



# THE COMPUTERWORLD HONORS PROGRAM

## CASE STUDY

LOCATION:  
*Atlanta, Georgia,  
United States*

YEAR:  
*2006*

STATUS:  
*Laureate*

CATEGORY:  
*Business and Related Services*

NOMINATING COMPANY:  
*Capgemini*

### ORGANIZATION:

**BellSouth Corporation**

### PROJECT NAME:

**BellSouth Amber Alert Field Notification**

### Summary

In the words of nationally known experts, state elected officials, law enforcement authorities, media representatives and others, BellSouth's AMBER Alert Notification System protects the children of its communities through innovative use of technology and people. By its own extension of the program to other companies, children nationwide are more protected from harm as a result of BellSouth's program.

Through its own field dispatch system, its employee intranet and the public Internet, BellSouth distributes AMBER Alerts from state law enforcement authorities to its technicians, employees, retirees and millions of customers within a matter of minutes after the AMBER Alerts are broadcast publicly. This program provides a huge additional resource to efforts to recover children in serious abduction cases – and to deter perpetrators from committing the act in the first place. Ernie Allen, president of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, said BellSouth's program “is making the difference” in protecting children and helping families and communities throughout its region – and beyond.

### Introductory Overview

John Walsh, America's icon for missing children and host of the popular America's Most Wanted television show, declared BellSouth's AMBER Alert Notification System “a shining example of how thousands of workers, a corporation and its leadership, law enforcement authorities, government officials and broadcasters can come together for the betterment of our communities, our families – and, ultimately, our children..”

Paul Patton, Kentucky governor when BellSouth launched its program, echoed the sentiment of state leaders across the Southeast when he called it an “extraordinary show of corporate citizenship (that) improves the protection of Kentucky's children in the short run and the quality of life of all Kentuckians in the long run.”

BellSouth services technician Tommy Newson of Decatur, Ga., says the program brings back the days “when neighbors watched kids and would tell their parents if they did something right or if they did something wrong.”



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Newson and nearly 13,000 other BellSouth technicians – along with other BellSouth employees and retirees and BellSouth customers – literally have enhanced the protection of children in hundreds of communities across the Southeast through the BellSouth AMBER Alert program. It represents a unique use of modern-day corporate resources – technology, people-power, leadership and community involvement – to assist the most vulnerable among us: children.

Under the program, BellSouth uses its dispatch system to transmit AMBER Alerts from state law enforcement agencies to its technicians over an Internet Protocol link and a wireless data radio network that delivers the alerts on wireless laptop PCs. The technicians, wherever they are across the nine-state region, are notified that they've received an AMBER Alert both via their pagers and whenever they transact business on their laptops.

The technicians also have a unique way to respond to an AMBER Alert if they locate anyone or a vehicle mentioned in the alert. Trained in emergency preparedness, they are instructed to call a designated “star” number on their Cingular cellphones and are directed via automated interactive voice recording to the proper law enforcement authority for their location.

The technician AMBER Alert system remains the centerpiece of BellSouth's program, which has been expanded to include notification to all 62,000 employees via their intranet, to all 100,000 retirees via their Internet sites and to millions of customers and Internet users who access the BellSouth Internet Service homepage. Moreover, immediately after launching its program, BellSouth assisted Cingular Wireless and other telecommunications companies – including some of its own competitors – in launching similar programs for their own technicians and employees.

The BellSouth initiative is coordinated with nine state law enforcement agencies in the Southeast (Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee) that issue AMBER Alerts to television and radio stations through the Emergency Alert System.

As a long-time supporter of the communities in which it operates as well as an industry leader in serving customers and the public, BellSouth's goals through its AMBER Alert program have been to uphold those corporate values. In achieving those goals, BellSouth employees have a special opportunity to put those values into action.

### Benefits

“Here at the Georgia Bureau of Investigation (GBI), it is our hope and prayer we never have to activate (an AMBER Alert). It is encouraging to know, however, if and when the times comes, the men and women of BellSouth will be working with us to facilitate the safe return of a child,” said Vernon Keenan, GBI director.

State officials across the Southeast – governor and first lady, attorney general, state police commanders, emergency management officials – and experts with nationally known missing persons organizations made clear the benefits of BellSouth's AMBER Alert program: Children have a better chance at recovery and avoiding harm's way in serious abduction cases – and perpetrators will be deterred because of the additional awareness of AMBER Alerts that BellSouth's program provides. In the end, that results in a better way of life for the Southeast and the nation.

Since the launch of BellSouth's AMBER Alert initiative, 92 alerts have been distributed through its system. BellSouth employees have not been involved directly in the recovery of any child



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mentioned in the alerts, yet during this period, all children subject of the alerts have been recovered except in one case.

Based on the progress and encouraging developments of the nation's AMBER Alert strategy, U.S. Justice Department officials say the impact of AMBER Alerts, such as those distributed by BellSouth, has been to discourage would-be abductors from acting for fear they will be discovered by alerted citizens in the community as well as by law enforcement officials.

For BellSouth internally, the program gives employees, retirees and customers the opportunity to participate more directly in the AMBER Alert system, and many technicians and employees say they are more informed about assisting in searches for missing children when they receive the alerts via their intranet site.

For communities and organizations outside BellSouth, information on how we compiled the program was offered from its inception to other companies in the industry and in other industries. BellSouth worked closely with Cingular Wireless, based in Atlanta, and with Qwest Communications, based in Denver, and Sprint, based in Kansas City, on providing information to help launch AMBER Alert programs in those companies.

### The Importance of Technology

BellSouth's program is based on and dependent on information technology. The AMBER Alerts are sent in e-mails from a state law enforcement agency to BellSouth and are distributed to technicians using an integrated dispatch system and their wireless laptop PCs. The alerts are state-specific, and the system is set up so only technicians in the state that issued the alert will receive it. The dispatch system transmits the alerts over an Internet Protocol link and the laptops deliver the alerts over a wireless data radio network provided by Cingular.

Also on their laptop, the alerts and any photographs that state law enforcement authorities provide are posted on BellSouth's Technician Home Page – an internal site that is accessible via wireline connection.

Technicians are notified that an alert has been issued via a paging system. For field technicians and engineers of Cingular Wireless in the BellSouth region, the alerts are sent to Cingular's communications system, which in turn distributes them as text messages on Cingular Interactive pagers or cellphones.

The technician notification system is used during the normal business workday, when technicians are on duty.

Around the clock – 24/7 – the alerts are distributed to all employees via their intranet and to retirees via the Internet using BellSouth systems. In addition, BellSouth posts the alerts on the homepage of its Internet Service, making the alerts available to millions of customers and Internet users shortly after state law enforcement agencies issue them to the public.

### Originality

Ernie Allen, president of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, said BellSouth's program represented the largest single corporate involvement in AMBER Alert that he knew of at the time. What makes BellSouth's program unique is that it involves its field person-



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nel, all other employees, its retirees – and its customers. And BellSouth took the lead in trying to extend the program to other companies in its industry.

Moreover, BellSouth is unique in that it directly coordinated the program with every state law enforcement agency in its region, so there is no third-party participant between the agencies that issue the AMBER Alerts and BellSouth.

Most importantly, the “star” AMBER aspect of the program is original to BellSouth. It uses a special access telephone number to connect the technicians to an automated voice recording system that in turn connects them to the appropriate state law enforcement agency where they are located. This enables them to contact authorities quickly when they are responding to an alert. Technicians are trained to contact authorities only.

### Success

Missing persons experts on the national and state level say that BellSouth’s program is successful in deterring serious child abduction cases. In addition, the program has created considerable positive publicity among both state and national media, and generated goodwill among state officials and the company.

Most importantly, BellSouth employees are proud to play a more direct role in the AMBER Alert program – a definite point of success for the program.

Regarding protecting our children, instances of recovery of children who are the subject of AMBER Alerts have increased. Since BellSouth first joined law enforcement agencies across the Southeast in March 2003 to distribute AMBER Alerts, the company has distributed 92 alerts including three in 2003, 46 in 2004, 35 in 2005 and nine so far in 2006. As a result of BellSouth’s achievements with its wireless AMBER Alert notification process, three other telecommunications companies — Cingular, Sprint and Qwest — recognized and applauded BellSouth for its technical and administrative achievements. In return, BellSouth shared its AMBER Alert techniques with the three companies, which they since implemented.

Also, the U.S. Department of Justice has recognized BellSouth in playing a key role in the Southeast. The national AMBER Alert program is now operating nationwide and has been credited with greatly increasing the number of children recovered from abductions.

In the last nine years, more than 200 abducted children have been rescued with 80 percent of these successful recoveries occurring since AMBER Alert became coordinated through the Department of Justice. Based on the progress and encouraging developments of the country’s AMBER Alert strategy, U.S. Justice Department officials say the impact of AMBER Alerts, such as those distributed by BellSouth, has been to discourage would-be abductors from acting for fear they will be discovered by alerted citizens in the community as well as by law enforcement officials.

Leaders from several organizations have recognized BellSouth’s contribution to AMBER Alert:

“The U.S. Attorney General’s Office is pushing for a nationwide AMBER Alert system because we understand that a rapid response is of the utmost importance when a child is missing. We thank BellSouth for joining in this movement to help locate missing children. BellSouth’s leadership and commitment to this effort provides an example that we hope more corporations follow.”



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---Cheri Nolan, Deputy Assistant Attorney General, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice

“The Polly Klaas Foundation has learned over the years that community involvement is of invaluable help when a child goes missing. And who has more contact with millions of residents than your local phone company and Internet provider? BellSouth’s use of AMBER Alerts makes perfect sense and will help save lives.” ---Jenni Thompson, Director of Public Affairs, Polly Klaas Foundation

“By arming their field technicians with AMBER Alert information, BellSouth is casting a wider net and, I believe, speeding up the process by which missing children can be found. The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children strongly believes the AMBER Alert program is a lifesaving tool, and we are confident that through BellSouth’s support of the program, more children will be safely reunited with their families.”

--- Ernie Allen, President and CEO, The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children

“We applaud the leadership of BellSouth in this effort on behalf of the children of Georgia. It’s clear that, with this program and its long history of community support, BellSouth and its team members share my passion for community, for family – and for protecting the most vulnerable among us, our children.”

--- Mary Perdue, First Lady of Georgia

“Each day, the Georgia Emergency Management Agency works with various organizations to minimize the effects of man-made and natural disasters. Clearly, keeping Georgia’s children safe is one of GEMA’s top priorities. BellSouth’s support of the AMBER Alert and Levi’s Call program, will help GEMA and law enforcement officials throughout the state in our combined efforts to bring missing children home quickly and safely.”

--- Gary McConnell, Director, Georgia Emergency Management Agency

“Any opportunity to uphold our families – and, in this case, to keep children safer – is an opportunity we’re going to take, and that’s what the AMBER Alert Network is all about. It’s a matter of safety for children and families, and we’re proud that CWA members will be directly involved.”

--- Jimmy Smith, District 3 Vice President, Communications Workers of America

### Difficulty

Perhaps the greatest obstacle in coordinating the program was gaining the cooperation and support of the nine state law enforcement agencies in BellSouth’s region. In some cases, BellSouth was required to sign binding agreements, and, in other cases, BellSouth secured the support of high state officials to help make the program happen.

Overall, BellSouth was able to secure from each state agency the commitment to send the alerts to BellSouth in a format that BellSouth could work with; in some cases, this was new and additional work for those state law agencies. However, they saw the value of BellSouth’s program and ultimately agreed wholeheartedly to participate. This has made it easier for other corporations to roll out their own programs.