



## Saving Money and Gaining Efficiencies with a Complete Bill Distribution Solution

Benton PUD



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### Highlights

#### Benton PUD:

Benton PUD, a municipal corporation of the State of Washington, began providing electrical service in 1946. Today, they provide electric energy to more than 45,000 electric customers covering more than 900 square miles of territory.

#### Business Objectives:

- Meet customer expectations to view and pay their bills online
- Achieve operational efficiencies and promote a “green” business strategy

#### FIS Solution:

To address Benton PUD’s entire bill distribution process, with an integrated solution consisting of:

- Biller Service Provider – for electronic presentment and payment
- Payment Distribution Services – for print and mail services

#### Benefits Achieved:

After just six months, Benton PUD:

- Exceeded their projections for online bill pay adoption, hitting their projected five-year average
- Exceeded industry adoption averages (8.5% after six months, compared to an industry average of 4.5%)
- Reduced expenditures on stamps, envelopes, paper, and distribution staff
- Reduced manual processes associated with handling checks
- Gave customers a \$5 credit, based on annual estimated savings

**“More and more, consumers are expecting to be able to view and pay their bills on line. Therefore, we see this as a vital service to provide to our customers.”**

**- Jon Meyer, Supervisor of Customer Systems, Benton PUD**

In August of 2006, Benton PUD assembled a diverse team of individuals from throughout the organization – including representatives from Customer Service, Marketing, Communications, Treasury, Finance, Accounting, and IT – to research options for an electronic bill presentment and payment (EBPP) solution. While Benton PUD already had a solution in place for Internet payments, it didn’t allow for bill presentment.

“This simplified solution was basically an extension of our customer access strategy, to provide more options and more hours in the day for our customers to transact business with us. But it didn’t address the need for a complete EBPP strategy and solution. Our overall goal was to give our customers what they wanted. In addition, this would open the door to promoting the service as a ‘green’ product,” said Meyer.

### The Decision-Making Process

The first decision Benton PUD needed to make was whether or not to develop EBPP in house or to outsource – a decision that proved rather easy. “We’re a small utility company,” said Meyer, “with about 150 employees serving 45,000 customers and generating approximately 40,000 statements each month. With such a limited number of resources, especially given how much attention we need to give to security and compliance issues, this project would simply have been overwhelming.”

Benton PUD proceeded to evaluate the major players in the industry. They invited some of the top EBPP vendors to visit Benton PUD’s offices for presentations and demonstrations. Several of them made it clear that Benton PUD’s smaller customer base would be a constraint.

“We also talked with companies that had historically been bill printers and were now transitioning to EBPP,” said Meyer. “They had hundreds of customers for printing, but only a handful for EBPP.”

“Then there was FIS, a proven and established EBPP provider, that had a robust printing solution as well. We saw working with FIS as an opportunity to address our entire bill distribution process with one integrated solution,” said Meyer.



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### Implementation and Training

“We implemented FIS’ print solution first, which included a redesign of our bill, followed by the EBPP component,” said Meyer. “For EBPP, we did a ‘soft implementation’ with our employees, who are also customers, before rolling it out to our full customer base. FIS gave us a lot of candid suggestions during this process, helping to guide us along the best course of action. FIS’ expertise was invaluable.”

Benton PUD recognized that education would also be critical to the overall success of the project. They took a “Train the Trainer” approach, in which FIS trained several “Super Users” at Benton PUD, who then educated the rest of the staff.

“FIS’ initial training was extremely effective, which had a positive ripple-down effect. Our Super Users were fully prepared to pass their knowledge on to our CSRs within the customer service group,” said Meyer.

### Tremendous Success

When Benton PUD introduced its customers to e-bills, which they branded as Power Pay, they offered a \$5 credit for signing up. They promoted this via Benton PUD’s Web site, bill inserts, newsletters, direct mail letters, and radio and television ads. The response was incredible.

“The day after the first newsletter promo went out, Benton PUD experienced 40 to 50 enrollments per day, which we sustained for a month,” said Meyer. “By the end of the first month, we already had 1,000 customers enrolled. Through the end of the first six months, we had more than 3,500.” This is an 8.5 percent adoption rate, compared to an industry average of 4.5 percent.

“The adoption we’ve experienced has blown our assumptions out of the water. We assumed, over a five-year average, that we would see a nine percent adoption rate. We’ve nearly hit our five-year average in six months. It’s been tremendous,” said Meyer.

### Savings and Efficiencies

Not only has Benton PUD’s Power Pay program been successful, but it’s also resulted in hard dollar savings, as well. According to Meyer, “We save money on stamps, envelopes, paper and distribution staff expenses. On average, our conservative estimated annual savings is five dollars per customer; however, in some cases, savings could be much higher.

“We’re also saving money with our printed bills. FIS shared some best practices with us to help us make our bills easier to read and with fewer pages, which has resulted in reduced paper costs,” said Meyer.



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In addition to hard dollar savings, Benton PUD has also experienced improvements in efficiency. Some of these efficiencies are the result of the integration between FIS' print and EPP solutions, via FIS' CSF® Designer product. "With CSF Designer, we can change our paper bills and have those changes automatically flow into our presentation of bills online. This saves us time in terms of specifying, communicating, and testing the changes," said Meyer.

"We've also determined that it takes an employee a minute to open an envelope, process a check, and post it to the account. This time is saved now – and time equals money! We save money each time we avoid this manual process as a result of Power Pay," said Meyer.

### Overall Satisfaction

"We have a high level of satisfaction with FIS. Our results have far exceeded our expectations to date, and we continue to see a stable level of enrollments. It's comforting to know that if a problem arises, FIS has the technology, resources and expertise to resolve it," concluded Meyer.

### Contact Us

For more information about how FIS' integrated e-bill and print services can help you save money and gain efficiencies, please call 800.822.6758 or visit [fisglobal.com](http://fisglobal.com).