Improving District Communications With Mobile

QUICK FACTS
Edison Township operates 19 schools and serves over 15,000 students in the central New Jersey area. The district is the fifth largest in New Jersey and has become widely known as one of the best performing districts in the area. Edison’s graduation rates are evidence of the district’s commitment to ensuring every student achieves the highest level of success. In 2010, 95.7% of graduates matriculated to college and the district had 28 National Merit Scholars.

RESULTS
• 89% of visits to the Parent Portal come from My Edison
• My Edison has been downloaded over 6,200 times
• Users are spending an average of 3 minutes per session in My Edison

For the Edison Township school district, engaging district stakeholders and fostering communication has become a top priority. With the majority of their community members accessing information via mobile devices, Edison decided to launch a mobile app that allowed them to reach these users in the most effective way possible.

Using Mobile To Boost Community Engagement and Communication
Like any school district, Edison Township relied heavily on its website to engage and communicate with parents, students, teachers, and community. The website received approximately 83,000 hits per month, 58% of which were coming from mobile devices. However, the site was not optimized for mobile use, which resulted in significant user dissatisfaction. “Parents using their mobile phones to access our Parent Portal were getting very frustrated. We were losing traffic and hindering communications with our community,” said Richard O’Malley, Superintendent of the Edison Township School District.

The decision to increase mobile accessibility wasn’t just a matter of convenience for users however. Recent New Jersey legislation allowed for students to transfer between districts, and the ability to communicate the value of Edison programs and services was critical to keeping enrollment levels up. “The difficulty of using our website on mobile devices wasn’t a point in our favor with potential parents,” said O’Malley.

Edison considered several options to improve accessibility, including creating a custom mobile friendly website. However, the size and data limitations of a custom site meant the district would have to decrease their content to ensure the site operated quickly and efficiently on all platforms and browsers.
Realizing that a native mobile application would provide a more robust and personalized connection without having to reduce content, the district partnered with Blackboard to create a branded mobile app.

**My Edison**

The official “My Edison” app was launched in November 2011, and has since received more than 6,000 downloads. My Edison allows district parents, teachers, students, and community stakeholders to use any mobile device to quickly and efficiently access all the information they need to know about the district, including the Parent Portal, maps, news, events, school directories, videos and images, and athletic information.

Since its debut, My Edison has significantly strengthened the district’s relationship and communication with parents and the community. In fact, more than 88% of visits to Edison’s Parent Portal are coming from the My Edison application. “Parents can now engage with us from their mobile devices, wherever they are,” said O’Malley. “Rather than wait for a mobile browser to open up, they can find maps, events, and parent information instantly.”

In order to generate enthusiasm and promote usage of the app, Edison came out with the campaign tagline; “Edison Township Public Schools in the palm of your hand”. The user response was immediately positive. “Our parents love using the app, and we’ve also seen an increase in the use of our existing web services.” Currently, there are over 6,200 active users of My Edison spending an average of 3 minutes per session within the app. As an added benefit to both the Edison Township and its community, My Edison allows prospective parents to see what’s going on in the district and make an educated decision on where to send their child to school.

**The Future of My Edison**

Committed to community engagement, Edison Township is continually expanding upon the My Edison app. In the near future My Edison will include an e-newsletter, virtual backpacks, library access, and other important features. My Edison has facilitated the creation of an active and engaged community by giving members immediate access to everything they need. As more services become demanded by district stakeholders, Edison Township is well positioned to incorporate these demands within My Edison.