4 Ways to Include Deskless Logistics Workers in Your Digital Strategy

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Supply chains are undergoing unprecedented restructuring driven by competition, demand shifts, and trade wars — circumstances further accelerated by COVID-19. The resulting pressure on profits forces logistic functions and companies to evaluate ways to innovate, lower costs, and increase long-term resiliency.

Logistics industry leaders are meeting this challenge by embracing digital transformation through innovative digitalization plans. But these companies often overlook one aspect as they upgrade to new technology: deskless workers.

Here are four ways to support the digital transformation of logistics by connecting deskless workers:

No. 1: Amplify the Worker's Ability

Logistics organizations operate in distributed environments. This means the industry's deskless workers need to access critical information at multiple points of work: loading a shipment, picking stock in a warehouse, operating heavy machinery, or transporting cargo.

Intelligence amplification (IA) emphasizes empowering these workers at their point of work. One way to achieve IA is to connect workers with experts, backend systems, and knowledge bases. This amplifies any worker's ability and intelligence, including new employees and contractors, by ensuring all workers have real-time access to the information and systems they need to get up to speed fast. Intelligence amplification boosts the productivity and safety of workers with immediate access to inventory, instruction manuals, safety procedures, and more.

No. 2: Automate Routine and Procedural Processes

Traditional communication methods for deskless workers do not support voice-driven automation of routine tasks and protocols.

Today's technology supports the ability to automate routine SOPs (Standard Operating Procedures) and frees workers to focus on higher-value tasks. These SOPs include voice-activated checklists, safety SOPs, and data

processing for compliance forms. Even new Return-to-Work protocols can be automated to remind workers to wear PPE or walk employees through voice-activated health screenings.

Automating processes with intelligent software and voice-activated bots not only allows workers to increase productivity and remain heads-up on their jobs, but it also increases everyone's situational awareness — the cornerstone of safety, regulatory, and corporate governance compliance.

No. 3: Support Dynamic and Urgent Environments

Logistics teams work in increasingly dynamic environments and need to respond and collaborate fast. Dispatchers and managers require solutions enabling them to see the physical location of all employees, assign tasks in real-time, and redirect workers to emerging needs while allowing workers to replay messages so nothing is missed.

Solutions that improve response time during dynamic and urgent situations should include bots, protocols, and workflows that keep managers informed of lone worker activities, trigger alarms, and deploy immediate resources in the event of an emergency. This technology automatically responds to voice calls for help, location breaches, lack of movement from lone workers, and more. Geolocation information pinpoints the exact location of an emergency and identifies the closest workers to help or respond. The entire incident workflow — from the initial incident and location information to the response times and workers involved — is then transcribed and recorded for any future review or compliance reporting.

No. 4: Ensure Workers Are Connected on Any Device, Anywhere

Logistics operations track and manage drivers, dock loaders, stock pickers, shipping and receiving clerks, and more. Increased productivity and safety of these workers is a key component driving digitalization initiatives for logistics industry participants. To do this, deskless workers need digitalization solutions that reinforce best practices for the entire deskless workforce by enabling communications with rail, port, airport, warehouse, trucking, and delivery operations workers — regardless of what devices they're using to communicate.

Digitalization solutions must consider the distributed nature of their supply chain counterparts. Imagine a truck driver enters a geofenced area. Just by entering the area, the driver can start an automated workflow that alerts receiving to their inbound location, sends the driver information on which dock they should use, and deploys unloading resources to meet them. Further automated SOPs can support the unloading crew in tracking and logging the truck's inventory, updating warehouse systems in real-time, and reducing the need for manual data transfer.

The Solution

Current communication technology is often not designed to provide deskless workers with access to greater team collaboration, critical information, or automated processes. Innovative organizations must consider new collaboration solutions that drive the digital transformation of the entire supply chain and the logistics workforce.