

Client /
Hydro One

Annual Volumes /
2.5 million total calls
11 Million bills issued
1.5 million agent handled calls
200,000 pieces of customer correspondence
per year

Services Include /
Inbound and back office customer care
Business customer centre
Inbound collections
Theft of power collections
Retailer and applications support

Term /
10 years

Start /
March 2002 -
February 2012

CASE STUDY /

Hydro One and Vertex



"In support of our corporate goal of improving customer satisfaction through quality experiences, Vertex teamed with us to develop a plan that has yielded exceptional results. Our joint analysis of the metrics that drive customer satisfaction enabled us to better understand and serve our customers. We are pleased to have a collaborative partner with a shared focus and commitment to ongoing quality improvement."

David Adams, Senior Manager - Outsourcing Relationship Development,
Hydro One Networks

Brief

Hydro One is an Ontario, Canada based utility that is one of the five largest transmission utilities in North America. As the stewards of critical provincial assets, Hydro One works with its industry partners to ensure that electricity can be delivered safely, reliably, and affordably to its customers.

Vertex has been providing business process outsourcing (BPO) services to Hydro One since 2002. In 2006 Hydro One approached Vertex and indicated that one of their corporate goals was to dramatically improve customer satisfaction as a result of the Hydro One customer satisfaction survey. At that point, Hydro One customer satisfaction scores on agent handled calls had hovered in the 75-76% range for several years. Up to that time, the relationship with Vertex had focused on significant reductions to cost with no erosion to service offered to customers. Now, Hydro One was looking to Vertex to help lead the drive to improve the customer experience.

Response

In 2007 Vertex and Hydro One entered into collaborative discussions to evaluate and analyze the historical customer satisfaction scores, and to work jointly to develop a plan to radically modify the customer experience and improve customer satisfaction. Those discussions led down several paths, and the parties mutually agreed to target the following areas for change:

- The Vertex/Hydro One Quality program
- A cultural adjustment that would reflect the change in focus
- Technology that could help to support Hydro One's goals
- End-to-end process review

For the last 18 months, Vertex has been working closely with Hydro One to help them deliver on their goal of significant improvements to customer satisfaction. For the most recent period, customer satisfaction on agent handled calls has reached 84.5%, which represents almost a 10% increase over an 18 month period.

Results delivered

- Customer satisfaction scores on agent handled calls increased from 76% in 2006 to 85% in 2008
- 'Virtual Hold' customer satisfaction levels at 90%
- Quality monitoring program changes yielded a 10% increase in first call resolution
- 'Pay for performance' program results excellent

POSITIVELY
CHARGED
VERTEX
BUSINESS SERVICES

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Results

- Our analysis of the metrics that truly drive customer satisfaction found that the primary concern of customers is first call resolution. We made quality monitoring program changes yielding a 10% increase in first call resolution.
- Customer satisfaction scores on agent handled calls increased from 76% in 2006 to 85% in 2008.
- We introduced Virtual Hold, allowing customers to hang up during periods of heavy call volumes. Once their place in queue has reached the front of the line, they receive a call and are immediately connected to an agent. Customer satisfaction scores for customers who accept the Virtual Hold option are typically over 90%. Service levels also increased 5% (from 65% of calls within 30 seconds to 70% within 30 seconds).
- We operate two call centres for Hydro One—Markham, and London, Ontario. These centres are 'virtual' in nature, and calls have historically flowed between the two centres on the basis of first available agent. In 2008, we modified this to allow greater specialization at the two sites. One site now serves the bulk of collections-related issues and the other serves the bulk of billing related issues, while maintaining full redundancy and the ability to direct the flow of calls between sites as necessary for workload balancing. As part of this, we introduced a new service level specific to 'Collections Quality'. Since its inception, Collections Quality scores have increased by 7%.

Vertex Innovations

- In 2007, Vertex and Hydro One entered into a 'Pay for Performance' program linked to Quality and CSAT results that penalizes Vertex for poor performance and awards us for good performance. To date, Vertex has always been rewarded and, because our results have improved so much, Vertex has agreed to work with Hydro One to amend the program to further increase the standards.
- Vertex launched a campaign with its employees within the Hydro One account to develop a new logo and "motto" that would really capture the essence of what we were trying to accomplish. The Vertex Hydro One motto became "Care to Care"—in essence, illustrating the 'caring' relationship between the end customer, client, and our staff – all of the components that work together to deliver an optimal customer experience.
- In 2008, we launched bi-weekly Process/Quality forums. The goal is to better understand the drivers that influence call quality and customer satisfaction. At forum meetings, our quality team analyzes call quality results and identifies training and coaching opportunities. Our process team identifies process gaps and analyzes process tickets. Our escalation team identifies customer escalation issues and identifies opportunities to address recurring issues. These forums have allowed us to be more proactive in ensuring that we deliver the highest standards of customer satisfaction.

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Hydro One "Agent Handled Calls" Customer Satisfaction (CSAT) Scores

