

Managing all Work in One System Drives Productivity Improvements for ETSA Utilities


ETSA Utilities

The Company

ETSA Utilities is the electricity distribution business for the state of South Australia, delivering power via a distribution network to nearly 800,000 residential and business customers throughout the state. To support these customers, the utility has several divisions to install, maintain and repair the electricity network for customers throughout the state.

The Field Services division handles major construction projects as well as most of the connection and maintenance work for the rural part of the state outside of Adelaide. Those technicians also handle major construction projects such as substation building, etc. in the metropolitan area. The Services division handles connection and maintenance jobs within the metro.

ETSA Utilities supports a network comprising 382 zone substations and about 85,500 kilometers of power lines valued at approximately \$2.6 billion. It is the fifth largest distributor in the Australian National Electricity Market, employing more than 1,670 people. The company also provides construction and maintenance services and asset management services. ETSA Utilities is 51 percent owned by Cheung Kong Infrastructure Holdings Limited and Hongkong Electric Holdings, which form part of the Cheung Kong Group of companies. The remaining 49 percent is owned by Spark Infrastructure. Spark Infrastructure began trading on the ASX in December 2005.

The Challenge

To deliver on its promises of maximum uptime, minimum service wait time and efficient service completion, ETSA Utilities needed to gain a more holistic view of workforce management across both its Field Services and Services divisions. As part of a major initiative, the company deployed SAP's enterprise resource planning (ERP) system in 1997. Subsequently, executives determined that managing field technicians down to the crew level, (that is, scheduling crews for different jobs based on skill sets,

Benefits

- Lowered average time per job
- Eliminated 700-job backlog
- Increased productivity leading to more jobs completed per day
- Created single repository for scheduling long - and short-term projects
- Gained better company-wide visibility of workforce management
- Improved prioritization of jobs based on urgency

location, etc.) would increase efficiency. However, the company quickly realized that SAP alone would not meet its specific mobile workforce management needs.

The first attempt at managing scheduling involved allowing local works coordinators in both divisions to determine the scheduling approach that best suited their needs. These "systems" often centered on spreadsheets or even pieces of paper, drafted and handed out to field technicians at the start of their shift. A centralized planning group within ETSA Utilities provided some general guidelines on the number of hours crews should spend on different jobs, and which types of jobs to complete first.

Scheduling themselves, local works coordinators occasionally prioritized jobs in a manner later deemed inconsistent with the company's overall goals and customer needs. Other parts of the business requesting work from the Field Services team occasionally felt the local teams weren't correctly prioritizing their work. This local-scheduling also led to inefficient travel schedules, with service teams sometimes driving four hours round trip for one job, not knowing they could have handled a few nearby jobs on the way to or from the original work site.



"Broad-scale visibility into scheduling and job completion is absolutely critical for utilities," said Grant Roach, manager business improvement in the Field Services division. "Without it, scheduling becomes a gamble, and customers pay the price. We needed a new approach that would let us see how best to prioritize jobs and how to match the right crew with the right work order."

The Field Service team's specific challenges focused on long-term project planning to ensure enough staff would be on hand to handle jobs down the road. Jobs lasted about a day on average per crew, with bigger projects requiring several crews and a week or more to complete. The Service division's challenge was managing a high-volume, short duration workload. Each year it undertakes connection works for approx 27,000 customers.

Both divisions required a centralized schedule management solution that would not only give managers global visibility of who's doing what job when and where, but also eliminate the guesswork to ensure crews have the right skill mix and parts enabling them to complete jobs in the right order.



Solution

ETSA Utilities deployed ClickSchedule workforce optimization software from ClickSoftware to help make the process more efficient, and field technicians more productive. ClickSchedule enables ETSA Utilities managers and schedulers to see both immediate and long-term jobs and consistently make smart decisions about prioritization, crew scheduling and fast response to emergencies.

ETSA Utilities' CISOV customer information system sends requests for work to SAP, which opens a work order and sends the information to ClickSchedule. ClickSchedule provides schedulers the information about the job's location, urgency and the necessary resources to complete it effectively.

The Service Group's field technicians have become more productive in that timeframe as the average time per job has reduced. This frees technicians to complete more jobs per day, which helps reduce customer wait times. Prior to deploying ClickSchedule, the Service Group maintained a backlog of routine maintenance jobs. ClickSchedule's optimization capabilities means that the system now automatically looks for opportunities to squeeze these routine jobs into the schedule, helping ETSA Utilities eliminate that backlog.

"ClickSchedule gives us a single point of reference for scheduling operations. Before, the information was disjointed, and we didn't have a good frame of reference for making scheduling decisions. We now have one repository that lets us schedule jobs in order of importance. Since deploying ClickSchedule [in 2007], we've experienced improvements in workforce productivity and efficiency."

Steve Brooks, business analyst in the Services group

- For more information on ETSA Utilities visit www.etsautilities.com.au
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