



How a Chief of Staff Got Back 20% of Her Time—While Getting More Done

CASE STUDY

The Customer

Alderman James Cappleman represents the 46th Ward of the City of Chicago (“Ward 46”), anchored by a powerhouse team led by Chief of Staff Tressa Feher. Ward 46 is a diverse and bustling district that covers parts of the Uptown Historic District, Buena Park, and Lakeview. With more than 53,000 residents and thousands more in and out of the ward every day, the alderman’s office carries a heavy workload to ensure that constituents are served successfully.

The Situation

After Alderman Cappleman took office in 2011, Chief of Staff Tressa Feher had to surmount multiple challenges as her team managed a heavy flow of communications and service requests. These challenges ultimately resulted in significant time invested in redundant work, and a big tax on Tressa’s schedule as she monitored and handled all constituent services, legislative issues, and multiple zoning projects herself. Workflow constraints centered on three areas:

1) Communications came in from multiple channels—phone, email, Twitter, Facebook, and walk-ins. The sheer volume of inbound requests, as well as the platforms across which these messages were spread, resulted in a huge amount of work for the team.

2) Cross-functional work—such as managing service requests received personally by Alderman Cappleman in the field and then passed to the staff—was convoluted and backed up the team’s workflow. When work moved in the opposite direction—from the team to Alderman Cappleman—the team had trouble ensuring that the alderman was up to date on the bird’s-eye view of issues in the ward as he moved from place to place, engaging with constituents each day.

3) Dissatisfaction from constituents was quickly addressed by the alderman’s hardworking team, but they had no way to look back in time at interactions, nor to get accurate information from Chicago’s central 311 system to see where engagements may have gotten stuck. As a result, it was difficult to successfully address constituents’ concerns.

Record

how constituents feel about issues in your city, and see a tally of support or opposition over time.

Export

any and all of your data in bulk as Excel spreadsheets for further processing.

Generate

PDF reports of service requests or issues for consumption in team meetings, or send them off to other departments who need access to the information but aren't on Romulus.

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As chief of staff, Tressa ultimately had to address these challenges, and she sought out solutions as soon as the alderman was in office. Unfortunately, the vendor community didn't supply products that addressed her needs—or fit her requirement that they be cost-effective and easy to set up. As a result, Tressa developed custom, detailed spreadsheets for her team to use to track communications and service requests. Over time, she felt that even with the time she had personally invested in these tools, they weren't enough to support her needs.

The Process

Tressa and the Ward 46 team's strong commitment to their constituents drove them to seek tools that would help them get more done. Tressa knew how the team could best serve constituents, provided the team was served by strong vendors supporting them in that work.

Tressa looked for tools that would offer a **low-risk** approach, anticipating the risks of committing to a long-term or expensive contract without a way out. Seneca Systems' Constituent Services Platform, Romulus, turned out to be an ideal solution. Romulus offered a fair monthly per-seat price and month-to-month usage, cancellable at any time if her team did not benefit—all features that met Tressa's criteria and presented a low risk, permitting every team member to have a Romulus license.

With Romulus in place, the team set out to **optimize communications**. First, they consolidated their many communications channels into a single view, accessible by any team member to allow maximum coverage. With all communications centralized, they didn't have to shy away from offering constituents new ways to get in touch. The team used the Romulus number-generation feature to begin offering text messaging for super-fast, super-easy constituent communications.

Finally, with centralized communications and processes in place, the Ward 46 team handled communications around the clock, with **daily usage** logging constituent comments and managing requests. With a single view for communications and reports on activity, the team could bypass the cross-functional challenges they ran into earlier, when they didn't have a common tool in place.

In Romulus, Tressa found a Constituent Services Platform that now allows her team to use their organization and effective approaches successfully.

The Results

In two years of Romulus use, the Ward 46 team has processed thousands of communications and hundreds of service requests that resulted from those exchanges. This approach brought the Ward 46 team multiple benefits:

Time Saved, without Sacrificing Quality

First, streamlining communications and service requests with Romulus saves Tressa an estimated 20 percent of her week—time that she gets back to focus not on administrative work, but on the major strategic and issue-based items facing the alderman and the ward. She can monitor issue responses from constituents and keep an eye on the work being processed by the team. Further, her team saves an estimated 20 hours per week when doing administrative work.

Faster Response Time

Tressa logs in regularly to review comments from constituents praising the quick response received from her staff. She attributes the quick turnarounds to multiple factors.

First, her team’s ability to share a workflow tool means any online worker can address communications live. Even if the alderman is on the go at events, the feedback and comments he receives can be logged and addressed promptly, without downtime. Second, her team uses Romulus for quick-response communications such as text messaging and social media. Because of the team’s forward-thinking adoption of these communications channels, Ward 46 constituents get responses even faster than they expect—and it shows.

Delighted Constituents and Government Workers

Finally, Romulus offers Tressa and her organized team a tool to support their constituent-friendly approach. Tressa and her team use words such as “helpful,” “friendly,” and “responsive” to describe Seneca Systems Customer Service. Seneca’s team is available online and on the phone around the clock to address customer needs. In addition, Tressa and her team engage with Seneca regularly to affect roadmap features, giving feedback and getting better software in return.

Tressa Feher and her Ward 46 team know best how to serve their constituents, and Romulus is the “built-for-government” platform they use to do it.