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Megan Gooding,
Customer Account Representative
at Waterloo North Hydro.
Photo credit: David Briggs

PUTTING THE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE FIRST ENHANCED DIGITAL RESOURCES AT WATERLOO NORTH HYDRO

By Kiel Edge

Moving is stressful, but Waterloo North Hydro (WNH) has taken some stress out of the equation by introducing a number of online tools aimed at making customers' lives easier. Through the revamping of its online tools and the introduction of new products, WNH is adapting to the changing needs of customers by providing all the information they need with the click of a button.

Better service, greater efficiency

WNH has a large student population, which leads to an influx of account transactions, including new account set ups, account closures, account moves, and a high volume of calls each spring and fall. In the past, providing these new customers with important account details, such as billing information, energy efficiency tips and payment options, often led to long phone conversations or visits to several sections of the corporate website.

In the Fall of 2017, WNH consolidated this information into a student-specific webpage. This page was designed to include all the information students need when setting up their account and preparing to pay their first bills. The new resource saves time for both students and WNH staff, as customers no longer need to call in to find information they may have missed during their initial account set ups.

To help spread awareness of this important resource, WNH's Customer Service Representatives (CSRs) referred callers directly to the site. WNH's social media channels also provided links to the new page several times a week during peak moving times.

Students are not the only new customers who need to find information, so in the Summer of 2018, WNH unveiled a New Customer Welcome Package. The 20-page booklet provides a visually-appealing overview of the services provided by WNH and highlights important information on rates, billing support programs, electrical safety tips, energy efficiency options and an explanation of online tools available to all customers. The Welcome Package is sent electronically to all new customers upon completion of their move request or new account set-up. By making the Welcome Package available online, WNH is able to make changes to content as necessary, ensuring the resource remains up-to-date.

Serving customers through innovation

Consolidating key information for all new customers was a priority for WNH throughout 2017 and early 2018, and the organization also made improvements to its online tools. With the launch of its innovative JOMAR Customer Information System (CIS) in early 2017, WNH now has the ability to fully integrate online tools into its CIS.

In the Summer of 2018, WNH revamped its online move request forms using new technology pioneered through its CIS development. The new forms allow customers to select information from drop down menus, such as their address, helping to eliminate data entry errors. The system also provides an automated confirmation once a form is completed. The automated process substantially decreases the processing time of each request and lowers the number of follow-up interactions required with customers.

"WNH takes pride in meeting the needs of our customers through innovation," said Rene Gatién, WNH's President and CEO. "Our improved tools lead to an improved online experience for our customers and has helped to provide them with a positive first interaction with us."

The technology also allows WNH to automatically register new customers for its My Account online portal, as well as Electronic Billing. Customers previously had to wait until they received their first bill to take advantage of the benefits of the online portal, but system improvements allow for customers to receive their login details immediately upon completion of their move.

Through a commitment to streamlining its online experience, WNH has helped ease the stress of moving for customers across its service territory. With more changes planned for 2019, the organization continues to meet the evolving needs of its customers. **D**

Kiel Edge is a Communications Specialist with Waterloo North Hydro Inc., which services more than 57,000 residential and business customers in the City of Waterloo and the Townships of Wellesley and Woolwich. For more information on WNH, its programs and services, visit www.wnhydro.com.



WNH's new Welcome Package includes the information new customers need, from safety tips to managing their electricity consumption.