

Voice Technology Boosts Productivity

54% of customer service calls are handled through Tele-Works' interactive voice response.

Situation

Union County, N.C. has consistently been in the top 20 fastest growing counties in the U.S. With a 42% growth in accounts since 2005, the Public Works Department was having a hard time keeping up.

A burgeoning customer base meant there were a host of new challenges for the Department —

- o Customers wanted easier ways to pay and more self-service options
- o Past due accounts were rising
- o It had become increasingly difficult to get timely information to customers
- o Costs for collecting and processing payments were rising

The Department was looking for ways to improve collections, decrease the number of delinquencies, and deliver improved customer service without adding to its overall costs. With revenue collections flat in the past four years, a solution with a quick payback was essential.

Solution

Union County selected interactive voice response (IVR) technology by Tele-Works. Customers can now hear their account balance, payment history, consumption history and make payments by phone without having to call during normal office hours or wait to speak to a customer service representative. Customers can serve themselves at a time that is convenient for them.

And because the IVR system interacts with the Department's utility database in real time, customers and staff are always working from the same information. There is no added work for staff.

An outbound call system was implemented to make courtesy calls to past-due customers to remind them of their overdue balance. Customers can opt to speak to a customer service representative, make an automated payment by credit card or eCheck, or hang up and pay later. Either way, the customer is informed.

Outbound calls are also used to inform customers about boil alerts, water restrictions, service interruptions and repairs.

2009 Statistics

Population: 198,000

Utility accounts: 39,362

- ✓ 10 month full return on investment
- ✓ Collected \$2.3 million in payments by IVR
- ✓ Reduced unnecessary shutoffs by 48%
- ✓ Improved staff productivity — 54% of customer service calls are handled through the IVR
- ✓ 20,000 outbound calls made annually

Benefits

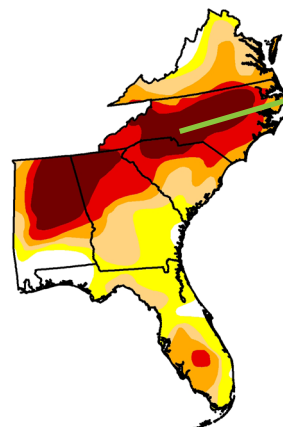
Automation with IVR technology has been widely successful for the Public Works Department. The Customer Service Department handles approximately 9,500 calls each month, and 54% of those calls are serviced through the IVR. "We haven't had to hire any additional customer service representatives; this is remarkable considering the huge growth in accounts we've had," said Jolene Keziah, Customer Service Supervisor, Union County Public Works.

Moreover, outbound reminder calls have been extremely beneficial to the Department.

In the 24 hours following a callout, payments increase by 50%.

These outbound calls have resulted in a 48% reduction in shutoffs for Union County.

Drought!



Water Restrictions

Hit hard with severe drought in 2007, Union County needed to quickly notify customers about new and changing water regulations.

The outbound call system automatically made 15,000 calls helping to conserve water, notify violators, and warn users of excessive consumption.