Viva Connections and found the right person to call,”

he says. "I contacted him directly and didn't need to go through another colleague or leave the floor to find his phone number. I solved the problem much faster with Viva Connections."

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Blum



## Connecting the employee community

Beyond company updates, HR tasks, and benefits, Blum also empowers employees to connect on a personal level. For example, they can build communities around shared activities like rock climbing, running, or even tax questions. "We're connecting people not just with the organization, but with each other," says Sarah.

"Through Viva, office workers and frontline workers can join up to go running after work. By bringing together employees who might not encounter each other at work otherwise, they gain a deeper understanding of each other's jobs and expand their network."



Concludes Sarah, “In Europe, we’re facing a skilled labor shortage in different areas, and we want to keep staff turnover as low as possible. It can be hard to find the right candidates. They should have the skills but also, more importantly, be a cultural fit. With Viva Connections, we’re better engaging employees and showing them that they’re working together as part of something big.”

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