

Meter Data Management a Valuable Tool at Clinton Utilities Board

At Central Service Association (CSA), we like to let our members/clients do the talking. In the text below, Todd Loggins, Director of Engineering and Operations at Clinton Utility Board in Clinton, Tennessee lays out his usage and value-statement for CSA's Orbit Meter Data Management and Analysis product.

By Todd Loggins

Director of Engineering and Operations
Clinton (TN) Utility Board

The Clinton Utilities Board (CUB) provides electric service to approximately 30,000 customers spread across parts of 6 counties in East Tennessee, and has become widely recognized as an industry leader in the deployment and use of technology to help better serve its customers. For CUB, the challenge has never been whether or not to deploy new technology, it has been sorting through the vast array of new products and software offerings in order to focus on the things that its customers are most interested in, which is quite simply keeping their bills low, keeping their lights on, and providing them with great service. In 2006 CUB began the installation of an AMI system and almost immediately began seeing a tremendous return on that investment. However, one of the challenges that CUB faced was how to handle the huge amount of data that was generated from all those AMI meter reads; and more importantly, how could we take that data and use it to focus on the things that our customers are most interested in. It wasn't just a matter of producing pretty charts and graphs, it was a matter of performing the kind of analytics that would allow CUB personnel to make smart business decisions. After a number of years of searching and reviewing several Meter Data Management (MDM) systems, in 2015 CUB chose CSA's Orbit MDM system as the best fit and the one that best aligned with that intent.

The CSA Orbit MDM has provided CUB's customer service representatives (CSRs) a completely new set of tools to assist customers and provide them with the high level of service that they desire and deserve. For years our CSRs were faced with the never-ending question of "why is my bill so high?" but they had little information to provide the customer other than what last month's weather was like. Now a CSR can assist the customer by providing them with daily and hourly usage data to help provide a better understanding of usage patterns and ways to improve energy efficiency. They can also provide historical usage data along with coincidental temperature data to help a customer diagnose issues with HVAC units or water heaters.

The benefits of the Orbit MDM do not stop with CUB's CSRs. Some of the most significant improvements have come in CUB's Engineering and Operations Departments. Historically CUB's engineers have always been faced with the same challenge that most all utility engineers are faced; properly sizing distribution transformers when the only information available is monthly kWh usage data. Assumptions can be made, but the end result is that the majority of the time a conservative approach is taken, and transformers are simply oversized. This results in

excessive spending for larger transformers than is actually needed. The problem gets even more pronounced when multiple customers are connected to a transformer, and there is no way to know the diversity among those customers in terms of a coincident peak on that transformer. The Orbit MDM has helped to eliminate all of that guesswork for CUB's engineers. Now with the transformer report in the Orbit MDM, our engineers can use actual measured data to make accurate transformer sizing decisions. CUB's engineers can also utilize the transformer load study function to quickly and easily look system wide for transformers that are either grossly oversized -- and costing money in terms of increased upfront transformer cost and the resulting cost for increased losses -- or that are grossly undersized, with a high probability of failure.

From an Operations perspective, the Orbit MDM has helped to reduce costs while also improving reliability. When a transformer outage occurs, CUB's system operators are able to use the transformer report within the Orbit MDM and know whether or not the transformer is undersized and needs to be replaced. If it is undersized, they can let the crew know so that they can take a new, larger transformer with them avoiding another truck roll. Another valuable operational tool within the Orbit MDM is the blink count report which can not only be used to assess hard-to-find issues such as bad lightning arresters, but it can also be used as a proactive monitoring tool to find devices that are operating and causing momentary outages. This allows the underlying issue to be corrected before it results in a sustained outage.

These are just a few of the highlights that make the Orbit MDM one of the most valuable assets in CUB's technology portfolio. For CUB, the Orbit MDM is not just a data repository capable of producing a lot of pretty graphs and charts, it is a tool for helping CUB focus on the things that are most important to its customers by providing better service, keeping the rates low, and keeping the lights on.



For more information please contact:

Steve Willis
Central Service Association
Orbit MDM Brand Manager
662-842-5962
662-610-9931
swillis@csa1.com