



Pouring connection into every shift: How a growing distillery keeps its frontline culture strong

Learn how one of America's most-visited distilleries uses Beekeeper to strengthen frontline employee engagement, streamline communication, and preserve a tight-knit culture during rapid growth.

One of the world's most-visited distilleries, Ole Smoky, uses Beekeeper to connect its growing frontline workforce. The platform consolidates communications, integrates with ADP, and enables employee self-service for routine HR tasks, preserving the company's signature culture as it scales.

Key results:

- **Connects frontline teams** across retail, operations, and sales with one platform
- **Provides real-time answers** to employee questions through a customizable FAQ chatbot
- **Streamlines access** to payslips, HR documents, and company updates

“What’s so valuable about Beekeeper is that it becomes whatever you need it to be. It’s helped us maintain the spirit of connection by giving our frontline teams a central place to find everything they need for work.”

— Roland Parker, Employee Experience Specialist,
Ole Smoky Distillery and Tanteo Spirits

CHALLENGE

As Ole Smoky Distillery expanded beyond its Tennessee roots, frontline employees began to feel disconnected. Without email access or mobile-friendly tools, critical company updates often didn't reach the frontline. Teams relied on managers to pass along messages, and information frequently slipped through the cracks. A centralized, mobile-first solution was needed to bring consistency, transparency, and connection to the frontline.

SOLUTION

Beekeeper was implemented as a single point of access for everything from communication to payslips. ADP integration makes payroll data instantly accessible, while an FAQ chatbot provides instant answers to common employee questions. Frontline teams now receive real-time updates and use Beekeeper to coordinate events, announce milestones, and share wins.

RESULTS

Beekeeper has helped Ole Smoky bring its growing team closer together. Frontline workers can now easily stay informed, celebrate achievements, and connect across locations. Frontline employees get instant access to payroll documents and company resources, while HR and payroll teams spend less time fielding repetitive requests. Company news, events, and updates are shared in one place, making everyone feel part of the same team.

“Even though we’re all working for the same company, employees didn’t necessarily feel they were on the same team. Beekeeper helped us change that.”

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Preserving a tight-knit culture while scaling operations

What began as a small distillery rooted in Appalachian tradition quickly became one of the top-selling American whiskey brands. As Ole Smoky expanded across Tennessee and beyond — and later merged with Tanteo Spirits — maintaining the strong sense of connection that had always defined its culture became increasingly difficult. Without mobile-friendly tools, hourly staff were missing key updates, leading to frustration, increased HR overhead, and growing disconnect between teams across states.

Protecting that sense of connection became a priority for Roland Parker, Employee Experience Specialist at Ole Smoky.

“We started out pretty small, and it was easy and natural for us to connect with each other,” says Parker. “But as we’ve grown, we’ve had to think about how to preserve our culture in a way that still feels authentic, especially for our frontline teams.”

Most Ole Smoky employees work on the frontlines in production, retail, or sales roles, and many don’t have regular access to email. Important updates were often shared through managers or passed along verbally, but information frequently fell through the cracks. “The feedback from our frontline was that communication was lacking and they felt out of the loop,” explains Parker.



Parker also noticed a growing disconnect between teams at different locations. “Even though we’re all working for the same company, employees didn’t necessarily feel they were on the same team.” The merger with Tanteo Spirits only heightened the need for a unified way to reach every employee, no matter where they worked.

Corporate teams were feeling the strain, too. Payroll was trying to phase out paper checks, but had no easy way to provide pay information that was accessible on the go. HR was spending a lot of time fielding questions from employees, with similar issues coming up frequently. “We had a shared Excel file of commonly asked questions, and we had answers that we could copy and paste from, but it was time-consuming and labor-intensive,” explains Parker.

“We needed a frontline-friendly solution that everyone could access,” says Parker. “Somewhere employees could see all the information they need — but also make and maintain connections with each other.”

Keeping every employee in the loop, from stillhouse to storefront

To maintain its close-knit culture, Ole Smoky Distillery and Tanteo Spirits turned to Beekeeper's Frontline Success Platform — a mobile-first communication tool built specifically for frontline employees.

With Beekeeper, employees now have one central place to access real-time updates, payslips, event announcements, and essential HR information — right from their phones.

Beyond company-wide news, Beekeeper allows departments to send targeted updates, too. “Our operations teams can send out announcements that are only pertinent to them, which wasn’t possible before,” says Parker.

The platform has also made it easier to plan and promote events that strengthen frontline culture. “We’ve used Beekeeper to collect RSVPs for two different events,” explains Parker. With custom workflows, employees can quickly RSVP, confirm their details — like dinner selections — and even notify their managers, all within the app.

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Implementation was fast and straightforward, taking just three weeks. “Rolling out Beekeeper to our teams was very easy — I really didn’t need to do much,” says Parker. Once integrated with ADP, employees could instantly view their payslips directly in Beekeeper, giving them convenient, on-demand access to payroll information that had previously been difficult to access.

To further reduce the burden on HR teams and support self-service, Ole Smoky also launched Beekeeper’s FAQ chatbot. Setting it up was simple: “We used the spreadsheet we already had with frequently asked questions to create the knowledge base for the FAQ chatbot,” Parker explains. Now, employees can get answers to common questions without having to wait for HR support.

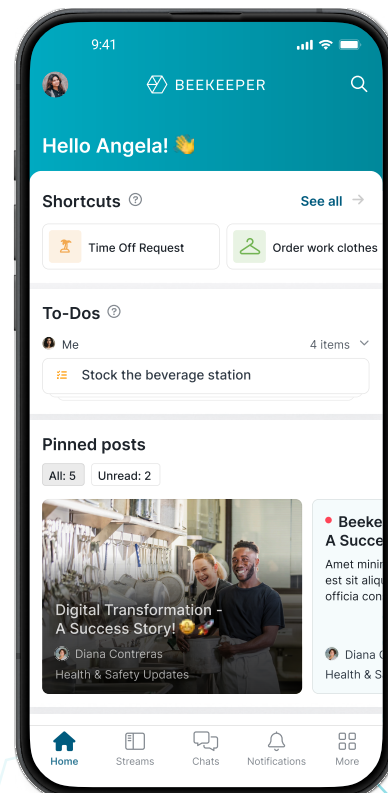
By giving employees instant access to everything they need — and making communication simpler across every location — Beekeeper has helped Ole Smoky keep its frontline connected, empowered, and firmly rooted in its culture.

Product features

- Employee communications
- FAQ chatbot
- ADP integration
- Event management

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Raising the bar on frontline connection and communication

It didn't take long for employees at Ole Smoky Distillery and Tanteo Spirits to see the value of Beekeeper.

With Beekeeper, Ole Smoky can now easily share updates that previously got lost in emails or newsletters — channels that didn't always reach frontline teams. "Folks in bottling and blending get to interact directly with corporate teams, something that was never possible before," says Parker. That visibility has strengthened the sense of connection across all locations.

Frontline employees also feel more connected to the brand itself. "We're the official moonshine of the University of Tennessee, and employees love sharing photos when they see our logo displayed at the stadium," says Parker. "It's amazing to see them engaging with the brand and feeling proud to be part of it in new ways."

Beyond improving culture and communication, Beekeeper has made it much easier for employees to manage everyday tasks.

"For our employees in sales, the ADP integration is one feature that's made a huge difference," says Parker. "Now, reps can check that the number they have in their head matches what's coming on their paycheck. It's helped our payroll department ensure accuracy, and that's really important to us."

As a result, the payroll team now runs fewer emergency pay cycles and has seen more employees enroll in direct deposit, saving time and reducing headaches behind the scenes.

"What's so valuable about Beekeeper is that it becomes whatever you need it to be," adds Parker. "It's helped us maintain the spirit of connection by giving our frontline teams a central place to find everything they need for work."



About Ole Smokey Distillery and Tanteo Spirits

Born from the rich moonshine tradition of the Smoky Mountains, Ole Smoky Distillery opened in 2010 in Gatlinburg, Tennessee. It quickly became a top-selling whiskey brand and major tourist draw, expanding to three more locations across Tennessee. In 2023, the company merged with Tanteo Spirits, known for its tequilas, growing its portfolio and bringing even more flavor to its lineup.



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