Abstract:
As recent events have shown, effective knowledge sharing has become important at all political levels, especially when disasters occur. We present the case of Miami-Dade County, which implemented a multi-jurisdictional, multi-channel environment (311 portal) and successfully utilized it during Hurricane Wilma. Drawing from our research on citizen relationship management (CiRM) and literature on absorptive capacity (ACAP), we argue that this setting increases an organization’s ability to acquire, assimilate, transform, and exploit information and knowledge regarding citizen’s needs.

Absorptive Capacity (ACAP)

- Effective knowledge sharing and learning is an important source of organizational performance.
- Scholars used it to explain why organizations vary in their ability to either profit from or exploit novel knowledge.
- High degree of potential ACAP helps PA understand what the citizens think, want, and need.
- High degree of realized ACAP helps PA to identify strategies and organizational means to optimize operations with respect to an quality of citizen relations.

The four key dimensions of ACAP are:
- Knowledge acquisition
- Assimilation
- Transformation
- Exploitation

Emergency Management

- Hurricane Katrina shows that administrators have to review emergency plans regarding:
  - Internal and external situational awareness.
  - External communication.
  - Multi-jurisdictional, Cross-boundary collaboration.
- Phases of Emergency Management are:
  - Preparadness
  - Response
  - Recovery
  - Mitigation

Citizen Relationship Management (CiRM)

- Citizens are a valuable source for PA in terms of planning, providing and performance management.
- CRM draws from private sector CRM, and is a cluster of management practices, communication channels and technological solutions to handle issues, problems, concerns, and demands of citizens.
- Currently CiRM is mostly technology driven through the use of CRM software in (311) call centers.
- Early research data analysis indicates that CiRM/311 (the citizen data) has broader implications.
- CiRM fosters information exchange, organizational innovation, change and accountability.

Case Study: Miami-Dade County

- 2.3 million residents, unincorporated area of +1 Mill. people and 35 cities.
- 311 Answer Center is single point of contact for all non-emergency public services, including information and service requests since mid-2005.
- Online services and 311 staff provides 24/7 services in emergency situations and communicates directly between EOC and 311. One of the first multi-jurisdictional CRM case in the US.
- Very mature portal, GIS system and knowledge base connected to CRM.
- Preparedness & response to Hurricane Wilma (Level 2) landfall at 06:30 a.m., October 24th 2005.
- 957,000 homes without electricity and other damages inflicted on a broad area.

Case Study: 311 data

- Pre-Hurricane Requests #
  - School closures (Any level) 3442
  - Evacuations and evacuation routes 1197
  - Shelter openings and locations 1135
  - Interim for individual preparation 1042
  - Availability/ distribution of sand for sandbags 584
  - Government office closures 925

- Post-Hurricane Requests #
  - Status of closures per level, single, government offices, (transit systems) 14849
  - Coffins 11001
  - Press releases / power line down 9740
  - Distribution of water, food, fuel 7371
  - FEMA related 4929
  - Locations of opened gas stations 2772
  - Food distribution program 2584

- Roof damage reported by 311. House damage can also be reported through the web-portal.
- Based on 311 data MDC setup strategic supply points and routed people to functioning gas stations.

Conclusion

- 311/CiRM increases public administrations ACAP.
- 311/CiRM is only successful in increasing ACAP if the back-end process and organization undergoes change.
- 311/CiRM data is powerful factor for increasing PA’s ACAP but only as powerful as the vision and leadership behind it.
- Managing external and internal expectations is essential for building a sound and sustainable 311/CiRM environment and realizing true ACAP.

In general:
311/CiRM reintegrates the citizen back into Public Administration in comparison to many eGovernment and former NPM initiatives.

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