



How American Eagle Outfitters Inc. Made Store Communications a Competitive Differentiator

AEO INC.

About American Eagle Outfitters, Inc.

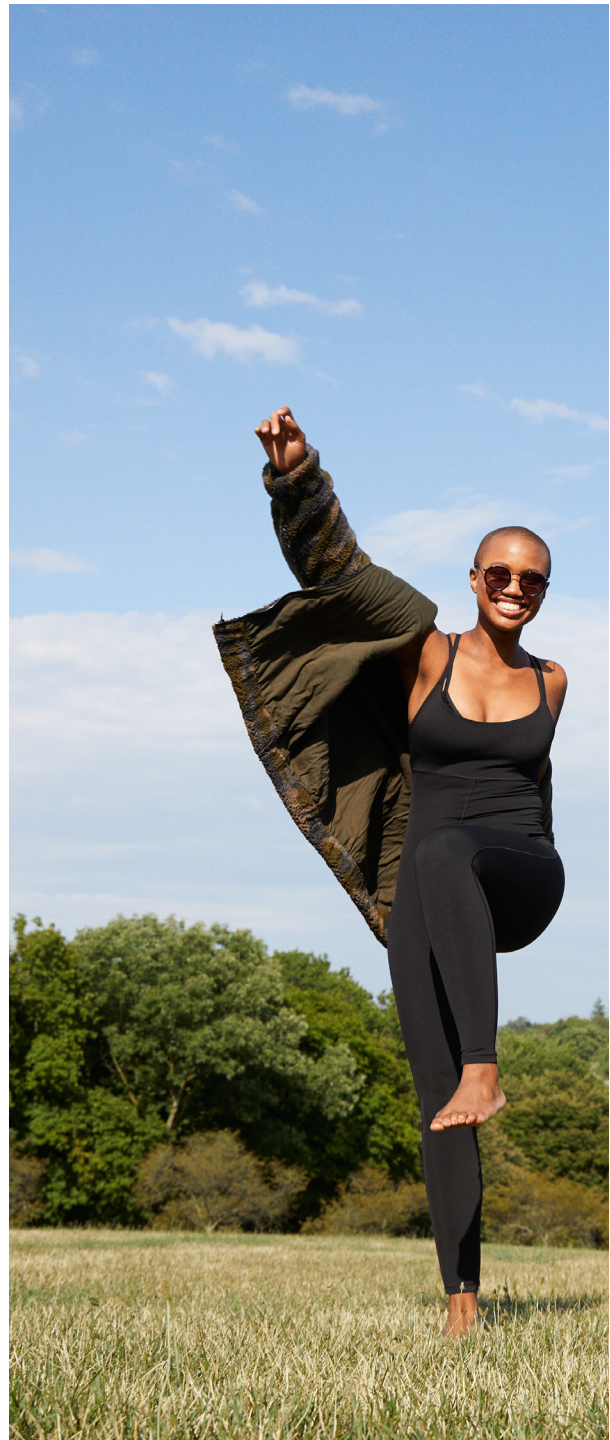
American Eagle Outfitters, Inc. (NYSE: AEO) is a leading global specialty retailer offering high-quality, on-trend clothing, accessories and personal care products at affordable prices under its American Eagle® and Aerie® brands. Our purpose is to show the world that there's REAL power in the optimism of youth. The company operates stores in the United States, Canada, Mexico, and Hong Kong, and ships to 81 countries worldwide through its websites. American Eagle and Aerie merchandise also is available at more than 200 international locations operated by licensees in 26 countries.

For more information, please visit www.aeo-inc.com.

About Retail Zipline

Today, only 29% of direction sent from HQ to stores is executed correctly. Built by retail, for retail, Zipline is the operations platform for brick-and-mortar retailers and the only solution on the market that combines store communications and task management to drive flawless store execution.

To learn more, please visit www.retailzipline.com.





American Eagle Outfitters Inc. (AEO) has been a leading, global specialty retailer for more than forty years.

With strong omnichannel capabilities centered around a successful store organization, the company looked to strengthen communications with its American Eagle and Aerie stores, seeking a platform that could empower the organization and provide a seamless solution to fit its needs.

Opportunity

AEO's requirements for a store communications and task management platform were clear. First and foremost, they needed a way to package communications for field leadership. Since stores, corporate teams, and field management are constantly ideating and solving challenges, connecting people to a single source of truth with clear and engaging communications was imperative. Secondly, AEO sought a consistent experience between the desktop interface and mobile app, since field leaders needed a way to quickly and easily communicate with stores when on the road. By checking these boxes, the company was confident that it could streamline communication to drive better store execution.



Vendor Selection

When the AEO store communication team first met Zipline's CEO and Co-Founder, Melissa Wong, they felt an immediate synergy since Melissa had been in their shoes as a professional communicator in the retail industry. The team felt that Zipline understood exactly the needs of AEO's business and the impact enhanced communications could have on the company's nearly 40,000 store associates.

The AEO store communication team was also impressed by the amount of time that Zipline spent during the sales cycle to understand the company's culture, processes, and people. It was clear that Zipline understood the nuances of retail.

The AEO store communication team visited with Regional Directors and District Team Leaders to gain buy-in, drive trust, and develop consensus cross-functionally. At the same time, Zipline worked to support the AEO store communication team by communicating the ways they could help partner with AEO's technology team during implementation. This allowed everyone to focus on the benefits of switching platforms versus the development work that was involved.

Pilot Period & Implementation

With all teams on board and confident that Zipline checked all the feature boxes that they needed, AEO moved forward with a pilot in September 2019, beginning with 150 AE and Aerie stores. As the pilot saw success, with additional store leaders requesting the platform, the test group grew to 300 stores across the two brands in 2020. The fact that leaders wanted to take on this project, during the holiday season, spoke volumes about excitement for Zipline and how well it was working for the company.

The pilot was an unequivocal success. In addition to saving the company time that can be redirected to helping associates on the floor and spending more time with customers, Zipline was also lauded in other ways. AEO surveyed field leaders and found that 100% of pilot stores believed that Zipline was an improvement and 97% reported that Zipline improves the way they receive and process home office communication. Additionally, 96% reported that it is easy to search and find communication with Zipline, which helps them in their day-to-day work.

AEO's store operations team and publishers also experienced improvements. With Zipline's drag and drop publishing tool, publishers can now simply drop their content into a template, allowing them to focus on content, rather than process, which is an important feature of an effective communications program.



Following the successful pilot, implementation was smooth, quick, and took just a few weeks. Zipline eliminated a lot of the work that AEO's technology team was responsible for in previous implementations, allowing them to refocus efforts on other projects.



Results

AEO is a company dedicated to innovation, which it reflects through its AE and Aerie brands. With Zipline, AEO can amplify that mission. Today, with Zipline fully implemented, the AEO store communication team has a singular platform that allows them to remain connected and agile, streamlining communication and task management.

This alignment was critical when COVID-19 catapulted retail into uncharted waters. When the pandemic hit, the AEO store communication team mobilized quickly and pivoted with incredible agility, putting in place the tools necessary to prioritize the health of its associates and customers. Zipline provided AEO with a one-stop-shop for all of the company's leading safety guidelines, policies, and health and well-being information.

Today, the AEO store communication team feels confident that it's on track to meet and exceed its communications goals. With Zipline, AEO has the opportunity to innovate and maintain strong communication and store execution. From being able to replace printed binders and paper checklists to ensuring that field teams have the targeted information that they need to do their jobs more efficiently, Zipline has changed how the AEO store communication team works for the better. Field teams are able to communicate more efficiently and with greater productivity.