

CASE STUDY IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



Background and Summary

Washington Gas is a regulated utility providing natural gas service to more than 1.2 million customers in the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia. The company provides energy to residential, commercial, and industrial customers. The clean-burning natural gas supplied by Washington Gas is the fuel of choice for more than nine out of 10 new home buyers in the D.C. metro area.

In March 2020, COVID-19 was officially declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization. Soon after, as businesses shut down and people faced layoffs, 32 states and Washington, D.C. implemented moratoria on utility shut offs. These legislative acts were put in place to protect the health and wellness of citizens and left Washington Gas unable to perform any collection activity. Outstanding utility bills were deferred for 12 or 24 months, leaving a gap in revenue for Washington Gas.

Problem

In November 2020, Virginia released COVID relief funds available for customers to pay their utility bills. Washington Gas needed a way to quickly and effectively communicate with people that the funds were available and obtain signed attestations from eligible customers.

Solution

Washington Gas approached Tilli, its communications and payment processing provider, to develop a multichannel communication approach to

- 1) make customers aware of the relief options available to them*
- 2) obtain digitally signed attestations to provide proof to the regulatory authorities and*
- 3) help them receive those funds to pay their outstanding utility bills*

Tilli wanted to meet customers where they're at, offering multiple communication options, including

customized direct mail, personalized email, interactive voice response (IVR), ringless drops, and SMS. Tilli was able to launch its first phase approach within two weeks of getting the requirements from Washington Gas.

Results

After receiving digitally signed attestations, **Washington Gas was able to assist 30,000 people** by applying available funds to their delinquent accounts. The project was considered a massive success for the company. It highlighted the need for multiple avenues of communication and superior customer service in the utility industry.

Speed to Credit Attestations Phase 1: Developed and Launched in 20 Days

In the first phase, Washington Gas was able to send **60,469 emails** to customers who qualified:

- *Emails in December 2020 — 24,853*
- *Emails in February 2021 — 35,616*

Speed to Credit Attestations Phase 2: Developed and Launched in 10 Days

In the second phase, Washington Gas introduced IVR / ringless drops and SMS texts in addition to email. In total, **88,486 outbound calls** were made, **117,025 texts and emails** sent.

Each method of communication gave customers different avenues to fill out the attestation form needed to receive the COVID relief funds. Based on Washington Gas's requirements, Tilli electronically set up a web attestation form to collect information along with a digital signature capture to make the process seamless for the

FEBRUARY 2021

25,435

Outbound Calls/Ringless Drops Made With IVR

17,823

SMS Messages Sent

MAY 2021

57,898

Emails Sent

18,808

Outbound Calls/Ringless Drops Made With IVR

29,448

SMS Messages Sent

JUNE 2021

44,243

Outbound Calls/Ringless Drops Made With IVR

11,856

SMS Messages Sent

customer. For the print customer, a personalized QR code was developed for easy conversion to the web attestations form for electronic signature and submission.

The customer sentiment was both heartbreaking and heartwarming. Both Tilli and Washington Gas were able to see the impact COVID-19 had on Virginia communities through the information collected by the attestations. Between hardship and frustration, there was also thankfulness and relief. **This project helped 30,000 people find some ray of hope in a difficult time.**

BOTTOM LINE

UtiliCX Platform successfully achieved COVID-19 Customer Credit Attestations resulting in over \$8M in customer credits via two multi-channel campaigns, within the open attestation periods allowed by the State Corporation Commission.