How one utilities company used eAdoption to put customer experience first

When a leading utilities company transitioned customer communication from print mail to email, it changed the game to earn—and keep—its customers' loyalty.

Energy companies are not typically regarded for their award-winning digital customer service—rather, for facilitating basic needs: providing oil, natural gas, electricity and other essential services for home and business.

But one WhatCounts, an OSG company, customer is different. Beyond providing best-in-class natural gas service to about half a-million households and businesses in one of the USA's fastest growing states, our client prides itself on fostering beneficial relationships with customers. Over the past several years, the company has been meeting and exceeding customer expectations through focused and well-executed strategies to help the many customers interested in receiving to exclusively digital correspondence.

Since 2014, this utilities company has partnered with WhatCounts, a Digital Communication and Marketing Automation platform focused on utilities and financial verticals. **Acknowledging that utilities and retail energy providers were generally not the first companies to adopt new digital marketing technologies, WhatCounts embraced the opportunity to help our client leapfrog many of its competitors in meeting customers wherever they are on the digital road—and do so quickly, securely, and accurately.**

Not Your Traditional Utilities Company

Using a combination of primary and secondary marketing research, the focus on "full steam ahead" digital approach has set a new mark for its industry cohorts to follow. With the help of WhatCounts, they were able to transform its communications with customers—not simply through necessary transactional messages, but also through an emphasis on timely and personalized content, promotional offers and customer satisfaction surveys. But why was the leap to digital worth it?

For the past several years, our client's marketing team has remained laser focused on providing customers up-to-date, real-time information delivered through an immediate, trackable channel: email. According to them, **email represents the most cost-efficient means of relaying messaging to customers**—plus, such missives can be delivered in seconds as opposed to days.

Begin With Customer Expectations, Honor Preferences

Although their research informed that many customers were tiring of print mail, the company focused on digitizing the business critical messages first, while honoring customers' varying appetites for email-exclusive communication. The Company began with emailed bill notifications, order confirmations, and renewal email messaging, but has continued to expand both the number of customers served via email, but also the number and types of messages customers receive. By having each message able to access an email preference center (also accessible via the online self-service website), customers are in control of what types of communication they'd like to receive.
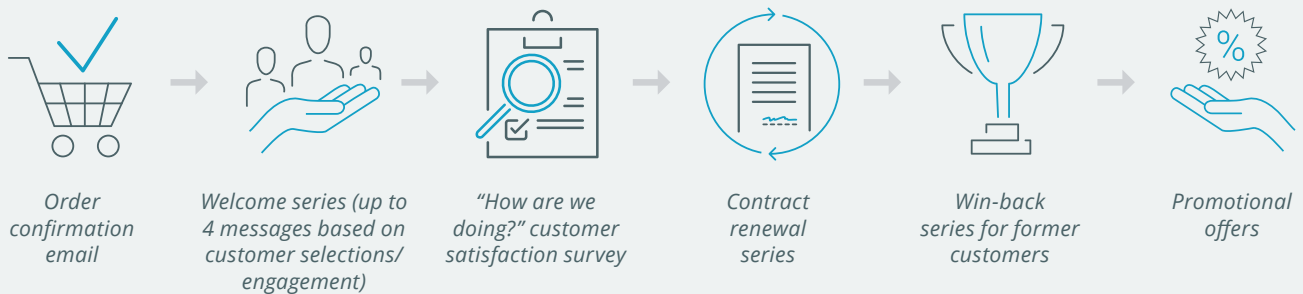
Transitioning From Costly Print To Digital Communication - Accuracy Matters

Upon signing up with the utility company, customers are asked to provide an email address as part of their account. But as more and more communication became digital only, the need for consistent, accurate email collection has proved to be a challenge worth focusing on. **A three-pronged approach has increased accurate email collection, and now upwards of 80% of customers have a good email address on file, and remain opted-in.** Call center representatives are tracked and provided incentives for collecting accurate email addresses. Existing customers without email addresses on file are reached via multiple print campaigns aimed at collecting email address for them, often as inserts to other existing campaigns, with multiple methods offered to supply their current email address. Lastly, all of the systems and websites that represent digital touchpoints were updated to alert customers during digital interactions that the company was missing an accurate email address, and support collection.
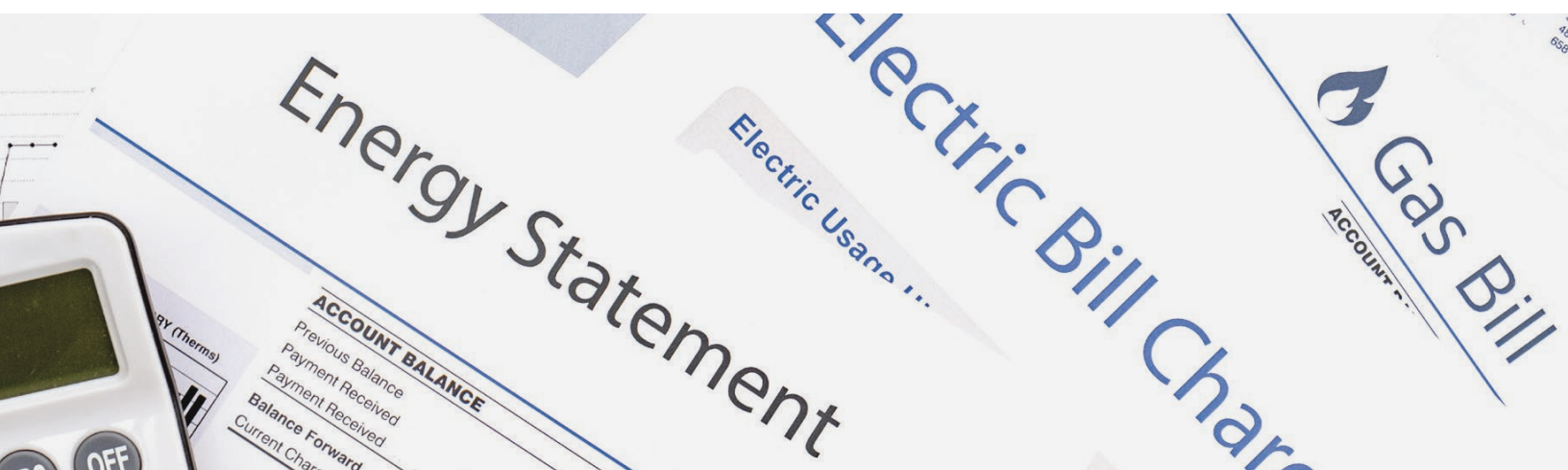
First Phase: Maintaining Customer Engagement With Lifecycle Marketing

With a high percentage of email addresses on record, legitimate strategies in digital communications were possible. Soon after online billing and payments became available to all customers, the company focused on lifecycle marketing to keep its customers engaged. These messages were cost-prohibitive in print, but easy to deliver digitally, with superior engagement, and near instant results via A/B Testing. By working hand-in-glove with WhatCounts' Customer Success Manager, our customer's marketing team was able to design creative, automated workflows for numerous successful email campaigns including these.

| Order confirmation email | Welcome series (up to 4 messages based on customer selections/ engagement) | "How are we doing?" customer satisfaction survey | Contract renewal series | Win-back series for former customers | Promotional offers |

Through integration with WhatCounts, these campaigns were completely automated to send custom, personalized communications to customers based on any number of customer data points and situations.

Second Phase: Transactional Communication

As our client grew both paperless billing, and multiple campaigns covering a wide swath of expected customer situations, some communications, especially personalized ones, remained print-only. They are currently working with WhatCounts on a solution to help it close in on the Shangri-Las of digital communication - 100% of communications are available for customers requesting such.

| Paperless billing | Payment confirmation | Sign up for new service | Renew service | A Greener Life Campaign encouraging customers to halt paper communications |

We are quite glad you have been so client-focused and adjusted your product and processes to help meet our needs. I consider you our favorite partner… Not a vendor!"

Manager of Digital Marketing and Analysis

Leading The Industry With Innovation

Even after the utility company accomplished its goal of nearly 100% electronic communications, it continued to innovate in the industry, inspiring WhatCounts to develop a feature that would solve yet another unmet need. Due to the regulated nature of the industry, Records Management rules exist that require companies to store, archive, and retrieve customers' transaction and communication history.

With this challenge to give email the same standing as the stored and encrypted PDFs of print materials, they asked WhatCounts for a feature that would capture and store a secure image to mirror what each customer received via email. **Collaboration with WhatCounts produced the novel Email Snapshot.** Thanks to this feature, WhatCounts customers in any industry can select whether the contents of any email (batched or API) should be 'Snapshotted' and saved securely. In this client's case, the primary need was for regulatory compliance, but a major benefit also exists for the call center team who can quickly and easily retrieve the email communications a customer received.

Are you a utilities company—or any customer-driven business—ready to take your communications to the next level? **Let WhatCounts be your partner for increasing customer satisfaction, loyalty and renewals.** We have the stats—and the supporters—to back it up.

OSG Let's go connect.

About OSG

For more than 25 years, OSG has been a leading outsourced provider of omnichannel billing and payment solutions, offering a full suite of integrated customer communications and engagement solutions that transform the way our clients reach their customers. From transactional documents to strategic marketing initiatives, OSG employs cutting-edge digital technology to expertly craft communications that enhance the customer experience. OSG's reputation for excellence is based upon award-winning communications solutions and long-term investment in clients' success.