

An aerial night view of a city street, likely in New York City, showing tall buildings with lit windows and light trails from traffic. A large billboard on the left side of the image reads "MILLENNIA COME AND GO. ART IS FOREVER." and features a drawing of a human figure. The street is marked with "LANE FIRE" and has several lanes of traffic. The overall scene is illuminated by city lights and the red light trails of cars.

Transforming Customer Services
to Support High Performance in
New York City Government

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As the biggest and most populated city in the United States, New York has one of the nation's largest and most complex city governments. More than 350,000 city employees and more than 120 agencies, offices and organizations offer nearly 4,000 different services to 8 million residents. To stay connected in "the city that never sleeps," residents need efficient, 24/7 access to a wide range of customer services.

Business challenge

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At the time, citizens in need of government assistance faced more than 4,000 entries on 14 pages of the New York City Phone Book. More than 40 resource-intensive city agency call centers and hotlines fielded inquiries regarding a vast range of services. Customers were often transferred or hit other dead ends when reaching out to city government for help.

Mayor Bloomberg envisioned a centralized, all-purpose call facility that residents could easily access through a simple-to-remember 311 phone number. Live operators would answer calls and efficiently direct customers to the information or resources they needed—24 hours a day and seven days a

week. This single, integrated communication channel would manage all of the city's non-emergency service and information requests.

The city needed help in designing, developing and launching the ambitious "311 Customer Service Center" initiative—the most comprehensive customer service center ever developed by a government organization. The city called upon Accenture based on its deep customer relationship management (CRM) capabilities, large-scale integration experience and its ability to deliver a comprehensive solution within a short time frame.

Furthermore, Accenture offered the skills, resources and experience to oversee and deliver the highly visible NYC 311 with minimal risk. Accenture had a hands-on understanding of the city's technology infrastructure and an excellent track record of working with New York on important technology projects.

Residents had grown to expect inefficient service. New York City government responded with a centralized, all-purpose, efficient customer service center.

A poll conducted prior to the launch of 311 showed that:

- Fifty-two percent of callers had to make two to 10 calls before reaching the appropriate government agency
- Thirty-seven percent of callers spent 20 minutes or more trying to get the right agency
- Sixty percent of these callers said this timeframe was what they expected from government
- Eighty-three percent of those surveyed were in favor of the creation of a 311 service

How Accenture helped

Working closely with the city's Department of Information Technology and Telecommunication (DoITT), Accenture led multiple teams to efficiently build and launch the new customer service center and 311 hotline. Unlike many technology projects, NYC 311 was about fundamentally transforming the way in which the city operates.

The integrated 311 solution provides a single point of entry to city government for all residents, visitors and businesses and is evidence of the city's leadership in managing change while implementing solutions for high performance.

Project governance and interaction with city agencies were critical factors from the start of the engagement. This open and ongoing agency collaboration enabled the team to make a successful transformation at a rapid pace. Also, because this was one of the mayor's key initiatives, the Accenture/DoITT team had the buy-in needed to quickly address roadblocks and continue swiftly along the transformation journey.

The project included:

- **Developing a searchable knowledge base and taxonomy of city, state and federal government services.** Using enterprise content management technologies, the team fed information into a CRM tool and established the basic structure of information that enabled customer service representatives to respond quickly to customers' inquiries. The result was a comprehensive repository of information dealing with more than 7,000 aspects of the city's government.
- **Building an entirely new, integrated call center operation.** Accenture took the lead in establishing a facility to house more than 450 customer service representatives along with the supporting technology infrastructure, which is based on Oracle's Siebel CRM Call

Center application (v7) running on a Sun Solaris platform. Other key solution components include computer telephony integration from Genesys Telecommunications, telephony and private branch exchange systems from Nortel and data network routers from CISCO. Accenture also helped identify, hire and train qualified staff to answer calls and manage the new facility. And while the 45,000-square-foot operations center and technology hub is equipped to handle more than 20 million calls a year, the center is also integrated with a separate call center operation capable of handling overflow calls. By addressing customer issues through the call center, city agencies are able to focus on core competencies rather than on administrative tasks.

- **Introducing a host of new operational processes.** Accenture leveraged Siebel CRM customer contact applications from its alliance partner, Oracle Corp., and content management tools from Interwoven. Through Interwoven's content management platform and its Connector for Oracle's Siebel CRM, customer service representatives have a single point from which to create, manage, approve and deploy content such as FAQs, literature, and other information about agencies and the services to Siebel CRM applications. This greatly improves content management and helps ensure the delivery of consistent information to the city's call center applications, as well as to the city's website.
- **Rolling out 311 to more than 100 New York Police Department precincts.** Accenture guided the networking of all 122 of the city's police precincts to the 311 system to help resolve "quality of life" complaints lodged over the hotline. A customer service representative can now route

non-emergency calls to a specific precinct, which allows the police to analyze problems more quickly and determine the most effective responses.

The initial release of 311 focused on triage for all call types across all agencies in the city, and a deeper level of support (including service requests) for 11 initial agencies. With subsequent releases every six to eight months, 311 then focused on deepening the level of service offered to other agencies, with each release supporting resolution of a higher percentage of calls thorough the call center. Through other major releases, the team continued to expand the breadth of 311's offerings. For example:

- Accenture also worked with the city to launch 311 Online, which brings online the same information and assistance available through the call center. A customer can use 311 Online to report a problem, request services, check the status of a request, submit a video or photo to support a request and file a city agency complaint or compliment. 311 Online has helped the city reduce costs by offering self-service through a more economic channel. The system also supported cost savings as it used existing DoITT enterprise components.
- Using the same enterprise content management technologies as the call center, 311 Online supports the city's response to the dynamic New York City environment through a data-driven architecture. The online service request intake capability can be modified and extended without a major release. Frequently accessed information such as alternate side parking, school schedule and garbage/recycling pickup is available on the 311 Today section of the 311 Online homepage and can be overwritten with breaking news and alert information if needed.

- Accenture worked with the city to develop and launch the 311 Service Request Map on 311 Online, which provides the public with access to 311 complaint data organized into multiple categories on a map. The 311 Service Request Map increases transparency into how the city is providing services and better enables the public to hold the city accountable for the services it provides. It also makes data available for New Yorkers to collaboratively address the problems that neighborhoods and the city face.
- Accenture helped develop an enterprise solution to support real-time integration with agency back-end service delivery systems. Service requests from 311 are instantly transferred to the agency back-end system and an update is automatically sent to 311 once the service request has been addressed.
- The deployment of Enhanced 311 (E311) allows 311 to provide better service to customers who have more complex health and human services needs. Customer representatives identify the underlying needs of a caller and then explain important services offered through NYC health and human services agencies and not-for-profit organizations. For example, a caller requesting food stamps might be interested in other hunger-related programs such as soup kitchens and school meals.
- Accenture worked with the city to launch additional 311 services for parents. 311 now provides a resource for parents seeking answers about their children's education, including information on enrollment, transportation, admission or general education inquiries. Customers can speak with 311 representatives for general questions and directly to Department of Education specialists who are trained in these areas.

311 is an evolving service that is constructed to grow along with the city. It has the flexibility to support updates to services without requiring an

application deployment. New services can be added and data, such as phone numbers and hours of operation, can be modified within minutes.

311 also provides city agencies and officials valuable insights and data through business intelligence and analytical reporting. In 2006, as part of the city's Citywide Performance Reporting (CPR) program, Accenture worked with the city to develop a robust set of enterprise business intelligence (BI) tools based on Oracle Business Intelligence applications and technologies to help measure and manage performance across its many agencies, including detailed performance management reporting on the 311 Customer Service Center, and how agencies responded to customer requests.

Through BI reports and dashboards, the city tracks integrated information from millions of customers, allowing city staff to analyze call patterns and plan for or respond proactively to issues. For example, based on an analysis of more than 2,000 complaints, the city launched the NYC Department of Transportation Pothole Project to support proactive dispatching of additional workers to address potholes.

Analysis of call patterns also allows the city to respond proactively to issues—such as dispatching extra workers to deal with potholes or helping police target illegal social clubs—after 311 showed a connection between certain locations and public drinking complaints.

The system also monitors action on requests for a broad range of services, from repairing broken streetlights to acquiring birth certificates and arranging for sanitation pickups. With this information, city officials—and the public at large—access a window into agency performance measures and statistics.

"It's not just a citizen service hotline, it is the most powerful management tool ever developed for New York City government," said Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg. "I can't imagine running the city without it."

High performance delivered

With Accenture's help, the city of New York has applied best practices in customer relationship management to transform service delivery and, ultimately, achieve high performance.

The results are clear:

- The center represents nearly 300 city, state and federal agencies that combined offer nearly 4,000 services.
- More than 400 call center representatives answer calls 24x7x365.
- Information is available in more than 170 languages, from Amharic to Zulu.
- On an average weekday, more than 60,000 customers dial 311, and the majority of calls are handled in four minutes or less.
- 80 percent of calls are answered in 30 seconds or less, with an average answer speed of 30 seconds.
- A full 85 percent of 311 customers have their inquiry resolved during their initial call.
- The NYPD is better informed about citizen quality of life issues or complaints.
- New York City has saved money from the consolidation of agency call centers and expects to save millions more over the long term.

311 has significantly impacted service delivery by New York City agencies:

- **Reducing burden on 911.** 311 contributed to a reduction of approximately 4 million calls to 911 between 2003 and 2009, resulting in less diversion of first responder resources to non-emergency situations.
- **Eliminating duplication of services.** By centralizing the call-taking process

for complaints citywide, 311 has uncovered areas where multiple agencies were performing the same or similar tasks. Some areas where duplication was eliminated include complaints regarding manhole covers, potholes and the improper disposal of refrigerators.

- **Filling gaps in service.** The public has, at times, requested services through 311 that the city had not historically provided. Gaps in service delivery that have been addressed include complaints related to noxious odors from portable toilets; about potentially hazardous open sidewalk vaults; and about bike path conditions on city bridges.
- **Directing resources to areas of need.** 311 has allowed the city to identify neighborhoods and locations with the highest level of complaints, concentrate resources where needed and use data to solve problems.
- **Allowing agencies to focus on their mission.** By disseminating information, particularly about major events, 311 allows city agencies to better focus on their key public service areas, rather than on call-taking. Across multiple winter and summer seasons, 311 has helped the public locate city-provided heating and cooling centers. 311 has also enabled city agencies to launch large-scale initiatives, such as the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene's free Nicotine Patch and Gum Program. Since 2005, 311 has helped to enroll more than 200,000 New Yorkers in the program.

- **Improving agency efficiency and service delivery.** 311 has also been a catalyst for the development of new, more efficient and increased delivery of city services. 311 data provides a detailed count of every inquiry and its result. 311 data is used in the Citywide Performance Reporting system, which holds agencies accountable for delivering results.

An early test of the 311 system's robust architecture and disaster recovery came in August 2003 when a major US power outage brought the city to a virtual standstill. The 311 call center received more than 150,000 calls in less than two days. Even so, the technical infrastructure ran without interruption. And because the 311 system is highly flexible, the Accenture team was able to immediately establish an emergency bank of auxiliary call takers to triage the incoming volume.

As a citywide communications channel, 311 also offers a means by which to disseminate information during smaller scale emergencies such as snowstorms, transit strikes or the H1N1 outbreak. No matter what the emergency, the availability of 311 helps keep customers from unnecessarily dialing 911. For example, during the 2005 New York City transit strike, 311 received more than 241,000 calls on the first day of the strike. On January 27, 2011, 311 handled its largest call volume to date, with 276,827 calls in just one day due to a large snowstorm, and nearly 4 million callers in the month.

Speed to value was another important benefit of 311. Accenture was able to help launch the ambitious citizen service



Industry Recognition

2010 *Computerworld* Honors finalist

2009 Center for Digital Government Best of New York Awards, Project Best Advancing Service to the Public

2008 Municipal Arts Society award

2005 *Computerworld* Honors Program finalist

2005 NYC Citizens Budget Commission Prize for Public Service Innovation

2004 MIT Digital Government Awards "Local Government Innovator"

2003 Overall Excellence in Technology award

program just nine months after the mayor announced his vision for a more accessible government. In the summer of 2007, just four years after its launch, 311 had received more than 50 million calls. On May 9, 2010, 311 received its 100 millionth call, making it one of the largest and most sophisticated customer service systems in the world. By 311's eight-year anniversary in March 2011, it had received more than 118 million calls.

Accenture continues to be involved in further improving the city's ability to deliver customer services, and is currently responsible for assisting the city in supporting and enhancing the infrastructure and applications for the 311 call center, including the newer online capabilities.

The 311 project represents a revolutionary change in government. It has changed the way the public and the mayor hold agencies accountable. It also has transformed the manner in which New Yorkers access government services and how agencies operate.

"For the first time, we now have a real handle on what troubles New Yorkers. And New Yorkers have a place they can communicate without having an intermediary. In a city as large as New York, knowing who to turn to is the most difficult challenge there is. It's amazing how fast it's become part of the city's culture."

Mitchell Moss, director of the Taub Urban Research Center at New York University

About Accenture

Accenture is a global management consulting, technology services and outsourcing company, with approximately 215,000 people serving clients in more than 120 countries. Combining unparalleled experience, comprehensive capabilities across all industries and business functions, and extensive research on the world's most successful companies, Accenture collaborates with clients to help them become high-performance businesses and governments. The company generated net revenues of US\$21.6 billion for the fiscal year ended Aug. 31, 2010. Its home page is www.accenture.com.

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