



Fort Wayne Delivers on Commitment to Responsive Government with 311 Call Center

In the fall of 1999 Graham Richard was elected Mayor of Fort Wayne, IN having campaigned on a platform of increasing the efficiency and responsiveness of local government. Richard is a great proponent of Six Sigma management techniques, and in 2000, the City of Fort Wayne became the first city government to officially adopt the system. A forwarding thinking and technology-savvy public servant, Mayor Richard had seen the operational efficiencies and service delivery enhancements 311 call centers had delivered to cities such as Chicago and Baltimore and believed it would further the Six Sigma initiative.

At the time, not only were the city's 225,000 citizens unclear which number to call for various city services, but so were city employees. Each department had its own number and if a department was called by mistake the caller would be transferred until eventually the correct department was reached. Or, alternatively, in an effort to address the customer's concern as quickly as possible, inconsistent answers were provided. A centralized call center would be charged with answering calls for all departments, handling frequently asked questions with consistent scripted responses, or taking a service request order, forwarding it to the right department and providing the caller with a tracking number.

During his second term in office, Mayor Richard and his staff began the search for a 311 call center technology provider. The City evaluated Motorola, Hansen, eReact and Lagan. After a thorough review the City selected the Lagan 311™ solution as the foundation for the city's "One Call to City Hall" program. Since the City already had a Utilities call center it decided that to optimize resources it would centralize management of the 311 call center within this group and staff call center takers specifically to field 311 calls from other departments.

"We found Lagan 311 to be the most robust solution, a true 311 engine that could provide the scripting that is essential for consistent, speedy responses and a searchable knowledgebase that can be kept up to date and extended to include all of the City Departments over time," said Phil GiaQuinta, State Representative, House District 80 and the Utilities Services Manager for the City of Fort Wayne.

Launched in early 2007 with three initial departments—Solid Waste Management, Parking Control, and Right of Way—today the center's six call takers handle calls for 16 departments with the Fire Department scheduled to be added in early 2009. The call center is open Monday-Friday from 7:30 a.m. – 5:30 p.m. The Lagan solution is integrated with the City's existing complementary technology solutions: Hansen for work order management system, Intergraph for geographic information system (GIS) data, a proprietary billing system, and

The City of Fort Wayne 311 Call Center doubled its call volume in the second year of operation, fielding over 120,000 calls in 2008, and currently supports 16 departments including:

- Neighborhood Code
- Street Department
- Solid Waste (trash pickup)
- Parking Control
- Right of Way
- Sign Shop
- Signal Operations
- Street Lighting
- Filtration Plant
- Sewer Maintenance
- Sewer Plant
- Stormwater Maintenance
- Water Maintenance
- Property Management
- Animal Care and Control
- Purchasing Department



Connecting Governments and People

the Syntellect phone system which takes over after hours providing prompts for emergency (911) calls and other departments and allowing the caller to leave a message or schedule a call back. In addition, the City worked closely with the phone carrier in developing the switch over of phone numbers from the department to the 311 Call Center.

“The integration with existing systems has really helped streamline operations,” adds Maggie Fiedler, Customer Relations Manager for City Utilities. “For example, when a citizen calls we can pull information from the billing system so we don’t have to re-enter data such as an address and phone number. This saves us a lot of time and increases accuracy. In addition, the Syntellect phone system tracks call volume which helps us determine if we need to adjust our hours of operations. And, finally, getting consistent contacts between the phone carrier and the call center was essential for a smooth transfer to 311 by the department.”

Fort Wayne 311 call center volume has more than doubled in its second year of operation with a total of 120,000 calls in 2008. First call resolution rate is 85 percent and most calls are addressed within 30 seconds as a result of the scripting. By the end of 2008 the City logged 40,000 service request orders since implementation.

Taking advantage of the Lagan 311 system’s multi-channel contact capabilities, Fort Wayne also offers a standard local number, an 800 number to accommodate the many ‘snow birds’ who live in Florida during the winter but contact the City with various service questions while out of town, and an email address. In 2008 the City added self-service capabilities via the web. Citizens can visit www.cityoffortwayne.org to file a variety of service requests including pothole repairs, missed trash and recycling pickups, abandoned vehicles and street light outages. Seasonal information is also available such as bagged leaf pickup schedules in the fall and weed removal in summer. Within the first eight months nearly 1,000 service requests were received online.

Dealing with emergencies has also proven to be much easier with the 311 system. According to GiaQuinta, “Since we’ve had the Lagan solution we’ve had a flood, a blizzard and a huge ice storm, and each time our 311 team supported the City 24 hours a day for four days. In fact, during the major ice storm in December 2008, 87,000 homes were without power and we received approximately 16,000 calls in a four-day period. Thanks to the knowledge base and scripting our call takers could answer these out of the ordinary calls consistently and accurately. Because the Lagan system is so easy to use I believe that if we had a larger scale emergency we could fairly easily add more call takers and bring them up to speed quickly.”

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