The Implementation that Changed Government Services

From Worst-to-First in Two Years
(with no increase in staff or budget).

SUMMARY

This whitepaper shares the award-winning and unexpected strategic, financial, and operational benefits achieved by one jurisdiction's commitment to its 311 operation. This paper describes how a well-built and effectively managed Enterprise 311 operation enabled a jurisdiction of over 1 million citizens to create useful trust with customers and to counteract the stream of customer complaints and the erosion of customer confidence in two years without additional budget or staff. A checklist of ten crucial yet overlooked factors for success in an Enterprise 311 operation is offered that can produce the same level of success in any jurisdiction.

Citizen Confidence is a Key Foundation for Government Success.

Customer confidence is what every government leader strives for, primarily because it leads to higher civic engagement, promotes a collaborative approach to community building, and fosters favorable political results. The importance of these 'bread and butter' services is elevated in local and County governments that have a direct impact on citizens' daily lives.

Yet Confidence is at a Historic Low.

Government leadership is often distracted away from delivering quality services by crisis management and lofty policy and takes for granted daily customer service operations. While public trust in State and local governments have shown slight improvement (and fare better than trust in the Federal branches), only about 1 in 3 Americans have high levels of trust in their regional governing bodies (State Policy Network Trust in Institutions, March 2020- May 2023).

A Solution to The Confidence Gap May Surprise You.

A less well-known success-factor to counteract the erosion of customer confidence and build useful trust with customers is a well-built and effectively managed Enterprise 311 operation. This paper shares the award-winning results achieved in two short years by one jurisdiction's commitment to its 311 operation, and the surprising strategic, financial, and operational benefits to the government that resulted. This paper also offers a checklist of ten crucial yet overlooked factors for success in an Enterprise 311 operation that can produce the same level of success in any jurisdiction.

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THE 311 STATUS QUO

Customer confidence in government is an essential aspect of maintaining a healthy relationship between citizens and their governing bodies.

When citizens are confident in their government's abilities, they are more likely to be supportive of its policies and initiatives.

However, when customer confidence erodes due to insufficient information about services, poor service delivery, and an absence of communication and follow up, it can lead to a strained and sometimes adversarial relationship between citizens and their government.

One of the best and perhaps surprising ways for government to cultivate citizen confidence in government is with a well-built and well-managed Enterprise-wide 311 operation.

> A robust, Enterprise-wide 311 operation can not only generate confidence and trust in government and strengthen customer satisfaction but can also help government to predict and manage its capacity to meet customers' service demands and improve accountability for delivering services (with transparency!).

Yet while government 311 operations are common and numerous, few have unlocked the full range of benefits available to Agencies, Operations Leaders, and Executives.

That's because what constitutes a well-built and well-managed Enterprise-wide 311 operation (and what it takes to create one) may not be what you think.

Common Symptoms of 311 Problems

Nationwide, governments strive for excellence in their 311 operations, yet common problems persist as symptoms of larger systemic issues. For example:

- **Customer complaints about undelivered services or difficulty getting needed information are considered business-as-usual** due to the constant and scattered stream of complaints made to the 311 call-intake center, the Agencies, and the Executive and Legislative offices.

- **The term "311" is unconsciously associated with the 311 call-intake center and not the servicing Agencies** in the minds of government staff, Executive and Legislative offices, and customers.

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- **311 management is diffused** among the 311 call-intake center management, the technology office, overseers of the telephonic infrastructure, and each Agency that delivers services.

- **Agencies view the 311 call-intake Call Center as a means to answer their main phone number** often without consideration of cost, information exchange requirements, or accountability.

- **311 business processes (and technology) are not integrated into Agency internal workorder management** processes and require duplicate data entry.

Conventional 311 Problem Solving

Conventional responses to service delivery problems tend to misdiagnose the cause of issues, and misdirect scarce time and money to fixes *within* the 311 call-intake center itself, such as customer service training for call-takers, hiring more call-taker staff, buying/replacing/ upgrading technology within the call-intake center, co-locating 311 with 911, and occasionally even initiating an Executive-driven "Stat" initiative to explore "311" problems and elevate accountability for performance improvement.

While some of these efforts may create improvements, few have unlocked the full range of service delivery excellence and hard-to-come-by insights that are possible from a high performing 311 operation.

YOUR 311 OPPORTUNITY

A well-managed Enterprise 311 operation can be a goldmine of strategic advantagees for customers, government Agencies and Executives.

A swift and successful response to 311 calls and requests for service boosts public satisfaction, enhances the government's reputation, and fosters a sense of trust amongst constituents. This increased trust can lead to higher civic engagement, stronger community building, and favorable political results.

Due to the right approach, smart decision making, and effective Leadership, in two short years one Mid-Atlantic 311 operation serving approximately 1 million citizens was transformed from among the worst to measurably first with no increase in staff or budget.

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This jurisdiction's 311 operations were transformed:

FROM

A siloed, measurably poor performing call-intake center that worked in conflict with the responding Agencies, which also provided poor service to the region's tax-paying citizens, who, in response supplied a relentless stream of complaints to the call-intake center, Agencies, Executive Offices, and Legislative Offices which are not coordinated in addressing them.

TO

- **Recognition.** An Enterprise 311 operation that received three awards of recognition in three years for the performance of its call-intake center, for civic engagement and public information, and for its use of technology in service to its customers.

- **Partnership between Agencies and the 311 call-intake center.** A government where service Agencies and the 311 call-intake center work in partnership to collect requests and deliver services that satisfy customers.

- **Collaboration _among_ Agencies to successfully fulfill customer service requests.** A government where Agencies collaborate to address customer issues that cross Agency areas of responsibility and expertise.

- **Collaboration _within_ Government.** A government where Executive and Legislative branches work in tandem to track regional service demands and address complaints in a consistent manner.

- **Use of 311 information to improve services.** A government that collects feedback on customer service and service delivery and uses it to evolve services to satisfy customers into the future.

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- **Use of 311 information for strategic insight into resource planning and customer engagement.** An Enterprise 311 operation that provides real-time insights into community needs and concerns which:

  - **Aid in data-driven decision making** about successful ways to respond to citizen needs, e.g. by providing data about demand for services.

  - **Quantifies demand for information and Agency services** to inform budgeting requests and resource allocation.

  - **Lowers the resource costs of rework and reactive problem solving** by limited field personnel.

  - **Mitigates risks** by addressing minor issues before they escalate into major problems, saving time, money, and safeguarding the resilience and reputation of the government.

  - **Informs creation of a useful knowledge base** to support customer inquiry about government services.

At the core of this achievement lies the opportunity for *any* jurisdiction to achieve its own version of this success. The key success factor for any jurisdiction is to properly understand and recognize the components of a successful Enterprise-wide 311 operation and to attend to them all.

On the next page, you will find the Checklist of Enterprise 311 Success.

Use this checklist of ten (10) key 311 success factors to learn where your 311 operation can be strengthened to deliver these benefits in your jurisdiction.

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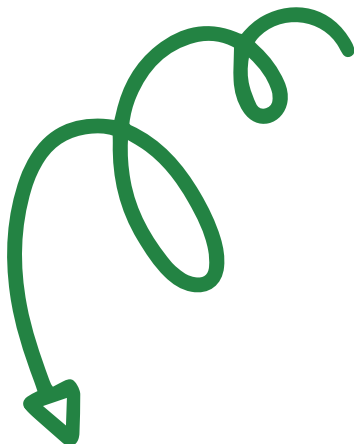
Checklist of Enterprise 311 Success

Does Your 311 Operation Have the Following?

☐ **A Realistic View of the As-Is Operation.**
A complete understanding of the causes of Service Delivery problems and the operational changes needed to address them.

☐ **A Realistic View of the As-Is Culture.**
A clear awareness of the culture changes needed for Service Delivery success and the know-how and commitment to make them.

☐ **A Vision of Success.**
A robust vision of a successful Enterprise 311 Operation that can successfully drive change.

☐ **Leadership That Can Make Change.**
Leadership practices that are outcome-oriented instead of legacy-based.

☐ **Leadership Practices to Achieve Success.**
Leadership practices that are outcome-oriented instead of legacy-based.

☐ **A Model for Success.**
A well-defined Enterprise 311 Operating Model.

☐ **Living Communication.**
Communication practices that achieve buy in and support from stakeholders ranging from the front-line government personnel to the Legislative Branch to customers and community organizations.

☐ **Informed Leadership of Technology.**
311 technology that is selected, implemented, and maintained to achieve the desired customer service outcomes.

☐ **Living Training.**
Training that ensures the readiness of government personnel and customers, and that maintains an ongoing understanding and proper participation in the Enterprise 311 system.

☐ **Living Quality Assurance.**
An going Enterprise management and maintenance operation that keeps information current, provides quality assurance, provides useful data and performance reports, and sustains a customer-oriented Enterprise 311 Operation into the future.

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Lisa Morgan is the Trusted Advisor to Leaders of Private, Non-Profit, and Federal, State, County, and Local governments nationwide. Clients trust Lisa Morgan Solutions to provide Advisory and Consulting services on all challenges to move forward and *get things done*!

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