

Automated Transactions Lead to Big Savings

Web and interactive voice response (IVR) delivers.

Situation

Palm Coast is a new and progressive city that is growing rapidly. Incorporated in 1999, the City has seen its population more than double in the past ten years to 75,000 people. In order to keep up with the enormous growth and rising demand for services, the City executed a long-range comprehensive plan and an accompanying 5-Year Strategic Plan that clearly defines the City's mission and goals. The Mayor, City Council, and the Executive Team have successfully led a top-down strategic effort to maintain a high quality of life in their City even during a period of unprecedented growth.

The City's number one goal is to "Provide Quality Services, Maintaining the City's Financial Soundness." From this goal, came several initiatives designed to deliver great customer service without a substantial increase in staffing or capital outlay; specifically, the City needed to automate payments and many other non-financial transactions.

Solution

With these directives in mind, Palm Coast selected Tele-Works to provide web and IVR to automate repetitive activities and add-on customer self-service in several locations within the City including utilities, building inspections, and parks and recreation. Through these automated processes, citizens and customer service personnel save valuable time while continuing to provide high levels of service.

The Utility Department now provides web and IVR bill payment options, allowing customers to pay with a credit card or eCheck. Customers can now interact with the Utility Department without having to call during normal office hours or wait to speak to a customer service representative. The department also uses Tele-Works IVR to automatically place courtesy phone calls to past-due customers reminding them to pay to prevent shutoffs and associated fees.

Web and IVR scheduling options are also available for Building Inspections. Clients can hear their permit information; schedule, reschedule, or cancel inspections; and they can pay their inspection and permit fees through the system. Parks and Recreation offers both scheduling and payments through the web and IVR. Citizens can reserve community space, sign up for classes, and pay the appropriate fees without having to speak to a Customer Service Representative.

Tele-Works also developed the City's automated InfoAssist System to provide citizens with answers to frequently asked questions through the web or phone. InfoAssist allows citizens to browse information by category as well as search by keyword.

Annual Statistics

Population: 75,000

- ✓ Utility department is collecting 74,565 payments and almost \$8 million through IVR and web annually
- ✓ 4,350 building inspections were scheduled by IVR in the first 6 months of use
- ✓ 1,530 building inspections were scheduled by web in the first 6 months of use
- ✓ 70,000 customer calls fielded through the self-service IVR—the equivalent of 1.5 people

Benefits

Automation with web and IVR has been widely successful for the City of Palm Coast. In the Utility Department alone, the city takes 74,565 automated IVR and web payments annually for a total of \$7.9 million.

In the first 6 months, the Building department saw 4,350 inspections scheduled by the IVR and 1,530 using the web—a real time saver for the city.

In total, the City is now handling more than 200,000 automated transactions per year through the IVR and web. Additionally the City's outbound call program to past due customers has led to a reduction in shutoffs and approximately \$6,000 per year in savings on postage and handling of delinquency mailings.

The City is fielding almost 70,000 customer calls and 170,000 minutes through the IVR annually, which is the equivalent of 1.5 people! Not only is the City saving money but they are prepared to handle increasing volumes as the economy and housing market improve.

Web and IVR usage in the Utility Department (Jan 06-Jul 09)

City continues to expand automation and meet Performance Goals

