



UTILITY COMPANY IMPLEMENTS FULL-SERVICE CUSTOMER WEB SITE

SASKENERGY

/// CASE STUDY



SaskEnergy, which provides more than 323,000 Saskatchewan customers with affordable natural gas, wanted to expand its online capabilities to improve service and keep costs as low as possible for its customers. EDS, an HP company, helped implement a full-service customer Web site.

CLIENT PROFILE

www.saskenergy.com

SaskEnergy is Saskatchewan's natural gas distribution company, a provincial Crown corporation with roots of more than half a century in Saskatchewan.

Founded: 1952

Industries: Energy, Government

Headquarters:
Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada

Employees: 983

Revenue: CA\$1.2 billion

Business Need Addressed:
Productivity

SaskEnergy wanted a full-service customer Web site

For more than half a century, SaskEnergy has provided the residents and businesses of Saskatchewan with reliable, affordable natural gas service. Today, the utility operates one of the largest consolidated natural gas pipeline and storage systems in the world, while offering its customers some of the most affordable energy rates in Canada.

To continue to fulfill the Saskatchewan government's mandate to keep rates as low as possible, without compromising service quality, SaskEnergy decided to significantly expand its online capabilities. Through its partnership with EDS, the utility had already introduced an online application that enabled customers to submit meter readings electronically. EDS also developed an interface that lets users sign up for its equalized payment plan (EPP), which helps customers budget for winter's significantly higher utility bills by spreading out payments throughout the year.

Now SaskEnergy wanted to implement a full-service customer service Web site to enable online bill presentment and account management, allow users to access historical usage records, and even provide a sophisticated feedback tool to enable users to communicate directly with their local utility representatives.

EDS automated and integrated customer account information over the Web

SaskEnergy's My Account draws heavily from the utility's existing Web application infrastructure and billing system. In fact, with so much of the necessary infrastructure already in place, EDS developers were able to deliver the new application for approximately half of what it would usually cost to implement a project of this scope.

ENSURING EXPANDABLE ONLINE SERVICES

EDS leveraged a custom application SaskEnergy had developed earlier, the Windows Customer Service Information System (WinCSIS), a rich-client Visual Basic-based application that enhances the utility's legacy mainframe customer service information system and enables integration to Web-based applications. During initial development of WinCSIS, SaskEnergy and EDS decided to include application programming interfaces so that the utility would have the infrastructure in place to expand its online services when the time came.

Services featured

- Composite Application and Portal Services
- Server Management Services
- Network Management Services

The EDS team is always making us, the customer, their top priority. We see it in the people they place on site, the opportunities they present, the quality of work delivered, and the candid dialogue we have. From the top down, we know SaskEnergy is important to EDS, and the team works hard to maintain that feeling."

Colleen Huber
Vice President and CIO
SaskEnergy

My Account allows SaskEnergy's customers to monitor and manage natural gas consumption by viewing their specific account information - current and historical consumption and charge details, up-to-date account summary, payment summary, a two-year comparison, and an equalized payment plan summary. Additionally, customers can request eBills over paper bills, submit meter reads for gas consumption and sign up for EPP online. My Account provides meter read reminders and a variety of proactive communication messages to help consumers become more energy-savvy.

Automation and integration are key benefits of the solution. Integration between My Account and the billing system means that changes or updates are automatically posted to customer accounts. If a customer submits a meter reading or decides to sign up for EPP, that information is immediately updated in the billing system. Automation also virtually eliminates input errors. Today, if an erroneous reading is entered, the customer is quickly prompted to double-check the entry before it can be submitted.

Online technology enhanced SaskEnergy's customer service

Within four months, nearly 4,300 SaskEnergy customers had signed up for My Account. Today, more than 14,000 customers manage their accounts online.

My Account gave customers the extended service hours that competing utilities provide without expanding staff. It also provided a range of back-office efficiencies. For instance, more and more customers have turned to the Web to input their meter readings. This improved accuracy and enabled SaskEnergy agents to focus on service delivery instead of paperwork.

The new Web interface also provided a few unexpected benefits for employees. My Account offers a quick snapshot of customers' two-year historical usage, a report previously unavailable from any of SaskEnergy's other information systems. Today, service representatives often find themselves logging into My Account to access this information to better address service and billing issues. "The EDS team has always been enthusiastic and positive," notes Joanne Buratenski, SaskEnergy's marketing supervisor. "During numerous changes and updates to our Web site, along with two major online service enhancements, EDS was able to take our visions and make them reality."

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