

CENTRICA BRITISH GAS

The UK's Largest Supplier of Gas and Electricity
Improves Customer Service



BACKGROUND

British Gas (part of the Centrica group) is the largest energy supplier to Britain's domestic and business market segments. Operating under the British Gas brand (Scottish Gas in Scotland), the company provides gas and electricity services to 15.7million residential accounts and over one million small and medium business (SMB) and enterprise business users. Because the company operates in a highly competitive market, consistently achieving high levels of customer service is of critical importance.

In recent years, British Gas has invested in systems and people to improve customer service. A key element of this is the ability to provide information to front-line agents to enhance their ability to deal with customer enquiries quickly and effectively.

The Challenge

Mark Cobley, manager, Integrated Correspondence Information Systems, British Gas, explains that while Customer Services Advisors have access to the SAP Billing and Siebel CRM systems, a number of additional disparate systems are used to access customer correspondence.

Furthermore, the systems do not provide an exact view of the letter sent to the customer. Customer enquiries were taking longer to handle, and on occasion, the call had to be transferred to another staff member.

"Our Energy Supply business receives over 200,000 calls each week from customers to discuss their energy accounts," Cobley explains. "Our Service and Repair business can receive 160,000 calls per week from customers wanting to book a boiler service or repair, particularly during the autumn and winter months. Yet our front-line service teams were not able to instantly retrieve an exact image of customer correspondence, such as energy bills, to enable customer enquiries to be dealt with in a timely manner.

"We wanted to give our customer service representatives instant access to relevant documents including gas and electricity bills, non-payment debt-related letters, and inbound letters received from our customers."

At a Glance

- Each week British Gas answers 360,000 calls from customers to call centres in the UK
- In addition British Gas sends out over 270,000 documents every day — these documents include statements, letters, energy efficiency reports, reminders, cheques and statutory letters
- In many cases these documents need to be retained for legal and compliance reasons as well as for reference and customer service
- British Gas wanted to take advantage of digital delivery to reduce postage costs
- Several separate archives were used for storing customer communications and call centre staff did not always have access to these
- CrawfordTech and EMC were asked to bring their experience of customer correspondence archiving to bear on this problem

Solution

British Gas selected EMC and CrawfordTech to provide a centralized electronic document management solution which has improved the customer experience. All outbound letters, including energy bills, debt collection correspondence, connection letters, and similar critical customer communications, are automatically archived from the print center. In total, the solution archives and manages approximately 330 million documents with approximately 87 million added per annum, enabling customer service staff to access these at the click of a button on the CRM system.

Similarly, inbound letters are scanned and a copy loaded into the archive in addition to the copy sent into the back office for action.

Today, 5,000 British Gas customer services personnel based across six contact centers use this solution to view the information required to resolve customer queries. "British Gas has joined forces with Sainsbury's, the British-based supermarket chain, to supply customers under the Sainsbury's Energy brand," Cobley states, "where customers often sign up in the store, and the signed contracts are captured on a sales tablet and transferred into the Documentum repository."

Improving Customer Service Levels

Cobley points out the substantial customer and staff experience improvements that have resulted from the Documentum implementation. "First, because customer service personnel have the right information at their fingertips, they are able to reduce the amount of time on the telephone with each customer. The integration of Documentum provides our staff with an exact view-in full colour of every bill or letter. Prior to this, many of our documents were viewed in SAP; while this contained the information, it was in a different format." An example of the feedback received states, this system gives you the ability to talk to customers about their bills and letters with confidence. For the first time, we can see the exact information contained on the bill can easily refer to it in our conversations."

Online Presentment and Self Service

More recently British Gas has provided access to the correspondence archive available through its customer website. About 8000 Customers every day view summary statements and another 2000 download their correspondence and bills. The online portal reduces the load on call center staff and improves customer satisfaction through self-service.

In addition by making bills available online British Gas is able to offer online only tariffs. Of the 330 million documents sent each day approximately 80,000 of the total remain as digital only copies which results in saving in printing and postage of approximately £3 million each year.

CrawfordTech Solutions

Crawford Technologies develops software and solutions to help enterprises optimize and improve the secure and accessible delivery, storage and presentment of their customer communications.

With over 1,800 customers on six continents, CrawfordTech solutions and know-how enable the largest banks, insurers, healthcare providers, utilities and print services companies to use their existing technologies, documents and data in new ways. We help them navigate the challenges in leveraging legacy applications in the platforms and applications of the future.

CrawfordTech's products, services and domain expertise reside at the nexus of content, data, and output management and are essential components of our customers' digital transformation, output management and document accessibility strategies

Meeting Compliance Requirements

Cobley notes that the solution will also enable the company to meet its compliance obligations. “The current processes in place for meeting the regulations set out by the Financial Services Authority which apply to our Service and Repair business were often time consuming, but now correspondence is available at the touch of a button.

“The solution is useful for auditing, proving a history of paper-based and email correspondence between British Gas and the customer is available.”

EMC and CrawfordTech Consulting for Best Practice

Finally, Cobley states that British Gas relied on EMC and CrawfordTech Consulting Services to get the most out of the solution. “When we selected the solution, we started with a pilot program. EMC and CrawfordTech helped us with the solution installation and implementation as well as the knowledge transfer to ensure that our internal project and support teams gained the skills required to maintain and enhance the system. We wanted to make certain that we were using Documentum optimally. We continue to use EMC Consulting Services to ensure that we adopt best practice.”

“The pilot approach also helped us to ensure that the solution would be acceptable to the larger user community,” continues Cobley. “By using a pilot, we could iron out any issues that might have been encountered before going live. We also knew that if our pilot team liked the new solution, its use would spread throughout the organization. As it turned out, they the solution very much, and it was quickly adopted by the rest of the relevant staff.

“In choosing EMC Documentum, we desired to adopt an industry-leading electronic document management solution to improve our customer service levels. EMC Documentum is now helping us daily to reinforce our company’s customer- focused commitment.”

Conclusion

Crawford Technologies has a fifteen year track record of customer communications solutions. We have the products and expertise that is used by hundreds of customers around the world to optimize print operations and archiving.

Utility companies are seeking fundamentally new ways of addressing the challenges of print stream archiving. Now in partnership with EMC, Crawford Technologies offer market leading print stream archiving technology integrated with the EMC’s ECM solutions.

PRO Archiver is a tried and tested print stream archiving solution and over 90 EMC customers can testify to the benefits of putting customer communications in an enterprise archive using this technology.