

Harborough Council embrace the convenience of SMS technology

The Customer:

Harborough District Council serves a 230 square mile rural area of South Leicestershire, incorporating the market towns of Market Harborough and Lutterworth.

The Challenges:

Because of the rural location of the Council, the distance for residents to travel to Council Offices made communication difficult and time consuming, so alternatives needed to be found.

Harborough District Council wanted to improve services for residents and streamline the methods for the reporting of problems - notification of abandoned cars and fly-tipping for example, and questions to council staff. Peter Rowbotham, Customer services manager at Harborough Council said

"The challenge was about making it easier for people to contact the council. Not everyone has the time to visit the council offices in person and can find texting questions and service requests easier and faster."

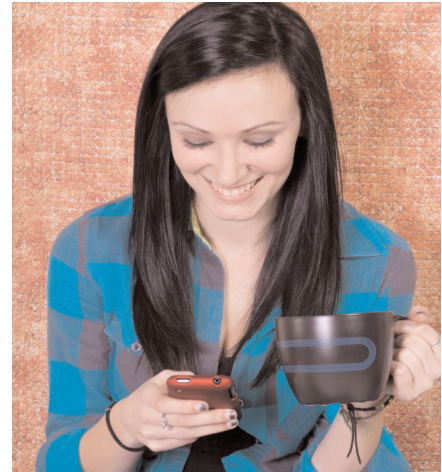
The Product:

Text Message Server, developed by ProcessFlows is a corporate SMS solution which enables the sending and receiving of text messages to and from mobile phones on networked PCs. Specifically aimed at the server based market to offer desktop users the benefit of this most popular communication tool, Text Message Server integrates seamlessly with email and offers an inbound SMS address for each user. SMS messages are delivered in close to real-time and recipients then have the ability to reply directly back to the desktop, speeding up the communications process and giving businesses a truly competitive edge.

The Benefits:

As more than 75% of the population have mobile telephones and people in the UK send more than a billion text messages every month, SMS made good business sense. The upsurge in SMS as a convenient and fast means of communication, coupled with low cost and accuracy, makes SMS a unique and confidential means of communication. The technology can also be used for consultation purposes, sending out of community messages and the processing of electronic payments. Texts are received at the Harborough District Council's call centre (Contact Centre) in the form of an email, which integrates with Text Message Server.

The system, which was funded by a Government grant, allows customer service staff to acknowledge messages from their PCs, delivering a reply directly back to a mobile phone. Both the Government and Harborough District Council recognise the benefits of SMS as a quick, easy and cost effective way of contacting local residents.



"Text Message Server is a true messaging 'solution', integrating seamlessly with email, CRM and back-end software and services, to provide a fast and cost-effective communications platform. It is just a matter of time before every business network is SMS enabled. Organisations that have embraced this technology are already reaping the benefits of enhanced information."

Chris Thompson, Managing Director
ProcessFlows

The Future:

Peter Rowbotham looks forward, *"The Council acknowledges that SMS is a complementary and convenient channel for our customers to contact us, but SMS is not just about simple service requests. We see the potential for SMS in notifying our customers of service changes, carrying out consultation etc. and we will be working to develop the processing of car parking payments using this technology".* He goes on to say *"We will also be using the system for distributing important information to our own staff – such as severe weather warnings. With the E Government agenda we are confident that the use of SMS will continue to grow in the public sector."*

