

## PG&E Customers 'Very Satisfied' with Online Chat; Inbound Calls Decrease

### SITUATION

San Francisco-based Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E), one of the nation's largest combination natural gas and electric utilities, is at the forefront of an industry experiencing tougher demands on service. With rising energy costs and ever vigilant commission oversight, the utility has an on-going effort to increase customer satisfaction and service levels.

### CHALLENGE

With over a million customers servicing their accounts on PG&E's corporate website, the utility wanted to offer another communication channel to complement its email support. The **company** believed chat would provide customers with a convenient and efficient way to get immediate responses to questions, without having to place a call into the support center.

### SOLUTION

The utility deployed InstantService's chat solution as a pilot program in 2005 to service online account customers, answering questions about billing, account information, and other service issues.


"Use of our chat channel has more than tripled since it was debuted, which proves to us that customers like the convenience, and the high scores on our satisfaction surveys prove they're happy with their chat experience," said Mike Chase, Director, Web Channel at PG&E.

### RESULTS

The company tracks customer satisfaction with the solution's integrated and customizable exit survey. Tracking between January-May 2007 showed very strong results. Using a survey scale of 1-5 (1 for strongly disagree and 5 for strongly agree), customers responded as follows:

- "strongly agree" that the chat feature was easy to use (average score: 4.8)
- "strongly agree" that the PG&E agent provided responsive and timely service (average score: 4.7)
- "agree" that the chat session allowed them to resolve their issue without further contacting the utility (average score: 4.3)
- "strongly agree" that they will use the chat feature in the future to correspond with PG&E (average score: 4.6)

"The driver for offering chat was, and still is, to help improve online customer service," added Chase. "The fact that the majority who use chat tell us the session resolved their issue and that they didn't have to call, is proof it's working for them, and us."



**Pacific Gas and Electric Company®**

#### FACTS AT A GLANCE

- PG&E provides natural gas and electric service to approximately 15 million people throughout a 70,000-square-mile service area in northern and central California.
- The utility's move to offer live chat to its online account customers breaks new ground.
- PG&E chose the InstantService solution because of:
  - Ease of implementation
  - Low cost of entry
  - Ease of use for agents
  - Rich functionality



"With over a million customers online, it is imperative that we offer a highly-scalable, easy-to-use self-service communication channel to help resolve issues, without increasing our inbound phone volume."

Mike Chase,  
Director, Web Channel  
PG&E

InstantService, Inc. is a leading provider of customer communication technologies for online businesses and contact centers. InstantService offers an integrated suite of live chat, email management, knowledge base, Web site analytics and lead capture solutions to increase sales and enhance customer service.