

▶ BrightArrow® Digital Voice Dialer

Interview with the Sultan School District, 2011

The Sultan School District in Washington state started using BrightArrow's Web-based Digital Voice Dialer for their automated notifications in August, 2010.

In 2011, BrightArrow visited Sultan to discuss their experiences with the notification system. The interviews are summarized here.

Prior to using the BrightArrow system, Sultan School District had been using Global Connect amongst other well-known notification systems. As you see from this interview, the BrightArrow Digital Voice Dialer exceeded all of their expectations and prior experiences.

According to Dave Moon, Technology Coordinator, *"BrightArrow is absolutely phenomenal. I see us sticking with BrightArrow indefinitely. We will never steer away. It answers all of our needs out of the box, and it's hands-off for me, so that's a winner right there. That sold me."*

For a full transcript of the interviews and Sultan Schools' contact information, reach us at Sales@BrightArrow.com or 800-649-9660.



Dan Chaplik, Superintendent.

"In the past years, we dabbled in automatic calling notification systems... there really has been no shortage of us getting contacted by people who had them. So we tried out a couple. The two things we were looking for: Something that can easily be done by anybody, and the cost point obviously is the other. We have been very happy with your solution. It has done everything we wanted it to do, so we have been really excited about that."

"Our priorities include: Having a stable, usable system. Easy to train people to use. We can count on help if we need it. We have felt that with you. I feel real good about that!"

Jackie Whaley, Assistant to the Superintendent.

"It is actually very easy to use. It's very intuitive, and it's simple. A very simple process."

"Oddly enough, I do not have Internet at home. So I actually use the 800 number, which is very easy to use. It takes me maybe 3 minutes total to get all of our employees notified when we have a delay due to something weather related."

"Another area in which I have used it is that I developed a list just for lock-down. We made a list of people that should be called during a lock-down, and you pick up the phone and make one phone call and all those people receive the call on their cell phone. I tested it, so I know it works perfectly."

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

OVERVIEW



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Dave Moon, Technology Coordinator.

"We have been doing student notification systems here in the district for about 10 years. Throughout all of the systems we tried, the biggest challenge has been ease of use. One thing that BrightArrow offered us was that ease of use, right out of the box. It was simple to set up; with a simple user interface, which is key, especially when you are dealing with many users – the simpler the better.

"We changed systems about two years ago, and price drove that change. Our next solution's interface was absolutely horrid. Then we went to BrightArrow, and they delivered on every promise made. Actually, BrightArrow came in even cheaper, so that was a bonus.

"One great experience that we have had – one of many – is that they listen, and they implement. We had made a suggestion on one of the reports to include additional information, and within 2 or 3 days the feature was implemented and we were using it.

"I would compare the functionality in BrightArrow up against any of the big players. Right out of the box, we have all the key functions. We are able to do calls on the fly, import specific calls, tag specific calls. BrightArrow met every requirement that we had right out of the gate.

"One of the best features is the ability for us to remote in and make a phone call. We simply dial an 800 number, put in a PIN code, choose our lists, record our message, and we hang up our phone 45 seconds later... and the call's going out.

"Integration with BrightArrow was as smooth as can be. As a PowerSchool district, my biggest fear and where I had run into problems with previous companies is integration with PowerSchool. The other systems basically said 'well, we are providing our dialing service, and it's your job to get us the information.' BrightArrow's support helped us every step of the way. They were there, they let us try different things, try different data flows until we had it perfect – until we nailed it down.

"With BrightArrow, they took the dialing out of my attendance secretaries' hands. What is fantastic is that it is set up in PowerSchool. Our attendance secretaries just wait for the report to roll in. Before, they would spend

the last 45 minutes of every day updating it into the system and then waiting for it to do a report to make sure the list was accepted. PowerSchool and BrightArrow integrate seamlessly and it's hands-off, which saves me and the attendance secretaries a ton of time.

"The user-interface is so simplistic. My secretaries pull it out of PowerSchool like they do for any other system, and they just turn around and load it into a Web interface. And they choose their call, make their recording, and push a button. The learning curve is next to nothing – 5 minute learning curve. Do it once and you're in.

"We have had two snow days this year already. When that happens, our Superintendent cancels the day, I get a phone call, and my wife actually makes the call out to parents, through BrightArrow. It goes out in English and Spanish. And so, within 10 minutes of the Superintendent making a call to cancel school, we have parents notified.

"I would put the customer service at BrightArrow up against anybody in the marketplace. They answer their phone and return e-mails, which is huge. Those are the best things any tech director could ask for from a company they are looking to get support from.

"With BrightArrow, integration with any school Student Information System would just be a breeze. If you can get the data out of your system, with which any system you can, there's no doubt in my mind that any system will integrate with BrightArrow.

"Our staff loves it because BrightArrow has taken away a ton of work for them, especially our attendance secretaries. Principals love it because they can just poke their head out to an attendance secretary and say 'can you make a call go out to all 8th grade softball players and let them know practice is off today' and 10 minutes later the phone is ringing. And I have even had teachers use BrightArrow for reminders there is a test tomorrow. I would honestly have to say it is all positive, no negative.

"I would absolutely recommend BrightArrow to anybody out there. Any district out there. I would even put out the 'give me a call,' if you have any questions at all. Give me a call – 5 minutes talking with me, I can show you what it can do and absolutely tell you how happy we are with it. "



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TRANSPORTATION

Sherry Broughton, Transportation.

"In the past, our drivers would make lists and we would divide into sections and just start manually calling parents if it was a snow issue and a route was going to be closed. If it is something that can be done before 5am in the morning, then it would go on the news reports and go on our web site, but for a last minute change when a bus is broken down, and I have to bring another bus and driver who is going to be 20 minutes late, BrightArrow's dialer is very convenient. I can put it in the system – it calls all the parents on that route. So anybody that normally would be calling me, they get to hear it; it works very well. It will dial the parents on their cell phones, their e-mails, their home phones. Whatever I choose for it to dial, it will call all those numbers and then redial if it doesn't get to that number... and it does it in a matter of less than 5 minutes.

"We use it for many purposes: Buses that break down; we have had issues with snow



and flood and trees across roads; things that are unexpected. I know I have used it more than anyone else in the school district. Even if a bus is just 10 minutes late,

BrightArrow keeps our phones from ringing.

"Parents appreciate it immensely because if they can get a call first thing in the morning they can make arrangements for their elementary students. In the afternoon if they are waiting, they are not standing out in the rain wondering what's happening; having to find the transportation number at first and then having to call it. If everybody's calling me I cannot get to everyone."

ATTENDANCE AND TRUANCY

Jennifer Moon, Attendance.

"I think purchasing BrightArrow was a wonderful investment by our school district. Not only do the schools get to use it for unexcused absences or tardies but it has been really amazing during our snowstorm, or reaching parents whenever there is an emergency, or anything about the school that is going on. I think the parents appreciate it and have come to rely on it. It is a very good product; very easy to use; mostly hands-off. It's been easy for my job.

"In the past, we had another system that wasn't as easy. You had to do the reports from PowerSchool, import them into the phone system, and then it would dial. Sometimes you wouldn't



reach the parents because of a mis-dial, or the reports weren't as easy to read as this one is. If it didn't go through, you would have to go through a lot of steps to go through and pull up a report. With BrightArrow, it takes no work. Seriously, none. I just go through my PowerSchool to make sure all the entries are correct before I leave for the day, and then it calls. So, I get in the morning, and there are messages from the parents excusing their child or asking why they are getting a call.

"BrightArrow has reduced absences. I have it set so it goes home at 5:30 at night when the families are home. I think that getting the call has not only decreased the unexcused absences and kids knowing not to skip, but has also improved the parents' ability to call and get directed to my line to be able to excuse their child.

"I think this is the fourth (dialing system) that I have used since I have been attendance secretary at the middle school. The other ones weren't as user friendly as BrightArrow because of all the reports you had to do before you went home to make sure that everything was right so a parent doesn't get a call when their child was in school. And at this point it's just basically in PowerSchool. Everything else works, by itself."



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