CASE STUDY
SMS Web Service

PROFILE

Industry
Transportation

Founded
1965

Website
www.hovertravel.co.uk

Category
B2C

Customer Since
2011

PROJECT

Objective
Implement a quick and reliable method of communication to improve operational procedures and inform customers about disruptions to the service.

Solution
M:Science Web Service integrated into website delivering two-way messaging and creating a bespoke SMS notification service.

Business Impact
Enriched its web communication, improved operational procedures and enhanced customer relationship and service levels.

Hovertravel integrates SMS to enhance its communication with customers

Established in 1965, Hovertravel is the world's longest running commercial hovercraft service and is the only scheduled passenger hovercraft service in Europe. Its two hovercraft (Freedom 90 and Island Express) provide a frequent service between Southsea, Hampshire and Ryde, Isle of Wight. With a journey time of less than 10 minutes, this is the fastest way to cross the Solent. Over 26 million passengers have travelled on the service since its launch.

The Challenge

Customer service is an essential factor in the travel and transportation industry for any organisation wishing to succeed. Commercial travel services, especially, have a duty to keep their passengers informed about any cancellations, disruptions or unscheduled events. Due to the very nature of Hovertravel's service, this is not something that the organisation has full control over, as the weather conditions can affect its service, causing delays or, in the extreme, cancellations.

Hovertravel therefore needed a quick and reliable method of communication that would enable it to provide its passengers with up to date information regarding any changes to the schedule and to assist customers with their travel plans. The organisation also wanted to explore new, effective ways of marketing to help distribute offers to existing customers as well as promote the service.

The Solution

In 2011, Hovertravel embarked on a complete overhaul of its website and decided that it wanted to integrate a bespoke email and SMS service for customer notifications. Following some due diligence, Hovertravel selected M:Science SMS Web Service to provide SMS capabilities, which could be integrated into its website, created and developed by Correl8.

M:Science SMS Web Service is a comprehensive two-way SMS messaging service that provides a website, Web service or application developer with the ability to incorporate methods to send, receive and track SMS messages via an Internet link, without the need to install any additional client applications or components.

"We chose M:Science as it was attractive for cost reasons, the amount per text credits, and the SMS Web Service offering could be easily integrated into our website," explained a spokesperson for Hovertravel. "The product also provides inbound messaging allowing us to offer the obligatory STOP facility for customers wishing to opt out of the SMS notification service."

The Results

Utilising the simplicity of SMS Web Service, Hovertravel has created a dedicated SMS registration page and added links on numerous pages, especially the service status page, encouraging customers to sign up to the service. The database now contains over 1400 registered users that now receive operational updates as and when necessary as well as any promotional offers generated by Hovertravel.

"If a crossing is going to be cancelled or delayed, or a craft is having technical issues, we automatically send a text to the customer informing them of the issues and operational changes. The use of SMS allows us to reach customers when they are mobile so we are encouraging our customers to sign up to the service as much as we can. If we stopped providing the SMS service our commuters would be very unhappy. They rely on the updates when there is a disruption and text messaging seems to be one of the best communication methods. It also integrates seamlessly with our web communications strategy."

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Hovertravel has been really impressed with the M:Science product and especially the level of support and service. It is now looking to expand the use of SMS for contacting staff members, especially to help with crisis management, as it believes it is the quickest and easiest communication method.

"We find the SMS solution very easy to use and we are really happy with the service. We have had no real problems at all. It's a perfect solution for us. We receive an automatic email when we are running low on credits, which is really handy as we don't have to keep an eye on it, and M:Science is also extremely accommodating and flexible regarding credits and payment - occasionally providing us with emergency credits if we suddenly have bad weather and we need the text messages urgently."

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