

311 City of Pittsburgh: Improving the Capabilities of 311 through Efficient and Effective Processes

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Executive Summary:

Project Situation and Goals

The 311 Response Center of Pittsburgh is in the process of improving their customer relationship management system. 311 Pittsburgh engaged a team of MBA Sustainability students from Duquesne University to evaluate their operations versus best in class practices for 311 centers. They aim to develop cost effective recommendations and an action plans to improve responsiveness, performance consistency, quality control, and internal/external communication and reporting functions.

Key Research Findings

Best Practices of 311 Response Centers Nationwide:

- Adopting a simplified categorization of call types increases efficiency (Baltimore 311 Center)
- Engaging with municipal service agencies, to showcase the benefits of participating in a 311 system. (311 Conference Feedback)
- Launching a real-time map of 311 calls that displays 311 service calls to community members and departments (Baltimore 311 Center)
- Using a 311 Mobile Application video will increase consumer awareness and encourage communication to the public. (Denver 311 Center)

Stakeholder Feedback

- Customers
 - Gap in Customer Relationship Management circle
 - Some customers recognize that 311 works with liaisons and understands that some issues are out of 311 control
- Employees
 - Frustration with city partnerships due to lack of fulfillment of requests
 - Based on observation, employees are cross trained to handle various call types
- Liaisons/Partners
 - DPW prioritizes requests based on safety and severity ranking
 - High amounts of backlogged requests
- Management
 - Management is open to improvement using new technology (QAlert)
 - Recognizes the importance of employee engagement
- Software/Technology Specialist
 - QAlert system is underutilized by 311
 - Data from weekly reports could improve efficiency

Conclusions:

311's competitive advantage is their technology system, dedicated employees, and willingness to become more innovative through efficient processes, and enhanced relationship management with customers and liaisons.

Strategic Recommendations:

- Create shared value by closing the gap in the CRM circle
- Document processes for all levels of operation to have for future reference
- Send out weekly reports to improve accountability
- Enhance employee engagement through recognition

Next Steps:

1. Create weekly reports to communicate with liaisons and improve accountability.
2. Utilize in-house digital innovations specialist to create a 311 informational video.
3. Engage employees through activities that create PR value opportunities.

Situation Analysis & Goals/Metrics

311 Response Center: Current Situation

The City of Pittsburgh's 311 Response Center services the residents of the Pittsburgh area acting as a response center for non-emergency issues and concerns in the city. The 311 Response Center has an app, called MyBurgh, which allows residents of Pittsburgh to notify the city's 311 call center of non-emergency issues. MyBurgh can also be used to get refuse collection reminders, hear about latest updates in the city government, and provide the city with feedback on key issues.¹ A request can also be submitted through the 311 website, twitter, or simply by dialing 311.

Currently, at the 311 Response Center in Pittsburgh there are several things that are being implemented or improved upon within the organization. One improvement that the 311 Response Center has recently adopted was a new reporting system, QAlert. The new system has streamlined operations, improved timeliness of responses, and automated tracking of incoming calls and follow-up action.² Currently, the 311 Response Center is also incorporating new technology to improve their customer relationship management. The 311 Response Center recognizes that there is room for improvement and they are open to recommendations on how to improve their customer relationship management. The 311 Response Center has a group of very dedicated employees who truly prioritize customer service and will be great assets towards improving the capabilities of 311 through efficient and effective processes.

Opportunities and Goals

The 311 Response Center has an opportunity to enhance their capabilities and efficiently and effectively improve their processes. First and foremost, there are some areas in the 311 Response Center that are problematic and inconsistent. Quality of service and consistency in communication remain a problem at the 311 Response Center when the 311 operators forward requests and concerns to over 100 municipal clerks who subsequently interface directly with residents, other city employees, and communities.³ Software reporting and analysis capabilities within the City of Pittsburgh's 311 Response Center have yet to be fully recognized.

After conducting a stakeholder analysis we found additional areas that could be improved upon including:

- Closing the gap in the customer relationship management circle since some customers recognize that 311 works with liaisons and others don't.
- There is frustration with the city partnerships due to lack of fulfillment of requests.
- The QAlert system is underutilized by 311, data from weekly reports could improve efficiency.
- Management recognizes the importance of employee engagement and is open to improving that aspect of the organization.

Looking at some of the issues that need to be addressed, there are goals and steps that can be taken by the City of Pittsburgh's 311 Response Center. Primarily some broad goals are to improve decision

¹ "311 Response Center." 311 Response Center. City of Pittsburgh, Mar. 2016. Web. 26 May 2016.

² Ramos, Diane. SCOPE OF WORK: City of Pittsburgh 311 Center. Pittsburgh: Diane Ramos, 19 May 2016. WordDoc

³ Ramos, Diane. SCOPE OF WORK: City of Pittsburgh 311 Center. Pittsburgh: Diane Ramos, 19 May 2016. WordDoc

support, training and coaching, and application of technology to keep Pittsburgh among the nation's most livable, resilient, and innovative cities. By evaluating the current City of Pittsburgh operations versus best-in-class practices of other 311 Response Centers our team hopes to develop cost-effective recommendations and an action plan to improve responsiveness, performance consistency, quality control, and internal/external communication and reporting functions.

Some of the best practices of 311 Response Centers nationwide that our team evaluated and felt that Pittsburgh could implement were from Baltimore and Denver's 311 Response Centers. Some processes that might be implementable include:

- Baltimore's 311 Response Center has implemented a low number of call type categories for increased efficiency. Since, Pittsburgh has over 200 call type categories, by categorizing calls for efficiency would help streamline the process from consumer to end department.
- Denver's 311 Response Center launched a 311 Mobile Application Video. The video is very informational in the way it describes how customers can use the 311 Response line and through what channels they might chose to do so.

Measuring Success

The success of this project will be measured by the enhancement of capabilities that the City of Pittsburgh's 311 Response Center has and how efficient and effective their processes become. The measurements of success will be based on the results of the recommendations that are put in place. Each recommendation has the capability to measure success due to the outcomes. The recommendations that can be measured include:

- If employee engagement increases then the job satisfaction should increase along with creating a lower turnover rate within the organization.
- If the 311 Response Center implements a video and it works then it should result in more downloads of the app and also increase the "requests" volume.
- If 311 can effectively categorize call types in order to streamline call and response processes, then the call center efficiency should be increased, also allowing for data to be easily analyzed.
- By implementing a real time map of service requests for customers to see, then the amount of repetitive requests should decrease along with increased customer satisfaction.
- By enhancing CRM Systems through reporting, it would allow city departments to measure the amount of tickets that have not be addressed. The recommendation can be considered successful if the number of backlog decreased and communication and accountability between departments increases.

Linking each recommendation with a success measurement will help the City of Pittsburgh's 311 Response Center be able to track how efficient and effective their processes have become after implementing certain recommendations.

Presentation of Research Findings and Analysis

Recommendation Analysis

Through the evaluation of several alternatives and their qualitative and quantitative evaluations, we found that The City of Pittsburgh's 311 center would greatly benefit by considering a 311 Mobile Application Video and by participating with Municipal Service Agencies. Here we have identified the

benefits of participating 311 centers and the result achieved through statistical analysis and by using other cities as a benchmarks for what could be for 311 Pittsburgh.

Partnering with Municipal Service Agencies

Information gathered from the 311 Conference Feedback uncover that by participating with municipal service agencies to identify the benefits of participating in a 311 systems, there is an increased awareness of the benefits that 311 centers provide to the community. Our ideas include attending Town Hall Meetings or Community Forums that citizens can attend to gather current information in their cities, express concerns, and have input in needs and priorities in their city. Currently, PGH 311 is only focusing on community meetings, but perhaps some focus groups will allow them to see how users think they could improve.⁴ County meetings held at the 311 Call Center in Sacramento, California identifies opportunities to leverage multiple department services to address countywide problems from root causes. One recent example of this is the emerging program to provide services to Sacramento County's homeless and transient population and mitigate issues that stem from this part of our community.² By using this Nominal Group Technique in order to generate ideas, record ideas, discuss ideas, and vote on ideas,⁵ the citizens are able to provide city officials with a better idea of what citizens see as real problems. Feedback and recommendations from other Jurisdictions using 311⁶ include educating participating municipal service agencies on the benefits of participating in a 311 system in efforts to create a culture where agencies consider 311 in their emergency preparedness, response, and recovery plans.

New York 311 Call centers have implemented E311 (Enhanced 311) which allows 311 to provide better service to customers who have more complex health and human service 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. By linking up with local food shelters, and non-profit agencies, 311 will be able to provide assistance and information to citizens looking for basic needs by partnering with other help groups in the city. Furthermore, Pittsburgh 311 can benefit by linking up with public schools. Also in New York, 311 for Parents 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.⁷

Creating a 311 Mobile Application Video

Denver, Colorado posted a 311 Mobile Application video in efforts to reach out to their community and make citizens and residents aware of the benefits of using the mobile app. Pittsburgh could benefit by doing the same, as a 311 Mobile Application video will increase consumer awareness and encourage

⁴ "Community Engagement Strategies." *Prevention by Design*. Web. 2 June 2016.

⁵ *Gain Conesus from Stakeholders Using the Nominal Group Technique*. Vol. 7. Mt Lawley, W.A.: TAFE PEP Resources Unit, 2006. *ETA*. Web. 2 June 2016. <<https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/evaluation/pdf/brief7.pdf>>.

⁶ Cohen, Debra. "The Role of 311 Nonemergency Systems in Emergencies." *Community Policing Dispatch*. The COPS Office, Aug. 2009. Web. 02 June 2016.

⁷ Accenture. *Transforming Customer Services to Support High Performance in New York City Government*. *Transforming Customer Services to Support High Performance in New York City Government*. Accenture. Web.

communication to the public. As of now,⁸Pittsburgh population is at 305,704 and a video to the public is predicted to help reach a large number of citizens. Denver’s application video was uploaded to YouTube. YouTube has over a billion users—almost a third of all people on the Internet—and every day, people watch hundreds of millions of hours of YouTube videos and generate billions of views. YouTube overall, and even YouTube on mobile alone, reaches more 18-34 and 18-49 year-olds than any cable network in the U.S. Growth in watch time on YouTube has accelerated and is up at least 50% year on year for three years straight.⁹ With there being over 600,000 people living in Denver alone, it is assumed that through statistical population information, why Denver is most accredited for its popular mobile app usage.¹⁰

One of the main focal points to creating a more efficient 311 Call Center for the city of Pittsburgh is communication. Employees and management of 311 PGH are willing to make necessary changes in address how 311 Pittsburgh communicated with the public. These examples are benchmarked from like cities who are known for outstanding performance, communication and mobile app responses in the 311 call centers.

Categorization of Call Types

Baltimore, Maryland’s 311 center has developed a comprehensive categorization of various call types that the center receives regularly. When users call the center they are asked to choose from one of the generic call types available¹¹. Users are able to choose from thirteen different service request types¹². The requests are available in audio format (through telephone calls) or digitally (on the 311 website).

Table 1.1: Types of Service Requests

Animals
City Street Trees
Emergency Notification Registration
Environmental Health
Food Complaints
Housing & Sanitation Violations/ Building and Zoning Complaints
Recreation Centers and Parks
Street Lighting
Streets, Alleys, Sidewalks
Traffic/ Parking Signs and Signals
Trash/Garbage/Recycling Collection/ Rodents
Vehicles
Water, Sewer Water, Strom Water

Source: Baltimore 311 Services

⁸ "Pittsburgh Population 2016." *World Population Review*. 2016 World Population Review, 23 June 2016. Web. 12 July 2016. <<http://worldpopulationreview.com/us-cities/pittsburgh-population/>>.

⁹ *YouTube*. YouTube, Web. 12 July 2016. <<https://www.youtube.com/yt/press/en-GB/statistics.html>>.

¹⁰ "Denver Population 2016." *World Population Review*. 2016 World Population Review, 1 July 2016. Web. 12 July 2016. <<http://worldpopulationreview.com/us-cities/denver-population/>>.

¹¹ "Request a Service." *City of Baltimore*. Web. 02 June 2016. <<http://www.baltimorecity.gov/311-services>>.

¹² "Calling 311 in Baltimore." *About.com Travel*. Web. 02 June 2016.

Currently, the Pittsburgh 311 Center has over 200 different call types. Certain types are repetitive and confusing which can cause inefficiency during response to the calls and reporting of service request data. Baltimore’s center is able to streamline its call and response process by grouping certain requests. Individual employees become “experts” for different call types and are then able to work more efficiently. Additionally, more meaningful data can be produced with this organization plan. Different liaisons can receive information and statistics specific to their associated call type. For example, in the case of the Pittsburgh 311 center, if a call type were “potholes”, the Department of Public Works would be able to easily create and review reports based on the specific call type they are associated with.

The Pittsburgh 311 Center has indicated that it has various call types and that it could be challenging to consolidate them to a shorter list. As a solution, the group would be able to create over-arching categories, which also include subcategories. In this way, the center is able to better analyze data and improve efficiency all while continuing to utilize its current call types.

Table 1.2: Expert of Potential Pittsburgh 311 Categorization:

<u>Request Type</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Number of Requests</u>
A.	<i>Potholes</i>	3348
B.	<i>Residential Lawns/Property</i>	
B1.	Building Maintenance	2332
B2.	Couch on Porch	72
B3.	Leaves, Grass or Other Yard Debris	32
C.	<i>New Service Request</i>	
C1.	Traffic or Pedestrian Signal Request	92
C2.	Curb/Request for Asphalt Windrow	63
C3.	Request New Sign	52
C4.	Schedule Request	51
C5.	Pedestrian Signal Request	13
C6.	Loading Zone Request	6
C7.	Permit Parking (Request for RPP Zone)	4

The Pittsburgh 311 Center would be able to categorize its call types and then easily view data in regards to each types, such as the number of requests. Additionally, the group can work to eliminate call types that are similar, such as “Traffic or Pedestrian Signal Request” and “Pedestrian Signal Request.” The entire system will become more streamlined once unnecessary data is eliminated.

Create a Real Time Map of Service Requests:

The Baltimore 311 center recently launched a real time map, which allows users to view areas across the city that have service requests.¹³ This map increases communication and efficiently. Individuals that use the map are able to see pending requests, therefore, they may not report the same issue thus reducing call traffic. Additionally, this type of real time dashboard keeps users involved throughout the entire process, creating higher satisfaction. A frequent Pittsburgh 311 center call, Amy Ganser, noted that she would like “to be able to know what other individuals had reported, so [she] does not report the same items.” Ganser, like many consumers, would use an interactive, real time map to see their service request’s progress.

Currently, the Pittsburgh 311 Center has an interactive map for internal employees. Both the 311 center and their liaisons can view this map to identify areas that have multiple service request. Therefore, the technology already exists within the department. The application only needs to be shared with the public. Use of the real time map, on a larger scale, has the potential to reduce the number of calls the center receives and ultimately streamline processes.

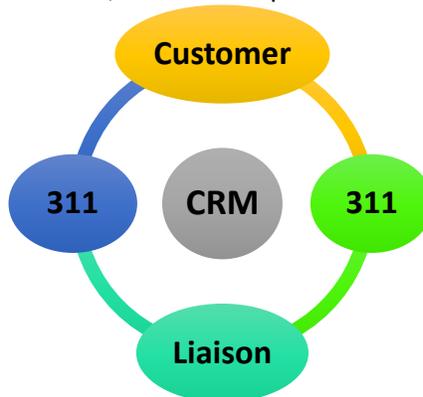
Indicated Action

Short-term Recommendations: Opportunities for areas of improvement in the long-term

Through research of comparable 311 Response Centers and interviews with key stakeholders of 311, it was possible to identify a few areas of improvement and opportunities for 311 to incorporate in the short-term. Below are our short-term recommendations.

Enhancing CRM Systems through Reporting

- In order to have a well-functioning, full circle CRM system, 311 needs to recognize the circle involves 311, Liaisons, and Customers.
 - There is currently a gap in the CRM circle, in which there is lack of communication between 311 and its liaisons, and follow up between 311 and its customers.



- Weekly reports to liaisons can improve miscommunication and emphasize urgency by discussing tickets placed in the system that have not yet been addressed.
- Importance of **Accountability** – Using weekly reports will help to increase accountability of liaisons that 311works with in an efficient and effective manner.

¹³ "City of Baltimore Launches Real-time Map of 311 Calls [MAP] - Technical.ly Baltimore." *Technically Baltimore City of Baltimore Launches Realtime Map of 311 Calls MAP Comments*. 2014. Web. 02 June 2016.

- Following up with customers regularly will allow 311 to close the gap in CRM Circle.

“My recommendation is a point of closure. From an end users’ standpoint, citizens like to know that the request has been fulfilled, and using 311 and their customer service to spearhead it.”

– Christopher Curd (Proactive 311 Customer)

Creating a Dynamic Relationship between 311 and its Employees

- Employee engagement is especially important in creating a stronger Call Center
- Recognizing employees presents PR Value Opportunities
- Ideas for Engaging Employees:
 - Administer Formal Employee Engagement Surveys
 - Reward and Recognize Best Performing Employees through a “Wall of Fame”
- Publicly Recognize Employees Success on the Website or MyBurgh App

“As employees we have to remind ourselves to have more patience because people think we should be getting the requests filled. They don’t treat us as a hub like we are.”

– 311 Employee

Effectively Utilizing the MyBurgh App

- As mobile apps are constantly emerging, 311 should inform the public of the convenience of using the app. To encourage usage of the app, 311 could include a message in the beginning of the call, letting consumers know that they can also use the MyBurgh App in conjunction with, or instead of calling in to 311 Response Center. This could potentially decrease call volume and allow employees to use their time more efficiently.
- The app provides an advantage by allowing customers to track progress and completion for products; this allows 311 to communicate with the end user and bring CRM system to a full circle.
- Focusing on the 18-40 year-old demographic could benefit 311 as this age group typically uses mobile apps frequently.

Long-term Recommendations: Opportunities for areas of improvement in the long-term

Through research of comparable 311 Response Centers and interviews with key stakeholders of 311, it was possible to identify a few areas of improvement and opportunities for 311 to incorporate in the long-term. While some of these recommendations may not be feasible currently, we recognize their potential impact in the future if they are incorporated long-term. Below are our long-term recommendations.

Categorizing calls for efficiency

- In order to increase efficiency of calls, reduce the number of call type categories by tenfold (200 currently, to 20 types). Each of the 20 categories should have subcategories for organizational purposes. This will allow for lower number of call categories to help with streamlining the process from consumer to end department.
- Data can be collected from the re-categorization to determine:
 - Seasonality of Calls

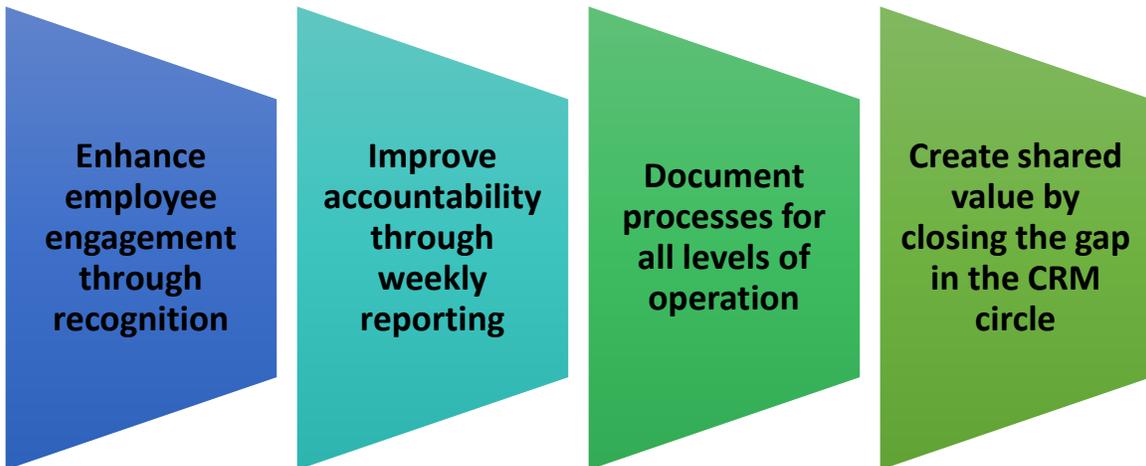
- Frequency of Calls
- Liaisons who must Respond
- Comprehensive categorization (See Table 1.2)
 - Each main category is given an alphabetical value.
 - Subcategories are assigned an alphabetical and numerical value, based on frequency of call type.
 - Certain categories will have no sub-categories (such as potholes) due to high call frequency.

311 Reaching the Public

- Creating a short video that highlights the benefits of using the mobile app and 311’s general services may help improving the communication to the public. This video could potentially be created in-house, by 311’s recently hired Digital Engagement Manager.
- Use social media to share video (YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, and local community forums), and potentially have the video played at the next City Hall meeting.

Action Plan

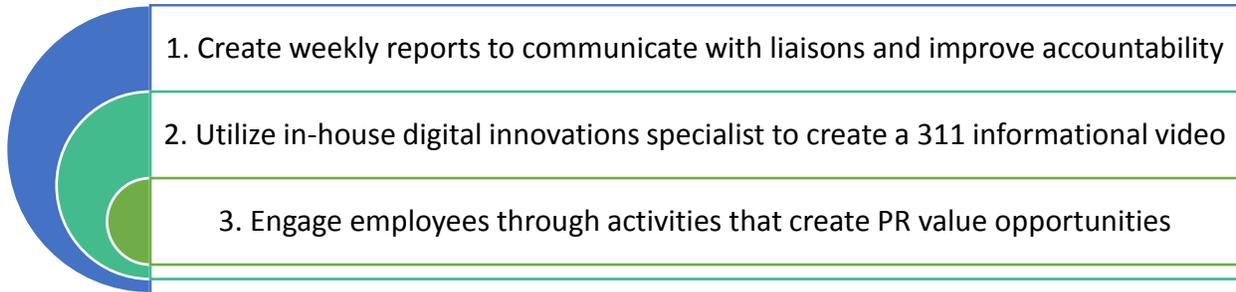
With all of the recommendations that have been made, an action plan is presented below that identifies the steps 311 should take in increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of their CRM system and overall business.



First, 311 needs to recognize their employees in order to enhance employee engagement. Since every successful business is built off of their core, internal processes, employee engagement is vital to 311’s success. Second, 311 needs to begin weekly reporting with liaisons to improve accountability and overall communication between all members of the CRM circle. Third, 311 needs to begin documenting processes for all levels of operations to ensure sustainable transition of all knowledge and information to new leadership and management. Finally, with the engagement of these steps and other short-term and long-term recommendations, 311 will be able to create shared value by closing the gap in the CRM circle.

Next Steps

The immediate and actionable steps that 311 can take to begin improving their CRM includes:



Weekly reporting has already initiated between liaisons to increase and improve the accountability. 311 should also work with their newly-hired digital innovations specialist to create a 311 informational video that communicates to the public 311's services and their new MyBurgh App for increased usability. Finally, engaging employees through activities that create value will help 311 to strengthen its internal business and its crucial stakeholders; employees. These three actionable steps can begin immediately, and long-term recommendations can eventually follow suite to increase shared value among 311 and its customers and liaisons.

Conclusions

It has been evident throughout the entire consulting experience with 311 that they are very dedicated to their job and always seeking out areas of improvement. A well-functioning business always starts from the core, so the employees are an important stakeholder to consider in the success of any organization, especially Pittsburgh's 311 Response Center. They recognize that there is a gap in their CRM circle, and in order to fix that gap, a few steps need to be taken immediately and in the long run to ensure a successful 311 Response Center. The decision to gain a deeper insight through feedback and information from key stakeholders, including employees, management, customers, liaisons, and IT specialists at 311, have helped in formulating recommendations and identifying areas of opportunities for 311 to improve their CRM and overall business. By looking at some of the best practices from comparable benchmarks and feedback from key stakeholders, the following conclusions have been formulated:

1. Enhancing CRM Systems Through Reporting
2. Creating a Dynamic Relationship Between 311 and its Employees; Employee Engagement
3. Utilizing 311's MyBurgh App and Promoting the Use of it to Customers
4. Categorizing Calls for Efficiency
5. Reaching the Public Through a Video

311's competitive advantage is their technology system, dedicated employees, and willingness to become more innovative through efficient processes, and enhanced relationship management with customers and liaisons. Through the implementation of short and long-term recommendations, they can continue to increase the shared value of 311 and its services.

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