Hosted IVR Solution
Improves Customer Interaction and Crew Response

Tennessee's Nashville Electric Service used to maintain a set number of telephone lines to handle outage calls. The lines worked well during normal operations, but major, storm-related outages overwhelmed the system, frustrating customers and hampering utility crews.
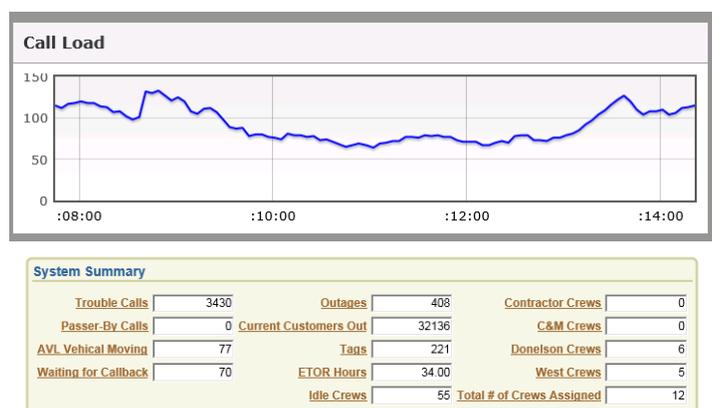
Specifically, NES's internal interactive voice response (IVR) system made a limited amount of lines available for incoming outage calls and outgoing callbacks. When the volume of calls exceeded the capacity of the internal system, calls were transferred to an external high volume call center. But there were script differences between the internal outage IVR and the external overflow IVR systems. Challenges with speech recognition and database synchronization put further pressure on the customer interaction. In order to eliminate busy signals that upset customers and to ultimately reduce the duration of an outage call, NES replaced its internal outage IVR system and hosted overflow call taker with a comprehensive hosted IVR service from Milsoft Utility Solutions.

While the old system was limited to a maximum of 238 telephone lines for incoming outage calls and outgoing callbacks, the new IVR solution from Milsoft can provide upwards of 400 lines per outage for less cost.

"Moving to a single system hosted offsite for all of our incoming outage calls and outgoing callbacks has allowed NES to significantly increase our outage line capacity, consolidate our services and offer one point of entry for a customer," said Billy Draper, the utility's chief database coordinator. "Milsoft provides NES with a true turnkey solution. We no longer worry about IVR upgrades, licenses, and phone line capacity. We consolidated two aging systems into one hosted solution and now provide a quality product to our customers and reduced our costs in the process. Milsoft is enabling NES to concentrate on keeping the lights on."

According to Draper, the Milsoft team is a group of "highly capable, responsible and professional individuals." NES's Milsoft account representative held weekly status meetings during the deployment phase, to keep on track an aggressive three month project schedule. The Milsoft help desk is available to NES personnel on a 24/7/365 basis. NES uses an outage management system which allows the utility to dispatch crews to areas identified by outage calls, and Milsoft has written the interface from the hosted IVR system to the outage management system to great success.

As an illustration of Milsoft's ability to respond during a crisis, a major storm hit the Nashville area in July 2015, knocking out electric service for more than 30,000 customers. To manage the storm's impact, Milsoft reduced the incoming call time by adding a server to the NES setup. NES tracked IVR calls into the outage management system at the rate of a little over one per second for sustained periods of time. It was likely the highest IVR traffic volume NES has ever experienced, and the Milsoft team worked

Call Load

System Summary

Trouble Calls	3430	Outages	408	Contractor Crews	0
Passer-By Calls	0	Current Customers Out	32136	C&M Crews	0
AVL Vehical Moving	77	Tags	221	Donelson Crews	6
Waiting for Callback	70	ETOR Hours	34.00	West Crews	5
		Idle Crews	55	Total # of Crews Assigned	12

with NES personnel in real-time, to increase the capacity of the system for as long as was necessary.

"I am confident our customers like the new consolidated outage script because it is much easier to report an outage using the new flow," said Billy Draper. "The numbers also indicate that it takes less time to report an outage using the new system."

As part of its power restoration process, NES dedicates resources to communicating with customers about the utility's automated system to capture outage information and send crews to restore service. Via the utility website and public relations materials, NES explains to customers they can report an outage online through "My Account," via text message from a mobile device or by calling a dedicated phone number. In return, customers may receive status updates via text message and view an online outage map for system updates.

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