

311 Text Chat for City Services

Business Challenge

311 is a call-in service designed to make it easier for residents to access their municipal government for both information and non-emergency services. 311 is available in a number of communities across Canada.

In the case of one Canadian city, dial-in 311 service was successful, but they wanted to broaden the reach and continue to make it easier for the community to access their services. As with any government, there was also a focus on doing more with less. As a result, text messaging was an obvious choice.

Solution - JumpTXT® Media Chat

Impact Mobile has provisioned the 311 number as a text-based short code with the wireless carriers in Canada, and has made it available to municipalities across the country. When a resident first texts in a question to 311, they are prompted for their municipality, and an algorithm interacts with the user to finalize a match if necessary. Once the municipality is determined, the setting is saved for the user so that all future questions are automatically directed to the correct municipality.

Incoming text messages are converted to email and forwarded to the respective municipality. To the municipal contact centre, the conversation appears as an email, and to the user, the conversation is conducted completely via text messaging. Many organizations integrate these emails directly into their contact centre so that conversations are “sticky” and directed to the same agent for the duration of the conversation. Other organizations choose to handle the email via a shared email account in whatever email system they already use.

Municipalities also have the option to view and respond to these messages via a web console as opposed to email. Either way, the conversation is threaded, logged, and easy to use.

Results

- SMS is a technology that almost every mobile phone supports, and people are already comfortable texting. As a result, the 311 service is now more convenient and accessible for the residents of this city.
- The city’s contact centre is answering the same questions more efficiently via SMS. SMS conversations are being handled in a responsive manner by agents during downtimes and in between calls, and they are often able to carry on more than one conversation at a time. Thousands of inquiries have been addressed via SMS, and cost per inquiry has been far less than phone calls.