



NY hospitals increase communication to improve care



Rapid, two-way notification gives one of the nation's largest hospital systems a way to reach staff when exposed to pandemic, hurricane, power outage or security threat.

Customer Profile:

North Shore-LIJ is based in New York, serving an area of seven million people in Long Island, Manhattan, Queens and Staten Island.

Problem:

Efficiently and affordably managing business continuity in a 14-facility hospital system that regularly faces interruption from snowstorms, hurricanes and other outside influences.

Solution:

Using a mass notification solution, security can notify and direct hospital employees no matter where they are.

Benefit:

Teams can be mobilized quickly, disruption can be averted or eased, and the hospital system has saved time and money.

Hospitals are beehives of activity

Hospitals are busy places where the responsibility for the health and safety of patients, employees and visitors is vital. To ensure safety, interruptions must be kept to a minimum and, when unavoidable, must be managed with equanimity. Interruptions can range from staffing shortages, power outages, bomb threats, unwelcome intruders or anything else that impacts the business of taking care of patients.

The Problem: Communicating with widespread staff to avert crises

North Shore-LIJ covers a territory that includes New York's Long Island, Queens and Staten Island, and often suffers from inclement weather in the form of snowstorms and even hurricanes. James Romagnoli, VP of protective services, and Joe Martino, emergency management coordinator at North Shore-LIJ, have made it their team's job to anticipate and manage interruptions and keep the health system's 14 hospitals running smoothly.

One of the toughest challenges Romagnoli's team faces is that of notification—how can they alert staff to let them know when something might interrupt their day? Mass emailing can get the message out, but since many staffers don't check their email till they're already at work, it's not effective in letting people know about things right away, like a road closures or a bomb threat. North Shore-LIJ has a call-tree system that targets office phones, but since most hospital

workers spend little time in offices, messages are often not retrieved until it's too late. North Shore-LIJ Health System needed a solution that would reach people like nurses, who are on the move all day long, using the communication modes they were most likely to rely on—BlackBerry smartphones, cell phones and pagers.

The Solution: Intelligent Notification

Shortly before the H1N1 influenza outbreak of 2009, North Shore-LIJ put Intelligent Notification into place as an emergency notification tool. The timing couldn't have been better as New York was hit hard by the outbreak, and Intelligent Notification was indispensable in delivering critical daily situational updates. Since then, the corporate security and emergency management teams at North Shore-LIJ have used the product in other ways: to warn of bad weather, to alert employees of road closures, for executive communications and to notify staff that a water main will be shut down or that floor access may be limited.

"It's easy to get a message out to a security team of ten people, but say something devastating happens, like an infant abduction," explains Martino. "Imagine how effective it would be if we could alert every employee via text, cell phone and pager, and describe the kidnapper and his or her approximate location. It's highly unlikely they would make it out of the hospital with virtually everyone on duty on the lookout."



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—Joe Martino,
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coordinator at North Shore-LIJ

North Shore-LIJ can now alert any number of people, wherever they are

The hospital system is reducing dependence on its time-intensive call tree and ineffective email alert system and will soon migrate all 14 hospitals to Intelligent Notification. That means that disparate paging systems will go away, along with the significant costs associated with using them. Martino is happy that he can now send an alert to all employees or to a subset based on location, function or level, and that anyone he alerts can quickly respond in a meaningful way.

The team is looking forward to using Intelligent Notification in other ways as well. When a magnitude 7.0 earthquake devastated Haiti in early 2010, North Shore-LIJ prepared for the possible relocation of patients needing specialty care. Although that situation never materialized, Romagnoli and his team were confident that Intelligent Notification would have been a valuable tool in coordinating relief efforts among the system hospitals.

Martino likes the hosted model (SaaS), saying that working with the product couldn’t be easier and the savings in infrastructure costs are considerable. “It’s all about business continuity, keeping things on track,” he says. “With Intelligent Notification, we’re becoming more efficient and we’re saving time and money.”

How North Shore-LIJ benefits from Intelligent Notification:

- **Quickly launch mass notifications** – Martino (or any other authorized initiator) can quickly launch a notification by logging on to the Web, sending an email or making a phone call. He can use existing message templates or create new notifications and recipient groups in seconds, targeting and customizing notifications for specific hospitals, departments or regions.
- **Reach thousands of recipients simultaneously** – Romagnoli’s team can send customized alerts to recipients by mobile phone, SMS, landline, email, pager or BlackBerry—whatever mode works best for them.
- **Quickly receive actionable responses** – Notification recipients can respond by voice or by written message, with responses displayed in real-time as well as archived for reporting and auditing.
- **Initiate instant conference calls** – If Romagnoli needs to get his security team on a quick conference call, they can simply press a key on their phones to join a call to share information, make urgent decisions and coordinate response efforts.

The bottom line

North Shore-LIJ has used Intelligent Notification to improve communication between all 14 hospitals in the system, as well as within the hospitals themselves. Eventually, all 42,000 employees will be in the system, and if necessary, the CEO or other authorized users could send a voice message out to all of them in minutes. Intelligent Notification improves communication and can help save lives.

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