

USER REPORT

CloseNow Solves Closing Confusion

Small Ohio Multimedia Cluster Helps Develop Emergency School/Business Closing Software

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FINDLAY, Ohio Operating a small multimedia company in northwest Ohio, school delays and closings are an important part of our business.

Having the most up-to-date and accurate delay and closing information is vital, as our radio listeners have come to depend on us for this important information.

Locally, our company includes two radio stations, WFIN(AM)/WKXA(FM), two daily newspapers and an Internet design/hosting business, among other media-related divisions.

In the old days, up until about four years ago, like most other radio stations, school officials would call our radio stations to be added to our list of delays and/or closings.

This list was read on-air and could be quite lengthy. This was challenging as our morning show hosts and news anchor were not only having to provide entertaining and informative morning shows, but they were also answering the telephones to receive the school delay/closing information from the school administrators, and making sure each studio had an up-to-date and accurate list.

Of course, Little Johnny was also calling to see if he had to worry about the homework he didn't complete last night.

With the arrival of the Internet, one of our computer-savvy morning show hosts created a spreadsheet that we posted online, indicating the status of all area schools. This was a tremendous leap forward, but we wanted to take this to the next level.

What we needed was a software vendor that had an existing software applica-

tion for school delays/closings providing school administrators access to change their school's status either through a Web-based interface or through a dial-up



The WKXA Studio With Custom CGS CloseNow for Radio on the Screen

application.

We needed this information to be posted automatically online, and we wanted our listeners to be able to sign up for e-mail and text message alerts for their particular school. It was a tall order.

Early 2007, we talked with various vendors and CGS InfoGraphics Automation was the only one that almost met our needs.

They had most everything we were looking for; and they were planning to provide text alerts in the fall of 2007. We felt confident partnering with CGS for this important segment of our radio station information. We were, if not the first, one of the first radio clients for CGS and what would be called CloseNow for Radio.

During the summer of 2007, we ordered our server and began creating the

database for all the schools in our listening area. This was not a huge chore as we already had a lot of the information from being in the school delay/closing business for a lot of years.

We had the CGS server configured and in place soon after the new school year

started. Letters were sent to all the schools with their unique organizational ID, password and detailed instructions on how to access and use the automated system. Schools can still call the radio station in the event they misplace their login information, etc. Text alerting became a reality in November, so at that time we launched the e-mail and text alert service. Through CGS's tech support team, we worked through various issues and bugs throughout the school year.

Feedback

School administrators love the fact they can call in and change their school status from the road while checking road conditions or from the computer and don't have to worry about getting a busy signal when calling the radio stations.

Our telephone traffic has decreased substantially since we've implemented CGS.

As with any project, there have been challenges. The only major problem we've encountered was sending text alerts to Verizon Wireless customers. The problem was that due to spam controls within the Verizon network their users were not able to receive our text alerts. As Murphy's Law would have it, most wireless customers in our area use Verizon. This was a major issue that has since been resolved.

At times, I've felt we have beta-tested this product for CGS. I guess that comes with the territory, when you're pushing the edge on something new. From day one, we've asked for a lot of modifications since our needs are quite different than those of television.

CGS understands this and has been, in my opinion, open and responsive to our requests. I think together we have created a solid radio school delay/closing information system.

Additionally, this has been an additional source of NTR for our radio stations, as we've secured sponsorships for the Web page, e-mail and text alert messages. For additional exposure, our newspapers link to the radio station's delay/closing page. Also, our county sheriff has been so impressed with the ability to distribute timely information, we've created a mechanism within CGS for sheriff officials to access the system to propagate certain local emergency information.

With CGS, we believe we have a dependable method for providing accurate and timely school delay/closing information and local emergency information to our community.

For more information, contact CGS InfoGraphics Automation at (859) 299-4081 or visit www.cgsautomation.com.

TECH UPDATE

YouCastr Bets on Sports

YouCastr labels itself as a "live Internet sports broadcasting network," aiming to set it apart from the streaming competition. Its YouCastr Pro service is the streaming service, streaming only sports talk radio stations.



Besides Flash-based streaming YouCastr Pro offers live chat, live polling, live broadcaster questions and automatic podcasting of shows. Station and listener blogs are also available.

YouCastr Pro can provide analysis of listeners including show analytics, episode analytics, listener engagement indices, listener demographics and aggregate data over specified times. YouCastr Pro is aimed at simplified installation and operation. Typical installations involve a single station-based computer feeding the YouCastr server system.

For more information, contact YouCastr at (617) 968-3624 or visit www.youcastr.com.



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