CASE STUDY – SCE&G (SOUTH CAROLINA ELECTRIC & GAS, A SCANA COMPANY)

Public Utility Tracks Light Pole Installation to Reduce Delays and Improve Billing

Mobile process automation removes hand-written field notes and improves billing speed 94%.

South Carolina Electric & Gas, SCE&G, a SCANA company, is a regulated public utility engaged in the generation, transmission, distribution and sale of electricity to approximately 692,000 customers in South Carolina. The company also provides natural gas service to approximately 342,000 customers throughout the state. SCE&G's energy portfolio includes a diverse mix of electricity generation including hydro, biomass, natural gas, coal and nuclear. With addition of two new nuclear units, the company will have greater fuel diversity with approximately 60% of generation from non-emitting sources. When the new nuclear units go online, SCE&G will retire up to six coal-fired generating units, reducing its coal-fired generation capacity by more than 700 megawatts. This will result in a reduction of carbon emissions by almost 50 percent from 2005 levels.

The Problem:

SCG&E uses third-party contractors to pick up, transport and install lights and poles for commercial customers across South Carolina. With their existing manual system, SCG&E lacked visibility into which contractor was picking up inventory items for which job, nor could they quickly track when and where each job would be installed or have timely notification when the jobs were completed. Contractors completed all field paperwork manually and could take up to 120 + days to transcribe hand-written field notes and submit the job completion paperwork to SCE&G for billing.

Because SCG&E could not bill its customers until after receipt of completed job documentation from contractors, billings were delayed, account receivables were behind and customers were unhappy. SCG&E needed greater visibility of each job status and precise reporting of where jobs were in the installation process. They were developing a new Light Management System (LMS) to track the light as the asset and the pole and wiring as attachments to create a kit. They wanted to know where each pole was installed via GPS coordinates and what kit was used. They needed to associate jobs with contractors and identify when each contractor took delivery of poles and kits for each job. Because contractors might take poles and kits for several jobs, it could take them days or weeks to complete all jobs. SCE&G wanted to know when each job was installed and completed in order to forecast for billing, and remove and automate manual paperwork for each job.

Why Inovity?

Inovity, formerly BarCode ID Systems, had previously provided unique value to SCE&G with a mobile meter-reading application that was designed and installed at SCE&G over three years ago. The key decision-maker for the project at SCE&G considered the team at Inovity to be subject matter experts and believed they had the expertise to develop an application to fit this new need. As a trusted advisor and proven provider, Inovity proposed a mobile application for the light and pole tracking project based on their meter-reading app. The decision-making team at SCE&G awarded Inovity the project.

The Solution:

Using their existing framework from SCE&G's meter-reading application, Inovity created a new application to track the high-dollar lights and poles used by contractors for SCE&G installations, and integrated the movement of the inventory with SCE&G's Peoplesoft backend system. Inovity' developers and engineers worked closely with SCE&G project managers to thoroughly test, troubleshoot and tweak the system before installation and deployment, ensuring a smooth transition to the new application. The application ensured that contractors who checked in to SCE&G's yard to pick up kits for each job would have poles and kits scanned and associated with them. SCE&G would then issue a loaner Motorola Solutions (now Zebra Technologies) MC75 mobile computer for the contractor to use during installation. When ready to begin a job, contractors would scan weather-resistant barcode labels on the light poles/kits at the installation location and their work order number. The application would capture the GPS coordinates of the location and time/date stamp the transaction. When contractors would return to one of SCE&G's 26 satellite networks, the data would be uploaded to SCE&G's Peoplesoft system, either automatically or by prompting an operator to upload the data. SCE&G would then be notified about the installation, including the pole and kit identification numbers, location, time, date and contractor who performed the installation. SCE&G's elected to have only WLAN connectivity with the field devices to meet their current business needs, rather than real-time WWAN or cellular connectivity.

The Results:

With the Inovity' light tracking application in place, SCE&G saw dramatic increases in the quality and frequency of data generated by its installation contractors. With a total of 40 units in place over two implementation phases, SCE&G was able to reduce billing time from 120+ days after job completion down to 7-10 days, and dramatically improve its receivables. Because all manual forms were automated through the mobile application and removed from field installations, fewer errors occurred in customer billing. SCE&G now had complete visibility of its valuable inventory and could locate the status of a job quickly and accurately.

As a trusted advisor to SCE&G, Inovity took its proven application that had been in place and working well for over three years, modified it for the current business challenge and developed a successful application that solved the customer's needs. With the solution working well, SCE&G is considering future modifications to include RFID tracking and expansion of the application to other SCE&G business units.

Formerly BarCode ID Systems, Inovity is a business process improvement company that transforms technology into powerful, integrated solutions that drive efficiency and reduce costs. As a specialty IT systems integrator, Inovity designs and delivers innovative solutions that connect and relay crucial business information between all points of operational activity, in real time. By emphasizing workforce mobility, ERP data mobilization and business process intelligence, Inovity provides automated technology solutions for manufacturing, distribution, healthcare, retail and field service environments.

The company was established in 1993, is privately owned with headquarters in Atlanta and maintains sales and engineering offices in Atlanta, Chicago, Boston, Greenville, SC, Greensboro, NC, Columbus, OH, Huntsville, AL and Ft. Lauderdale. With innovation at its core, combined with solutions for productivity, agility, efficiency, connectivity, and visibility, BarCode ID Systems has become Inovity. Contact Julie A. Leonard, Marketing Director, 800-452-7418, ext. 9045, jleonard@inovity.com, www.inovity.com.