

3 1 1 : T H E N E X T W A V E

Nine Imperatives For Leadership of 311-Enabled Government



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INTRODUCTION

As government leaders consider their new investments in systems for citizen contact, workload tracking, and performance management – known in broad-brush as “311” systems -- they are uncertain about the path ahead. They ask, “Where do I start today – and how? What key capabilities should I look for?”

Others with existing operations have different challenges. “How do I sustain 311 in the face of budget cuts, recessionary pressures, and *increased* demands for service from citizens, employees and elected leaders alike?”

And all leaders ask, “Where are the possibilities for *transformation* – for deepening value in ways all citizens, political leaders, and employees would acknowledge were essential? Where is the *next wave of 311 taking us?*”

To answer these questions, faculty and researchers at Harvard University’s John F. Kennedy School of Government recently convened 25 government leaders and technology and service providers for a day and a half of focused discussion. They raised and address five questions:

- 1) What is 311 today, and what can it do for a jurisdiction using it?
- 2) What are the major challenges to achieving successful implementations?
- 3) What are key capabilities to be delivered, and how can jurisdictions attain them?
- 4) What are the mega-futures and major trends we see for the next wave of 311?
- 5) What are the imperatives for leadership – the best next moves for leadership now?

This is a report of their findings and discoveries.

Background

In the 1980’s city leaders in Baltimore conceived 311 to offload non-emergency calls for service from police 911 operators. Today, it has emerged as a popular and essential capability of governments. More than a mere call center, 311 is today the centerpiece of advanced systems of people, technology and business processes.

- Citizens are today mobilizing entire governments for the first time with a web click or free call to 311, just as they did police departments using 911 thirty years ago. 311 has joined 911 as a major means of engagement and action with citizens, employees and civic leadership.
- Many jurisdictions take 311 beyond “mere” call centers, building in additional linkages from the report of an issue or complaint to response by city agencies. Where possible, governments tie 311 systems to “backend” workload tracking and performance management systems, and use analytics to track citizen priorities, assess agency performance, and help drive city budget decisions.

Today, the challenge for many is to integrate these three “legs of the stool” – call centers, workload tracking, and performance management – to assure the steady progress of jurisdictions in attaining their strategic goals.

Tomorrow, 311 holds the prospect for deepening citizen engagement with government, improving government response to requests for service in ways perhaps unthinkable even five years ago, and broadening the footprint of 311 networks to states and regions, and even nationally.

How shall we get there - whether fortifying today’s operations or planning for tomorrow’s? The test of success is no longer “merely” taking a thousand calls a day in less than 3 minutes per call. It is, rather, *how can we use 311-enabled systems to help us streamline government, assure results, engage our citizens, and improve the look, feel and vitality of our community in all ways possible?*

In sharing these findings and discoveries, we hope that today’s decision-makers will understand more clearly their options for actions, and the imperatives for leadership.

1: WHAT IS 311, AND WHAT CAN IT DO FOR JURISDICTIONS NOW?

If we asked five people how they would describe “311”, we would get as many **answers**. Our group found that there were ten roles or functions that a full-featured 311-enabled system can play in the life of jurisdictions who use 311. In fact, jurisdictions take advantage of 311 to greater or lesser extents. From among the ten roles enumerated below most jurisdictions strive to maximize a small, core set. *When asked “What is 311, anyway?”* the list below sums up the *variety of roles 311 can and does play*.

311 CAN BE:

The great citizen communicator: A convenient, consistent, high quality information disseminator, both by push and pull. As many as 60% of calls will be from citizens to pull information from government – how to file a claim, where to vote, where to park, where to get flu shots. While citizens *query* 311 for information on issues of the day, governments find it invaluable to push information to citizens – what trash to put to the curb, for example, or special recycling instructions.

An always-on constituent service engine. In some jurisdictions, as many as 50% of calls will be to requisition city services – trees that need cutting, hydrants that need fixing, potholes that need filling, graffiti that needs painting. Citizens use 311 to mobilize government to take action on problems that bother them.

A fast-track to improving the look and feel for the city. Accelerates the pace of improvement. With easy access to all, problems are spotted and nominated sooner, forwarded for action faster; clocked in to the workload queue; performance expectations set; results attained more swiftly, assuredly. Helps assure results - whether a cleaner city, a lower-cost city, a healthier city, or a more satisfied electorate.

A citizen satisfier with government: Puts an end to *blue pages roulette* -- helps users find and mobilize government services faster, and with less hassle. Provides *no wrong door* access, and a consistent customer experience across all agencies. Open when customers want it open; via a channel *they* want to use. *A positive image-maker for government and its leaders.*

A budget-trimming, shared-service consolidator. A *cost-saver* for jurisdictions from consolidations and integration of individual department or agency call center operations and overlapping service delivery.

A revenue-maker. Can help cities and counties get taxes, fees, and fines paid right away, over the phone.

A regional or city forecast engine. Using analytics, enables government to see leading-edge indicators of trends in critical service delivery areas -- crumbling infrastructure, drug-related neighborhood problems, school safety issues. A *hot button and over-the-horizon problem spotter*.

A safety and disaster resource. Lets jurisdictions push and pull information during crises tailored to the exigencies of the moment – a steam-pipe explosion, urban flooding, snow emergencies, fugitives on the run.



“In our city, we saw a thousand blue page numbers just for the city and county. For a citizen to have the ability to navigate that without an Indiana Jones treasure map and decoder ring was virtually impossible. There was no accountability at those answering points within the agencies and departments. Sometimes they'd answer the phone, sometimes they wouldn't. They wouldn't track constituent input, so it didn't result in any ability to measure or provide a performance management capability for the Mayor.”

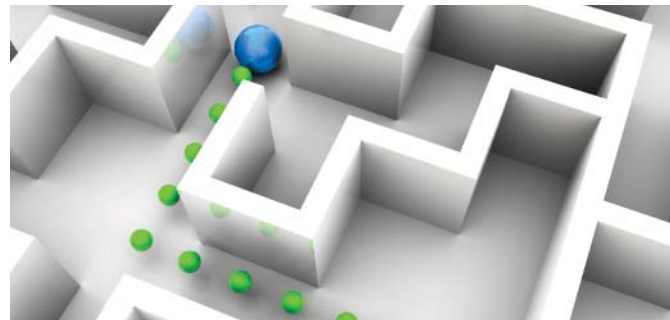
A transparency machine for managing government. Tears the veil off agency operations and finances. Shows chief executives and budget officials the “call and response” habits of key agencies. Lets leaders understand the true cost of services delivered, and know what the next dollar invested in any agency will bring. Helps map potential consolidations, service integrations, process improvements and reorganizations. A change management engine for leaders.²

A political leveler/power re-distributor. Everyone has access. Just as 911 gave all citizens the power to mobilize an entire police department for the price of a phone call, 311 gives that same power for non-police services. Not only *easy* access, but *equal* access.

2: THIRTEEN CHALLENGES TO GETTING IT RIGHT

When implementing or managing a 311 operation, experience shows that there are numerous challenges. Below are the thirteen hidden shoals – “gotchas” – that leaders should focus on.

- **Customers experience poor access or service.** Language barriers, physical disabilities, device incompatibility, waiting times for service, poorly informed call center representatives, inconsistency of reply across representatives in repeat calls for service, operations that are closed for business -- or off the centralized 311 directory altogether-- each risks creating dissatisfied customers. Customers expect to be able to reach and mobilize the city easily. As the front end points of contact, 311 call representatives can create impressions of government “togetherness” or confusion.
- **Channels lack alignment, cause conflict and confusion.** When different “channels” (web, email, telephone, in-person, brochures, etc.) have different facts about the same matters, everyone loses. In the move to centralized customer service, cities may have as many as five channels open to 311 – via the call center itself, through an aldermanic office, via the police department, via the operational departments, and via self-service on the web. In highly stovepiped organizations, departments are used to managing their own data with little accountability. The move to 311 requires vigilance, testing, and quality control. Information can quickly fall out-of-date or alignment, creating an impression that agencies cannot keep their “stories” straight, or that city leaders do not know what the story is.
- **Customers’ requests for service fall into “black holes”.** Where there is no strong linkage to work order systems, service requests can be completed late or not at all; unlike a FedEx package en route, they cannot be tracked or the status seen . Work may be delayed, underway but invisible, or never performed at all. If the call center ranks are not adequately staffed, trained and informed; if the front-end call center is not tied to a work-order and back-end performance management system; if there is no transparency to the work in process, results may vary and citizen reaction will be negative.
- **Secure or sensitive data is breached.** With information sharing, issues of proper use for privacy and security become paramount. Failures to safeguard sensitive data – either at rest, in transit, or in use -- can result in data loss, loss of trust, and litigation.
- **Success overwhelms jurisdictions.** Call volume can increase by as much as 400% over a two year period. With success comes demand, expectations, and load. Without proper



“In some cities knowing who the ‘go-to’ guy in certain departments formed the basis of whether you would receive services. With 311 people expect that anybody can call anytime of the day for many of the services -- and without any connections.”

²See, Robert D. Behn. *What All Mayors Would Like to Know About Baltimore's CitiStat Performance Strategy*. 2007: IBM Center for the Business of Government.

planning, jurisdictions may be overwhelmed and jeopardize early gains and good will.

- **Jurisdictions lack baseline measures and are unable to tout their successes – or deal with their shortfalls.** Without good baseline measures and metrics – or a set developed early on – it is hard to make the case that investments resulted in net gains.
- **Bureaucracies balk at “collectivization” moves, wage low-level conflict, or stay “off the platform” altogether.** Whether giving up the front-end intake to non-agency call centers, or tying into citywide work-order performance management systems, there is a natural proclivity for agencies to want to “own” data, resources and action. The shared services model and platform is where leaders achieve savings, consistency in customer experience, and performance management, however. Standing off creates risk for all. When “blue pages roulette” persists, government leaders are blamed.
- **Statutes prevent funding, impede consolidations to shared services.** Offering a community resource like a front-end call center with back-end enterprise capabilities comes at a price. The cost to capitalize and operate can reasonably be drawn from the individual agencies which stand to benefit from shifting their work burdens to central units. Within some jurisdictions, however, agencies operate under statutory authorities which prevent capitalizing such “ventures” – even when it makes good sense.
- **Line agencies fail to improve year-over-year operating performance.** To transform the city, line agencies require understanding and use of case management, analytics and reporting power and requirements of the 311/workorder/performance management systems. Data analytics may show that there are repeat calls for service or repeat performance failures. When agencies fail to investigate and change flawed business processes, failures persist, costs remain high, and citizens lose confidence in government. Business process stays the same – even when data shows there are failures of oversight or process they must address.
- **System operators under-exploit the technology and leave “value on the table”.** Jurisdictions make large investments in telephony infrastructure, for example – but may use it for inbound service only. Outbound holds great value – in “reverse 311” notifications to divert workload, to ping collections on past due tax, fines, fees, and other purposes. Using the infrastructure, additional jurisdictions can be brought on to deepen value and offset costs.
- **The operation cannot sustain itself as it matures, and falters under budget pressures.** 311 systems are not mere call center operations: they mature into integrated full service customer service operations with work order triggers and performance management linkages. Their full value to the jurisdiction to aid in the transformation of citizen access and city work depends on continued development past the mere taking of calls within x rings or seconds. Without planning, systems fall prey to budget cuts, and put the potential for true transformation. Many face sustainability issues – can they cross the chasm from their start-ups as call centers to becoming an invaluable part of the city



“If they enter a work order on the web and it goes into vapor land and they don't get what they said we promised them, the next time they're going to say, ‘Well I tried that new web thing. That is not worth a darn. I'm going to call because the last time I called I got a person and she was nice and courteous and she understood.’”

performance management enterprise? With budget cuts looming, these cities face threats to growth, and significant challenges to their financing.

- **311 tarnishes rather than burnishes leadership reputations.** 311 staffs are ambassadors for many city agencies, taking calls from citizens who may actually never contact the operating department for service. Line agency results fulfill the promise. Where call takers or service delivery falters, reputations suffer. Good call center staffs are knowledgeable about those agencies; communication and systems linkages between the call center and operational units is strong.
- **311 changes the traditional political process.** 311 permits direct citizen access to requests for services. There emerges as a result a new role for the aldermanic leaders – less to handle specific service requests, more to follow up and make sure they are completed on time, and to use 311 data to bolster claims for further city attention and investment in neighborhoods.

3. SEVEN KEY CAPABILITIES TO BE DELIVERED

What are key capabilities to be delivered, and how can jurisdictions attain them? We find there are seven core capabilities, characteristics or attributes that leadership should assure for its 311 operations. There are numerous requirements for attaining them. We enumerate these below. When asked, *“What are the key capabilities to deliver?”* here is what the Harvard group said systems should provide.

(1) An Outstanding Customer Service Experience

Requirements:

- **A consistent, high quality standard in the front end/customer service experience across multiple organizations of government** – whether school boards, courts, utilities, traffic and parking, or child welfare services. Disparities create impressions of “no one in charge”. Poor experience with one stand-alone agency can erode gains made with the consolidated service. Moving to a proven standardized customer service platform benefits all.
- **“No Wrong Door” navigation.** Shift the burden from citizen to government to help match need to service. Aspire to “No Wrong Door” navigation, which eliminates “Blue Pages Roulette.” When achieved, it is dynamic: it requires test and retest to assure accuracy and consistency of answers, and quality of experience, whether accessed via telephone, email, fax or other “channel”.
- **A harmonized, well-trained and energized staff.** Aspire to 24/7 capabilities – or “open for business” when citizens want to do business. . Consolidations of multiple call centers into one can achieve this, but call takers may find working eight hours a day sometimes at night or on weekends, stressful and lead to high turnover. Create a learning environment rather than a punitive “gotcha” environment. Support and salute success; learn from errors.
- **Hear and speak with citizens in the language of their choice.** In New York, as many as 20% of the population would rather speak with call takers in a language other than English. In California 40% of some workloads are in Spanish. Assuring access to citizens, including sightless and without hearing, adds value to your offering.
- **Provide transparency to service requests, feedback on results.** Reveal current



“If people are calling repeatedly about the same issue, it generally indicates that there is work that needs to be done, not so much in the level of call center, but at the system or at the business process itself.”

service status (a la FedEx tracking) as well as results. Capture customer satisfaction evaluations into agency performance reviews and action plans for improvement. Let callers know what they can expect, and when.

(2) A Platform Dedicated to Citizen Mobilization and Engagement

Requirements:

- **Provide anywhere/anytime access by channel of choice.** Whether the elderly or Gen YouTubers, every generation has a preferred means/device of contact, and hours in the day and the week when citizens may want to ask a question, receive messages, or get help. By addressing the requirements of different customers, governments can assure the widest possible access and use of 311 systems for “push” and “pull” communications.
- **Hear and capture citizen issues and priorities.** Welcome learning the problems of “hidden America” and engaging newcomers. 311 is a “citizenship builder”: American cities are filled with immigrants from countries where ordinarily citizens would want to avoid any contact with their government. Often, these residents are most vulnerable and in need of services. A landlord has turned the heat off in midwinter; a job site is filled with asbestos or other hazardous conditions; children are sick. 311 enables government to engage and provide services to these at-risk populations.
- **Use 311 analytics and reporting to “reveal” the neighborhood to community residents, civic associations, and citizen groups.** Help them track neighborhood issues like housing violations or abandoned vehicles, lay claim to action by government, and see the results. 311-derived analytics and reports can provide invaluable profiles of issues, problems and action, and gain support from citizens for its continued use.³

(3) Analytics that Guide Performance Reviews and Budget Decisions

Requirements:

- **Use the 311 systems to translate citizen expectations of performance into clearly defined tasks and work orders for city agencies.** Using 311 as the front-end to jurisdictions’ work order systems with service delivery on the back-end, 311 generates powerful analytics. Service requests – whether from citizens, employees or others – feeds the work-order systems and links to performance management. With such linkages, senior management can track performance at all stages of the flow: from customer contact, to work-order generation, to results on the “ground”.
- **Train agency heads in the art and science of management “by the numbers”.** Senior managers may lack training or capability to manage to performance targets. If



“Before transitioning in a new agency, we ‘secret shopped’ their operation. Our callers were experiencing fifteen minute call wait times, not getting live agents, staying on hold, hang ups, experiencing very, very poor satisfaction. The minute that we moved them over to the call center, the call time dropped to three minutes and satisfaction jumped dramatically. For the exact same rep. Minimal training, but a change of environmentals and they adopted the call handling protocols used in 311. That’s the only difference.”

³ See, Thomas H. Davenport and D.J. Patil, *Strategic Uses of Analytics in Government*. 2008: IBM Center for the Business of Government.

given those skills, reports, and expectations, 311/workorder/performance management systems can help managers improve service efficiency and quality. With good oversight, leadership can then rely on the expertise of those who have been on the job for many years to use their subject-matter know-how to deliver services more efficiently.

- **Re-script business processes to address revealed opportunities and problems.** Use 311 analytics to highlight recurring problems that are generating repeat calls for service. Using the power of analytics, leaders and agency heads can see recurring issues and opportunities for improvement, address them, and boost overall performance.
- **Guide performance reviews and budget decisions using the 311-enabled performance management data.** Translate key findings on agency performance into action on agency budget requests. Use back-end data to understand true cost of work using activity-based costing. Indicate not only where customer service is weak and where departments are wasting money, but evaluate new claims for budget increases.

(4) Consolidations that Leaders Navigate as Complex Change Management

Requirements:

- **Reap efficiencies.** With many agencies of government each providing their own staffs and resources for call centers, opportunities abound to consolidate onto single centers and reap the financial benefits of doing so. The more services that can be brought on, as appropriate, the greater the potential efficiencies.
- **Standardize service.** In consolidations, standardizing services holds great promise. Managers can train and monitor performance; the customer-facing look and feel of the jurisdiction can be made more uniform; hours of operation can better reflect citizen demand; one stop shopping can improve the customer experience; new services can be introduced and delivered. With standardization, however, comes risk that line agencies will lose contact with customers, or miss important give-and-take along subject matter lines.
- **Structuring the shared service enterprise.** Successful consolidations require the support of agencies which will share in the front-end service request intake, and then must deliver on the back-end work-order performance. Creating new shared governance arrangements, securing shared financing and acquisition, and tailoring business process to the exigency of agency-by-agency requirements is essential to execution and support.
- **Drive further consolidations to manage risk.** Citizens often ascribe “ownership” of all agencies to a few highly visible political leaders – even if those leaders may in fact lack statutory authority over them. Whether it is an agency like sanitation over whom the jurisdictional leader in fact has direct authority, or one -- like a regional transportation system – with shared authority, the public will associate a few high-visibility leaders with agency performance. Bringing these agencies increasingly into “the fold” of the 311



“In this new day and age, nobody is just going to listen to any department head tell them stories about how, “Oh, yeah, well my foreman on that job said XY&Z.” This is now all about “You have to prove it to me.” I am going to compare sets of data and I’m going to believe the one that’s right and that’s what I am going to go with.”

operation gives leaders greater control over the quality of customer care and customers' perception of government.

(5) Operations that Earn and Keep the Support of the Authorizing Environment

Requirements:

- **Enable new role for city councilors.** 311 can enhance the role of local city councilors – to follow up on citizen requests, assuring that work that is requisitioned has been done on time and to citizens' satisfaction. In addition, councilors have a role in bringing 311-data to bear in arguing for improved services to neighborhoods. Providing reports to councilors helps them in this role.
- **Script capital budget initiatives, involve local politicians.** Use evidence of citizen service complaints about infrastructure problems such as potholes, for example, to plan and gain support for capital projects such as street resurfacing. Working with councilors, city leaders can gain support for repaving projects, for example, that benefit councilors' constituents.
- **Make data indicating risks and gains from consolidations transparent.** In ordinary times, consolidations require support from the authorizing environment, whether for financial authority, legislative or regulatory action, or other requirements. In times of no growth and shrinking tax bases, being able to show improvements in efficiency while gaining support for service cuts or tax increases is critical. Effective marketing and communications, using strong baseline measures and metrics, and shared performance data, lets leaders point to the benefits and risks of such efforts, and gain support for consolidations and workforce reductions.
- **Use 311 to rally a city around confidence in government and civic pride in its accomplishments.** 311 can represent a movement to modernization that can rally a city. With strong fact-based marketing and communications, citizens can form a realistic and positive impression of the jurisdiction and its accomplishments.

(6) A Plan to Manage Success When it Comes – As it Surely Will

Requirements:

- **Plan to win.** In the months and years following introduction, demands for services will predictably skyrocket. Call center loads may triple or quadruple. Anticipate and plan for those as an expected development.
- **Have a migration strategy to self-service and other measures to relieve increased demand on call centers.** Take advantage of web-readiness to offload some costly call-center workload to self-service, keeping priority work for customer-facing representatives. The ability to move calls to the right channels – to self-service where possible -- is essential to containing costs



"To set up a new business in our state -- establish a trade name, incorporate, get your tax ID -- you'll have to talk to four distinct departments and five divisions under those departments. None of that's tied together -- not the data, the applications, the workforce, or the processes. There's a huge opportunity to tie in those resources across those Tier 1 call centers."

- **Have a clear customer care strategy for multi-channel/high volume operations.** Know and prioritize which calls require “high touch” customer care, even in a high-call environment, and which requests for service can be diverted to other channels.
- **Help manage expectations.** When citizens request services, success is measured in terms of expectations. Analytics can help make the promise realistic; sound business process engineering can help deliver on it.
- **Anticipate predictable topical or seasonal call surges.** Elections, school openings, weather conditions are all predictable and can be effectively addressed with careful resource planning, sufficient staffing, and good training within the call center.
- **Use “Reverse 311” to pro-actively reduce call loads.** By calling constituents to advise them of developments – a traffic problem, a new recycling calendar, where to get help for flood cleanup-- leaders can “push” information and avert heavy call-in loads.
- **Let citizens self-service “status-of-service” queries.** For infrastructure departments – fixing water mains, filling potholes, trimming trees, doing building inspections, issuing permits -- let citizens track where in the service point a work order is by going online, a la FedEx tracking.
- **Invest in improved agency marketing to reduce call center demands, and resulting pressure on “headcount”.** Use call analytics to see where better marketing and communications by agencies might address information needs, reduce call load, and lower call center head count. If a call center is receiving many questions regarding library hours, for example, the library system may be able to tailor its marketing and communication more effectively. One measure of success would be then be reduced calls for service to 311 for that topic.

(7) Deepen and Extend the Value of the Investment

Requirements:

- **Mine existing platforms for new value.** Understand the potential of the investment in technology, people, and changed business process to leverage further value – whether reverse 311, web-based service tracking, or other.
- **Use 311 as front-end revenue generators.** Use telephony infrastructure to “push” payment requests, or enable call center operators to take payments – municipal fines, fees or taxes -- while fielding “pull” information calls.
- **Reduce per service costs by adding new partners to the network.** Bringing on additional in-jurisdiction agencies, or servicing out-of-jurisdiction organizations, 311 operations can gain new financial support that more than offsets the true marginal cost of expansion.
- **Add new services that citizens welcome.** Governments can help citizens figure out taxes, for example, by having corporate finance departments complete claims for earned income tax credits.
- **Become the platform of choice in the region for distributed services and information bases.** As jurisdictions add scope and reach to their shared services platform, and connect



“You start attacking the budget issues by consolidating first on that local level. Then, maybe Parks or Housing, which are not city departments. You look at bringing those in because residents will call 311 expecting answers about city functions – and they think, libraries, parks, housing, is part of that.”

⁴ See, Thomas Eisenmann, Geoffrey Parker, and Marshall W. Van Alstyne. *Strategies for Two-Sided Markets*. 2006: Harvard Business School Publishing.

with other networks, they increase the value of their network to partners and draw further activity, deepening value for those who participate in the shared service. Support for regional coalitions and standards-based linkages can go far to interconnect systems. ⁴

- **Leverage economic development benefits.** Locate physical facilities and other operations in economically-challenged areas.
- **Improve leaders' situational awareness for incidents and spot future trends sooner.** Problems are no respecters of political boundaries. Any time jurisdictions collect information over a period of time they have the benefit of seeing fast-rising problems sooner, and doing trend analyses to spot emerging trends faster. Using advanced analytics and reporting, for example, leaders can see months ahead of time critical trends in health, infrastructure or finances that may impact the economic vitality and tax base of the region.
- **Assure the privacy and security of sensitive data sets.** As governments make crucial decisions with respect to whether and how to collect data, assuring the privacy and security of data at rest, storage, transport and in use assures continued use and access. Consider ways to anonymize data if at all possible, stressing geo-identifiers rather than personal ones, for example. Know and secure who has access to what level of data and analytic product. Enforce and audit a clear privacy policy, test facilities and operations, and validate availability and security of data.
- **Assure the availability and continuity of service.** Plan for redundancy, fail over/surge capacities via outsourcing, sharing slack resources with other jurisdictions. Whether for summer vacation periods, weather emergencies when staff cannot access facilities, or other exigencies, have secondary centers or back up capacity to handle the overflow and surge.



“We seek to partner with everyone we can to build support for this system. We have leaders that we send monthly reports to, informing them, alerting them what’s going on in their community. That way, they can help us do our job. At any given time, we’ve got eight to nine thousand active or open cases. If they notice that department X has not addressed their concern, then they’re going to call us back and say, ‘Well, it hasn’t been addressed and should have been.’”

4: MAJOR FUTURES/MEGA TRENDS

Looking to the future, we see several important trends that will impact risk and opportunity for the next wave of 311.

- **Distributed, wireless-empowered workers.** Increasingly, jurisdictions will take advantage of wireless technologies to generate, execute and track demands for service. Mobile “job-in, job out” devices track the “when, where and how” of job execution. This can let workers work “off the queue” to address problems they spot, as well as “on-the-queue” to address the next priority job.
- **“Every citizen a sensor”.** Historically, the reporting of community problems has relied on citizens using landline telephones to report potholes, abandoned cars, and the like. With many citizens now carrying cell phones, many of which are geospatially enabled, every citizen can now “instantly” report broken hydrants, fountains, or benches -- while strolling in parks, for example, or along roadways. Using scanning bars and other technologies, records can be made of the precise hydrant, bench or lamp pole in need of service. Anywhere, anyone, anytime reports are now possible.
- **Move to mobilize citizens via non-official networks.** Alternative contact technologies such as text messaging, blogs, mobile devices proliferate. As we move off desktops, having the capability to accept push “feeds” from citizens, and to use their own networks to push messages to thousands of people simultaneously, is likely to feature critically in the next wave.⁵
- **New transparency:** Citizen engagement and empowerment. 311 linkages to work orders and performance management permit new ways to engage citizens – not just to give report cards, but to open channels to mobilize government, provide highly customized one-to-one work order relationships, and cumulatively reflect the priorities for action of a building, a block, or neighborhood. Understanding how to mobilize citizen views and perspectives, translate these into priorities for action, and acquire citizen reports of satisfaction with government may truly democratize access.
- **Regionalization, IT consolidation initiatives.** As regions see benefit from sharing resources and information, cross-boundary integration efforts as well as cross-sector linkages between private and public sectors are emerging. Cities will explore county regionalization; states will explore the same. Political leaders will use 311 to raise their regional profiles, providing coverage to regions where citizens perceive they are responsible, even if they are not. To create real value from such linkages requires sound cross-boundary governance, financing and acquisition, and business process engineering capabilities, together with reporting and data standards, and strong safeguards for rules regarding privacy and security.



“We have our own localized plans, but if all of a sudden we needed some serious out-of-weather-pattern or out-of-climate-area support, the answer may be right here around the table where we could jointly use each other's excess capacity in disaster and emergency situations.”

⁵ See, Andrew P. MacAfee. *Enterprise 2.0: The Dawn of Emergent Collaboration*. 2006: MIT Sloan Management Review.

5: THE NINE IMPERATIVES FOR LEADERSHIP FOR 311 – THE NEXT WAVE

In considering their options, leaders face choice and decision. We urge leaders to consider these nine imperatives as essential to bringing forward the next wave of 311.

Imperative #1: Plan for success – but also for rough times ahead. Understand where you are on the lifecycle of 311 implementation.

- **Issue:** Early success can overwhelm 311-enabled systems and degrade performance, causing customer service delays, conflicted information across channels, and dropped or lost calls-for-service. Support may suffer.
- **What to Avoid:** “Predictable surprises” in volume and related “maturity” issues that can cripple a 311 system as it grows.
- **What to Do:** Plan for success at each stage of development; know where you are on the maturity curve; manage expectations. Anticipate the predictable increases in call-center workload with a multi-channel strategy that diverts demand to web-enabled self-service, reverse 311, or other. Manage for service quality, effective workload tracking and strong performance management at each stage of roll-out. Demonstrate success over a defined range of fiscal, operating and performance goals. Garner support for sustaining the operation with next-step investments.

Imperative #2: Be fanatical about great 311 customer service.

- **Issue:** 311 is often a significant encounter for diverse citizens – old and young, infirm and well, English-speaking and non-native speakers, with high expectations. Such diversity can be a challenge to operators who must balance efficiency with great customer care.
- **What to Avoid:** Unsatisfactory encounters for the citizen, including failures to take action on problems, inaccurate or incomplete information, and language or cultural differences impacting communication.
- **What to Do.** Champion quality and the user experience at every turn. Cherish the insight to constituent issues and problems it offers. Use 311 to track and report back to citizens on their requests for service; manage agency performance against benchmarks. Standardize the customer experience across multiple or consolidated call centers. Assure consistency, quality, transparency, and privacy/security by strong management and effective oversight, defined rules and standards, and constant quality assurance on “high-touch” customer-facing services.

Imperative #3: Maximize efficiency by seeking consolidations, integrations to shared services where possible to offset costs, improve consistency. Handle the move to 311 as a complex change management effort requiring all the skills of a political campaign.

- **Issue:** Duplicative services such as multiple call center operations add costs, create conflict and confusion across platforms, and encourage agency “exceptionalism”. With



“You try to get people to use the web because it’s cheaper to handle them there than on the call center. If you want people to have confidence in the portal but the departments aren’t keeping the information current, they’re going to call you. And as much as I love my call center, I love it better when they don’t call.”

some agencies “on” the 311 shared service platform (call center, web) and others “off”, leaders miss savings opportunities, lose cost control, and give up performance accountability.

- **What to Avoid:** A mish-mash of agencies -- some on, some off the 311 shared services platform – undermining consistency, savings, and a uniform customer experience. As the jurisdiction acquires new partners or moves agencies onto the 311 platform, complexity, conflict and confusion are common.
- **What to Do:** Have a clear roadmap for migration of agencies onto the 311 shared service platform, and clear executive sponsorship (accountability, resources and authority) for the effort. Drive internal consolidations, integration to improve consistency of experience, reap operating efficiencies, and broaden performance transparency. Lead as a complex change management effort requiring buy-in, but also decisive leadership. Engage political leadership, line-of-business heads, and technologists in “win-win” strategies for governance, finance, and operations.

Imperative #4: Deepen the value of 311-enabled services by adding networks, features, and capabilities; strive to make your 311 system the region’s platform of choice for information, analytics, and services.

- **Issue:** The value of 311 is the information it ties together and the services it provides to customers. The more networks that 311 can involve, the more services, capabilities and features users can find on the 311 system, the greater the value for all. An isolated 311 system with few services forces internal and external customers to seek information and services elsewhere, costing 311 its customers and support.
- **What to Avoid:** An isolated, stand-alone 311-enabled network as a “call center” only, with few services or features, lacking communication or interoperability with local, regional and national networks of providers, citizens, governments, and industry.
- **What to do:** Make your 311-enabled system the *platform of choice* – a high visibility regional powerhouse of services and offerings to the electorate, industry, government, commerce, and citizens. Add value through improved analytics and reporting, billable services, payment/collections capabilities, “push” and “pull” communications, tie-ins to emergency services during natural disasters, fugitive hunts/missing children searches, and other enhancements. Draw in new partners, making infrastructure (telephony, business process, expertise) available, setting rules for its use, and assuring standard, high quality services. Forge strategic alliances for information sharing with local, regional and national data producers and consumers.



“We’re a victim of our success. Our call volume is four hundred percent higher than it was two years ago -- so I want folks to get the answer on the web site. I’m sure everybody around the table who runs 311 has got the same problem.”

Imperative #5: Engage the Web 2.0 world; make every citizen a sensor; treat 311 as the finger on the pulse of the city, and the electorate.

- **Issue:** Millions of citizens now exist on their own networks – informal groupings linked over social networks like Facebook or Myspace; on cell phones or blogs; and other means and devices. Government has little experience incorporating their reports or views via 311-enabled platforms, translating them into priorities, and taking action.

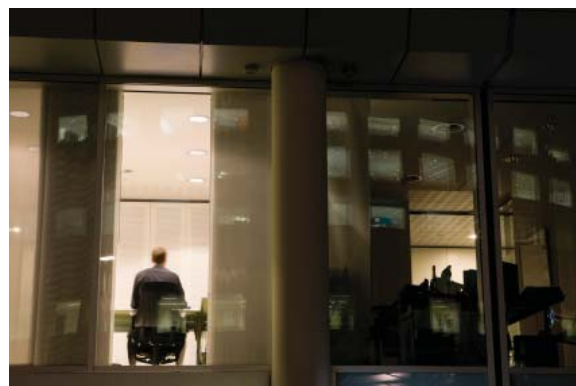
- **What to Avoid:** Either “stiff-arming” data from user-generated networks, or being overwhelmed by so-called wisdom of crowds “gaming” the system with onslaughts of reports.
- **What to Do:** With care and caution, open the 311 platform to the new networks of citizens. Leaders have the opportunity to engage citizens through these same networks, both to push and pull information, to gain their information and reports, and to document their priorities. Those who can mobilize these networks to acquire reports of issues or problems, and who can push data through these networks to activate help and citizen involvement will go far to transform the political landscape. With “every citizen a sensor”, the look and feel of the city as well as the issues and needs of citizens, neighborhoods and communities can all be more clearly seen.

Imperative #6: Use 311-enabled data and analytics to help set your jurisdiction’s budget and strategic goals, establish priorities for action and investment, and track and report progress.

- **Issue:** With inconsistent, partial or erroneous information, policy- and decision-makers lack shared facts on performance or views of key challenges. Conflict and confusion can result; jurisdictions may miss important opportunities to address ongoing and emerging social and infrastructure needs.
- **What to Avoid:** Leaving data within agencies rather than marshaled via 311-enabled performance management for all to see.
- **What to Do:** Tie 311 intake to backend workload tracking and performance management systems. Use 311-enabled analytics to help frame priorities, set strategic goals, and track indicators of progress. Share and report with agency heads, legislators, citizens and financial officials, increasing transparency, and building confidence in -- and reliance upon -- 311-enabled reporting. Use 311 analytics to assess performance, frame budget decisions, identify next best investments -- whether to control costs, take budget savings, or make investments -- as defined by citizens, industry, non-governmental organizations, agencies or political leadership. See, adapt to emerging trends sooner, faster and more accurately -- whether in regional weather impacts, health or safety matters, or jurisdictional financial/tax issues, for example. Gain transparency for and insight to, key issues and opportunities.

Imperative #7: Plan for resiliency, continuity and a key role for the 311 platform in crisis, disaster, and emergency conditions.

- **Issue:** In crisis, disaster, and emergency conditions, leaders struggle to gain clear views of the situation (“situational awareness”), make timely, effective decisions; and communicate with citizens and organizations taking action.
- **What to Avoid:** 311 “out of the loop” for information gathering, analysis, and emergency communications; lack of preparedness to support information sharing and communications (“push” and “pull”) in crisis.
- **What to Do:** Involve 311-enabled platforms in exercises for crisis and disaster response. Test infrastructure and information sharing, and identify gaps in readiness. Prepare for



“Going in you have to change that “stovepipe mentality” culture where departments handle their own stuff. You’re moving to a centralized organization. That culture change needs to be tackled upfront: breaking down those barriers, acting as one enterprise rather than eighteen, twenty six, thirty departments.”

people issues (staffing and care of employees during emergencies), infrastructure issues (loss of connectivity), analytics and information sharing (validate flows and accuracy), and communications to and from decision-makers.

Imperative #8: Safeguard your investment and franchise: test, diversify, and secure the 311-enabled platform.

- **Issue:** Leaders may assume that once success is achieved, it is assured. But 311-risk is dynamic: each day holds the potential for new failure, tomorrow's headline, and next month's disaster.
- **What to Avoid:** Assuming that today's performance is a guarantee of future success; lack of 311-specific quality assurance plan or program.
- **What to Do:** Invest in and plan for 311-specific quality assurance measures; test for accuracy of data; assure privacy and security safeguards; survey for customer satisfaction; test and plan for the resiliency of systems; and assure quality and continuity of operations under all circumstances. Assuring the accuracy, durability, resiliency, and convenience of the 311 system is paramount for its future.

Imperative #9: Encourage the learning organization.

- **Problem:** There is deep expertise within government about how to do its basic work; there is not a matching history of oversight or accountability. With so much riding on the success of 311-enabled performance management systems, the rollercoaster of publicity can be difficult to manage positively.
- **What to Avoid:** Playing the game of "gotcha" during difficult days – whether with department heads, managers or line workers.
- **What to Do:** Take the lessons of performance management and help workers convert failures to success via learning. Performance management introduces a new level of visibility and accountability. Leaders who use it to build workforce capability and involvement will be rewarded with the support and engagement of agency heads, managers, and workers who genuinely care about doing the work well.



*"They've got to keep a positive P&L.
They can't take on new things that they
don't make money on."*

Lastly, we urge leaders to treat 311 not as a call center but as the pulse of the city, and the electorate. The new wave of 311 welcomes millions of citizens, each with their unique preferences, requirements, and issues. Some will be encountering government for the first time from foreign nations. Some will be sophisticated users. Some will just be maturing into citizenship from youth. Some will be aging, elderly and perhaps infirm, with many issues. As a single point of access to mobilize city services, 311 tracks the heartbeat of the city. Pay attention to it; understand its messages; connect with citizens around the priorities, issues and concerns they bring to their encounter with the next wave of 311.

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