



No Substitute for Secure: Axis Security Protects Staff and Clients with Crisis Communication



Industry Security
Location United Kingdom
Product BlackBerry®
AtHoc®
www.axis-groupservices.co.uk/

Deploying personnel to a client site is only the first step to securing that site. Equally important is establishing a line of communication with said personnel. That way, if something goes wrong, they can respond immediately.

“In the event of a major incident, we need to be able to communicate with both our clients and our sites,” explains Leo Tarelli, Mobilisation Manager at Axis Security. “We need to be able to notify them about a developing situation so they can all take the necessary actions.”

Initially, Axis Security met this need through a competing mass notification platform. However, when the time came to renew its license for the platform, the organisation instead opted to search the market for an alternative. This search eventually brought them to BlackBerry® AtHoc®.



Lines of Contact in Times of Crisis

Axis Security is one of the leading security firms in the United Kingdom. It provides uniformed personnel to corporate clients throughout the country, with about half of its guards employed in London by blue chip organisations. All officers are fully vetted, licensed, and trained.

“In 2018, Axis Security was [recognised as Security Guarding Company of the Year](#) at the annual Security Fire and Excellence awards,” said Leo Tarelli, Mobilisation Manager at Axis Security. “We have also been awarded the Highest Approved Contractor Score by the SIA, the UK agency that governs security firms – something which requires a thorough audit of our processes and procedures. Finally, we were recently recognised by Institute of Customer Service with their ‘Service Mark’ accreditation.”

In order to maintain a strong reputation, it is imperative that Axis Security be capable of responding with rapid efficiency to whatever crisis it encounters, protecting both its personnel and its clientele. It was with this in mind that the firm purchased a contract for a mass notification tool. After some time spent configuring the platform – creating the necessary templates and user-groups – Axis Security deployed the solution to its offices and to a few select sites.

It proved a powerful tool, but by no means a perfect one. After a 3-year contract, Axis Security sought an alternative supplier, with better prices and functionality. BlackBerry AtHoc provided both.

A comprehensive emergency mass notification system trusted by over 2000 organisations globally, BlackBerry AtHoc provides unified alerting across multiple devices. And emergency alerting isn’t all the platform does. Available as both a secure cloud or hybrid on-premises deployment, BlackBerry AtHoc can also be used to improve communication and collaboration, promote better situational awareness, and break down communication barriers between agencies.

Axis Security chose networked mass notification module AtHoc Alert to help protect its people. Its emergency managers can rapidly disseminate information about emerging incidents with a single click, helping to ensure everyone has the information they need to make better decisions about safety. AtHoc Alert allows notifications to be targeted based on multiple criteria, while also sending alerts across channels that include email, text messaging, in-app alerts, social networks, speakers, display boards, radio, and voice calls.

“Though BlackBerry AtHoc was the most cost-effective solution, we don’t really look at it as a cost-saving tool. It provides us with the ability to communicate with our clients and our sites more efficiently and effectively than we could before. And that in turn helps us keep our personnel safe while also protecting our clients – that’s not really something you can assign a specific value to.”

Leo Tarelli
*Mobilisation Manager,
Axis Security*

A Bridge to Better Crisis Communication

The primary driver of their switch to BlackBerry AtHoc, notes Tarelli, was price. BlackBerry AtHoc was able to meet all the same needs as the competitor tool, but at a lower cost. After a brief evaluation period, the decision to transition to AtHoc was finalised.

“The implementation was very smooth,” he continues. “We were able to export our current list and run it straight into AtHoc’s import routine with very little adjustment and rewriting the templates didn’t take long at all. The support we received from BlackBerry was excellent as well, and our questions were always answered in a timely fashion.”

“From actually using the product, we’ve honestly found it better,” he continues. “We use mass notification in many different forms – not just here in head office, but also locally in some of our buildings. BlackBerry AtHoc’s grouping and categorisation is much better in that regard, with simpler and cleaner segregation of users and user groups.”

Communication, Coordination, Protection

Axis Security’s deployment of AtHoc is both comprehensive and multifaceted. Certain offices, for example, require only a few internal emergency templates. Within some of Axis Security’s buildings, however, there may be as many as twenty or thirty.

“The process we devised for our emergency alerts is that we’ll send a notification to our field staff with the expectation that they respond back to acknowledge their safety,” explains Tarelli. “Once that alert is received, each site adopts a different posture based both on the incident and its own policies. This may include sending out more patrols, locking down access to exit and entry points, evacuating a site, or simply entering into a state of alert.”



In addition to using BlackBerry AtHoc to communicate with personnel, Axis Security promotes use within some of its buildings. Building management can send out evacuations, alerts about floods and power outages, or information about emergency maintenance. They're able to communicate with all individuals on the premises, which leads to a much smoother response process.

Axis has deployed BlackBerry AtHoc across 562 users, testing the system monthly to ensure that everything works as it should. Internally, these include operatives in its two 24/7 control rooms, its senior management teams, its business continuity director, and Tarelli himself. Externally, it includes both the onsite security teams and building management teams.

To date, BlackBerry AtHoc has already proved instrumental in at least one significant event. A major gas leak put an entire neighborhood on lockdown. For several hours, people were unable to go anywhere near the building or the adjoining railway stations.

By leveraging BlackBerry AtHoc, Axis was able to not only evacuate and disperse the building, but also provide tenants with regular updates from the fire brigade and the police service.

"London has the same problem as most major cities in that when there's an evacuation, there are very few places people can muster," says Tarelli. "BlackBerry AtHoc helps us address that issue. When a building is evacuated, people can go and do what they need to do, knowing we'll alert them through the system when it's safe to return."

"It's a godsend of the platform," he adds.

Although Axis Security is currently using BlackBerry AtHoc exclusively for emergency alerting, it does eventually have plans to expand its deployment. It recently purchased a license for AtHoc Connect, which bridges gaps between communications infrastructure to enable better collaboration across organisations. It has also activated a functionality within BlackBerry AtHoc that allows attachments to be sent along with emergency alerts.

"Standard text messages simply don't have the look or feel we want," explains Tarelli. "The ability to attach PDFs and the like to BlackBerry AtHoc alerts opens up a new angle on using the system. It allows us to get information we've received from the police or the national crime agency to our clients quite easily."

“Reliability is one of the key benefits of BlackBerry AtHoc. We can trust the system will be there when we need it.”

Leo Tarelli
*Mobilisation Manager,
Axis Security*

Security and Communication Go Hand in Hand

For Axis Security, the only thing more important than professionalism is to meet its duty of care towards employees and clientele. At any given time, there are multiple personnel in the field. Axis must be able to guarantee their safety, wherever their jobs take them.

Effective communication is the foundation of this safety – and it’s a foundation BlackBerry is proud to help provide.

About BlackBerry

BlackBerry (NYSE: BB; TSX: BB) is a trusted security software and services company that provides enterprises and governments with the technology they need to secure the Internet of Things. Based in Waterloo, Ontario, the company is unwavering in its commitment to safety, cybersecurity, and data privacy, and leads in key areas such as artificial intelligence, endpoint security and management, encryption, and embedded systems. For more information, visit www.BlackBerry.com and follow [@BlackBerry](https://twitter.com/BlackBerry).