

# A Leading Producer and Transporter of Energy

## S N A P S H O T

### OBJECTIVE:

#### Improve Customer Satisfaction & Reduce Overall Handle Time

One of the nation's leading producers and transporters of energy was seeking a partner that could offer them a robust interactive voice response (IVR) platform in conjunction with agent-based solutions. The energy company anticipated rate and fuel cost increases that would drive additional call volume and reduce profit margin. Additionally, the company needed a flexible solution that would support weekly volume spikes. The energy provider also searched for a solution that could perform IVR and agent services more effectively and efficiently without sacrificing quality. These efficiencies would translate into savings that could be put to use with other strategic initiatives and priorities within the company.

The energy leader focused on selecting a partner who could help them meet their goals and stay in compliance with government regulations, while at the same time reducing operational costs. The outsourced provider would need to improve customer satisfaction, reduce overall handle time and create the optimal blend between agents and automation.

After a review of several communications solutions providers, the energy company chose West Corporation for their blended customer contact solution. The decision was based upon several factors:

- Reputation and expertise in the call center and utility industry
- Demonstrated excellence in customer service, as noted by several awards including JD Power & Associates for outstanding customer service, and Frost & Sullivan North American Company of the Year Award in Contact Center Outsourcing.
- Full range of solutions to include contact center agents, home agents, bilingual agent solutions, IVR services and industry leading hosted workforce management
- Business continuity and emergency planning
- Willingness to contractually commit to providing continuous quality improvement and savings

#### THE WEST SOLUTION: A Customized Suite of Blended Solutions

The company leveraged West's technology and agent resources that shared best practices and worked hand in hand to compliment the energy company's three existing call centers. Over 450 of West's agents were dedicated to take call types such as billing and payment questions, residential turn-on and turn-off service orders, credit requests, transfer upsells, outages and collections. West was held consistently to the same KPIs as the client's internal call centers.

Through our tenured management team and technology, West delivered a robust reporting package that included historical and near real-time executive dashboards as well as online access to reports through a secure web portal.

Our blended agent and technology solution included the following features:

- **Network ACD** – With West's ACD, we were able to intelligently route customer calls between multiple call center sites based upon predetermined rules and parameters. Robust reporting and call management capabilities exist within the technology, which provided the energy company and West the ability to make sound routing decisions and to "drill down" on key agent activities
- **Natural Language Speech Recognition** – Allowed callers to "speak" responses rather than pressing keys. By allowing callers to speak naturally what they wanted to do, we were able to minimize the number of menus that are offered up and ultimately get the customer to the best available agent with the appropriate skills to handle that particular call type. Natural language recognizes virtually any spoken English word and most spoken character strings. The costs savings comes from reduced misdirects and improved first call resolution.

- 100% of calls answered in 60 seconds
- Stretch Goal of 15 Second ASA met for additional PUC incentives
- 70% of eligible third party bundled services calls transferred to the appropriate agents, previous internal rate was less than 20%
- Over 250% lift in revenue from third party transfers
- Decrease in annual minutes for the entire group of call centers by 9.8% in 5 years
- 11% reduction in AHT vs. internal call center
- 5% Reduction in transfer rate back to client in a six month period
- Over \$1.8 million in annualized savings from labor



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- **Work-At-Home** – As a proven consultative partner, the energy company asked West for a flexible solution to deal with high call volume in the early part of every week, as well as emergency outage calls, West Work-at-Home solution was implemented. The West home agent program allowed for more scalability, and roughly 25% (more if needed) of calls being handled in the home agent model. The program has shown to be helpful in meeting KPI goals such as ASA. Recently with a consistent reduction of ASA under 15 seconds, West has helped achieve goals to receive government incentives from the Public Utilities Commission.
- **Workforce Management** – One of the energy providers needs was the ability to better utilize and manage agent schedules; West's Workforce Management system Spectrum, was utilized. Spectrum is designed and built by West Corporation, and is the culmination of over 23 years of WFM experience that precisely matches agent schedules with call volume needs thus providing very granular labor (cost) controls. Spectrum's agent empowerment features allow the agent more flexibility thereby increasing employee satisfaction, attendance, and decreasing attrition. [www.agentempowerment.com](http://www.agentempowerment.com)

## THE RESULTS:

### Meet Compliance, Reduced Quantity of Call Minutes and Increased Customer Satisfaction

West helped reduce the total number of call minutes for the entire enterprise while increasing the quality of customer care calls. West consistently outperformed the client's internal center in ASA and AHT metrics. While handling approximately 250,000 calls per month, West was able to meet and exceed KPI metrics, increase customer satisfaction and reduce labor costs. A high level summary of results included below:

- **Decrease in Annual Minutes.** Through a combination of IVR automation, first call resolution, call que management, lower AHT, and flexible home agent work force, West was able to decrease annual minutes for the entire group of call centers by 9.8% over 5 years.
- **Improved Average Speed of Answer.** With West's tried and tested Workforce Management System (Spectrum), we were able to more effectively staff for peak and non-peak times. This coupled with the availability of home agents allowed a KPI to be met and 100% of calls answered in 60 seconds or less. Additionally our client challenged us for a stretch goal of 15 second ASA to meet PUC standards for additional program funding, which was met.
- **Transfer of Third Party Bundled Services Calls.** The energy provider had an existing partnership with a third party bundled services provider, that assists customers with activating their television, internet, and telephone services while setting up their utilities. The process involves sending the customer data from the energy provider's system to the third party vendor, as well as transferring them directly to the third party IVR. The successful completion of both constitutes a conversion of the call and an additional revenue stream for the energy provider. Prior to West's involvement, the conversion rate was less than 20% with internal resources, after West's integration with the program the success rate increased to over 70%. This translated to a 250% lift in revenue from third party transfers and upsells.
- **Reduction in Transfer Rate.** When a customer is not satisfied with his or her result the call is escalated and transferred back to a management level with the provider. Prior to West's involvement, the average rate was 13%, West reduced this to 8% within 6 months with the advent of voice self-service call handling.
- **Maintaining Compliance.** West continued to meet state legislative goals, which prevented the energy company from receiving fines for not meeting handle time requirements, and in many cases exceeded PUC goals which resulted in additional government incentives.
- **Creating Efficiencies with Our Interactive Voice Response.** Our tailor-made gas application IVR had an average resolution trending at approximately 7% while the electric IVR application had an average resolution trending at roughly 8%. We also added an option for Bill Payment Extensions in March 2009 that allowed customers to apply for a payment extension through the voice self-service system instead of talking to an agent.

The tier one energy provider has been pleased with West's blend of agent and interactive voice response (IVR) performance and their ability to yield results. They have consistently expanded the relationship to meet ongoing challenges and with West best practices, realized the benefits of additional savings. Over the course of the relationship it is estimated that West has saved the company \$1.8 Million annually in labor costs by improved ASR automation, reducing ASA and blending of home agents. Additionally, West managed to improve quality by 8%. Due to the successful partnership with West, millions of dollars in savings and additional revenue were added to the bottom line. This translated to the ability to free up valuable resources and dollars that could be dedicated to furthering CRM advancement and Smart Grid technologies.



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