

ClickSchedule Helps Canadian Utility Cut Costs While Increasing Maintenance Visits By Nearly 50%



The Company

Gaz Métropolitain Plus operates as a subsidiary of Gaz Métropolitain, which provides gas to homes and businesses in Quebec. With assets of over \$2.5 billion and more than 1,200 employees, Gaz Métropolitain is one of the largest natural gas distributors in Canada. The company serves approximately 150,000 customers in Quebec and has a presence in the northwestern United States.

Launched in 2000 to complement the parent company, Gaz Métropolitain Plus provides maintenance and repair services on gas appliances such as furnaces, hot water heaters, and fireplaces. The company's field service technicians visit customers on a scheduled, preventative basis as well as on an emergency-response basis. Overall Gaz Métropolitain Plus answers 75,000 calls annually and provides on-site services to 45,000 customers per year.

The Challenge

In 2004, Gaz Métropolitain Plus took over field service dispatching from its parent company. In planning how to build a first-rate service workforce model from scratch, the subsidiary realized it needed an efficient way to improve customer service and increase service revenues while simultaneously keeping operational costs in check.

Consequently, the company's needs stretched beyond what many software solutions currently provide. "We wanted a system that automatically selects the right technician for each service incident, not just a gantt chart that instructs a dispatcher on how to make the decision," said Yvan Lefebvre, Director of Information Technology for Gaz Métropolitain Plus. "We needed to eliminate decision-making under the pressures that typically exist in a customer dispatch department."

Key Benefits

- **Increased Productivity:** By deploying ClickSchedule, Gaz Métropolitain Plus increased the average number of preventative maintenance visits from approximately 4.5 to 6.5 per day—an increase of nearly 50%.
- **Cost Savings:** The simplicity and efficiency of the solution helped Gaz Métropolitain Plus proceed on a strategic plan to outsource its entire dispatch function. The new dispatch model will save the company close to \$1 million annually.
- **Improved Mobility:** Because ClickSchedule integrates seamlessly with mobile devices, Gaz Métropolitain Plus will soon provide field technicians with equipment in their trucks to access schedules directly — further improving scheduling efficiencies.

Lefebvre also sought a dispatch solution that would integrate easily with the customer relationship management (CRM) software that Gaz Métropolitain Plus already had in place.



The Solution

Based on favorable comments from industry analysts, Lefebvre chose ClickSoftware's ClickSchedule solution. "The feature-set immediately impressed us," said Lefebvre. "The software offers a wide range of functionality."



Given any number of criteria—including technician locations, skill sets, vacation schedules and training time, to name a few—ClickSchedule automatically chooses the right technician for each service call and optimizes scheduling in real time, taking the difficulty in decision-making away from dispatchers. The solution also integrates with existing CRM systems within a company, making a connection between massive amounts of customer data and optimized scheduling capabilities, and improving the total customer experience.

In a site visit to another Quebec utility, Lefebvre saw ClickSchedule's automatic schedule optimization capabilities in action. "They utilized a service-dispatch system identical to ours," said Lefebvre. "This showed us exactly how efficiently ClickSchedule ensures we properly take care of customers while also managing field-technician schedules in a way that reduces costs."

"The software," Lefebvre continued, "is also simple to use and easy to teach to others—a feature that has come in handy for us." In fact, the ClickSchedule solution allowed Gaz Métropolitain Plus to completely outsource its field-service dispatch function.

The Implementation

A ClickSoftware systems engineer visited Gaz Métropolitain Plus on-site to integrate ClickSchedule with the company's CRM software as well as other back-office applications. "He helped us define technician skills, service rules and objectives, and the relative weight of each scheduling factor," Lefebvre said. "The knowledge transfer went smoothly so that we know how to change parameters ourselves if business conditions change."

Gaz Métropolitain Plus deployed ClickSchedule in its pure form. Lefebvre did not have to make any adjustments, keeping the operation of the software as simple as possible. "It does exactly what we need it to do — it's the ideal solution for any dispatch operation."

"In addition to increasing the number of maintenance visits we complete each day, ClickSchedule helped make it possible to outsource our entire field-service dispatch function. This represents a tremendous cost-savings for the company."

- Yvan Lefebvre, Director of Information Technology,
Gaz Métropolitain Plus

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