Customer Service: A Utility Perspective

Achieving Excellence in Customer Care with Oracle Utilities CC&B

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For nearly a century, utilities have been drivers of economic development and growth for the customers in the communities they serve. Especially for communities in suburban and largely un-industrialized areas, a utility's connection with the customers it serves is a very personal and important one. However, once-rural markets are growing and changing in ways never seen before, and that personal connection is being challenged by shifts in demographics, consumer demands and mobile computing. As customer base continues to grow, diversify in complexity, and expand its demand for services, providing a personal touch while at the same time building cost-effective mass appeal into its services can be a daunting challenge. The challenge of adapting to new customer demands or scaling services to an ever larger marketplace can be overwhelming, and that challenge can be exacerbated by the aging customer relationship, technologies available to your utility today.

Oracle Utilities Customer Care and Billing (CC&B) is designed to meet the specific needs of utilities facing these challenges and can dramatically expand your ability to maintain close customer relationships while at the same time allowing the flexibility to diversify and standardize your customer service offerings.

MANAGING COMPLEXITY

When a customer reaches out to a utility for service, the first questions that need to be answered are “where?” And “who?”. For most customers, that is an easy set of questions to answer – an address or an account number is all that is needed.

But in more complex scenarios, CC&B allows you to go much deeper into the conversation. Industrial, commercial, and even small business customers often have multiple service locations, have multiple agents authorized to do business with the utility, and can have extremely complex billing needs. CC&B allows the flexibility to put person, account and service location data into a hierarchical structure that can be as simple or as intricate as the business need requires.

There is one place for that data, and it is kept up to date so there are never any outdated records in other applications. If a utility provides multiple types of services, i.e. water, electric, gas, waste water, sanitation, etc., CC&B can

CAPABILITIES AVAILABLE WITHIN CC&B:

- Maintain unlimited person records associated to an account
- Create a single account, or multiple accounts
- Group or individualize service agreements
- Present itemized or summary level bills
- Organize service locations with parent and child relationships
- Contextually search and display information
consolidate customer service functions into a single integrated solution. By capturing and organizing more detailed information about its most important customers, the company can maintain more personal relationships, while at the same time providing streamlined feedback and quality service.

BUSINESS PROCESS ASSISTANT

Not every business offering is so complex. There are certain services that should look and feel the same every time they are executed. Standardizing those business scenarios will reduce errors and improve the quality of customer service. CC&B allows Business Process Assistant (BPA) scripts to be built that will guide customer service representatives through those tasks where standardization is desired. Examples of those scenarios might include taking a payment, starting or stopping a service, or requesting a payment extension/arrangement. As customer demand or market changes influence the volume, frequency, or conditional assessment of such tasks, CC&B will allow you to quickly adjust the logic and workflow necessary to achieve the desired results for these areas of “mass appeal”.

RULES-BASED AUTOMATION

In many aging Customer Information Systems, there are a fair number of manual activities that are intended to simply “keep the system moving”. Those activities range from users generating field orders to manually executing batch jobs in order to process system transactions. CC&B has the capability to automate those manual activities through the creation of event and rules-based algorithms that can execute mundane, but sometimes complex and tedious, clerical tasks in the background while users focus on collecting the important data that will drive the downstream logic. Additionally, CC&B has dedicated configurable functionality for monitoring, analyzing and generating any activities related to collections, severance and write-off business processes, including the creation of any field activities such as connects and disconnects that might be needed. This automation will allow your users to focus on truly servicing the customer rather than working through manually processing transactional data within the system.

CC&B also has the ability to set thresholds, or “exceptions”, allowing someone to ensure the business processes are continuing to work properly as the rules change.

RULES-BASED AUTOMATION:

- Automate monitoring and control over collection and write-off activities, including the creation of adjustments and corrections
- Automatically generate and dispatch field orders
INTEGRATING YOUR BUSINESS SYSTEMS

Utility systems have historically been inefficient and cumbersome to operate due to the amount of manual intervention that is required to get an answer for your business questions or simply to get a desired result. Many customer systems remain largely disconnected from finance, GIS, mobile, outage, etc. which results in hundreds or thousands of man hours each year being spent on manually moving data back and forth between systems. However, CC&B comes with standard integration plug-ins that seamlessly connect your customer data to your other enterprise level systems. Additionally, Oracle’s open framework will allow you to easily extend services beyond the standard integration points to build out your suite of customer-facing, operations-driven and even third-party systems.

With integration comes the ability to more efficiently and reliably respond to the growing needs of your customers, as well as to the needs of your business. As both customers and your core business operations demand more information and demand it more often, an open and flexible CIS solution will be critical to providing the timely and accurate feedback that drives satisfaction and growth for your utility.

PLATFORM FOR THE FUTURE

Growth and change will inevitably be part of the roadmap for success as your utility looks forward to the next ten, twenty or even fifty years of servicing your customers and communities. In order to successfully navigate the changes to come, your utility will need the ability to live up to new expectations of a more complex and demanding customer base, while maintaining strong community relationships with those you serve. CC&B is built for utilities and offers a wide range of flexible, automated and integrated functionalities that will take you well into the next century of service. With the proven strength of Oracle and its partners, you can be assured that as your business needs evolve, so too will Oracle Utilities CC&B. And with Oracle’s entire suite of utilities applications, should your business needs evolve beyond the capabilities of any of your other enterprise applications, CC&B is ready-made to integrate with a number of utility-centric systems that will grow and adapt with your business as well.

INTEGRATION OPTIONS:

- Finance & Banking: know your revenue cash positions immediately
- Mobile: update customers of field status in real-time
- GIS: determine exactly where your services and customers are on the map
- Web & IVR: offer your customers unlimited self-service options
- Payment processors: receive and post payments faster and more reliably
ABOUT EMTEC

Emtec is the right size provider of technology-empowered business solutions for world-class organizations. Our local offices, highly-skilled associates, and global delivery capabilities ensure the accessibility and scale to align your technology solutions with your business needs. Our collective focus is to continue to build clients for life: long-term enterprise relationships that deliver rapid, meaningful, and lasting business value.

ABOUT LUCIDITY

Lucidity Consulting Group, based in Irving, Texas, is an information technology consulting firm that provides advisory, integration, and managed services across the Utilities, Manufacturing and Distribution sectors. Effective April 2015, Lucidity is an Emtec company. The acquisition significantly complements and expands Emtec’s consulting services including additional expertise in the Utilities and Manufacturing industries.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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