

Axonify

The hospitality associate enablement toolkit

**A 3-step plan for enabling your hospitality workforce
to drive next-level service and maximize productivity**



The hospitality associate enablement imperative

Investing in your frontline is no longer a nice-to-have: it's a business imperative. And the most impactful way to invest is through associate enablement.

What's on the minds of hospitality leaders? Workforce versatility. Security and safety. Operational efficiency. Reinforcing operating standards. And, of course, offering a next-level guest experience. Associate enablement has a key role to play in each of these crucial challenges that hospitality is looking to solve. That's why we're diving deep into enablement in this toolkit—what it is, and how to use it to support and empower your people.

We distilled associate enablement into three steps to make it easy for hospitality leaders to get started:

1. Get the basics of associate enablement
2. Learn to build enablement campaigns
3. See how enabled your *own* workforce is

This toolkit will walk you through these three steps and give you everything you need to start supporting your hospitality teams.

Ready to dive in?

Who is this toolkit for?

Any hospitality leader who wants to drive revenue and maximize productivity will benefit from reading this guide, including:

- ✓ HR leaders responsible for hiring, retaining and engaging frontline employees.
- ✓ L&D leaders driving critical training initiatives.
- ✓ Communications leaders getting the word out to keep everyone on the same page.
- ✓ Operational leaders sweating the small stuff to maximize productivity and efficiency.

While all of these leaders have a role to play in enablement, their initiatives and activities haven't traditionally been well-connected. The following pages will act as a positive first step toward getting everyone working together to launch a holistic strategy that prioritizes and empowers your most valuable asset: your people.







STEP 1:

Get the basics of associate enablement

Associate enablement, defined

We've used the term "associate enablement" already, but what does it mean? The simplest way to define associate enablement is the tools, resources and support that hospitality workers need to get things done. It's about ensuring your people have exactly what they need, in the flow of work, to do the right things, in the right moments, to meet business objectives.

While an enabled frontline will look slightly different from one hospitality organization to the next, they often have a few common denominators:

COMMON CHARACTERISTICS OF AN ASSOCIATE ENABLEMENT STRATEGY		
 <p>FAST</p> <p>Enablement happens quickly in the moment of need, to avoid taking up extra time throughout a shift or workday.</p>	 <p>IN THE FLOW OF WORK</p> <p>The tools and resources frontlines need should fit into the workflow, shared through the devices they are already using.</p>	 <p>COMMUNITY BUILDING</p> <p>Fun, friendly competition is inherently built into enablement programs to drive adoption and engagement and foster a sense of belonging.</p>
 <p>EASY TO ACCESS/USE</p> <p>Enablement makes information easily accessible in the moment of need, like when an associate has a guest at reception with a question.</p>	 <p>TASK ORIENTED</p> <p>Enablement must align to hospitality workers' task-oriented approach, making it clear what needs to be done, every day.</p>	 <p>PERSONALIZED</p> <p>Enablement strategies are adaptable to the unique needs of individual workers and roles within a hospitality organization.</p>

The pillars of associate enablement

So what does it look like on a day-to-day basis? The functions of associate enablement fall into three core pillars: learning, communications and operational support.

The driving force of the most effective associate enablement strategy is learning—giving your people the capability to execute on their role. Meanwhile, the communications pillar ensures your staff is reachable,

informed and connected to HQ, no matter the scale. And operational support is all about putting that training and information to use.

Before we look at how these pillars work together, we'll explore each individual pillar in more detail, including common tactics, the tools and technology used and how to measure success for each one.



DEEPER DIVE

Enablement vs. experience: what's the difference?

You may have heard the terms used interchangeably, but associate experience and enablement aren't the same.

- ✔ Associate experience encompasses the totality of a hospitality employee's experiences at work. It's influenced by a wide variety of factors, including things like scheduling, compensation and benefits, relationships, and—you guessed it—enablement.
- ✔ Associate enablement is a critical pillar of experience, firmly rooted in making sure employees have everything they need to get work done. It's influenced by things like communication, training, plus the technology and tools that prepare employees to confidently execute on the operational priorities of the business.

PILLAR 1:

Learning

In order to get things done, hospitality frontlines need to know how to do it. This is the most critical component of associate enablement; without it, nothing gets done. Workers need to be trained on the processes, protocols and products that drive business outcomes. They need to be able to access information in real time to support guest queries or specific task completion. And, they need to be able to access upskilling and cross-skilling resources to prepare them for new roles (and enable organizations to stay agile and responsive to staffing changes). And, they need to remember all of it.

For all this to happen in hospitality workforces, learning needs to look different than it would for traditional desked workforces. It needs to be accessed easily at the moment of need, in the flow of work, from the devices they're already using. But more than that, it needs to be accessed and consumed *quickly*.

While corporate or deskbound workers can take time to complete corporate training, hospitality workers on the frontline cannot step away from their tasks to complete a 45-minute training session in the back room. And even if they could, they'll forget it the minute they step back onto the floor. So hospitality organizations need to approach training differently, with a focus on bite-sized modules that tie seamlessly into the other enablement pillars to constantly reinforce and tie back to daily tasks and company-wide objectives.

Unfortunately, when that approach to learning isn't in place, productivity and engagement suffers. Research shows that while [36% of hospitality workers and managers say adequate training and upskilling is a top driver of success and happiness at work](#), 26% don't have access to it. And, perhaps even more worrisome, 31% don't feel that their organization invests in their personal development and growth.



48%

of hospitality managers say a lack of employee training is impacting day-to-day operations.

What learning and development looks like for hospitality workforces

Modern frontline learning is all about getting the right information in the right moment. This can look very different from organization to organization. In a hotel, for example, associates might do daily microlearning before they start their shift. They might also have access to on-demand resources throughout their shift so they can look up critical information in the moment of need (like how to properly make up a bed). Skill-testing questions could reinforce vital information, while self-directed learning paths help develop crucial skills for associates looking to further their career into another department, or a managerial role.

While digital tools are critical to the necessary speed and ease of associate learning, it doesn't replace hands-on training. But a shift in approach is needed to avoid the inconsistencies and inefficiencies that can occur at scale.

Modern enablement tactics



On-the-job training

Learning how to do a job while in the role, through hands-on learning and instruction.



Microlearning

Training delivered in short, focused bites that fit naturally into the everyday workflow.



Reinforcement

Exposure and retrieval practices that ensure knowledge is retained and ready to apply.



Compliance training

Training that ensures employees conform to mandatory rules, specifications and regulations.



Coaching

One-on-one management of an employee to help them achieve performance objectives.



Self-directed training

Upskilling and development paths guided by the learners themselves

Measuring success

Measuring the success—and impact—of learning is a critical step in an effective enablement campaign. Employee training metrics like adoption, participation and learning path completion rates, allow hospitality leaders to identify what's being learned and retained, and where knowledge gaps and training red flags are emerging. Armed with that information, programs can be iterated quickly and at scale.

But success isn't just about adoption and knowledge metrics. These traditional learning measurements are taken at a single point-in-time and offer limited value in terms of volume, depth and dimension. The true success of learning is how it ties back to business results. To see how knowledge and participation influence broader organizational KPIs, like revenue, workplace safety and turnover, organizations need a more sophisticated approach. This means collecting data and, with the right technology and tools in place, finding those direct links between usage and business outcomes. And when those links are found, replicating them.

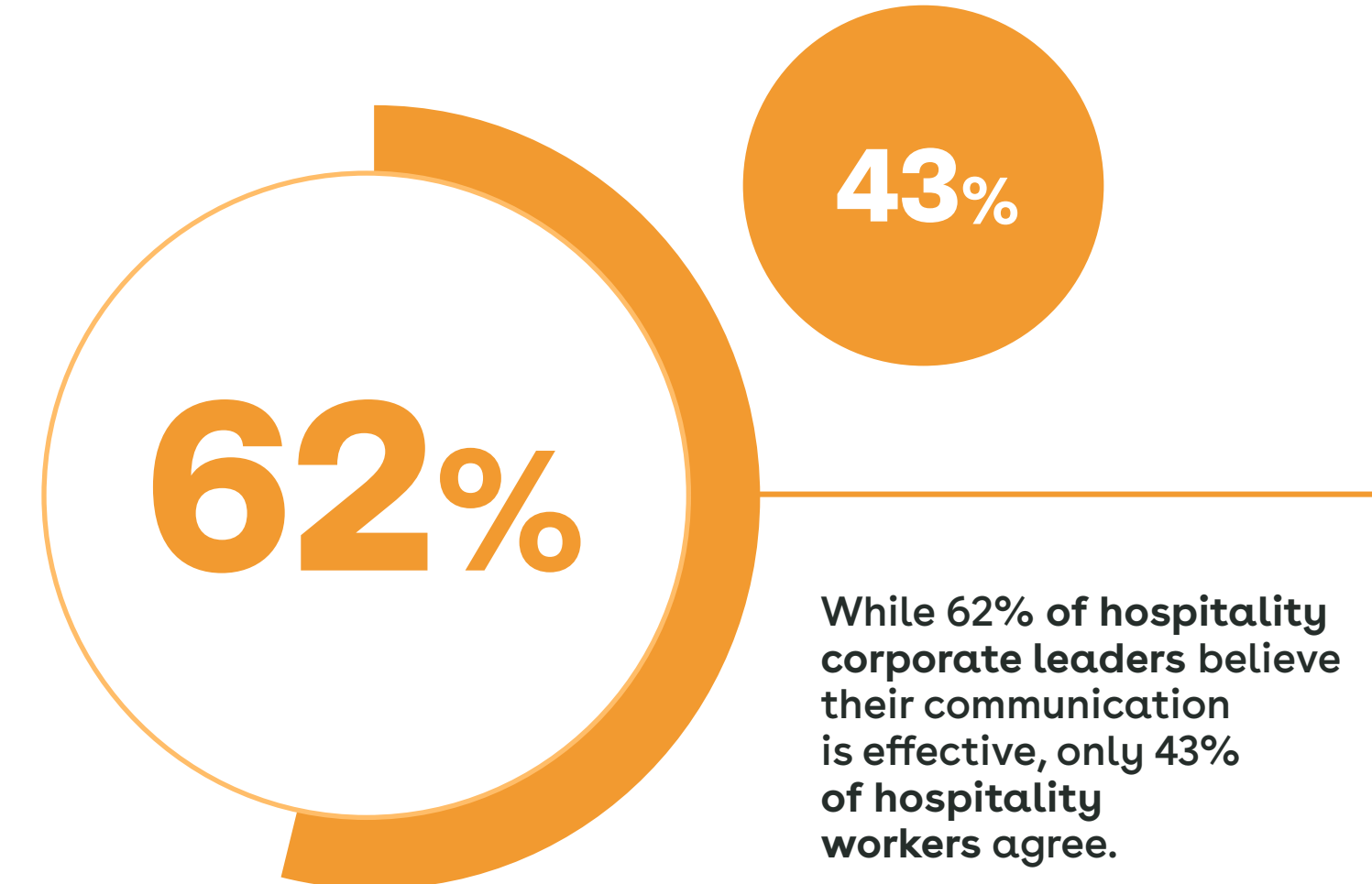
PILLAR 2:

Communication

In order to get things done, associates also need to know why they're doing it. In other words, they need to know what's going on: what's happening at corporate, what other teams are doing, what can they expect. They also need to be able to share and collaborate: what's working at their location, what customers are saying, what makes a process easier or more efficient.

This two-way communication is pivotal to an enabled hospitality frontline, but currently it's trending in the wrong direction. Our recent research found that [less than half of hospitality workers feel heard at work.](#)

The communication component of associate enablement is about the ability to reliably reach every single employee, in multiple languages, no matter the scale of the organization. Never had the communication element of associate enablement been more important than during the pandemic, when hospitality organizations needed to be able to talk to their staff in real time, sharing last-minute guidelines or legal changes. But even beyond that specific time, communication is and always will be about connections: connecting hospitality teams to corporate, and dispersed locations and regions to each other. When that connection is strong, it's easy for workers to understand why they're coming to work each day.

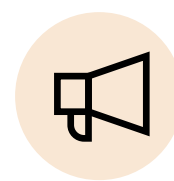


What communication looks like for hospitality workforces

Associate communication encompasses many of the touchpoints that enable a dispersed workforce. It could be the corporate office sharing a company-wide announcement about a new promotion. It could be locations or workers getting recognized for going above and beyond for guests. It could be a transparent discussion of the brand's vision or mission, or a major change in management.

But aside from the standard top-down communication, frontline communication can also look more community-focused: associates sharing ideas on how to promote a loyalty program, staff sharing shifts or even different locations or regions finding ways to connect and engage with each other, which can be difficult in dispersed frontline organizations.

Modern enablement tactics



Broadcasts

Company-wide or regional team announcements sharing news or broader updates.



Nudges

Reminders about relevant topics, such as promotional or company information.



Pulse checks

Brief survey questions designed to take a quick "pulse" of sentiment or engagement.



Social forum

Feedback and discussion forums focused on specific topic or question.



Knowledge base

Centralized repository or hub of information, job aids and other resources.



Peer chat

Messaging channels that connect dispersed teams and locations to share ideas and best practices.

Measuring success

Similar to learning enablement tactics, measuring communication efforts involves tracking core metrics, but also tying them back to business outcomes.

Reachable rate is a pivotal metric for tracking communication effectiveness because it tells you how much of your workforce you can reach within a reasonable amount of time. From there, measuring open and read rates, and other engagement metrics, tell you how effective and valuable the information you're sharing with your people actually is. Like with many employee metrics, some of these numbers are easy to capture and some are not. Having an enablement solution in place will make it much easier to track them.

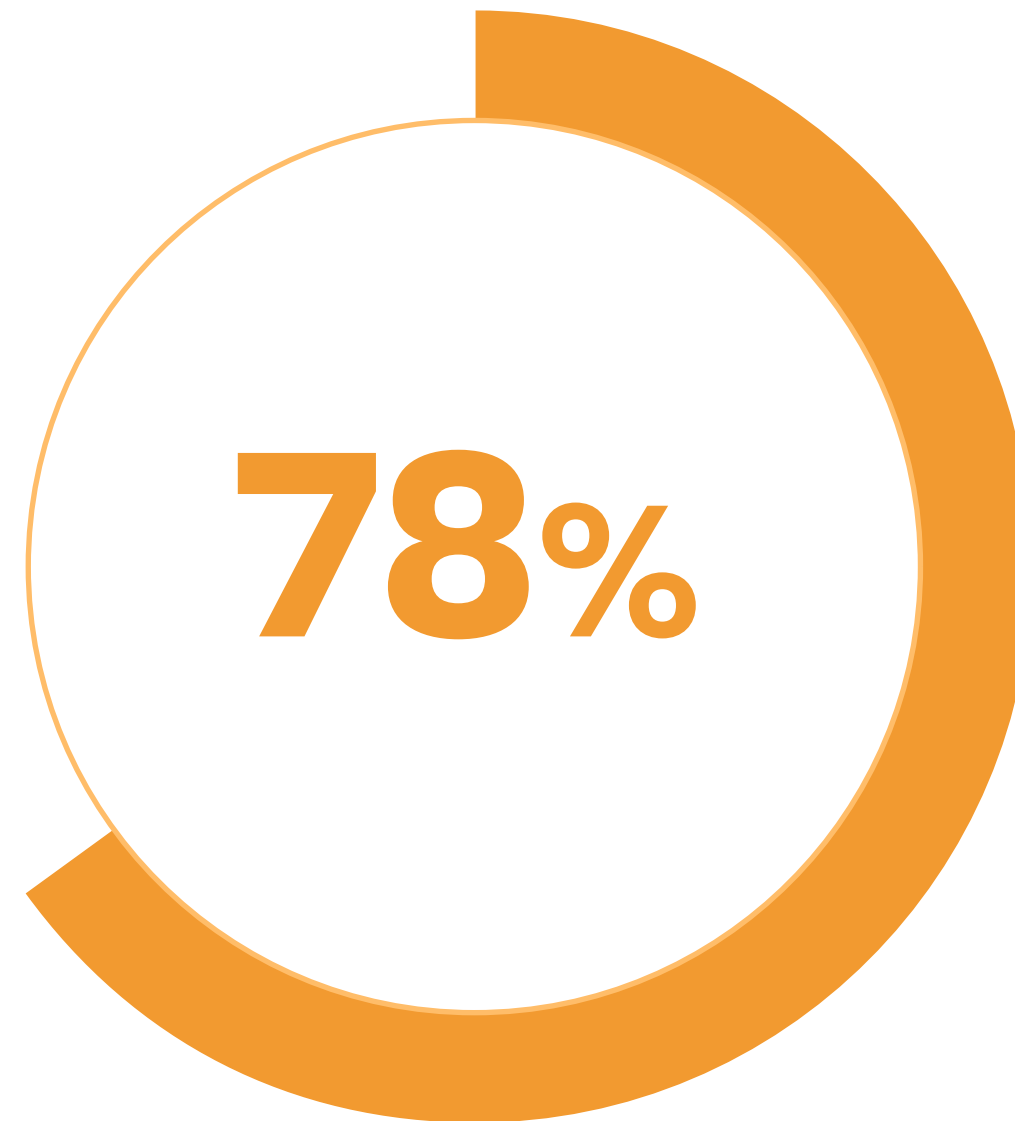
Again, the next step is having the right technology and tools in place to measure these metrics against key business KPIs to see not just how readable your communications are—but how effectively they enable your team to succeed.

PILLAR 3:

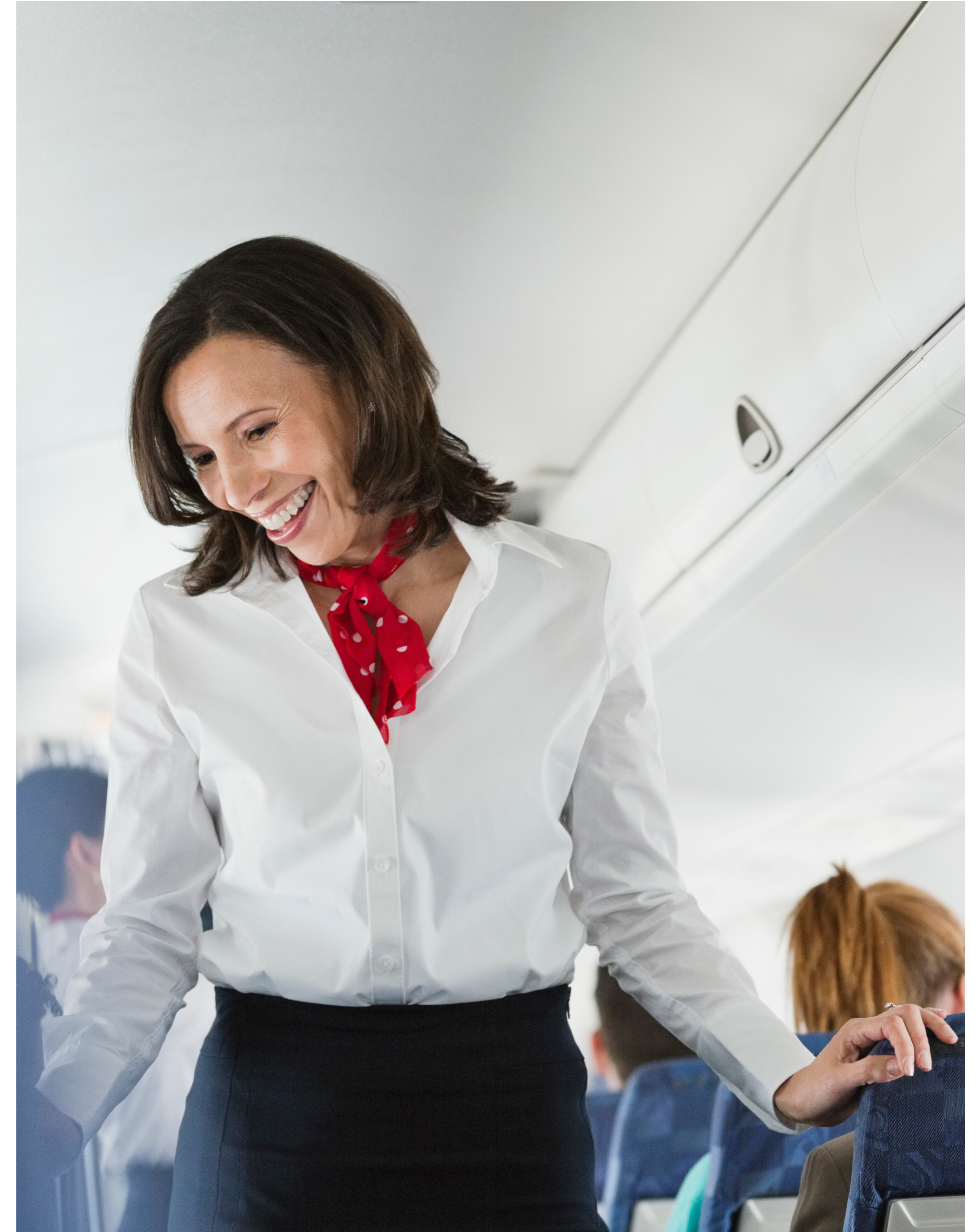
Operational support

As part of a task-oriented workforce, hospitality employees need clear direction around the actions required on a daily, weekly and monthly basis: standard operating procedures, safety protocols, you name it. In other words, they want to know exactly what's expected of them.

The operational component of an associate enablement strategy is all about clear and concise processes and directives that keep staff focused on the jobs that are critical to success. Hospitality workers don't have time to track down a manager with a clipboard; managers don't have time to manually assign tasks and verify what's getting done. It needs to be standardized, automated and in one place.



of hospitality workers, managers and corporate leaders believe that effective task management can address frontline challenges and help workers thrive.



What operational support looks like for hospitality workforces

The operational functions of a hospitality organization differ wildly depending on its industry, size and scope—but there are some common denominators when we start to explore what operational support looks like on the frontline.

It could be a hotel's front desk staff reviewing and following the SOP for checking in a guest. It could be an airline's pre-departure checklist. It could also be protocols around workplace safety, or emergency response. Operational support is all about enabling hospitality organizations to put all their training and engagement to use, every day.

Modern enablement tactics



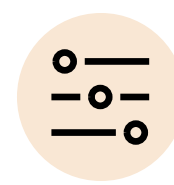
Task assignment

Corporate- or manager-assigned tasks directed to individual workers, teams or regions.



Task verification

The ability to manually or automatically approve the completion of tasks at scale, often with photo evidence.



Inspection checklists

Location-based audits or reviews of operational flows, compliance or processes.



Behavior observations

Individual or team audits of particular behaviors or processes.

Measuring success

With the right technology in place, measuring operational consistency and execution can be simple: what's the task completion rate? How often are tasks verified as correct? Are inspection checklists showing any problem areas?

That's one of the biggest values of moving operational support from the clipboard to the digital space; it makes monitoring at scale simple and easy so that organizations can stay agile and reactive around key events and major launches.

One word of warning: when measuring the success of operational support at scale, look for trends, not one-off mistakes. If a location is implementing a loyalty program wrong, that's an easy fix the manager can address. If an entire region makes the same mistake, you have a trend—and your training, communication or task assignments might be to blame.



STEP 2:

Learn to build enablement campaigns

Bringing the pillars of enablement together

How to bring the three pillars of associate enablement together to drive business outcomes.

Frontline learning, communication and operational support can function separately—in many organizations that’s exactly the norm. But it’s not enablement. Because it’s when these three pillars are used strategically to empower and support your people against business goals that things really get exciting.

The pillars of associate enablement aren’t stages; you don’t complete one before starting on the next. Instead, these three components work together holistically to give workforces what they need, in the format and approach that makes sense for the way frontlines work. This is called an enablement campaign.

The process of combining learning, communication and operational support to enable frontlines might feel daunting. It often involves working with stakeholders from a number of teams, and aligning once-disparate strategies into one seamless approach. To simplify the process of building an enablement campaign, we’ve broken it down into a step-by-step process.



Building an enablement campaign

Here's how to bring the three pillars of associate enablement together to align and empower your people.

STEP 1

Set a goal

An enablement campaign starts with a goal. Are you launching a promotion? Are you driving awareness around your loyalty program? Are you preparing staff for a key event or seasonal surge? Clarify your goal by fine-tuning who you need to perform, what they need to do and what resources, information and support they'll need to do it.

STEP 2

Identify your “access points”

Next, identify how your people will engage with your campaign. This includes device access, applications and tools and connection points that will span all three enablement pillars of learning, communications and operational support. If you've never built out an enablement campaign before, this process will be more in-depth. Once you start to have a more sophisticated process in place (or, better yet, an enablement solution), your access points will become more clear.

STEP 3

Finalize your touchpoints

The final step is looking at the touchpoints—or activities—that will do all the heavy lifting to enable your staff to execute on the campaign. These are the modern enablement tactics we explored in the previous section. But it's how these tactics come together that's strategic. It's not enough to send one announcement, one training video and a list of tasks to every worker. An enablement campaign has many touchpoints to ensure the information and training sticks.

Think of your enablement touchpoints in three buckets:

- ✔ **Preparation:** Activities that take place prior to a key event or change.
- ✔ **Execution:** Activities that support the key event or change while in motion.
- ✔ **Sustainment:** Activities that ensure that the change or protocols are working.



DEEPER DIVE

Enablement campaigns versus learning campaigns

While learning campaigns are a series of “learning experiences” designed to create behavioral change, enablement campaigns pull that process into a broader results-focused strategy focused on a business outcome.

An enablement strategy in action:

Loyalty program re-launch

Once you start to build out a campaign, it becomes easier to see how the pillars of enablement become one cohesive strategy. Let's build an enablement campaign for a hotel chain making enhancements to their loyalty program.

Campaign goal

The goal for this campaign is to prepare 50,000 hospitality associates for a re-launch of the brand's loyalty program through in-depth program knowledge training, and clear and consistent SOPs for sign-ups and questions.

Access points

For the launch of the program, the brand is leveraging a CYOD (choose-your-own-device) strategy to corral all the launch announcements, program training and associated tasks into one central enablement solution, accessible through personal devices as well as company devices located throughout the hotel locations. This material will be available in associates' preferred language.

Touchpoints

The touchpoints for the enablement campaign span 60 days, including 45 days before the launch and 15 days after. First, training begins 45 days prior to the launch, with resources and announcements added to a central library. Ongoing reinforcement and pulse checks monitor associate progress through the training, while setup task lists and photo verification ensure locations are properly preparing promotional signage in lobbies and in guest rooms. Post-launch, site inspections evaluate execution of the program, while pulse checks and reinforcement continue to monitor knowledge retention and identify gaps quickly.

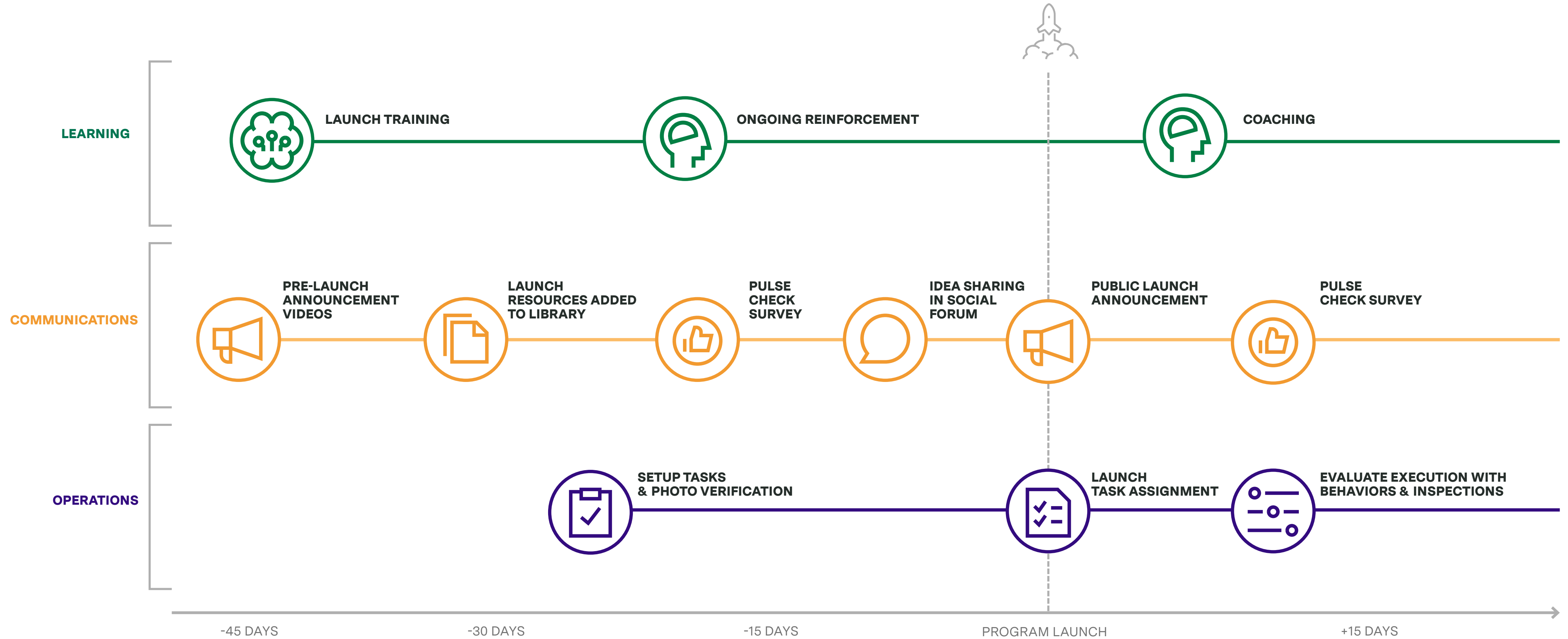
Measuring success

To measure the success of the re-launch, the organization can track metrics around the preparedness of its staff, how effectively they executed on the launch itself and how both of these stages impacted the KPIs of the program. Preparedness is monitored before and during the launch to iterate on the support resources as needed. What were the open and read rates of the initial announcement? What was the completion rate of the training? How did workers perform on the reinforcement questions? These metrics, paired with sentiments uncovered by pulse surveys, give the organization a clear sense of how successful the re-launch will be.

At launch time, task completion and verification, alongside site checklists and behavioral observations, monitor execution; if deviations in SOPs occur, the organization can follow up with more reinforcement training or resources as needed. Afterward, the enablement platform correlates metrics with sign-ups and other organizational data to identify areas for improvement, and processes to replicate.

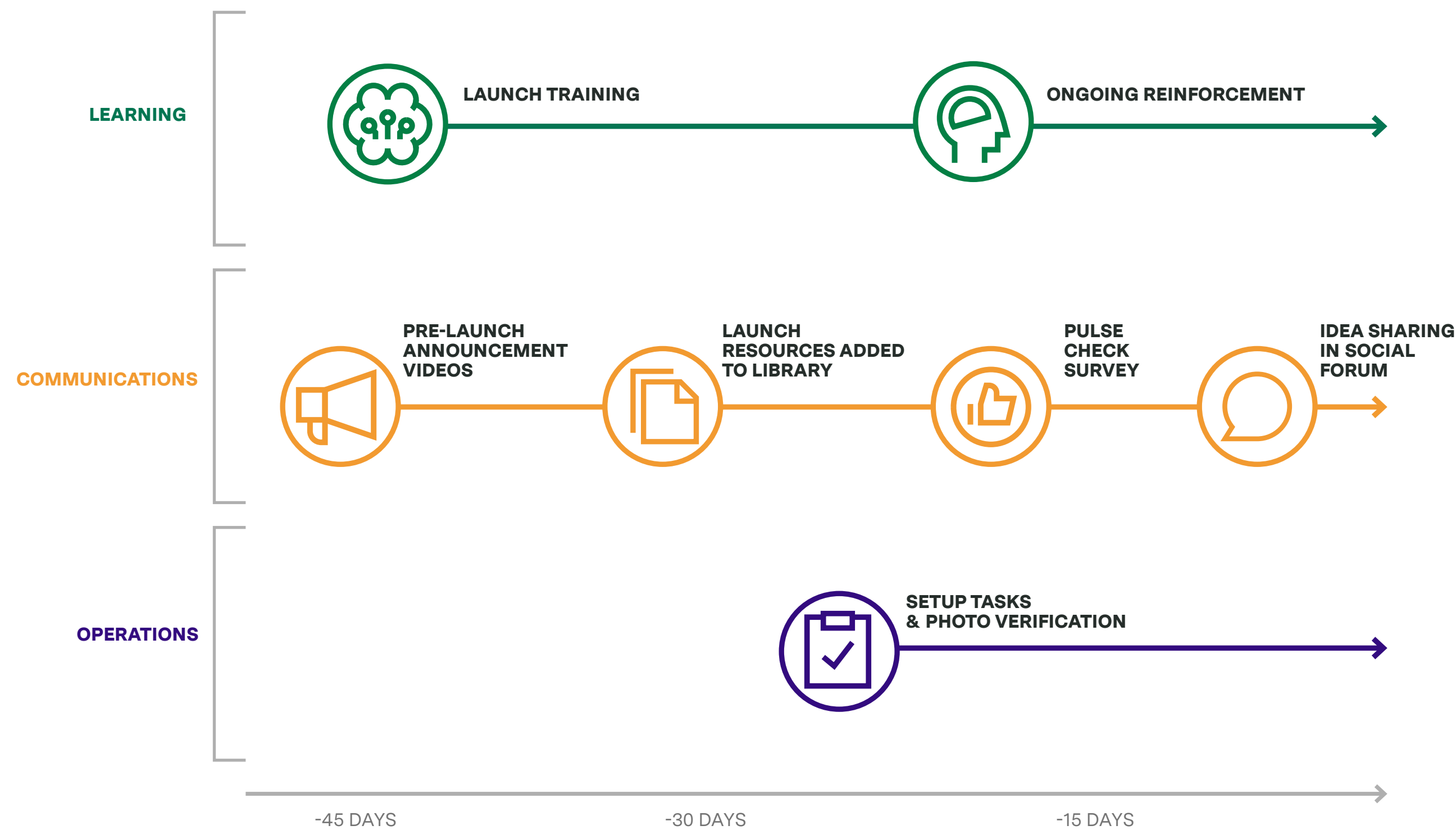
Campaign timeline

Now that we've mapped out the strategy of your loyalty re-launch campaign, let's see how it looks from start to finish, with all three enablement pillars in place.



The pre-launch experience

Let's take a deeper look at the pre-launch stage of this enablement campaign through the eyes of Sandra, a front desk attendant.



Sandra's experience:

- Sandra first hears about the loyalty program updates 45 days before the launch, when an announcement video is shared to the feed in her enablement app. She learns what is changing and why the organization decided to re-launch the program.
- When she goes into the app to complete her daily training, she starts learning details about how the program is changing. Resources on the program get added to her knowledge base, so she can self-serve additional info when needed.
- Sandra and her team are sent a task list on how to set up signage about the program re-launch in the lobby and in guest rooms. As they prepare for the launch, they upload photos to the app to get verified. The setup gets flagged and they double-check one task before they re-jig the signage to be displayed correctly.
- As the launch gets closer, Sandra is getting reinforced on her training. A pulse check survey asks her to evaluate how she's feeling about the launch. She shares that she's feeling confident and excited about sharing the news with guests.



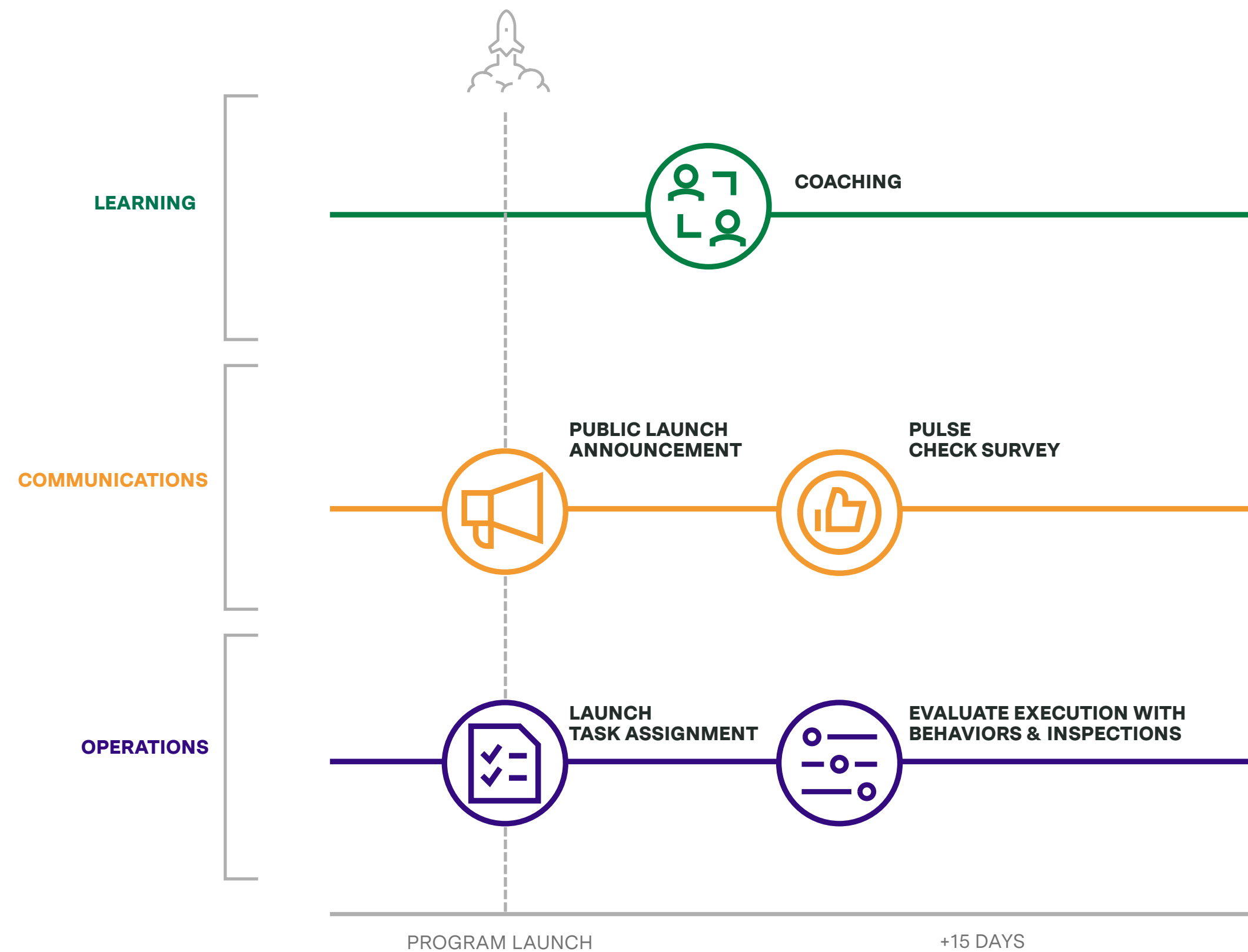


Sandra's experience:

- In the days leading up to the launch, Sandra shares ideas (and excitement!) with teammates from other locations on how to communicate details about the program with guests to encourage sign-ups.
- When launch day comes, Sandra feels empowered and ready to execute on the re-launch. She shares details about the changes with new guests and existing loyalty members. She pulls up resources from the knowledge base as needed to answer guest questions.
- After the launch, Sandra's front desk manager coaches her on her approach to getting program sign-ups and helps her fine-tune her exchanges with guests. Ongoing pulse surveys check in with Sandra, and her team to see if they need additional support, while behavioral and store inspections monitor the execution of the campaign for inconsistencies or opportunities for improvement.

The launch experience

Sandra's experience continues as launch day arrives. Let's walk through the launch and post-launch stages.





STEP 3:

**See how enabled
your own
workforce is**

QUIZ

How enabled is your hospitality workforce?

Use this quiz to explore how enabled your frontline really is.



Instructions

Answer the following questions about the frontline experience your organization is offering. There's no wrong answer! Torn between two answers? Choose both! When you're finished, tally your responses to see where you're sitting on our enablement scale.

1. How do frontline workers typically access digital information on the job?

- A. Back room computer
- B. Company-provided device (POS, tablet, hand-held)
- C. Personal smartphone

2. Are frontline workers permitted to use their personal devices to access job information, including communications, training and support resources?

- A. No
- B. Yes—but only on the clock
- C. Yes—anytime, anywhere

3. How do you adapt job resources and tools to meet frontline workers' different language preferences?

- A. All information is made available in 1 language
- B. All information is made available in a select number of languages
- C. All information is translated into each worker's preferred language

4. How does your corporate team typically communicate important updates, such as new processes, timely promotions or product recalls, to your staff?

- A. Emails sent to location managers
- B. Posters and on TV monitors in break rooms
- C. Company-provided messaging apps

QUIZ: HOW ENABLED IS YOUR HOSPITALITY WORKFORCE?

5. How quickly can you reach your entire frontline workforce with a critical message?

- A. Within 1 month
- B. Within 2 weeks
- C. Within 7 days

6. How do you confirm important messages are received by frontline workers?

- A. We don't
- B. Frontline managers verbally confirm receipt
- C. We track it digitally

7. How do frontline managers communicate with workers when they're not on-shift?

- A. Phone calls
- B. Texts and/or informal messaging apps
- C. Company-provided messaging apps

8. How often do you ask for structured feedback from frontline workers?

- A. We get feedback sent to us through managers
- B. During the annual employee engagement survey
- C. Through ongoing pulse surveys and discussion forums

9. How often do frontline workers access formal training activities, like online courses, videos, classroom sessions, on average?

- A. Yearly
- B. Monthly
- C. Weekly

10. Where do most frontline workers access digital training and support resources?

- A. A desktop computer in a back room
- B. The devices they use on the job, like handhelds and tablets
- C. Their personal smartphones



QUIZ: HOW ENABLED IS YOUR HOSPITALITY WORKFORCE?

11. What percentage of frontline workers typically complete annual compliance training by the due date? Select the closest option.

- A. 0%
- B. 50%
- C. 100%

12. How do you personalize training to the needs of each frontline worker?

- A. We don't. Everyone in the same role gets the same training
- B. Location trainers adapt job training to individual needs on the fly
- C. We leverage data to deliver the right training and coaching to the right worker

13. How do you make sure frontline workers remember the information they receive during training?

- A. We don't
- B. We ask managers to follow up
- C. We use ongoing reinforcement and practice activities

14. How often do you provide frontline workers with cross-training opportunities in other functions?

- A. We don't
- B. Only when a position becomes available
- C. Continuous as part of our workforce management strategy

15. How do frontline workers typically access upskilling and career development activities?

- A. This is not available
- B. They must request access from their manager
- C. They are permitted to self-enroll into development programs

16. How do you handle shift change requests for frontline workers?

- A. Workers are required to complete their scheduled shifts
- B. Workers must get approval from a manager to change shifts
- C. Workers can trade shifts with peers as needed via the scheduling app



QUIZ: HOW ENABLED IS YOUR HOSPITALITY WORKFORCE?

17. How do frontline workers typically know which tasks they are assigned to complete during a shift?
- A. Paper checklist and/or whiteboard list
 - B. Verbal instructions from their manager
 - C. Digital task list
18. How do frontline workers typically find information to answer questions on the job?
- A. Ask a peer
 - B. Ask a manager
 - C. Access resources on their work or personal device
19. How do frontline managers typically confirm tasks are completed correctly?
- A. They don't
 - B. They verbally confirm with the assigned worker
 - C. They confirm the task is completed as expected automatically through photo verification
20. How do frontline managers record their observations during store walks and location audits?
- A. None
 - B. Paper note
 - C. Digital checklist

Quiz results

How do your responses stack up? Find out which option you chose the most and how it lines up with the results below:

Mostly As

Your frontline is not enabled

Here's the good news: there are a ton of opportunities for your organization to invest in your frontline and ensure that your teams are getting the tools, support and resources they need to get things done, every day. Not sure where to start? Our team is here to help! Book a call today to talk through your quiz results.

Mostly Bs

Your frontline is partially enabled

You're starting to give your frontline the tools, resources and information it needs to get things done—great! But there's a lot of opportunity for improvement. Your results suggest that the intent is there, but you may be lacking the technology and automation that will unburden your managers and inspire your staff to truly perform.

Mostly Cs

Your frontline is highly enabled

Your frontline is getting things done! You've got the right processes and tech in place to nail your enablement campaigns. Be sure to keep auditing and reviewing your processes—enablement is a living, breathing process and as your workforce (and business goals!) change, there might be opportunities to adapt or evolve your strategy.



What do I do now?

The first step in enabling your team is getting a sense of where you are today—and you've done that! Next, [book a call with our team](#) to go over your results and start building an enablement strategy.

Axonify

How hospitality learns, connects and gets things done

You're looking to deliver next-level guest experience, prioritize operational consistency and reinforce safety and compliance regulations—and Axonify can support every step of the way. Axonify is the top enablement solution for frontlines. It's science-backed and proven to maximize labor productivity.

Visit axonify.com to learn more

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