Managing Meter Data and Getting Full Value Out of Your Systems

Too often, utilities that have deployed AMI have found out that capturing the potential value inherent in advanced metering systems involves more than just replacing meters with newer digital meters. In fact, far too many utilities have found that deploying AMI without optimizing processes and data flows only results in more complications as the utility finds itself flooded with meter data and trying to manage a new system with legacy operational practices. Fortunately, addressing these issues can create positive change – resulting in operational and financial impacts that can be quantified.

AMI should be more than using the latest new technology, but rather finding ways to use technology to achieve measurable business results. For example, utilities that have employed careful and thoughtful approaches to process improvement using AMI have found a wide range of benefits, including:

- Reduced frequency of special/off-cycle meter reads
- Improved customer service capabilities
- Reduced back-office expenses
- Reduced call volume
- Reduced cycle times and costs for service reconnects
- Reduced truck rolls
- Reduced outage minutes
- Increased utility revenue

Achieving gains in these areas and others does not happen by accident. There needs to be a thoughtful process put in place to address the inherent need for change management – updating work processes to account for the new technologies put in place. Some of the common challenges for utilities include:

Issue	Legacy Approach	Process Improvement
Billing Process	Meter data is moved manually on a monthly basis into the CIS	The implmentation of a Meter Data Management system allows for an automated and continous process throughout the month
High Bill Complaints	Customers calling with high bill complaints frequently result in meters having to be bench tested to ensure accuracy	The meter can now be automatically pinged on demand by a CSR to ensure accuracy while the customer is on the phone
Outage Management	Line workers have to try to assess the location of the fault and "find" the source of the outage in order to engage in restoration efforts	An OMS that is fully integrated into the AMI system automatically locates the source of the fault and provides dispatching support
Customer Leak Detection	Customers with unusually high water bills may be flagged for potential internal leaks - by that time the leak imay be over 30 days old	Monitoring systems that engage with the MDM identify potential customer leaks within 72 hours and provide a process to notify customers
Asset Management	Meter data is never used in making decisions about maintenance schedules; decisions are made on a perceived "best practices" basis	An asset optimization scheme can be set up to utilize meter data and other system metrics in order to optimize asset replacement and maintenance schedules

Small Shovel can help utilities to increase operational efficiency. Small Shovel works with its clients to ensure that process change accompanies the deployment of new technologies. By managing the data for utilities, Small Shovel explores ways to unearth the value inherent in metering system data. Some of the ways we can help include:

- Managing day-to-day AMI/MDM system operations to alleviate the strain of system management and maintenance
- Supporting workflows to streamline meter-to-cash
- Providing IT/OT support for all parts of the organization
- Delivering canned and ad hoc reports on a routine basis to free up time from your office staff
- Automatically delivering exceptions report and reports of other items the utility needs to know about (irregular usage, identifying suspected leaks)

How can Small Shovel help your utility? Contact us at info@smallshovel.com to find out!

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