



Two-way paging hits the UK

Paging has taken a big step forward with the launch of the first ever two-way paging service in the UK this month. Chris Jones, CEO of PageOne, discusses this exciting new development and the impact that two-way paging will have on the paging landscape.

Having effective communication structures in place is vital for all public sector organisations, particularly in the current financial climate where there is pressure to improve efficiency levels while simultaneously raising the quality and reach of the mobile communications methods that keep staff connected. Paging has long been seen as crucial technology in the public sector with its real time, one-to-many broadcast capabilities and its higher level of reliability and robustness when compared to other forms of mobile communication.

In day-to-day operations the technology provides an excellent way of communicating up-to-date information to staff, while in a crisis paging stands alone as the one fail-safe form of mobile communication. For example, in the aftermath of the extensive floods that engulfed large areas of Gloucestershire during July 2007, mobile phone networks failed to cope with the sudden surge in demand. However, the emergency services and voluntary organisations such as the British Red Cross were able to rely on the PageOne paging network as a way of co-ordinating the emergency response.

One of the true benefits of paging is its unique broadcasting ability, enabling a single emergency message to be received by thousands of people simultaneously and it is still one of the most cost-effective ways to communicate to large numbers of individuals. The paging network is also free from non-essential and public traffic that can congest and delay the mobile network traffic, especially in times of heightened public anxiety, which makes it ideal for providing resilient communications to private and public sector organisations alike.

The advent of the two-way paging service that PageOne has launched is expected to further boost the role of paging both for effective day-to-day communications as well as for emergency and incident management response. The two-way pager combines the speed, reliability and broadcast ability of paging, with the auto acknowledgement and response of GSM. Introducing the response element to traditional broadcast messaging very

effectively closes the communication loop, giving the organisation's control centre the ability to determine if the paging message has been delivered; if the message has been read; and if the person can respond. This vital feedback is further enhanced by the ability of the two-way pager to report its location as well, giving the control centre all the important information needed to manage an incident quickly and efficiently. In addition, all this information is logged and provides a full audit trail of messaging events for review at a later date. In comparison with SMS the two-way paging service delivers more information, and for the first time the incident manager can target messaging based on locality as well as availability.

The introduction of the reply path for paging has also been extended to group calling or broadcast messaging, so in the immediate aftermath of unforeseen events such as fires, floods and terrorism, there may be a large number of groups that need to be contacted instantly and kept informed using the one-to-many broadcast ability of paging. This one to many group call is now further enhanced by allowing all those individuals to auto-confirm receipt of the group message, read, reply and report location which is then displayed on a map identifying all the responders within the group. Linking two way replies and location information with group broadcast that could include thousands of members, makes this a very powerful incident management tool.

Paging plays an important role in providing the public sector with a resilient, robust and reliable solution for real-time broadcast messaging. The addition of two-way, location-aware services further boosts the role that paging can play in an effective communications strategy. It is a solution that every public sector organisation should carefully consider when researching into or revising its field communication needs. If it is vital to know when the message was delivered, when the message was read, if the person can respond and where they are, two way paging can provide the solution.



Chris Jones, CEO of PageOne, outlines how the addition of two-way, location-aware paging can boost the role of paging in an effective communications strategy.