

Leader Technologies Incorporated

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Leader Technologies® Incorporated, also called **Leader®**, is a software development and marketing company headquartered in Columbus, Ohio that specializes in voice, streaming media and data systems for collaboration and decision making. The company started an ambitious, non-traditional R&D program in 1997 designed by founder Mike McKibben, a former strategy consultant, to rethink how communications and collaboration would work with the advent of a stable commercial Internet, and how the associated data could be better managed as intellectual capital. That effort led to the award of the company's first United States patent for its Digital Leaderboard® on November 21, 2006 titled U.S. Patent No. 7, 139,761 – DYANAMIC ASSOCIATION OF ELECTRONICALLY STORED INFORMATION WITH ITERATIVE WORKFLOW CHANGES.¹

History

Leader was founded in 1997 by entrepreneur Michael T. McKibben ("McKibben") after he completed a project to rebuild the AT&T (NYSE: T) e-mail application AT&T AccessPlus in time for its concurrent release with Microsoft Windows 95. This application is believed to be the only OLE 2.0 Microsoft Exchange-compatible e-mail client ever developed outside of Microsoft Corporation (NASDAQ: MSFT). It provided primary interfaces to AT&T Ecommerce Services and AT&T EasyLink Services (formerly Western Union EasyLink service) for e-mail, electronic data interchange (EDI), enhanced fax and custom messaging services. AT&T EasyLink Services was sold to Swift Telecommunications, Inc. in 2000 and is now marketed as EasyLink Services (NASDAQ: ESIC). McKibben coordinated this project in close collaboration with AT&T Bell Labs.

Innovations

In founding Leader, McKibben envisioned new ways for organizations and individuals to use the Internet for communications, collaboration and to manage intellectual capital.^{2 3 4 5} He developed a multi-disciplinary transformation design

Leader Technologies



Type	🇺🇸 Private
Founded	Columbus, Ohio (June 1997)
Headquarters	Lewis Center, Ohio, U.S.A.
Area served	Global
Key people	Michael T. McKibben, Chairman & Founder James E. Sobwick, Chief Operating Officer Maynard C. Anderson (Director) William DeGenaro (Director) John Mott (Director) Richard Fullerton (Director) Riad Yammine (Director)
Industry	Social networking Software development Web 2.0 services Telecommunications
Services	Audio conferencing Alerting - health, safety & administrative Web conferencing Unified communications Intellectual capital management Social networking
Revenue	Subscriptions Telecom & data minutes Service agreements
Websites	leader.com leaderphone.com leaderdialog.com leaderalert.com leadermeeting.com
Contact	737 Enterprise Drive, Suite A Lewis Center, Ohio 43035 USA (614) 890-1986 sales@leader.com

¹ McKibben et al. "Dynamic association of electronically stored information with iterative workflow changes." Search word: 7139761. United States Patent and Trademark Office. 21 Nov 2006. Retrieved on 12 Apr 2008.

² Newpoff, Laura. "Angels' Eyes: In shadow of big VC deals, small investors keep entrepreneurs supplied with capital". *Columbus Business First*. 6 June 2003. Retrieved on 12 Apr 2008.

approach.⁶ In collaboration with co-inventor Jeffrey R. Lamb, formerly with the US Air Force National Air Intelligence Center, they threw out conventional thinking and took a fresh look at information architectures.

They were awarded their first patent for the Digital Leaderboard® framework on November 21, 2006 - U.S. Patent No. 7, 139,761. More patents are pending.

Audio conferencing

Leader's first product was its Leader Phone® Web 2.0 audio conferencing services. Leader Phone® has proven to be the first true innovation in the audio conferencing industry in more than a decade because it combines traditional telephony with Internet data services.⁷ These services are now being used by a wide variety of small and large



Michael T. McKibben
Chairman & Founder

customers across all industry sectors.⁸ Historically, corporate audio conferencing began life in operator service centers, was cumbersome to set up, and was expensive. Leader's innovation takes the provisioning and management of these services to the users themselves, without the need for operator intervention, and offers more features at a lower cost.⁹

Enhanced Web 2.0 features

Leader Phone® (full-featured, toll-free) and Leader Dialog® (basic, tolled) Web 2.0 services offer an array of customer options not previously available in the telecommunications industry. Traditional audio conferencing features, also called teleconferencing, offered one flavor, plain vanilla. Leader's Web 2.0 innovations have introduced customer choices that allow users to choose the features and security options needed for specific circumstances. For conference calls not requiring security, a permanent dial-in PIN number is available with either a tolled or toll-free dial-in number for participants. These tolling options enable a customer to decide whether to pay for the whole call (e.g., all participant costs on a company conference call) or spread the cost among the participants (e.g., each participant pays his or her long distance charges on a call of community volunteers). These various rate options have now been combined into a new rating offering called Leader Phone® Customer Select™.



Leader Phone® provides advanced Web 2.0 audio conferencing services toll-free, with full web controls and innovations like direct dial, record and group dial; full enterprise support.

³ Newpoff, Laura. "Leader Technologies wins tax credit, plans 153 jobs". *Columbus Business First*. 23 May 2003. Retrieved on 12 Apr 2008.

⁴ Office of Strategic Research, "Ohio Computer Services Industry". Ohio Department of Development. Mar 2004. Retrieved on 12 Apr 2008.

⁵ "Columbus Technologies Council TOPCAT Nominations for 2005". *Columbus Tech Week*. 14 Jan 2005. Retrieved on 12 Apr 2008.

⁶ "Local organizations win Awards of Excellence". *Columbus Business First*. 14 May 2003. Retrieved on 12 Apr 2008.

⁷ Martin, LaMonica. "Start-up accelerates XML Web services". *CNET News.com*. 18 Feb 2003. Retrieved on 12 Apr 2008.

⁸ "LeaderPhone chosen by State of Kansas". Leader Newsroom. 29 Nov 2004. Retrieved on 12 Apr 2008.

⁹ Bednarz, Ann. "XML device could reduce XML-related bottlenecks". *Network World*. 24 Feb 2003. Retrieved on 12 Apr 2008.



For higher security requirements, such as a confidential board of directors meeting, unique PINs can be issued. These PINs automatically cancel themselves at the end of that call and cannot be reused. For situations requiring an immediate unscheduled conference call to individual participants, the group "blast dial" feature contacts group members almost instantly, without having to distribute PINs, dial-in numbers and a call time, then wait for people to dial in... then continue to wait for stragglers.¹⁰ In addition, any call can be recorded simply by pressing *4 on the host phone keypad at no extra charge. The host will get an email after the call with a link to a secure site where the recording

can be downloaded as an MP3 file. This feature is used extensively for everything from sales training to legal depositions to permanent records. This recording feature was also used extensively during the Hurricane Katrina disaster response so that Louisiana and federal officials could get vital life saving information.

Online presentations

Web conferencing is sometimes required in conference calls to supplement the telephone conversation. Leader offers full-service Web 2.0 web conferencing via Leader Meeting™. This service allows a moderator to present slides, screen shots, spreadsheets and documents to the participants on their personal computers. It includes the ability to transfer host controls among participants, draw on a whiteboard, application sharing, polling, chat, invite new participants on the fly, and request attention.



Leader Meeting™ provides Web 2.0 desktop and application sharing as a compliment to audio conferencing; includes polling, whiteboard markers, IM; Leader Phone® integration.

Alerting - War on Terror – supporting US national security

The United States Department of Defense and Department of Homeland Security became aware of Leader Phone® and asked Leader to adapt the technology to supply emergency voice alerting for its 3-day *Terrorex '04* counterterrorism simulation in Las Vegas, Nevada.¹¹ This event gathered some 700 executives from government, law enforcement, intelligence and military to simulate a multi-pronged terrorist attack on the United States. This effort was successful and a new Leader service was born – Leader Alert®. This service has since expanded to include any combination of voice, SMS (texting) and email alerting as well as an opt-in web portal that enables recipients to



Leader Alert® supports large-scale health, safety and administrative alerting applications for communities, government, education and commerce.

¹⁰ Carlson, Caron. "Conferencing Eased Via the Web". *eWeek.com*. 13 Feb 2003. Retrieved on 12 Apr 2008.

¹¹ Arlen, Gary. "Las Vegas war games". *Washington Technology*. 23 Jan 2004. Retrieved on 12 Apr 2008.

specify their preferred alert delivery modes. In addition, site and system redundancy has now been implemented to help avoid outages.^{12 13}

Alerting - Post-Virginia Tech school safety

The tragedy at Virginia Tech highlighted the shortcomings of existing alert notification systems and pointed to the need for more responsive and immediate services. Historically, large-scale alerting has been confined to civil defense sirens, public radio, TV broadcasts and public address systems. Homegrown auto-dialers were incapable of being managed by the users themselves. Leader Alert® puts the ability to launch large numbers of alerts in the hands of its users, without the need to involve technicians. Leader Alert® has just received the endorsement of The Ohio School Boards Association for campus health and safety alerting for implementation in secondary school districts across the state. Among universities, Kansas State University has implemented Leader Alert® campus-wide, including use of the opt-in web portal.

First response - Hurricane Katrina disaster response – supporting the people of Louisiana

On August 29, 2005, the day the levees broke in New Orleans, Louisiana, Leader received an urgent telephone call from the office of Andy Kopplin, Chief of Staff for then Governor of Louisiana, Kathleen Blanco.^{14 15} The telephone network for internal calls in Louisiana had failed and the Governor needed to coordinate the State's response to the

unfolding Hurricane Katrina disaster.¹⁶ Out-of-state calls were still working. Leader responded immediately and then supplied continuous audio conferencing, alerting and news services 24x7 for the Governor, her staff, all Louisiana state agencies and federal first responders. Leader's emergency services platform was one of the few working systems that never went down during the disaster - one of the largest natural disasters in the history of the United States. Leader Alert® was used by Pass Christian Harbor, Pass Christian, Mississippi¹⁷ to instruct vessel owners to clear the harbor



April 18, 2007 - Greenbriar Middle School, Parma (suburban Cleveland), Ohio. Knife-wielding woman attempts to enter the building. School officials disarm her, turn her over to local police, and immediately send a Leader Alert® to 700 nervous parents, calming nerves and avoiding school cancellation.



Pass Christian Harbor, Pass Christian, Mississippi, before Hurricane Katrina passed over... below, after. Leader Alert® was used to evacuate the harbor.



¹² "Leader Technologies to Sponsor Ohio Homeland Security Initiative Meeting at Ohio State University". *TMCnet*. 9 Dec 2004. Accessed on 12 Apr 2008.

¹³ Staff Writer, "New Technologies Ready For The Front Lines Of Terror War". Ohio State University / *Security Innovator*. 15 Dec 2004. Accessed on 12 Apr 2008.

¹⁴ Daley, Beth. "A race to shore up weakened levees". *The Boston Globe*. 25 Sep 2005. Accessed on 14 Apr 2008.

¹⁵ O'Connor, Terry. "Andy Kopplin emerges as unsung recovery champion". *BNET*. 8 Jun 2007. *New Orleans CityBusiness*. Accessed on 12 Apr 2008.

¹⁶ "Leader provides vital communications links for the State of Louisiana in Hurricane Katrina disaster response". WCMH NBCTV4. 07 Sep 2005. Access on 12 Apr 2008.

¹⁷ Merchant, Shouger. "Voice-alert system warns communities of trouble". *The Columbus Dispatch*. 28 Jul 2005. Accessed on 12 Apr 2008.

prior to Katrina making landfall.^{18 19} The vessels were moved out of harm's way, but the eye of Hurricane Katrina passed directly over the harbor, completely destroying it.²⁰

Hurricane Katrina lessons learned

Among the Hurricane Katrina lessons learned, conference calling and alerting are essential emergency management tools that need community-wide deployment before a disaster strikes. Disasters are by nature unpredictable. Katrina showed that even the most elaborate first-response plans can be rendered useless.

Lesson # 1: The citizenry get creative

After the levees broke in New Orleans, Governor Blanco, Chief of Staff Andy Kopplin, and their staff had to get creative and start over. In such situations it became clear that human beings do get creative; they can do wonderful things with whatever tools and resources are available, however limited. The Leader Phone®, Leader Alert® and Leader News® services became vital tools in supporting Louisiana' first responders and elected officials. Leader Dialog® (no paid subscription required) was then created to make it possible for everyone in the general citizenry to have immediate access to conference call capabilities so that people who do not normally collaborate can get together in an emergency and who have no common budget to pay cover the costs. Each person pays their normal long distance charge only.



U.S. Coast Guardsman searches for survivors in New Orleans, coordinating life-saving with Louisiana state agencies like Wildlife & Fisheries who had the rescue boats and Social Services who set up rescue shelters and provided emergency living funds. Strategically, this effort was coordinated at the state level 24x7 via Leader Phone®, Leader News® and Leader Alert® services provided to Governor Kathleen Blanco. This experience also inspired the creation of Leader Dialog® for everyday community audio conferencing; to enable the general citizenry with audio conferencing capabilities in a crisis.

Lesson #2: First response communications systems must be simple, familiar and effective

People in the midst of a life-threatening circumstance are nervous, upset and distracted. They have short attention spans. In such circumstances, only the most familiar communications tools get used... services with which they are already familiar. Hurricane Katrina proved that the telephone is the communications device of choice. The Internet was a distant second (online news, reports and information). A common misconception is that Louisiana had no phone service. On the contrary, parts of their system worked continuously, and that is the part that was used to connect to Leader services as a kind of mass remote switch.

Lesson #3: First response audio conferencing, news and alerting service must be provisioned outside the affected area.

Governments at all levels tend to organize their emergency management systems within the scope of their available resources. Hurricane Katrina, perhaps the largest natural disaster in the history of the United States, swamped every emergency communications plan and system in Louisiana. Leader's system was situated outside the disaster zone. Louisiana's local phone

¹⁸ "Pass Christian employs Leader Alert system for emergency announcements". *The Sea Coast Echo*. 23 Jun 2005. Accessed on 12 Apr 2008.

¹⁹ "Pass Christian Harbor implements Leader Alert". WLOX-TV13 Biloxi, MS. 16 Jun 2005. Accessed on 12 Apr 2008.

²⁰ Eaton, Dan. "Hit by Katrina, one CEO sees his firm fighting back". *Columbus Business First*. 9 Sep 2005. Accessed on 12 Apr 2008.

exchanges became clogged and could not connect local calls, but those same switches were able to dial out of state and connect long distance calls, even in regions where power was knocked out, and the phone services were running on auxiliary generator power.

Leader Dialog® was designed in the wake of Hurricane Katrina to become an Everyman's audio conferencing service; a service to use for everyday, conventional audio conferencing. Then, if an emergency event occurs, a service that can be used by the citizenry to support ad hoc first response collaboration. Leader Dialog® also makes it possible for people to get together on the phone for community events, political campaigns, education, volunteer work and other circumstances where there is no budget available to pay for such calls centrally.

National media coverage

Leader executives Mike McKibben and Jim Sobwick were invited recently by William Shatner to be interviewed for his *Keeping America Strong* special series for Heartbeat of America TV. This series was the brainchild of Shatner and Bert Tenzer, Entertainment Tonight producer, and dedicated to highlighting emerging medium and small American entrepreneurial businesses. The 30-minute Heartbeat of America TV interview was hosted by William Shatner, anchored by Doug Lewelyn. Special Series Advisor Rear Admiral Kevin F. Delaney, U.S. Navy (ret.) presented Leader chairman and founder Mike McKibben with a special *Heartbeat of America – Keeping America Strong* award in recognition of Leader's entrepreneurial efforts that help keep America strong.²¹

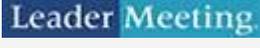
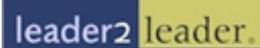
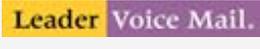


William Shatner Interview
Keeping America Strong

²¹ William Shatner & Bert Tenzer. *Keeping America Strong*. Heartbeat of America TV. June 2008. Under special license. <<http://www.leader.com/tv/heartbeat/index.htm>>.

Current services

Leader provides corporate audio conferencing, web conferencing and health and safety alerting for government, education and commerce under the following brands:

Leader® Brand	Application	Cost	Subscriber Instructions	Unique Features
	Web 2.0 Audio Conferencing	9.5¢/minute per participant	Leader Phone® 1-2-3 www.leader.com/leaderphone-123.htm	800 toll-free; full web controls; direct dial and record capabilities; supports regular, wireless and VoIP phones; able to conference call-enable a telephone carrier switch; per second billing; other enhanced features.
	Web 2.0 Audio Conferencing	Sponsored; long distance only	Leader Dialog® 1-2-3 www.leader.com/leaderdialog-123.htm	Sponsored tolled service; costs paid by sponsor, user pays normal long distance charges; supports regular, wireless and VoIP phones; basic features.
	Web 2.0 Alert Notification	Priced by requirement	Leader Alert® Consultation www.leader.com/leaderalert-123.htm	Voice, text and email alerting for large-scale; pt-in web portal; supports regular, wireless and VoIP phones; special security features.
	Web 2.0 Web Conferencing	20¢/minute per participant	Leader Meeting™ 1-2-3 www.leader.com/leadermeeting-123.htm	Desktop and applications sharing, polling, full moderator controls; VoIP support; other enhanced features.
	Enterprise Social Networking	Site license	Leader2Leader® www.leader.com/leader2leader.htm	Enterprise Social Networking technology designed and engineered to meet the more stringent needs within enterprises for security, privacy, data integrity, strategy and scalability.
	Virtual Voice Mail	Corporate and Government Sponsored	Leader Voice Mail® www.pickocc.org/telecom/leader.shtml	Launched July 21, 2009 in partnership with the Ohio Consumer's Counsel and Ohio Benefit Bank to serve in-crisis consumers in Northwestern Ohio initially. Leader Voice Mail® is a free service for individuals who are in transition and have no access to traditional landline telephone service. It provides them with a way to reach potential employers, landlords or to maintain contact with family members and loved ones. ²²

²² Ohio Consumers' Counsel partners with Leader Technologies to provide Web 2.0 voice mail services to Ohioans in the 419 area code. Jul. 21, 2009. Joint [Ohio Consumer's Counsel](#), Governor's [Ohio Benefit Bank](#) and [Leader Technologies](#) Media Event. Accessed Aug. 1, 2009.

See also

- Audio conferencing
- Collaborative software
- Emergency management
- Intellectual capital
- Interoperability
- Technological convergence
- Telecommunications
- Teleconferencing
- Unified communications
- Web 2.0

Further reading

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White Paper. "Heroes in the Storm - How Louisiana's Elected Officials Took Advantage of Leader Teleconferencing to Manage the Katrina Disaster". Leader Technologies. 25 Oct 2005.

White Paper. "The Future of Campus Alerting - Timely and informative alerts can save lives, unify response, stop rumors, and prevent panic". Leader Technologies. 20 Apr 2007.

White Paper. "Responding to the Unpredictable - Unleash problem-solving creativity with conference call and internet tools". Leader Technologies. 01 Oct 2006.

External links

- Official Home Page — <http://www.leader.com>
- Leader Phone® — <http://www.leaderphone.com>
- Leader Dialog® — <http://www.leaderdialog.com>
- Leader Alert® — <http://leader.com/leaderalert.htm>
- Leader Meeting™ — <http://leader.com/leadermeeting.htm>

Categories: Teleconferencing | Collaboration | Warning systems
Telecommunication services | Web services | Internet companies | Web 2.0

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