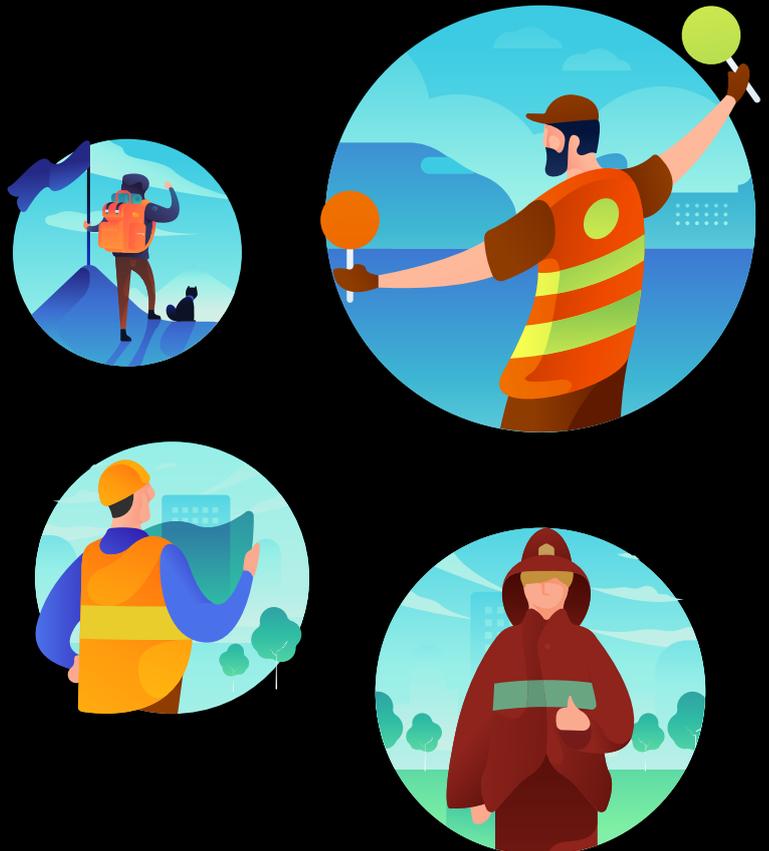


whispir

Master effective communications in a crisis:

Keeping your stakeholders informed and your business operating effectively



ASX WSP

Whispir has spent the past two decades helping organisations to automate and manage their business critical communications. This guide outlines lessons we've learned and explores how effective communications is essential to helping mitigate the impact of incidents and crises.



Business resilience

Business resilience is the ability of an organisation to respond and adapt to dynamic changes in its operating landscape – opportunities, demands, disruptions or threats – and continue functioning with limited impact to the business in the short, medium and long term.

Effective business resilience preparation goes beyond crisis and incident management, involving planning for a wide spectrum of potential scenarios that can affect organisations of all sizes, from small to medium business, large enterprises and government departments. Those that do it well can transform these operational challenges into new opportunities and material competitive advantages.



Crisis Management

Crisis management is an organisation's planned response to unforeseen emergencies or disasters to minimise harm to the business, its stakeholders, and the general public.

These events can include natural disasters, industrial incidents, international health emergencies, terrorism, data breaches and other possible scenarios. A crisis creates disruption in normal business operations, has a company-wide impact and can be triggered by a significant event or the escalation of smaller incidents.

The common outcome of these situations is financial loss, reputational harm, and potential risk to human life. An effective and well executed communications strategy is required to minimise the impact of these incidents.

Organisations are now leveraging technology to deliver planned, multi-channel, two-way communications that coordinate a rapid organisational response while keeping stakeholders informed. Technology allows companies to effectively communicate coordinated messages to different stakeholders in different locations through the channels that they use.

In summary, planned, transparent and effective communication is the key to dealing with a crisis.

Crisis Communications Framework Essentials:



Have a plan

Ensure a detailed crisis management process is in place, including the allocation of specific tasks that need to occur in the event of a crisis. It's crucial that this process facilitates two-way internal communications throughout the organisation - enabling senior leadership team members to promptly make informed decisions while keeping staff aware of evolving situations and appropriate plans. The key objectives during any crisis are to protect any individual (employee or public) who may be at risk, ensure all stakeholders are kept informed, and that, ultimately, the organisation survives.



Have a single source of truth

It's important for organisations to have a 'single source of truth' so that both internal and external stakeholders know where to go to access the latest information. Any company spokesperson needs to be identified, media trained and kept up-to-date with the evolving situation to ensure media, staff, customers and the public are informed with a clear, consistent message.



Use templates

80 percent of time spent managing communications is used figuring out what to say. By taking the time to prepare communication templates in advance, organisations are well-placed to respond quickly and reduce the risk of a poor communications outcome.



Be transparent and open

In the digital age, it's no longer possible to hope that information can be kept from the media or general public. A policy of openness and transparency is essential to maintaining trust during a crisis. This transparency must be consistent across all company communications - news interviews, social media, internal announcements, etc.



Be authentic

In crises, people are under unprecedented pressure which impacts decision making. Sterile and impersonal corporate responses fail. Stakeholders want to engage with organisations that are empathetic to the challenges people find themselves in.



Keep employees informed

Employees are often a conduit to keeping communications flowing between stakeholders. It's essential to ensure employees are informed with regular updates to prevent the circulation of incorrect information and potentially negative statements. The benefits of engaging the edge of the organisation often lead to valuable new insights.



Customer and supplier communications

Information on any crisis should reach your customers and suppliers directly from you, not the media. Part of any crisis communication plan needs to include processes to inform these vital stakeholders, and how to effectively update them throughout the incident.



Update early and often

Be proactive with sharing news, even when the whole picture isn't clear. It is better to over-communicate than to allow silence and rumours to fill the void. Start with summary statements that make it clear what is initially known and provide updated action plans and new developments as early and as often as possible. Set expectations for when people will receive communications - i.e. every two hours or daily.



Social media

Ensure all channels that your stakeholders use reflect the same message and content, not just traditional avenues such as media releases and the company website. Few things are as damaging and hard to address than incorrect information being live tweeted without your ability to see and respond with facts and appropriate messaging.

Rapidly communicating organisational response to unplanned events

Improving response times

Many organisations operate in fast-paced, time critical environments and therefore need to ensure they have in place ways to efficiently harness incident or response times from staff should an incident occur. This could be everything from a site accident to a serious break in the supply chain that affects other parts of the business.

Utilising technology that enables the automation and standardisation of protocols and informs multiple stakeholders in a variety of channels is imperative to achieving this. Multi-channel communications platforms can improve response times, ensure greater customer and staff safety, reduce risk of brand damage, and mitigate impact to the bottom line.

Essentials for communications management of unplanned events

Identify & log

Ensure you have a system for an employee to recognise a major incident and log it.



Categorise & prioritise

The type of incident needs to be determined and prioritised by potential impact.



Engage

A manager steps outside the regular incident process and alerts the major incident managers on duty.



Respond

The major incident manager determines the severity of the incident. The incident might be further escalated, or immediately resolved if the current team has the capability to implement a fix.



Identify and log

Closure. The final stage is to review the actions that took place during the incident to identify improvements that can prevent a similar incident from occurring again.



1 Case Study: Airlines

Managing the outcome

When a potentially major incident occurred, the airline responded quickly by activating pre-defined communication workflows to contact a variety of stakeholders simultaneously. Probable incident categories had been researched and default template messaging developed.

On the ground, staff were activated to start repair activity and provide guidance to the pilot. The executive team were able to distribute internal and external communications to alleviate concerns while passengers were promptly informed of changes to the schedule.

Communications templates and workflow enable organisations to coordinate operational communications while providing real time situational awareness. The ability to notify the appropriate stakeholders and respond quickly allowed the airline to turn a potentially damaging situation into a well-managed engagement. Customer concerns about rescheduling could be planned for, impacts to the share price could be mitigated through timely external communications and brand impact minimised.



2 Case Study: Telecommunications

Engaging people effectively

A telecommunications provider required a solution that delivered elevated cut through beyond existing IT Service Management (ITSM) notifications. Operations support engineers were at risk of missing notifications during service disruptions especially outside office hours. Additionally, the business continuity management team's internal call-tree system required upgrade to support complex rule-based escalation management.

The company utilised communications workflow technology to improve telecommunications service management, reducing incident response times for business continuity communications (e.g. fire drills, staff recalls) enterprise-wide, from the one platform.

The interactive two-way cross-channel solution provided comprehensive reporting and message delivery status transparency for key staff and senior stakeholders. This enabled rapid crisis team activation and scenarios via a template-based solution across text-to-speech, SMS, and email, ensuring faster speed of task allocation and resolution.



Overcoming incident communication challenges

Essentially, all organisations need to ensure high impact incidents are treated with appropriate urgency while low impact incidents can be de-prioritised and dealt with when resources become available.

Incidents need to be categorised by severity based on impact and urgency and resolved accordingly. This is easier said than done.

The main challenge is the overwhelming deluge of notifications flooding the inboxes of management every day. These notifications range from basic updates and progress reports to outage warnings, making it entirely possible to miss the major incident warnings that require an urgent response.

The other major challenge for organisations is identifying the right person and bringing together the team who need to manage the response. According to the SANS Institute, the most trusted and largest source for information security training and security certification in the world, more than one-quarter of Incident Response (IR) professionals (26%) are dissatisfied with their current organisation's IR capabilities, calling them ineffective, while only 9% categorise their processes as very effective.

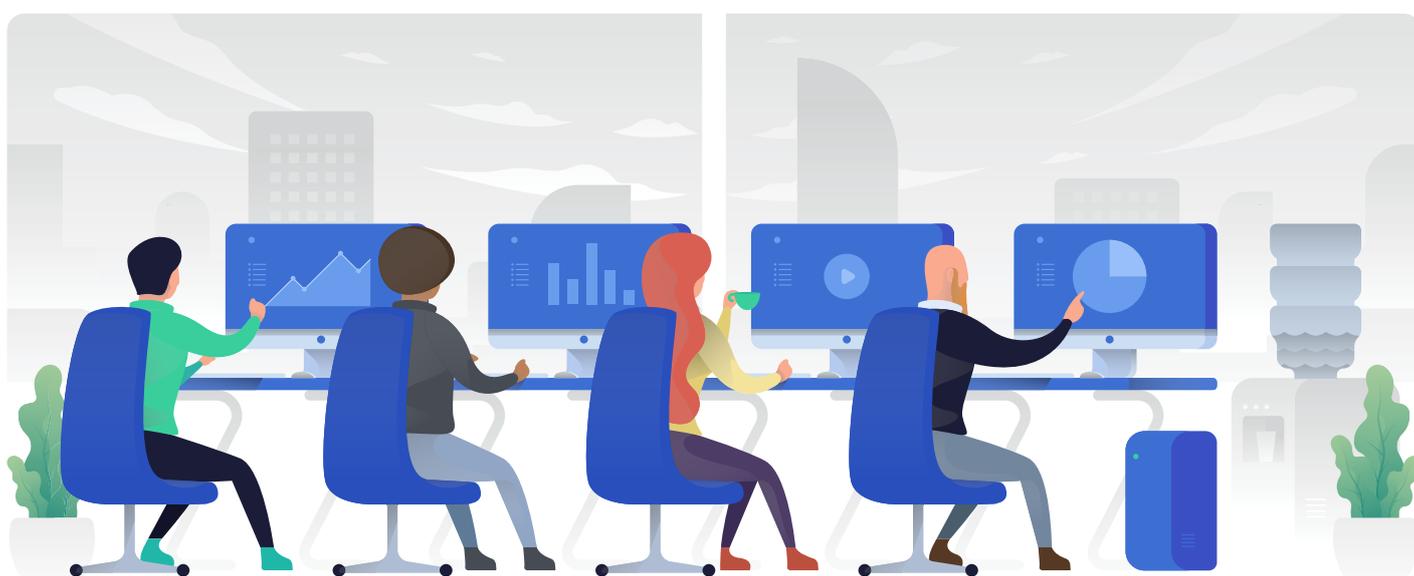
However, technology is now making this more manageable. Sixty-eight per cent of respondents to the SANS survey projected that improvements in their IR capabilities and processes would come from automation and Security Information & Event Management (SIEM) integration tools that increase visibility into threats and how they apply to their environment, including scoping and remediation capabilities.

Mobilising teams no matter what system is down

Ensure your communication systems are not dependent on just one channel. For example, it's no good relying on a 9-5 generic email address as a central decision point if no-one is there on the weekend or relying on a central intranet portal if many of your staff in the field most of the time.

Messages need to be automated and integrated with monitoring systems, providing rapid crisis team activation and scenarios via a template-based solution across voice text-to-speech, SMS, mobile web apps and email to ensure faster task allocation and resolution.

Effective incident management systems are built around an automated communications platform, which allows interactive two-way cross-channel communications, comprehensive reporting and message delivery status transparency for key staff and senior stakeholders.



Creating competitive advantage

Outside of crises and incidents, business resilience can also be a source of competitive advantage. We explore some ways communications technology can improve the coordination of an organisation's general operations.



Production Updates

Downtime can be one of the largest costs in business, whether that's manufacturing and supply chain disruption or IT outages. It's vital to ensure supplies and components are ordered and delivered on time to allow the production cycle to continue uninterrupted. When an incident impacts the supply chain, even if it only affects a single component, it can have significant flow-on effects for all levels of the production cycle.

Solution: Automated technologies can leverage machine to machine (M2M) communications and deliver multi-channel messages including SMS, voice, mobile web apps or email to create work orders at short notice. This ensures people are informed throughout the supply chain, from service staff to customers and suppliers.



Diverse Stakeholder Management

A diverse range of stakeholders are impacted by every business incident, which can include government or regulatory bodies, executive teams, management groups, customers, partners, suppliers and shareholders. These diverse stakeholders require different, yet timely and accurate information on subjects ranging from shift timings, marketing, operations, legal compliance and finances. Communicating information to all these people in a timely and effective manner is a constant challenge.

Solution: Combining these communications streams into a single platform, with a central reporting dashboard improves cut-through in the delivery of messages. It provides a mechanism for tracking all critical communications, provides recipients with a way to respond appropriately, and then allows informed, real time decisions to be made based on the feedback gained from these conversations.

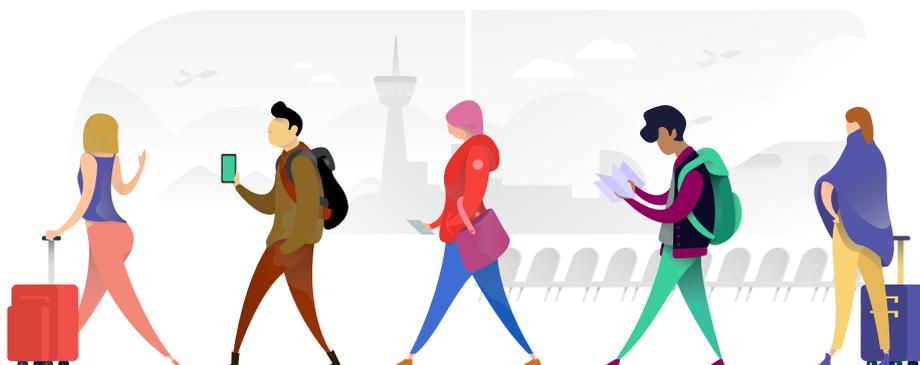


Executive Communications

As businesses grow, it becomes increasingly harder to reach and inform employees across the organisation. Maintaining contact between the executive team and all the layers of the organisation can be challenging, especially when dealing with different branches, departments, geographically dispersed locations and even international operations.

Solution: Dispersed communications work best when delivered through a centralised delivery platform, which has the capability to schedule the timing, and send messages through multiple channels to ensure the entire team is reached, including SMS, voice, mobile web apps or email.

Communications should be easily segmented, with pre-defined templates that can be quickly adapted to suit the message, and a response tracking mechanism to keep track of inbound and outbound message flows. This provides a single view of all communications workflows, to and from stakeholders regardless of the channel used.



Effective communications during the COVID-19 outbreak

As COVID-19 continues to disrupt international supply chains and staffing logistics, Whispir has developed 10 guiding principles to ensure stakeholders are kept informed during the outbreak with secure, timely and actionable communications. Ensure your communication system has the features on the right.

Ten COVID-19 Communication Guiding Principles	Core Whispir Capabilities
<p>1 Engage with all your stakeholders</p> <p>Think of who is important. All your different stakeholders - customers, staff, suppliers, regulators, executive team and communities - each have different communications requirements and expectations.</p>	<p>Manage dynamic stakeholder profiles</p> <p>Communicate with all your audiences from a single login. Segment and group your internal and external contacts using dynamic contextual profiles and attributes. Set your rules to determine who gets what, when it matters the most.</p>
<p>2 Deliver consistent, standardized and useful communications</p> <p>Structure your content and send clear and standardised communications to all stakeholders. This avoids confusion, misinformation, and ambiguity which over time can materially reduce trust.</p>	<p>Bundled Communications Templates</p> <p>Achieve clear, consistent and actionable communications every time. Instead of spending time authoring content and managing approvals, when every second counts; use our drag and drop editor to create pre-approved templates. Without the need for design or development resources; ensure professional, on brand content is always at your fingertips.</p>
<p>3 Ensure communications are timely</p> <p>Think of when stakeholders need to receive updates. Respond promptly to new developments, as new insights emerge, or events occur.</p>	<p>Automate communications processes</p> <p>Quickly and dynamically manage any scenario by setting automated responses, alerts and escalations. The power and potential of Whispir is in trigger management and workflows when certain actions occur, or certain criteria are met.</p>
<p>4 Ensure communications and responses are actionable</p> <p>Engage the edge of the organisation and capture insights from people in the field quickly to improve analysis and decision making.</p>	<p>One click response rules</p> <p>Give your audiences rich, data driven interactions while reducing call centre demand and deflecting voice calls. Turn data into time savings by collecting information from multiple sources while creating a seamless user experience. For your stakeholders, trigger instant teleconferencing if needed.</p>
<p>5 Record all interactions for auditing purposes</p> <p>Improve transparency and accountability with full audit trails of communications over all channels including WhatsApp and peer to peer video chats.</p>	<p>Full on-demand audit trails</p> <p>Whispir allows you to instantly generate reports and identify who said what to whom and when. Ensure compliance and minimise the cost of post event reporting.</p>
<p>6 Ensure your communications secure and encrypted</p> <p>Be prepared to manage receipt of sensitive personal information and ensure you meet your statutory obligations for security and privacy of the data you will aggregate over time.</p>	<p>Encryption at rest and automated data redaction</p> <p>Whispir allows you to manage receipt of sensitive private and individual health information on an adhoc basis securely and responsibly.</p>
<p>7 Restrict access to sensitive information</p> <p>Ensure you use a system where only those with the right permissions can access personal information.</p>	<p>Customisable security permissions and controls</p> <p>With Whispir you can set parameters to automate the secure management of sensitive information, so that only those that need to know have access.</p>
<p>8 Ensure your communications support engagement over multiple channels and platforms</p> <p>Communicate with your stakeholders in the channels they use. Eg WhatsApp or instant peer-to-peer videos that can be archived and available for audit.</p>	<p>Advanced omnichannel capabilities</p> <p>Whispir allows you to use one or many of the following channels on demand; Voice, Video, Email, SMS, Push notifications, Facebook, WhatsApp, OneClick crisis app. Whispir has geolocation capabilities and integrates with ServiceNow, IBM Resilient and AWS Eventbridge for crisis and operational communications.</p>
<p>9 Be prepared to be flexible and quickly modify content or update</p> <p>In pandemics things often don't work out as planned or evolve suddenly. Use a system that has the flexibility to modify content and processes on the fly</p>	<p>Easy to modify processes</p> <p>Whispir communication workflows can be modified simply and easily within minutes, no coding required.</p>
<p>10 Establish processes to ensure statutory reporting obligations are met</p> <p>Use a system that instantly fulfils statutory reporting obligations and reduces the risk of human error.</p>	<p>Automate statutory reporting</p> <p>Whispir allows you to reduce risk and free up valuable resources by automating statutory reporting processes.</p>

In summary

The best defence is a good offence.

Incidents affecting business operations are a daily occurrence, and without proper management and communications, incidents can escalate into critical events that can significantly and negatively impact an organisations operations.

The integration of automated communications technology into day-to-day processes ensures you are always prepared.

Resilient communications - best practice



Communications planning

Having a clearly defined plan in place for communicating in different scenarios reduces response time, improves accuracy of message and ensures the right people are contacted in a timely manner. Global multi-channel message streams. Messages should be sent through multiple channels to ensure all stakeholders are reached, including SMS, voice, mobile web apps, social media, web or email.



Message templates

Message templates should be prepared with specifics which can be rapidly altered during incidents, thereby saving time by providing pre-defined communication and response options.



Message automation

Where possible, communications platforms should be integrated with monitoring systems, allowing details to be auto populated into message templates. Tickets can be raised automatically and sent directly to the resolution team members.



Two-way conversation flow

It's not enough to just send messages. There needs to be a system in place to track receipt, allow the receiver to respond as needed, and escalate when required.



Reporting on demand

Make informed decisions and ensure that it is quick and efficient to report who said what to whom and when, post event.



Practice

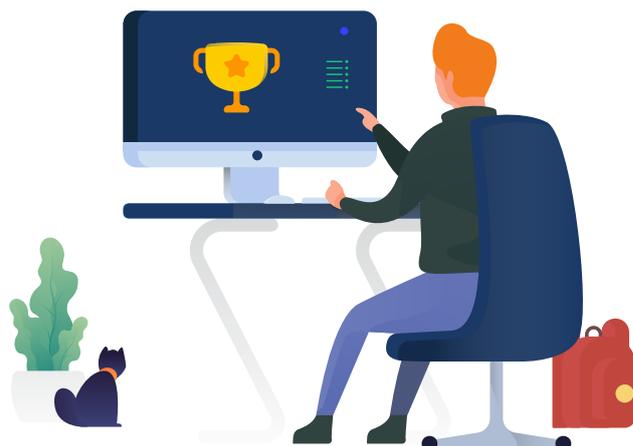
Practice until you get it right and then practice some more until you can't get it wrong.



Mitigating operational risk with the latest communications and workflow technology

The day-to-day application of automated communications can also turn changing circumstances into opportunities for building new processes that become a source of sustainable, technology-driven competitive advantage.

Whispir's integrated communications workflow platform combines these processes in one platform.



21 ways to engage with your people and keep them informed



Customer Advisory

Facilitate ongoing, seamless engagement with your brand, build confidence and competitive advantage during rapidly changing market environments.



Service Delivery Advisory

Proactively inform service recipients of altered business operations, manage expectations and ensure easy feedback paths.



Supplier Advisory

Ensure critical supplier/vendor relationships are uninterrupted. Deploy safe engagement paths for continuous operations, even during alternate work arrangements.



Community Advisory

Relieve anxiety, enhance collaboration and maintain community fellowship. Travel advisories, health and safety protocols, FAQs, case status and containment, self service advisories, resource sharing & more.



Instant Teleconference & Instant video

Simple, high-touch, remote engagement of diverse stakeholders anywhere they are and on any schedule. Connect. Engage. Thrive.



Statutory Reporting

Assist rapid response to any mandatory COVID case reporting requests. Person-to-person Contact tracing, travel declarations and self /medically declared quarantine notices.



Advisory Communications

Easily inform your staff of the latest Epidemic status, any actions to take, and any protocols external stakeholders should follow when engaging your organisation.



Wellness Report

Simple and efficient method for an individual to declare any sickness and symptoms. Communicates and informs those that need to know directly.



Travel Declaration

Simple method for staff and stakeholders to declare their recent travel and exposure history. Ensure compliance with all entry protocols and allows for auditable contact traceability.



Business Continuity Planning

Request staff to work from home or at an alternative location. Track acknowledgements and update location on a daily basis. Assist with contact traceability in the event of exposure to COVID-19.



Remote Working Notice

Issue notice to internal and external stakeholders on how best to reach staff at alternate work location.



Template Launcher

Save frequently-used communications templates to your mobile device for easy access and sending of declarations or notices.



Declaration Prior to on site Visit

For organisations and individuals operating physically on-premises, send visitors health screening declaration prompts.



Confirmed Case on Site

As the risk of on-site infections remains a crucial issue, utilize Whispir to notify key stakeholders or the wider organisation for alerts, notifications and updates.



Call Centre Deflection and Incident

With this template, see how easy it is to provide customers with the exact details, processes and tools required, without driving extensive call centre time.



'Return to Work' Staff Advisory

Take the lead in managing the 'Return to Work' conversation with your staff and other stakeholders. advisories, resource sharing & more.



'Return to Work' Customer Advisory

Ensure customer confidence by keeping them informed on your 'Return to Work' policy and company developments.



'Return to Work' Supplier Advisory

Manage business-critical relationships such as your suppliers effectively and centralized using the Whispir platform.



Declaration: Health Screening

Equip staff to confirm and update on their health developments with digital health screening declaration questionnaires and forms.



Alerts & Reminders

Send your organisation network daily reminders like hygiene reminders and workplace guidelines.



Contactless Delivery

Send recipients an SMS in real-time to sign off their deliveries.



About the Whispir platform

The Whispir platform is a multi-channel automated communication workflow solution, designed to be robust, scalable and customisable enough to meet the most stringent messaging security requirements.

Whispir's low-code/no-code platform allows organisations to create workflows without design or development resources. Its drag-and-drop templates enable businesses to automate personalised two-way interactions for individual recipients at scale using smart logic and dynamic content. The platform also facilitates customised actions based on certain real-time events or 'triggers' to determine responses across multiple communications channels.

The Whispir platform integrates with pre-existing IT systems, enabling organisations to modernise legacy systems including systems of record (databases), systems of intelligence (AI platforms) and systems of engagement (communications channels such as SMS, voice and IoT).

Reporting and dashboard functionality improve situational awareness, speed up decision making and increase critical responsiveness.

Whispir are the trusted communications provider for more than 500 leading enterprises, including Telstra, Qantas, Westpac, BHP and IBM, as well as government agencies, including Australia Post and V-Line. Customers use the platform for critical communications such as crisis response, emergency management, community notifications and IT incident management as well as customer engagement and general operational communications.



To find out more:

whispir.com

or

For your COVID-19 communication templates, go to

whispir.com/covid19-au

For our 'Return to Work' communications templates go to

whispir.com/campaign/return-to-work