Six Points to Consider in a Notification System

1. **Capacity.** Does the notification system have sufficient, demonstrated capacity to deliver all messages quickly and reliably?

   The **Connect-ED** service provides a hosted Software as a Service (SaaS) solution without any need to invest in, or maintain, hardware, software, or additional phone lines.
   - Average daily usage of less than 2% of available, contracted capacity.
   - Not subject to power outages and other disruptions, unlike auto-dialer systems
   - Call routing, throttling, and load balancing expertise to ensure calls get through reduced local bandwidth in an emergency situation
   - Pre-contracted capacity for over 17 billion voice messages annually

2. **Security and Redundancy.** Is access to private student and staff data limited to authorized personnel? Does the system have redundant capabilities in all the power interconnects?

   Stringent security protocols used by the **Connect-ED** service protect sensitive information with no single point of failure and redundant systems throughout. Built-in controls and PIN authorization safeguard communications at all times.
   - Allows you to specify roles and rights at the user level
   - Data is stored at a Level 4 government-rated facility—the highest rating available
   - Burstable bandwidth, redundant power feeds, multiple data connections, 24/7 security and monitoring to ensure full protection and total security

3. **24/7 Client Care.** What are the provider’s on-site training, customer service, and technical support policies? Are all three included in the cost of the system?

   Blackboard Connect provides 24/7 Client Care for all users. Additionally, our approach is tailored to each client to provide proactive advice and recommendations to identify areas of improvement.
   - Dedicated 24x7x365 technical and client support for all users
   - Training and support—where, when, and for as long as requested for all clients
   - Proactive client care—provides best practices, on-site use evaluation

4. **Experience.** Does the provider have significant experience delivering calls on behalf of thousands of school institutions of various sizes across the country?

   With five years of proven performance, the **Connect** platform is used at over 21,000 active sites—colleges and universities, K–12 school districts, plus local, state and Federal government agencies.
   - In 2007, the Connect platform was used to deliver over 240 million voice messages to landlines and cell phones.
   - Call routing, throttling, and load balancing expertise to ensure call delivery
   - Proven, cost-effective, easy-to-use technology
   - The families of in one of every six students enrolled in the nation’s K-12 public schools are served via the Connect-ED service.

5. **Assessment.** Does the service have reporting capabilities that allow the district to monitor, manage and measure the system effectiveness? Can the service be used for non-emergency outreach messages?

   The **Connect** platform provides the capability to send timely, targeted messages and track delivery.
   - Unlimited use for a fixed, low annual fee
   - Used for outreach daily—not just emergencies—so you and your principals know how to use it when needed
   - Message delivery tracking with comprehensive reports

6. **Focus.** Is the service designed to meet the needs of educators?

   Any system you consider should have hierarchical controls so that authorized personnel have access to the appropriate level of access to the database, i.e., Principal, Assistant Superintendent, School Clerk, etc.
   - Send personalized messages—leveraging the power of your own voice—for everything from school lunch balances to overdue library books
   - Automated attendance service integrates with most student information systems
   - Combines a complete suite of communication tools: Community Outreach, Attendance Notification, Emergency Communication, and Single Survey
School districts nationwide are looking for reliable, cost-effective ways to increase ADA and foster student achievement in an era of restrictive budgets. Designed for seamless integration with existing information systems, the Connect-ED service enabled two leading California school districts, La Mesa-Spring Valley and Vacaville Unified, to fully automate daily attendance without changing procedures. The result: improved attendance and parental involvement—the #1 predictor of student achievement—with proven ROI.

La Mesa-Spring Valley School District quickly recouped nine times the amount it invested in the Connect-ED service. Comparing Period 1 (P1) attendance in 2005 (August to December) to 2006 P1 attendance, a 0.75% improvement was realized, leading to a $450,000 increase of payments to the district from the state. This does not, of course, include the many benefits gained by using the system for outreach purposes or to better address urgent situations.

Vacaville Unified School District began using the Connect-ED service for attendance calls in January 2006. Parents immediately responded to the new service with enthusiasm. According to Superintendent John Aycock, “Connect-ED has become an integral part of our outreach programs. Parents are excited to feel more connected to their children’s schools.”

With enrollment in decline, the district turned to outreach and incentive initiatives to boost attendance, with the Connect-ED service a key component. As a result, the district increased its 2006 ADA from 91.8% to 95.08%. The district received from the state of California approximately $714,000 per 1% increase in attendance, or $2.7 million overall.

In the words of Superintendent Brian Marshall, “I thought that the Connect-ED service would pay for itself if attendance brought the ADA up—and it did. Our figures showed us that the system paid for itself many times over. It helps us detect problems early on and use the data to inform our strategic planning.”

Software: Connect-ED

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