



# The Computerworld Honors Program

Honoring those who use Information Technology to benefit society

## Final Copy of Case Study

**Status:**

Laureate

**Year:**

2013

**Organization Name:**

Team Rubicon

**Organization URL:**

[www.teamrubiconusa.org](http://www.teamrubiconusa.org)

**Project Name:**

Operation Greased Lightning

**Please select the category in which you are submitting your entry:**

Mobile Access

**Please provide an overview of the nominated project. Describe the problem it was intended to solve, the technology or approach used, how it was innovative and any technical or other challenges that had to be overcome for successful implementation and adoption. (In 300 words or less.)**

After any natural disaster, there is a critical period of time between the disaster itself and the arrival of conventional, state-supported aid. Team Rubicon filled this gap after Hurricane Sandy by deploying Veteran Emergency Response Teams (VERTs) to provide necessary supplies, clear transportation routes, and coordinate over 10,000 spontaneous volunteers. To perform these tasks efficiently, Team Rubicon needed a way to collect requests for assistance, communicate the requests to the command center, and prioritize them according to urgency. Palantir Technologies sent several engineers to camp out at Team Rubicon's command center in the Rockaways. There, they partnered with team leaders to develop an application that enabled volunteers to enter requests for assistance into Palantir Gotham through web-enabled mobile devices. Within days, volunteers on the ground were using iPads and smart phones to file requests for water, medical supplies, and home repairs in Palantir Gotham, where they were aggregated and analyzed as part of Team Rubicon's broader operation. Volunteers also used the mobile devices to capture photos of flooded spaces, damaged buildings,

and blocked roads, which were entered into Palantir Gotham as media objects. Analysts at Team Rubicon's command center used Palantir Gotham to maintain situational awareness across all response activities. Coordinators tracked volunteer progress and dispatched additional support as needed. Analysts at Team Rubicon's command center also used Palantir to connect to data sources provided by other organizations, including information on fuel availability, power grids, and available medical clinics. Volunteers on the ground accessed this information using Palantir and relayed the information to affected individuals. Using Palantir Gotham's Map application, dispatchers could see where volunteers were located in relation to damaged houses, and re-position volunteer groups to areas of highest demand.

**When was this project implemented or last updated? (Please specify month and year.) Has it incorporated new technologies and/or other innovations since its initial deployment? (In 300 words or less.)**

Hurricane Sandy struck the Eastern Seaboard in late October 2012. Team Rubicon & Palantir Technologies staff remained on location, using the application until December 2012.

**Is implementation of the project complete? If no, please describe the project's phases and which phase the project is now in. (In 300 words or less.)**

Yes, the project is complete.

**Please provide at least one example of how the technology project has benefited a specific individual or organization. Feel free to include personal quotes from individuals who have directly benefited from the work. (In 300 words or less.)**

Team Rubicon's military veteran volunteers were using iPads and smart phones in the field to file real-time requests for water, medical supplies, and home repairs using Palantir Gotham. Once entered, the requests were aggregated and analyzed as part of Team Rubicon's broader operation. Volunteers also used the mobile devices to capture photos of flooded spaces, damaged buildings, and blocked roads, which were entered into Palantir Gotham as media objects and used to support response planning. Using Palantir Gotham, analysts at the command center monitored response efforts in real time and dispatched volunteers to areas of greatest need. In the two-week period following Hurricane Sandy, Team Rubicon volunteers repaired 762 homes. "The Palantir software acts as a force multiplier. The software addresses a common problem in dispatching crews for disaster relief: lack of real-time communication. "We were standing there, looking at everything, wondering what we were gonna do. They (Team Rubicon) came in like a swarm of locusts and just took over."

**Would this project be considered an innovation, a best practice or other notable advancement that could be adopted by or tailored for other organizations and uses? If yes, please describe that here. (In 300 words or less.)**

Yes, this project represents an innovation and best practice that could be adopted for other organizations and uses. The Palantir/TR solution was built on top of the Palantir Gotham platform, which is used by dozens of organizations around the world. Team



Rubicon used Palantir as a mobile response platform that could integrate and analyze data in real time. Palantir hopes to implement (and build on) this solution for other organizations as well.

**If there are any other details that the judges should know about this project, please note them here. (In 300 words or less.)**

Listening to the victims of Hurricane Sandy describe the impact Team Rubicon had on their lives is the best way to gauge our effectiveness. Please take 3 minutes and 6 seconds to watch and listen to just a few of the over 750+ homeowners we were able to help ([http://youtu.be/2Kn\\_fOUQFJY](http://youtu.be/2Kn_fOUQFJY)). As stated earlier, Palantir's solution acted as a force multiplier, enabling Team Rubicon to extend our reach to as many people as possible. In addition to viewing the referenced video, appendix 1 & 2 give a glimpse into some of the assistance Team Rubicon and Palantir were able to provide the victims of Hurricane Sandy.