



How a digital workplace helps YMCA employees

Better Serve Their Communities

MangoApps gives the YMCA a space where employees can share knowledge, quickly access resources, and lean on each other for support





COMPANY:
YMCA

NATIONAL RESOURCE OFFICE:
Chicago, IL

EMPLOYEES:
50,000

OVERVIEW:

The YMCA is the leading nonprofit committed to strengthening community by empowering young people, improving the health and well-being of people of all ages and inspiring action in and across communities. Guided by their core values of caring, honesty, respect and responsibility, the Y is dedicated to giving people of all ages, backgrounds and walks of life the opportunity to reach their full potential with dignity.

Balancing structure and autonomy

The YMCA is a nonprofit organization that does important work in communities across the US.

The Y is a federated organization. While YMCA of the USA (Y-USA) serves as national resource office, each YMCA association functions as its own entity. This decentralized structure gives every location the freedom to adapt to the needs of its community and offer services that actually matter, rather than a boilerplate approach that might miss the mark.

As a result, no two Y branches are alike, so one-size-fits-all approaches don't work for them, whether you're talking about a software implementation or a community service initiative. When they were looking to create a digital workspace for their employees, they needed something that would be flexible enough to work for their people, and MangoApps fit the bill.

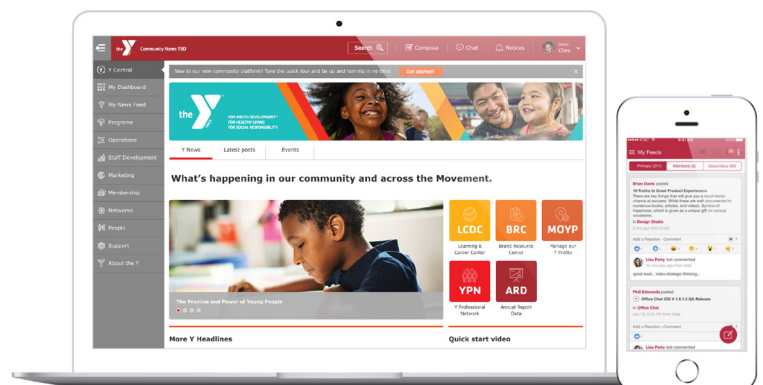
"Every Y serves a different community that has very different needs," says Vanessa Blair, Senior Manager of Organizational Communications at Y-USA. It's hard to try to be everything for everyone, but MangoApps allows us to offer various types of content in the same place. So Y staff can sort through the different resources and choose what benefits them."

Before the Y started working with MangoApps, they had some digital solutions in place, but those systems were missing the core of what the YMCA is all about—bringing people together.

"With COVID, MangoApps has played an incredible role for us, communication-wise. It's really helped create that stable, centralized place for Ys to get the information that they need, fast. It also gives them a sense of a community—that they aren't in this alone. Y staff across the country are facing some of the same challenges that they're facing."

- Vanessa Blair, Sr. Manager of Organizational Communications, YMCA of the USA

"In our old system," says Emily Hatteberg, Editorial Manager, Content Strategist, "Y-USA pushed out content, and we also had online communities. They were separate. You had to be a member of a community in order to access what was there. We wanted to marry those two things—spaces that would be both resource repositories and social spaces where people could share."



“I have access to everybody in the movement with a click of a button,” adds Scott Fahrney, Chief of Staff at Florida’s State Alliance of YMCAs. “Before MangoApps, if you knew someone that was an expert on a particular topic, then hopefully you could get to that person. But if you didn’t, you were on an island alone to figure it out.”

After demos with many software providers, the Y chose MangoApps because it ticked all their boxes for features, they liked the look and feel and, most importantly, it was the only platform able to meet the diverse needs of their decentralized organization.

Building on a Strong Community

The Y-USA team responsible for deploying MangoApps has countless examples of ways in which the platform has brought people together and strengthened their national community.

MangoApps made it very easy for employees at different Ys to share resources and ideas, and opened doors to possibilities that weren’t there before. The effect of a capability like this is hard to quantify. It’s reduced duplicated work, improved culture, and has given people an avenue to feel heard and find support.

“We went with MangoApps because of the way that it looks and functions. The other platforms were really manual and more like the previous one, where Y-USA pushed content to people who couldn’t share or participate.”

- Elizabeth Herrera,
Community Manager, Y-USA



“With MangoApps,” says Fahrney, “I know what’s going on nationally all the time. When problems arise with the 18 Ys in Florida, I can go and say, ‘Oh, the Chattanooga YMCA in Tennessee is dealing with the same thing. Let’s connect you to them and figure out how to solve this.’”

“Y-USA isn’t a local Y,” adds Elizabeth Herrera, Community Manager at Y-USA. “We don’t exactly know all the challenges and all the things that they go through. Connecting them to each other to find information and get tools is very helpful.”

“We have so many decision makers, because every Y is autonomous. Autonomy is amazing, because it sparks innovation. It also can be detrimental because it’s hard to keep up with systems. MangoApps has helped us create structure in our unstructured network.”

- Scott Fahrney, Chief of Staff,
Florida State Alliance of YMCA

With MangoApps, the Y’s national employee resource groups have a new way to connect and network. “We have six of them,” says Hatteberg. “LGBTQ Resource Network, Hispanic-Latino Leadership Network, African-American Resource Network, Emerging Leaders Resource Network, Women’s Leadership Resource Network, and Asian Pacific Islander Leadership Network—they’re for people who may not see a lot of themselves, necessarily, in their immediate workplace. Being able to connect across the country with individuals who may be facing the same challenges as them—and also the same opportunities—is very important.”

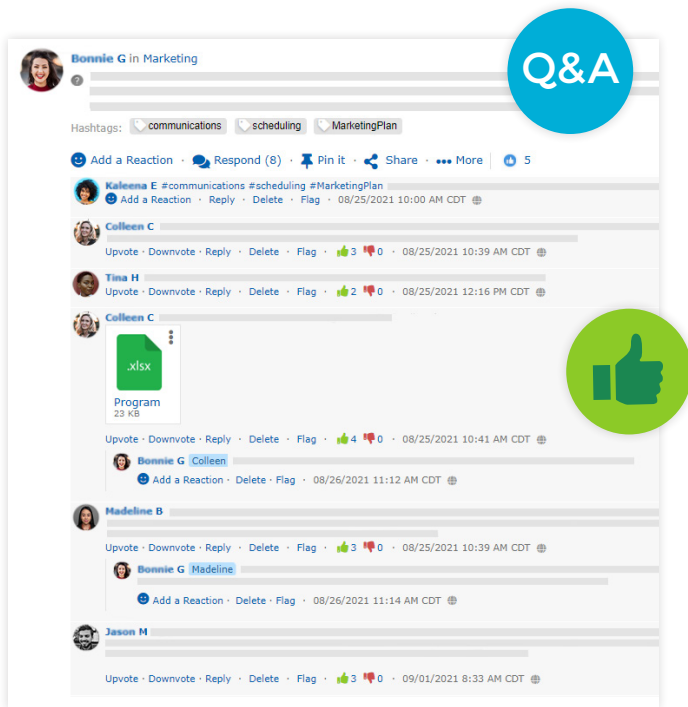
Rising to the Challenges of COVID-19

The internal communications team at Y-USA, like everyone else, was blindsided by COVID-19, and had to respond quickly. With MangoApps, they were able to use what they saw their employees discussing on the platform to inform their strategic outreach.

“We’ve had many conversations during COVID,” says Hatteberg, “about how lucky we feel that we shifted to MangoApps before the pandemic hit. We started with a twice-daily update to help people focus on the things that were most important in that moment.

That was a huge win, being able to put that together based on the questions and responses and so forth that we saw within MangoApps.”

Community organizations like YMCAs were hit hard by the pandemic. Communities saw a dramatic increase in the need for things like childcare and food access, and Ys across the country had to figure out how to provide these critical services without compromising the safety of their employees and their community members.



With so much happening all at once, MangoApps gave Y employees across the country an easy way to lean on each other for both support and guidance. One of the ways they do this is through the Questions module, where any user can ask a question within a particular group, opening a comment thread where relevant users around the country can chime in, in real time. This allows Y employees to get advice in minutes, where before they may not have had access to colleagues facing similar challenges or been able to get responses so quickly.

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Using Data To Build a Communication Strategy

One of the key functions of an internal communications platform like MangoApps is the ability to analyze employee sentiments towards the content you’re putting out, and refine it over time. The YMCA team puts a lot of emphasis on analytics and reporting.

“MangoApps helps us understand the types of content that Y staff like and don’t like,” says Blair. “Being able to measure the views and engagement behind a post, and see chatter in real time, it really helps paint a clearer picture of what staff needs are, so we can better meet them. We’re able to tailor our communications to help meet those needs, as opposed to just guessing.”

This analysis has allowed Y-USA to really hone in their content, so they are not only hitting the right topics, but doing so in a format that will resonate and be understood. For the YMCA, that means a tight, scannable copy with lots of visuals.

“ We can use MangoApps to spot trends and see gaps—if we’re getting a lot of questions about something, we know it’s a problem for people. Then, we can create something or connect them better to the resources they need. ”

- Emily Hatteberg,
Editorial Manager,
Content Strategist, Y-USA



MangoApps has deep reporting and analytics features that make it easy for them to find and analyze this information. “In our previous platform,” says Herrera, “we had really bad reports. We didn’t even use them. I really like that MangoApps has all the data in the backend—engagement, the content that’s being shared—there’s just so much functionality.”

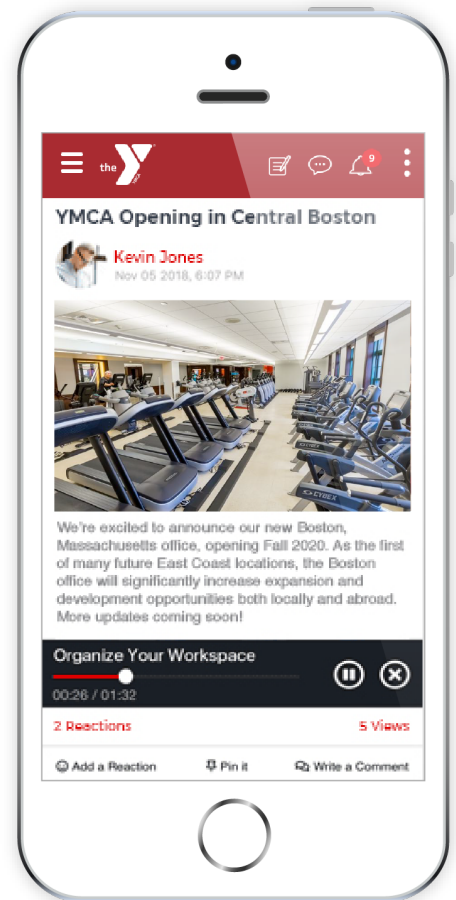
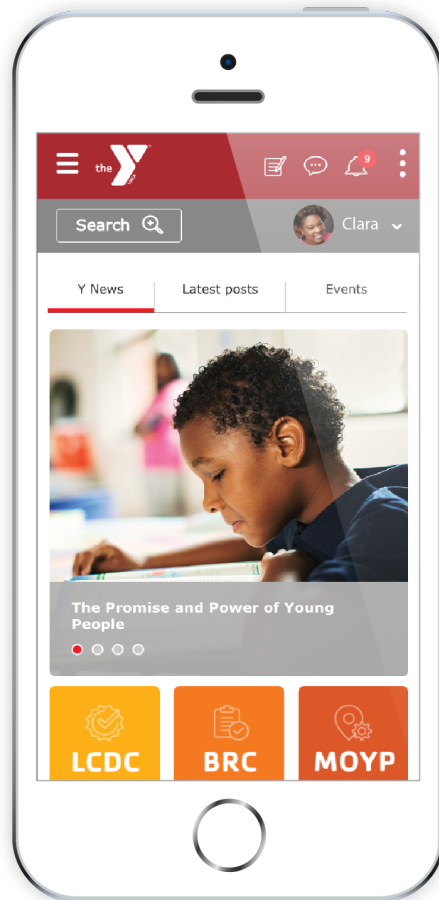
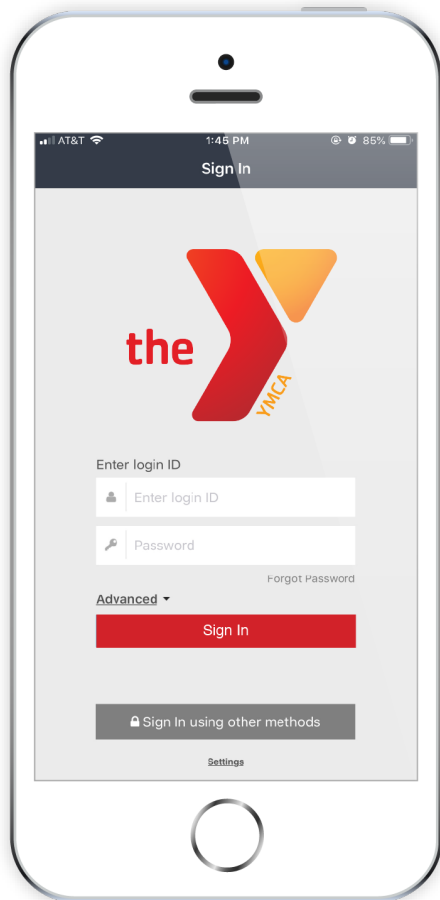
Maintaining a Culture of Helping Each Other

Overall, the YMCA has found success in using MangoApps as a digital extension of their culture, which will continue to be important as the world moves through and past the pandemic. “We are a very supportive culture,” says Hatteberg. “One of the biggest characteristics of a Y person is that if you need them, they’re going to be there for you. They don’t care what time, whatever, they’ll show up because that’s just the kind of person they are.”

When you have an organization built on values like that, giving people a space to connect across geographic divides can only strengthen your mission and purpose, whether people are sharing light-hearted personal content or reaching out for support in the face of adversity.

“The ease with which someone can throw up a question and reply to someone else is huge,” says Hatteberg. “For people who aren’t used to interacting in this way, or feel vulnerable putting out challenges that they’re facing, our local Y moderators are there to make sure they feel safe in sharing. It’s still a process—we started out as a very in-person organization. But I think we’re getting there.”

The YMCA has built a digital space where their people can quickly get connected to the colleagues, ideas, and resources that they need to thrive. At the end of the day, that means they’re better equipped to serve their communities.



Other Resources

[The Wildlife Trusts Case Study](#)

[Illinois University Case Study](#)

[CCS Fundraising Case Study](#)

[Digital Workplace Platform for The Modern Workplace Whitepaper](#)

[Employee Engagement is No Longer Optional Whitepaper](#)

TRANSFORM HOW YOUR COMPANY COLLABORATES, COMMUNICATES, & GETS WORK DONE.

Contact us for a more detailed capabilities demo
sales@mangoapps.com | mangoapps.com

[Schedule A Demo](#)

