When *Disaster* Strikes:

Causecast Instant Disaster Response
When Disaster Strikes.

As the leader in community impact technology, Causecast helps organizations better leverage their support for nonprofits and demonstrate an active, world-changing social consciousness. To that end, Causecast recently launched its Community Impact Platform, which provides a state of the art system to make giving and volunteer programs as simple, effective and engaging as possible.

The Community Impact Platform helps organizations engage their constituents through cause, connecting volunteers to nonprofit volunteer and giving opportunities and offering innovative social impact campaigns for group participation. Organizations ranging from corporations to schools to membership clubs use the platform as a way to provide structure and community around group-led philanthropy, using built-in tools to plan, track and report their efforts.

One of the platform’s customizable campaigns is Instant Disaster Response, which provides an easy way for groups to immediately address major disasters and galvanize participants to get involved.
Why Responding to Disasters is Important for Business

Historically, disaster response has been the province of domestic and international relief agencies. But as the public has come to expect increased social responsibility and community service from companies, major disasters have become a rallying cry for corporate involvement.

Indeed, how a company responds to disasters can have implications for the perceived (and actual) integrity of its brand:

- Employees of companies that take a leadership role during times of national or international crises often feel a sense of pride and loyalty towards their companies.

- Conversely, not responding to disasters can leave employees feeling disappointed and even frustrated with their companies.

- Consumers respect companies that step up to disaster relief; when companies stand at the sidelines, the effect can be one of public disapproval.
Challenges of Corporate Disaster Response

While disaster response can be seen as a company’s civic duty, ordinary businesses are not, in fact, set up to serve as relief agencies. Mobilizing a company to marshal its resources around disaster response typically becomes a challenge in several respects:

Creating custom campaigns is a time-consuming process that can make it impossible to quickly leverage public interest.

Disaster campaign building is not typically a capability that companies have in-house. This means that overburdened IT and marketing departments are leveraged to do things they aren’t trained to do or third-party vendors must be hastily sourced and trusted to manage costly and sensitive campaigns.

Companies usually don’t have pre-existing relationships with the nonprofits and agencies in disaster zones that must be partnered with in order to provide effective relief.

Because of the costs associated with creating custom disaster response campaigns, only large companies usually have the resources to activate their consumers and employees around disasters.
When Disaster Strikes.

The challenges of stepping up to disaster response are significant, preventing most businesses from even trying. This is unfortunate, as disaster victims need all the help they can get and companies can reap tremendous cause marketing and employee engagement benefits when they rise to the crisis occasion.

Causecast believes that corporate disaster response should not be the exclusive domain of the Fortune 500. Small and mid-sized businesses can and should participate in the public discourse when disasters strike and leverage their employees and consumers to get involved with associated fundraising and volunteerism. But even large companies with significant resources at their disposal can stumble when it comes to disaster response. Their core business mission is not disaster response and the variables involved - from connecting to the right support on the ground to providing an engaging employee experience - can be overwhelming.

Smart policy would dictate that companies should not overinvest in disaster response by committing to infrastructure they don't need, or underinvest by not having any resources to help when help is needed. As such, the Instant Disaster Response campaign within Causecast's Community Impact Platform is designed to be push-button simple for businesses of all sizes, enabling organizations to automatically galvanize employees around a shared social concern with ease and effectiveness.

Recently, one of Causecast’s clients, academic hub Chegg, had the opportunity to implement the Community Impact Platform’s Disaster Response Campaign. Chegg relied on the platform to help it effectively support those in need amidst a terrible situation.

Disaster Strikes

Fast-moving and deadly, explosive tornadoes struck hard on Friday, March 2, 2012, spanning from the Gulf Coast to the Great Lakes, racing through the heart of the Midwest and South and putting an estimated 34 million people across 17 states in harm’s way. Survivors described it as “the worst we’ve ever seen,” “like a horror movie,” and “as if the gates of Hell had opened up.” When the nightmare was over, 74 tornadoes had touched down on 10 states, whole towns had been destroyed, and 39 victims were dead.

Causecast Responds

When the Causecast team learned about the storm system on Friday evening, an explosive “super cell” of tornadoes had been moving so quickly throughout the heartland that as many as four million people were within 25 miles of a tornado. The team realized that one of Chegg’s offices - in Kentucky - stood in the bulls-eye of the storm system.

Kate Stahnke, Causecast’s VP of Product, called Heather Hatlo Porter, Chegg’s Manager of Philanthropy and Executive Projects, to alert her about the disaster. Laying out the situation as calmly as possible, Kate kept the gameplan simple: here’s what happened, we’re on it, here are the next steps. Kate felt sure that Chegg in particular would want to show leadership around this disaster - and she was right.

It was time to mobilize.
When Disaster Strikes.

Tailoring the Campaign

The helpful thing about instant disaster response is that it’s...instant. So launching a campaign was as quick (and easy) as 1-2-3.

1. As Causecast’s platform administrator, Kate pulled up the disaster response template, filled in a description about the disaster, and added an appropriate disaster image. Causecast’s nonprofit department accessed its library of partners and selected relevant non-profits on the ground that were helping in the recovery effort; these selections were indicated on the campaign as charity choices. With the click of the “save” button, the campaign was now loaded into the system and available to any client using the Community Impact Platform.

2. Kate sent an email to all clients - including Chegg - that a Tornado Disaster Response campaign was available to be customized and pushed out to company employees. Aware that Chegg was already planning to implement this campaign, Kate connected directly with Heather to determine which nonprofits Chegg wished to support. Ultimately, Chegg chose to partner with the Louisville chapter of the Red Cross, so that non-profit was selected as Chegg’s campaign recipient.

3. Chegg was able to easily customize the campaign with its look and feel by using the simple campaign interface. Once Chegg tailored the campaign to its needs within minutes, the disaster campaign was ready to be blasted out to the staff. Heather sent an email to all employees informing them that Chegg was supporting hurricane disaster victims through its own response efforts, with a link to the campaign to find out more. She encouraged everyone to roll up their sleeves and join Chegg’s fundraising and volunteer efforts.

Chegg’s Employees Step Up

When Chegg’s employees started their day on the morning of Monday, March 5, they were surprised to see an email in their in-boxes about Chegg’s disaster relief to support victims of the tornadoes.

Within hours, Chegg had already raised thousands of dollars through employee donations. Later, some employees found other ways to contribute, such as sending school supplies that would be needed by affected children and - for the Chegg employees who worked in the Kentucky office - physically showing up to the disaster zone to help.

“Our team was amazed to see Chegg mobilize so quickly. Minutes after the email was sent out, many employees were already logging into the system.”

Heather, Chegg

The maiden voyage of the Instant Disaster Response campaign proved to Causecast the importance of advanced technology in addressing the world’s problems - the drumbeat by which the firm marches. Technology alerted Causecast to the disaster, technology created the campaign and technology managed Chegg’s employees through the disaster response process. In the end, the pursuit of social good through better technology resulted in a successful disaster response campaign launched after a 24-hour turnaround, one which assisted needy people in a disaster zone and helped a company inspire its employees.
“We were impressed by the whole experience. Given the speed of the campaign launch we would have expected a lot of technical bugs, but the execution was nearly flawless and the customer service throughout was fantastic.”

Results

$5,560 Raised for Tornado Relief in 24 hours
Get a Tour

[www.causecast.com](http://www.causecast.com)

- Impact Tracking & Reporting
- Mobile Verification
- Recognition and Rewards
- Immediate Disaster Response
- Social Proof
- Integration with your Intranet or Website