



“Working with Deloitte has enabled us to bring in a major application that works well for our business. Not only can we offer customers the options they demand, but we can better support our customer service organization.”

– Charlene Sevier, IT manager, Newport News Waterworks

Newport News makes waves in the water industry.

After implementing a new Customer Information System (CIS) built on SAP® technology, Newport News Waterworks is effectively transforming its municipal utility service into a leading customer-driven operation.

Newport News Waterworks is a regional water provider, owned and operated by the City of Newport News. Its IT Manager, Charlene Sevier, manages a division of twenty-two employees who handle everything from networking and help desk issues to records management and process controls within the organization. And for years, this staff has been relying on an aging legacy system to manage a customer base of 400,000 people in Hampton, Newport News, Poquoson, and portions of York County and James City County.

More and more the system was proving to be ill-equipped to meet growing customer service requirements and changing regulations. The time had come for the organization to invest in a new CIS built on SAP technology, but implementing such a transformative system would be no easy task.

Complex problems, powerful solutions

For utilities, the CIS is the critical backbone of customer case operations. From metering to billing, payments to collections, these applications are at the heart of a great customer experience and support all aspects of revenue management. However, such applications are subject to a constantly changing environment.

“Many of us are now familiar with the Check Clearing for the 21st Century Act (or Check 21 Act), a federal law that allows the recipient of a paper check to create a digital version, thereby eliminating the need for further handling of the physical document,” says Sevier. “While this is increasing the speed in which checks are processed, it’s one example of how a single change adds enormous complexity to a CIS solution.”

This complexity is further compounded by the impact of changing postal regulations and customer demands for more payment options. When you factor in all of the different elements coming into the system (e.g., resident or tenant information, security deposits, meter reads and payment processing) with the wide range of output (e.g., bills and late notices), as well as commonplace occurrences, such as move ins and move outs, it’s clear that managing a new CIS would be complicated.

Impacts from transformation:

- Enhanced customer service
- Improved asset management and workflows
- Better people management

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To help simplify the transition and maximize results, Newport News Waterworks engaged the skill of an experienced integrator, Deloitte, to implement a SAP-based CIS solution.

From turbulent to smooth operational flow

As Newport News Waterworks and Deloitte worked together in the planning phase, careful consideration was given to how the utility company was going to support the system. Without a major data center, the utility relied on Deloitte to provide the hardware and personnel to run the software for a period of time until it was able to transition over to a hosted solution.

“A lot of companies may not be able to provide those capabilities, but Deloitte was able to – all under one umbrella, one set of management – which allowed us to be free to focus on the details of the project,” explains Sevier.

Another area in which Deloitte lent a helping hand was in addressing the sheer complexity of the CIS. Like many others in the industry, Newport News Waterworks’ CIS had a number of interfaces to other systems. Deloitte’s ability and willingness to serve as the prime contractor to those other vendors enabled an effective transition.

In the last three to four years post CIS implementation, Newport News Waterworks has made tremendous progress. Today, it is achieving:

- **Enhanced customer service:** The utility now offers customers the payment options they asked for, such as direct debit, eBilling, and budget billing.
- **Improved asset management and workflow:** Increased asset visibility is yielding improved infrastructure longevity and reliability. Smooth and efficient workflows provide real-time information across departments and support regulatory reporting and compliance.
- **Better people management:** The IT division has matured in its ability to manage a major application.

The water industry has come a long way with the evolution of new technologies, and utility companies like Newport News Waterworks are significantly benefiting from them in every area of operation, particularly in the field of customer service. As Sevier explains, “Life has been interesting these last few years. From redesigning bills to undertaking rate structure changes, we have a constant slew of initiatives going on – all of which enable us to do more and be more for our customers.”

A utility’s relationship with its customers is one of many important facets of success and through the implementation of a new CIS under Deloitte’s guidance, Newport News Waterworks is proud to be leading the way.

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“Deloitte and Waterworks work in a joint partnership when it comes to the various projects and initiatives that are underway. Regardless of whether it’s a technical support pack upgrade or a rate structure change, Deloitte helps us craft a project plan so that everyone knows what their role is and when they’re expected to participate.”

– Charlene Sevier, IT manager at Newport News Waterworks

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