

Next-Generation Messaging: Critical Alert System

Don't be constrained by the triple play. Here's another example of a possible broadband service to sell. See the end of the article.

By David Daugherty and Charles Flynn ■ *Korcott Holdings*

Annie Sims, called Annie by her friends, will be attending BigBucks University in central Florida this fall. An honors graduate from high school, Annie has been looking forward to college, if for no other reason than to put a little distance between herself and her parents, who reside in Williamsburg. Annie's parents, on the other hand, are less than enthusiastic about the whole affair. Florida seems to get more than its share of violent weather, and the tragedy at Virginia Tech has made them deeply concerned for the safety of their daughter.

Although somewhat anxious about Annie's imminent departure, Daddy Sims has done his due diligence on BigBucks and has found several administrative features to his liking. Daddy particularly approves of the on-campus Critical Alert System. As well as providing leading-edge communication amenities for voice, video and data, the campus communication system can interrupt normal operations to issue campus-wide security and critical alerts. But most importantly, the system allows campus security to quickly ascertain and document the security status of campus facilities and its residents.

A week before classes start, Annie and her parents are carting her belongings up to a third-floor off-campus apartment that Annie will share with two other students. As the day progresses and Annie gets situated in

her new home, she and her father decide that it is time to check out the communication amenities. Annie jacks into the port marked "Data" next to the desk in her bedroom and fires up her computer.

The Welcome Screen (which Annie ignores) has been designed to welcome residents and provide an overview of available services. Annie quickly determines that there is nothing of interest on the page and clicks "Click here to read AUP".



The standard opening screen. Students will ignore it, of course.

The next screen, which Annie also ignores, is an Acceptable Use Policy agreement that residents must read and accept before being granted access to the Internet. The AUP is a legally binding agreement between Annie and the apartment complex that helps manage the contingent liability of the complex owner and the ISP for any illegal activities that Annie may choose to pursue using her Internet access.



Acceptable Use Policy. Few students read this, either.

Annie clicks on the "I Agree" button at the bottom of the page and is then asked to create her user account. This is a simple process of entering some personal information and typically takes less than a minute.



Standard account creation page.

When Annie clicks the "Create" button at the bottom of the screen, she has temporary Internet access. Final authentication is granted when she has confirmed her e-mail and text message addresses. From this point forward Annie can access her Service Management Portal (SMP) by going to www.hispeedup.com. She can log in to add computers or gaming devices to her account or change any of her personal information.

The Messaging System

A little later in the day, after Annie has finally gotten rid of her parents, she returns to her computer. To her surprise, her browser displays a welcome message from the BigBucks messaging system instead of her personal Web page. She reads the message and learns to expect e-mail and text messages in order to complete authentication. She acknowledges the message and is re-

turned to her personal Web page.



The confirmation page is a good place to promote add-on services.

Once Annie has acknowledged the e-mail and text messages, she is officially logged and authenticated with the campus security system.

Critical Alerts

During critical alerts, campus security will issue a systemwide alert. All students and staff will respond via Internet or their cell phones. Each building on campus will be assigned a security administrator who will also be charged with reporting the security status during critical alerts. This type of rapid response information allows campus security to quickly ascertain where to direct response teams.

Technical Aside

The messaging system is an important part of the apartment complex and campus communications environment. Unlike e-mail and other forms of Internet-based messaging, the BigBucks University messaging system redirects the student's Web browser to the messaging system. Access to the Internet is temporarily interrupted to deliver and log messages, message receipt and acknowledgement. The system relays important information to students from apartment support staff, campus administrators, campus security law enforcement and others. It is atypical because it enables real-time two-way communications between the student and messaging entity. All aspects of the communication are logged for future reference. Message types include:

Promotional Messages

These are addressable messages that typically include some paid advertising. Students have the ability to opt out of promotional messages. Promotional messages will also include incentive-based messages that reward residents with services for responding to advertisements. They are the lowest priority message and will not interrupt Internet services until a long period of inactivity has been detected. All promotional messages and responses can be logged.

Administrative Messages

These messages include anything having to do with the normal operation of the apartment complex and/or the college campus. Administrative messages are the next lowest priority form of nonoptional messaging and will interrupt Internet services after a fixed amount of inactivity. All administrative messages and responses can be logged.



Example of low-priority messages sent to student desktops. Notice the acknowledgement button.

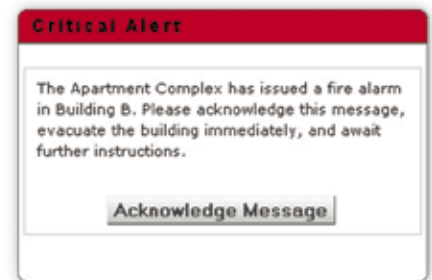
Security Alerts

These messages relate to issues that might lead to a critical situation. Security alert messages are the second highest priority of messaging and will interrupt Internet services as soon as the end user is inactive. Due to the level of disruption caused, security alerts typically require confirmation from key administrative staff to be issued. All security alerts and responses are logged.

Critical Alerts

These sitewide messages warn resi-

dents of threats to personal safety. Critical alerts are the highest-priority messages and will immediately interrupt Internet services for everyone in an apartment complex and/or campus. Due to the level of disruption caused, critical alerts require confirmation from key administrative staff before they can be issued. All critical alerts and responses are logged.



Security alerts and critical alerts describing threats to personal safety can be pushed through to desktops with highest priority

Is This Real or Vaporware?

Although it is fictional, much of the preceding story is an accurate reflection of messaging technology currently employed in student housing by Time Warner Cable (TWC), Suddenlink Communications, Bright House Networks and soon Cox Communications. For the past several years Korcett Holdings, Inc., (KHI) of Austin, Texas, has been working with MSOs and property owners to perfect the underlying messaging technology as a feature of Korcett-based broadband services. Korcett-based broadband services are currently marketed by TWC under the HiSpeedUp brand, by Suddenlink under the RateShaper brand, and by Bright House under the RateSteady

brand. Other MSOs are expected to be on board by the end of the year.

Do You Need a Critical Alert System?

KHI works hand in hand with our MSO partners, MDU developers and campus administrators to develop custom systems designed to address specific needs. The tragedy at Virginia Tech has created an unexpected urgency associated with the deployment and testing of the Critical Alert subsystem. **BBP**

Acknowledgements

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About the Author

David Daugherty is the CEO and founder of Korcett Holdings. Korcett Holdings is dedicated to the development and marketing of next-generation service solutions. For more information about Korcett Holdings or Korcett Integrated Solutions, see www.korcett.com. David also invites those with questions, comments and inquiries to contact him at david@korcett.com.

Charles Flynn is the Director of Business Intelligence at Korcett Holdings. Charles has more than 10 years of experience developing distributed applications. Charles has a unique focus on overcoming the communications gap between business users and application developers. He has a proven track record of success linking business needs into technical solutions.

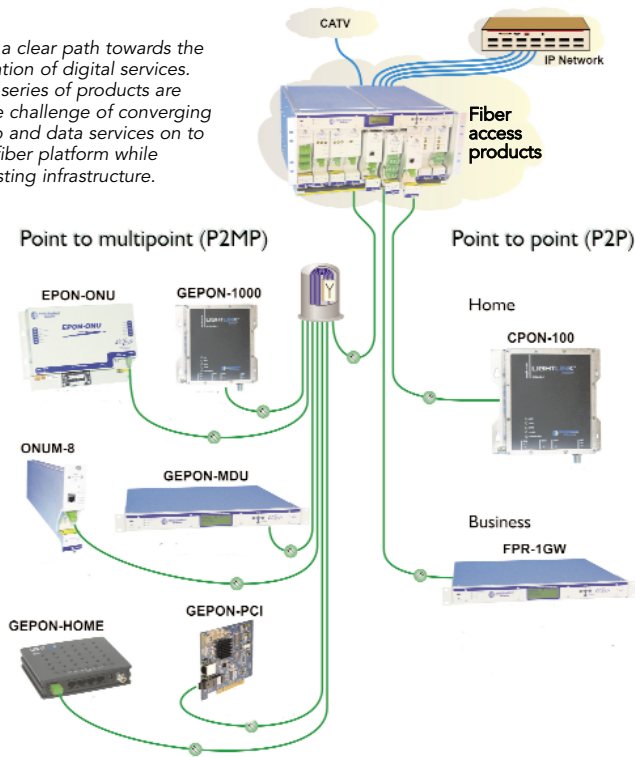
KHI is seeking working relationships with MDU developers and college campus administrators who are interested in the definition, development and deployment of Critical Alert systems. Anyone interested in becoming part of this discussion or becoming an alpha test site for the Critical Alert system should contact the authors.



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