

**Zipline**

# **New Year, New Store Comms Strategy**

A Guide to Help Your Teams Think  
Beyond the Binder in 2022





The 2021 Holiday Season pushed most retailers' store teams to the max. Between Covid variants, staffing shortages, and supply chain disruptions, there was a lot to deal with and a lot to get done. But with the madness of Peak now in the rear view mirror, it's a good time to take stock of what worked, what didn't, and where to focus your team's efforts in 2022.

At Zipline, we think 2022 should be the year you take your store communication strategy to the next level. Now more than ever, providing your teams with the right knowledge at the right time to do their jobs efficiently is critical.



Retail is a crazy business. Your stores deserve communication that keeps pace with it all, allowing the freedom to be more agile, the ability to drive better execution, and the means to increase employee engagement. When all these are improved, so is your bottom line, and employees are given precious time back to attend to retail's most important thing - the customer.

We know this because we've lived it, and we've seen store employees struggle with binders first-hand. In this guide we'll examine the five main reasons why retailers should think beyond the binder and into the future where technology enhances an employee's daily work.

Unfortunately, many retailers still rely on outdated methods of communication, especially during their stores' busiest times. In 2021, we continued to see many major retailers distributing information from HQ to the field by way of a printed binder. Pages and pages of directives around merchandising, returns, recalls, compliance, health and safety, and training were placed in the hands of store leaders and then expected to be communicated appropriately and on time to waiting field employees. This is simply not an effective way to communicate crucial information that impacts a store's ability to operate profitably. What good is a stack of information that's outdated the minute it's printed?

# 5 Ways a Binder is Holding Your Communication Strategy Back



## 1.

### **A binder can't centralize information.**

A binder isn't a limitless portal of knowledge, updated in real-time (but you already knew that.) At best, it provides a high level look at a brand and store's important priorities. On the one hand, culling down potentially overwhelming information can help teams feel focused. But because you're limited to the number of pages you can slot between two sheets of plastic, there are going to be inevitable omissions.

Having a binder in hand might help store leaders feel in control, but it won't prevent them from constantly toggling between different, disparate sources of communication. There are still emails to read, conference calls to take, intranets to browse, calendars to peruse, and tasks to check off. Eventually, that binder becomes yet another source of headache-inducing information that needs to be read.



## Why an intranet just won't cut it | Customer Spotlight

Lots of retailers decide to move beyond the binder by implementing “intranet” type solutions like SharePoint. The advantage with this kind of setup is that everyone knows where to go to get the latest information. Theoretically, stores should have access to the latest version of the truth. But in reality, people (both folks on the receiving end of the communications and folks who are doing the publishing) dislike using intranets like SharePoint because they're notoriously difficult to access and navigate. As a result, adoption and readership declines and store execution suffers.



When we first started working with a 200-store jewelry retailer, they had an intricately designed SharePoint site with everything stores needed to know to do their jobs. But because SharePoint is not built for the complexity of retail, there were several ways this vehicle was failing them: it lacked a proper search function, it wasn't mobile-friendly, and it didn't give leaders any insight into what communications had been seen or actioned on by stores.

Zipline solves these problems and more. Our intuitive search function means teams can pull up the right document in the blink of an eye, and since the platform is mobile-first, they can do this right from the sales floor. Field and HQ leaders always have access to real-time mobile-friendly reporting that shows exactly how their stores are tracking on recent tasks.



2.

## A binder isn't accurate.

You know the drill: No matter how much you plan, no matter how closely you align goals with your business partners, no matter how many deadlines you enforce, that printed binder is out of date the minute you print it. It's not your fault. In retail, priorities shift constantly. Parking your stores' most critical information in a static printed binder essentially handcuffs them to material that's never going to be up-to-the-minute accurate. And that can be downright dangerous.

Z

### Communicating in real-time Customer Spotlight

A 900-store children's clothing retailer was used to sending predictable communication to its stores via printed binders. But this delivery method was nowhere near practical when dealing with unforeseen critical updates like inclement weather procedures, product pullbacks, and shipment delays.



When we first started working with this retailer, they were delivering time-sensitive updates to stores using fax machines and voicemail - two unreliable, outdated modes of communication. Employee engagement was low, and confusion was high.

By implementing Zipline, the brand was able to finally get critical updates in front of store teams in an instant. By following our communication principles, they saw an immediate uptick in next-day and same-day store execution. Their stores were finally in a better position to respond to up-to-the-minute company and customer needs without causing confusion.



3.

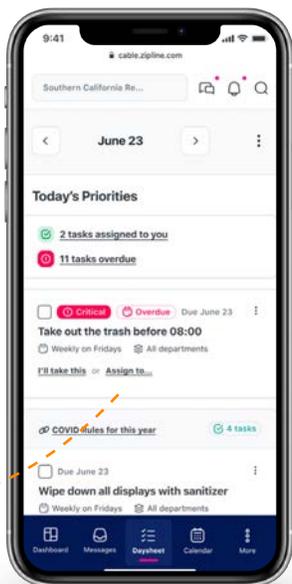
## A binder isn't mobile.



Last we checked, a binder weighs in at at least a couple of pounds. You can't slip it in your back pocket, pull it up on a desktop or laptop or take it with you on-the-go. You can cart it around the sales floor, sure, but it's not easy to thumb through pages to answer associate questions in real time. In the store every minute counts - and every minute a store leader wastes walking to the back office to pull a binder down from the shelf amounts to dollars lost in labor, sales and conversion.

4.

## A binder doesn't drive accountability.



You can confirm a binder was received, but can you confirm it was read? It's difficult to know if anything HQ, or your field leaders, worked so hard to get into that binder was seen. In the past, we've seen retailers tackle this issue in a variety of manual, time-sucking ways: They require their District Managers to painstakingly review every store's task sheets during in-person store visits, or they ask teams to snap photos of completed worksheets to confirm completion. Instead of spending time coaching and developing their teams, DMs are reduced to box-checking auditors - not a good use of time.



## Visibility drives accountability (and engagement!)

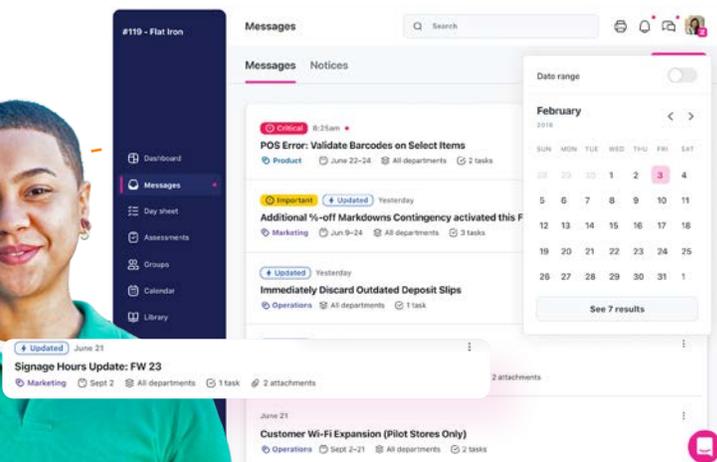
### Customer Spotlight

Lack of accountability is actually pretty common in retail, especially when it comes to communication. If employees claim they missed a memo, it's almost impossible to hold them accountable for their actions and their excuses are translated into shortcomings for the entire organization.

At Zipline, we believe there's better accountability when employees have a clear understanding of their responsibilities and everybody has access to the same information - and this includes data on "who-did-what."

Once, we spoke to a store manager at an internationally-recognized toy company who admitted he was struggling with recognition and praise for his staff. Not because he didn't want to, but because he was always so wrapped up in the details of: "Did this get done?," "Who did this?," and "What are we missing?" Checking these boxes had to take precedence over developing, coaching and recognizing his team.

The company then launched Zipline, and immediately this store manager was able to see who had read messages in his store, who claimed tasks, and who marked them off. After taking a week-long vacation, he returned to find that everything had been taken care of in his absence. With this newfound perspective, he was able to fully recognize his team for a job



## So, what can you achieve when you Banish the Binder?

Put all information and tasks in a single place

Give your HQ teams the ability to update critical information in real-time

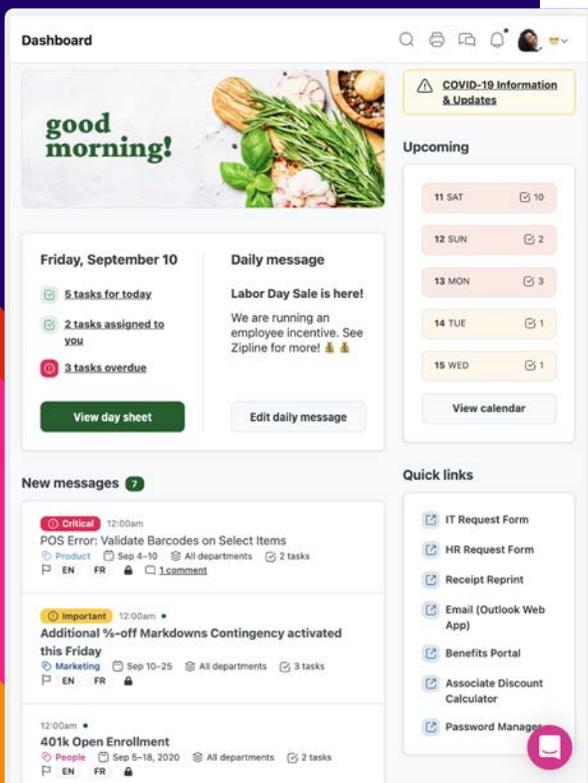
Allow your store leaders to access content when and where they need it - on a smartphone, store tablet, mobile POS, wherever!

Create role and location-specific content - and target it to only the people who need to know

# 5.

## A binder can't be personalized.

Retail brands crave a consistent customer experience, but every store is still a little different. Localized promotions, community-focused events, different store formats, different product assortments - this is today's retail reality. A printed binder has to assume a "one-size-fits-all" approach, essentially dumbing down strategic information so that everybody from the Flagship Store Director in Times Square to the Associate Manager overseeing a rural, small-format store can benefit. As a result, team members waste time reading though information that either a) doesn't apply to them, or b) is too vague to really inspire any sort of deliberate, strategic action.





## About Zipline

Zipline was created by people in the retail trenches. We've been there and know the execution struggle inside and out. As a result, Zipline puts a tool into someone's hands that can change not only how they work, but how they live. Our platform's with its open API and pre-built integrations allow for a quick implementation, easy adoption, and improved execution - bringing order to an often chaotic environment. Simply put, we help ensure what needs to get done gets done. Whether we're helping a c-store be speedy and contactless, or helping a high-end specialty retailer feel exclusive and luxurious, we help our customers bring their brand promise to life.

To discover more on how Zipline can help bring better field enablement to your retail workforce, visit our website at [getzipline.com/retail](https://getzipline.com/retail) or contact us at [meetzipline@zipline.inc](mailto:meetzipline@zipline.inc).

# Zipline