

KEEPING STUDENTS NOTIFIED

Three ways to increase student participation in text message alerts

Text messages are among the most common types of alerts in today's emergency notification systems, so making sure that as many people as possible participate in this form of communication is a must.

When it comes to quickly and easily getting in communication with someone, a quick text is often the best solution. Because people are so familiar with texting, this makes it a great tool for your emergency notification system - the key is making sure people sign up for the program.

Campus Safety Magazine recently published a report on emergency notification systems across three major campus types - schools and school districts, college and universities and hospital systems. Across each, text messaging was one of the most popular communication modes, with 40 percent of schools districts, 82 percent of colleges and universities and 41 percent of health care systems using the tool. In the case of the former two, the key is having participants - students - use the system. The study examined some of the most popular ways that campus decision makers have been able to get their students to participate in their text message alert systems. The following are the three most successful:

1. Spreading awareness

One of the most popular solutions in getting students to participate in a text message alert system is to simply make them aware of it. Without knowing about a program in the first place, it makes it impossible for students to enroll. The study found that email announcements were some of the most common strategies that campus officials used to enroll participants in these educational environments, with 48 percent of school districts and 50 percent of college and university officials using this strategy. In the latter case, this would make sense considering most universities already have an internal email system in place. Another common strategy that groups employed was a simple website announcement, with which 39 percent of school districts and 47 percent of college campuses used to enroll students in the texting program.

But the frequency at which campus officials used this strategy is not the same as its success. Fortunately,

spreading awareness has been met with some general success. Email announcements were the most successful, with 42 percent of school districts and 39 percent of colleges and universities deeming them an effective strategy. Website announcements worked about a quarter of the time for these two campuses.

2. There from the start

Another common strategy for getting people to enroll in the text messaging element of an alert and notification system is to do so during orientation. This is by far the most common method for college and university campuses, with 69 percent of survey respondents saying they enrolled students during new student orientation. School districts came in at 36 percent.

This strategy can work effectively because it has students treat text messaging alerts as a part of the standard operating procedures of the school or university. If they understand that the importance of text message alerts and are enrolled from the onset, it becomes a part of the daily routine for students. This is one of the more effective strategies for educational campuses. The study indicated that 65 percent of university and college campuses found it effective.

3. Make it the only option

One of the most effective strategies in getting students to enroll is simply doing it for them. Rather than leaving it up to them as to whether or not to sign up for text message alerts, many campuses are automatically placing them in the program and giving students the option as to opt out if they would like. This is smart because many students may want to enroll in text message alerts, but could forget or don't have the time to sign up. If they are adamant about not having these text messages, they still have the option to opt out. The report indicated that 35 percent of colleges and universities have a program like this in place, along with 28 percent of school districts.

Campuses that used this solution found that it was generally successful. Thirty-six percent of colleges and universities and 31 percent of school districts found it successful. While effectively forcing students

to participate in a texting alert program may not seem like an ideal solution, student preference is not the top priority when it comes to an emergency situation - it's safety.

Getting students to participate in a text message alert system may not be the easiest thing to do, especially with so many other programs on campus, but it is an important one nonetheless. Consider employing some of these solutions into your ENS to drive up user participation and ensure that individuals are effectively receiving your alerts.



About Omnilert

At Omnilert, we believe no one should ever die or get seriously injured due to lack of timely and accurate information. Our suite of emergency notification and critical communication solutions empowers organizations to keep their people informed and their operations viable during the most challenging times. We transform the way those responsible communicate with their people to rapidly disseminate critical information, automate emergency communications, accelerate emergency response, ensure business continuity, and recover quickly from a crisis. Our people and technology, together, help ensure successful outcomes for our customers.

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