



## ECOTRICITY

# SAP® SOFTWARE AIDS RENEWABLE ELECTRICITY SUPPLIER'S GROWTH

### QUICK FACTS

#### Company

- Name: Ecotricity Group Limited
- Location: Stroud, United Kingdom
- Industry: Utilities
- Products and services: Electricity from renewable sources
- Revenue: £27million (€34 million)
- Employees: 146
- Web site: [www.ecotricity.co.uk](http://www.ecotricity.co.uk)
- Implementation partner: IBM (United Kingdom) Ltd

#### Challenges and Opportunities

- Expand customer base to 1 million
- Streamline processes across the organization
- Increase billing accuracy
- Improve quality of customer service
- Enhance operational efficiency

#### Objectives

- Establish a scalable IT infrastructure
- Introduce automation to eliminate the use of paper-based forms
- Integrate financial management processes
- Provide improved access to customer information

#### SAP® Solutions and Services

- SAP for Utilities solutions
- SAP® Customer Relationship Management application
- SAP NetWeaver® Exchange Infrastructure component
- SAP Active Global Support organization
- SAP Solution Manager application management solution

#### Implementation Highlights

- Implemented software within a tight 7-month time frame
- Adopted structured approach to minimize project risk and delays
- Empowered project management team to make swift decisions
- Used industry-specific features to minimize customization requirements
- Helped ensure successful project delivery using IBM's global delivery model by providing support from its India and Spain competency centers

#### Why SAP

- Ability to accommodate growing customer base
- Superior fit with business requirements
- Excellent reputation and track record within the utilities sector

#### Benefits

- 70% increase in billing accuracy
- Attainment of a 95% on-time billing rate
- 15% reduction in call volumes
- Resolution of 80% of inquiries at the point of contact
- Ability to support future growth

#### Existing Environment

Legacy software

#### Third-Party Integration

- Hardware: IBM
- Operating system: Microsoft Windows NT
- Database: Oracle

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**Trevor Saunders**, Head of Infrastructure,  
Ecotricity Group Limited

**ecotricity**

**Customer Success Story**  
Utilities – Retail



When Dale Vince first founded Stroud, United Kingdom-based Ecotricity Group Limited, he had a clear vision. He wanted to offer customers electricity from renewable sources – helping to reduce emissions and protect the environment. As public demand for “green energy” has increased, so has the company’s customer base. However, existing legacy billing software threatened to restrict future growth, preventing Ecotricity from increasing market share.

To resolve this, and to facilitate customer service improvements, the company decided to implement SAP for Utilities solutions and the SAP® Customer Relationship Management (SAP CRM) application with help from IBM (United Kingdom) Ltd. As a result, Ecotricity now has a scalable foundation to support future growth – enabling it to take its vision to new customers.

### **Differentiation Through Service Excellence**

An independent company, Ecotricity is committed to fighting climate change by investing in renewable energy. Founded in 1995, Ecotricity has grown from a company of just six employees to a medium-sized energy provider with a workforce of 150 and a customer base of over 35,000. The company’s goal was to expand its customer base to over a million. However, it was clear that existing billing software, which was no longer supported and was struggling to handle current volumes, was not up to the task of supporting this dramatic growth. “We didn’t just want an improvement on what we had,” explains Trevor Saunders, head of infrastructure at Ecotricity. “We needed a solution that

could support our business as it is today, as well as the much larger organization we hope to develop in future.”

For Ecotricity to stand out in the marketplace, it needs to ensure that service levels do not suffer as the company expands, so improving the customer experience was also a key priority. “A reliance on manual processes sometimes led to delays and billing inaccuracies,” remarks Saunders. “We wanted to increase our operational efficiency to dramatically improve the service we offer customers – helping to differentiate us in the industry.”

### **Reengineering Processes**

To help ensure Ecotricity was fully prepared for its ambitious expansion plans, the company brought in IBM to conduct an in-depth business-process-mapping exercise. “We needed to understand where issues were arising and put measures in place to resolve them,” comments Saunders.

As part of this work, IBM recommended the implementation of SAP for Utilities and SAP CRM at Ecotricity. “We felt

that SAP solutions offered a very good fit for Ecotricity’s needs,” says IBM solution architect Mukul Dixit. “We knew that SAP was a global leader within the utilities sector and had positive experiences with past implementations.”

### **Rapid Implementation**

The time frame for the implementation was tight. “We anticipate a boom in demand for green electricity over the next few years, and we didn’t want to have to turn away customers because our IT infrastructure couldn’t cope with the volume,” says Saunders. “It was critical to get the new solution up and running fast.”

IBM adopted a structured approach, using its “Seven Keys to Success” methodology to keep the project on track and help ensure optimum quality management at every stage. The roll-out of the software to 80 users was completed within just seven months – an achievement that was recognized with an SAP Quality Award in 2008. As Hitesh Amin, partner at IBM (United Kingdom) Ltd, says: “IBM has ensured successful project delivery within record time by utilizing its global delivery model, the depth of experience within its utilities sector, and its project management methodologies.”

### **Strong Project Governance**

Saunders feels that strong project governance was an important success factor. “The project was backed at the most senior level, and the cross-discipline team was empowered to make the decisions needed to push



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the installation forward,” he confirms. “We established a sense of urgency from day one. An undertaking to reach key decisions within a 24-hour period ensured that time delays were kept to a minimum.”

The Ecotricity-IBM implementation team also avoided unnecessary and time-consuming customization. “Because the software is developed specifically for the utilities sector, it provided the process support we needed – without us having to make extensive changes,” says Saunders.

To help ensure a smooth rollout of the software, the implementation team also used the SAP Solution Manager application management solution to monitor the technical infrastructure and access knowledge within SAP. And as this was the first United Kingdom-based implementation of the latest version of SAP

streamline financial management and billing processes across the company. Results have been swift and dramatic.

“Now 95% of all bills are issued on time, and billing accuracy has increased by 70%,” remarks Saunders. “And because fewer customers feel the need to get in touch with queries and complaints about their bills, the number of incoming calls has decreased significantly. In the first month alone, we had a 15% reduction in call volumes, reducing our administration costs and enabling us to deal with outstanding customer inquiries faster.”

### 360-Degree View

“Customer interaction center functionality within SAP CRM now provides staff with a 360-degree view of the customer. This enables staff to resolve 80% of inquiries at the first point of

The SAP CRM implementation is the first installation of the latest version of the software in a utilities company in the United Kingdom and is based on a Web client. “Because SAP CRM is Web-based, we have more flexibility to move staff around quickly and easily within the contact center,” says Saunders. “The intuitive interface also provides an excellent user experience.”

### Green Light for Future Growth

Saunders feels that the SAP solutions will provide significant competitive advantage in the future. “Our IT infrastructure is no longer an obstacle to business expansion – and that allows us to concentrate on the big issues for the customer,” he confirms.

Ecotricity intends to further harness the power of SAP software to differentiate itself in the marketplace. Soon customers who are looking for a “green experience” will be able to conduct transactions and receive bills online – an environmentally friendly alternative to paper correspondence. The company is also planning to introduce multichannel capabilities such as telephone self-service, Web self-service, and inquiry handling by e-mail, as well as using SAP CRM to help manage marketing campaigns.

Saunders concludes: “With SAP software in place, and drawing on the global expertise that IBM can offer, we have the confidence to move forward and achieve our vision – increasing our investment in renewable energy and providing customers with a green alternative.”

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CRM, experts from the SAP Active Global Support organization were on hand to help ensure swift resolution of any issues that arose.

### Streamlined Processes

Supported by the SAP NetWeaver® Exchange Infrastructure component, SAP for Utilities solutions now

contact, rather than referring them to back-office colleagues,” explains Dixit. “Previously, customer service representatives were using paper-based forms to record inquiries such as billing queries and change-of-address notifications before handing them over to colleagues. Now, better access to information allows them to handle these situations on the spot – improving customer service and increasing productivity.”



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