

CASE STUDY: Virgin Atlantic Airways



How Virgin Atlantic Airways Uses Send Word Now to Communicate During Emergencies

Virgin Atlantic Airways, one of the world's leading long-haul airlines, was founded in 1984 and currently has 38 aircraft in its fleet. From its main base in London, Virgin Atlantic services destinations as far apart as Las Vegas, Tokyo, Delhi, Boston and Shanghai. The airline offers service from ten U.S. cities to London and onto a range of long-haul destinations worldwide. With such an expansive network, the organization places special emphasis on safety, security, and crisis management. At London headquarters, the company's central crisis management team is responsible for developing crisis management plans for Virgin Atlantic locations worldwide. There, Resilience Manager Tiggy Thiagarajah depends on Send Word Now's on-demand notification and response software to communicate with his staff, and local crisis teams, whenever there is a major disruption.

A Lesson In Critical Communication

On May 22, 2011, a cloud of ash originating from the Grímsvötn volcano in Iceland began to drift over European airspace, disrupting travel and threatening the operations of many major airlines, including Virgin Atlantic. Memories of the 2010 eruption of the Eyjafjallajökull volcano, which cost the industry over a billion dollars, were still fresh in the company's mind.

"When this cloud began to form, we immediately thought of the impact and disruption it caused to our customers in 2010," explains Thiagarajah, "Fortunately, the industry has learned a lot since then. By using Send Word Now to communicate with our crisis management teams, we were able to coordinate a much more fluid response to this threat. Our experience allowed us to make decisions early on, and Send Word Now allowed us to send this information at the click of a button. This time around, no flights were grounded."

At A Moment's Notice

As head of the company's crisis management teams, Thiagarajah is responsible for deploying Send Word Now, whenever a major event threatens the company's operations. "Whenever there is a crisis," he explains, "we immediately turn to Send Word Now's messaging platform to communicate with all of our support teams, department heads, and relevant parties. Using

the Get Word Back response feature, we can also determine very quickly which staff members are available to help, if need be."

The organization distinguishes between two types of major incidents, and sends out differing levels of alerts accordingly. During minor events, such as power outages or regional crises, Virgin Atlantic's crisis management team sends out "amber" alerts. For these, the team uses Send Word Now to send updates to predetermined groups of people and initiate conference calls via the platform's Conference Bridge functionality. A "red" alert would be used for major aircraft incidents; in such a case, Virgin Atlantic would use Send Word Now to message all users at once, across all modalities.

Organization and Planning

Apart from the Get Word Back and Conference Bridge, Thiagarajah and his crisis management team depend on Send Word Now's Scenarios feature to communicate even more quickly during time-sensitive incidents. This feature, which allows users to pre-populate customized, event-specific messages for easier activation, "allows us to send out red alerts at the click of a button," says Thiagarajah. "They are extremely useful for key messages in the early phases of a crisis."

Virgin Atlantic also keeps its contact information up to date by using Send Word Now's simple recipient self-update feature, which allows the company's



staff members to provide current contact details on their own by clicking a dedicated link. Using Send Word Now's comprehensive grouping features, the crisis management team is then able to organize these contacts into three distinct, yet flexible, groups. "We maintain a crisis management group, a support team group, and a customer service team group," explains Thiagarajah. "Some events, such as a customer relations issue, may only apply to one specific team, but whenever there is a major event we can easily target all three. Having that flexibility is invaluable."

Why Send Word Now

"In the coming years, I look forward to expanding the Send Word Now system within our organization," says Thiagarajah.

"As we integrate the platform into our normal business operations, our staff members will become even more familiar with it, thereby allowing us to use it more effectively during a crisis."

Thiagarajah explains that Virgin Atlantic selected Send Word Now for many reasons that also made it stand apart from its competitors. One of those was reliability: "Send Word Now is the only company offering a 100% uptime guarantee. Many other systems don't offer that, but this peace of mind is very important to me."

"Our old notification system was much slower and was much more difficult to manage," he adds. "Send Word Now is incredibly fast and easy to use."

It's an incredibly easy way to notify many people within a short time, and it is the most user-friendly notification platform on the market."

The Send Word Now Advantage

By tailoring its services to the needs of its customers, Send Word Now consistently provides innovative notification solutions that outmatch its competitor's offerings. Through its BlackBerry and iPhone integrations, Conference Bridge functionality, and unique features such as multi-lingual alerts, customers can take advantage of Send Word Now's customizable platform to maximize their communication efforts. And on top of its robust software features, Send Word Now offers best-in-class customer support services that just can't be beat.

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-Tiggy Thiagarajah
Resilience Manager
Virgin Atlantic Airways

Send Word Now is the leading provider of on-demand alerting and response services for both routine and emergency communication. The easy-to-use, web-based emergency notification service is used by government agencies, municipalities, universities, non-profit organizations and businesses, including many Fortune 500 companies, to ensure fast, effective, two-way communication in real-time. Send Word Now's Alert Tracer[®] provides a full audit trail of messages sent and received for after-action reporting and follow-up. Designed to reach anyone, anywhere, anytime, with any device over any type of connection, Send Word Now's mass notification system is capable of transmitting hundreds of thousands of voice and text messages in minutes.