

Harbor Watch meets labor challenges amid virus, disasters



Dispatch Dynamics' Virtual Hiring Hall provides the functionality of a brick and mortar union hall without the risks associated with COVID-19. Using a laptop, tablet or SmartPhone, dispatchers, union officers and members can literally do everything from any remote location that they do in a hiring hall.

CHARLESTON, S.C. – Hurricanes. Tornadoes. Flooding. Extended power outages.

In addition to dealing with these and other natural disasters, industries along the East and Gulf Coasts are now struggling to find ways to continue to survive the complications of COVID-19 and the "new normal" created by a worldwide pandemic.

Will lessons learned today help to meet tomorrow's challenges?

One company is already prepared to meet those challenges. Dispatch Dynamics Inc., a Charleston, S.C. technology company, has been providing cloud-based, remote work solutions for the maritime industry for nearly a decade. And now, with pandemics and natural disasters further complicating how work gets done, Dispatch Dynamics' "virtual hiring" software could mean the difference between success and failure for any business that relies on, or is transitioning to, a mobile work force.

Harbor Watch, a suite of eight craft-based dispatch applications was developed specifically for the maritime industry and the International Longshoremen. Rapid Dispatch, also developed by DDI, is a remote hiring and dispatch application that can be tailored to meet the needs of any mobile work force.

"Our Virtual Hiring Hall provides all the functionality of a brick-and-mortar hiring hall, but without the risks associated with the COVID-19 pandemic," said DDI president and CEO Jody Newman. "With the safety and convenience of their laptops or SmartPhones, employers, dispatchers, union officials and members can literally do everything they do in a hiring hall from any remote location, without the inherent and increasingly dangerous risks that come with face-to-face contact."

Given stringent mandates, both nationally and internationally, limiting face-to-face interaction in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, not to mention natural catastrophes like six recent hurricanes which devastated parts of Texas, Louisiana and the Gulf Coast, DDI software offers companies an efficient way to continue doing business despite disruptions to travel, power and land-line communication.

"More importantly," continued Newman, "DDI's remote work solutions allow companies transitioning to a mobile work force to provide employees or independent contractors a secure mobile app to indicate their availability for work according to shift, job and/or seniority. Every step of the remote hiring process is viewable in real time on a password-protected website, even as jobs are being scheduled by the dispatcher. Using Harbor Watch, employers can schedule and dispatch workers, plus send text messages to any number of workers, using only a SmartPhone."

Newman noted that, according to search engines, Harbor Watch is currently the only cloud-based dispatch application in the maritime industry.

Harbor Watch demonstrated its mass communication value when the Port of Charleston experienced a security threat at approximately 8:00 p.m. on June 15, 2017. Within the hour, an ILA Local used Harbor Watch to send 5,000 text messages to its 1,350 members working in the port, keeping them safe and informed as events unfolded.

"Given the restrictions on assembly the pandemic has caused, hundreds, and in some areas thousands, of International Longshoremen must now endure long lines outside their own hiring halls as they wait for daily job assignments – all because of internal politics and archaic hiring practices. Due to their resistance to change and technology, these same ILA Locals could be at risk, in light of the current and growing health threat posed by COVID-19, risks that would be completely eliminated through the use of Harbor Watch."

No one can predict how long the current pandemic will continue to impact labor, limit business and social assembly and underscore the need for remote work solutions. But natural disasters, power outages and other disruptive events will forever create challenges for management and labor. Cutting-edge technology, like the Harbor Watch software created by DDI, can provide intuitive, simple-to-use solutions to those challenges for decades to come.

"Our software has been proven over more than seven years of daily use by the ILA, without any down-time," Newman added. "We are prepared to provide any mobile labor force the state-of-the-art technology needed to meet and conquer 21st-century challenges. Our software, including Harbor Watch and Rapid Dispatch, is designed to do more than simply help our clients continue to do 'business as usual' but to do business, better, more efficiently, more productively and more cost-effectively."

To learn more about remote hiring and digital dispatch, check out Harbor Watch Virtual Hiring Hall on their website, DispatchDynamics.com.

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