



Service and Software

Echo has been established for over 20 years delivering customer service and software solutions to water utilities in the UK, Australia and USA that support and enhance their customer operations. Broadly, this incorporates outsourced customer service solutions including customer contact handling, billing, meter reading and debt collection, as well as developing, implementing, and supporting billing and CRM software.

Market conditions this financial year had an optimistic outlook compared to the previous year. In the UK Echo supported clients with their PR24 preparations, although the cost-of-living continues to impact clients in both bill affordability and debt collections.

At the start of the year, the Australian market had already entered a buoyant phase as a significant number of the utilities had commenced preliminary planning to replace their legacy billing solutions over the next few years. Towards the end of the year, Echo was planning towards its first Australian Client Forum in Melbourne, which further enhanced this view. Furthermore, the various state-based regulators are continuing to place greater emphasis on customer centric service models, which aligns with the inherent benefit of selecting Aptumo on Salesforce.

In the USA, the utilities are increasingly focussed on change programmes to enhance customer experience, including billing system replacements.

Overall, Echo delivered a strong performance during the year, supporting its existing clients and making further progress in its global expansion in both Australia and USA. In the UK, following a strong contract award with Northern Ireland Water at the end of the previous financial year, it's now significantly through the implementation of Aptumo alongside the new end-to-end customer service delivery model. A renewed contract was won with a further UK large water and sewerage company client, with a new system implementation for Aptumo.



Strategic direction

Echo has a strong reputation and lengthy proven track record as a trusted service partner to water utilities. Our strategic direction remains one of continued growth across the UK, Australia, and the USA, focusing solely on water sector customer service and software.

Aptumo, Echo's innovative customer billing software, continues to present growth opportunities for the business both in the UK and overseas. Together with the customer service side of the business, both offer significant transformation opportunities for clients.

Echo continued to support the UK and Australian water markets throughout the year, helping its clients transform their customer management systems to deliver a cost-effective and improved experience for their customers.

Northern Ireland Water (NIW) and a large UK water company became Echo's third and fourth clients in the UK to choose Aptumo, the company's next-generation, cloud-based billing and CRM software, helping them to simplify processes, offer customers more choice in how they communicate with the company, and deliver more self-serve options to further improve customer service. The 10-year contract secured last year with Echo's longstanding client NIW, saw the commencement of Aptumo implementation, which is alongside Echo's end-to-end customer service provision.

During the year, Echo planned towards the first Client Forum in Australia with Coliban Water and North East Water. Echo continued to actively bid on live procurements in the water sector and took part in key industry events. This further strengthened Echo's presence and commitment as a valuable supplier to the Australian water sector.

Echo has continued to progress its expansion activities and plans in the USA. The partnership with a water sector system integrator, established in the geography, has further enabled ongoing business development and tender opportunities.

To position the business well for the anticipated growth ahead, Echo continues to focus on its forward-looking product roadmap to ensure Aptumo offers innovative functionality for the evolving water sector markets in the UK, Australia, and the USA. A further priority has been in bolstering the Salesforce skillset within the team to better support the business when implementing Aptumo alongside other native Salesforce products or where Salesforce is the client's platform of choice. This has included the use of artificial intelligence to support automation of key processes, and integration tools and capabilities.

Echo has continued to support its clients Cambridge Water and South Staffs Water (SSW) in their joint ambition to deliver an excellent customer experience. Performance in the year for C-MeX was impacted by the cyberattack on parent company South Staffordshire Plc, however Echo was able to support SSW in exceeding its performance commitment targets for the number of customers helped during the year and the percentage of its household customers registered on its Priority Services Register, whilst also reducing the volumes of customer complaints.

Echo delivered all targets for its client NIW for the tenth successive year and, is now well into implementation phase for a new contract, implementing a new and innovative market leading service and software solution to help NIW in their ambition to deliver world-class customer service.

Echo's wholly owned offshore operation in India was awarded 'Great Place to Work' and continued to deliver agility and efficiency for existing external and Group clients in a range of software functions and customer service back office, and administration roles, whilst continuing to prepare for expansion into wider processes and service offerings.



A platform approach to

How our clients are improving both customer

- Sales**
New water connections
Property searches
- Marketing**
Customer outreach
Social interactions
- IoT (asset management)**
For asset monitoring
- Intelligent IVR**
Advanced self-service
Sentiment analysis
- Salesforce maps**
Geospatial asset and incidents
- CIS and billing powered by Salesforce



Looking to the future

On a global scale the water sector continues to provide opportunities. Echo is well placed to take advantage in UK, Australia and USA as the business remains focused on supporting clients to deliver against regulatory, customer and wider stakeholder requirements.

In customer service solutions and billing and collections, Echo remains strongly positioned to be a trusted service partner to water utilities.

Looking ahead there are ongoing challenges anticipated, particularly as the cost-of-living crisis remains a threat in relation to water bill affordability and debt collection. Customer expectations remain high, as customers demand a world class service and greater choice. Data, insight, and billing choices continue to be high priorities. In addition, further changes are expected within the sector with the onset of the artificial intelligence era, smart metering agenda drive and the global quest to be more resourceful with the usage of water.

The subsidiary in India will continue to grow to support the sector with back office and administrative initiatives.

Innovation is at the heart of Echo and the business will continue to specialise in delivering software and customer services for water sector clients. Product roadmaps and software development are aligned to the sector drivers and opportunities both in the UK and overseas.

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For the year ended 31 March 2024

To help create a world where essential services and infrastructure deliver for customers, clients and our planet

South Staffordshire Plc

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Regulated Water Supply

Strategic report

Regulated Water Supply

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SSI Water, Waste and Infrastructure

Strategic report

SSI Water, Waste & Infrastructure

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SSI Compliance

Strategic report

SSI Compliance

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Commercial Water Production and Distribution

Strategic report

Commercial Water Production and Distribution

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Utility Network Design and Installation

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Utility Network Design and Installation

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Environment, Social & Governance (ESG)

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Environment, Social & Governance (ESG)

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Financial review

Financial report



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