

Keys to a Successful Software Implementation for Enhancing Member Services

Golden Spread Electric Cooperative adopts Itron's MV-PBS Complex Billing Solution for member billing and MV-WEB for online data presentment and demonstrates keys for success in selecting and implementing new software solutions.

BACKGROUND

Since its inception in 1984, Golden Spread Electric Cooperative, Inc. has grown from a "paper" G&T with two employees serving 11 member systems to a fully staffed and functional G&T Cooperative with 16 member systems and a diversified portfolio of generation assets. With this growth came the need for updated technologies and process improvements. In 2011, GSEC began its search for a new billing system to streamline the calculation of member bills and invoicing processes. The custom developed billing software in place was costly to maintain and its hard-coded rate logic hindered GSEC's ability to implement rate changes. GSEC required a standardized billing solution that was fully supported, flexible enough to handle its complex requirements, and user-configurable so that new rates could be implemented quickly and easily. To complement the new and improved billing platform, GSEC also looked to acquire an energy presentment tool to provide its members ready access to usage reports and statistics not available before.



Company Overview

Golden Spread Electric Cooperative, Inc. (GSEC) is a consumer-owned public utility formed in 1984 to provide low cost, reliable electric service to its rural distribution cooperative members. Golden Spread's 16 member systems are located in Oklahoma and Texas and serve nearly 227,000 member - consumers. Golden Spread owns and operates gas fueled generating plants, combustion turbine and wind turbine generating facilities totaling over 1,100 megawatts of generation capacity.



**Golden Spread
Electric Cooperative, Inc.**
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SELECTION PROCESS

With the assistance of an external consultant, GSEC began the process of selecting a solutions vendor. This included reviewing all billing processes, data formats and sources, and reporting needs and compiling these into a comprehensive and detailed requirements document. GSEC then collected vendor references, met with users of vendor solutions, and scheduled demonstrations with competing vendors. After compiling responses to the detailed requirements and hosting vendor demonstrations, GSEC devised a simple and objective decision model whereby vendors would be graded on how their software met the stated requirements and objectives. This careful and methodical preparation not only aided in selecting the best solution for GSEC, but also provided a valuable reference for future use in laying the groundwork for the implementation of the new systems.

DECISION

Once the results were in, GSEC selected Itron's MV-PBS Complex Billing Solution as its new billing system and MV-WEB for energy data presentation to its members. MV-PBS's advanced data interface capabilities and integration with Itron's MV-90 xi solution streamlines the data collection and billing process, requiring fewer manual inputs and improving billing accuracy. The MV-WEB online presentation solution works seamlessly with MV-90 xi to provide improved graphing and data accessibility to GSEC's coop members. Each of these solutions is backed by Itron's proven support services team offering professional and reliable system maintenance and support.

RESULTS

In January 2012, GSEC began the project to overhaul its software applications and processes with the installation of MV-PBS. Over the course of 2012, GSEC upgraded their MV-90 xi system to the latest release, installed and deployed MV-WEB, and completed the configuration and testing of MV-PBS, billing many months in parallel with the existing systems. In January of 2013, the project was complete with MV-PBS in production. The benefits gained through this project include:

- » Streamlining of data collection and billing processes
- » Reliable maintenance and support of critical systems
- » A single system for managing energy data
- » Increased flexibility for complex rates and billing scenarios
- » Greater billing accuracy with reduced manual inputs and processes
- » Improved graphing and availability of data to members

One of the main drivers behind implementing a new billing system was to enable the introduction of new products and rates, making the organization more agile and responsive. In 2014, GSEC revised its member billing making several changes to its rates and riders and developing new reports. This was made possible in large part by the flexibility of the new MV-PBS billing system. Rate changes could now be executed quickly and MV-PBS's versioning capabilities enable a seamless transition to the new rates while keeping the historical configuration in case cancel/rebill needs arise. GSEC's due diligence and preparation leading up to its selection and implementation of the new software applications paid off, ensuring a solution that would not only meet its current business requirements, but also its needs going forward.

“The implementation of MV-PBS in conjunction with upgrading MV-90 xi and implementing MV-WEB was a successful project within GSEC. The success of the project came ‘in part’ by setting a solid road map with the requirements phase of the project and working with a great project team at Itron. This project has set the bar at GSEC for the process to be used for future software applications. Shortly after the implementation GSEC revised its rate design which necessitated changes in the rate language and reports within MV-PBS which was successful as well. The implementation of the software and revisions to the rates were made seamlessly with the great teamwork between GSEC and the Itron Project Team.”

-- **Larry Shields**, Billing Manager
Golden Spread Electric Cooperative, Inc.



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