



High performance. Delivered.

Achieving high performance
with Accenture's contact center
optimization solutions for utilities

• Consulting • Technology • Outsourcing

Cut contact center costs with caution

Facing increasing operating costs, decreasing operating margins and greater-than-ever cost pressures, today's retail utilities are understandably seeking the next cost-reduction opportunity. Not surprisingly, the contact center—one of any utility's more significant operating costs—continues to be a target for such measures (see Figure 1).

In this environment, retail utilities may be tempted to reduce contact center operating hours, trim budgets for management activities, suspend training plans or even cut head count at the front lines of customer service. While making these kinds of cost reductions may yield short-term financial results, the long-term implications to customer satisfaction and operational performance could be disastrous.

Research shows that as utility executives continue to eliminate costs from customer service teams, customer expectations are rising sharply.¹ The days of a distanced relationship between utilities and customers are over. Today's utility customers expect greater attention, higher-quality service and more value for their money than ever before. Increasingly brand disloyal, in areas where they have provider choice, customers are willing to make an immediate switch when a provider underestimates their expectations.

Businesses inside and outside the utilities industry recognize that even challenging times can represent an opportunity to achieve high performance by optimizing contact center operations. By focusing on optimizing service, organizations can both strategically trim cost while maintaining, or even improving, the service they provide to customers.

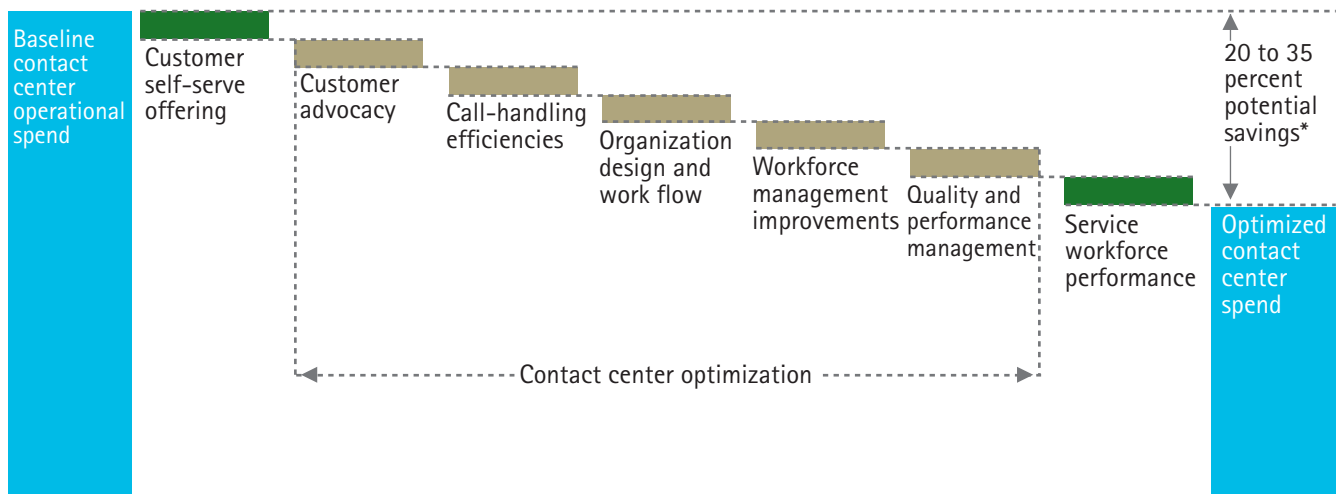
Did you know?

Utility customers have a better experience with contact centers in other industries. In a survey conducted by Purdue University, 83 percent of customers indicated satisfaction with contact centers in the transportation industry, 78 percent with contact centers in the media industry, but just 53 percent with contact centers in the utilities industry.²

Although companies have invested in contact center technology to reduce costs and remove frontline human interaction, only 5 percent of customers "strongly agree" and 30 percent "strongly disagree" that increased technology has improved service over the last five years.³

Figure 1. Contact center transformation: A significant opportunity for cost savings.

Leading utilities can achieve annual savings of 20 to 35 percent by optimizing contact center operations and targeting high opportunity areas.



* Additional savings possible by optimization of the contact center sourcing mix

Ultimately, Accenture's contact center optimization solutions help you strike the delicate balance between saving money and satisfying customers.

Accenture's approach to contact center optimization

With a flexible, modular approach, Accenture's contact center optimization solution can help companies balance cost to serve and customer satisfaction. You can tap into our expertise for an in-depth review of your current capabilities, a large-scale transformation initiative or an optimization of your sourcing mix. Many retail utilities opt to start with short-term "quick-hit" successes and then build on those successes with a longer-term, strategic approach.

In delivering the contact center optimization solution, Accenture relies upon a utilities-specific diagnostic tool set that focuses on the following key levers:

- Workforce management to deliver greater accuracy in forecasting, scheduling, occupancy and intraday operations
- Organization design and work flow to help the operations teams

respond to customer questions with minimal handoffs and within optimal time frames

- Quality and performance management to evaluate interactions between customers and employees, so that documented best practices and processes are followed—facilitating higher-quality customer interactions and more effective coaching
- Call handling to improve the utility's ability to resolve customer inquiries, track and report on results, and proactively serve the customer to prevent issues from occurring in the future
- Customer advocacy to provide a structured, automated approach for managing and learning from complaints, compliments and "chronics"
- Sourcing mix to help confirm that the contact center is operationally flexible and able to respond to fluctuating volumes of inbound calls

Ultimately, Accenture's contact center optimization solution helps utilities strike an optimal balance between a reduction in cost to serve and an increase in customer satisfaction. As an owner-operator, Accenture has proven within its own operations that by focusing attention on selected operational levers, it is possible to save money while improving the customer experience.



Accenture Customer Satisfaction Survey

In surveying more than 4,000 consumers in nine countries, Accenture gained deep insight into the critical importance of delivering a customer-centric service experience. How well companies understand and meet the distinct preferences and expectations of the customers they serve—from how long they are willing to wait for service to the way they are treated by customer service representatives—continues to exert a powerful influence over customers' willingness to remain customers versus their propensity to leave.

Midsized utility reduces cost to serve, enhances satisfaction

A midsized gas and electric utility with \$3 billion in revenue and 1.75 million customers was receiving a high level of complaints and facing significant penalties from its regulators. Accenture delivered a comprehensive assessment of the utility's operational capabilities, identifying a number of opportunities for improvement across the contact center. The next step: a detailed, initiative-based roadmap and business case to support implementation of the recommendations. The ultimate results are expected to yield significant cost savings while enhancing customer service and satisfaction.

We know what it takes to optimize contact centers.

What can you expect when you team with Accenture?

You work with professionals who understand the unique challenges of the utilities industry. We see the world as you do and can help your company differentiate itself to achieve high performance. Our understanding of key business issues and trends, and applicable technologies and business solutions enables us to deliver innovative yet practical solutions tailored to each client. We bring a breadth of skills, capabilities and assets to help utilities address our clients' business challenges, including:

Utilities industry experience

Accenture's utilities industry group has more than 30 years experience working with electric, gas and water utilities worldwide. Our group includes 7,500 utility industry people working with approximately 275 clients in 40 countries. We serve 74 percent of the utilities on the 2009 Global *Fortune* 500 list using our deep, global industry knowledge, people and assets to help clients develop the strategies and adopt solutions to improve performance in the dynamic utility market.

Client-ready utilities assets

Accenture has developed many utilities assets, including the High Performance Utility Model, based upon our extensive consulting,

systems integration and outsourcing experience. This model helps utilities assess their performance against industry leaders, jump-start business improvement projects and accelerate program delivery.

Accenture Utilities BPO Services

Accenture not only has leading consulting capabilities, but we also have a deep operational understanding based on our business process outsourcing (BPO) services for utilities. Accenture Utilities BPO Services provides solutions to 14 clients and 15 million customers in North America, Europe and Asia Pacific.

Contact us

Accenture's approach to contact center optimization is designed to help retail utilities navigate through today's challenging environment. We work with companies to chart a successful course to improve the way they manage their contact centers—and to build the high-performance businesses that can compete and win in a changing environment. We would like to hear about your needs and discuss how we can work together to help your organization advance toward high performance.

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Endnotes

1. "Customer Service in a Shrinking Economy," BusinessWeek, February 19, 2009, via Factiva © McGraw-Hill Inc.
2. Utilities quarterly benchmark report, Purdue University/BenchmarkPortal, second quarter 2008.
3. Accenture, The customer service challenge: Creating the "perfect" customer call, 2006.

About Accenture

Accenture is a global management consulting, technology services and outsourcing company.

Combining unparalleled experience, comprehensive capabilities across all industries and business functions, and extensive research on the world's most successful companies, Accenture collaborates with clients to help them become high-performance businesses and governments. With more than 176,000 people serving clients in more than 120 countries, the company generated net revenues of US\$21.58 billion for the fiscal year ended Aug. 31, 2009. Its home page is www.accenture.com.

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