



## Turning a company into a community

What is the next strategic step for a company that quickly grew to be one of the largest real estate development, design, and construction firms in Western Canada? After 18 years of organic growth, **Omicron Canada Inc.** identified the need to align everyone within their organization to fully harness the potential of their integrated business model.

With this in mind, the company embarked on an extensive internal evaluation of their brand and identity. They emerged with clarity and redefined purpose framed in a brand promise and a set of five guiding principles. They had a singular focus upon completion of this introspective undertaking: build a community. Their quest was one Omicron for all its people and parts. This case study explores how they tackled this very lofty objective with the help of a **Jostle**<sup>®</sup> intranet, and how incredible their progress has been over the past three years.

- Company:** Omicron Canada Inc.
- Size & Locations:** 150 people across three offices and multiple construction sites
- Sector:** Real Estate Development / Professional Services / Construction
- Interviewees:** Bill Tucker, CEO  
Courtney McKissock, Senior HR Advisor
- Participation:** **68%** weekly **88%** monthly



## Who is Omicron?

**Omicron Canada Inc.** (Omicron) is one of western Canada's largest real estate development, design, and construction firms. The company differentiates itself by offering all the services required to take a building project from start to finish, under one roof. Headquartered in Vancouver, the 150-person company operates across five key sectors, servicing retail, institutional, industrial, residential, and education clients.

Omicron has continuously adapted as it grew its business across various geographies, and have led a deep mix of project types ranging from greenfield mixed-use developments to renovations and interior improvements. Omicron is a Platinum Club member of **Canada's Best Managed Companies program**, a designation that recognizes demonstrated excellence in business leadership, governance, and customer service.

## The starting point: brand ground zero

After 18 years of organic growth, Omicron identified the need to develop a new brand foundation and corporate identity to unify their people and parts. This led to an extensive 18-month re-branding project that resulted in a new value set and vocabulary to guide behaviour, decision-making, business development, and project delivery. This new brand framework also provided the basis for how Omicron would evolve their culture and internal community in a more deliberate manner. Key members of the Omicron leadership team **talked about their strategy and implementation** in this interview with Jostle's CEO, Brad Palmer.

## The challenge: build an internal community

### Integrating functions across geographies

Omicron has a complex business environment. The organization integrates real estate development, architecture, engineering, and construction services across three office locations: Vancouver, Victoria, and Calgary. In addition, they operate mini-offices on each of their construction sites (over 20 at any given time) and have a number of internal and external consultants who contribute to projects in varying degrees.



This geographic dispersion made communication and face-to-face interaction difficult. Office-based and site-based employees were not able to connect on a regular basis, even those who are located in the same city. It would not be uncommon for team members who work side by side on projects to connect in person just once a year at the annual holiday party - or not at all. There was very little opportunity for meaningful inter-office connections to be made beyond email or phone calls.

### **A complicated organizational structure**

The business has a matrix organizational structure. This means that employees often have lines of reporting based on their profession or role, as well as to the projects they are committed to at any given time. There is also a layer of sector-based reporting that influences the allocation of resources. Not an easy environment within which to navigate, achieve clarity, or build effective working relationships.

### **One Omicron for all its people**

Physical separation and the complex organizational arrangement meant that connecting and unifying employees around a common purpose was incredibly difficult. It also meant that sharing information and celebrating achievements (individual, corporate, project, and customer) was cumbersome and therefore, infrequent. Furthermore, there was no consistent brand language and shared vision for the business prior to the brand evaluation.

Omicron's executive leadership team knew that the priority coming out of the re-branding exercise was to focus on building a community. They wanted one Omicron for all its people built on a brand promise of "A Better Way" with these guiding principles: Build Trust; Be a Leader; Be Proud; Be Efficient; and Be Involved.

Omicron wanted everyone to identify with the new brand promise, believe in it, and bring the guiding principles to life in every part of the organization and in every conversation. Equally important, they wanted their customers to have a consistently positive experience of these principles in action.

### **A key component was lacking**

The problem was they had no mechanism to create this community. There was no way to unify all the business parts using the new brand framework. There was no engaging and inclusive company-wide channel to communicate and celebrate. There was no way to reach office and site personnel in an engaging, consistent, or real-time manner. In addition, they needed a way to put faces to names — to humanize the business and put people at the centre of their new community. As Courtney McKissock, Senior Human Resources Advisor, explains, “When people have a visual of one another it changes the way they relate.”

### **A better way forward**

The firm’s CEO, CMO, and VP HR set about finding a technology solution that could help Omicron achieve their community building goals. They looked at a variety of options including Yammer but immediately fell in love with the simplicity, functionality, and visual nature of the Jostle intranet. Omicron saw the Jostle platform as the ideal partner to facilitate the creation and organic growth of the community they were striving to build. And more importantly, it would grow with their business as it evolved and changed - because people were always going to be at the centre of this platform.

While the new brand framework and desire to create a community were very deliberate and seeded from top leadership downwards, Omicron wanted the community to take hold in a very grassroots way. They wanted every employee to feel that they could contribute and communicate in a way that was meaningful to them. Omicron wanted this to be a community that employees actually wanted to be part of - a place that was exciting, interesting, informative, inspiring, educational, and fun.

*“If you can take a company and turn it into a community...that’s aspirational for us.”*



**Bill Tucker**  
CEO



## An inclusive intranet for a new community

Omicron wanted their new intranet to be as inclusive and meaningful as possible. They set about creating an implementation team and plan to launch their new Jostle platform. With representatives from every office, function, and level of seniority, they began to identify goals, milestones, and sequence of events leading up to launch day and beyond.

They created an eight-week campaign planned around four core phases: excite, welcome, engage, and embrace. The excite phase was designed to hint at the new way forward and generate excitement about the change to come. The welcome phase was all about launch day activities. The engage phase was planned to provide a closer look at each of the platform's views and capabilities. The embrace phase was important for long-term adoption and included activities such as contests, quizzes, and tips and tricks sessions.

## Seeding the community

Omicron launched their Jostle intranet in April 2013 with a community open house, filled with fun and fanfare including a flash mob that earned them first place in the "Most Creative Launch" category of [Jostle Awards 2014](#). This was a significant day for Omicron as it signalled the beginning of their new community.



Featured Article

Courtney McKissock  
Published on April 26, 2013

39 views

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More from Courtney McKissock

- Omicron Vancouver Holiday Party!
- Interior Design 101 Powerpoint
- 5 minutes with... Colin Mingus!

### Video: Community Open House and FLASH MOB Video!!!

Vancouver Community Open House and Flash Mob Dance!  
from Omicron VideoUpload

03:41

HD vimeo

We had a fantastic time at our open house on Tuesday. Check out the video!

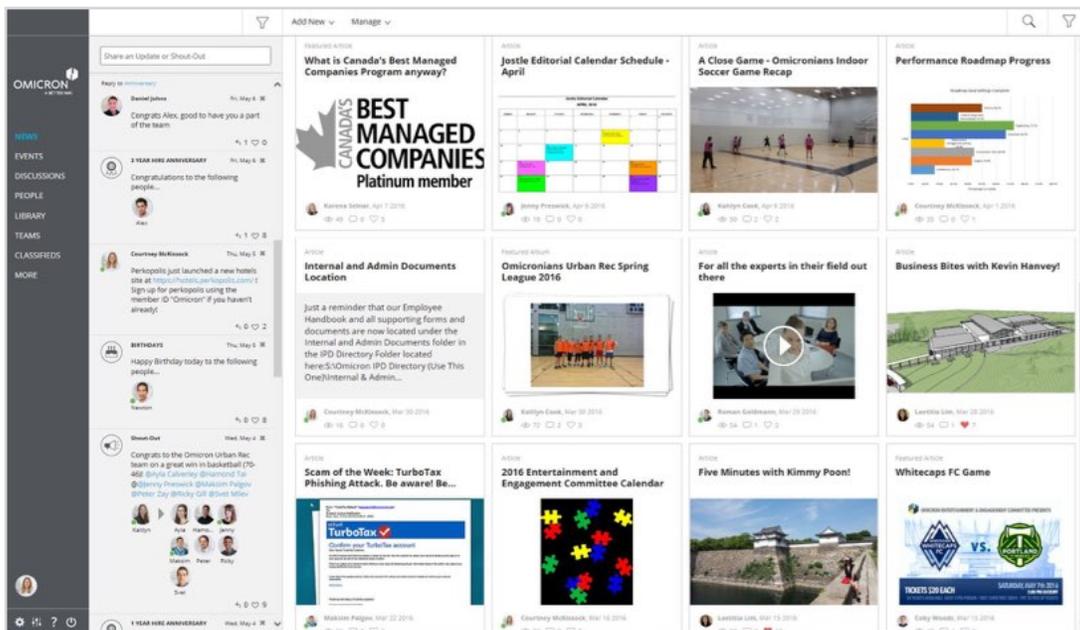
Launch day fanfare included a flash mob dance

The first year of the Jostle intranet at Omicron was driven by grassroots adoption. The leadership team simply let people run with the platform. Although they did have a team of Jostle Ambassadors who were responsible for coaching employees and posting baseline content on a regular basis, there were no boundaries or expectations for participation.

The level of adoption in their first year was an early success metric for the company, with over 80% average participation month over month. Courtney shared: “We were so encouraged by the way that people participated from the start. Folks at Omicron are proud of what they do, and are excited to have a place to share it.”

## The community roots take hold

Omicron decided to add a little more structure to a few aspects of their Jostle intranet after their first year. This was in response to feedback gathered from employees about the types of content and information they wished to see more of. In their second year, they introduced an editorial calendar for their NEWS view that would cover a regular cadence of topics such as project updates and spotlight features, employee interviews, leadership perspectives, and client profiles.



Omicron's lively Jostle intranet NEWS view



Another key part of deepening their community was increased sharing of technical information, design and construction methodology, and best practices. As an integrated group of professionals delivering complicated projects, unifying all disciplines through education, knowledge, and experience was another key factor in creating a lasting, vibrant community at Omicron. This became a greater priority in their Jostle platform's third year.

## **A community that celebrates together stays together**

Omicron values celebration of people and achievements. They wanted their new community to be alive with stories of individual, project, and customer success. They rely on their Jostle intranet to make these achievements known and recognized. Previously there was no way to achieve this level of visibility and high-fiving across the organization.

*“After thousands of hours in the design process, the office team can now see images and video of the construction actually underway. The Jostle platform lets us do something we never could before: share and celebrate.”*



**Bill Tucker**  
CEO

Omicron also makes a point of celebrating milestones to show and recognize progress, and to reinforce the behaviour and character they are looking for in their community. Every year they host an anniversary event to celebrate their community and its growth. Their Jostle intranet is firmly at the centre of the festivities, with a yearly awards ceremony including the sought after “Jostler of the Year” title and trophy. The Jostle platform is used to cast votes for winners in the various categories.



The Jostle intranet's first anniversary event with virtual candles on the cake



Omicron's Jostler of Year with the sought after trophy!

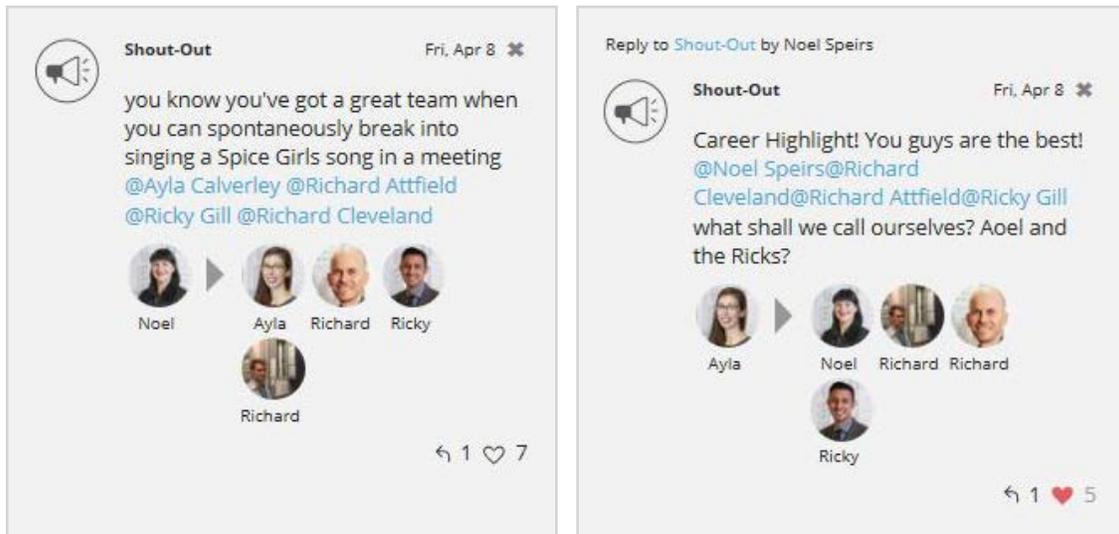
## Three years in: the business impact

### A work in progress

Omicron's community is a work in progress. But after three years, they have made a lot of headway in their journey to seeding and growing their new brand framework. The five guiding principles are alive across the business and visible through the Jostle platform.

People demonstrate pride by sharing their achievements and recognizing the good work of others through NEWS and Shout-Outs. The CEO, executive leaders, individuals, and teams build trust by communicating openly. Every person can show leadership by sharing information, coaching others, and driving initiatives in a targeted or public way. Efficiency is up; having a central place to store mission critical and people information is saving time and reducing disruptions. With close to 90% monthly participation year over year, people are involved and engaged.





Shout-Outs are frequently used to recognize and celebrate others at Omicron

By giving people the freedom to use the Jostle intranet in their own way, Omicron feels that they are providing an essential tool to keep leaders and employees informed, communicating, engaged, and recognized. Courtney told us: “Some people take the bull by the horns and are continuous users and contributors. Others are more passive and simply view the content. We let people be themselves. This is the type of culture and community we are working hard to build.”

*“The way we started it - the thought process we had then and now is constantly evolving - was to build a community at the core of our business. And to help us get there we wanted something more than just an intranet and more than “Facebook-for-employees”, we needed an engine to help us drive our objectives quickly and consistently. That engine is our Jostle intranet.”*



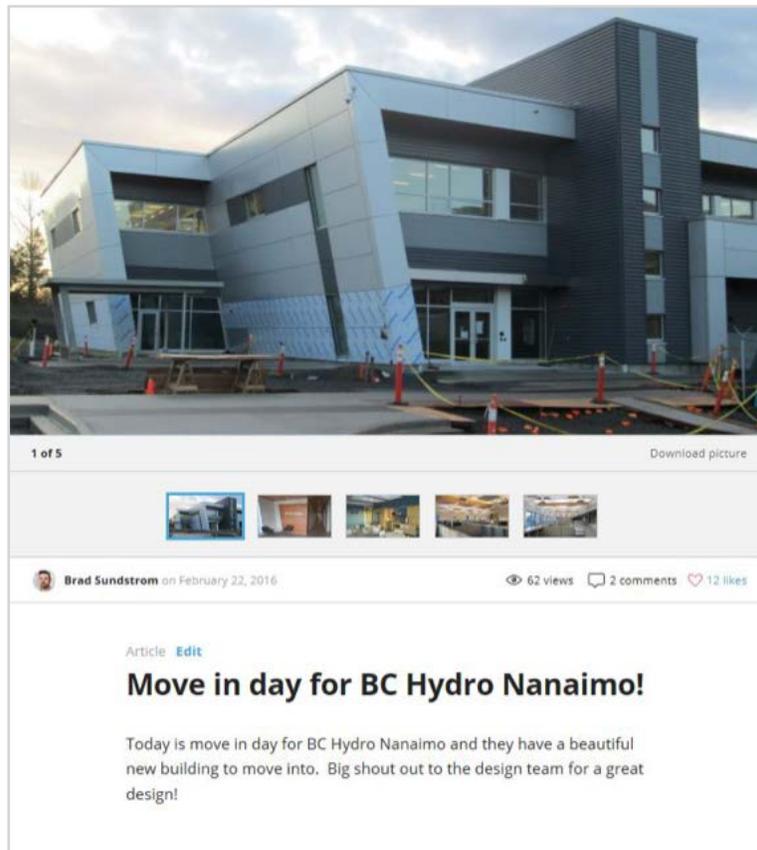
**Bill Tucker**  
CEO



## Keeping people connected

A key objective of Omicron's new community was to bridge distances, roles, levels of seniority, and functions. The Jostle intranet keeps everyone at Omicron connected. In particular, it has transformed the way that remote construction sites can contribute to and stay engaged with operations and company news. The company's site superintendents have become some of the most enthusiastic and regular contributors to the NEWS and Activity feeds with written and visual updates of project progress from the field.

Office-based team members who plan and design projects can now see the fruits of their own work come to life, in real-time. That is incredibly powerful and rewarding. And furthermore, many staff members, who would otherwise have no connection to this side of the business, can stay up to date and informed about interesting project news and activities.



Regular project updates keep everyone informed and connected

Omicron has always had a very vibrant social culture with lots of in-office and after-work activities and events. This has been amplified with the arrival of the Jostle intranet. Social activities are posted in the EVENTS view, and photographs and stories from past events are shared in the NEWS feed.



The annual Grouse Grind hike event



Oktoberfest at Omicron!

The Jostle platform has helped reduce internal email clutter. Funny pics, classifieds, and the update about whose turn it is to clean the kitchen now find their way onto the Jostle platform instead of bogging down the email server.

A key part of growing Omicron's community is the on-boarding of new team members. A new on-boarding process includes introduction of new hires on the Jostle platform. In addition, HR uses the intranet to introduce new hires to the brand framework and views the Jostle platform as a living expression of Omicron's culture that every new hire must experience.

### **A respected reputation**

Another outcome of Omicron's community building investments is a strengthened reputation. Prospective employees view the presence of the Jostle platform as forward-thinking and a strong commitment to employee wellbeing. Giving everyone at Omicron an opportunity to help build this culture and community, is empowering and helps build a team of healthy employee advocates for the organization.



*“Our Jostle intranet has made a significant impact on our employee communication and sharing, and has really helped us build an Omicron community.”*



**Courtney McKissock**  
Senior HR Advisor

### **The go-to place for information**

Any sustainable community needs accurate and meaningful information that is current, centralized and easy to navigate. For Omicron, this means making critical corporate and project delivery information available via LIBRARY. The CEO and senior leadership team use the Jostle platform to provide monthly business updates. The PEOPLE section is mission critical for front office operations, where at a glance the receptionist can locate an employee or put a name to a face. For Bill and Courtney, this sums it up best: “If you haven’t heard about it, you haven’t been on Jostle.”

### **No learning curve**

When we first spoke to Omicron’s CEO about the impact of the Jostle intranet on his business, he was astonished at how easy the platform was to use and engage with: “What we find great about the Jostle intranet for our business is just how simple it is to use with virtually no learning curve. We have a lot of traditional users who find it accessible and friendly – which is amazing since they have had difficulty adopting other new technologies. It must be great if even old guys can use it!”

### **A bright future with an established community**

So, where to next for Omicron? After three years, their brand framework and promise of “A Better Way” are becoming firmly entrenched in the way that people show up at work and in front of clients. Within the Jostle platform, the brand language and character is evident, and serves as a constant reminder of the values and expectations within their community.



The next level of attention in Omicron's community is greater clarity in their organizational and team reporting structures. One of their objectives for the fourth year of community building will be a closer look at how the organization fits together. They understand that this is a key requirement to enable and empower their people and decision making. The Jostle intranet will help them achieve this goal with its **TEAMS®** technology.

Another objective will be to shift their focus from adoption to long-term engagement. Having established a solid foundation, Omicron is exploring ways to bring greater meaning and breadth of information to the Jostle platform. One way they are doing this is by creating groups, such as an editorial committee to research and deliver more focused and effective content, and to gather feedback as they go. Courtney told us: "We cannot innovate and change effectively if we do not provide avenues for feedback." Another group is looking at how the social activities of the firm might play a greater role in employee engagement. Both of these strategies will utilize the Jostle intranet to drive their objectives.

Omicron has weathered the storms of a difficult economic climate, including the decline of the energy sector business in Alberta over the past few years. However, they have continued to invest a significant amount of time and deliberate effort to keep their community alive and growing. We are incredibly proud to be an integral part of building such a committed and vibrant community, and cannot wait to see how the future unfolds for Omicron as they continue to deliver "A Better Way".

## About Jostle Corporation

Jostle is the creator of a new kind of intranet that is designed to help leaders engage their workforce. Its elegance and relevance yield exceptional participation rates – exceeding five times industry standards. Jostle's intranet is turnkey, cloud-based, and requires no IT resources. For more information contact [info@jostle.me](mailto:info@jostle.me) or visit us online at [www.jostle.me](http://www.jostle.me).

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