



HOW JOULES USED COLLABORATIVE LEARNING TO BUILD CULTURE AND CREATE COMMUNITY



There's a reason I've implemented Fuse in two organisations now. I love that it supports a culture of social and collaborative learning whilst creating community and building a sense of belonging. That's been invaluable to us during Covid and I can honestly say that Joules now has a stronger culture because of Fuse.



Lyn Warren, Retail & People Director, Joules

The Joules logo is written in a white, cursive script font. It is located in the bottom right area of the image, above the case study title.

joules

Joules case study

INTRODUCTION

When Lyn Warren joined Joules as HR Director in May 2018, she knew that one of her first projects would be to onboard a social and collaborative learning platform.

What she didn't know then is that her platform of choice would become Joules' central hub for internal communications in the midst of Covid-19.

This is a story about Joules partnering with Fuse to enable a culture of knowledge sharing and continuous learning. It's also a story about bringing people together, staying connected, and showing support in a time of crisis.



ABOUT *joules*

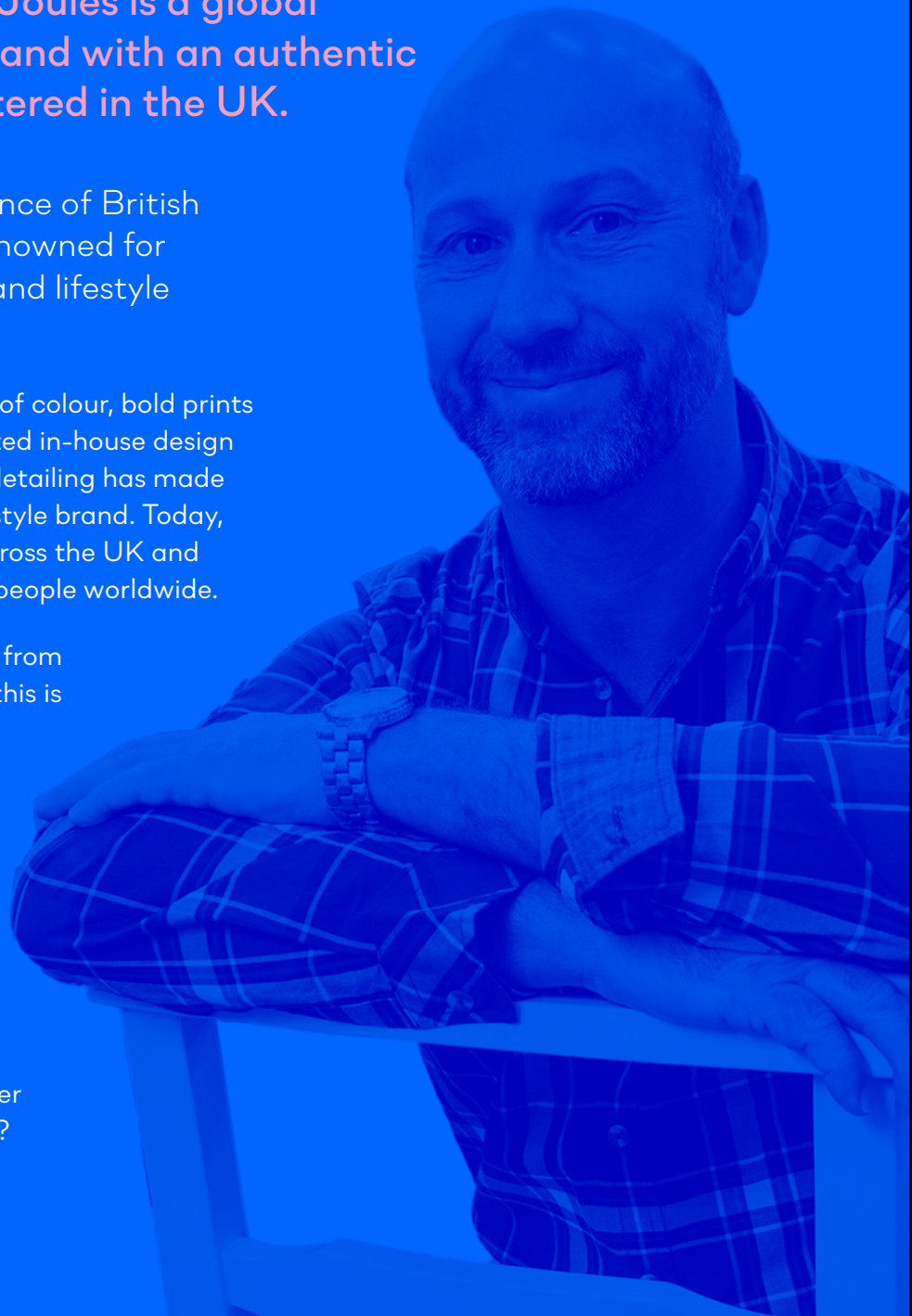
Established in Leicestershire by Tom Joule three decades ago, Joules is a global premium lifestyle brand with an authentic heritage, headquartered in the UK.

Joules captures the essence of British style and has become renowned for its high quality clothing and lifestyle collections.

This, along with its strong use of colour, bold prints – all hand-drawn by the talented in-house design team – and unique signature detailing has made Joules a well-loved family lifestyle brand. Today, Joules operates 130 stores across the UK and Ireland, and employs +1,600 people worldwide.

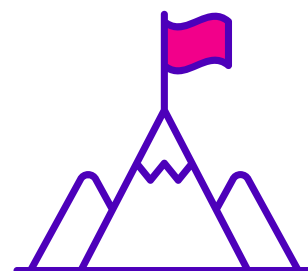
One thing is abundantly clear from speaking to the Joules team: this is a company that cares about its people – and it's a point that is continually reinforced throughout this story.

So let's start at the beginning...What did learning look like at Joules before Fuse, and what were the challenges that Lyn and her team were seeking to address?



CHALLENGES

Keeping pace with continuous knowledge change



Before Fuse, Joules operated to a 'filter down' learning model whereby HQ would disseminate new product information to store managers who would then distribute it to retail colleagues. It's an approach that worked well for Joules in its early years, but one which was becoming increasingly untenable as the company continued to scale.

Key challenges included:

An inability to quickly and effectively distribute new product information and empower colleagues to keep pace with the speed of knowledge change

Limited opportunities to learn through collaboration or share tacit knowledge due to the disparate nature of the workforce (even Joules' HQ colleagues were based across five different buildings)

Formal training programmes were reserved only for store managers and other company leaders, which excluded around 60% of the total workforce

No visibility of individual learning needs relative to career aspirations

Store colleagues learned primarily from their managers, which often created inconsistencies in the way different stores were operating

The only digital learning resource was an historic document library, which was difficult to navigate and failed to support knowledge and learning in the flow of work

No ability to measure learning outcomes relative to business performance

Elaborating on these challenges, Lyn says:



The Joules product portfolio is large and constantly evolving. That was presenting ongoing challenges with getting the right information to store colleagues at the right time. As a company we didn't have a fast and effective way of doing that - and it was a problem further compounded by the disparate nature of our workforce.

Lyn continues:

We also wanted to make learning available to all our people, not just store managers and company leaders. The goal was very much to democratise access to learning opportunities and improve people experiences - for everyone, at all levels of the organisation.



LEARNING AND BUSINESS OBJECTIVES

With a clear understanding of the challenges at hand, Lyn and the Joules team outlined **five key objectives**:



Five key objectives

1. Democratise access to knowledge by enabling every Joules colleague to easily search for and access the right information at the point of need

2. Enable social and collaborative learning in the flow of work via one universal, mobile-ready learning platform that offers anytime, anywhere access

3. Improve customer satisfaction by equipping retail teams with the information they need to become brand ambassadors and confidently answer customer queries

4. Support a wider sense of community across the Joules network by connecting colleagues around the world and providing a safe space for them to communicate and share stories

5. Better understand individual learning needs through measurable analytics that also tie learning to business performance

A LEARNER-DRIVEN 'PULL' PLATFORM

So what prompted Lyn to select Fuse for a second time?

“The thing I most love about the Fuse platform is that rather than pushing content out in a structured way, it works by harnessing the skills and tacit knowledge that already exist within the workforce. It's also very collaborative, which makes for an enjoyable - and valuable - learner experience.”

Fuse serves additional business needs beyond learning, too. It's great for internal comms and community-building - both of which are often tied to learning anyway. It makes sense to have all those capabilities in one central platform.”

Lyn Warren,

Retail & People Director, Joules

ROLLING OUT TO RETAIL COLLEAGUES

A self-proclaimed “fan of Fuse”, Lyn brought the Fuse team in to demo the platform to her management colleagues at the beginning of 2019.

**THE REST, AS
THEY SAY,
IS HISTORY.**



Lyn explains how the Joules team prepared to roll-out to all 1,600 employees in September 2019:

“We started by running a ‘coming soon’ campaign to drive awareness and engage key stakeholders. I travelled the country speaking to store managers at roadshows, and we also gave early access to regional managers who acted as product champions – the aim being to create a follow the leader learning effect.”

Learner engagement gradually increased in the months post-implementation as positive word of mouth spread amongst in-store and office-based colleagues. The real turning point, however, came in the form of a global pandemic that no-one could have predicted.

COVID: A CATALYST FOR LEARNER ENGAGEMENT

At the beginning of 2020, just over a quarter (27%) of all employees were actively using Fuse each month. By the end of the UK's first lockdown in June 2020, that figure had skyrocketed to well over three-quarters (81%) as people flocked to Fuse as a source of information, community support, and much-needed connection.

It was an unprecedented time and as a non-essential retailer, Joules was forced to close its stores and shift to a 100% online sales model overnight.

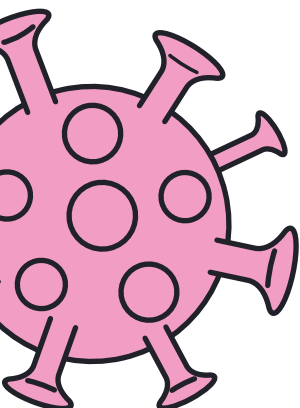
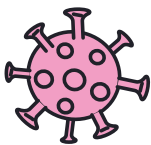
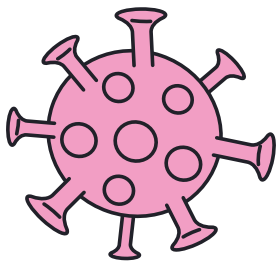


FUSE: FOSTERING COMMUNITY DURING COVID

Lyn reflects on that first lockdown in March 2020:



Fuse instantly became our learning, internal comms, engagement and wellbeing platform all rolled into one. The majority of our people were furloughed but it was important to us - and to them - to stay connected and show support. There was so much uncertainty that people really needed that and Fuse acted as the key facilitator.

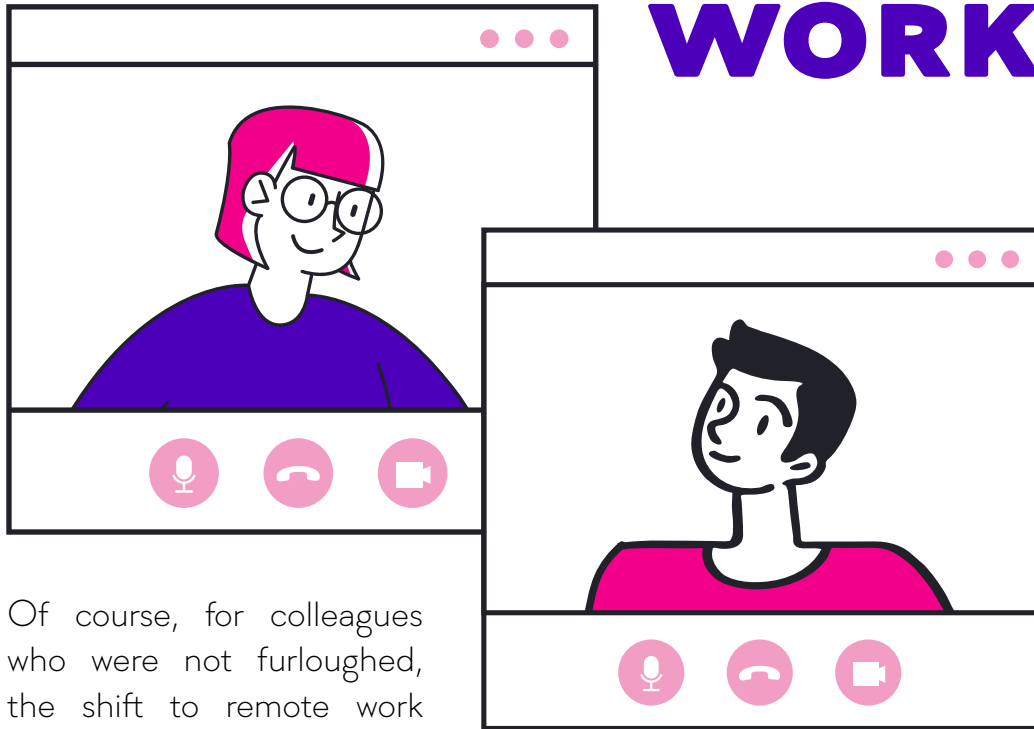


LOCKDOWN LEARNING: +80% ENGAGEMENT ON FUSE

Perhaps the most pleasant surprise during that time was seeing the swathes of 'feel-good' content that employees were creating and posting to Fuse. And, despite some of the Joules workforce being on furlough, this didn't deter people from continuing to engage with one another on Fuse. As Lyn explains, the platform offered something for everyone:

“We created a lot of wellbeing content to support people and provide tips on how to stay physically and mentally well. We then started to see a big uptick in user-generated content with people posting their own updates about fitness, upcycling projects, and volunteer work. That was very uplifting and I got the sense it was really helping to reduce the anxiety that people were feeling due to the pandemic.”

UPSKILLING AND RESKILLING FOR REMOTE WORK

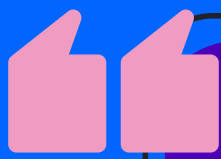


Of course, for colleagues who were not furloughed, the shift to remote work presented plenty of practical challenges that **required differing levels of upskilling and reskilling**. Commenting on the critical role that Fuse played in this regard, Lyn says:

“We used Fuse to provide practical IT support - getting remote workers set up with Microsoft Teams, for example. Then later on, after the first lockdown, Fuse became a hub for risk assessment and training around social distancing regulations. We were able to post videos showing managers what store layouts should look like, and that had a direct impact on our readiness for re-opening.”

CONSOLIDATION AND COST-SAVINGS

By this point, Fuse had become Joules' go-to resource for learning, information and community support. So much so, the company decided to eliminate a document storage platform and transfer everything to Fuse.

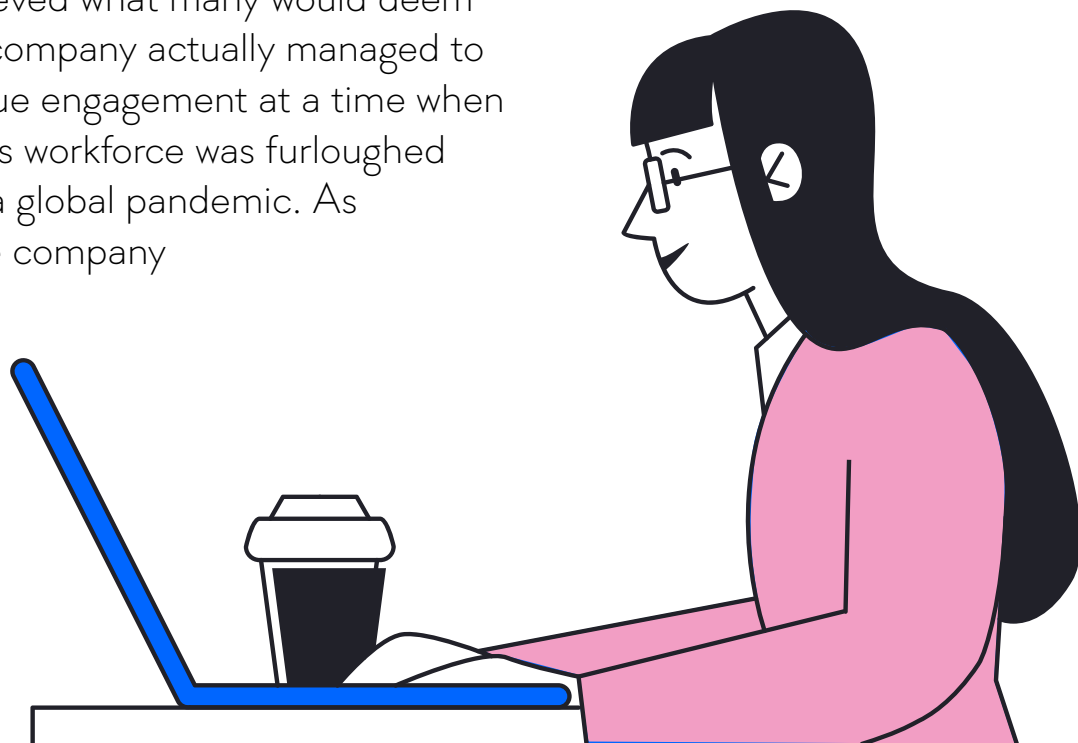


People were using the platform as a hub for learning, internal comms, community-building, and wellness support, and that naturally rendered other platforms redundant.



FUSE AS A DRIVER FOR EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

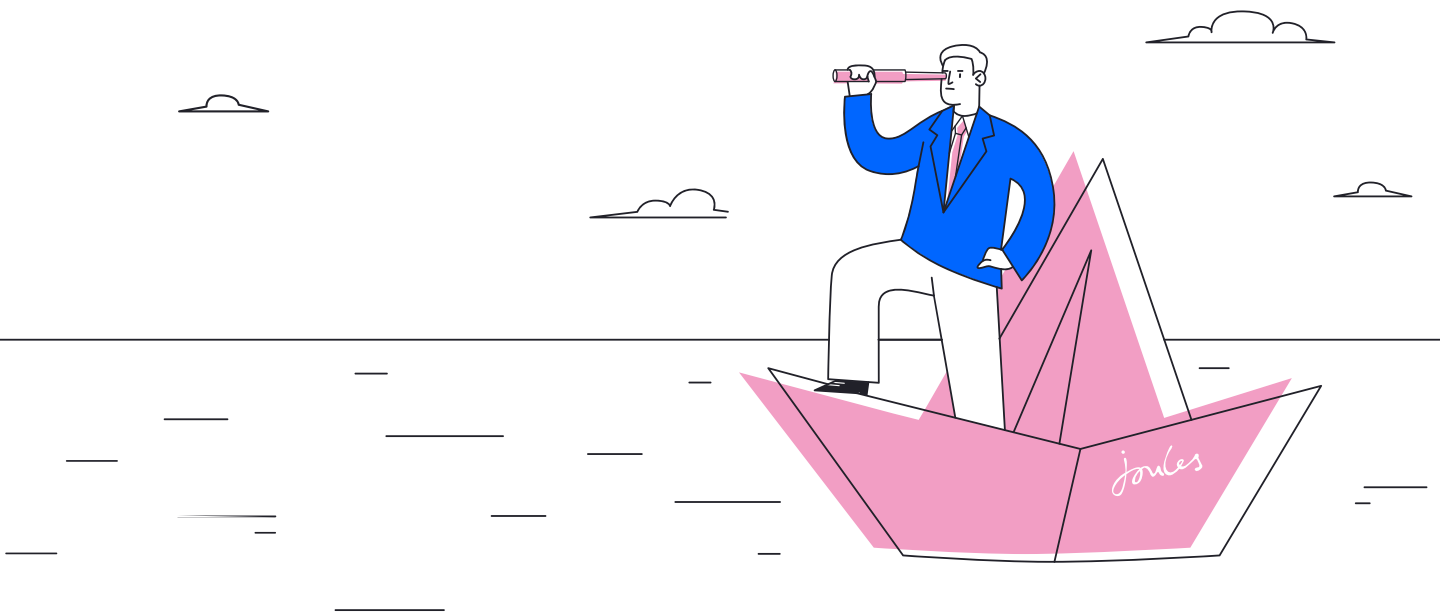
Another great nugget to this story is the fact that Joules achieved what many would deem impossible: the company actually managed to increase colleague engagement at a time when the majority of its workforce was furloughed in the throes of a global pandemic. As Lyn explains, the company actually moved from a **Best Companies 1 star rating up to 3 stars** – and it was a very welcome discovery:



“To see an uplift in engagement like that at the height of the crisis was certainly unexpected but it very much spoke to the strength of our company culture and provided great validation for the work that everyone had put into building that sense of community. I don’t think we could have achieved that had we not had Fuse as a key driver for engagement.”

THE JOULES LEARNING JOURNEY: WHAT'S NEXT?

“Tapping into tacit knowledge on demand”



When asked what's next for the Joules / Fuse partnership, Lyn says:

“Our next focus will see us creating top quality induction content that supports brilliant onboarding experiences every time, irrespective of location or job role.

As part of that, we'll be looking to ensure our new recruits - and indeed, all our people - are learning from Joules' best and most relevant subject matter experts. Connecting learners to those high performers, bottling their expertise, and enabling people to tap into that tacit knowledge on demand, is very much where we're headed - and that's very exciting.”

Lyn Warren, Retail & People Director, Joules