



Moving Bucks and Oxon 4x4 Response Group up a gear

The charity can better serve its community
coordinating its volunteers using Smart Messaging

Who do you call if you need to deliver hot meals to people trapped indoors by a snowstorm?

It's not the sort of emergency that the police or fire service respond to. While local authorities are not set up to deal with it either. Instead, it falls to volunteers like the Bucks and Oxon 4x4 Response Group (also known as 'BORG') to come to the rescue.

The Buckinghamshire branch of a national network, BORG provides transport and logistics to community groups, the local council and the NHS.

They will help whatever the weather, time or terrain. And the charity can respond faster and more effectively since we donated BT Smart Messaging to manage their operations.

Company name:
Bucks and Oxon 4x4
Response Group

Location:
Buckinghamshire, UK

Members: 50

Industry: Voluntary sector



The challenge

Like many charities, BORG relies on donations. Volunteers don't just give their time to help out, they risk their own four-by-four vehicles driving offroad and even through floodwaters. So there is no budget for an expensive headquarters to coordinate their efforts.

Instead, the group's controller, Ron, would direct the team from his kitchen. Working through a handwritten list of names, he'd call each one to see who could help with the day's jobs. Then the controller would tell them where to go, consulting a map of Buckinghamshire laid out on his dining table to plot the fastest route. To keep track of who was going where, it was not unusual for Ron's fridge to double as a whiteboard, plastered with sticky notes. Volunteers would then text to confirm when a job was complete and that they were safe.

Ron would be the first to admit it was an imperfect system. Time was wasted calling volunteers individually, delaying how quickly they could respond and limiting how many jobs the group could do in a day. To try and streamline the process, BORG experimented with digital tools. While emails could be sent to everyone at once, volunteers often missed requests in their busy inboxes. Using a WhatsApp group didn't work out either, as it was difficult to keep track of who had agreed to do what. So they were stuck working the old fashioned way.

“Our volunteers are men and women, boys and girls. We've got doctors, ex-armed forces and mechanics. The only thing they have in common is they have a 4x4 and they want to help.”

Simon Prebble

Emergency Planning Liaison Officer, BORG



The solution

BORG were right to think digital was key to transforming the way they operate. They just needed the right tool. One of the group's volunteers, Simon Prebble, used to work for BT, so knew that we had the products and the know-how to help. After he reached out, we provided this worthy cause with Smart Messaging free of charge.

This tool is an easy way to manage conversations through a single, cloud-based platform. It could work over email, WhatsApps, Facebook Messenger and other chat tools. But we set BORG up using SMS, as this was what they were most comfortable with.

A group controller can send a message about a job to the whole team at once, and then a volunteer can respond 'yes' or 'no'. The first to say they're available will automatically be sent all the information they need, such as where they need to go and who they'll meet when get there. So they can hit the road and start helping straight away.

Volunteers will also be able to select from several auto-replies to let the controller know when they're en route and when a job is completed. With a quick tap, volunteers can also alert BORG if they need help -

a serious concern when driving on rough terrain or in a storm.

All of this happens in one place. The group controller can easily see who's been assigned to what job, what time messages were sent and which messages have yet to be opened in a dashboard. And as it works in the cloud, other group controllers can log in from any device and see the same information. So they can more easily take over from Ron at the end of his shift, without needing a handover call.

Like many of our solutions, Smart Messaging benefits from working over our mobile network, powered by EE – the UK's number one, according to RootMetrics. However, this solution also has direct connections to every other major network in the UK, so whoever a volunteer's mobile provider is, BORG can have confidence their vital messages will get through.



“We are delighted to support BORG and 4x4 response UK groups nationwide, helping them harness the power of BT Smart Messaging to transform their operations and optimise volunteer time, ensuring efforts can be best directed to those invaluable services that help those in need.”

Robert Jones
Head of Messaging BT



Bucks and Oxon 4x4 Response

The result

One person working with paper and pen to organise this group could manage seven members. Now they can deploy around 50 members using Smart Messaging. And BORG has cut its response times from 4-5 hours to 10 minutes for 60% of cases. So they've been able to help more people in less time, while expanding their service into the next county to support Oxfordshire Fire & Rescue.

BORG's increased capacity has been crucial to handling a surge in demand over the last two years. Volunteers have dropped off food parcels to people isolating during the pandemic, as well as delivered 12,000 vaccines from Stoke-Mandeville Hospital to neighbouring schools for older children.

More recently, they've been helping taxi Ukrainian refugees from council offices to their temporary accommodation.

After seeing BORG's success with Smart Messaging, much of the wider 4x4 Response UK network asked to start using it too. So we're proud to be helping better support communities from Northern Ireland to the Isle of Wight.

“When the next ‘Beast from the East’ blows in, we’re an order of magnitude better prepared to cope with it, thanks to this system.”

Simon Prebble

Emergency Planning Liaison Officer, BORG

How to get in touch

Email us at smenquiries@bt.com



Offices Worldwide

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