Enhanced Customer Digital Engagement for Utilities with Meridian Integration's IDEA Platform

Background

Digital customer engagement for utilities has traditionally trailed behind other industries such as telecommunications, banking, and retail, thus falling short of customer expectations and missing opportunities for the utility to build relationships with their customers. Until recently, customer engagement in the industry has been call center-based, and typically when facilitating a customer needing to make a payment or when there was a problem with their account.

The Challenges

Utility customers are now expecting more from their digital engagement experience. According to a recent study, utility customers spend an average of 8 minutes per year interacting with their utility provider. This is an indicator that utilities have not been able to connect with their customers in a meaningful manner, outside of the traditional "make a payment" or "report a problem" scenarios. Customers are looking for a reliable, intuitive, modernized, seamless, multi-channel experience where they can not only quickly and easily transact in a self-service manner, but also leverage their consumption and billing data to make informed decisions regarding which utility programs best align with their needs.

Whether it is communication regarding consumption history, conservation tips, level payment plans, payment reminders, payment acknowledgements, high bill alerts, outages, self-service options, and more, information must be effectively delivered by the utility to their customers in real-time for genuinely great customer experiences. Additionally, user-friendly, dynamically changeable statements (both print and electronic), e-bills with payments made from any device, payment notifications and payments made via text, real-time usage information, and customer self-service options have all become necessities.

The Solution

Meridian's Integrated Digital Engagement Application (IDEA) enables our utility clients to implement a unique, best-in-class SaaS (Software as a Service) solution specific to their customer's needs. IDEA creates rich customer experiences maximizing the satisfaction of their internal and external customers, as well as reducing the overall cost of customer service to the utility. Customers can have access to any information from your utility's systems including CIS, MDM (Master Data Management), OMS (Outage Management System), as well as any other that you chose to make available to them.

IDEA for Customers

IDEA for Customers creates an exceptional, multi-language, multi-account user experience with robust dashboards & real-time CIS information, while putting control in the customer's hands through features such as:

Billing & Payments	Consumption History	Service Management	User Profile Management
• Robust Payment Options • View Payments & Payment History • View Bills & Billing History • Generate Account Statements • Manage AutoPay, Budget Billing, Paperless Billing, and Payment Plans/Extensions	• Detailed Graphical Consumption History • Year to Year Consumption Comparison • Submit a High Bill Consumption Review Request	• Request Start/Stop/Transfer Service • Schedule & Manage Service Appointments • Service Appointment Notifications • Report an Outage	• Manage Communication Preferences • Manage Stored Payment Methods • Manage Guest Users & Account Sets • Manage Security Preferences

IDEA for Agents

IDEA for Agents enhances IDEA for Customers by providing your utility's CSRs with customer shadowing capabilities, process automation, and reconciliation capabilities. This allows your CSRs to support your customers in ways that have not been possible in the past. These capabilities improve your CSR's day-to-day operational effectiveness and your customer satisfaction. IDEA empowers Agents with a Comprehensive Agent Portal and enables the CSRs to quickly:

Billing & Payments	Customer Service
• Access/Email: Billing Payment, & Usage History to the Customer • View Customer's Upcoming Scheduled Payments • Block and Unblock Payment Types • Point of Sale: Facilitate Walk-In Payments (Credit Card, ACH, Cash, Check, Money Order) • Email historical bill PDFs to the customer • Email Branded Account Statements	• Shadow Customer Portal • View Recent Customer Portal Activity & Correspondence History • Manage Customer Portal Users (Lock, Unlock, Disable/Enable, Password Reset) Enroll customers in Services Such as AutoPay • Secure File Sharing with Customers

IDEA for Reporting

IDEA for Reporting provides your organization with comprehensive 360-degree analytics to inform and empower you on how your customers are leveraging the platform. This will ensure you and your customers maximum utilization of the IDEA platform, as well as the services your utility offers. We include metrics from your CIS system alongside IDEA data, as well as Google Analytics. These analytics include:

Real-Time Utilization	Utilization Metrics
• Users on the Customer Portal by: Location, Page, Device & Browser • Site Performance • User Behavior/Flow • Custom/Utility Specified	• Registered Users by Date Range • Login History by User or Date Range • Enrollment Metrics for: Paperless Billing, Autopay, Budget Billing, Payment Arrangements/Pay Plans • Email & Text Message Notifications

Results & Testimonials

In partnering with our utility clients utilizing IDEA over the past seven years, we have helped them achieve their stated customer digital engagement objectives by:

- Increasing adoption of customer self-service by an average of > 50% across IDEA customers
- Increasing adoption of Paperless Billing by an average of > 30% across IDEA customers
- Increased adoption of AutoPay by an average of > 50% across IDEA customers
- Reducing calls/cost of calls into client customer care
- Improving the ability to align company marketing strategies with customer needs based on utilization metrics

"We were glad to share with everyone what a great application Meridian has available and what great teamwork we had together on this project. Meridian is amazing to work with and we appreciate all you did during our project to make our portal such a success."

Courtney Basile
Project Manager, Greenville Utilities Commission

"Meridian helps utilities like ours create experiences that are intuitive and easy for our customers. We have been working with the Meridian team for the past two years and they have listened and implemented critical changes to improve how we run our business through automation. In our partnership, we continue to find new and exciting ways to connect with our customers via channels they expect and want from us. Meridian is helping move our utility business into the future and we are excited for the continued collaboration."

Diana Donnelly
Director - Customer Experience, Elizabethtown Gas

IDEA Point of Sale

IDEA Point of Sale provides your organization with an all-in-one, easy-to-use, integrated cashiering solution, which is critical to creating an excellent walk-in payment experience for customers. Real-time access to account balances and alerts, alongside essential cashiering functions and flexible payment options supporting multi-account and split payment methods, will maximize cashier efficiencies and ensure customer satisfaction. Walk-In payment types include, but are not limited to:

- Credit and debit card vis EMV device, including touch-less payments
- Apple & Google Pay
- Check, Assistance checks, and money order
- Cash
- Split payment methods & multi-account payments

Additional Features include:

Account Details	Account Alerts	Cash Drawer Management
• Account Lookup & Balances via QBR Code • Account Transaction & Correspondence History	• Cash Only & Blocked Payment Types • Active Collections or Severance Process • Disconnected for Non-Payment • Active Pay Pan or Payment Arrangement	• Open, Balance, and Close Tender Controls • Over/Under Adjustments • Voids/Cancels • Cash Turn-Ins • Supervisor Approvals

Calls to Action

Meridian Integration's IDEA platform can help you achieve your customer digital engagement goals. Please contact us at hello@meridian-integration.com or (833) 570-2193 to schedule a demonstration.

About Meridian Integration & IDEA

Meridian is an international leader in digital engagement solutions and mission critical system implementations and migrations for the utility industry. Our global team of utility experts help our clients build competitive advantages by leveraging our innovative technology and real-world tested methodologies, creating unparalleled user experiences, greater operational excellence, and improved profitability.

Meridian's IDEA solution is a web-based and mobile, digital engagement platform that consists of intuitive, user-friendly, customer-focused, portals designed to enhance the customer experience. Our platform delivers real-time CIS and payment processing system integration for all customer transactions, including electronic payments, outage information, usage information, end-to-end self-service, and agent portals for back-office integration.