



# Cruising and enthusing

## How Virgin Media O2 supercharged its employee engagement

As a company, [Virgin Media O2](#) hardly requires an introduction. One of the UK's largest employers, it represents a new frontier in terms of broadband and telecoms businesses. They're here "to upgrade the UK," with a customer-first approach that requires a great deal of skill, preparation, and perhaps most importantly, good timing. And in the wake of a pandemic, the roadmap for achieving world-class engagement with employees has never been more obscure or challenging.

Virgin Media O2's internal challenge was threefold; spreading awareness, doing so in a way that taught employees how to explain the new roaming rules, and leveraging employee engagement to allow for an organic method of dissemination, with little in the form of initial spend. Presented together, these issues posed a seemingly insurmountable obstacle. To overcome them, the company needed to create an opportunity for themselves and, seize the moment.



### A WORLD DIVIDED

The pandemic did more than stall economies and baffle seasoned media experts. It separated people from one another and isolated them in their own bubbles with few escape methods. Tense environments like that of isolation required a different approach from the status quo. People of course are likely to become more insular, doom-scrolling through news feeds and failing to communicate as they previously would have done pre-pandemic. In short, disseminating any kind of information was difficult in the extreme.

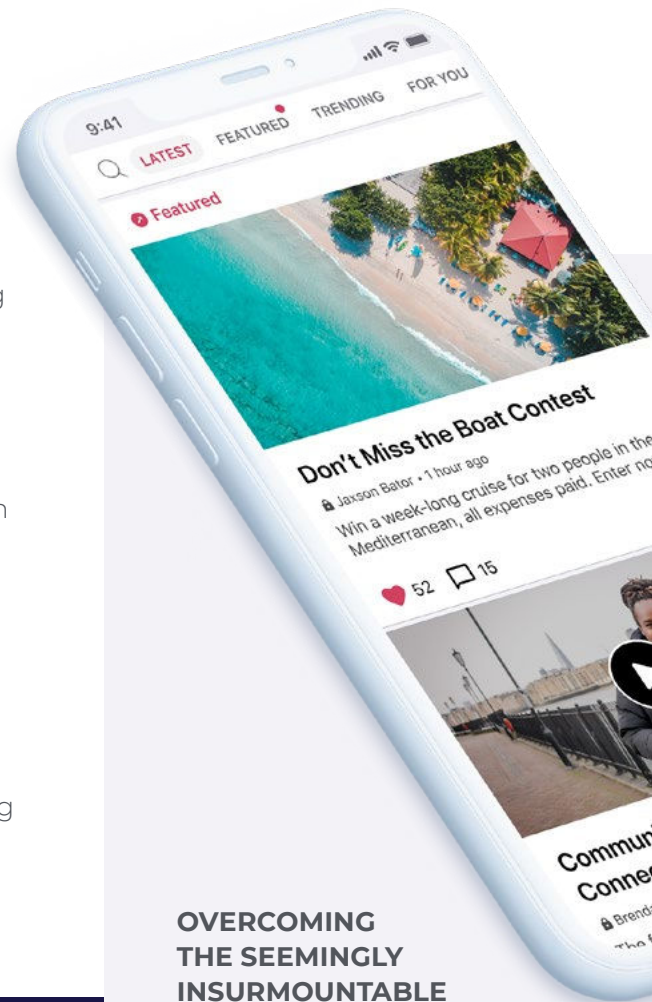
Virgin Media O2 faced this problem head-on. In January 2022, the company announced to customers its decision not to reintroduce daily rate roaming charges for calls, text and data used by travellers in the European Union. As the only major operator to take this decision, there was quite rightly a rush of news and interview features, but these only scratched the surface of what was going on.

# Divided no more

The solution to these challenges came in the form of an online internal competition. Titled “Don’t Miss The Boat” and announced on February 16th, it offered the perfect prize nearing the end of lockdown: a week-long cruise for two people in the Mediterranean, all expenses paid.

Considering the impending lift of lockdown and travel bans, it was most likely the best possible prize. Entering the competition was made perfectly simple, asking employees to post #dontmisstheboat on any social media platform they pleased before screenshotting that post and uploading it to Firststep, the world’s first intelligent communications platform used by Virgin Media O2 for their entire employee base.

A simple entry mechanic coupled with a grand prize would bring a tremendous response, but the results were still staggering.



## OVERCOMING THE SEEMINGLY INSURMOUNTABLE

As the only company in its field to make this decision, there was quite rightly a rush of news and interview features, but these only scratched the surface of what was going on. Presented together, the issues posed a seemingly insurmountable obstacle. To overcome them, VMO2 created an opportunity for themselves—seizing the moment and turning the pandemic from a disaster into a new kind of motivation.

*“The competition was simple, but it gave employees a boost to rally around the campaign.”*



ABS KAKKAR  
Head of Channels | Virgin Media O2

The other main component of the campaign’s success was the internal broadcast Livestream announcement of the winners. Hosted on February 18th, the Livestream used a raffle ticket system to pick the winning participants. By including an element of entertainment and drama, the Livestream made a perfect final impression of the competition and worked towards fostering goodwill for future events of this nature.

# Incredible results

In the two days the competition ran, 750 new users registered on Firstup to post their screenshots, taking the platform's user count to nearly 4000. At just under twenty-five percent of a margin increase, this volume of new users was incredible. The latest figures put the new user count at around 1300, with overall impressions just shy of half a million. These figures are even more impressive to consider from a limited-timeframe organic campaign.

Contrast these numbers to the last online employee competition Virgin Media O2 ran, offering winners a brand new smart watch, which garnered around 500 new users of the Workspace platform. The factors surrounding Don't Miss The Boat are myriad and varied, but the sticking point of its success was the excellent timing and thematic use of a prize to coincide with the right moment. Firstup was an ideal platform for this type of competition, as its core concept of personalized employee feeds could adapt to a sudden influx of new users very easily, while still maintaining core brand messages and communiques from the company.



# The Firstup platform delivered the comms

In summary, it's safe to say that Virgin Media O2's results from this competition well exceeded objectives, and the lessons learned from both the pandemic and the employee response will be carried forward to even more internal comms success stories; it's all about the customers, their problems, and where they go to find solutions. After all, who wants to come home from their holiday to find an extra bill for their normal data usage? VMO2 has said no to extra roaming charges and yes to good comms results.

Firstup was an ideal platform for this type of competition, as its core concept of personalized employee feeds could adapt to a sudden influx of new users very easily, while still maintaining core brand messages and communiques from the company.

## TRUSTED COMMUNICATIONS

According to the [Edelman Trust Barometer](#), business is the only institution seen as both ethical and competent, with a 61% trust level globally. They also suggest that businesses can build on that trust by ensuring trustworthy information goes out to their employees, and then by extension, the community.



Firstup is the platform that the world's largest companies use to connect with their people, deliver personalized communications, and gain engagement insights throughout the employee journey. Contact us for a demo.

LEARN MORE | [firstup.io](https://firstup.io)