



Alerts Online

Ontime Anytime Everytime

In partnership with EDT

Alerts Online

Alerts Online is partnering with EDT to provide a leading edge platform for multi-channel information delivery. We provide a truly customer-focused environment for all your communications needs. It provides a one-stop shop for your customers to manage all their communication channels and preferences. This customer-focused approach means your customers will be more inclined to maintain their channel information leading to improved communications and greater customer satisfaction. Alerts Online offers the latest set of communication channels, including email, SMS and soon to come fax, MMS, secure email, MS Alerts, instant messenger and postal services. As more channels become available we do all the hard work to integrate them. Your organisation is channel-agnostic. Alerts Online puts your customers in full control making you truly customer focused.

Introduction

Two terms often heard around industry today are customer focus and agility. Yet how many organisations can claim to be truly customer-focused? At best, most organisations provide choice to their customers around how and when the customer can communicate with them. Rarely does the business provide choice the other way. Channel choice is the first step to delivering true customer focus.

Alerts Online is the next step.

To remain agile, your business must be able to rapidly adapt to an ever-changing business environment. Industry is continually developing new and innovative ways for you to communicate with your customers. The cost of keeping up is high and increasing every year. **Alerts Online helps keep you agile in a cost-effective manner.**

Unlocking your Information Assets

Your organisation is sitting on a wealth of information assets. **Your information assets can be unlocked using Alerts Online.** They can be used to generate revenue, save costs or increase customer satisfaction. The cost of collecting and maintaining all your information assets is high and yet it is probably the least leveraged asset in your business. **Alerts Online can help you realise the value in your information assets.**

Ever-growing Complex Legislation

Organisations now have to work under an ever-growing set of legislation concerning electronic communications, security and privacy, where even just communicating with your existing customers can be challenging. With spam on the increase, the legitimate use of electronic channels has been made far more difficult. **Alerts Online keeps you legitimate by only allowing you to work within a proven framework.** Stay within that framework and you will remain compliant with the latest sets of regulation.

What is Alerts Online?

Alerts Online is a partner of the e-Delivery Team at the e-Government Unit, providing services to support the common infrastructure programme and the Direct.gov programme. Through this relationship, adopters of the common infrastructure are able to access all of the Alerts Online services under the same common infrastructure framework.



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Keeping Legal **Data Protection**

Alerts Online are fully compliant with the Data Protection legislation and take the subject very seriously. We only work in an 'opt-in' way with all customers so they are fully aware of what information they are providing and how it will be stored and used.

For several modes of operation, your business does not even need to store any private information about the customers you are communicating with. This greatly simplifies the legal overhead needed.

Keeping Legal **Privacy**

We too are customer focused and to that end we are always up-front about what information we store and how we use it. Our privacy policy is comprehensive. **The trust relationship we build with your customers means they will keep using the system knowing that their information will not be abused.** This means that communication channels will be kept up to date and you will be able to communicate reliably.

Keeping Legal **Security**

Security of the system is paramount to us. Security is about perception as much as technology. We aim to be 100% secure at all times. If your customers do not believe their information is safe, they will not use the system. **At Alerts Online, we use the latest technology to secure our systems** and will continue to maintain the highest possible standards in this area.

Leveraging your Information Assets

One of the most frustrating things for your customers is being unable to access the information they both need and know you have. **The Alerts Engine allows you to push this information to your customers in a way that is convenient to them.** There are two major benefits to using push technology for communicating with your customers.

- Customer satisfaction
- Reduced costs

Improved customer satisfaction can be achieved by providing timely information about events or subjects that are important to your customer.

There are countless traffic jams caused every day by road works. In all cases road works are pre-planned and are known about in advance by one or other government institutions. This can be very frustrating for road users as they are rarely informed ahead of time leading to frustration and potential delays in their lives. The Alerts Engine can be used to inform drivers of potential delays by alerting them to road works on routes they regularly use. These alerts will allow a road user to take alternative routes or provide more time for their journey.

There are many examples of this type of problem such as train cancellations, plane cancellations, road traffic incidents, school closures, bank closures etc. All of these types of events can be alerted to your customers and this will **improve customer satisfaction.**

Reduced costs can be achieved by using low cost channels instead of post and call centres. Most businesses have plans to migrate their customers to cheaper channels and self-help methods such as web-based (pull) models. Customers do not generally visit websites for updates or new event type information. The consequence is that they will miss the important information and will often call you to get help. The use of **the Alerts Online Engine allows you to push the information your customers need in a way that is convenient to them.**

Alerts Online Example Business Case

Hospitals have a problem with patients not turning up for their appointments. These missed appointments cost the hospital money in terms of unused consultant time as well as increased waiting list times. The hospital case study demonstrates, in a simple calculation, how the Alerts Online Engine can lead to savings.

Hospital Case Study

The following figures highlight some example costs and savings a typical hospital might make by using the Alerts Online Engine.

- (a) Cost of Alerts Online messages to hospital = £0.07
- (b) Service fee per year = £1,200.00
- (c) Cost of missed appointment to hospital = £70
- (d) Total number of hospital appointments per year = 20000
- (e) Current percentage of missed appointments = 8%
- (f) Number of missed appointments per year = 1600 ((e) * (d))
- (g) Cost to hospital of missed appointments = £112,000 ((f) * (c))
- (h) Cost to send a message to every appointment = £1,400.00 ((a) * (d))
- (i) Total cost including service fee = £2,600.00 ((h) + (b))
- (j) Number of appointments attended to break even = 37 ((i) / (c))

As can be seen from the figures above, only 37 appointments need be attended or cancelled and reassigned to break even. The calculations are shown in brackets so it is easy to build a business case for yourselves and adjust the figures to suit your business.



How can you use Alerts Online ?

The system can be used in a number of ways to meet your business needs. The following section will help you step through the capabilities of the system and help you decide which model works best to achieve your goals.

What types of messages do I want to send?

There are three basic modes of messaging, personal, bulk and direct. Each has its own specific benefits and each can be tailored to meet your specific business needs.

I want to send a message which is private to one recipient

This mode of operation allows you to send a single message to a customer. It is usually a result of an event specific to that particular customer.

For example, you may set up an alert to inform a customer that you have received a payment from them. The message might contain the amount of money received and the date upon which you received it. This information would be specific to that one customer.

I want to send a message to a number of specific recipients

This is a variation of the personal message. The above scenario was specific to a particular customer. However, there are times when the same message needs to be sent to a number of specific customers.

For example, there may be 20 people with library books overdue on a particular day. This mode of operation allows you to send one message to multiple recipients. As the message is generic "Your library book is now overdue, please return it as soon as possible" it can be safely sent to a number of recipients at once (obviously, no recipient will see the other recipients as all messages are sent individually once processed by the Alerts Engine).

I want to send a direct message to an address as my customers are not online

Not all of your customers will be online. It would be inconvenient to say the least if you had to force your customers to go online to register for an alert for a one-off reminder type message.

For example, a person is at hospital making an appointment. The Alerts Engine supports the ability to send one-off messages directly to a supplied address. The receptionist would capture the address and use it via the Alerts Engine to send a one-off reminder at the appropriate time to the customer. At that point the address would be discarded as it was captured for a one-off message and to re-use it for different purposes would be a breach of data protection legislation.

I want to send a bulk message to all interested recipients

This mode of operation is a broadcast. When the message is the same for all recipients, there is no need for you to specify them. These messages are generally event-driven where the event applies to all subscribers.

Other uses for bulk messages may be newsletters, general reminders, advertisements (where the customer has subscribed to receive them), events, concerts, etc.

For example, a bulk alert may be used to notify people of a document change on a website. The event would be the document being loaded to the site and this would trigger an alert to be sent to anyone who had subscribed.

I want to send a bulk message with some parameters

Like bulk messages above, bulk with parameters allows you to send generic messages to a wide audience. The parameter means that the customer can be more specific about the information they receive.

The parameter can be set as anything you require. It may be geographic; this would allow a customer to specify a particular post code area (GU16 for example) and only alerts with that parameter would be sent to them. This could work well for flood warnings for example where the message is the same for a wide number of customers.

For example, an organisation may want to send out document change alerts for documents that change on a website. The above method (bulk) would allow a customer to receive an alert every time a document changed on the website. However, they may only be interested in a specific document. The parameter would allow them to receive alerts for that specific document only. You are able to define the parameters and thus control the granularity of the alert.

I want to send a delayed message to be delivered later

The Alerts Engine has a feature that allows you to send messages ahead of delivery time. This can be useful for a number of reasons. The first is that when a high volume of messages needs to be sent out at once, they can be loaded into the engine to be delivered up to 14 days later. This means the messages can be uploaded over a number of days (or nights) and so reduce the pressure on bandwidth. The other benefit of this feature is that messages need not be stored in your systems awaiting delivery.

For example, when an appointment reminder is required, a message can be sent immediately for later delivery (just before the time of appointment) thus relieving you from the need to build event-triggered systems.

I want to send a message as a result of a paper form being received

One of the benefits of the direct message approach is that it can be used for paper based systems. Where important forms are sent to an organisation for processing, it is not unheard of for the forms to go missing in the post or get lost or damaged during processing. The cost of writing back to the customer to acknowledge receipt is high. This often means the customer is unaware of any issues. This results in the customer ringing the call centres to check on progress or receipt. This is expensive. Call cost in a call centre can be over £5.

The Alerts Engine can help. By including an 'alert me' section on your forms you can ask for an address to alert a user of, for example, form receipt, form processing and form process result. One example of where this may be useful is in passport processing.





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Fully Gateway Integrated

As a partner of EDT, we have integrated our systems into the common infrastructure. This means that your customers are able to manage their accounts by using their Government Gateway credentials. You will also be able to utilise your investment in DIS technology and send your alerts to us via your DIS box if you want. This re-use improves your ROI on DIS technology and the central infrastructure.

Your Business in Control

Alerts Online provides you with the tools to improve your customer-oriented business model. It also provides you with the tools needed to fully control your costs and manage your customers. The system provides a full management interface online allowing you to manage your alerts, messages and customers.

All these facilities are simple to use. You can have your alerts up-and-running in minutes.

You get to choose what and how many channels will be available to your customers for your alerts. That way you remain in full control of your costs.

You can also specify the cost of the alert to your customers. You can either pay the cost of the alert, have your customer pay or share the cost. The flexibility of the billing system allows you to set the price of your alerts to suit your business needs.

For example, for alerts where the business can identify a saving (e.g. a reduction in missed appointments in hospitals), the business may be prepared to pay the price of the messages. Where there is no business case for paying the costs, you can have the customer pay, and even generate revenue if the information you provide has value.

Revenue Generation

The Alerts Online Engine allows you to unlock your information assets and start generating revenue from them. We have a range of options that will allow you to provide information to your customers. We take care of all the billing and you provide the information. You will receive regular revenue for your alerts (as customers sign up) and a full breakdown of message delivery to your customers.

The Technical Section

The Alerts Online Engine offers a range of integration options depending upon your business needs:

- Integrate fully into your web site or portal using our range of SOAP interfaces,
- Use a White Label version of our site,
- Just point your customers towards our site and let them manage their alerts through us. **NO INTEGRATION NEEDED!**

We have SDKs available to help your developers integrate, if you require.

Our aim is to get your alerts up-and-running as quickly as possible. For bulk alerts you can get up and running immediately without the need for any technical work whatsoever. All you need to do is contact us and get an account set up.

Further Reading

For more information regarding the technical aspects of the Alerts Online Engine please look at the supporting documentation on the CD provided with this leaflet:

Documents showing the interface specifications for the Alerts Engine.

PowerPoint presentations showing further information on the Alerts Engine.

Flash presentations showing usage scenarios.

Alternatively contact your account manager to set up a technical meeting. We can then provide access to our online technical resource.

Next Steps

This overview should have provided you with enough information to show how Alerts Online can deliver improved cost-effectiveness for your business as well as increased customer focus and customer satisfaction.

The next step is to contact your EDT representative and ask for a follow-up meeting. They would be happy to provide you with further information and help you plan your next steps towards using the Alerts Engine. They will also be able to help you with business analysis services if required.

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