oak
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Isolation

How Oak Engage combats isolation in the workplace

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Introduction

The rise of hybrid working since the pandemic has offered employers and businesses a whole raft of benefits, not least the better work life balance. Hybrid working is a key indicator for people looking for new roles. However, this does mean that employees may be more likely to experience isolation due to an increased amount of time spent away from their office and colleagues.

Workplace isolation can occur when employees feel disconnected from their colleagues or employer. We'll look at the key causes of workplace isolation and how Oak can help you to offer increased support to all employees by building a better culture and engaging your workforce.

This whitepaper will cover various aspects of workplace isolation and the solutions including:

- Isolation that occurs from a hybrid work environment

- Isolation caused within the office

- Oak's solutions to workplace isolation

  1. Timeline

  2. Mobile access

  3. Hubs

  4. Employee recognition

  5. Analytics & insights

Loneliness in the hybrid workplace

The pandemic forced many of us to adapt our working habits, some for the better, but it definitely comes with its challenges. That's why we studied the impact that hybrid working has had on our mental health, combining a survey with insight from industry experts to answer some of the key questions around loneliness in the hybrid workplace.

50%

Our survey revealed that half of remote workers feel more isolated and lonely working from home, with young workers (aged 16-24) most likely to be affected.

42% of those aged 16-24 fear being overlooked for pay rises in favour of people who work in the office

42%

35%

Over a third of remote workers admit that working from home has dramatically affected their mental health

Causes of isolation in the workplace

Isolation caused by dispersed working environments may be the most familiar and prominent version of isolation in the workplace that employees currently face. With such a large increase in businesses adopting a hybrid model over a short space of time, those that may have previously seen very little workplace isolation may now be experiencing a rise in employees feeling isolated.

Awareness around mental health in the workplace has thankfully risen in prominence since the pandemic. More people are now open about sharing concerns and issues they may be facing. If you're hearing or seeing more people discussing topics like this, a knee jerk reaction may be to revert back to more office-based working, however this isn't likely to solve the issues.

Workplace isolation isn't restricted to employees simply working on their own in a different location to their colleagues or having a different work pattern. Isolation can also occur within office environments, through things like age differences, work cliques, overall company culture or poor onboarding and induction processes. While hybrid working may be the most obvious effect, the cause can be rooted deeper within the organisation and be caused by;

1 Lack of communication

When employees are not encouraged to communicate with one another or there is a lack of opportunities to do so, it can lead to feelings of loneliness and isolation.

2 Organisational structure

Certain organisational structures can create isolation by separating departments or teams into silos, making it difficult for employees to interact and collaborate with one another.

3

Discrimination, harassment and work cliques

Employees who are subjected to discrimination or harassment may feel ostracised and isolated from their colleagues. Workplace cliques can also cause isolation when individuals are excluded from conversations and feel left out of both work and social activities.

4

Personal factors

Employees who are introverted or shy may have a harder time connecting with others in the workplace, leading to feelings of isolation. This can lead to those individuals becoming more reclusive and absent both physically and mentally.

5

High turnover

Frequent turnover can create a sense of instability and disrupt the social dynamics in the workplace. Changes to team dynamics can cause issues and anxiety for people who have been within the same company or in the same job for many years. These changes can lead employees to feel isolated if they struggle to connect and engage with the rest of the team.

6

Lack of recognition

When employees feel that their contributions are not valued or recognised, it can lead to feelings of disengagement and isolation.

Solutions

Oak Engage offers a solution that improves connectivity with your employees, breaks down barriers and improves your company culture, increasing productivity, engagement and a sense of connection.

Oak goes beyond operating simply as 'an intranet' and document management system (although it does these things exceptionally well). It contains a whole host of features designed to nurture a better employee experience, including social features to integrate and engage your workforce, wherever they're based and whoever they are.

Feed

Oak's social feed feature can be added to homepages to keep all employees connected and involved with the day-to-day goings on in your business. Anyone across the business can post or upload to a feed to keep colleagues in the loop with news stories, photo or video updates and more.

The ability to react and comment on others' posts encourages two-way communication in a relaxed environment to increase interaction and participation amongst your workforce.

Less formal than email or other communication channels, Oak's feed can help to initially break down barriers for employees and adds a familiar social media feel to updates. Your employees will instinctively know how to use it, reducing barriers to usage and ultimately, providing a simple user experience.

How Oak combats isolation in the workplace

Stephens Timeline

John Thurston
6 days ago

John Smith, well done on the Q1 finance presentation, some great insights and data.

♡ 0   View Post

Mason Moorfield
6 days ago

We have some brilliant suggestions coming in via the employee feedback form - thanks to those that have submitted feedback.

♡ 0   View Post

Marie Theaker
2 months ago

Check out our latest company update from last week, let me know if anyone has any questions!

♥ 3   View Post

My News

06 March 2023

2023 Office Guidance

We've updated some of our policies and office guidance for this year.

20 February 2023

Cycle Challenge

Read how the employees of Oak got on with the cycle challenge round Northumberland.
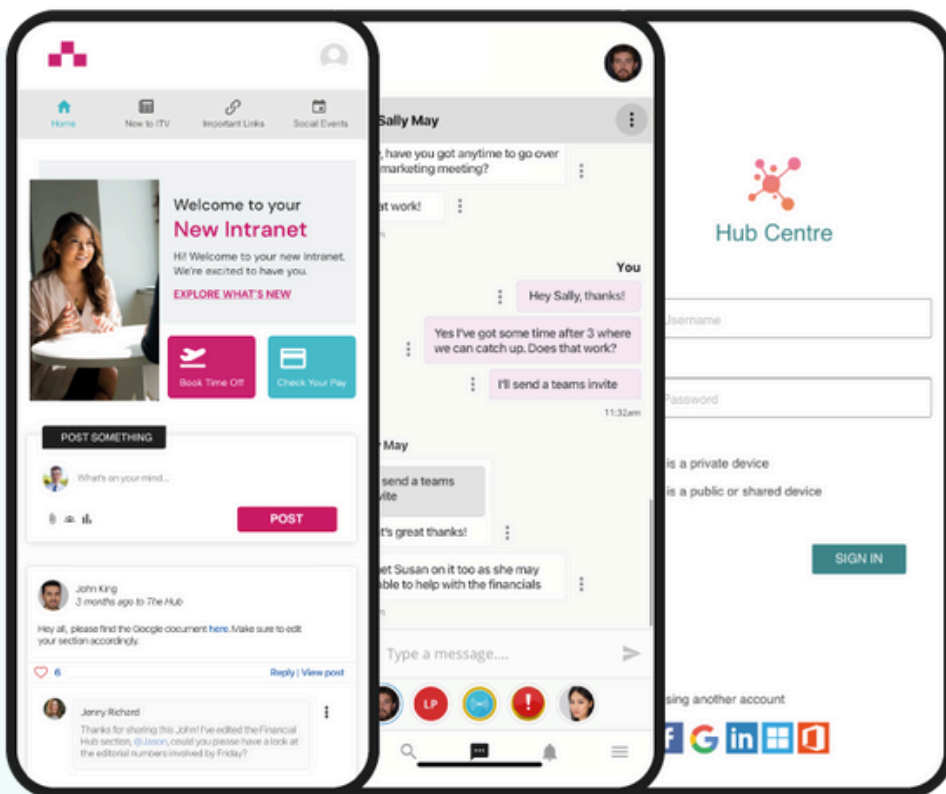
18 February 2023

Wellbeing Initiatives

Find our tips and tricks to improve your wellbeing whilst working remote.

Mobile app

A mobile application is vital for employees in this day and age. So many businesses are operating with a combination of colleagues who are desk based, deskless and some who are always on the move. Targeted, efficient delivery of news via push notifications ensures nobody is left out of important updates.

When we approach the social aspect of what Oak can offer to combat isolation, it's not just 'another channel' for messaging to get lost in. It is a lifeline to encourage connection with your team and colleagues, without limits through location or job type. Knowing you have the ability to check something on the go, connect with a work friend or share social updates with like-minded communities can have a big impact on employee engagement, helping the team dynamic to thrive for even remote and on-the-go colleagues.

The Oak app is fully customisable with a broad range of features and functionality. It can be designed to match your company branding to resemble an extension of your values and culture. This in turn creates a fully immersive experience for any employee accessing the app. With a hybrid workforce, an intuitive, seamless app experience becomes an extension of your collaborative office space, encouraging connection amongst colleagues, wherever they are based.

From a practical and compliance perspective, the app is completely secure and available with 2-factor authentication. Employees are able to download the app to their own device, meaning no large outlay costs of providing work mobiles for an entire workforce, while still maintaining high levels of security.
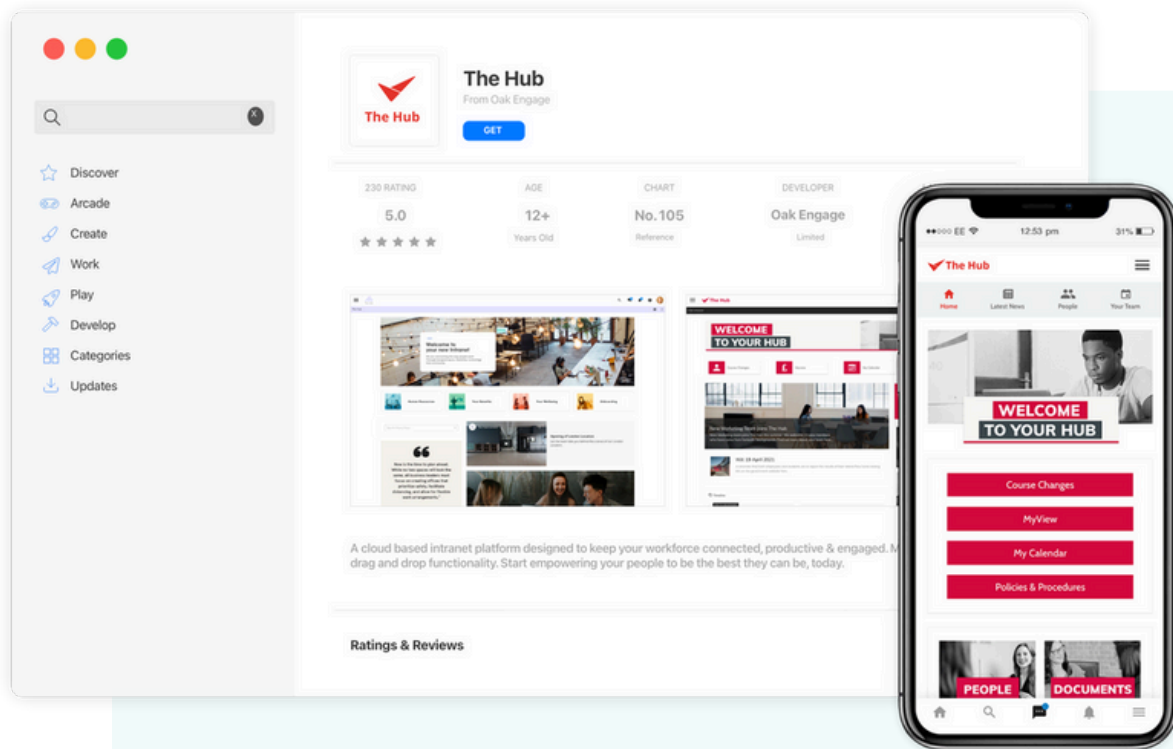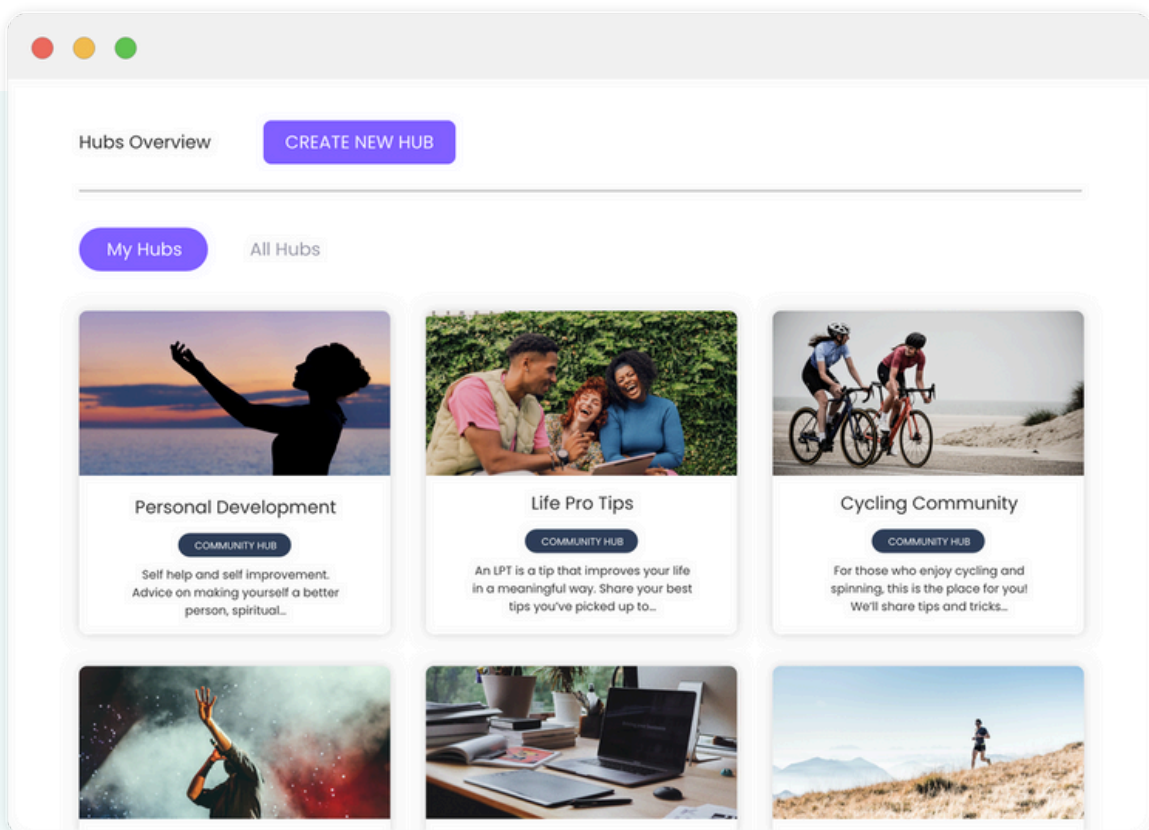
Hubs

A powerful feature within Oak's toolbox are collaborative spaces known as 'Hubs'.

Hubs can be open or closed groups that have huge scope for colleagues to come together to work on collaborative projects. Regardless of where they are based or how they work, Hubs can provide a virtual meeting room for your people to share ideas, access information and documents relevant to their projects and interest groups.

Hubs have much more flexibility and potential; there's no limit on what you can create a Hub for. We see companies using them for running clubs, book clubs, affinity groups, gaming societies and more.

In larger organisations, it can be harder to find people who share the same interests as you. This can be compounded with hybrid working as your colleagues may not ever meet certain people depending on their working patterns.

Hubs enable your employees to find others who share similar interests and come together, increasing their social interactions and wellbeing. A benefit of Hubs is that by being virtual, they're ideal to encourage involvement from people who may be quite anxious about joining groups or clubs in person. Discussions or meet-ups can be organised virtually, helping break down barriers to getting involved.

Employee recognition

Oak's employee recognition feature is a great way to show appreciation to other people within your organisation. This provides a simple and effective way for employees to feel valued, from support on a tight deadline to going the extra mile for a colleague. Sharing recognition through applets on your intranet can encourage others to share praise and in turn, support connection and increase morale. Colleagues can easily show their appreciation to others with tailored messages, fostering a positive culture of praise and recognition. This can be a powerful tool to bring employees together and help combat isolation.
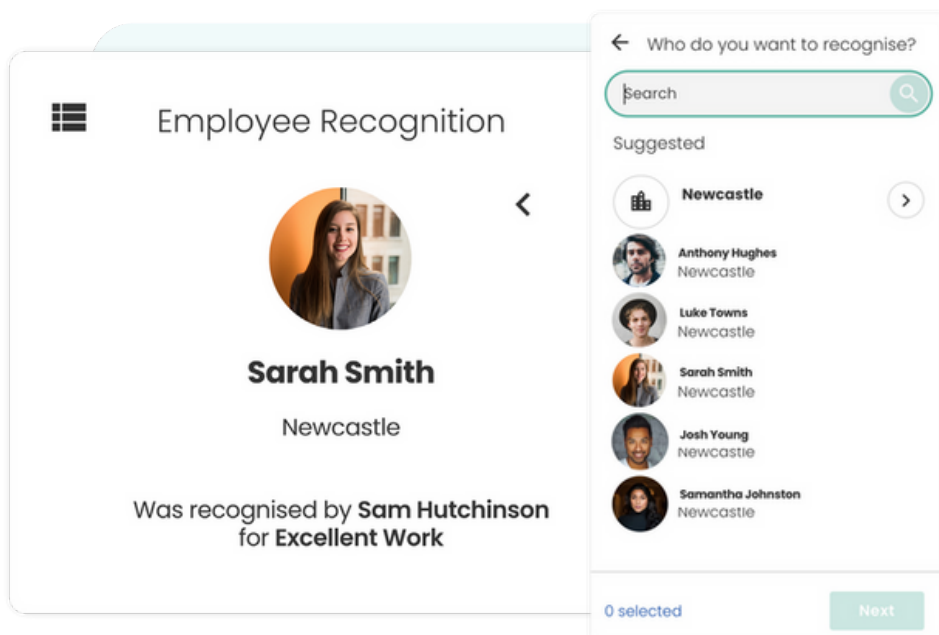
Analytics and reporting

While Oak offers huge flexibility on the tools that are available for employees, it also provides key insights into how your workforce feel and what you can do as a business to help engagement, productivity and support wellbeing.

Oak's analytics tool gives intranet managers access to intranet-wide analytics, helping you to track performance of comms and prove that the right messages are reaching the right people.

Get visibility of how many users are accessing the intranet and the types of content they use it for. Discover a detailed overview of user interactions, content popularity and other engagement metrics such as popular times and searches.
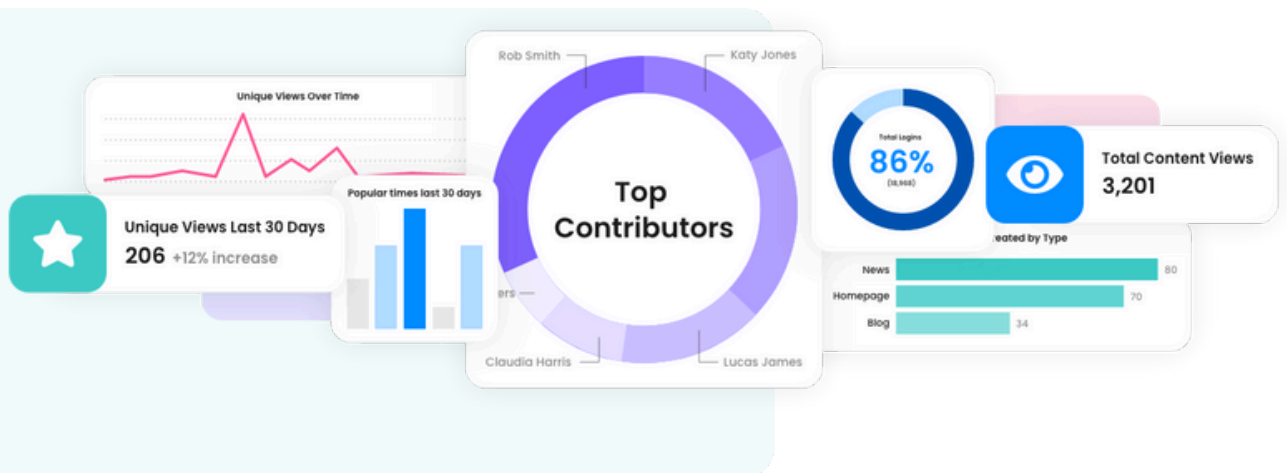
Surveys and feedback

Create opportunities for your employees to share their voice and utilise insights from that feedback to show that you're listening and working towards what they want. Once you have an understanding of how your colleagues feel, whether it's specific to their own wellbeing or their thoughts on inclusion or mental health support at work, you can enable meaningful change. If required, feedback can be kept anonymous to encourage further honesty in responses.

You've gathered feedback and implemented change, but Oak also supports your business with quick polls. These can be added to homepages to measure how employees are feeling once change has been put in place, so you can see the impact of those changes and if they are beneficial for your employees.

The benefit of these feedback tools being built into the Oak platform is that you don't need to worry about emails getting lost in busy inboxes; alerts and notifications can be set up within Oak. What's more, you will have all your data in one easy place that can better support your measurements and offer a real-time picture of the sentiment in your business.

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To find out more about how Oak can support all your employees in and out of the workplace, get in touch to arrange a demo.

Book a demo