



Use of Mass Notification at Azusa Pacific University

Azusa Pacific University uses Everbridge Mass Notification for emergencies and regional events that require immediate notification. It doesn't have to be an emergency or a dangerous situation, but notifications that need to go out quickly to a broad audience.

Highlights

- Azusa Pacific University was able to set up within 20 minutes and send notifications.
- Notifications were sent out to 10,000 students who are actively taking classes, and thousands of staff members.

Chris Saenz

System Engineer at Azusa Pacific University

"Everbridge is a necessary tool for our campus safety and communications teams during events. I don't know if they could do their jobs correctly without Everbridge."



Q&A with Chris Saenz

System Engineer at Azusa Pacific University

What is your primary use case?

We've used Everbridge for power outages, weather events that might impact students on campus, police activity, and earthquakes and natural disasters. Everbridge gives a heads-up to our students who live on campus and our staff members who work on campus to exercise caution during an upcoming or ongoing event that puts them at risk.

How has Everbridge helped your organization?

The main advantage is that we are able to keep in constant communication with a very wide audience. At times, we have close to 10,000 students taking classes at our university, plus a few thousand staff members. That's a large audience and, at times, we need to communicate with them very urgently. Everbridge has allowed us to do that very efficiently.

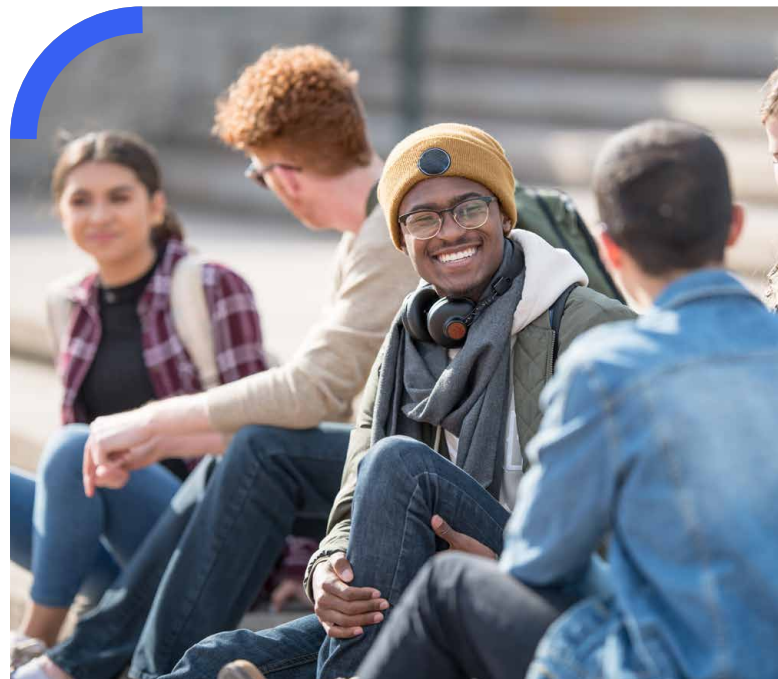
Before we had Everbridge, if there was an emergency, we would have our campus safety people physically go to different locations and try to communicate. We also have a public address system over which we could try to just send out an audible message, but they're not as efficient and do not reach as many people. The best way to reach people is to contact them on their devices, and Everbridge also allows us to push notifications thorough social media, digital signage, and campus-run devices such as lab computers.

In terms of productivity, I'm sure our campus safety and communications teams see it as a necessary tool for those events. I don't know that they

could do their jobs correctly without something like Everbridge. Everbridge has been that mass notification tool for us for almost 10 years now.

It has features that enable us to build dynamic audiences. We know, for example, that certain students live on campus while others are commuters. We sometimes target notifications to those who live in a certain area. That's a definite improvement over where we were before.

Having various audiences that we want to target in Everbridge helps save time. We also build notification templates so that if an emergency arises, we are not writing things word for word, but rather using those templates and filling in a minimal amount of data and pushing those messages out as quickly as possible. We've gained significantly in terms of the accuracy and efficiency of who we're targeting with these notifications.



What is most valuable about Everbridge to your organization?

Our organization has seen benefits from the reporting tools that come with Everbridge. The reporting we have is very intuitive and provides good insight into the results when we send out a mass notification: Who is responding? How long does it take? When do they receive the messages and through which medium? Are they replying through text messages? Are they replying through a website? That's a lot of information that helps us know how our audiences are responding.

How long have you used Everbridge?

I've been using Everbridge for eight or nine years. I work in IT, and I help to manage the application at the IT level. I help with any integration of Everbridge with our email system, our domain, and our student information system that provides data so that we can target specific audiences. While my involvement is at the IT level, other departments generate the notifications, push them out, and interpret any data we get from them.

What do you think about the stability of Everbridge products?

It seems very stable. All the times we've had to send out messages, we have never seen any technical issues with their systems.

What do you think about the scalability of Everbridge?

From what I understand, only big institutions use their systems and their services, so it is impressive how many messages they send out and how scalable they are. We were told how many millions of messages they facilitate, and they can accurately track that they were delivered and responded to among their various customers.

We have up to 10,000 students who are actively taking classes and a couple of thousand staff members. We're based in Azusa, California, but we do have some alternate locations within the city of Azusa, as well as some regional campuses around the greater Los Angeles area.

The geography is a little bit spread out, even here in Azusa on our main campus. We have staff members who are on campus during normal work hours and students who live here, so they're here 24/7. A student could be part of one semester and not part of the next. It's a diverse base and we want to communicate with them very quickly and efficiently, year-round.

We plan to increase our usage of Everbridge. In the last couple of years, we've done more

integrations with the different applications and services they integrate with. We also want to have more well-defined target audiences in our account. We're going to use more and more features that it provides. Right now, the major hurdle is just being organized on our end and having the time to implement them. But we definitely want to use more of their features.

How is Everbridge's customer service and support?

We've received good technical support. Over the last year, their liaison support has reached out to us to connect with us to see if we have everything we need. They have been very proactive in asking if we need anything from them or if they can help with something. Their support individuals have done a good job of keeping in contact with us.

How would you rate customer service and support?

Positive.

How was the initial setup?

The initial setup was straightforward. From the moment you get into Everbridge, within 20 minutes, you can send a notification and make it conform to about 90 percent of what you want it to be. It's quite intuitive on the Everbridge user side.

When we started, getting all of our student and staff data into Everbridge from our student information and HR systems took a little bit of work. Our systems are big and complex, so it was hard getting our user data into Everbridge.

We had a couple of system administrators, a network engineer involved in the implementation, and a couple of software developers to pull data from our systems. We definitely needed our campus safety individuals including our campus safety chief, and some of our communications department were involved as well.

Periodically, the system requires maintenance but not very much. It mostly runs on its own because it is hosted by them. They have contacted us a couple of times in the last few years when they changed some of their IP addresses for their systems. There's also a new encryption certificate they're going to provide us with that we need to change on our side.

What about the implementation team?

We got a little bit of support from Everbridge itself, but we didn't have any third-party help.

What was your ROI?

Our organization values the capabilities that Everbridge gives us. We've been a customer for almost a decade, so I know we're seeing value.

What other advice do you have?

Our main challenge was figuring out what we want to allow our audiences to be able to do. We went back and forth for a couple of years on this. Obviously, we want to notify people when there's something that we feel they need to be notified about. But if you give your audience the ability to remove themselves from all notifications, there's a chance that you won't actually be notifying the people that you want to notify. In the end, we prevented them from removing themselves or their contact methods, such as email and text. They cannot change their contact information in Everbridge. They have to receive notifications. If they're part of our organization, they're going to get them. That was something we wrestled with, but it was more of a policy issue rather than an issue with Everbridge itself. We think we're doing what's best for our audiences.