

Cutting-Edge City Strives for Seamless Integration

Infrastructure management software used for work order and maintenance management.

At the south end of the Chesapeake Bay, where the temperate waters run into the Atlantic Ocean, sits the city of Hampton, VA. Just west of the city, the James River curls southeast before it too meets the Atlantic. To the north, the Back River follows a similar path before ending in the Chesapeake. The geography leaves only Hampton's northwest side connected to land, save the southern bridge access to Norfolk and Virginia Beach. With a population of about 146,000, no fewer than seven other cities crowd Hampton, and this creates a multi-metropolis in which—if it were not for the bordering waters—residents would be unable to tell where one city ends and another begins.

Just as unique as its topography layout is Hampton's approach to working with citizens. The city has won numerous awards in technology over the past

six years, including the 2003 Government Customer Support and DCI Customer Focus Award and the 2000 City/County Communications & Marketing Association's (3CMA) Savvy Technology Services Award. With the city's innovative 311 call system, this should come as little surprise. Hampton boasts one of the first 311 call systems in the United States, in which residents dial a single number (311) and an operator either answers their questions or directly submits a non-emergency service request. Available 24 hours a day and seven days a week, the system is set up to accommodate a staff of 16, although all seats are rarely occupied. Residents love the convenience, and the city receives more than 750 calls each day through the system. Eighty percent of those calls relate to the public works department, where the calls may range from inquiries about construction to informing the

department of a sewer leak.

When the city first adopted its 311 call system, the customer service hub was cutting-edge; in fact, many cities are beginning to implement similar customer service systems. However, a major problem arose from the 311 call method. With all customer requests going through a central call system, operators would have to send the information to the appropriate department, which would then have to re-enter the same information that the operator had collected into the city's infrastructure management system (IMS). The department would also have to create work orders for information the operators had already collected.

IMS Administrator Susan Gregg said that the data re-entry added confusion and work for other departments. "We needed to stop the data re-entry," Gregg said.

Solutions from Abroad

The city would need to find a solution to entering data and generating work orders through its IMS. The city used *GBA Master Series*® infrastructure management software as its work order and maintenance management system, which is designed by GBA Master Series, Inc. (gbaMS, www.gbaMS.com). With an open-architecture design that provides easy integration with other applications, the IMS allowed the city to consider alternatives to its problematic work flow.

During the fall 2005, Hampton employed Lagan (www.Lagan.com)—a citizen relationship management (CRM) company that is no stranger to awards itself. The Deloitte Fast 50 has recognized Lagan for five consecutive



Operator Tammy Hopson takes a call from a citizen of Hampton.

years, and the ARM Tech Track 100 has named the firm as one of the fastest growing technology companies in the United Kingdom. The city commissioned Lagan to implement a solution that would accommodate the call center and the other departments because Lagan's solutions typically require fewer resources and less time to deploy than conventional options.

Lagan used its Frontlink™ software solution to create an interface with Hampton's 311 call system and the IMS software. The software could automatically create interaction history and provide the city with query capabilities. Lagan president and CEO Des Speed said, "Frontlink uses standards-based, adaptable technology to help government agencies manage their citizen interactions through service request processes, enabling customers to select the most convenient communication channels to interact with organizations. The solution increases access, improves responsiveness, and delivers effective results."

For Hampton, Frontlink acted as a web-based relay system that allowed the operators to enter data into a single application. Any requests that related to public works would link to the IMS database, which would automatically create work orders and send notices to the appropriate parties.

gbaMS Development Manager Nicole Schmidt, who helped with the integration between the Lagan system and the company's IMS system, said that the implementation gave the city the results it needed.

"Overall, this integration will streamline and automate the processes so the operators don't have to take care of everything," Schmidt said. "This will standardize requests. All of the city's departments are heading toward the 311 system, and with this integration, all requests will be sent in the same way and relayed through e-mail or as a printed notification."

Seamless Results

To make Lagan integrate with the IMS software, gbaMS helped Hampton create stored procedures—codes that are placed into SQL Server that execute a specific command like a script. For

example, one stored procedure allowed the IMS software users to collect information regarding created work requests. Another procedure made it possible to check the status of requests, and another allowed users to add comments to requests. These integration tools let the public works department get the full benefit from Lagan's Frontlink system, as if the information had actually been entered into the IMS software that the public works department uses.

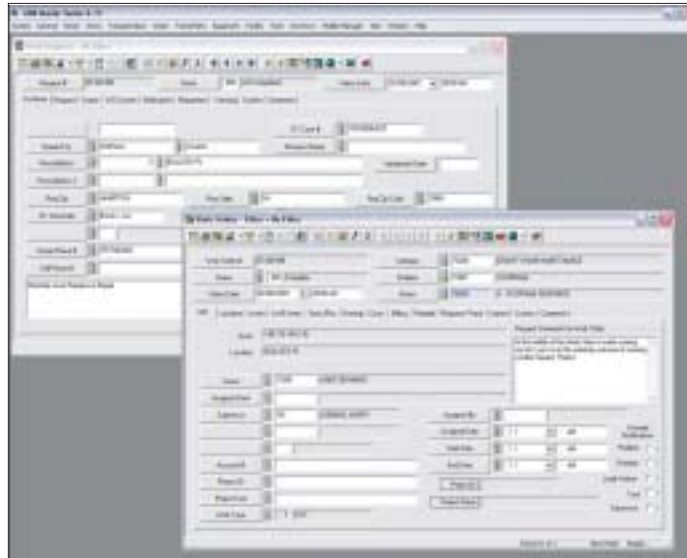
"This project has eliminated a lot of confusion on the public works side of things," Gregg said. "Before, there really wasn't any way to document what came from a request call through the 311 system, and now it's all connected to the work order system."

Hampton and Lagan helped with the implementation by providing resources that gbaMS needed. "The city developed their own internal integration to get this project going," Schmidt said. "It was easy to get questions answered from our side since all of the key players were involved. Also, Lagan was very flexible and easy to work with. That helped make this project successful."

gbaMS System Engineer Chris Wright agreed. "The project went smoothly," Wright said. "During the project, the people at Lagan knew what they were talking about. They had a good handle on what they needed and what they wanted to happen."

Comparable Projects

Lagan and gbaMS have integrated with other vendors for similar projects to Hampton's 311 system in the past. Lagan and Unisys Corporation joined



Hampton's customized software integrates Lagan FrontLink, a citizen request program, with GBA Master Series, an infrastructure management software program. The result is that when operators enter a request into the system that relates to public works, a work order is automatically generated and sent to the public works department.

forces to implement a similar "One Call" 311 system for Minneapolis. This implementation helped to streamline municipal processes and provide the city's 400,000 citizens and visitors with quick and easy access to municipal information and non-emergency services. After launching in January 2006, in its first month of operation, Minneapolis 311 operators helped nearly 19,000 residents, workers, and visitors access city government information and services. As if hitting the ground running were not enough, the city's goal for its first month in operation to answer 90 percent of calls in less than 20 seconds was shattered with an average of seven seconds.

gbaMS has also worked with Des Moines, IA, where an integration with FrontRange Solutions Inc.'s (www.frontrange.com) HEAT system created a means for the city's 500,000 metropolis citizens to reach the sewer division with requests. The integration allows automated generation of work orders through an online system, eliminating data re-entry for sewer crews.

Hampton is a metropolis within a metropolis, where cities and waterways run together and integration is a way of life. For a city that strives to serve its customers as quickly and satisfactorily as possible, Hampton has found software compatibility that yields seamless results. **GE**