

Utilities Analyses Gains Competitive Edge with Information System Developed by Dynamic Answers

Utilities Analyses, Inc. (UAI) manages more than \$750 million in annual utility expenditures at more than 12,000 client facilities nationwide. UAI's tariff consultants understand how a utility operates from the inside out and have been using that experience to lower costs for UAI's clients from their offices in Atlanta, Georgia, since 1972. Cumulatively, UAI clients have benefited from more than \$45 million in savings.

After decades of operating as a successful utility consulting organization, the executives at UAI began exploring the idea of developing a solution that could help them consolidate and better analyze utility billing information.

"We had been listening to our clients and learned that we needed to broaden our services to offer more than just consulting," explained Kevin Shaw, President of UAI.

Such a solution could be accessible to clients and provide a tighter integration between UAI and their best customers. It would also allow UAI to make better use of the information they had in house – essentially becoming more efficient – while being more responsive to the changing dynamics of the industry.

Investing in an in-house information system would help UAI find incremental savings from the utility billing information that they were already collecting from clients.

With a more organized, systematic approach, they hoped to be able to identify, track and implement additional savings strategies for clients.

UAI's interest took them down the "build or buy?" path, a road that quickly led them to Michael Wilkes of Dynamic Answers.

"When I listened to Michael Wilkes describe his solutions, a light went off in my head that Dynamic Answers would probably have solutions that we could take advantage of," Kevin Shaw, President of UAI.

Dynamic Answers began by introducing UAI to the requirements gathering process – helping them to distinguish the critical from the nice to have.

"Michael helped us think through the process like 'Why do you want to do that?' 'How will it help?' and 'Do you really want to get into that

market sector?'" continued Shaw. DAI also helped UAI refine their thinking and avoid what would have been some very expensive mistakes – first by looking at the competition and the opportunity in this space, then by identifying off-the-shelf solutions before making recommendations for custom development.



"DAI challenged the entire solution throughout the process and it helped us think through critical items that would make the project a success," explained Shaw.



"From the beginning, Michael was especially valuable in helping us think through, from a Business Analyst perspective, what we wanted to do and what we didn't want to do."

Kevin Shaw, President of UAI

At one juncture UAI even evaluated buying a system from another utility consulting company before concluding that building their own system was the right way to go – with DAI leading the way.

Ultimately UAI employed DAI to help facilitate the development of web-enabled utility billing information system. The system allows for illustrating last months' usage and costs right on the desktop in a user-friendly manner. Clients and consultants can identify variances in their utility bills, such as over-billing, and look for opportunities to negotiate lower rate tariffs. The most valuable attribute of the product is putting fresh data at the

fingertips of clients and consultants wherever they are to enable better decision making.

“Fortune 100 clients have multi-billion dollar systems that they get from e-bill pay vendors,” explained Shaw. “But the less sophisticated clients – ones who are still spending \$10-20MM on their utility bills – may not have been exposed to such a system.”

For instance, Miami-Dade schools (the 4th largest school district in the U.S.) has 370 schools and 700 electric accounts that serve those schools.

“They love our system,” continued Shaw.

The DAI solution has become tightly integrated into UAI's service offering and changed the way that they find savings for clients. Before the DAI solution, UAI was a regional provider competing for smaller organizations but with their new solution, they have become a national player servicing multi-site national accounts with thousands of electric accounts.

“It has really changed our workflow process and increased productivity but more importantly it has given us an entry card to play nationally,” concluded Shaw.

“Having our own system has given us license to go whale fishing,” exclaimed Shaw.

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