From Natural Disasters To Cyber Attackers: BlackBerry Uses AtHoc To Keep Its People Out of Harm's Way

BlackBerry AtHoc

Industry:
Enterprise Software & Services

Location:
Waterloo, Ontario, CA

Product:
BlackBerry® AtHoc®

Employees:
4,100

Website:
www.blackberry.com

As a global corporation with far-reaching infrastructure, BlackBerry maintains a presence in major cities all over the world and maintains operations in each location. More importantly, BlackBerry recognizes its duty of care to employees- a responsibility to safeguard them against everything from natural disasters to viral pandemics like COVID-19. Helmed by Director Laura Beattie, BlackBerry's Environmental Health & Safety (EH&S) and Enterprise Business Continuity Management (EBCM) organizations share responsibility for these critical objectives.

Continuity, Safety, and Care

Originally, EH&S and EBCM relied on a crisis hotline and later email communication to stay abreast of developing incidents. BlackBerry employees were given an emergency number they could call if they noticed something was amiss. If they heard about an incident in the media or caught wind of something transpiring at a BlackBerry site, they could call the number for further information.

As part of an initiative that sought to improve BlackBerry's crisis response process, Beattie and her colleagues worked with Jeff McDonald, Senior Director of Network Operations. Together, they devised a number of premade emergency templates to send out via email. As BlackBerry grew and expanded, they also created a local incident management team at each global location, including Facilities, Global Security, Health and Safety, Human Resources, IT, local leadership, and remote support professionals.

Email alone could not meet BlackBerry's crisis communication needs – it needed something more efficient and streamlined.

The EH&S/EBCM Use Case

The company's acquisition of emergency management and alerting company AtHoc provided the solution. A powerful tool for two-way crisis communication, BlackBerry® AtHoc® can send quick, efficient emergency alerts across multiple channels, including through a desktop app, a mobile app, via email or SMS, and by phone. Using this solution, BlackBerry has now deployed several innovations geared at protecting remote workers.

Through map layering at the Physical Security Operations Center (PSOC), an operator can circle an area in which there is a developing incident, and everything BlackBerry-related in the area immediately pops up, including travelers and home workers. To protect employee privacy, exact home addresses are not used. Rather, all home workers are attached to the nearest city, and the capacity of BlackBerry AtHoc to attach customizable response options to alerts can be used to further direct and assist people during an emergency.

BlackBerry's Global Security and Travel teams regularly monitor security and travel risks across the globe, flagging high and medium-risk areas. Before leaving for these regions, travelers determine how frequently they'll use the BlackBerry AtHoc mobile check-in feature. They then keep the Global Security Team apprised of their location at key stages in their journey.

BlackBerry AtHoc In-House Champions

Because Beattie and her team were some of the first to implement BlackBerry AtHoc in-house, they've effectively become its internal frontrunners. Collaborating weekly with the BlackBerry AtHoc team, they constantly brainstorm potential improvements and test both new and existing features. They also run regular simulations to ensure internal disaster preparedness.

"BlackBerry AtHoc is really about getting mass communication to people quickly. In any type of emergency, people are looking for direction – getting the word out to everyone individually would be incredibly onerous. With BlackBerry AtHoc, we can give thousands of people guidance with the push of a button, and keep our employees safe."

- Laura Beattie,

Director, Environment Health & Safety/ Enterprise Business Continuity Management, BlackBerry Limited

In 2019, they worked with HR to initiate the AtHoc Alert Challenge. Campaigned globally across the company, the challenge measured both the percentage of employees in each department who responded to alerts as well as the time it took them to respond. Beattie and her team were able to improve BlackBerry's internal response rate from 63% to over 90%.

In addition to maintaining business continuity and employee safety, Beattie and her colleagues have led the charge in leveraging BlackBerry AtHoc for more efficient infrastructure management. If there is no connectivity or power at a site, a notification can be sent out immediately, often saving staff a lengthy commute to work. Through two-way reporting, BlackBerry AtHoc also helps communicate information about the severity of service outages and collects acknowledgement from the recipients.

BlackBerry AtHoc has also seen extensive use amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. As the situation with the virus has developed and worsened worldwide, EH&S, EBCM, and the Global Security Team have together used the platform to keep BlackBerry staff apprised of safety measures, government mandates, and other developments.

A More Efficient Path To Stability and Well-Being

Before the BlackBerry AtHoc implementation, an emergency response could take hours. Alerts had to be crafted, incident threads had to be merged and managed, and Beattie's team had to ensure everyone made it to safety. Now, however, this is all handled through the platform.

"With BlackBerry AtHoc, we're able to send alerts to everyone and determine who's impacted in any given scenario," says Beattie. "We can send out notifications in a matter of minutes, and account for staff just as quickly. It makes it much easier to keep employees safe and infrastructure operational."

"As the situation with COVID-19 has continued to develop, we've used BlackBerry AtHoc extensively. We've leveraged AtHoc Alerts to notify staff of safety measures, government mandates, site closures, and other pertinent information. It's proved effective enough that we're considering using it for long-term health, wellness, and business continuity checks with internal staff."

- Laura Beattie,

Director, Environment Health & Safety/ Enterprise Business Continuity Management, BlackBerry Limited

About BlackBerry

BlackBerry (NYSE: BB; TSX: BB) provides intelligent security software and services to enterprises and governments around the world. The company secures more than 500M endpoints including 150M cars on the road today. Based in Waterloo, Ontario, the company leverages AI and machine learning to deliver innovative solutions in the areas of cybersecurity, safety and data privacy solutions, and is a leader in the areas of endpoint security management, encryption, and embedded systems. BlackBerry's vision is clear — to secure a connected future you can trust.

For more information, visit BlackBerry.com and follow @BlackBerry.

BlackBerry

Intelligent Security. Everywhere.