

CASE STUDY: International Fund for Animal Welfare



How the International Fund for Animal Welfare Uses Send Word Now to Help Rescue Stranded Marine Mammals on Cape Cod

Cape Cod is a large peninsula that extends into the Atlantic Ocean off the Massachusetts coastline. The surrounding waters provide important habitat for many species of marine mammals, but unfortunately, it is also susceptible to high tidal fluxes and extreme tide cycles, especially in the winter months. As a result, a large number of dolphins strand along the Cape's beaches each year. This is where the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) comes in.

Brian Sharp, Stranding Coordinator for IFAW's Marine Mammal Rescue and Research program, is responsible for coordinating rescue operations whenever there is a stranding along the region's coastline. In order to do so, he and the IFAW team rely on Send Word Now to communicate with and organize hundreds of on-call volunteer responders any time an animal is in need.

Coordinated Communication

The Cape Cod region has one of the highest number of live dolphin mass strandings, which are defined as two or more animals stranded on the beach at once, of any location in the world. Sometimes, these strandings can leave up to 60 dolphins on the sand bars or mud flats in one day. "Ever since our agency began doing this work, we have faced the problem of contacting our volunteer responders in a quick and effective way," says Brian Sharp, Stranding Coordinator for IFAW. In addition to its marine mammal team, IFAW relies on more than 200 highly trained responders throughout the community for its rescue efforts.

"When we relied on simple phone trees, it was incredibly difficult to get the right number of responders to the right place," he adds. "Reaching only one person at a time meant that the situational information could change before we even reached the end of our contact list. On top of that, I never knew exactly who had received my messages or whose contact information needed to be updated."

In the winter of 2012, IFAW decided to look for a more sophisticated solution. "We needed an alert notification system that we could use to get information to volunteers quickly. We needed a notification system that worked as a functional tool. We found all of that and more with Send Word Now," says Sharp.

Streamlined Rescues

Sharp implemented Send Word Now during one of the biggest mass stranding events in the region's history, which spanned over three months during the winter of 2012.

"When we first used the tool, we hadn't even had a chance to test it yet. But thanks to the outstanding work of Send Word Now's customer support team, we were able to hit the ground running," he explains.

Now, whenever IFAW is alerted to a mass stranding, Sharp uses Send Word Now to send a targeted alert to volunteers in the region, including a Get Word Back response option that asks who is available and how fast they can get to the site. And when he's not at a computer, he just calls the Send Word Now hotline to have its operators send out an alert for him.

Feature Functionality

"One of the things that I love most about Send Word Now is its versatility," says Sharp. "When an animal is stranded in a tidal dependent area, time is of the essence. We need to be able to find the people that are closest to the event as quickly as possible in order to stabilize the dolphin until staff can arrive. Features like Get Word Back, Geo Alerting, and Self-Update make it all possible."

Because Sharp relies on Send Word Now not only to notify, but also to coordinate its volunteers,



he uses the Get Word Back feature in most of his outgoing messages. “When we send out an initial alert,” he explains, “we only write the most basic information. Then we use the fill feature to find just the right amount of volunteers for a given event. For example, if we only need five people for an event, after five people have responded with a “yes,” only those volunteers are sent further instructions. Any remaining volunteers will receive a message letting them know to stand-by in case they are needed later.”

Using the platform’s geographical alerting feature, Sharp is also able to target his messages to reach volunteers in specific areas. “We cover about 700 miles of coastline, and strandings can occur anywhere along that route. By setting a specific geographic range on the alerting page, I can be sure to reach only those volunteers who can get there quickly enough to save the animal.”

Since Sharp operates a small team, managing the database of his 200 plus volunteer responders’ contact information can be a daunting task. “With a group that size, Send Word Now’s self-update feature is invaluable,” he says. “All we have to do is send out a link and our responders can update their information in our system. The fact that we can automate this process is a huge time-saver.”

Why Send Word Now

When Sharp and his team members began to look for an automated notification system, they were immediately impressed by Send Word Now’s robust, multi-modal messaging platform. “Before I found Send Word Now I didn’t know that you could send voice alerts, text messages, and e-mails, all at the same time,” explains Sharp.

“As soon as we saw Send Word Now’s features, including its Get Word Back response option, we were incredibly interested.” He adds that the platform provided far more flexibility and scalability than its competitors, noting, “No other system I looked at had all of the features that we needed and wanted.”

“On top of that,” he says, “Send Word Now’s customer support has been great. The team helped us to get the system up and running during one of the biggest strandings we’ve ever experienced. Since then, the company has listened to our suggestions and the product has evolved to suit even more of our needs. I love that the service isn’t one size fits all. Whether you have a staff of 6 or 6,000, it will work for you”

The Send Word Now Advantage

For businesses operating under the demands of today’s global markets, the need for effective and reliable communication solutions has never been greater. Send Word Now consistently provides innovative notification solutions that outmatch its competitors’ offerings.

With its smartphone integration, international capabilities, and unique features, Send Word Now’s award-winning platform is the go-to choice for companies with a diverse or international employee base. And on top of its robust software features, Send Word Now offers best-in-class customer support services.

Send Word Now is the leading provider of on-demand alerting and response services for both routine and emergency communication. The easy-to-use, web-based emergency notification service is used by government agencies, municipalities, universities, non-profit organizations and businesses to ensure fast, effective, two-way communication in real-time. Send Word Now’s Alert Tracer® provides a full audit trail of messages sent and received for after-action reporting and follow-up. Designed to reach anyone, anywhere, anytime, with any device over any type of connection, Send Word Now’s mass notification system is capable of transmitting hundreds of thousands of voice and text messages in minutes.