



XOPNetworks

Why should your Home Owners Association (HOA)
have an Announcement Service?

An XOP Networks White Paper

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Fast and accurate neighborhood communications is a necessity in today's complex and fast changing world. People want and need to know what is going on in their neighborhood so that they have information to make appropriate decisions for their family.

It is important that information on meetings, events, emergencies and safety (burglaries, storms, power outages/restoration, road works, etc.) gets communicated quickly and accurately and that contact records kept to provide a paper trail of the notification with as little effort as possible.

This document examines the current methods that a typical HOA might use, their problem areas, suggests a unique solution, and how it would be implemented by a typical HOA Group subscribing to XOP Networks' Managed Announcement Service.

HOA COMMUNICATIONS – TRADITIONAL METHODS

Many HOAs today have manual intensive methods of communicating to their homeowners. For event information, this typically consists of visiting the homeowner and delivering a flyer and/or posting on the door/mailbox. While some HOAs deliver “news” by sending/ emailing monthly news letters, when there is an important security announcement, someone in the group takes it on themselves to call other people in the HOA and verbally communicate the message. Administrative functions, for example, voting the Board of Directors, is time consuming and usually results in poor/no response.

HOA COMMUNICATIONS – THE BOTTOM LINE

All of these methods are time consuming and leg-work intensive (delivering flyers to ~300 households is a daunting task!), and suffer from being discarded or being delivered late. Emails, while slightly more effective, tend to be junked out of hand as generally they are too long, complex, and arrive too late. When an important security issue arises, making individual phone calls to even a short list of block captains, is time consuming and often too late to deal with the situation.

The result is ineffective HOA communications leading to dissatisfaction and lack-of-perceived-value of HOA membership. While important to all groups, this is especially important to voluntary HOAs, where membership sign-up and perceived value is especially important.

UNDERSTANDING THE ISSUES A TYPICAL HOA FACES

Typically, a number of specific needs must be addressed in order for the average HOA to communicate with its homeowners in the quickest and most effective manor. These needs are summarized as follows:

- Provide announcements to between 50 and 500 households.
- 1-4 announcements per month.
- Recorded by the HOA via a simple phone call.
- Triggered/released by phone.
- Announcement length 2.5 minutes or less.
- Three sub-groups of homeowners, Main Group, Security Watch (Block Captains), and the Board of Directors.
- No complex administration, other than contact details of homeowners.

- Communicate to residence phones, cell phones, email and pagers. The choice of any or all is up to the individual homeowners.
- Minimal maintenance on the part of the HOA.
- Log of contact results automatically generated, so as to permit a “postmortem” of who was called/answered/etc.

HOA COMMUNICATIONS – THE SOLUTION

What is needed is a method of communicating effectively with little effort, low cost, and without the expense of buying stand-alone equipment. In addition, most HOAs do not have the expertise or time to manage databases of homeowners, and decide on what is to be communicated and when.

The solution to these problems is a “Managed Announcement Service”, where the responsible person(s) call a single local phone number, enter a predetermined authorization PIN, record a message, and launch an announcement to all the homeowners or selected sub-groups.

XOP Network’s Managed Announcement Service can provide the solution. The service is affordable (typically \$1 per household per month), highly reliable, easy to use and set-up, and requires very little administration on behalf of the HOA.

HOA COMMUNICATIONS – TYPICAL APPLICATIONS

The following list is typical of the types of announcements that are used by homeowner groups. Individual groups may choose their own applications as desired.

- All HOA members:
 - Reminders for bulk trash pick-up – prerecorded message + email
 - HOA Fees due – prerecorded message & email
 - Delinquent dues – prerecorded “friendly reminder” to delinquent subset only + email.
 - Major Security Alert – prerecorded, triggered by any resident + email
 - Parties and gatherings – recorded on the fly by phone
- HOA Board members:
 - Board meetings - Prerecorded message with time, date & place + email

- Voting for the Board. Home owners are automatically called with a message: “Press 1 to vote for Jim, Press 2 to vote for xxx, etc., etc... Call log provides hard copy of voting.
- Major security incident – recorded on the fly, sent to all + email
- Security Committee/block captains
 - Suspicious activity – recorded on the fly – sent to other committee members only + email
 - Actual Security Breach – recorded on the fly, sent to all residents + email.
 - Security meetings – prerecorded with time, date & place.

HOW THE SERVICE WORKS

This service allows an announcement to be sent to a large number of people in a short time. The messages can be sent in any or all of the following media types: voice, email, text and pager and they can be sent instantaneously or at a scheduled time. We understand that a typical HOA is primarily interested in voice messages that are to be sent immediately after being initiated with a single phone call. Once the database of groups and subgroups of homeowner contact details is entered into the system (XOP Networks will help with this process), the HOA authorized personnel can simply do the following to initiate an announcement:

1. Dial the access number provided by XOP Networks
2. Enter the PIN for the required group/subgroup (e.g., All Homeowners = 12345, Crime Watch = 23456, Board or Directors = 34567).
3. You will then be prompted to enter “press 1 to send an existing message now”, “press 2 to replay an existing message”, “press 3 to record a new message”, “press 9 to abandon/cancel”, “press 0 to repeat these options”.
4. Assuming you want to record a new message, you will have to press 3 above. Record your new message and press # to end the recording and save.
5. Press 2 to review your message, then press 1 to send now.

Once you have decided to launch the message (by pressing 1 above), the system takes care of everything else. It will call the primary numbers, then the secondary etc., send emails, send SMSs to cell phones and alpha-numeric messages to pagers.

In the body of the email there is a predetermined text message alerting the recipient to the fact that they are being contacted by the service. Attached to the sent emails is a wav. file that has the recorded message – all you need to do is play it with any PC based media player (e.g., Windows Media Player).

It should be noted that the email set by the system can be blocked by spam filters, both in the internet providers network, and/or internet security programs that run on PCs. If this occurs (i.e., you don't get the email) contact your internet service provider and

request “unblocking of the originating email address” For PC users with internet security programs, make sure the originating email address is in the “allowed” list.

SETTING UP THE SERVICE – WHO DOES WHAT

HOA’s Responsibilities

- Furnish homeowners names and telephone numbers in format furnished by XOP Networks (M.S. Excel Spreadsheet)
- Update homeowner’s names and telephone numbers when necessary.
- Decide on what groups will be eligible for various announcements (all homeowners, Board or other group as designated by the HOA.
- Furnish names of people authorized to record and launch announcements to XOP Networks and update as required.
- Call-in and record announcements as required.
- Trigger/initiate announcements as required.
- Include 3 telephone numbers of XOP Networks personnel in data base for quality assurance purposes.

XOP Networks’ Responsibilities

- Furnish unlimited announcements to the HOA for one year.
- Load and maintain HOA’s homeowner’s phone contact data base.
- Set up and maintain web interface.
- Set up announcement groups and pin numbers as directed by the HOA.
- Provide training for the HOA’s officials.
- The Contact Results Log permits a “postmortem” or events, who was called, who answered, who did not etc.. The log is available in real time via web access but as an added service the log will be emailed to designated HOA officials within 48 hours of announcement.
- Trigger a minimum of 5 additional calls to the HOA’s homeowners who are in the data base but not contacted with the initial announcement over a period of 24 hours after each announcement initiation.

CONCLUSION

More Value Added and Much Improved Communications for the HOA

By utilizing our Managed Announcement Service, the HOA's homeowners can be kept informed by phone on any neighborhood situation - quickly and reliably with minimal effort from the HOA's administration. The HOA at all times is in complete control of the process including what is to be announced, who the announcements will go to and when the announcements will be made.

By utilizing our service the HOA can achieve the following benefits:

- Make Announcements when Required
 - Get the message you want out quickly, with minimal leg-work.
 - Have confidence and proof that the message was sent out and was received by intended recipients.

- Save Time and Effort
 - Record the message as you would with your home answering machine.
 - Send the message to everyone with one simple phone call at a time of your choice.

- Major Impact
 - You will have an announcement capability that you can count on with assured reliability and high quality.

Want to Learn More?

For more information, please visit our Web site <http://www.xopnetworks.com> or send an email to marketing@xopnetworks.com

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