

Wheeler CAT

CASE STUDY

Wheeler increased employee engagement, reduced incidents and bolstered productivity with clear, consistent communication.

As Utah's largest equipment dealer, Wheeler Machinery Co. has evolved over 73 years from selling Cat tractors to offering a wide range of over 300 Cat machines and power systems. Committed to supporting those who build the world, Wheeler focuses on maximizing customer productivity and profitability. It's no surprise that safety is Wheeler's highest priority. But how do you keep approximately 900 employees spread out over 10 locations continually engaged and excited about safety?

Wheeler Machinery Co. is the #1 Cat Dealer in North America for safety.

Business Challenge

Safety poses a continual obstacle for Wheeler's leadership in terms of employee buy-in. Safety Manager Troy Worthen - who has been with the company for over 25 years - remarked, "We would dread safety shares. Employees were apathetic and half of them were falling asleep during these meetings. It was awful."

If injuries or incidents spiked, Wheeler's leadership struggled to respond swiftly with new training. Michelle McDermaid, DOT Compliance Manager explained: "In the past, if we started seeing a disproportionate number of back injuries, we would say 'Okay, we're having a lot of back injuries. That's some training that we're going to need to develop next year'... but that's a year later." How many more preventable injuries would occur in that time?

Leadership also had no way to gauge retention or measure accountability. "We did an internal study and more than 50 percent of our workforce wasn't actually reading company emails - even from the president," McDermaid said. "It was really scary because you take all this time to collect information, put an email together, and send it out to everyone and not even half of your people are seeing it."

Lack of communication posed a significant challenge. "We have 10 locations - 9 in Utah, and 1 in Nevada," Worthen explained. "One of the biggest complaints we received from employees was communication. Our executives are in one location and information flows freely there. But as you go out to more remote locations the information can be delayed, muddled or even non-existent." McDermaid added, "For instance, we would say 'Today's topic is on profit sharing,' but by the time the email went out, word of mouth had already spread and people were saying 'They took away our profit sharing.'" Leadership was worried this would impact employee morale and trust.

As a leader in heavy industry, Wheeler must comply with Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and Department of Transportation (DOT) regulations. An Experience Modification Rating (EMR) based on risk affects the company's ability to be competitive and influences insurance rates. Improving training and communication is crucial for injury prevention, and thorough documentation is vital for proving compliance and avoiding fines or litigation.

Solution

After an initial consultation with Tyfoom, Wheeler decided to focus on four areas:

- **Engagement:** Both employees and management dreaded less-than-effective safety shares that lacked buy-in from a large and spread-out workforce.

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Employees said they wanted better communication

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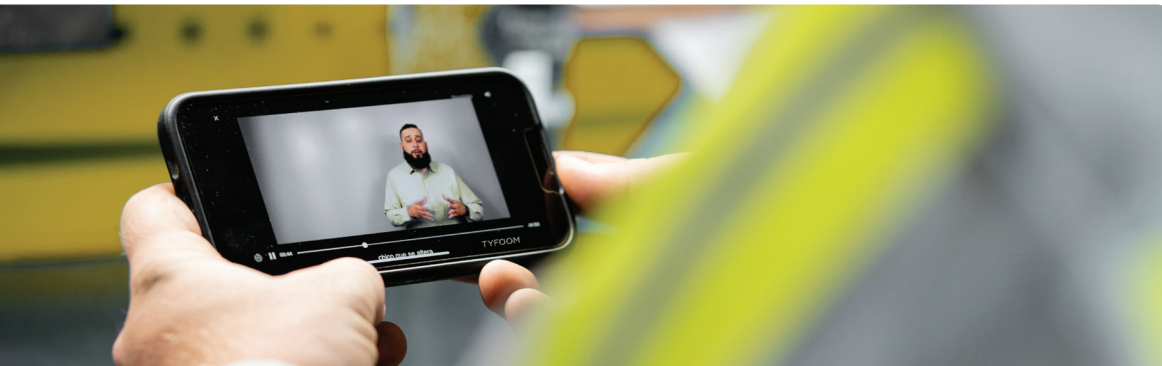
- **Accountability:** Leadership had no way of tracking who received important updates both company wide and at the team level.
- **Communication:** An internal study revealed that fewer than 50 percent of employees read company emails.
- **Documentation:** Wheeler lacked a comprehensive yet streamlined system to maintain documentation for regulating bodies like OSHA and DOT.

“We expected that initially we’d have about 100 people not understand how to get the app,” Worthen explained, “but the implementation process was smooth and we didn’t really have any issues.” McDermaid added, “Getting everyone set up with Tyfoom was the easiest implementation process we’ve ever had.”

Results

Shortly after implementing Tyfoom to its workforce, Wheeler experienced multiple positive results.

Engagement. Studies have shown that 70 percent of employees prefer learning from video. Tyfoom’s video-based microlearning platform makes it easy to share crucial information without overwhelming the learner. Easy to film and easy to edit, these simple training videos can be created and distributed in minutes.



“The prospect of making videos was intimidating at first because I had no prior experience,” McDermaid recalled. “I was shocked at how easy it was and how quickly you can get them out to everyone.” Wheeler produced 145 videos in 2022. The topics ranged from driver safety to machine guarding to safety glasses and different kinds of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). “Really the sky is the limit as far as topics go,” McDermaid said.

Using this methodology, Wheeler can quickly create videos to address issues as they arise. And with an engagement score above 95 percent, Wheeler knows most users will view the content within 24 hours.

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“With Tyfoom we can zero in on back injuries, for example,” Worthen explained. “We can use existing videos in Tyfoom’s library or develop new training on ergonomics immediately and release it right away. That kind of rapid safety delivery system is an absolute game changer.”

Participation. Before Tyfoom, safety training approval and creation were cumbersome. Technicians emailed safety suggestions to the department, which were then reviewed and discussed in safety committee meetings. “It used to be a time intensive process,” McDermaid explained. “But now they can film a short video, send it in for approval and share it.”

Tyfoom allows employees to record and submit their own videos. “For instance, our warehouse folks recognized that we had a lot of people from the office wandering around the area,” Worthen said. “Our warehouse is an active environment. They took it upon themselves to make their own video on pedestrian safety. They sent it to us ready to roll.”

McDermaid added, “The employees at our Vernal store got together and filmed each of their kids saying why it’s important for their parent to come home safe every day. To see that kind of personal touch has a huge impact.”

Adoption. Gamification stimulates the brain’s hippocampus triggering a dopamine release, making learners feel good and encouraging long-term knowledge retention.¹ Tyfoom uses gamification, social rewards, and competition to increase engagement, adoption, and behavioral changes.

“Since using Tyfoom we have generated enthusiasm, a sense of excitement about safety that’s tough to do in our line of work,” Worthen said. “Initially we thought the employees would only use Tyfoom because we asked them to, but they are really into it. There’s a friendly competition that keeps it fresh. We could never have dreamt of this kind of engagement and enthusiasm just even a few years ago.”

Team Unity. With baby boomers nearing retirement, knowledge transfer is a growing concern for U.S. businesses. In 2018, boomers constituted 34 percent of the workforce and are set to retire by 2030. This shift, especially in the manufacturing sector facing skilled worker shortages, could lead to 2.4 million unfilled positions by 2028.² The issue isn’t a lack of people, but a shortage of qualified employees.

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With a shortage of qualified, skilled employees, Tyfoom bridges this gap.

¹ <https://ewyse.agency/blog/gamification-for-learning-strategies-and-examples/>

² <https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/pages/manufacturing/articles/future-of-manufacturing-skills-gap-study.html>

Tyfoom bridges the gap between generations of workers. “Tyfoom has really changed the technology aspect and created a platform for our younger generation,” McDermaid said. “They do everything on their phone. It’s an app and they know how to use an app.” Worthen added, “The beauty of Tyfoom is its simplicity. At first the older folks would say ‘Hey, I’m 60 years-old. I don’t know if I’m up for all this high tech stuff,’ but they were! And they’re awesome at it!” Tyfoom brings teams of all ages together by making it easy for seasoned workers to share knowledge and leave an impactful legacy to the next generation.



Visibility. Tyfoom not only allows leaders to create videos with micro-bursts of learning, the platform also tracks user progress and patterns. “You can send out a training video and then immediately see who watches it. For instance, I can say ‘Okay, this message went out today and 800 out of 900 employees have seen it.’ This lets you identify the individuals who need more coaching or feedback to help them move along,” McDermaid said.

Tyfoom also assists managers in identifying the best individuals for the next generation of company leadership. “Tyfoom has helped us see the employees who are truly engaged and team players,” Worthen relates. “You now see the people who you thought were good, but were just kissing up and now you know they aren’t all in. And then there are the people who you didn’t think were leadership material because they weren’t as articulate or well-versed, but they are actually willing to do the work.”

Effective Communication. With hundreds of employees throughout Utah, Wheeler faced significant communication challenges. “The employees in the branch stores always felt like they weren’t part of the bigger picture,” said McDermaid. “They felt disconnected because they were the last to hear updates and alerts. Now everyone gets the exact same information at the exact same time. That’s an ability we didn’t have before.”

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Clear communication fosters connection and trust. “Our employee satisfaction scores have gone up. Our folks are seeing the president and vice president routinely through videos sent via Tyfoom and it's been very positive,” said Worthen.

Accurate and Accessible Documentation. Regulatory bodies like OSHA and DOT require thorough documentation to avoid penalties and fines. Tyfoom makes record keeping easy, efficient and centralized. After Wheeler experienced a rare accident, “OSHA wanted to see documentation, specifically this employee’s training records on machine guarding,” Worthen recalled. “We were able to instantly pull up this person’s records from the last year and a half and show OSHA that we have a consistent training process that’s documented and constantly refreshed. Of course you want people to be safe first, but this protected our company from more severe repercussions.”

Powerful Reporting. Tyfoom enables leadership to keep detailed records and offers managers reporting tools to prevent accidents and injuries. Wheeler uses Tyfoom’s “Forms” feature for comprehensive Job Hazard Analyses (JHA), allowing workers to digitally submit job site photos, identify hazards, and provide safety managers with thorough documentation, replacing paper forms.

“When I was the Safety Director,” Worthen recounted, “I would look at paper JHA forms. I’m sitting at my desk and some of the job sites are 20 miles away. Now that employees can attach pictures of their work sites, I can see a piece of equipment or a site condition area and that’s huge. With Tyfoom I feel like I’m everywhere at once.”

Tyfoom helped Wheeler achieve uniform and consistent safety communication. “It’s made safety fun again,” said Worthen. “It’s bridged a gap with the younger generation. Our ability to communicate has increased ten-fold. We’ve significantly decreased our injury frequency rates, reducing our EMR and making us more competitive in the business world. Our insurance rates are cheaper. We have fewer people being injured. It’s better for morale. Because of Tyfoom we’re a safer, more productive workplace.”

Wheeler Machinery Co. is currently the number one Cat Dealer in North America for safety.³

EMPOWER YOUR EMPLOYEES

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70% of employees prefer learning from video

³ <https://wheelercat.com/about/history>