



# New Generation of Systems for Bristol and Wessex

Customer experience expectations have changed radically in recent years. Utilities are still expected to invest in and manage their vast and complex infrastructures to the very highest standards, but customers will no longer put up with sub standard customer services.

Coupled with the impacts of climate change and water scarcity, which will require a major shift in the way people think of and use water, this presents a significant challenge for water industry customer services. As customers are asked to change their behaviour, water companies need first to deliver a quality service to them, on all fronts.

Companies like Bristol Water and Wessex Water have for many years been at the forefront of a shift in technology focus, redesigning their infrastructures around the needs of the customer. Consequently, Bristol and Wessex enjoy an enviable track record of customer service and billing performance. As the billing and customer service provider to both Bristol and Wessex Water, Bristol Wessex Billing Services Limited (BWBSL) is the organisation responsible for meeting relevant regulatory targets.

A continuous company wide effort at BWBSL seeks to find new ways in which to drive a step change improvement in the customer experience. John Coppack, General Manager of BWBSL, explains "All business processes are being examined to reveal how well they deliver to customer's expectations, as opposed to the needs of the business." Having enjoyed long term success in its billing processes, working with Echo Managed Services as the software solution provider, BWBSL is now looking to increase its investment in Echo's RapidXtra customer information system.

This investment in the latest water customer services technology represents a renewed commitment to keep improving the customer experience. The new generation of RapidXtra customercentric technology will deliver to BWBSL's customer service representatives a 360degree view of all customer related information.

John Coppack is excited about the possibilities "This will make available in one screen all customer related activities, providing contact handling agents with the functionality to handle each customer individually and ensure that account services and operational information are tailored to specific individual customer needs."

A number of challenges need to be overcome for BWBSL to achieve its vision of a single view of the customer. John Coppack explains "It's important to ensure there is a seamless migration of legacy technology to the new, customercentric IT environment. We're working with Echo to ensure that our developments do not disrupt our successful record of service delivery. Ultimately, in building a true customercentric service, we are also expecting additional benefits: improved efficiency and effectiveness using slicker processes and through better resource utilisation; and, a future proofed system that is sufficiently flexible to adapt to changing customer needs."

Phil Newland, Managing Director of Echo Managed Services, commented "Working with BWBSL and our water company clients, we're focussed on helping the industry progress beyond tactical activities. By providing a single view of the customer, RapidXtra helps water companies deliver a much improved, comprehensive experience for their customers. As a strategic management tool, RapidXtra will not only help BWBSL to manage the entire billing process, but also to provide all the right information to best service its customers."

Although the core activities of water companies have remained unchanged through the years, the crucial systems which facilitate the billing processes must now go further and provide a view of the customer as a single entity, rather than a series of unrelated transactions or accounts.