

Vox Telecom launches SMS service for PE police

An innovative SMS service introduced by Vox Telecom has improved communication between the community and the Humewood police station in Port Elizabeth.



© mario beauregard - Fotolia.com

"A number of police stations in the Eastern Cape have been making use of a Vox Telecom SMS service for some time now, mainly for internal communications purposes," says Andre Joubert of Vox Telecom. "Humewood wanted to use the service as a two-way communication tool between the police and victims of crime or members of community in general."

According to Brigadier Ronald Koll, many cases were being left unresolved because officers were able to "act as judge and jury...throwing out cases at their discretion". They wanted to introduce a tool that would allow the public to become actively involved in their own cases.

Communication is reviewed

"Using the new system, victims of a crime can respond and communicate freely with the police," says Joubert. "If a victim, for example, is told that his or her case has been closed, they can respond with a SMS message to object. Or, if a victim of a crime remembers more details or even spots the suspect, he can respond back with a SMS to the police station with the latest information. The SMS is not only immediately routed to a dedicated resource and appropriate investigating officer, detailed reports are also sent to the Brigadier who can review communications and detect problems with the resolution of cases or poor service. That way, the public knows that their case is being given full attention."

Thus far the community and the police force have been extremely positive about the project, says Joubert. "It's transformative for smaller, rural communities that may not have the funds to travel to the police station or make regular phone calls to follow up on their cases," he says. "Now, they can communicate in an affordable, easy way and stay informed throughout the entire process."

Sophisticated system

Joubert says that there are several other projects in the pipeline. "We are planning a second phase that will include a unique short code to be used for inbound communication - from the community to the Humewood police station - for example, anonymous tip-offs to aid crime prevention. Our ultimate goal is to set up a sophisticated system whereby users can send certain keywords via SMS to be routed to different departments within the police force - for example, by typing the word 'TIP' in a text message, your SMS would be routed to an anonymous tip line, whilst typing the keyword 'JOB' for example, would put you in touch with the HR department. The SMS service will allow the community to play a much bigger role in combating crime in the future."

SMSs are charged at normal rates and police are able to respond faster to a query. "We hope that this will soon be used by more stations or might even become a national service some day," says Joubert. "Humewood is an excellent example of what can happen when police, community policing forums and the public start working closely together."

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>