

D R A F T

Wired For Success

9-1-1, 4-1-1, 3-1-1 and Now 2-1-1

The United States telephone system is continually upgraded to connect people to essential services. 911 was instituted to dispatch local police departments, fire departments and emergency medical services to people facing immediate threats to life. 411 is the national directory assistance. People no longer have to acquire telephone books for cities and counties across the nation or append the desired area code in front of 555-1212 . 311 connects New Yorkers to several city agencies. Dial 311 to report lack of heat and hot water; get connected to your local Community Board and reach the local police precinct for non-emergency inquiries. 211 is the latest innovation.

211 is destined to be the national referral system to community services and volunteer opportunities. There are currently 169 active systems covering 32 states, the District of Columbia and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. US Senators Dole, Burr and our Rodham-Clinton as well as US Representatives Eshoo and Bilirakisi lead the legislative charge for public funding for the nationwide roll out. It is called the 2-1-1 Act (S211/HR896). When passed, the act would authorize \$150 million to assist states implement statewide 211s. The act calls for a 50% match of private funds. The public funds would be administered by the US Department of Health and Human Services.

The United Way of America and Alliance for Information and Referral Systems see many benefits to 211's national roll out. Implementing 211 will divert non-emergency calls from 911. This means 911 operators are more efficient in dispatching emergency services. 211 will reduce the number of existing and future 1-800 numbers for community service organizations. 211 provides more efficient volunteer recruitment and identification of desired social and community services. Imagine yourself eager to volunteer time to feed the homeless, hold an orphan baby or mentor a teenager but, due

to the bureaucracy surrounding matching you with a few options to consider, your interest wanes. It's believed that 211 will streamline the process by having all the community services operated by nonprofits and city agencies listed categorically and with service notes.

The roll out within the upper mid-Atlantic region is moving smoothly. Connecticut and New Jersey have implemented 211 statewide. New York State is in the operational phase. Delaware and Pennsylvania are in the planning phase.

To bring 211 to the nation, contact Governor Pataki's Office or contact members of Congress. Edolphus Towns and Major Owens represent Central Brooklyn. The New York City Council stays abreast of the City's implementation through the Council's Committee on Technology in Government. 2-1-1 responds to one of the Committee's goals, which is "promoting the openness and transparency of government by making sure that public information is accessible to every New York City resident." In fact, the Committee will have held an oversight hearing on 211 rollout, November 28, at 1 PM by the time this story is published. To learn more about 211, visit www.211.org.

Dishing Out TV Content Your Way

Do cable, Dish and regular television programming have you say, "I really could put on better shows than this"? Take Back TV website ([//TakeBackTV.com](http://TakeBackTV.com)) is all about do-it-yourself TV. Sponsored by VC² Nation (viewer created content), people learn how to shoot video and then, upload to current.tv. At Current.TV, the online community votes on uploaded videos to be broadcasted on DirecTV channel 366, Time Warner (New York) channel 103, Time Warner (Los Angeles) channel 116 and ComCast SF 125.

Take Back's website serves as a portal to "Current TV", "Current Studio", "Awaiting Input" and "Get Current." Current TV contains a series of tutorials on video production, legal issues and shooting technicalities that use live instructors and animation. Viewers

get tips on lighting, video speed and equipment. A digital camera can run from \$900 to \$7,000, depending on the number of chips it's made with. The content produced must run within the range of three to seven minutes. "Current Studio" explains how to submit your work and to vote on submissions. "Get Current" lists which stations to tune to view the shows on cable or satellite. Take Back TV has developed a lively collaborative environment for videographers and podcasters. Sun Microsystems and Java are corporate sponsors.

Quick Tips

Does the Content Management System (CMS) for your website result in very long URL strings? Visit [//tinyurl.com](http://tinyurl.com) to cut it down to size. Tiny URL is a technology that turns long URL strings into succinct addresses. You simply input the current URL strings into the indicated slot, press "Go" and within seconds, another much shorter URL is given.

Webex (www.webex.com) is an online conference tool that facilitates meetings between colleagues a distance from one another. A group starts a session by first registering with Webex and, then naming your group. Within this space, documents produced using various software can be uploaded and messages can be left for the other group members. Webex software is easy to learn and use. It's a resource for school projects, family projects and business.

Know of a great website or technological innovation? Have a question about the Internet and New Media? Contact me at akosua@plans4success.com.