

A Workplace Communication Case Study from The Marlin Company

When your facility operates 24/7 with a 12-hour shift schedule, you'd better have an effective way to deliver consistent, attention-grabbing messages to all employees, no matter when they clock-in.

Add in a '28-day month,' with employees working 14 days on/off, and the need to reinforce employee communications sky-rockets.

Andre' McBride, Plant Manager at International Paper's Sumter facility, was looking for an innovative solution for this particular workplace communication challenge. He needed it to be:

- 24/7 (without relying upon email).
- Ongoing (not just a limited-time initiative).
- Customizable so that safety, quality, and production messages were focused on the Sumter facility.

For Andre' and his team, the answer came in the form of The Marlin Company's Electronic Communication Station (ECS) technology—a patented workplace digital signage platform for easily distributing management messages via any number of flat screen monitors throughout a facility.

The Beginnings of 'The Cutting Edge'

The Sumter facility, which employs 112 hourly workers, is responsible for paper sheeting operations, receiving large paper rolls from mills in Selma, Alabama, Eastover and Georgetown, South Carolina. It takes a skilled, highly knowledgeable workforce focused on quality and attention to detail to convert those heavy rolls into the nicely packaged paper you may find at big box stores like Office Depot and Staples. Many businesses also utilize International Paper's high-end, customized and branded letterhead. That means there's always a strong need to communicate with employees, making sure they're ready to live up to their local motto, 'We will not fail our customers!'

The team in Sumter once used a common bulletin board for employee communication. The boards were tagged with a nameplate of 'The Cutting Edge,' a reference to the nature of their work in the paper cutting industry. From there, the facility utilized a poster program developed by The Marlin Company that addressed common workplace issues through visual communication. "The Marlin posters helped, and we did that from the standpoint of 'Safety First,'" says Andre'. "It did exactly what we wanted it to do. The monitors are just the next step."

This 'next step' fittingly maintains the same nameplate of 'The Cutting Edge,' which appears at the top of their two digital signage displays. And it's clear that Andre' and his team have expo-



Andre' McBride stands next to 'The Cutting Edge' board in the lobby of the International Paper in Sumter, SC.

entially built out their 'Safety First' messaging with their new visual communication technology, which displays several safety-related messages throughout the day.

Enhancing Existing Safety Programs

The Sumter facility's modern visual communication plan supports their BBS (Behavior Based Safety) process. Managers and employees have entered into a partnership to identify possible safety issues, communicate those issues, and encourage everyone to examine their daily safety behavior.

Many of the messages posted to 'The Cutting Edge' digital message boards are fully aligned with BBS and also 5S methodology, a workplace organization system that can help with both safety and efficiency. At any given time, their boards may display a photo of an actual work area at their facility. Captions then challenge workers to examine the photo from one standpoint or another, such as 'housekeeping.' It's all about helping to avoid 'at-risk conditions.'

The boards are also recognized as the place to get reminders about many other site-specific safety initiatives and meetings. Messages are branded for easy recognition, such as with their

(over)

S.H.A.R.K. pieces, which focus on Safety, Health, Awareness, Responsibility, and Knowledge.

Celebrating Success

It's clear that Andre' and his team at the Sumter facility recognize the importance of celebrating safety success. That's why 'The Cutting Edge' boards display 'Safety Employee of the Month' pieces. This content is easy to produce, often starting with a simple PowerPoint that is then uploaded and scheduled through The Marlin Company's cloud-based Content Management System (CMS). Pieces always include a picture of a smiling award winner—a real attention-grabber and easy way to promote a culture of safety and build morale.

Andre' also uses the built-in QuickCounter feature to count up the number of 'Days Since the Last Recordable' and 'Days Since the Last lost Work Day.' They recently used their boards to recognize a safety milestone, 2 years of 'No Lost Work Day Cases.'

Marlin Content: A Key Safety Component

"The Marlin pieces have a huge impact," Andre' says of the animated safety content that The Marlin Company automatically makes available for use with 'The Cutting Edge' boards. "They

make you think, 'Wow, what even made that person consider doing something like that?!'" Andre' exclaims as he recalls pieces that highlight extreme safety do's and don'ts.

While the Marlin pieces help attract attention, Andre' explains that employees enjoy many aspects of their digital boards. They like the employee recognition pieces and being well-informed about their facility, and they also like the weather, news clippings, and current events that Marlin supplies. This compelling contribution of information gets people looking at the boards on a regular basis.

Results Matter

The partnership created by management and employees through effective communication and transparency is a big part of the Sumter facility's long-term success. Whether 'The Cutting Edge' boards highlight plant objectives, safety, or quality messages, Andre' and his team can rest assured that every day and night, employees will be welcomed by a communication system that grabs attention and builds a sense of community. The boards have met the required objectives, and the faces of smiling employees on the digital displays are a reflection of a facility that is setting a standard in workplace communication. ■

About International Paper

International Paper (NYSE: IP) is a global leader in packaging and paper with manufacturing operations in North America, Europe, Latin America, Russia, Asia and North Africa. Its businesses include industrial and consumer packaging and uncoated papers. Headquartered in Memphis, Tenn., the company employs approximately 65,000 people and is strategically located in more than 24 countries serving customers worldwide. International Paper net sales for 2013 were \$29 billion. For more information about International Paper, its products and stewardship efforts, visit internationalpaper.com.

About The Marlin Company

The Marlin Company has been leading innovation in visual communication since 1913. Our patented technology (US Patents: 7,743,112; 7,765,273; and 8,516,527) and forward-thinking leadership secure Marlin's place as a pioneer in digital signage and workplace communication. Our national team of local sales representatives is always available to help you develop the most effective digital signage communication plan for your organization.

For more information, please visit: www.themarlincompany.com.

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