

New York City's Technology Leadership: A Focus on Engaging and Serving Constituents

A presence on the Internet has become essential for all government agencies. Keeping constituents informed, providing access to and delivering services, and enabling transactions that previously required travel to an office and standing in line, are now expected as essential to government operations in our media-rich world.

Significantly beyond a web presence, in New York City a variety of technologies and telecommunications have become central to engaging and efficiently serving constituents. The Internet (*NYC.gov*), radio (91.5 FM), the NYC TV network (several channels) and telephony (3-1-1 service), together comprise the core of the diverse media mix that has been creatively developed and shaped to better inform and serve New Yorkers. In each media context, the resulting creative applications have been recognized with notable national and state awards.

New York City's technology directions in all of these contexts are developed and managed by the Department of Information Technology and

Telecommunications (DoITT), led by Ron Bergmann, Acting Commissioner and NYC CIO.

Managing a single radio station or media group is a significant challenge in any large city. Overseeing all technology and telecommunications in our nation's largest and most vibrant urban setting is a daunting task. To learn more about just how it's done, and done so well, The NYS Forum is pleased to have this opportunity to talk with Ron Bergmann, NYC Acting Commissioner and CIO; Teryn Moore, Assistant Commissioner for Enterprise Development; Dean Schloyer, Deputy Commissioner and Executive Director of 3-1-1; and Arick Wierson, Deputy Commissioner/General Manager, NYC Media Group and NYC TV.

The Forum: *At the outset, I want to thank you all for taking time out of what I know are extremely hectic schedules to share your experiences with The NYS Forum's government and corporate members and friends.*

Given the growing convergence of technologies, having all that is

under the DoITT roof was, unto itself, a very insightful organizational move. Just how is it that DoITT came about?

Ron Bergmann: DoITT, as it is constituted today, has been evolving for a number of years. The City Charter delineates the powers and responsibilities of every City department and agency. It made increasing sense to

have data, voice, cable TV and public pay telephone franchising and media outlets integrated under a single umbrella. DoITT's broad mandate directs us to "plan, formulate, coordinate and advance information technology and telecommunications policies for the City." It was a decision that proved fortuitous when we were asked by Mayor Bloomberg to assume responsibility for the creation and implementation of 3-1-1.

The Forum: *Are there key, historic points of maturation that you feel have defined where DoITT is today and where it will be in the future?*

Ron Bergmann: A key factor has been the election of a Mayor who provides strong leadership and understands—and strongly supports—a central role for technology in serving both City agencies and our constituents. Mayor Bloomberg has created a leadership context which has provided the opportunity for us to act more as an enterprise. We're reaping the benefits of that enterprise approach, which we leverage not only as a City but also in close partnership with the State of New York.

The Forum: *"NYC.gov" is an exemplary, indeed, award-winning website that in some ways is the centerpiece of this city's open engagement with its constituents. What is your vision for NYC.gov in the next decade?*

Teryn Moore: The vision for NYC.gov is to become even more "customer" focused by providing greater access to government services and allowing for more self service. We are taking a more holistic approach toward our constituents, providing them the ability to have a single profile which gives them access to multiple services from multiple agencies. For example, we are planning to roll out Business Express at the end of this year. This will lay the founda-



Ron Bergmann, NYC
Acting Commissioner
and CIO

tion for allowing all people who own or are starting a business to complete licenses and permits online, check the status of their requests, and even see incentives for which they might be eligible. We can then expand to offer this approach to many other services—allowing for streamlined interactions with less repetition. In addition, we are applying this thinking to create an Integrated Human Service System, to improve constituent access to much needed pre-screening services. Moreover, where appropriate, we plan to make some of this functionality available at a high level through 3-1-1.

The Forum: *What do you feel will be the major challenges and barriers to achieving that vision?*

Teryn Moore: We're encountering some opportunities to align agency objectives while addressing issues of privacy. Obviously, when choosing to implement a large vision involving cooperation among many agencies, priorities and timelines have to be coordinated. Fortunately, projects like Business Express bring such value to the agencies that they are very excited about the possibilities and are eager to participate. We are also going to focus on privacy of citizen data as well as managing the need for electronic signatures. We see both of these

items as critical in allowing us to have closer, more trusted interactions with citizens.

The Forum: *Beyond the direct access to New York City government provided through NYC.gov, DoITT's 3-1-1 service is a far more personalized means of engagement, and if I understand correctly, provides translation services in over 170 languages. Would you describe the mission of the 3-1-1 program and how the idea originated?*

Dean Schloyer: The 311 Citizen Service Center is an organization that focuses on customer service within New York City. NYC 3-1-1's mission is to:

- Provide the public with quick, easy access to all New York City government services and information while maintaining the highest possible level of customer service;
- Help agencies improve service delivery by allowing them to focus on their core missions and manage their workload efficiently; and
- Provide insight into ways to improve City government through accurate, consistent measurement and analysis of service delivery citywide.



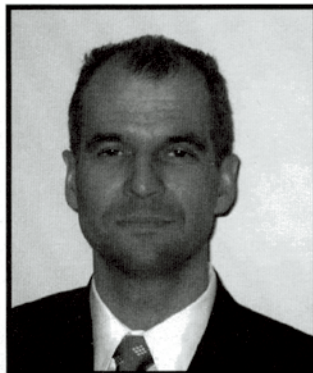
Teryn Moore, Assistant
Commissioner for Enterprise
Development

As part of that mission, we run a state-of-the-art call center that handles an average of 45,000 calls daily, and provides language translation services in over 170 languages. Calls to 3-1-1 are answered by a live operator 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

3-1-1 was a key initiative of the Bloomberg administration, and was implemented under close direction from the Mayor himself. Although the popularity of 3-1-1 is unquestioned, there are many customers that prefer to interact with government through the Internet. So, it is part of DoITT's long-term strategy to ensure that interactions through both the web and the phone are as convenient, efficient and easy as possible for our constituents.

The Forum: *Now that you have nearly three years of 3-1-1 experiences, what features seem to be most useful and are there new features you're considering?*

Dean Schloyer: As we have seen from the increasing call volume (over 32 million calls in 3 years), 3-1-1 has been well adopted by the citizens of New York City. 3-1-1 serves as a source of reliable and easily available information, particularly in times of emergency. From our experiences during the City's transit strike in December 2005, and the power outage in 2003, we continue to work to ensure that 3-1-1 is ready to respond to any event and resilient enough to stay up and running. As we look toward the future, we're implementing an analytics tool to use the data collected through 3-1-1 to help for city planning and research. 3-1-1 is also looking to expand some of its services on NYC.gov, offering citizens the ability to submit and check the status of their



Dean Schloyer, Deputy Commissioner and Executive Director of 3-1-1

service requests, without picking up the phone.

The Forum: *In a more traditional arena, DoITT's NYC Media Group includes NYC TV, which runs programming on six different channels as well as an FM radio station. Tell us*

about the TV channels and the role they play in the overall program.

Arick Wierson: NYC TV is the official television station of the City of New York and an integral part of DoITT. NYC TV manages and programs six television stations on behalf of the City, including one broadcast channel reaching 7.3 million households—nearly 19 million people in the New York area—and five New York City cable channels reaching 1.8 million households. This unique portfolio of channels allows NYC TV to segment its programming for viewers and serve as a postcard for New York City. The six channels of NYC TV are as follows:

Channel 25 is devoted to NYC TV's lifestyle programming, featuring New York City culture, history and local happenings;

Channel 74 is the home of government programming, covering mayoral press conferences, City Council hearings, City services and other government events;

NYC TV has built Channel 93/Channel 72 as a 24x7 traffic channel, programmed in partnership with the City's Department of Transportation;

Channel 73 showcases a variety of programs targeting New York City's vibrant ethnic communities;

Channel 71 serves as the home of horse racing and off-track betting; and

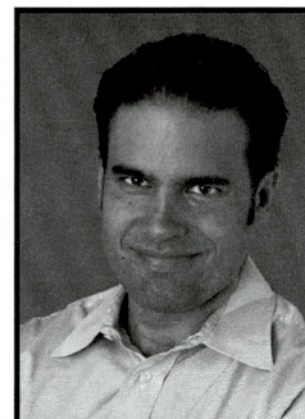
Channel 75 is managed and programmed by the City University of New York (CUNY).

Together, these six channels serve as a powerful communication tool for reaching New Yorkers and others within the tri-state area.

The Forum: *The radio station, 91.5 FM, is in the process of forging a new direction. Can you talk about how and why the station is undergoing a transformation?*

Arick Wierson: Along with NYC TV's six television stations is a full power FM radio station, WNYE 91.5 FM. Building on the success of television, NYC TV looks forward to overhauling its radio station for the purposes of expanding the audience of listeners and serving as a better complement to NYC TV's television stations. To achieve this goal, NYC TV plans to reorganize its program schedule to be more cohesive and more responsive to listener patterns during key times: morning drive, afternoon drive and overnights. NYC TV will also introduce original programming content featuring on-air talent and more music programming.

Continued - page 9



Arick Wierson, Deputy Commissioner/General Manager, NYS Media Group and NYC TV

The Forum: *When taken in total, DoITT represents a “package” of technology responsibilities shared by very few in this country. In closing, can you reflect on how this breadth of responsibilities has provided better opportunities for serving your city agencies and constituents?*

Ron Bergmann: Having a comprehensive approach encompassing all media types provides us with an extremely broad spectrum of service channels for meeting the needs of City agencies and citizens. In particular, the Mayor’s policy of “digital inclusion” means that for our constituents, regard-

less of their particular preference or the capacity available to them, we can reach out and engage them through phone, Internet, radio and television. This provides the broadest possible range of digital access channels for serving all of those who live, work, and visit New York City.

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