Effectively Managing Change with Oracle Utilities Customer Care and Billing for Water Utilities
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“[Oracle Utilities Customer Care and Billing] for Water Utilities has revolutionized the level of customer support we can offer”.
—Dan Stockton, CIO, California Water Service Co.

Water: The Oil of the Twenty-First Century?

Escalating population growth and rapid industrial development are increasing global demand for water. At the same time, utilities throughout the world are struggling to generate sufficient revenue to fix deteriorating infrastructure and comply with ever-changing regulatory requirements. Oracle Utilities Customer Care and Billing for Water Utilities allows you to respond swiftly and effectively to these challenges. By providing comprehensive system support for all your customer service and billing needs, Oracle Utilities Customer Care and Billing gives you the flexibility to adapt your internal processes to the way you do business today—no matter how that varies from what you did yesterday, or what you will do tomorrow.

Cope With Rapid Change

Few industries face the pace of change that the water utilities industry currently does. High-tech companies, searching for ways to reduce energy consumption, are increasingly turning to water as a cooling element in industry processes. Growing populations—especially in developing countries—need access to more, and more dependable, sources of uncontaminated drinking water. And countries around the globe are stepping up efforts to pass strict laws regulating water prices, quality, and usage to prepare for the possibility that future supplies of this all-important resource will be insufficient to meet demand.

Oracle Utilities Customer Care and Billing for Water Utilities helps you meet present challenges as well as prepare for future ones. At the heart of this solution is better support for all customer- and billing-centric operations. You can expand your service offerings or change rates overnight. Offer energy conservation loans or special rates for niche customer groups in quick response to regulatory changes. Efficiently audit water use, maintain and repair equipment, and process credit card and other forms of payment without rewriting complex code. Taken altogether, the features and functionality of Oracle Utilities Customer Care and Billing for Water Utilities allows you to thrive in a fiercely competitive industry.

Meet Demands of Your Particular Market

Not all utilities are the same. Although most use customer-centric business processes, others have a premises-based focus. The approach you take depends on the characteristics of your individual market.
Most likely, you make customers the center of your operations. This means that your primary concern is keeping customers happy, to encourage the timely paying of bills and to reduce demands on your call center staff.

A premises strategy, on the other hand, works well when public health regulations mandate providing continuous service to properties without regard to occupants. Utility companies choose this approach when supplying water to markets with a large proportion of low-income or transitory residents.

Oracle Utilities Customer Care and Billing for Water Utilities offers a best-of-breed solution that supports both approaches. By providing you with sufficient flexibility to adapt your billing system to the way you do business, it enables you to better control costs, optimize cash flow, and reduce risks when implementing new initiatives in response to market changes.

Cut Costs While Improving Customer Service Quality

With regulatory requirements and infrastructure-improvement initiatives squeezing your profit margins, cost containment is not an option, but an imperative. For competitive reasons, however, you can’t afford to sacrifice customer service quality when pursuing cost-cutting goals.

The call center is the lifeblood of your customer service strategy. It is the primary conduit through which your customers contact you, and your first—and best—method for responding in a way that communicates your dedication to delivering the best possible quality of care.

Yet your call center personnel may still be dependent on outdated legacy systems or even manual processes for accessing customer records. This makes it difficult—if not impossible—for them to respond quickly to customer queries. Likewise, data collection and billing errors can take significant amounts of time to properly research, and often require calling customers back hours or even days after the initial call. Not only does this frustrate customers—who want to resolve problems immediately—but it is an extremely costly and nonproductive use of call center representatives’ time.

Oracle Utilities Customer Care and Billing for Water Utilities streamlines call center activities, increasing customer satisfaction while significantly reducing costs.

Among other benefits, the system allows you to

- Shorten call times and significantly cut down on callbacks by giving call center staff members complete and immediate access to customer account histories
- Minimize employee training time through an intuitive user interface, online help, and prewritten scripts to handle the most common customer service scenarios
- Increase the productivity of call center workers, reducing the need for personnel and therefore dramatically cutting employee costs
• Steer customers to alternate sources of help via integrated voice response (IVR) systems and self-service Web sites

• Spread call volumes out over the month by varying billing cycles of customer accounts

* The system is highly flexible and configurable to our needs. We were able to configure it so we could keep track of field activities and create reports or make queries when tasks are completed to see how we can do things better. *

—Will Ross, Computer Services Manager, Miami Dade Water and Sewer Authority

Automate Field Service Tasks

Field service tasks—such as establishing new connections, dispatching field personnel to make special reads, performing final reads, and scheduling routine and emergency service calls—are activities that water utility firms perform every day. You can reap enormous efficiencies—and dramatically reduce costs—by streamlining and automating the underlying business processes that support them.

With Oracle Utilities Customer Care and Billing for Water Utilities, you can

• Automate service order initiation

• Enable rapid service order dispatch

• Upload data from completed field service tasks to a centralized integrated database for call center personnel to access in real time

• Redirect field personnel to respond to emergency calls for service

Optimize Cash Flow

Water utility companies must minimize the time it takes to turn customer water usage into billing statements, and billing statements into cash. Both consumer and industrial customers pay more quickly when they receive easy-to-read, accurate bills that are timed to coordinate with the availability of financial resources, or that fit into their schedules for disbursing funds for monthly expenses. Consumer customers, for example, might prefer to receive their billing statements at the beginning of the month, after they have been paid by employers. Companies with multiple offices might request that individual statements sent to regional hubs be consolidated into one bill that’s sent to their headquarters. And large industrial customers might ask for water utility bills to be provided in the form of electronic data tables.

Oracle Utilities Customer Care and Billing for Water Utilities allows you to do all this in addition to monitoring debt levels, adjusting collection methods to the specific financial situations of individual customers—whether consumer, corporate, or industrial—and better managing deposits to speed payments and reduce uncollected debt.
Oracle Utilities Customer Care and Billing for Water Utilities also allows you to

• Ensure bill accuracy by automatically identifying and resolving issues before sending out billing statements
• Tailor bill formats according to customer preferences
• Provide easy-to-understand billing graphs that show how energy consumption varies over customer-specified time periods
• Let customers choose the end date for their billing cycles
• Offer a choice of bill and payment methods, including e-mail, internet, cash deposit, direct debit, and postal service

Manage Risk

The system you choose to support your business must be scalable enough to grow as you do. You also need to be able to accommodate single-customer signups or add large numbers of customers simultaneously without affecting overall system performance. Additionally, you must be able to offer incentives like discounts, water conservation programs or affinity programs swiftly in response to competitors’ actions.

With Oracle Utilities Customer Care and Billing for Water Utilities, you can

• Scale readily from thousands to millions of customer accounts
• Process new customer accounts in any number
• Support both short- and long-term signup incentives
• Upgrade your system quickly and easily without undermining the investments you've already made in customer care automation

Reduce Total Cost of System Ownership

Upgrading systems requires extensive personnel time, which results in high costs but often fails to produce tangible benefits. With Oracle Utilities Customer Care and Billing for Water Utilities, utilities can benefit from one of the lowest-cost-in-industry upgrades.

Oracle Utilities Customer Care and Billing for Water Utilities has a number of key features that help minimize total cost of ownership, including

• An increasing number of pre-packaged integrations with other Oracle applications
• Low-cost archiving that stores and protects data over its lifecycle
• Customer relationship management capabilities that facilitate tracking and management of complex customer interactions
• Access to a configuration lab that moves data safely from testing to production
• A robust architecture that supports internal business process engineering initiatives
• Automated workflow processing

Oracle Utilities Customer Care and Billing for Water Utilities condenses volumes of complex, disparate data from multiple legacy sources into a cohesive knowledgebase from which water utilities can identify risks, determine trends, forecast demand, and predict changing market conditions.

Thrive in the Midst of Market Disruption

You face an increasingly tough competitive climate. Rising infrastructure and energy costs, shifting regulatory requirements, and customers who demand superior service all contribute to your need to continuously improve organizational effectiveness and maximize revenues. Oracle Utilities Customer Care and Billing for Water Utilities allows you to accomplish these goals and more. By evolving your business according to market demands, it reduces risk while simultaneously boosting customer satisfaction.

Contact Us

For more information on Oracle Utilities Customer Care and Billing for Energy Water Utilities, call +1.800.ORACLE1 to speak to an Oracle representative, or visit oracle.com/goto/utilities.