

Vertex turns  
Florida utility's  
focus from  
infrastructure  
to customers

## The Opportunity:

There were three reasons one Florida utility needed a new CIS:

**Its CIS was outdated.** It lived in a mainframe; it was written with COBOL; and it was past its useful life.

**Its CIS was inefficient.** It was forcing the utility to complete many tasks manually that, if automated, would have saved time and helped employees operate more efficiently, in some cases saving multiple days per month.

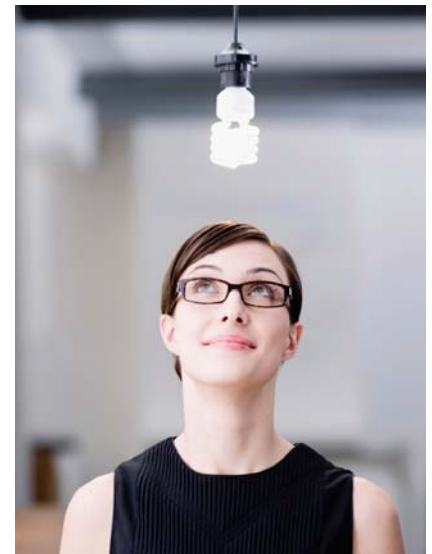
**Its CIS was unsophisticated.** But more than anything, the aging CIS was holding the utility back from providing the level of customer service that it wanted and needed to, given shifting customer expectations. Increasing popularity of online retailers like Amazon and services like Netflix had started to condition consumers to expect a different level of customer service, one that allowed them to use multiple channels to communicate with the utility.

The committee tasked with finding a new CIS knew that it was time to identify not just software stout enough to help the utility manage its 150,000 customers, but also a partner to implement, host and manage that software. A hosting partner would provide better security than the utility could provide on its own, plus allow the utility to work with experienced and knowledgeable experts that couldn't be sourced locally.

The software that the utility chose was from SAP, the industry's leading CIS technology. The partner chosen to implement, host and manage it was Vertex, a company with experience hosting and managing utility CIS technology since 1996.



Vertex has given officials at one Florida utility the SAP experts needed so they can think more about their customers and less about their infrastructure.



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## The Vertex Approach:

Above everything else, the top two benefits the utility gained by choosing to partner with SAP and Vertex were confidence and time. It secured the most sophisticated CIS software available, but doesn't have to host or manage it independently. The utility is able to focus on its most important job: serving its customers.

With SAP and Vertex on its side, the utility now has the ability to more easily collect on delinquent payments, automated processes for running standard reports that take hours instead of days, and read adjustments that can be reflected in the system in a single day instead of five.

Technically, the utility reached a level of security that it never had before. Since its data is now hosted in a data center in Dallas (with a back-up in Sunnyvale, CA), it is no longer sitting in hurricane-prone Florida. And the people working in the data center in Dallas have a level of expertise in SAP® software that would have been difficult for this utility to recruit and retain on its own.

System updates are handled by the Vertex team and equipment upgrades are a thing of the past since the data center is regularly maintained and always state-of-the-art. All of this means that the utility's employees are now free to think about serving the customer instead of spending their days (and nights) managing the technology.

Vertex's experts have been there since implementation, supporting and consulting with the business and technology teams, making them truly an extension of the utility's team. There are regular conversations, including a weekly support call, as well as ad hoc discussions as needed. Together, the team addresses challenges, solutions, and possible pitfalls, allowing utility officials to worry less about the infrastructure and hardware and concentrate on how they can use the technology as a tool to better serve their customers.

## Vertex's Hosting and Management Services

Application Development	Application Management	Infrastructure Management
Design	User Administration	Data Center Management
Configuration	Helpdesk, Incident Management & SLA Reporting	Server Monitoring
Development	Release Management & Change Control	Capacity Planning
Testing	Enhancement & Service Packs	Storage and Backup Management
Training	Batch Processing & File Transfers	Disaster Recovery
Service Level Agreements		

*Vertex offers clients guaranteed service levels and a predictable cost of ownership.*

But the biggest payoff of having its CIS hosted and managed by Vertex may be the benefit to the customer and the customer service representatives. Now that the utility isn't limited by space on the mainframe, agents are able to have more effective conversations with customers when they call in. Contact logs once filled with abbreviations and acronyms used by agents to save space due to mainframe limitations, are now more detailed with the new CIS, putting more information into the hands of the agents.

This allows the agents to work more closely with the customer and speak to them in detail about their accounts. They are able to say to a customer, "Oh, yes, we have your payment. We see that it came in on this date. Actually, we see that it was a check payment, and here's your check number."

For the utility, it's delivering a great customer service experience. For the customers, it's being treated in a manner that conveys how important they actually are to the utility. They feel like people with unique concerns and needs, not just points of consumption.





“Vertex doesn’t just run the system; they know our business and help us achieve our business strategies,” one county official said. “We would never host our own CIS again.”

## The Bottom Line: Better Customer Focus

Partnering with SAP and Vertex has given the utility the experts needed to keep powerful, sophisticated software up to date. It’s provided a current customer experience platform without requiring the purchase of expensive equipment, and it’s given the utility a predictable cost of ownership since the technology is managed and updated regularly as part of the service agreement.

All giving the utility the flexibility it needs to continue to meet shifting customer expectations. Introduction of multichannel communications, smart meters, and conservation programs is now possible, while ongoing IT spend isn’t going to provide any nasty surprises.

But more than anything, partnering with SAP and Vertex has given these Florida utility officials peace of mind.

“We don’t have to worry about the system,” one official said. “Our technology is up to date and performance levels are guaranteed, so we can focus on our customers.”