

## Case Study Boston, MA



### Boston Puts City Hall in the Palm of Citizens' Hands with iPhone App for Service Delivery

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- Over 4,000 downloads of the application
- Over 800 service requests placed, accounting for more than 6% of all services requests reported in that time

#### Challenge

Boston Mayor Thomas M. Menino began his fifth term in office in January 2010, and it's no secret why. Central to his leadership style is his long held belief that the purpose of government is to help improve people's lives. Over the past several years, he and his team have been leaders in leveraging innovations in technology to do just that.

In 2008, the City of Boston re-launched the Mayor's 24-Hour Hotline – a one stop shop for constituents to report City service issues and find out important information. Through the hotline, day or night, citizens can contact the City to request information or services from the many key departments including Public Works, Transportation and Parks. With this re-launch, the City also revamped its website, dubbed "Citizens Connect", to make it as easy for constituents to get information or ask questions on line as it was over the phone.

At the heart of these enhanced services is the Lagan Government Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system which allows the City to track citizen service requests from creation to completion; answer citizen's questions accurately, consistently and quickly with a knowledge management tool; and monitor and manage performance with reports and dashboards.

With this new system, the call centre and website were making it easier for constituents to connect with the City and faster for the departments to respond to their requests. The City's constituents were becoming even more valued partners for the City, acting as informal neighbourhood inspectors, with their reports helping to keep their streets beautiful.

The Mayor, however, challenged his team to go further, to seek more innovative ways to strengthen that partnership between City and citizen. He challenged his team to take advantage of new consumer electronics to engage citizens, building off their Lagan CRM system as the platform for innovation. Strong partnerships and a shared vision with technology vendors helped the City's team realize this goal.

## Solution

Today, constituent satisfaction rates are soaring thanks to new technology that puts City Hall in the palm of their hands. The Citizens Connect iPhone app, launched by the city in mid-October 2009, is designed to enable citizens to report common service requests including potholes, graffiti, and streetlight outages from their mobile phones anytime, anywhere. Residents can send photos of problems straight from their iPhones as they come across potholes, fallen trees, graffiti, broken street lights or garbage. They can also provide supporting descriptions and a map with the exact location of the incident. Constituents then receive a tracking number in return as a way to keep a tab on their requests and are automatically notified when a service request has been completed and closed.

At the launch Mayor Menino stated, “The Citizens Connect iPhone application is a great example of new urban mechanics. We are using the latest technology to make government even more accessible and more responsive to our constituents. We are excited for residents and visitors to use this application and help us keep Boston beautiful.”

A local technology firm, Connected Bits, and Lagan partnered with the City to develop the app and ensure streamlined integration with the City’s Lagan-powered CRM system. Unlike many of the point solution apps available today that require manual back-office administration, Citizens Connect is linked directly into the CRM system and the appropriate team for a complete end-to-end solution. Service requests sent via the app are automatically added to the work queue of the appropriate service department. This connection speeds the time to resolution for everyone involved, enabling Boston to maintain service request history for tracking and reporting purposes and making the City more accountable and performance driven.

Key to the successful completion of the project was commitment from the highest levels of government leadership, rapid and focused development cycles, beta testing with early and frequent feedback, coordination and a shared vision between the city and vendor partners, and access to the City’s management information system (MIS) resource experts. Within less than five months the application was launched.

“As a part of our ongoing commitment to innovation and accessibility, we have built a solid foundation with CRM as our platform for success,” said Nigel Jacob, Senior Advisor for Emerging Technology of Boston’s Citizens Connect. “The release of the Citizens Connect iPhone app has been a wildly successful experience for our citizens to date and an inspiration for additional ways to integrate better with our community.”

## Results

Within the first 90 days of the launch, Bostonians have shown enthusiasm for this new app with:

- over 4,000 downloads of the app
- over 800 service requests placed, accounting for more than 6% of all services requests reported in that time

In addition, other municipalities charged with expanding access channels between government and citizens have expressed considerable interest in the app. Boston continues its leadership position as one of the top cities in the country when it comes to providing residents with complete access to government services.

The Citizens Connect iPhone application can be downloaded for free at the Apple iTunes Store or online at the Citizens Connect homepage: [cityofboston.gov/online\\_services](http://cityofboston.gov/online_services).

### What's Next

From a citizen engagement perspective, Boston is on a hot streak and quickly becoming a role model for other cities and counties around the country who are similarly striving to engage their citizens for the betterment of their communities. With welcomed citizen feedback as an integral part of Boston's continued success, the city is already working diligently on the next generation of features and technologies for both the client side and the enterprise/business side to firmly establish the suite of online Citizens Connect services as invaluable tools for service delivery, accountability and performance management.

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