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High performance. Delivered.

Achieving high performance
with Accenture's multi-channel
self-service solutions for utilities

• Consulting • Technology • Outsourcing

“Do-it-yourself” service drives customer satisfaction—and bottom-line results

While “customer self-service” might sound like a paradox, customers not only accept but embrace the ability to handle transactions and address questions on their own. Across industries, many service providers are facilitating effective self-service via multiple channels: online, telephone, mobile and short message service (SMS).

Despite the success of self-service in other industries, most retail utilities are lagging behind in realizing the full potential of these capabilities. In fact, utilities are often cautious about self-service. Many feel burned by previous attempts at interactive voice response (IVR) solutions that elicited negative customer feedback and by web-based investments

that have failed to deliver expected results. However, with the right strategy and implementation, IVR can enhance customer satisfaction. And with effective back-end automation to support web-based capabilities, utilities can significantly reduce manual processing and associated costs.

Indeed, leading utilities are already maximizing the strategic potential of self-service channels (see Figure 1). By meeting customers’ expectations for anytime/anywhere access, these utilities are enhancing customer satisfaction. They are also achieving substantial reductions in cost to serve—driving bottom-line results for their organizations.

Did you know?

Accenture analysis shows that by increasing adoption of self-service, a typical utility can save \$1 million to \$3 million or more per year.

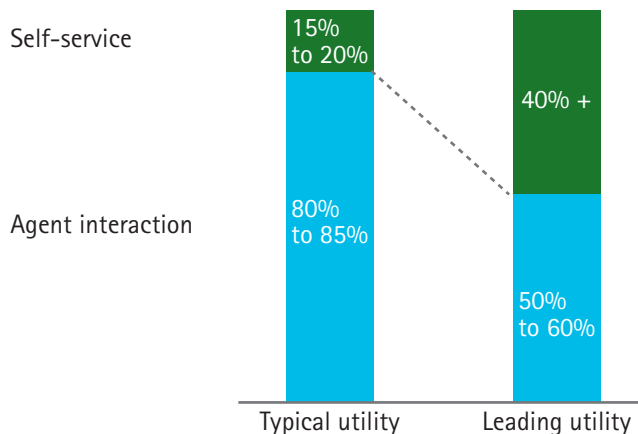
With the right design and menu options, interactive voice response (IVR) has a positive impact on customer satisfaction.¹

A majority of web services offered by a typical utility still require agent interaction and manual forms.²

Figure 1. Multi-channel self-service: A significant opportunity for cost savings.

By increasing self-service adoption, a typical utility could realize annual savings of more than \$1 million to \$3 million, or more.*

Self-service adoption**



* Based upon 2 million annual call volume at \$5 cost per call, 10 to 25 percent net increase in self-service adoption

** IVR Resolution Rate (Proxy for self-service adoption) - North American Client High Performance Customer Care Benchmarks - Accenture (2007)

By tuning existing systems and developing an effective plan for evolving capabilities, utilities can use self-service to drive measurable improvements in customer satisfaction and cost to serve.

Accenture's approach to multi-channel self-service

Virtually every retail utility has implemented one or more forms of self-service—including IVR systems, online capabilities and paperless billing (see Figure 2). But for many, customer adoption rates have languished. Consequently, organizations are unable to realize all of the potential benefits of self-service. Nor are they able to secure funding and support for ongoing improvements that would drive customer adoption and satisfaction and maximize return on investment.

If your organization is working through such challenges, Accenture's multi-channel self-service solutions can help. We have developed a proven, proprietary tool set of diagnostic and implementation capabilities specifically for retail utilities. Focusing on the top 10 self-service transactions for utilities, we analyze customer intentions, channel utilization and usability,

cross-channel consistency and customer segment behavior. We then identify opportunities to deliver substantial cost reductions while increasing customer satisfaction.

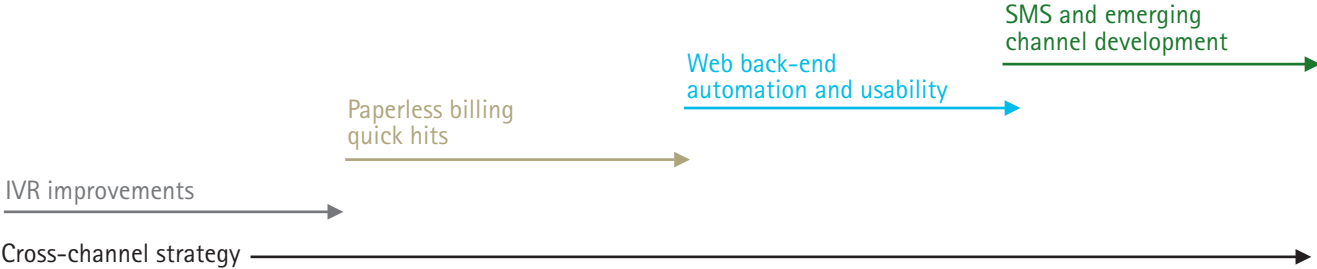
In our experience, retail utilities achieve the best results with a two-pronged approach that first targets enhancements to existing systems. The longer-term objective: to develop an effective cross-channel strategy that improves back-end automation, positions your utility to handle the ever-increasing volume of email correspondence and drives other high-impact improvements. At every step, we help ensure that self-service capabilities address customer intentions and needs, provide optimal benefits to your organization, and allow your customers to interact with you on their terms.

Ultimately, Accenture's multi-channel self-service solutions empower your utility to drive high performance through a better self-service strategy and supporting infrastructure. By tuning existing systems and developing an effective plan for evolving capabilities, utilities can use self-service to drive measurable improvements in customer satisfaction and cost to serve.



Figure 2. Self-service investment focus.

Utilities should first focus self-service investments on interactive voice response (IVR), which will provide the greatest and most immediate returns, while developing a cross-channel strategy to drive other high-impact improvements.



As customer expectations rise and expect access anywhere/anytime, utilities must focus on a cohesive cross-channel strategy that continues to drive down cost to serve.

Increasing use of self-service for a utility

A regulated utility was facing significant pressure to improve their IVR customer experience and to increase customer satisfaction. Accenture recommended some quick-hit improvements to the utility's IVR menu and verbiage. The enhancements delivered real results—including an increase in the IVR resolution rate from 28 to 37 percent and an increase in customer satisfaction of 1 to 2 percentage points.

We know what it takes to optimize multi-channel self-service.

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.

Accenture Customer Satisfaction Survey

In surveying more than 4,000 consumers in nine countries, we gained deep insight into the critical importance of delivering a customer-centric service experience in the current global economy. 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.

Contact us

Accenture's approach to optimizing multi-channel self service is holistic and 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 deliver customer service—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. ©Copyright Chartwell, Inc., Customer Care Center Report, 2008.
2. ©Copyright Chartwell, Inc., Web-Based Customer Service in Utility Industry 2008.

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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