

Information Builders enables agile information solutions with business intelligence (BI) and integration technologies. WebFOCUS – the most widely utilized business intelligence platform – connects to any enterprise system or application and enables simple and intuitive interaction with information.

Scottish and Southern Energy

Snapshot

Organization

Scottish and Southern Energy is a full-service energy provider with 17,000 employees, 8 million customers and 40 percent of the UK's renewable electricity generation capacity.

The Challenge

Help customers manage their energy consumption and control costs.

The Strategy

Provide all 420,000 business customers with timely, accurate, actionable billing, and usage data on their electricity and gas consumption.

The Results

Built Business Energy Center (BEC), a self-service customer portal that provides day-plus-one billing and usage data dynamically updated every 24 hours.

Information Builders Solution

WebFOCUS Pro Server, Workload Distribution Facility, Web Services Enablement Option, and Professional Services.



Using the unrivalled data access and integration capabilities of WebFOCUS, SSE combined powerful query and reporting tools into a single, high-performance solution.

WebFOCUS Energizes Cost Savings for Scottish and Southern Customers

UK's Second Largest Energy Supplier Drives Growth Through Customer-Centric Service

Scottish and Southern Energy (SSE), one of the largest vertically integrated electricity and gas companies in the UK, is enhancing customer service while cutting support costs using a self-service portal built on the WebFOCUS platform from Information Builders. Known as the Business Energy Centre (BEC), the Web site gives SSE's 420,000 corporate customers online access to day-plus-one billing and usage data dynamically updated every 24 hours.

Developed by the company's IT team and Information Builders Professional Services, BEC provides accurate, detailed intelligence that helps organizations identify usage peaks and troughs, spot trends, and take prompt action to reduce consumption levels. The solution was built using Information Builders' flexible WebFOCUS service-oriented architecture (SOA) to access customer billing information from SSE's existing back-office system and publish customer usage reports as Web Services. These Web Services reports present usage data via an intuitive portal interface and can be

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exported to multiple output formats such as PDF and Excel. The reports generated are helping companies cut costs and meet environmental sustainability targets through smarter gas and electricity consumption.

“WebFOCUS boosts competitive advantage by enabling us to give business customers 24/7 access to timely, actionable energy consumption data,” says Phil Collard, head of Business and Operational Support, Scottish and Southern Energy.

A High-Ranking Customer Portal

Following its launch in March 2008, BEC’s self-service functionality and ease of use made it instantly popular, with more than 23 percent of SSE’s business customers signing up in the first six months. In a recent survey, the portal’s most frequent users gave it a score of four out of five for performance, speed of access, and quality and relevance of the information provided.

The migration of 50,000 customers to BEC has enabled SSE’s call center to support an increasing number of customers without the need for additional resources. Thanks to Information Builders’ educational services team, the company’s IT department is largely self-sufficient in system management, support, and ongoing development, which minimizes cost of ownership. SSE is continuing to extend the portal’s functionality and reach and is confident of converting 90 percent of business customers to self-service within three years. BEC is also an important sales support tool for the utility when bidding for new contracts. Online service support and round-the-clock access to billing data are key to SSE’s 10-year plan to grow the value of each customer and expand its client base while continuing to drive down overheads.

Timely, Universal Customer Access

BEC replaced a legacy online tool that offered limited energy consumption data to SSE’s largest electricity customers with half-hourly supply agreements. Smaller monthly and quarterly billed customers, requiring updates on their consumption, needed to contact their nominated account manager or the company’s call center. Data was extracted manually from SSE’s billing system to create a report containing data up to a week old that was then mailed to the customer.

“SSE recognizes that controlling energy costs is crucial to operating efficiently and maximizing performance and profitability for today’s businesses,” said Collard. “We have always been committed to helping our customers avoid unnecessary cost by optimizing their energy use. Allowing customers to self-service their information requirements via a business-to-business Web site would put control in their hands.”

A High-Performance, Low-Cost Solution

SSE evaluated the time and cost implications of developing the infrastructure for BEC in-house, but instead chose commercial off-the-shelf software that would reduce risk, cost, and development time and be more flexible than a customized solution. “Our technical architects considered the reporting tools available,” said Mark Russell, project manager, Scottish and Southern Energy. “WebFOCUS was the best solution for combining information from multiple databases and heterogeneous enterprise systems and publish customer reports as reusable Web Services via our existing MS. NET portal.”

Using the unrivalled data access and integration capabilities of WebFOCUS, SSE combined powerful query and reporting tools into a single, high-performance solution. Information Builders

Find Out More

To find out how our solutions can help your company succeed, talk to an Information Builders representative today.

Contact your local Information Builders office, visit us at

informationbuilders.com,

or in the U.S. and Canada,

call **(800) 969-4636.**

Professional Services provided implementation support, helped build advanced reporting functionality, and trained the SSE team.

"Information Builders helped us develop real-life reports that would actually be used by customers," said Roger Skinner, services team leader, Scottish and Southern Energy. "Their consultants and educational services team worked closely with us and provided invaluable support at all stages of the project and beyond."

End-to-End Intelligence in Seconds

BEC has extended free-of-charge self-service access to electricity and gas customers of all sizes and provides not only raw usage data, but also a detailed breakdown of hourly consumption at each client site for the previous four years. Registered customers gain access to BEC via www.ssebusiness.co.uk and log on in just a few seconds. After viewing their energy profile and the portfolio of standard reports available, users can convert consumption data into graphs, spreadsheets, pivot tables, pdfs, XML, and other reporting formats for manipulation and analysis. Information can also be exported to all commonly used business intelligence and enterprise performance management tools. The portal also gives customers updated market news and provides links to regulator and energy services websites.

SSE's account managers promoted BEC during regular service review meetings with customers. "Customers were quick to see the benefits of the business center, which took off without any major sales effort on our part and grew by reputation," said Collard. "In smaller businesses, owners and directors access the site. In larger organizations, finance and utilities managers are frequent users, as are business cost consultants employed by multisite companies to audit their energy consumption and find ways to take out cost."

Building Competitive Advantage

SSE has also seen benefits to its own business through the improved productivity of account managers and call center agents who can now focus on resolving complex customer enquiries and on up-selling activities. Access data from BEC is fed into SSE's customer relationship management solution, which helps the company track hit rates and identify the most popular information requests.

BEC also enhances the company's sales proposition when talking to prospective customers. "Online access to billing and usage data is becoming an increasingly common condition in competitive tenders," said Collard. "We are one of the first energy companies to offer this kind of service, which enhances our reputation as an innovative, proactive supplier."

Maximizing Growth Opportunities

The flexibility of WebFOCUS means that SSE can build new capabilities into BEC rapidly and cost effectively in line with customer demand. The company is continuing to enhance functionality by allowing customers to perform ad hoc analysis on their usage data and plans to offer tailored reports to its largest customers. BEC also provides SSE with a platform on which it can offer a range of other online solutions, such as e-billing, to its customers. "BEC helps us meet the challenge of being a cost cutter and an innovator at the same time, while offering uncompromising service quality to our customers," concluded Skinner.

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