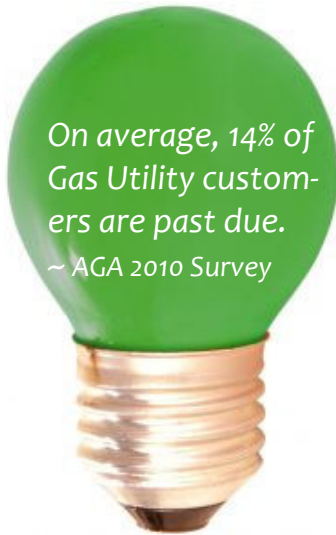


# Utility Call Ahead

## Control Service Disconnections With Live Agents



# ActiveTeleSource



On average, 14% of Gas Utility customers are past due.

~ AGA 2010 Survey

On average, clients that utilize our Call Ahead program realize \$95 of value for every dollar they spend on this service.

**T**he economy might be on the mend, but Utilities across the country still bear the wounds; customers behind on paying bills, leading to increasing residential disconnections.

Utilities in most states operate under the guidelines set forth by their Public Utility Commission. One key guideline requires that a Utility offer one last opportunity for customers to pay their arrearage prior to service disconnection; turning their Service Truck Crew into mobile collections units. Not to mention, the opportunity cost of having a service crew going door-to-door for payments, rather than working on service delivery issues. The question becomes clear, how much money could your organization *save* if more payments arrived prior to disconnection each month?

### Service Disconnections Erode Revenue

A large Gas Utility company in the Northwest needed a solution that would help them control the rising list of at-risk customers on their service disconnect list. Customers that were 2 -months or more behind on their payments received notices in the mail outlining when service would terminate. If payments were not received, that customer address would appear on the service disconnect list. Their options were limited due to a mandate from State Public Utility Commission that required them to make the final attempt to collect on the past due bill, in person, on the day of service disconnect. We analyzed this Utility's standard procedure for handling past due customers and the results presented several areas where we could make an impact with increasing their revenue from delinquent accounts and make a measurable impact on their Customer Satisfaction scores.

We learned that their Service Disconnect process began with a 15-day warning letter to inform the customer of their past due bill. The letter directed the customer to call in to the toll-free phone number and contact a representative to coordinate paying the arrearage. If payment isn't received within the designated period, the customer address would appear on the Service Disconnection list. As the disconnection list grew, their workload increased to a point where their resources spent considerable time each day shutting off gas lines or collecting payments in person. This dilemma also caused scheduling conflicts where more pressing gas line or gas meter service work began to experience delays due to the increase in Service Disconnection trips. Further analysis shed light on a greater problem; Truck Roll cost. We learned that the fully loaded cost (calculated by the Utility) for a Service truck to drive to a customer address and disconnect gas service, on average, is \$70 per trip. That means the cost to disconnect service and then return to reconnect service hovered in the \$140 range. Given that average past due bills (2-month time period) are \$164 and the service reconnect fee is only \$20, the Utility was losing revenue with each disconnection. We had the perfect solution; our Live Agent, *Call Ahead* Program.

## Live Agents Increase Revenue AND Customer Satisfaction

We proposed the following program; our client would send us a daily batch file of past due accounts after the 3-day warning letter expired, our Utility-trained agents (from our contact center in Portland, Oregon) would make outbound calls to those customers, inform them of the past due bill amount & impending service disconnection, and complete the payment transaction or direct customers to the appropriate payment center. In some cases, customers were warm transferred to a dedicated “escalation” number to deal with certain customer issues outside of our authorized parameters. Follow up analysis revealed that between 60-80% of customers in arrears contacted during this program period brought their accounts current thus avoiding costly truck rolls to disconnect their service as well as improving cash flow for the utility.



Our solution is built  
around driving call  
quality up, using  
**Active TeleSource.**  
~ Call Center  
Manager

Studies consistently support the notion that customers want to interact on the phone with a live person. Companies that consistently score at the top of Customer Satisfaction rankings know this. They design their training and monitoring around ensuring that customers have the best experience possible. For this reason, Active TeleSource uses dedicated, utility-trained agents for our Call Ahead programs to contact customers and arrange payments prior to service interruption. In a single, smooth transaction, our agents make outbound calls to your delinquent customer list to convey your message or conduct the payment transaction to avoid service interrupt. We even have the technological capabilities to make real-time account updates to your CRM system, using a secure interface. We typically work from data files delivered daily or weekly. Once the files are loaded into our system, our agents begin calling to arrange payments. Having utility experienced agents is one of the reasons our Customer Satisfaction ratings are so high; our agents are accustomed to speaking with customers and delivering utility-specific answers to billing questions from customers. Another feature that contributes to higher than normal ratings is that our agents also have the knowledge and experience to respond to non-billing questions that might arise during calls. These two features facilitate strong single call resolution scores or smooth call transitions. In most cases, our technology platform will support warm transfers back into your call center if necessary. For Live Agent Call Ahead projects, our high response rates and our expert payment handling experience leaves a positive imprint on your Customer Satisfaction scores.

## Industry-Leading Customer Satisfaction Begins Here

For over a decade, Active TeleSource has been the Business Process Outsourcing partner of choice for companies that share our emphasis on quality, partnership, and collaboration. If your company is seeking a measurable edge in order to retain customers in a competitive market or if are looking for an outsourcing partner with a proven record of boosting Customer Satisfaction scores, do what companies with top ratings by a National Consumer Rankings Company have done; call Active TeleSource.

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