Asda launches digital inclusion network

Tuesday 16 November, 2021

(16 November 2021) Asda has launched a digital diversity and inclusion space in its existing recognition, reward and benefits platform to offer its 140,000 colleagues a safe space to discuss and share personal stories. As part of a growing diversity and inclusion strategy, the digital space named "Our Inclusion Network" aims to generate conversations between colleagues and close the gap between the central inclusion team and colleagues on the shop floor.

With the aim of creating a 'one-stop-shop' for colleague engagement, Asda's colleagues access the inclusion area through "Our Asda" - Asda's existing recognition, reward and benefits portal, built on River Software's "Rippl" platform. The inclusion area enables Asda colleagues to join five open networks – disAbility, ethnicity, gender, wellbeing and LGBT+. With a social timeline and the option to post un-named, colleagues can add content about their experiences, such as sharing photos of 'wellbeing rooms' implemented in stores and how they can benefit colleagues.

In addition to the five open network groups, five closed connection groups are available for colleagues with lived experiences – Trans/Non-Binary/Gender Fluidity, Baby Loss, Carers, Fertility and Menopause. These groups enable private conversations between colleagues, and the Inclusion team's central account acts as care and concern, ensuring colleagues' posts are acknowledged, and support is provided where needed.

Commenting on the previous approach to diversity and inclusion, Kane Stephenson, Asda's Inclusion Manager, says: "*We used to have six colleague resource groups that looked after six strands of inclusion, but this was limited to 20 members per group, which meant we had a maximum of 120 colleagues talking about inclusion at any one time. We knew we had to improve accessibility and open up our inclusion networks to allow all of our colleagues to be part of the conversation.*

"The inclusion area of the 'Our Asda' platform has allowed us to remove these barriers, particularly as our previous groups were face-to-face, whereas this online approach means Asda is future-proofed for the digital world."

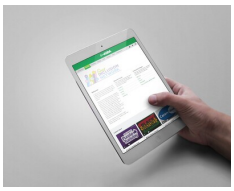
The inclusion community has grown steadily since its launch in May 2021, and Asda hopes to drive further engagement during six weeks of activity, starting with national inclusion week and the theme of "United for Inclusion". As part of this activity drive, Asda will be launching a "What can I do differently?" campaign, encouraging colleagues to consider small steps they can take to make everyone feel more included at work and in their personal lives.

Faye Devenney, Asda's Diversity & Inclusion Coordinator, explains how the digital inclusion area has been fundamental to giving head office insight into what matters to colleagues: "*Before we had the digitised community, the diversity and inclusion team found it difficult to authentically pick events throughout the year that we should observe as a business, such as religious holidays or awareness weeks. Now we have these communities; we can ensure that the business is focusing on the events that matter most to our people, giving them a say on what they would like to see Asda supporting and celebrating*."

Chris Brown, Rippl's managing director, adds: "*We're very proud of our partnership with Asda, and we were highly honoured when asked to develop their existing recognition, reward and benefits platform to encompass diversity and inclusion. Much thought has gone into how the digital groups ensure the protection of colleagues, including AI software that detects inappropriate content, providing the head office teams with the opportunity to review and approve flagged posts.*

It has been a turbulent few years in the retail industry for obvious reasons, so to provide Asda with the employee engagement tools it needs to connect with its incredible workforce is very satisfying, and I'm looking forward to seeing how Our Asda develops."

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