



Client Success Story: Call-Handling Procurement Support

AT A GLANCE

Location:

San Francisco, CA

Challenge:

The San Francisco Department of Emergency Management sought a robust, modern call-handling solution and needed guidance defining requirements, as well as during the procurement and implementation process

Solution:

Technology procurement guidance and implementation support from Mission Critical Partners

Results:

A sound strategy and strategic vision for deploying a call-handling solution that would empower their mission and build a strong foundation for transitioning to Next Generation 911

MCP Helps San Francisco Emergency Management Define a Procurement Strategy for an Advanced Call-Handling Solution

THE CHALLENGE

As the singular public safety answering point (PSAP) serving the citizens and guests of the city and county of San Francisco, one of the world's most popular tourist destinations, the San Francisco Department of Emergency Management needed a resilient, feature-rich, and flexible 911 call-handling platform that would support its 42 call-taking positions. A secondary requirement was a path to a National Emergency Number Association (NENA) i3-compliant system and meeting public safety standards for performance and reliability.

In California, PSAPs can take advantage of state-sponsored funding to upgrade and / or replace their 911 call-handling equipment using a Master Purchase Agreement (MPA). Included as part of that agreement are pre-negotiated rates and an approved vendor list. While the MPA has some advantages, it also has drawbacks one being that the most-advanced systems on the market often are not included.

In San Francisco's case, they sought the most robust, state-of-the-art call-handling

system available, and they recognized that solution wasn't available on the MPA. They collaborated with Mission Critical Partners (MCP) to determine their supplementary needs beyond the MPA, and then to provide guidance and oversight throughout the procurement and implementation process.

THE SOLUTION

MCP focused its efforts on helping San Francisco build a strong foundation of requirements before issuing a request for proposals (RFP), and helped build consensus by extensively engaging stakeholders, including call-takers, dispatchers, supervisors, managers, information technology (IT) staff and procurement personnel.

"One of the most common mistakes we see during the procurement process is that agencies don't spend adequate time evaluating their requirements. In San Francisco's case, our process helped to level-set everyone involved, and created consensus among the staff that we had



A key to San Francisco DEM's success was the development of use cases during procurement.

defined, as comprehensively as possible, what was most desirable from a new system," said Eric Caddy, project manager, MCP.

One-on-one and group interviews were completed with San Francisco's DEM stakeholders to determine the most important features among the PSAP staff. During these interviews, staff members described what they considered to be the most desirable capabilities of the ideal call-handling system. An initial set of requirements spurred from those discussions, and a core team of PSAP staff contributed their perspectives. The result was a strong, comprehensive set of requirements that would help the agency achieve its goals.

Next, use cases were drafted to further warrant that the vendor's solution not only would help San Francisco DEM meet its goals, but also would strengthen the RFP. Detailed specifics, such as complex reporting needs and specific outcomes the system needed to provide, were outlined in the use case scenarios.

"MCP's guidance during this stage was invaluable. Their familiarity working with 911 call-handling vendors and their knowledge of the newest technology and vendors available played an essential role helping us feel more comfortable with the requirements-gathering and RFP process," said Jun Chen, PMO manager, City and County of San Francisco. "We felt confident that whatever solution we implemented would perform how we intended it to."

San Francisco DEM selected West's VIPER platform as its call-handling solution, and shortly thereafter, they completed a vigorous testing process, led by MCP, to validate that the solution performed as expected. Testing gave San Francisco greater certainty that the new system would perform as expected in the most critical and unpredictable moments, such as sustaining a high call volume for an extended duration or ensuring complex configuration and routing scenarios.

MCP also supported the agency's implementation efforts by providing support and oversight during the cutover process and system integration testing.

"As one of the largest PSAPs in the nation, San Francisco DEM already has numerous planned and unplanned matters they're handling at any given moment. Teaming with a partner like MCP to upgrade their infrastructure and manage implementation on their behalf helped them stay focused on maintaining their daily operations while we held vendors accountable, and revealed and overcame roadblocks along the way," Caddy said.

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THE RESULTS

The San Francisco DEM cutover to the new call-handling system in November 2016. Since implementation, 911 call-answering times have improved. While this accomplishment cannot be directly attributed to the new call-handling solution, it is a contributing factor. As telecommunicators continue to become more assimilated to the new system and its capabilities, the confusion and frustration they experienced with the legacy system has been alleviated.

MCP helped the agency develop a sound strategy and strategic vision for deploying a call-handling solution that would empower their mission and build a strong foundation for transitioning to NG911. The methodical approach that began with procurement, and ended with testing and implementation, provided confidence in their new system. They also saved time and focused on delivering their mission, while MCP supported their priorities to achieve project success.

The San Francisco DEM and MCP partnership represents a technology procurement model for other 911 agencies in California to emulate.

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Mission Critical Partners

ABOUT MISSION CRITICAL PARTNERS

Mission Critical Partners (MCP) is a professional services and co-managed and IT services firm that helps clients enhance and evolve their public safety systems and operations through our extensive experience, knowledge and resources. By providing insight and support every step of the way, our clients are able to transform their mission-critical operations, maximizing the value of their investments and ensuring optimal performance and success. Additional information and career opportunities are available at www.MissionCriticalPartners.com.

For more information, visit MissionCriticalPartners.com

Mission Critical Partners
690 Gray's Woods Blvd.
Port Matilda, PA 16870
Phone: 888.8.MCP:911 or 888.862.7911
Fax: 814.217.6807