Overcoming internal communication challenges within organisations through the use of desktop alert systems

Introduction

Globalisation trends are resulting in geographically diverse workplaces, decentralised decision making processes, flatter organisation structures and fast changing priorities. 90% of employees work in locations other than their company’s headquarters and 70% of staff are based in remote offices from their supervisor. This has made achieving swift and concise communication across an entire workforce or a geographically scattered team challenging.

While corporations have traditionally relied on email as the primary business application for staff communications, it is simultaneously recognised as the main productivity killer in the workplace. Two billion global email users are sending the typical corporate recipient over 100 messages every day, who in turn are spending almost half their day (41%) surfing through mailboxes seeking to find, sort, prioritise and action important messages. On average, only 50% of the email messages received by white collar workers are actually relevant to their job. Consequently, important emails are often missed and unimportant emails are too frequently viewed.

Recognising the need to repurpose the function of email, organisations have adopted a variety of alternative applications specifically intended to facilitate internal communications, including video conferencing, instant messaging and other collaborative platforms like shared calendars, shared documents and tracked workflow processes. To compliment these techniques, the average organisation now also adopts six devices per employee typically consisting of fixed line phones, mobile phones, smartphones, PCs, tablets, laptops and pagers.

However, the multiplicity of communications devices among today's workforces has not solved an obvious problem: how to access an important colleague or decision maker in a timely manner. On average, a third of all staff cannot reach colleagues on the first attempt, even though half use multiple means of contact.

These communication bottlenecks cause project delays, which in turn cause missed deadlines and opportunities. As a result, productivity and quality of work decline, employee frustration rises and customer service and channel partnerships are compromised.

When decisions take longer to make, an organization is not as nimble as it could be and therefore less competitive. Technology resources are wasted and strategic initiatives are not leveraged. Ineffective communications system is ultimately an avoidable cost to a business.

Sources

2 The Radicati Group (2011-2012) “Survey: Corporate Email”
Therefore, new technology tailored to meet the unique communication requirements of an organisation is required. These messaging systems should help individuals and their organisations realise and react to important management messages in a simple way.

**Scope**

This whitepaper discusses the need for desktop alert systems as an alternative to emailing, and summarises specific scenarios where these systems can be adopted within the messaging infrastructure of corporations. The findings are based on the insights gained through providing knowledge management systems and software to a wide variety of customers.

**Findings and Analysis**

Current techniques for efficient delivery of internal communications pose a challenge to large organisations. Desktop alerts are one of the newest technology trends offered to alleviate redundant internal emails and improve business continuity, compliance and service quality.

**What are Desktop alerts?**

Desktop alerts provide a real-time communication tool for management teams to deliver instant or scheduled notifications to staff on their computer screen. Messages can be targeted to existing network structures or specific groups, requiring the acknowledgement of the employee to ensure and drive compliance.

**What are the demonstrated uses of Desktop alerts?**

Desktop alerts provide key staff with the information they need, when they need it, so that their performance – and the company’s performance – is optimised.

The three case studies below illustrate real life scenarios in which desktop alerts have facilitated effective disaster recovery communication, collected staff compliance documentation and enhanced cross-functional team engagement.
Case study 1: Disaster recovery communication

The CIO of a finance organisation had to immediately notify all 500 staff across the country of a critical email server failure expected to affect operations for over 3 hours. Staff are dispersed across 12 offices and 25 franchise branches with numerous advisers visiting offsite clients and key management staff at an offshore conference. With emailing not an option and without resources (or time) to conduct phone calls, the organisation broadcast the message using alert software via desktops and SMS.

The notification was flagged as urgent. Detailed reporting informed management that three quarters of all staff had acknowledged receipt of the notification within one hour, and 98% readership was achieved within 24 hours.

In this instance, it is estimated that the Desktop alert system saved the in-house IT Help Desk over 100 hours in tending to incoming support enquiries. Assuming that similar scenarios occur on average five times a year, the desktop alert system will save this company almost $30,000 per year in IT helpdesk support alone.

Case study 2: Staff compliance tracking and documentation

To retain membership with a governing industry body, the management team of an insurance firm required all staff to understand and indicate acceptance of a policy change relating to industry insurer ratings. With a national workforce of over 300 staff located in four corporate offices, the company had four weeks to report back to the industry body with their company-wide acceptance and compliance.

The company used a desktop alert system to communicate the policy changes to their employees. The compliance team implemented a staged campaign where alert messages were broadcast on a weekly basis across four weeks. The alert priority was initially set at medium importance for the first two weeks of rollout then upgraded to high importance as the due date approached. The alert notice consisted of a bullet-point list summarising the policy changes which clicked-through to a multiple choice questionnaire consisting of 3 questions. Upon answering these questions, the employee was then prompted to acknowledge their understanding and acceptance of the policy change.

In this scenario, the compliance team used advanced dashboard reports to track 100% staff responses within the 4 week timeframe and maintained their membership with the industry body.

Case study 3: Improving cross-functional internal communication

Staff engagement surveys indicated that the sales teams located in offices across the East Coast of Australia were not aware of campaigns and branding activity conducted by their Sydney-based in-house marketing team. Although ‘Marketing Update’ emails were sent regularly, readership could not be tracked and sales agents
(presumably having not read the material) were not leveraging local marketing activity to close sales.

The business adopted a desktop alert system and piloted its use as a business-as-usual communication tool between sales and marketing. Desktop alerts were conducted in an unobtrusive manner to deliver regular and concise updates relating to head office marketing activities. Sales staff had the option to provide direct feedback and suggestions to the marketing team. Readership activity and responsiveness was tracked for management reporting.

The next staff engagement survey reported better collaboration results across the entire business, driven mostly by improved relationships between sales and marketing. After the 12 month trial, desktop alerts were adopted by the entire business.

**Conclusion**

Technology in the form of desktop alerts provide an effective internal communication solution that can be tailored to fit within existing work processes. Desktop alerts address communication issues in a simple, intuitive and measurable manner. Desktop alerts minimise the effects of email overload within an organisation and improves internal communication processes to strengthen connections, promote collaboration to speed-up the decision making process and improve overall efficiency.

**Key benefits for adopting Desktop Alerts in the corporate communication infrastructure:**

- **Reduce email overload** – Internal corporate communication distributed via email often goes by unread and new processes remain unchanged. Desktop Alerts bypass email and delivery key internal messages direct to staff desktops to ensure notification and acknowledgement of business critical information.
- **Streamline operational performance** – Desktop Alerts provide an internal communication channel that ensures staff awareness of key corporate messages, thereby creating a nimble workforce with increased productivity and accelerated decision making processes.
- **Improve staff communications** – Desktop Alerts provide structure and intelligence to business communications, helping organisations unify their communications to reach each member of a geographically scattered workforce.
- **Real-time notifications** – Desktop Alerts keep employees informed of important changes as they occur, which ultimately saves time and helps control costs while improving productivity and competitiveness.
About the author

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About Us

Epsilon Knowledge is at the forefront of developing best practice internal communications and compliance systems for global enterprise through consultation and the flagship product, Epsilon Alert.

Epsilon Alert is a complete notification software solution that helps global enterprise and government agencies achieve compliance and change communication – rapidly and effectively.

Epsilon Alert improves business processes, consolidates the notification infrastructure, delivers real time reporting and significantly reduces redundant internal emails.

To find out how Epsilon Alert can simplify your corporate communications and reduce email overload, contact Epsilon Knowledge.

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