

HOW SEASALT LEVERAGED SOCIAL LEARNING TO EXTEND COMMS, COMMUNITY AND CULTURE




fuse




SEASALT
CORNWALL



Fuse is a vital business tool - both for Seasalt employees and, more recently, for our trusted suppliers too. It's our central hub for learning, internal comms and culture, and 95% of our people are consistently and actively engaged in using it for learning on the job. To say that Fuse was fundamental to Seasalt's performance continuity during Covid would be an understatement. 

James Hampton,

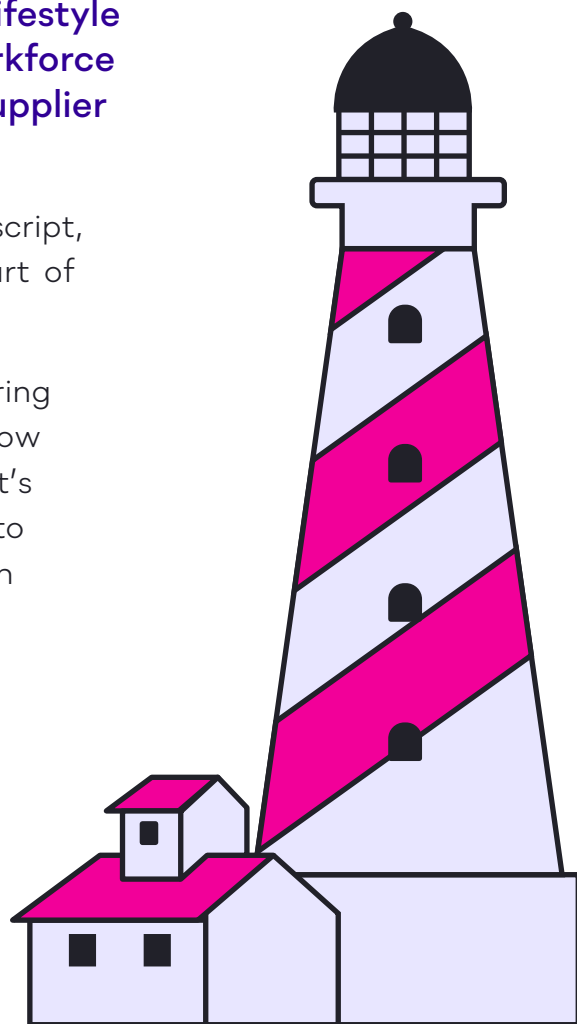
Head of Engagement & Development, Seasalt

INTRODUCTION

When Seasalt launched Fuse's learning and knowledge platform in February 2020, company leaders were excited to revolutionise learning for the lifestyle brand's rapidly growing workforce (and later, for its extended supplier audiences, too).

What happened next wasn't in the script, but it quickly became a central part of the narrative.

This is a story about Seasalt empowering people to access knowledge in the flow of work and drive performance. It's also a story about using technology to support transparent communication and build community in a time of crisis.





ABOUT SEASALT

Seasalt is a fashion and lifestyle brand headquartered in Falmouth, UK. Well-known for its distinctive prints, clothing and homeware designs, Seasalt employs +1,000 people, has 70 retail stores across the UK and Ireland, and sells to a further 157 countries online.

The company, which was started by the Chadwick brothers in 2008, is also renowned for its strong commitment to ethical business and sustainability - a key market differentiator that sees the company put people and planet at the forefront of all business operations.



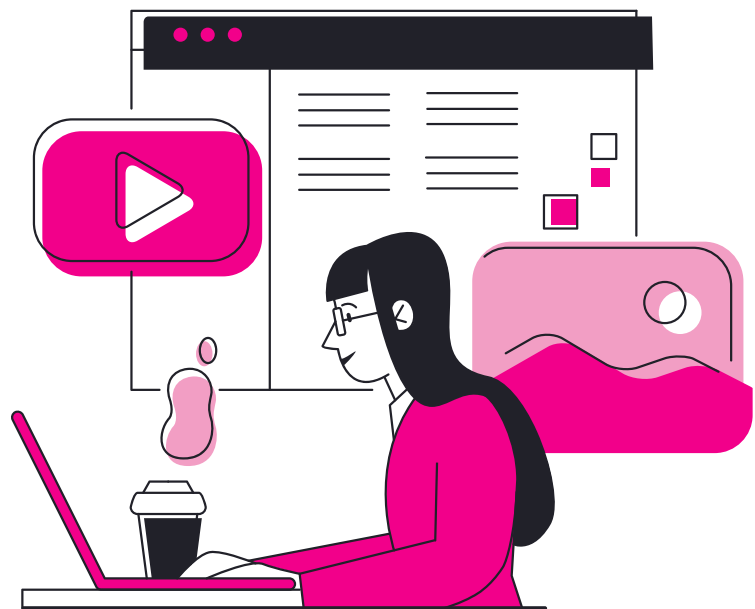
The Chadwick Family

RAPID GROWTH AND THE RACE TO DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

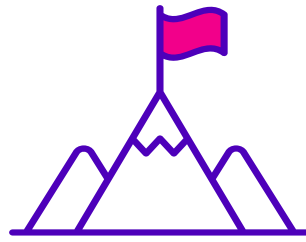
In 2018, and after several years of rapid growth in which Seasalt opened between 10 and 15 new stores per year, company leaders recognised the pressing need for a modern, digital, and scalable learning solution - and in particular, one that would drive performance by enabling instant access to the right knowledge, at the right time.

It was around this time that James Hampton, Head of Engagement and Development, and Ellie George, Digital Learning Coordinator, joined the Seasalt team and began to set the digital learning wheels in motion.

But let's backtrack for a moment:



What did L&D look like at Seasalt before Fuse, and what challenges were the team seeking to address?



L&D CHALLENGES

Keeping pace with a fast-moving product line

Prior to engaging Fuse, Seasalt worked to a 100% face-to-face learning model with the exception of an elearning programme geared towards senior company leaders. It's a model that had worked for the lifestyle brand until that point, but which could no longer keep pace with the company's rapid growth and expanding supplier ecosystem.

Key challenges included

Difficulties in sharing knowledge with the right people, at the right time - and in a fast and efficient way

Problems with keeping learning content relevant and up-to-date in an environment of continual knowledge change

Overall learning was a slow and variable process, which had created inconsistencies in how well employees were onboarded, and how well they performed

The central L&D team was overly reliant on store managers to distribute learning materials to store colleagues, and had no ability to assess whether or not employees were engaging with content

A lack of knowledge sharing across stores had created silos and disparities in the way individual stores were operating

No ability to measure competency of learning - and in particular, how well a manager was onboarding people

Commenting on these challenges, James says:



The biggest, most overriding challenge was trying to onboard and train new employees in such a fast-growth environment. At that time, Seasalt's L&D model involved only face-to-face training, either in-store or at head office, and it wasn't enabling us to get product information to people quickly enough.

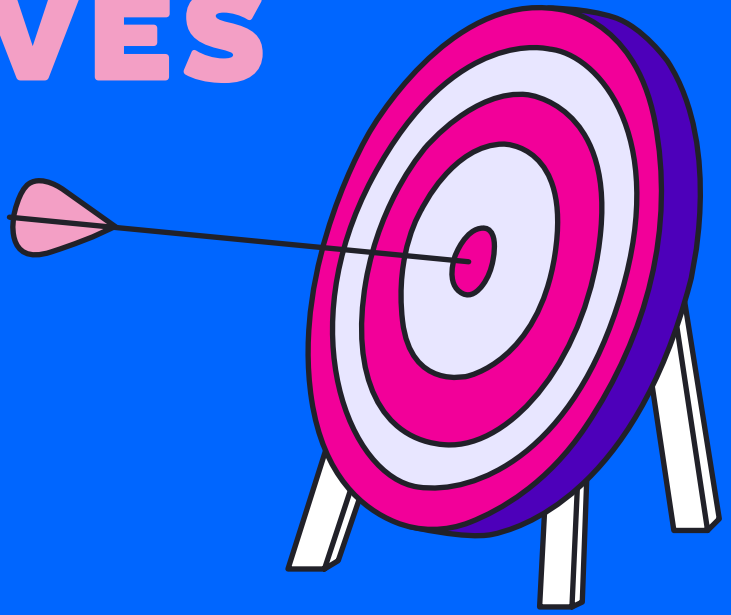
James continues:

We also had zero visibility of how well employees were being onboarded, and because of that, we had no way to determine what was working and what could be improved from a learning point of view.



OBJECTIVES

James and his team recognised the solution lay in a modern learning and knowledge platform that would support the achievement of the following key objectives:



1. Support a company-wide culture of continual learning and knowledge-sharing by enabling all employees, at all levels of seniority, to easily search for and access knowledge in the flow of work

2. Create better learning and performance outcomes by empowering people to instantly apply knowledge at the point of need

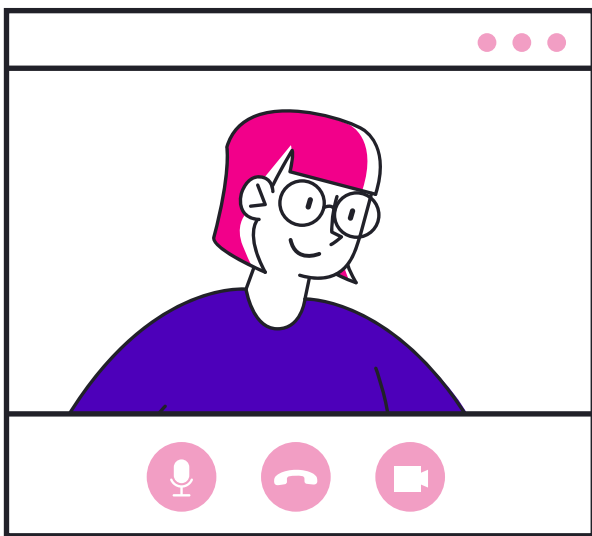
3. Leverage social and collaborative learning to support rapid upskilling at onboarding and reduce time to performance

4. Reduce reliance on store managers to teach employees and instead enable them to coach and reinforce the knowledge that learners can self-access in the flow of work

5. Improve employee experiences by engaging a blended, self-directed learning solution that enables individuals to learn in a way that works for *them*

FROM FACE-TO-FACE TO DIGITAL LEARNING IN THE FLOW

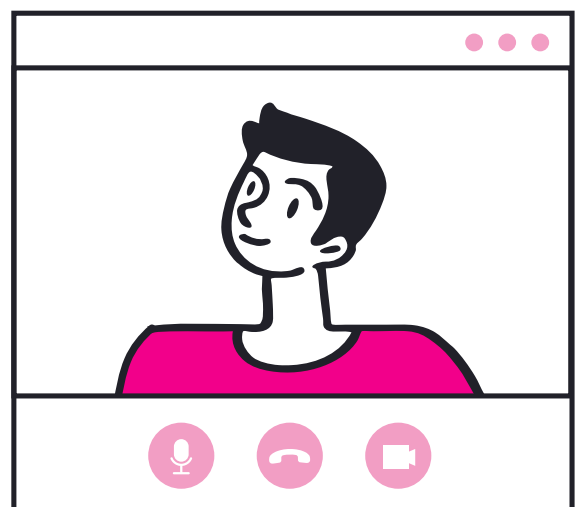
The search for a new learning platform began in 2018, with the team drawing up a shortlist of three vendors. So what prompted Seasalt to select Fuse over the competition?



✓ Social and collaborative learning functionality that supports universal knowledge-sharing and builds learning culture (both peer-to-peer and learner-to-subject matter expert)

✓ Consumer-like learning experiences that build positive learning habits by enabling quick and easy access to the right knowledge, at the right time

- ✓ Functionality to support both business and user generated content
- ✓ Self-directed learning that supports knowledge recall at the point of need
- ✓ Ability to create bespoke learning communities and map individual learning journeys
- ✓ Strong alignment with Seasalt's ethical business values and commitment to people and planet first



“ Having used Fuse in a previous organisation, I knew the platform’s social and collaborative learning functionality could really help to unlock tacit knowledge and remove silos at Seasalt. Beyond that, we also saw how it could support us in building a learning culture that would drive performance and build community. ”

James Hampton, Head of Engagement & Development, Seasalt

Ellie George, Digital Learning Co-ordinator, at Seasalt, adds:

“ Fuse really stood out because it offers a very simple user experience yet the technology is at the forefront in terms of innovation and learner-centricity. That makes for a very easy but valuable learner experience, and it’s really the beauty of the platform. ”



GOING LIVE: THE LEARNING TRANSFORMATION TAKES SHAPE...

Following an internal comms campaign designed to raise awareness and build interest in the new platform, the Seasalt team launched Fuse (known internally as 'The Anchor') to all employees in February 2020:



Ellie explains:

👍👍 We created five communities initially, one of which is our central learning community, but by the end of launch week, that number had grown to more than a hundred. That was just phenomenal! Every store had its own community to customise in line with their specific learning needs, and it was great to see the platform being so well received. 💬

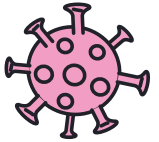
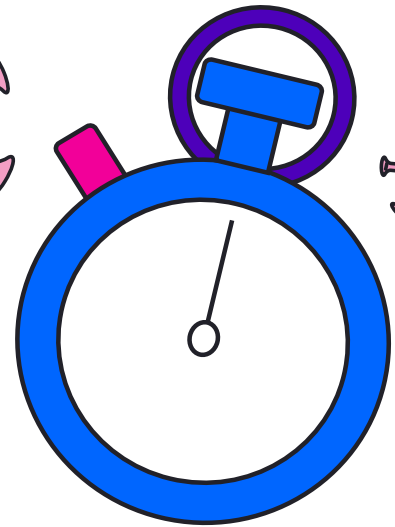
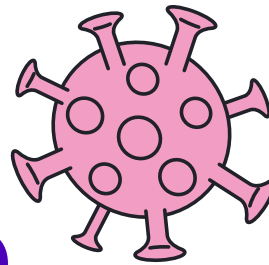
So what level of engagement did James and Ellie see in those first few weeks?

ACCELERATING ADOPTION: FROM NOUGHT TO (NEARLY) 90

The team saw huge adoption at scale in those early days, with initial figures showing +83% active users and climbing.

As James puts it: "We knew then that The Anchor had been well received and that our collective efforts in driving awareness had paid off. It's safe to say we were feeling confident about its success at that point."

COVID: LAUNCHED TO LEARNERS "JUST IN TIME"



What the team didn't know then was that within a month, murmurings about a new virus would become a full-blown global health crisis, leading to the closure of all non-essential retailers, including Seasalt's 70 clothing and homeware stores.

CRITICAL TO BUSINESS CONTINUITY

As James explains, The Anchor quickly proved to be even more critical to business success than first anticipated:



We launched just in time and it's hard to imagine how we would have coped without Fuse back then. There was obviously a huge amount of new information to communicate to our colleagues and suppliers, and so Fuse was absolutely essential to our business continuity in that regard.



95% ENGAGEMENT DESPITE FURLOUGH

During that first lockdown, engagement with the new learning platform only increased, hitting a consistent 95% active users per month - an amazing achievement considering 70% of Seasalt's workforce had been furloughed at the time. James explains:



Most of our workforce was on furlough but to our surprise, we actually saw engagement with the platform increase - and that's really a testament to how much value people derive from it. Those who were still at work continued to use it for problem-solving on the job, and those who weren't used it to stay connected, which was massively important for morale. ”

FUSE: AN ANCHOR FOR COMMS AND CULTURE

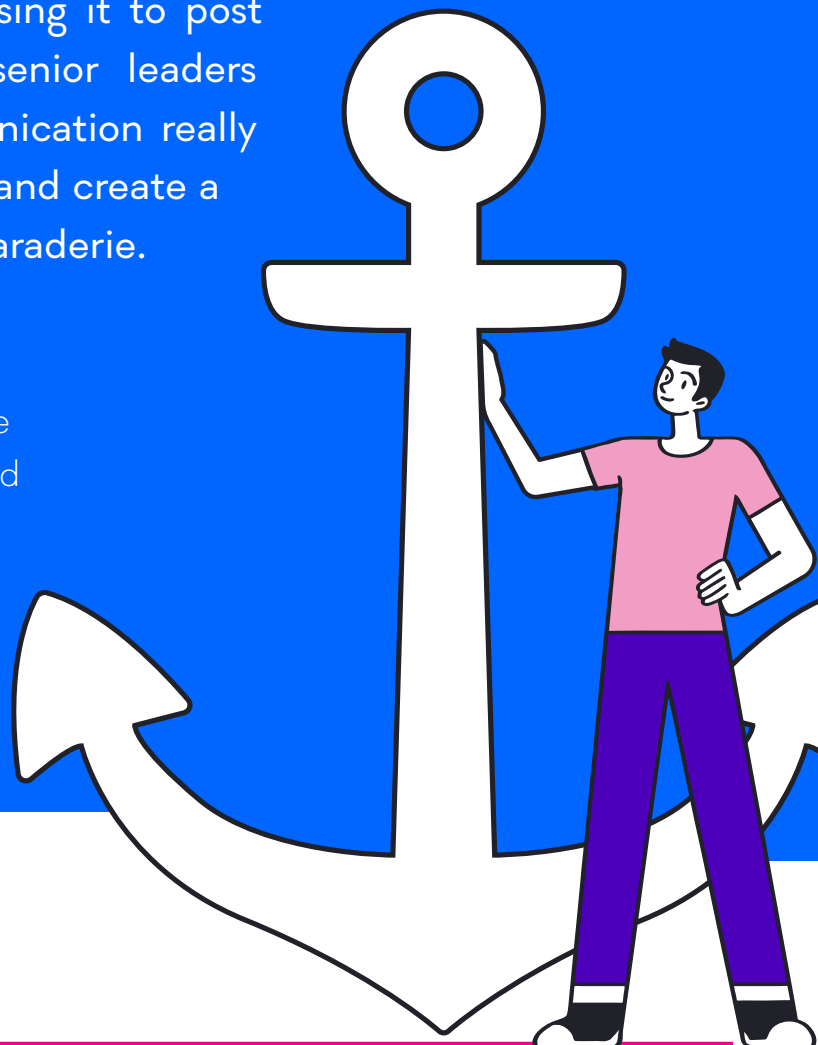
It was during this time that The Anchor became Seasalt's primary platform - not just for learning, but for internal comms, community-building, and culture. So much so in fact, that internal comms even became part of the L&D team's remit.



It became our central comms system overnight and our CEO began using it to post regular updates, as did other senior leaders and area managers. That communication really helped to allay people's concerns and create a vital sense of community and camaraderie.

James added:


We also used The Anchor for employee wellbeing purposes, creating a dedicated community where people could connect, share stories, support one another, and even have fun. That was really important. 



RAPID RESKILLING FOR SOCIALLY DISTANCED SELLING

For employees who were not on furlough, the shift to a 100% online sales model required significant upskilling and reskilling, both at scale and with speed. Ellie says:



It was absolutely vital to educating retail staff on social distancing rules and documenting how stores should be configured in order to ensure compliance. People knew where to go to find the information and answers they needed and that was critical to us being able to re-open our stores in a Covid-safe way. 



SO WHAT DO SEASALT EMPLOYEES HAVE TO SAY ABOUT THE ANCHOR?

“ It gives us a voice to ask questions and give shout outs, and [it makes us] feel part of the bigger picture. We can now put faces to names and we have easy access to senior team members, which has truly helped to connect us over the past 18 months. ”

Retail Assistant, Seasalt

“ [The Anchor] has made communication with employees who are out of the workplace so much quicker and easier – especially in situations like furlough. We have a lot of great learning resources on the platform so I save a lot of time because people are now able to search for and find the knowledge they need themselves. That frees me up to focus on my own workload, but it also helps employees to feel empowered. It’s really an invaluable tool – and I personally use it a few times every day now. ”

Store Manager, Seasalt

PART II: THE SUPPLIER HUB

That's a great story about learning in the flow of work and building culture in a crisis, but the Seasalt team didn't want to stop there (and neither did Fuse).

As an industry pioneer that puts people and planet first, the Seasalt team decided to extend the use of its platform to partner networks – and in particular, its extended supplier audiences.

Communicating beyond company walls

It's a plan that came to fruition when Seasalt and Fuse launched an innovative 'Supplier Hub' to support communications and align Seasalt's supplier ecosystem with the company's strong commitment to ethical business and sustainability.

“ The goal was to take the complexity out of supplier comms and create a more connected supply chain ecosystem that better understands the Seasalt brand, our values, and in particular, our commitment to ethical trading practices. ”

James Hampton, Head of Engagement & Development, Seasalt

After rolling out to all +65 suppliers in May 2021, the hub is already proving popular as it provides suppliers with easy access to key information, helping to build brand affiliation and nurture an ethically strong and legally compliant supplier network.

Here's what they have to say about it

“The new supplier hub is proving to be really valuable. It's quick and easy to find the content we need and our teams are already using it to access updates and key information. On top of this, it's creating the additional benefit of helping our people to feel more connected to the Seasalt brand.”

Seasalt supplier

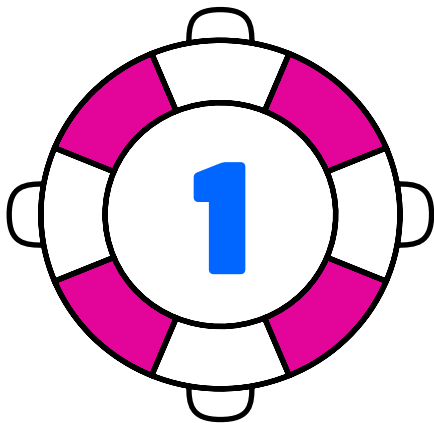
“We now have a communication and learning platform that enables us to get the information and know-how we need to optimise supply chain efficiencies and improve overall outcomes. We're already using the supplier hub several times a week, which speaks to the value it's delivering, and I'm confident it will further strengthen our partnership with Seasalt.”

Seasalt supplier



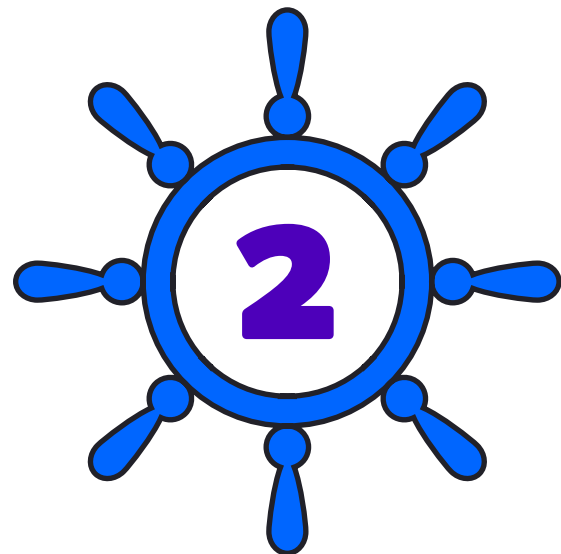
WHAT'S NEXT?

Asked about what lays ahead for the Fuse/Seasalt partnership, James and Ellie cite three plans that sit top of their agenda for the year ahead:



Drive further awareness of the supplier hub and its benefits in order to build engagement


Increase user-generated content through the delivery of an exciting project that will coach people in how to create great content and give them the requisite digital capabilities



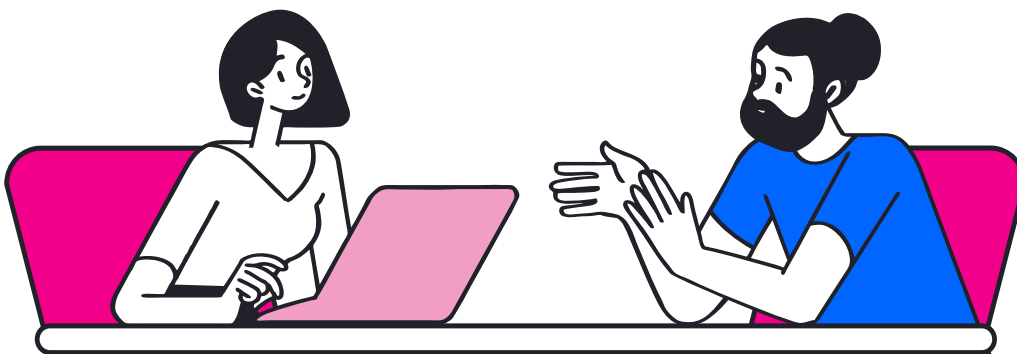
Hone in on the analytics within Fuse to better understand what is working and how the platform's benefits can be amplified for even better learning and performance outcomes






There's a lot we still want to do but for me, that next step is really digging into the data to prove that all-important link between learner engagement and improved business performance. We're confident the data is there to prove that, and so that's going to be a fun discovery process. 

Ellie George, Digital Learning Coordinator, Seasalt



Adding to Ellie's thoughts, James says:



We now need to build on the great foundations we've laid to drive even bigger performance outcomes – both for our workforce and for our channel partners. We very much have the building blocks set in place now and we plan on taking that to the next level as engagement continues to increase, and as the Fuse platform continues to provide even more innovation by way of intelligent search functionality and predictive performance support. 

ABOUT FUSE

Fuse is the learning and knowledge platform that sparks active engagement and ignites people performance. It is used by more than 120 enterprises around the world, including Vodafone, Panasonic, Scandic, Avon, Mazda and BAe, and connects people with the knowledge and expertise they need to acquire new skills and achieve high performance at work.

Additional resources

Learn more about Fuse on the [website](#).

Follow Fuse on [Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#).

