



A Case Study from The Marlin Company

Creating a Safety-Focused Culture

Allied Waste opted for a high-tech communication solution to address an age-old concern: workplace safety

When you think of business, you don't think of employees being struck by a passing car, pinched between vehicles or crashed into at high-speeds at intersections. Yet, these are real dangers trash haulers face every day, given that their workplace is on the nation's highways and byways. In an industry that ranks among the top 10 most dangerous US businesses, Phoenix-based Allied Waste Industries, Inc., its second largest player, set as its goal the dramatic reduction of employee accidents. Working hard to do just that, the company managed in just two years to reduce its accident rate by 70% through an innovation communications and safety training program.

The waste management industry is inherently risky because "employees are putting their bodies on the street," according to Mark Potjer, Operations Manager at Allied Waste's Grand Rapids, Mich., facility. In 2004, 17 out of 100 Grand Rapids facility employees were involved in accidents and Allied Waste resolved to lower the number as much as possible. The challenge was to make safety awareness absolutely paramount in the employees' minds. Since most Allied Waste employees have no access to the Internet, the

organization knew that it needed a novel way of reaching its employees.

Allied Waste began its safety initiative by communicating safety statistics to the employees using a decidedly low-tech method: Safety numbers were posted on a Dry Erase board outside the driver service area, where employees punch in, do their paperwork and get debriefed. Quantifying the accident rate made employees more aware of the need for safety in the field, but it did not drive the dramatic reduction in accidents that Allied Waste sought. Part of the reason was that it was difficult to keep the information timely, so it frequently became stale—and over time, ignored. Old safety notices remained tacked to a wall in a random, unattractive way that drew little attention and failed to grab employees' attention.

A High Tech Display Demands Attention

Wanting to take their safety program to the next level, Allied Waste turned to The Marlin Company of North Haven, Conn., experts in helping companies improve employee morale, performance and productivity through innovative print and electronic communication programs that reach all employees. With the help of The

Marlin Company's Electronic Communication Station™ (ECS), a 42-inch flat panel display, Allied Waste was able to bring its safety information to life through automatic and frequent rotation of animated safety messages and other content sent via the Internet. The multi-frame display shows real-time news, sports, local weather, and motivational workplace messages along with Allied Waste's safety information.

"In the past, our efforts to communicate to employees were limited by our low-tech tools. It was hard to get our employees' attention and to keep our information relevant," said Potjer.

"The Marlin Company offered an ideal solution with its ECS," said Potjer. "It incorporates great graphics and content that command employee attention.

"The best part is that the information is automatically updated, so employees know that content is always fresh. What's also appealing is that I can change the information at will from my computer. However, if I don't get the chance, I feel secure knowing that the display will be updated on its own. It's never stale and, consequently, never ignored."

**The Marlin
Company**

The Workplace Communication Experts™

The ECS includes “safety alerts,” which had previously been unread by employees. Another popular feature of the ECS is the display of local news. “That’s the first draw,” said Potjer. “We’re right in the Snow Belt and the Communication Station provides streaming, real-time weather forecasts. Our employees find this information extremely helpful. That information, in turn, gets them to focus on the safety messages.”

In addition, there are plans to “plug in” an employee recognition program in 2007 for safety-related achievements.

For Allied Waste, its safety program hinges on three factors: Training new employees and drivers who have had accidents; retaining employees with good safety records; and, maintaining a focus on safety.

“How do you get people to focus?” asked Potjer. “You must keep safety at the forefront and you must keep it there constantly. The Marlin

Company ECS helps us do just that.”

The company briefly used the ECS as a general information depot, giving updates on upcoming meetings and other company business, but has since restricted its use exclusively to safety. “Safety is our focus and we didn’t want any distractions,” said Potjer.

A New Ethos and Safer Employees

Allied Waste’s strategy to improve employee safety has paid off. Its employees have taken the safety messaging to heart and now proudly embrace an ethos of “not on my watch,” said Potjer. They know they are responsible for alerting us of anything they see that impacts safety. In 2006, Allied Waste’s Grand Rapids facility’s accident frequency dropped to 4.94, meaning that fewer than 5 employees were involved in accidents over the course of the year. This is a 70 percent reduction from an accident frequency of 17 only two years earlier, and was the lowest rate

among the company’s 400 facilities.

The Grand Rapids facility’s achievement didn’t go unnoticed. In early 2007, it was awarded Allied Waste’s “Safest Shop” award. “This is a special achievement in a company where safety comes first,” said Potjer. The company’s safety record bests that of industry leader Waste Management, according to Potjer.

“We will continue to strive to reduce our accident rate to zero, because even one accident is one too many,” said Potjer. “The Marlin Company’s ECS technology has enabled us to keep safety top-of-mind among our employees. The attractiveness of the display, the relevance of its information and the persuasiveness of its safety messaging, make it an indispensable component of our safety awareness program. For us, the ECS has been a lifesaving tool.”

About The Marlin Company

For more than 90 years, The Marlin Company has been the Workplace Communication Experts™ helping companies improve employee morale, productivity and performance through the innovative use of original, visually engaging content that is displayed in Communication Stations that can be managed through print or Internet-distribution. Its stations, which contain content customized by industry, are helping more than 8,000 companies of all sizes improve workplace attitudes and behavior. Through its many years of experience, The Marlin Company has developed a strong database of, and experience in, issues affecting the workplace. It routinely surveys thousands of clients to determine their current issues, work with industry experts across North America, and conducts national polling. Since 1995, it has conducted its annual “Attitudes in the American Workplace” Labor Day poll. In the early years, the Gallup Organization conducted the polling. Harris Interactive has done so since 2001.

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