



BlackBerry Customer Success Story



R3SM Inc. (Recover, Rebuild, Restore Southeast Mississippi) is a non-profit organization that supports efforts to repair and rebuild homes after natural disasters, from fires to floods and hurricanes. The organization is an advocate for accessible housing, medical resources and employment for those who most need it, such as the elderly and disabled, and serves as a coordination point for recovery funds, resources and volunteer labor in damage assessment and rebuilding.

Industry: Other

Region: North America

Company Size:
Small Enterprise - 15 Employees

Email Platform:
Microsoft® Exchange

Solution: BlackBerry® Messenger (BBM™), Documents To Go®

Non-Profit Organization Coordinates Disaster Relief Efforts with BlackBerry Smartphones

THE CHALLENGE

Like many non-profit organizations, R3SM has minimal staff and limited resources, but an overwhelming demand for services. Fifteen caseworkers serve hundreds - sometimes thousands - of clients in 28 counties across Mississippi, who are dealing with the effects of catastrophic events. The job requires extensive traveling, particularly to rural areas that don't have access to the Internet. And, in disaster areas, caseworkers often have to deal with power outages and downed phone lines.

In these kinds of scenarios, there is a critical need for communications and coordination in the field. Caseworkers require quick access to information, such as local resources and government grant programs to serve their clients in a timely manner. The faster they can get that information, the faster the client gains access to resources, such as food or shelter.

There's also a need to coordinate relief efforts with the organization's partners, which include the United Way, The Salvation Army and American Red Cross. R3SM is currently working on a pilot program for disaster case management with its partners that will be implemented across the U.S., which requires caseworkers to have access to near real-time information.

THE SOLUTION

"I had a BlackBerry® smartphone at my previous job at American Red Cross, and that exposed me to the benefits," said Matthew Brumfield, Project Data Manager for R3SM. "When I started this job, I realized there was no way I could function without it." Aside from his technical support duties, he also serves as the organization's volunteer and fundraising coordinator, organizing volunteers from across North America and coordinating the effort to rebuild homes for people affected by catastrophic events. He doesn't have time to pull out a laptop to check his email while he's in the field. He has four different email accounts for his different roles at the organization, and having a BlackBerry smartphone allows him to manage those roles while he's in a meeting or on the road.

"I'm always traveling, and my BlackBerry smartphone helps me stay in constant communication with staff and volunteers," said Brumfield. "I also started using BlackBerry® Messenger (BBM™) and I'm addicted to it now." His device also provides him with the ability to open Microsoft® Excel® spreadsheets and Microsoft® PowerPoint® presentations on the go. He also requires access to a national database called the Coordinated Assistance Network, which tracks client records across several non-profit organizations to avoid duplication of services. "My BlackBerry smartphone can access the database over the Internet, while other smartphones won't," he said.

“During a disaster situation, we don’t have time to open up a laptop and find a wireless hotspot. The BlackBerry smartphone helps us coordinate relief efforts quickly and efficiently, and also helps us stay in touch with clients, volunteers and case workers during the rebuilding process.”

Matthew Brumfield
Project Data Manager and Volunteer Coordinator
R3SM

KEY BENEFITS

- Cost savings through more efficient operations
 - Faster turnaround in processing clients’ cases
 - Improved ability to communicate during disaster situations
 - Delivers a high level of security for sensitive data
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Because caseworkers also have a need for near real-time communications, the organization has deployed another five BlackBerry smartphones to directors, and Brumfield would like to deploy more when resources become available. “We use the BlackBerry smartphone for everything from time management to almost real-time communications,” he said. “We use it for scheduling, for meetings, to track mileage while travelling. There’s a real need for it in our industry.”

R3SM’S BENEFITS

“I couldn’t perform all the different roles I have without my BlackBerry smartphone,” said Brumfield. “Without it, we would need two people to do my job. We’re saving at least one person’s salary annually – and that’s enough money to build a house for one of our clients.”

These efficiencies help the organization’s clients, who need access to resources as quickly as possible. For example, R3SM was given a government grant that serves 7,000 clients on a first come, first served basis. The faster that caseworkers can pull up information relevant to a case and turn around the paperwork, the faster those clients will receive the resources they need to help them through a catastrophic event. Also, caseworkers can use the browser on their BlackBerry smartphone to find information on local resources while visiting clients, giving them personalized attention.

Brumfield also uses his BlackBerry smartphone to communicate with volunteers and provide them with details of their lodgings, placement and activities. “We have groups coming from as far away as Canada, and we try to answer any questions they have as quickly as possible to get the ball rolling,” he said. This is particularly important during a disaster situation, where time is of the essence.

Also, during a disaster situation, the BlackBerry smartphone is designed to provide caseworkers with a highly dependable method of communications. “During a recent hurricane, we didn’t have power for close to a month in my area, and phone lines were down,” said Brumfield. “But I had my BlackBerry smartphone, which I used to send email to coordinate resources for relief efforts.”

“The BlackBerry smartphone’s long battery life makes it an invaluable tool for caseworkers spending long hours in the field,” he said. They also rely on the security features of the BlackBerry smartphone. For example, given they deal with sensitive information such as social security numbers, the ability to wipe a lost or stolen device is critical. “Like many non-profit organizations, we have limited resources, but the BlackBerry smartphone helps us make the most of those resources and act like a much larger organization,” said Brumfield.

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