

Newsletter

June 2007

Here's to the Future

This month is all about looking at the future with fresh eyes. 'Fail to plan and plan to fail' goes the old adage, but after 7th July 2005, everyone's painfully aware that a plan by itself just isn't enough. It has to work in the real world and needs some real world testing. Here we illustrate with some practical, working examples.

Have your say – what do you think about our newsletter and the topics we've raised? email us at news@rapide.co.uk

Or call our automated feedback line
0870 428 0436

This Month's Stories

❖ Don't panic! - Page 2

If something's broken, whether that's your email system or the whole building, you need to communicate. Unfortunately, that's often the time it's most difficult to get a message through – particularly when it's your system in trouble. So organisations like the MoD, Transas and the Environment Agency rely on Rapide.

❖ Spotlight on...Financial Services - Page 3

It's been a long time since banking was considered an industry at the forefront of technology. Was the cash machine really the last big breakthrough? What has been going on there since 1967? Here, we consider how the banking industry is using mobile to shake off its dusty image.

❖ Step by step guide to mobile subscriptions - Page 4

Mobile subscription services have got a bad name, thanks to the likes of Jamster's crazy frog. But they're not all about making a fast buck from an unsuspecting public. Text updates to subscription lists add extra value in media relations and build customer relationships.

❖ To boldly go - Page 5

Video, email, web 2.0, security and the internet have all been touted over the last year as the 'next big thing' for mobile. There's a lot of talk going on, but what's happening with real consumers? We review new applications to decide if they're science future or science fiction – but do you agree? Take this chance to tell us what you think.

Don't panic!

No matter how organised you are, at some point things will go wrong. It's not about what's happened, it's how you deal with it that counts. Communication is key – whether the incident is a problem with the computer system or a product withdrawal.

Managing incidents – the golden rules

1. Take control. Don't ignore or postpone dealing with problems, in stead make positive decisions and take action promptly.
2. By being open and volunteering information you will inspire trust. 'No comment' only suggests you have something to hide.
3. Brief staff to reassure them about what's happening and enable them handle enquiries from customers and journalists. Don't leave them till last.
4. Brief customers, don't leave them to guess or draw their own conclusions.
5. Brief the media about major incidents. Consider a press conference where you can share information quickly.
6. Turn negative questions into positive statements.
7. Memorise, rather than read the information you need to get across.
8. Don't just rely on your own systems to communicate – they may be affected by the incident. Have a look how the Ministry of Defence rely on Rapide.
9. Don't just push information out. Allow customers or staff to call a central number to listen to updates; relieving pressure on your website, intranet and phone system.
10. Use communication systems like text which will reach staff wherever they are.

On 7th July 2005 we were still able to deliver essential messages for our customers. We played an active part in accounting for staff and sending instructions while London's entire transport system was crippled and the mobile network under strain.

Ministry of Defence Crisis management powered by Rapide

Mobile phones are a vital part of communication in the Ministry of Defence. Incidents vary in scale and frequency making regular testing very important.

The Nuclear Accident Response Organisation (NARO) rely on texts sent through Rapide to recall specialist teams in the event of a nuclear accident onboard a Royal Navy submarine. Fortunately incidents are very rare and the training exercises used to test the system across many of the UK's main naval dockyards and ports have achieved 100% success record.

Read more case studies about incident management for the Environment Agency's Floodline, Central Trains and Transas at www.rapide.co.uk/case-studies.

Interested? Call us to see how it can work in your business on 024 7643 0180

Spotlight on... Financial Services

In 1967 the invention of the cash machine put banking firmly at the cutting edge of technology. The question is where does it stand forty years later?

The price of banking products has fallen, competition has increased, distribution has moved to call centres and online, and most importantly the focus of the media and customers has changed.

In its annual review, the Financial Ombudsman Service (FOS) said that a year ago it typically received around 10 complaints a week concerning bank charges, currently it's handling about 1,000 cases. The reason the industry is faced with an unprecedented level of complaints is because people are interested in fair play. Being given an honest deal is at least as important as being given the best deal.

The sea change has given financial services companies the momentum over the last few years to push technology boundaries again. This time it's opening communication channels with staff and customers to promote trust. And, importantly for organisations centred around accounting, it's actually cheaper than more traditional ways of keeping in touch.

Find out more – email us your name and address to receive our free financial services guide, send your email to rapide@rapide.co.uk

Feedback

Satisfaction, scoring, EFM - call it whatever you like. Financial Service companies know it's time to listen to customers – their power has never been higher and they've never been more willing to share exactly what they think. By using mobile collecting feedback is practical and simple. And the results are straightforward so they actually get used. Harvard's heavyweight credentials behind our system show that simplicity doesn't mean dumbing down – as clients will testify – it's actually linked directly to your bottom line.

Learn more about customer scoring and feedback at www.rantandrave.co.uk

Security

Over a third of the UK population use online banking at least once a week. Unfortunately security fears, fuelled by the parallel growth in phishing attacks, are likely to level out online growth unless public confidence is restored. And while banks are experimenting with two factor authentication to do just that, the advent of mobile banking is already challenging online security practices. Those partnering with Rapide are already a step ahead in this arena with encrypted secure text messages which use a PIN to read.

Text alerts

Mobile has become the default communication tool because it's always with you and (even if you don't admit it) always on. So financial services organisations are finding it's the perfect, cost effective customer reminder service. It's not just about customer service though, the results are tangible - for example, an alert reminding customers about their financial review meeting increased revenue by £1m a year, simply by increasing the number of people who actually turn up.

Interested? Call us for more information on 024 7643 0180

Step by step guide to mobile subscriptions

'Mobile subscription' – it conjures up frightening images of frogs on motorbikes being pursued by hoards of angry customers waving mobile phone bills.

Jamster cashed in on customer's naivety for short term gain when they thought they'd bought a single ringtone, they'd actually made a premium rate subscription. It seems Jamster took the money and ran. But mobile subscriptions can be another valuable tool for building relationships with staff, media and customers, offering value to both.

For example, England Cricket Board use mobile subscriptions through Rapide to update members with the latest cricket news and journalists with information about team line ups, photo opportunities and news conferences. Read more about it at www.rapide.co.uk/case-studies .

The Environment Agency use Rapide to send floodline texts to alert subscribers about flood risks – there's been a lot of activity on this recently!

Or use subscriptions to send regular top tips - great to motivate a team or circulate share prices (as Barclays Wealth have) or racing tips or update on the progress of a sponsored challenge.

Step 1

The first step is to identify the information your business has that is important, relevant and interesting to your target market. A mobile phone is an immediate and personal communication tool so updates and alerts that are specific for that time and individual fit this method best.

Step 2

Spread the word! No one will subscribe if they don't know what's available. The best time to mention a subscription is when they would be of most benefit, that's when a customer has asked for the information or bought a related product. And be scrupulously honest about what's involved. Explain how much will it cost or if it's provided free, what you will receive and how to stop your subscription.

Step 3

Allow people to subscribe and unsubscribe by text (by texting STOP to your number). we can look after your subscription list, adding and deleting contacts as appropriate which is a whole lot easier for you.

Step 4

Deliver your promise. Schedule texts to be delivered as soon as the information is available – keep it fresh and exclusive.

Find out how to run your own alerts by calling us on 024 7643 0180

To boldly go

(Yes we know it's a split infinitive, but it's become a kind of design classic, so, though it might not be to everyone's taste, no letters to the editor please.)

Guess the next big thing. This kind of game is fun. You can spend hours debating the answer, but by the time the future arrives everyone has forgotten who said what. That makes it quite difficult to lose, unless you're the person who has to back their opinion with cold, hard cash.

So far your mobile phone plays music and games, sends pictures and videos, and we still manage to get in the odd call and text message too. Here we give you some insight to what's hot and what's not at the moment. Why not let us know if you agree.

Mobile internet

For years the internet on a mobile phone has been tipped for the top. WAP was going to do everything including solve global warming and save the universe. But it hasn't materialised. Yet. With the advent of 3G, changes in phone screen designs and changes to the charging structure for data transfers, the mobile internet revolution stands a better chance than ever before.

If you'd like some evidence that this time it's for real: 3 have just relaunched their service with Yahoo, Ebay, Skype and Windows Messenger. And their relaunch is trumped by Vodafone, spending an eye popping £3.2million in advertising to promote their mobile internet partnered with online super powers like google, my space, YouTube and PriceRunner. Vodafone joins O2, T-Mobile and Orange with fixed rate data packages.

Web 2.0

Communities of user generated content are springing up online all over the place. As mobile phones have become the ubiquitous channel of personal communication that really is the natural home for social communities. You can see the partners for Vodafone and 3 include YouTube and my space and it could actually be web 2.0 fuelling the mobile internet revolution.

Email vs Text

The demarcation between devices is beginning to blur, your phone can already take photos and play music, so the line between text messages and email is beginning to look a bit silly. You can pick up your email from your mobile already, it's just not particularly slick. Unless you have a blackberry in which case, you're already part of the future. Everybody else, stand ready.

Security

We live in an increasingly paranoid world. Even when it's not international terrorism on the panic radar, it's phishing or identity theft. As the use of mobile banking and mobile payment increases, the security of the channel will come under scrutiny just like online.

Rapide supply groundbreaking secure SMS messaging. Information moving between the supplier and receiver is encrypted - which sounds very James Bond, but it's actually really simple to use and most importantly makes the data completely confidential by accessing the information using a PIN. Call us if you'd like more information on 02476 430 180

Video

The advent of 3G offered the mobile equivalent of broadband for your mobile, introducing new services like streaming video direct to your handset. So far, so groovy. But with mobile audiences failing to take to MMS in a massive way, what's the chance of video storming ahead? First there has to be a critical mass of 3G phones available to make services economic to provide and with screens tailored to display this kind of service. Squinting at a one inch square screen hardly showcases this kind of technology. Secondly, there has to be customer demand for the service offered, at a price they're willing to pay.

Much to the disappointment of the networks, who have paid a kings ransom for the privilege of a 3G licence, it looks like this one will happen eventually, but it'll be a very slow burner.