



CUSTOMER

- College of the Canyons

INDUSTRY

- Higher Education

CHALLENGES

- Student emergency, school closure and deadline notification
- Text messaging preferred by students
- System compatibility and stability
- Sense of urgency due to emergencies on other campuses

SOLUTION

- IP telephony communication solution: UNIVERGE® NEAX® 2400
- Messaging platform: NEC NEAXMail® AD-64
- Emergency campus notification solution: NEC Emergency Campus Notification
- Media: Text messaging to student body
- Integration: Message integration with three digital signs on campus

RESULTS

- Rapid response thanks to two-week installation
- Seamless database download with LDAP compatibility
- 100% compatibility with NEC telephony
- Integration with on-campus digital signage
- “Peace of mind...” for students, parents, faculty and leaders
- Flexible solution with multiple media-types
- College benefits from leading-edge campus notification system

College of the Canyons

Founded in 1969, College of the Canyons with more than 13,000 students has one of the highest student transfer rates from other community colleges in Los Angeles County. It was recently named the fastest-growing community college in the nation. Part of the Santa Clarita Communication College District, the college is known for its high academic standards, quality of faculty, staff, library and other facilities.

CHALLENGES

On the afternoon of April 16, 2007, 32 people were gunned down on the campus of Virginia Tech University in Blacksburg, Virginia. Even as the awful tragedy was still unfolding, Jim Schrage, in his Santa Clarita, CA, office nearly 3,000 miles away began fielding calls from concerned College of the Canyons leaders, students and parents asking, “What if something like that happened on our campus? Do we have anything to notify students?” Schrage is College of the Canyons vice president of facilities planning, operations and construction, and he manages all phases of campus communications.

Now, nearly a year later, Schrage recalls, “My answer to their questions then was, ‘No, we don’t have anything, but we can have a solution in place soon.’” That wasn’t soon enough. People wanted something right away. So my first call was to Digital Telecommunications Corp.”

Digital Telecommunications Corp. is an NEC-exclusive dealer serving the U.S. pacific states. NEC, Digital Telecommunications Corp. and College of the Canyons have been partners in campus communications solutions since 1996.

Schrage met the next morning with Digital Telecommunications Corp. president Robert S. Bliss about the NEC Emergency Campus Notification (ECN) Solution.

“Given our track record with Digital Telecommunications Corp. and NEC, I didn’t consider anything but their ECN,” says Schrage. “It is completely compatible, rock solid and highly reliable.”

CHALLENGES (CONT.)

Schrage suggested to the college president, Dr. Dianne G. Van Hook, that the college also use its NEC ECN solution to notify students in case of a campus closure due to wildfires, mud slides or earthquakes. As recently as 2007, the campus had to shut down due to wildfires. “In addition,” says Schrage, “we thought we could use the ECN to remind students of important college deadlines.”

“I can’t say enough about NEC and Digital Telecommunications Corp. NEC’s technology is superb and Digital Telecommunications Corp. continues to be our trusted technology advisor,” concludes Schrage.

SOLUTION

“Our first decision was: Which media format?” says Schrage. “The NEC ECN is perfectly capable of sending voice messages in many different formats; after polling students, we found the preferred format was SMS text messaging, so we had Digital Telecommunications Corp. configure the system that way.”

Text messaging presented a technical challenge. Schrage explains: “T1s can only carry a limited number of text messages simultaneously, so Digital Telecommunications Corp. and my department did an in-depth analysis of the functional requirements of the solution.

We decided that if we could reach just 10 percent of students on campus on any given day, we will have informed enough students for word-of-mouth to take over and inform everyone else. It was this approach that enabled Digital Telecommunications Corp. to help us correctly estimate and scale the number of ports.”

The college has three LCD signs on campus. Digital Telecommunications Corp. integrated the NEC ECN solution with the signs so that any message that goes out to the students over the ECN also appears on the signs.

“Our ECN is a centralized command center notifying students of important events and news,” says Schrage. “It is our preferred state-of-the-art notification tool because it can leverage SMS text messaging as well as our digital signs. And it’s very flexible so that if we ever wanted to send messages in multiple media formats, it could easily do that.”

RESULTS

Installation of the College of the Canyon’s NEC ECN solution only took a matter of weeks.

“We’ve never before implemented a system so quickly,” says Schrage, “but that was our sense of urgency about this issue. And, I’m glad to say, Digital Telecommunications Corp. and NEC shared our sense of urgency. Now I think all of us on campus have more peace of mind, knowing that in case anything happens, our NEC ECN is ready to get the word out.”

Schrage compliments Digital Telecommunications Corp. and NEC, saying, “I was impressed by how easy NEC and Digital Telecommunications Corp. made the whole process for us. They were very thorough every step of the way.”

Schrage continues, “Digital Telecommunications Corp. was able to take our College of the Canyons student body database and use it to download all the telephone numbers into our NEC ECN solution. Thanks to the ECN’s Lightweight Directory Access Protocol (LDAP) compatibility, there was no need to rebuild the database in any way. That saved a lot of time!”

“If an emergency were to happen today,” says Schrage, “our ECN is fully operational and ready to go. Our plan is to gradually introduce our college community to the system beginning with ’08 summer session students during registration.”

“I can’t say enough about NEC and Digital Telecommunications Corp. NEC’s technology is superb and Digital Telecommunications Corp. continues to be our trusted technology advisor,” concludes Schrage.

Says Bliss, Digital Telecommunications Corp. president, “It has been such a pleasure being a part of the Digital Telecommunications Corp.-NEC-Canyons team over the years. By selecting ECN for mass alerts and notifications, College of the Canyons is now on the leading edge of campus emergency communications.”