

CASE STUDY

Greater Cincinnati Water Works (GCWW)

“WE’RE SAVING 1.5 CENTS A PIECE—WHICH IS TREMENDOUS WHEN YOU CONSIDER THAT WE PROCESS 1.5 MILLION PIECES ANNUALLY.”

Mark Menkhaus, Assistant Superintendent, Greater Cincinnati Water Works
Commercial Services Division



DOC1 SOFTWARE SUITE ENABLED
GREATER CINCINNATI WATER
WORKS TO IMPROVE CUSTOMER
SATISFACTION, INCREASE
PRODUCTIVITY AND REDUCE COSTS

Challenge

GCWW struggled to provide customers with an easy to read statement that not only included the critical information they needed on a monthly or quarterly basis, but also displayed individualized messaging that was customized to each customer.

Solution

By implementing Pitney Bowes Business Insight’s DOC1 solution suite, GCWW improved statement production and readability, gained printing flexibility, lowered supply and administrative costs, and drastically improved both customer service and satisfaction.

SUMMARY

The Greater Cincinnati Water Works (GCWW) utility serves 1,100,000 customers with 270,000 accounts. Of those, 220,000 are billed quarterly, with the balance billed monthly. In addition, GCWW provides customer service for six external agencies. Further illustrating the volume of customer care required from this utility, in 2004, GCWW received 490,609 calls into its Call Center.

It Started with the Bill

GCWW utilized an older version of Indus’ Bill Print that had been heavily modified. Prior to implementing Pitney Bowes Business Insight’s DOC1 Software suite, the statements produced by GCWW used fixed-pitch fonts and were created on pre-printed stock. The result was a bill that had little information and was difficult for the customer to read. Utilizing DOC1 software, GCWW improved the legibility of the statement. Plus, DOC1 enabled GCWW to send customers personalized messages.

“For example, if a customer was on a payment plan, the bill never told them how much they owed, how much the next bill would be, and when it would be due. Now we do. In another instance, we had a snowstorm that affected some of our routes. For those customers, we had to estimate their bill. With this software, we were able to alert only those customers affected, that their bill was estimated that month because their meters couldn’t be read.” Mark Menkhaus, Assistant Superintendent, Commercial Services Division.

“From a customer service aspect, the greatest improvement is the readability of the new bill. When customers call in for other issues, they used to tell us, this bill is impossible to read. Now they tell us, there’s so much more useful information on this new bill.” Paul Vonder Meulan, Information Technology Assistant Manager.

Created Greater Flexibility

DOC1 software enabled GCWW to react to and manage change more effectively. “The City of Cincinnati changed its payment lockbox. With the old system, we would have had pre-printed stock with all the wrong information. Now, all the boilerplate information is printed on-the-fly. We didn’t need to trash all the pre-printed stock and utilize administrative time managing cutover dates and coordinating with the operators to make sure they don’t pull a box of the wrong stock,” explained Mr. Menkhaus.

Reduced Costs

DOC1 software enabled GCWW to reduce their paper costs significantly. According to Mr. Menkhaus, “For multiple page bills, we can now print on the front and back of the second and ensuing pages. We also have different bill formats for different customers. For instance, an industrial plant will have several water meters and we can now send them one consolidated bill that shows each meter’s usage.”

“FROM A CUSTOMER SERVICE ASPECT, THE GREATEST IMPROVEMENT IS THE READABILITY OF THE NEW BILL.”

Paul Vonder Meulan, Information Technology Assistant Manager, Greater Cincinnati Water Works

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GCWW has also realized postage savings. Mr. Menkhaus explains, “It used to be that people all over the building were mail merging documents in large quantities. Within DOC1, we created 40-50 letter templates that agents can access. These are batched at night and sent to our print and mail facility.”

Outsourcing Options

Utilizing DOC1 software, GCWW can now outsource their print and mail operations. “We were doing our printing and insertion in-house, but we didn’t have redundancy in either equipment or operators. Now we give the DOC1-generated print file to a print and mail service bureau,” says Mr. Vonder Meulan. “This is important as it enables us to provide billing and customer service to other utilities. Now we do the water and sewer billing for Butler County Department of Environmental Services. We produce a custom bill for Butler County, consolidate their bills with ours to maximize postage savings and enable their customer service agents to view bills online. We could never have offered this service before because we could not have guaranteed reliability. Now we can take on other customers with confidence,” continued Mr. Vonder Meulan.

Archiving and the Next Step

DOC1 Archive has further enhanced customer service while increasing employee satisfaction. In the past, the 40 customer service agents could not see a customer’s bill unless they printed it and retrieved it from one of the two printers in the building that could facilitate the pre-printed form—requiring more time and money to resolve customer issues.

The DOC1 Archive solution enables every agent to view an exact copy of the bill while the customer is on the phone. GCWW reports that, as a result, customer satisfaction and productivity improved—as expected. Wholly unexpected was the lift in employee satisfaction as this capability enabled them to perform their jobs better.

To further service the needs of their customers, GCWW is planning on developing an change Electronic Bill Presentment and Payment strategy. Leveraging the DOC1 Archive repository, GCWW expects this execution to progress flawlessly.

THE PITNEY BOWES BUSINESS INSIGHT ADVANTAGE

Through its partnership with Pitney Bowes Business Insight, and the implementation of the DOC1 solution, GCWW has dramatically improved their statement and billing process, gained workflow flexibility, cut costs, and boosted both customer and employee satisfaction to new levels.

