PPL Electric Utilities saves $600k and boosts customer satisfaction

HP Exstream improves the clarity of customer communications

Industry
Utility

Objective
Modernize billing communications to make them less cluttered and more customized

Approach
Acted on the recommendation of sister company PPL Services to deploy HP Exstream

IT matters
- Empowers business users to create customer bills and letters without relying on IT staff thanks to its intuitive GUI
- Allows PPL to push customized marketing messages front and centre along with personalized graphic components
- Deploys seamlessly from development to production within two weeks

Business matters
- Saves $600k per year by making 90 percent of bills run to only one page through smarter use of space
- Increases customer satisfaction levels by seven percent, courtesy of increased clarity of communications

PPL Electric Utilities
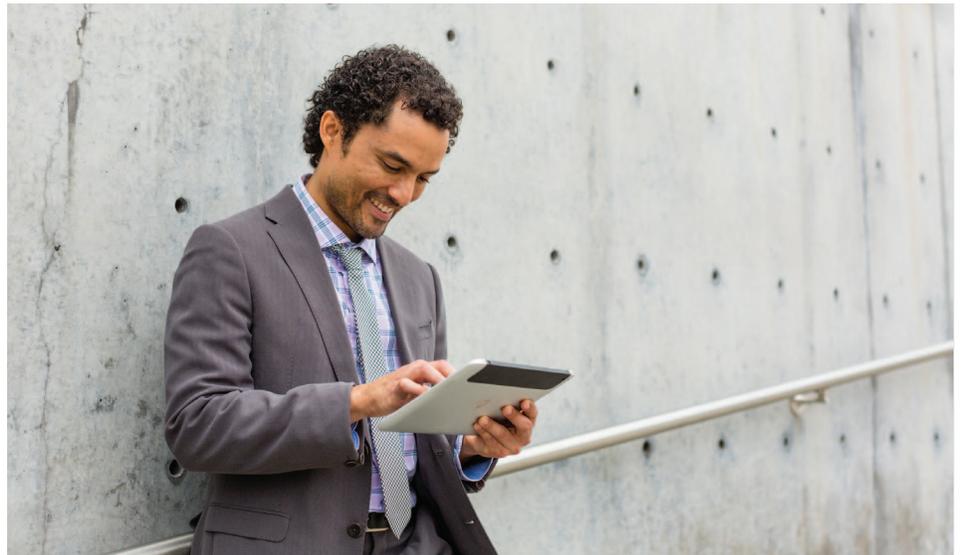
> **"HP Exstream gives us a triple whammy: our customers are happier, we're saving hundreds of thousands of dollars every year and we've reduced our carbon footprint."**
>
> — Susan Peters, electric delivery senior analyst, PPL Electric Utilities

Customer satisfaction increased by seven percent

PPL Electric Utilities in Pennsylvania wanted to improve customer communications. Now, it's using the HP Exstream communication management platform to issue 1.4 million bills and 200,000 letters a month. As well as saving money, the new solution has improved customer satisfaction by seven percent.

Customer solution at a glance

Software
• HP Exstream

Challenge

Outdated correspondence

PPL Electric Utilities is part of the PPL Corporation and maintains nearly 50,000 miles of power lines, enough to reach around the world twice. The company handles more than six million customer interactions each year and has consistently won awards for customer service and satisfaction.

Communicating clearly to its 1.4 million customers is one reason why PPL Electric is so highly ranked for customer service. However, its billing templates for customers had been designed in 1999 and were out of date, confusing and no longer in tune with the company's overall branding. PPL wanted to find a new platform for billing that would enable it to modernize the design.

"Our old bill was on odd sized paper and was very linear. There was no way to highlight individual components and it didn't flow intuitively," explains Susan Peters, electric delivery senior analyst at PPL Electric Utilities. "Any customized messages were buried on the last page, rendering them ineffective. We decided it was time to look at new ways of presenting our billing information."

Solution

Seamless transition

Sister company PPL Services recommended HP Exstream as a potential solution: "We could see that HP Exstream was a flexible solution that could draw on information from multiple data sources rather than relying on a single input file," adds Peters. "Combining that with its intuitive GUI would make it easy for our business users to generate customer communications themselves without relying on the IT department."

HP Exstream was installed on virtual servers and progressed from development to production status within a matter of weeks. A HP trainer spent two weeks introducing key employees from across the business to the software's functionality.

Benefits

Customized and compelling communications

The new bill has been designed to mimic the front page of a newspaper with different components providing different content such as customised marketing messages, graphs of power usage, account summary and technical information.

PPL Electric also used HP Exstream to create 80 different customer letters with customized information relating to disconnection, change of address and other common communications. It is also creating PDFs that customers can view online, helping to enable paperless billing.

"The new bill has more impact and makes it easier to see critical information at a glance. Also, by allowing us to move the customized messages to the front, it helps us connect with the customer on a personal level," comments Peters. "We are now issuing 1.4 million bills and 200,000 letters per month using HP Exstream."

Lower costs; higher customer satisfaction

The new solution has made an immediate impact. PPL Electric Utilities benchmarked customer satisfaction before the new bill was introduced and then again three months later. The results showed a seven percent increase in satisfaction which the company largely attributes to the new layout.

HP Exstream has also had a positive impact on the company's bottom line. While the previous bill was at least two pages long, 90 percent of the new bills issued fit on one page. PPL Electric is thus printing one million fewer pages per month. Despite the fact that the company introduced more expensive colour printing at the same time, it is nevertheless making savings of $600k annually thanks to the reduced paper and print costs.

"HP Exstream increases our triple bottom line: people, profit and planet. Our customers are happier, we're saving a lot of money and we've reduced our carbon footprint," says Peters. "That shows just how much of a difference the solution is making to our company."

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