

// CASE STUDY 2014 - 2018 //

FOCUS: Dynamic, end-to-end project management

The brochures for KEEP 2018 communications.

KION GROUP AG has been a Unequity client since 2014. It joins the brands Dematic, Linde, STILL, Fenwick, OM STILL, Baoli and OM Voltas all under one roof and is a global provider of forklifts, warehouse technology and combined services including supply chain solutions. The company is market leader in Europe and second worldwide in the manufacture of industrial trucks as well as a leading provider of automation technology. The group has more than 31,000 employees and generated revenues of EUR 7.7 bil. in 2017.

// THE KION EMPLOYEE SHARE

OWNERSHIP OFFERING //

KION and Unequity – long-term partners

After its initial public offering in 2013, KION GROUP AG launched its share purchase programme “KEEP” (KION Employee Equity Program) in 2014 to employees in Germany. It was the first time employees were given the opportunity of receiving special conditions for investing in the company. The plan from the start was to gradually expand employee share ownership internationally, and since 2013 KEEP has been offered on an annual basis. At this point, employees from 12 countries are eligible to participate in KEEP.

Unequity has been there from the beginning as the KION Group communications partner responsible for introducing KEEP in Germany, rolling out the programme step-by-step on an international level and for continually driving the campaigns in all of the participating countries. Unequity developed and implemented the creative and strategic communications as well as handled vital project management tasks with all of KION’s internal departments and external partners.



KION GROUP AG shares are traded on the German Stock Exchange under the initials KGX.

// GOALS OF THE KION EMPLOYEE EQUITY PROGRAM //

The KION Employee Equity Program is a 3 + 1 matching plan in which, after a defined holding period, employees receive one gift share for every three shares they buy. All employees who take part in KEEP for the first time also receive special starter conditions for their commitment. With these incentives and benefits, KION Group has established a very attractive employee share purchase programme. There were a number of objectives linked with the introduction of KEEP at KION Group. The primary goal was to generate added value for employees through the opportunity of investing in the company's development, thereby acknowledging their contributions to the company in general. On top of that, the programme was to enhance the sense of solidarity among employees at the different companies and brands under the KION GROUP AG banner.



"KKG" in giant letters on the Germany road show.

// CONSTANT CHALLENGES //

Inspiring loyalty

The launch of KEEP in 2014 focused on creating and strengthening the feeling of employee loyalty – not only in the programme, but also in KION shares and in the company itself. To achieve this goal, a Germany-wide road show visited employees at their workplaces to get them directly involved in the communication process.

The complexity of the various media components increased with each additional country. In addition to the different languages, there were also legal regulations as well as varying organisational structures in the assorted companies within the individual countries that needed to be taken into consideration. All of these aspects had a decisive impact on the conceptual side of the communications materials.

Communicating internationally

International compatibility played a massive role in developing the communications materials for the step-by-step global roll-out that began in 2015.

To ensure that the internationalisation of the programme was handled properly, and to simplify the administrative side for participants, a different provider was integrated in 2018 for employees in China and the USA. This of course required yet another differentiation in the preparation of the communications campaign.

// THE AGENCY'S TASK //

Developing a strategic communications concept

In order to raise awareness for the share purchase programme, a strategic and creative communications concept needed to be developed and delivered using the best possible selection of media. The existing and well-established channels were to be used for this massive undertaking: the employee magazine, the company Intranet, e-mails and standard media such as posters, notice boards and promotions. The primary objective of the campaign content was to communicate how KEEP works and how to participate, but it also had to illustrate the background idea of offering a programme of this kind at the company in general.

For the 2014 project launch, training was given to multipliers and stakeholders in conference calls and workshops in order to ensure that all of the important decision-makers and players within the company were informed about the new employee benefit and on board in terms of its planning. In conjunction with the launch of KEEP, a road show travelled to six large KION Group locations in Germany. The campaign was also published on the KION Social Intranet and on an external website as well.

Adapting and developing

In general, the communications strategy each year was based on a multi-level cross-media campaign. With the step-by-step international roll-out, more and more responsibility was transferred to the foreign locations in order for them to organise their own events or road shows. The leads in the various countries were given comprehensive support from Unequity in the form of materials and process information. For the continued roll-out in 2017, the initial testimonial concept was replaced with a brand-new creative concept and KEEP was given an entirely new look and feel.



The booths at the road shows featured balloons, t-shirts, informational materials and other goodies all about KEEP.



// COMMUNICATION IN VARIOUS CHANNELS //

Live – road shows and information days

To introduce KEEP in the pilot country, Germany, a road show travelled to six major locations under the motto “KGX? – Sagt mir nix!” (“KGX? - What’s that?”) It gave employees the chance to find out everything they wanted to know about KION shares and about the first ever employee share purchase programme at the company. At the same time, the administrator – necessary to open individual accounts and deposit accounts – was there to speak and answer questions about personal administration of the programme.

In subsequent years, planning and execution for events was taken over by the leads in the new participating countries. That structure works splendidly because each location has different needs and the country leads are in a perfect position to serve those needs. Unequity also provides them with support in the form of materials, consultation and any news about KEEP.



Employees found out for themselves about KION shares at a series of road shows.

E-mail communications

A multi-level e-mail campaign addressed to managers, multipliers and employees is initiated at the beginning of every KEEP offering. Depending on the timing and the depth of the subject matter, the sender is either the Executive Committee or, for informational messages about the programme, the HR department. The e-mails announce upcoming communications, provide information about content and deadlines, introduce services and providers, and link readers to important information on the Intranet. Employees who are already KEEP participants only receive digital information.



An animated video explains KEEP on the KION Social Intranet.

Online and video communications on the KION Social Intranet

Current information on KEEP is available on proprietary KEEP pages on the KION Social Intranet. During the launch phase, videos showed statements about KEEP from employees and Executive Committee members. This initial employee testimonial campaign, which was used on all media platforms, was then replaced in 2017 by a more modern, animated video that now explains the various processes of KEEP. Regular online news bulletins keep employees informed of current events and dates related to KEEP.

A proprietary Internet site has been set up for employees who don't have direct access to the Intranet from their workplaces in order to provide them with the most important information on the structure and functionality of the programme as well as with contact information for the people they can get in touch with for questions.

Each participating country has access to a country-specific KEEP Intranet site.



Print communications

Every year since 2014, campaign posters have been hung up during the offer period in central locations at all participating countries in order to raise awareness for the KEEP offers. At the beginning of the offer period in question, employees who are eligible for the first time, receive an information packet with a printed brochure, a personal letter and the programme terms and conditions – each in their country's language. The letter contains all the information they need regarding participation in KEEP as well as personal login information for the various administrative platforms for KEEP. In addition to designing all of the print materials, the entire production, shipping and handling of those materials was Unequity's responsibility.

The first share match that each KEEP participant receives is also announced in the share match flyer, which is sent via post to employees' homes or can be picked up at the HR department.



Brochures and posters show the continued development of the creative concept, from 2014 to 2018.



// CONCLUSION AND OUTLOOK //

Great communications for great results – in Germany and around the world

The introduction of KEEP in 2014 went extremely well despite a short time period in which to communicate the launch of the employee benefit. In the first year a surprisingly high number of participants got involved in Germany, but with the international roll-out that began in 2015, participation rates differed quite a bit in the various countries. In central European countries and in Asia, for example, participation was above average while employees in Eastern Europe were a bit less enthusiastic. In the USA, added to the programme in 2018, an impressive 19% of employees took part in KEEP for the first time – the highest level outside of Germany since the introduction of the plan. Overall, a lot of KEEP members have come back to participate in subsequent rounds of the offer as well.

The first matching shares of the programme were celebrated in Germany in 2017: roughly 1,700 employees received their bonus shares. Employee shareholders in France, Italy, Great Britain and China followed suit in 2018 with their own bonus shares. It definitely looks like the KEEP success story is still being written!

// AWARD WINNING PROJECT //

A GEO Award 2015 for “KEEP”!

At the annual conference of the Global Equity Organization (GEO) 2015, the KION Group and Unequity jointly took first place in the “Best Plan Communication” category. The prize was awarded for the extensive communication measures for the launch of KEEP 2014. The comprehensive, multimedia communication package convinced the jury with lasting effect. We are very happy together with our client about this well-deserved award for our joint work!



Teresa Oster (KION Group) and Simone Schmitt-Schillig (Unequity) are delighted to have won the GEO Award 2015

// AND WHAT CAN WE DO FOR YOU? //

Unequity makes good ideas successful with optimal communication. Whether it's employee participation or executive programmes, bonus plans, company car policies or occupational pension schemes. We make your compensation and benefits programmes a success – for your employees and your company.

Unequity. Good communication for good ideas.



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