

INFORMAL COMPARATIVE RESEARCH – MUNICIPAL 311 OPERATIONS

In efforts to help us plan and formulate the City of Minneapolis' 311 call center, we conducted some informal comparative research. Not all cities answered all questions. Interviews were done by phone in January and early February, 2005, and we specifically looked for quantitative results as a means of helping us determine the cost of operations. Along the way, our contacts offered us advice which is captured at the end of this document.

Question	Akron		Calgary		Chicago		Baltimore	
Total number of (non 911) calls to the City, annually?	To all City phones, no idea.		Approximately 8 million		No way of knowing		Pre-311 – Received approximately 17000 calls a day (about 3.7 million annually)	
Total annual number of calls to your call center?	Only been open 4 months; based on experience, estimating 25 to 30 thousand.		2001 – 145,000 2002 – 244,000 2003 – 303,000 2004 – 304,000		2004 – 3.9 million calls to 311		311 receives 1.2 million calls a year – roughly 50% are for city services and 50% are police non-emergency	
Total (non 911) call volumes pre and post call center implementation?	Pre 311	Post 311	Pre 311	Post 311	Pre 311	Post 311	Pre 311	Post 311
Are you using Automated Call Distribution equipment?	Yes		Yes		Yes		Yes	
Operational hours?	7:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m.		Currently 8 am – 7 pm – M/F; 8 am – 4 pm S/S		24/7 – 365 days a year		24/7 – 365 days a year	
How are calls managed when center is closed?	Originally calls forwarded to 911, currently using voicemail box.		Planning to go 24/7 in late Spring, 2005 – will hire 20 FTE for coverage					
How many customer service representatives does your center have? How have you structured shifts?	13 call takers. Three shifts: 6:30 a.m.-3:00 p.m.; 8:00 a.m.-4:30 p.m.; 3:00-11:30 p.m.		Have 27 Call Takers (no "leads") Have 2 supervisors, 1 manager/director, 1 admin, 1 trainer and 2 process documenters Staff 12-14 FTE during peak times (Monday business hours) and decrease coverage as week progresses. Definite seasonal variation in call volumes demands staffing flexibility. CALL VOLUME RANGES – 1800 a day in summer to 220 a day over general winter weekend. Have definite event and seasonal driven call patterns.		65 call takers (12 of them are leads called CO2s); 9 supervisors; 4 managers Doesn't count the 175 uniformed police officers filling out 115,000 case reports a year (part of 12% of total calls that are non-emergency) Shifts are most heavily staffed between 7 am and 11 pm – have 8 shifts staggered to cover heavier call times between 7 am to 5 pm Some seasonal variation – 50,000 a month range (July peak)		42 CSR1 5 CSR2 – Leads 5 Supervisors (part of escalation process but don't take direct calls) 2 Trainers/analysts (do SR mods, code new SRs, etc.) 1 Manager 85% of staff focused on covering day shifts; 12% evening and 3% overnight Initially brought in outside help to document and reengineer processes – now do this in-house – Department staff who provide services are responsible.	
How did you find and recruit call center staff?	All staff repositioned from other departments.		Transitioned in from existing call centers consolidated to date		Former call center employees from Mayor's office Newspaper adds		Former call answering staff.	
What is the average cost per Customer Service Representative for training?			Done in-house		Not known – training done in-house – role of supervisors – and on-the-job		Done in-house – have 2 FTE dedicated to training	
How much time is needed for training Customer Service	2 weeks of daily training.		Approximately 2 weeks		3 weeks of training + 6-8 weeks of on-the-job training		Approximately 2 weeks of classroom training – another 2-3 weeks of active	

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Representatives?				monitoring and coaching
What are staff turnover rates?	Have not been in operation long enough to experience turnover.	Minimal – well paid, union positions	Between 5-10% annually	First years – turnover was about 75%. Rate is now about 25% - usually occurs during first 6 months when employees are technically on probation.
How many types of Service Request are handled by 311? How did you determine which Service Requests to handle via 311?	Currently about 203.	Approximately 230 SRs Average call length = 140 seconds + 40 seconds for post call work. SR types determined by call centers consolidated at project inception (animal control, bylaws, complaints and commendations, fire prevention inspection scheduling . . . plan to add parks and recreation soon)	500+ Developed SRs from existing call centers consolidated prior to 311	Approximately 300 Average call length = 195 seconds (144 seconds talk time, 51 seconds PCW)
What are the relative proportions of Informational Requests to Service Requests?		75% of calls are for information or undocumented complaints 25% of calls result in SRs 46% of all calls are looking for a transfer to a live body on a specific issue - Calgary does warm transfers.	65% of calls are for information 22% are for services 12% relate to police non-emergency issues Remainder are transfers to 911 Do cold transfers	Of all calls to 311, about half do not result in creation of a new SR – could be duplicate reports of an event, calls to check status, etc. Measure duration of open requests and backlogs, not just time to close.
What are the top Service Requests up to 90% of all SR calls	Public Works related, i.e. snow removal, traffic signs/signals, potholes.	Varies by season and weekday	Know top service requests up to 50% of total volume	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Bulk trash pick up 2. Sanitation enforcement 3. Abandoned vehicles 4. Rats 5. Vacant buildings 6. Parking complaints 7. Dirty alleys 8. Live animal pickup 9. Water leaks 10. Pot holes
What are the top Informational Requests up to 90% of all IR calls		46% request transfers	Know top info requests up to 25% - get uncountable types of requests for information	Not known
Does your call center use IVR technology? How is IVR technology used?	Currently experimenting with using voicemail after hours.	Yes – 4 basic options (need more info)	NO – only a recording to let incoming callers know where they are in the queue	Yes – three basic options: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. transfer to 911 b. police matters c. hold for all other requests
What are your call center's operational costs – breakdown?		Didn't ask	Between \$4-5 million annually – does NOT include costs of 175 uniformed officers Look in 2005 budget on the web	Approximately \$3.8 to 4 million annually – includes costs associated with CitiStat CRM start-up costs of \$2.5 million +

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				call center start-up costs of \$.5 million
What is your staff to supervisor ratio?	1:13	2 supervisors who take some calls: 27 FTE (1:13)	Roughly 1:7	Ratio of call takers to supervisors is 1:9.4
What is the avg. hourly compensation per customer service rep? (salary + fringe)		\$21 CD to \$27 CD per hour	CO1 = \$21.3 - \$45.1 per hour CO2 = \$31.1 - \$51.9 per hour	CSR1 = \$22.50 per hour CSR2 = \$26.00 per hour Supervisor = \$32.00 per hour
What support functions are used by your call center?		IT provides some help – have internal capacity to make CRS changes though	Misc. – check budget for allocations	IT services – focused on business enabling – understanding the business before applying technology
How do you measure call center performance?		Depends	Measure center and service delivery performance in multiple ways	Monitor about 10% of every agent's calls – review and rate performance Follow up on a small % of closed SRs and ask about quality of service and satisfaction with resolution
What did you do with existing call centers? How many did you have pre-311? How many do you have now?	Utilities Business Office (water dept.) has maintained their operation. Customer Service Office is being phased out. Safety maintains the 911 Center.	Gradual migration of existing call centers into consolidated whole Total number of call centers prior to consolidation was approximately 17	Some call centers consolidated prior to 311 Still have many separate call centers including water collections, revenue (business licensing), 2 aviation departmental units Will seek to consolidate 2 aviation departmental units this year (2005)	Added department after department to CSR tool – basic work order management and reporting Started with DOT – their PW equivalent – easiest to document and track Rolled in major departments PRIOR to consolidating call center staff and switching to 311
How did you redirect human resources from existing call centers?	Staff from Customer Service reassigned, however not to 311 Center.	People from legacy call centers initially just collocated but didn't integrate	Took existing call center folks for 311	Took existing staff – feel it was a mistake – lack of strong customer service ethic – little willingness to change and become more customer centric. Initially had very high turnover.
How did 311 implementation impact call volumes to 911?	911 experienced a drop in calls, approximately 15%.	Don't have 311 per se – have 268-CITY 911 calls handled separately – impact of call center consolidation on police non-emergency not known	Not known	Experienced a 1/3 reduction in calls to 911 – reduced 911 call answering time by 1/2.
How much call traffic was diverted to 311 from 911? From existing call centers? What did redirecting curve look like?		Not known	Not known	Not known
Does your service offer web chat?	No	No	No	No
What Service Requests types does your website take in?	N/A	Anything that comes in	The 80 most frequently asked for – basic flavors	About 60

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How many web intake Service Requests do you receive?	N/A	Receive about 3200 a month – most come in between 8 pm and 2 am	About 1% of our total SR volume comes off the web Been trying to promote higher web use for SRs – hard to do though	Not asked
What are your top15/most used web intake Service Requests?	N/A	Lots of students asking for information, people looking for event information, expression of general frustrations, etc.	Look on web	Not asked
How do you deal with e-mail Service Requests?	E-mail to City website for services are routed to Contact Center where an Agent is assigned to enter them.	Enter them into CSR	Call Center staff enter info into 311 support system – manual	Whoever receives e-mail requests for service enters them into CRS
How do you deal with Service Requests that rely on external partners to perform some or all of the service?	If by external you mean contracted services, the departments who hire the vendors are responsible.	Not known	Not known	CRS used to hold some external partners accountable – including local utility for repairing broken street lights – send them SRs and monitor time to complete work. City is one of their major customers – thus the leverage.
Do you handle walk-ins in addition to providing call service?	N/A	Don't do walk ins	Don't do walk ins	Don't do walk ins
Do you have service level goals? If you do, what are they?	No	Yes – try to answer at least 80% of calls within 30 seconds – next target will be getting 80% of calls within 20 seconds	Yes – how we address underperformance depends on specifics	Yes – try to answer all calls in under 5 seconds. Watch abandonment rates – now under 1%. Goals also include meeting over 80% of all SR standard timing targets. Tell all customers for whom an SR is created what the completion timing standards are.
What are your center's customer satisfaction levels – both pre and post 311	We have not conducted any surveys at this point. While we do receive some complaints, most response is positive.	Would like to start doing calls to assess satisfaction rates May use center downtimes to do customer satisfaction or other outcalls for themselves or for others on commission basis	Didn't ask.	Didn't systematically measure customer satisfaction prior to 311 implementation