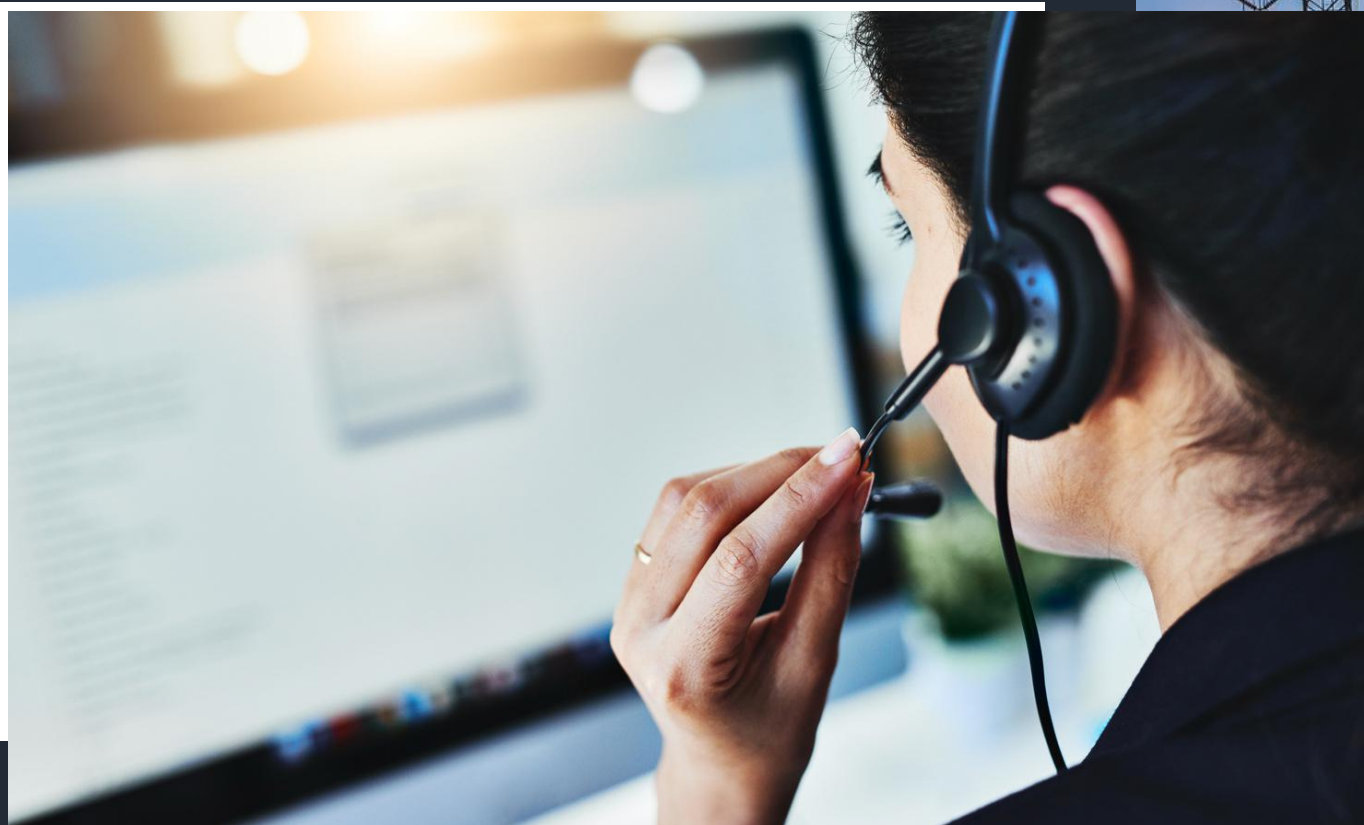


powerassist

Advanced Outage Contact Centre Powers Customer (and Utility) Satisfaction



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Power outages are an inevitable part of modern life. But when outages occur, utility customers want to know two things:

1. They want to know the utility is aware of the outage, and
2. They want to know how soon the lights will be back on.

Providing seamless and easy mechanisms to enable this two-way information exchange is critical to customer satisfaction, and according to a recent study by the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI), the use of technology to interface with customers during outage periods and other complaint-handling scenarios appears to be the main reason residential customer satisfaction improved in the utility industry for the first time in four years.

Lakeland Power is a perfect example. The utility distributes electricity to more than 14,000 customers across several municipalities in Ontario's rural cottage country.



Outages are an unfortunate occurrence in the service area because of heavy forestation and intense seasonal storms. In a high number of cases, it's the loss of supply from the transmitter that causes outages, which are outside the control of Lakeland Power. Both the utility and the transmitter have rigorous forestry programs to keep overhead lines clear; however, severe snowstorms and freezing rain can cause tree branches and trees to fall, and subsequent contact with power lines or other equipment can disrupt power to large sections of the distribution network.

Though Lakeland Power is a recent recipient of the Electricity Distributors Association's Innovation Excellence Award, the utility recognized that its outage call centre was an area of operations that had fallen behind the times. When customers called outside of business hours to inquire about an outage, representatives in the after-hours call centre could only take notes and pass them along to the utility's field crews. They had no information to offer customers and no processes to serve the broader performance goals of the organization.



“Our objective is to be one of Ontario’s top performing distribution companies, and we constantly assess our systems and programs to deliver the best services to our customers,” said Vince Kulchycki, Chief Operating Officer of parent company, Lakeland Holding. “During outage events, our customers expect prompt answers, and they want these answers communicated to them through different means. To accommodate all customers and their preferred communication methods, we needed an adaptive, robust, and flexible outage-contact solution.”

‘An Unmitigated Success’

Through the PowerAssist service, Lakeland Power customers now also have the option to live text or webchat with agents, or they can access on-demand information that agents update in real time to a public-facing website, social media, voice billboard messages and SMS and Webchat billboards.

In 2024, PowerAssist launched proactive outbound SMS-text messaging for outages. Lakeland Power customers who sign up will receive an SMS-text message when an outage is detected that impacts their premises and will be kept apprised of restoration progress. Reaching customers before they even begin searching for the outage-hotline number is expected to reduce the volume of calls and further improve customer satisfaction.



“Our partnership with PowerAssist has been an unmitigated success,” said Kulchycki. “The agents are valuable extensions of both our customer service and operations teams, and we’ve leapt forward in our technological capabilities without needing to own or master any new systems. Plus, our board members, who live in the community, are thrilled that they no longer hear complaints from their friends and neighbours about poor outage communication!”

Service Characteristics Before and After PowerAssist Deployment

Lakeland Power Answering Service (before 2022)

- Limited lines and high potential for busy signals
- Note-taking only (addresses)
- Limited Billboard messaging on telephone IVR
- No address confirmation leading to unnecessary truck rolls at times
- Limited record keeping
- No call recordings
- Limited updates to social media or the web (by utility staff only)
- No Service Level Agreements (SLA)
- Limited performance tracking
- Limited field-crew support

Lakeland Power Contact Centre with PowerAssist (today)

- Unlimited inbound call-handling
- Triage-trained agents with access to AMI, CIS and OMS data
- Timely Billboard messages posted across all channels and in alignment
- All calls recorded and stored for a minimum of 10 years
- Digital communication options (SMS texting and webchat) implemented and increasing in popularity
- Real-time 24/7 updates to social media, web and messaging boards
- Clear Service Level Agreements (SLA)
- Monthly performance reporting
- Close relationships with utility field crews during outages (leading to timely updates posted on all channels for utility customers)

Ready to take the next step?

When the lights go out, your customers want answers, and they want them now. But they want to communicate with you in different ways. PowerAssist is the outage call centre solution that meets the needs of all your customers. With multiple contact channels for convenience and speed, including the option to interact with a live agent, PowerAssist ensures your customers get fast, personalized service and the immediate answers they need to make decisions.

Contact Us



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About Util-Assist

Util-Assist's solutions merge technology with strategy to streamline processes, boost productivity, enable data-driven business decisions, and deliver enhanced customer experiences, transforming how utilities operate and deliver value to their customers. Driving digital innovation with professional services and managed services for electric, water, and gas, Util-Assist is shaping the utility of the future.

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Solutions. *Simplified.*