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BY SUSAN REDA ON JULY 3, 2018

## **FOSSIL STREAMLINES WORKFORCE MANAGEMENT COMMUNICATION**

Robin Beighley says effective and consistent communication is the key to maximizing productivity; it can unlock efficiency and increase associate engagement, opening the door to improvements in profitability.

For Beighley, director of retail operations at Fossil Group, the go-to tool for reliable communication is a task management system from Opterus. Store Ops-Center is an intuitive, all-in-one web-based tool that encompasses a broad spectrum of store communications including task management, issue tracking, store audit and messaging. A clear departure from older platforms that were difficult to update, Opterus provides users with access to the latest technology.

"I've been in store operations for almost 25 years — I spent 16 at Disney and then four years at Charming Charlie. At Disney, we had a home-grown intranet that was difficult to manage, and updates had to be requested and supported by the IT team, often resulting in delays. When I moved to Charming Charlie I was introduced to the Opterus solution and I was blown away by how intuitive and user-friendly it was," Beighley says.

"It's a one-stop shop for everything a retail operations team needs to effectively communicate to the field leaders and store level associates. It's how you manage consistent communication, lessen the number of distractions and ensure flawless execution."

### **Optimizing functionality**

When Beighley took over operations at Fossil Group, deploying the Opterus system inside the Richardson, Texas-based specialty retailer became her first order of business. Fossil Group operates four different concepts — Fossil full price stores, Fossil outlet stores, Watch Station International and Skagen — with over 500 stores internationally. Beighley felt strongly that having a communication system with structure and process was imperative to global consistency.

"Our role is to communicate consistently and accurately to all concepts across the globe. Initially we had to restructure our communication platform," Beighley says. "The solution that Fossil Group was using when I arrived was an internal Word Press tool. There was little flexibility and the team was struggling to get information deployed timely, and

ensure that store associates knew where to go for what they needed.



"Before we could switch to the Store Ops-Center platform, we had to create an overall communications strategy. We had to determine how we wanted to communicate and when to communicate — and then develop optimal templates to support various types of initiatives," explains Beighley. "Once we had a robust plan in place, the Opterus platform brought the strategy to life."

As for results, Beighley says one of the biggest challenges in the past was heavy reliance on email. If somebody sent an email to the store visual team about a window set, some might see it right away; others might not, depending on how frequently they checked email.

With Opterus in place, Fossil has been able to minimize the use of email and optimize the system's gatekeeper functionality. "We use the phrase 'less distraction, more connection.' We establish the frequency of communication and the tasks required. If we have off-cycle communication we send via a specific cadence, each day at 4 o'clock," she says.

"This way, our store associates know what to expect and are well informed without having to sift through excess emails. Opterus is a single point of communication that allows us to remove distractions.



They know what they're getting, when they're getting it, where it resides on the system and how to carry out best practices."

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Before Fossil began using the system, she says, "it was harder to close the loop on completion of tasks. For each task, we had to develop a survey, extract the results and often reach out multiple times to follow-up to ensure the task was complete. Now we send the message with all pertinent directions through Opterus, and can easily track task completion. The process has become seamless." Beighley cites the store calendar module as a standout, noting that the Fossil team can color code the calendar based on topic and urgency, thus removing any uncertainty about priorities.

"They know exactly what they're supposed to do, and we manage the workload so that they can effectively sell to the guests."

She also points out the value derived from being able to manage the solution without IT involvement. "IT is juggling a lot of projects. The fact that the retail operations team can manage the Opterus solution holistically allows us to get things done with urgency."

### Reducing redundancy

Janet Hawkins, president and CEO of Opterus, says Store Ops-Center consists of a number of modules designed specifically for retail operations. "It is designed to provide store personnel with clear, concise and timely direction to effectively manage and execute store tasks and communication."

Users can access the Center from a mobile site, using either iOS or Android, and they can opt to respond to messages and issues from a corporate email and route responses back into Store Ops-Center for stores to access.

Hawkins and her team take their cues from retail customers, building and evolving Store Ops-Center based on customer requests and input. The modules provide "best practice" solutions for issue tracking, store audits and training and certification documents.

"Using the issue tracker to reference just one module provides a 360-degree view of the issues in a retail organization," she says. "It ensures the stores are being supported to execute and complete what they are being asked to do and that they receive timely feedback when unexpected situations occur."

In a separate module, retailers can post information about products, policies and procedures that stores might need to have at hand. There is also an option to create certification programs, such as on-boarding, management, product and skills training, that consist of lists of required tasks.

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"We're providing an accurate go-to connection," Hawkins says. "Store managers and associates can easily access the system and it becomes a repository for everything they might need."

Beighley has received positive feedback from the field since switching to Opterus. "It has saved my team 15 to 20 hours a week and reduced the amount of redundant communication by 25 percent. Before we had to go through a lot of hoops to communicate. There were instances where we couldn't tailor communication by concept so everyone was seeing everything and it was confusing," she says. "This has really changed their focus and has allowed them to home in on the most important day-to-day initiatives."

"Our role in retail operations is to be the liaison between all the departments in the home office — merchandising, marketing, sales audit, HR — and the field. Using this solution, we can communicate what needs to be done, what's most important and how to execute tasks efficiently. We're removing distractions and allow store personnel to focus on the customer," Beighley says.

Given the brand's global presence, she says the real power for Fossil Group is the ease of communication and the ability to ensure the consistency across the globe. "Some things are region-specific, but there are a lot of things from a brand standpoint that we want to make sure are consistent. Opterus provides us with a global communications platform."



**Opterus**  
Simplifying Communications

[gary.stonell@opterus.com](mailto:gary.stonell@opterus.com)

416.884.4924

[www.opterus.com](http://www.opterus.com)