

Caravan and Motorhome Club: swapping annual appraisals for regular 1:1s

Industry: Leisure & hospitality

Number of employees: 400

Reason for change: Modernisation
(increased regularity and digitisation)

The customer

Caravan and Motorhome Club is a membership organisation that helps caravanners, motorhomers, and campers to access more than 160 scenic locations across the UK, as well as thousands of affiliated campsites in Europe. Established in 1907, the Club's mission is to help people "Get more from the great outdoors".



Lucy Carter,
Caravan and Motorhome Club

The company employs 400 employees at its head office in West Sussex, and has a 20-strong team within the overall HR department, composed of HR generalists, people development specialists, internal communications, and payroll. One of those team members is HR Advisor, Lucy Carter, who joined the Club in 2019 to oversee everything from employee onboarding to development, wellbeing, benefits, and more. A key part of Lucy's role involves introducing new recruits to [OpenBlend](#) - and enabling managers and employees to unlock its benefits for people and business.

We recently sat down with Lucy to talk about the Caravan and Motorhome Club's transition to regular 1:1 conversations, and find out how - four years on - OpenBlend is helping employees to thrive at work.



Before OpenBlend...

So what did performance management look like before the Club's partnership with OpenBlend?

"Appraisals took place once a year on an annual basis and were heavily focused on objectives and performance reviews. They were also tied to bonuses and compensation. We wanted to separate pay from performance conversations, and we also wanted to create more opportunities for timely recognition via more regular conversations." **Lucy Carter, HR Advisor, Caravan and Motorhome Club**

In particular, the Club's HR team wanted to encourage managers to engage with employees more frequently. Lucy explains: "We didn't have a system that made it easy for managers to recognise their employees' achievements and successes in the moment. The nature of annual appraisals also made it difficult for managers to remember what those achievements were months down the line."

Manual and paper-based processes posed another challenge: "Moving to a digitised model was a key priority – both for improving experiences across the board, but also for unlocking a consolidated data set that would enable us to track progress and create an expectation for managers to have regular 1:1s."

Last but not least, Lucy says the Club wanted to redress the balance of 1:1 conversations, enabling employees to take the lead in setting the agenda in line with the issues most important to them.

"Enabling employees to take an active role in shaping their own 1:1s was really important. We wanted to empower people to talk about their wellbeing and motivation... those broader topics that fall outside of the day-to-day."

The challenges:

- Annual appraisals that were manager-led and heavily focused on objectives
- Performance conversations tied to bonuses and compensation
- Managers and employees not having regular 1:1 conversations outside of day-to-day tasks
- No system to recognise employee achievements in real-time
- Paper-based, manual system that increased scope for error and administrative burden
- No consolidated data set to track employee progress over time.

The objectives:

Swap annual appraisals for a modern, digitised performance management model that supports regular and broad 1:1 conversations.

Enable real-time employee recognition to support employee experience and drive retention.

Unlock critical data insights to identify patterns, track progress, and support informed decision-making.

Identify a technology partner that provides managers and employees with the practical support and guidance they need to have frequent, broad, and effective 1:1s.

Why OpenBlend?

But before the Club even had the chance to put out a tender, Lucy explains that a fortuitous meeting with OpenBlend’s Founder & CEO, Anna Rasmussen, proved decisive: “Our team attended an event held by another OpenBlend customer. Anna was there and gave a demo of the platform, which instantly impressed. It ticked the boxes in terms of what the Club was looking for – and especially because it takes a very holistic approach. It’s focused on the whole person; it’s employee-led; it aligns with the GROW model; and it encourages a regular cadence of conversations.”

A collaborative launch

Fast forward a few months, and OpenBlend was rolled out to the Club’s ~400 head office employees. It was a “collaborative launch”, with the OpenBlend team providing “support every step of the way” via in-person training sessions and introductory webinars. Alongside these, the Club’s HR team produced internal communications to build interest and excitement ahead of launch, as well as training booklets for employees and managers.

Reaction from managers and employees

Asked about the reaction from managers and employees in those early days after roll-out, Lucy says: “[The platform] received a positive reception. A big part of that was down to the technology being very intuitive – that really helped to get everyone up and running quickly.”

“The increased regularity and broader scope of conversations took a bit of getting used to, but it helps that the platform is employee-led...people are able to choose what they want to talk about. If they don’t want

I find OpenBlend a very useful tool and it’s structured in a very organic way! As a relatively new manager, I find it steers me through the 1:1 journey while also allowing me to be led by the employee. I also like that it’s weighted towards wellbeing and leads to open discussions between both parties.

Club Manager



OpenBlend has been a great guide for 1:1 check-ins. I didn’t appreciate [its value] when I first started at the Club but as my role got more complex, and as my work-life balance became even more key to my happiness and success, it [unlocked] talking points that my manager and I perhaps wouldn’t have addressed otherwise.

Club Employee

to discuss their wellbeing or personal circumstances, that’s completely fine. Everyone uses OpenBlend differently, and in a way that works best for them.”

The benefits

So four years (and a global pandemic) later, has the transition to regular 1:1s stuck? Are Club managers and employees having frequent and broad-ranging conversations that focus on the issues that matter most? The short answer is yes. “One hundred percent of our head office employees have engaged with the platform,

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100% of our head office employees have engaged with the platform, and the number of people who are using OpenBlend to facilitate 1:1s has increased over time from 67% in 2019, to 93% in 2023. That really speaks to the value being derived from it.



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In addition, employee happiness, confidence, and stress management scores have all increased over time (now at 74%, 76% and 76% respectively), 97% of employees have defined their unique Motivators, 89% are working towards open objectives, and the Club’s overall wellbeing score sits at 76%.

And the extended impact on engagement and retention?

OpenBlend is definitely good for engagement”, says Lucy, “because it helps people to understand what they need to focus on in order to develop. It keeps people moving forwards and it acts as a continual reminder for employees to think about their own development.”

Next on the agenda? Develop...

OpenBlend is even helping the Club to improve its employer brand: “OpenBlend is certainly helping us to be a better employer because we’re enabling our people to ask questions they haven’t been able to ask before. The platform empowers – and encourages – them to talk about their wellbeing and motivation, and I’m sure that’s helping our broader performance and retention efforts.”



To further invest in those engagement, performance, and retention efforts, the Club has also recently added Develop – a new OpenBlend module that focuses on the employee’s unique development needs.

Develop provides a unique pathway for personalised learning by giving employees a platform to express how, when, and in what way they want to be developed – and it leverages effective 1:1 conversations to make this possible.

Talking about the Club’s plans for this, Lucy says: “We’re currently in pre-launch and we’re really excited about its potential. By adding Develop, we’re letting it be known that the Club values personalised development, and that we’re making it a priority.

Customer experience

...and finally, a question we ask all our customers on a regular basis: how would you describe your experience as an OpenBlend customer?

“I think engaging is the best way to describe it. The team is always there when we need any help or support. They also take the time to look at our data to see how things are going, and they prompt us when they see an opportunity to improve. We very much work in collaboration in that sense, and the next meeting is always in the diary. In fact, we have more catch ups with the OpenBlend team than with any other partner.”

Ready to make the move to regular, broad, and effective 1:1 conversations? Get in touch with our team today.

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