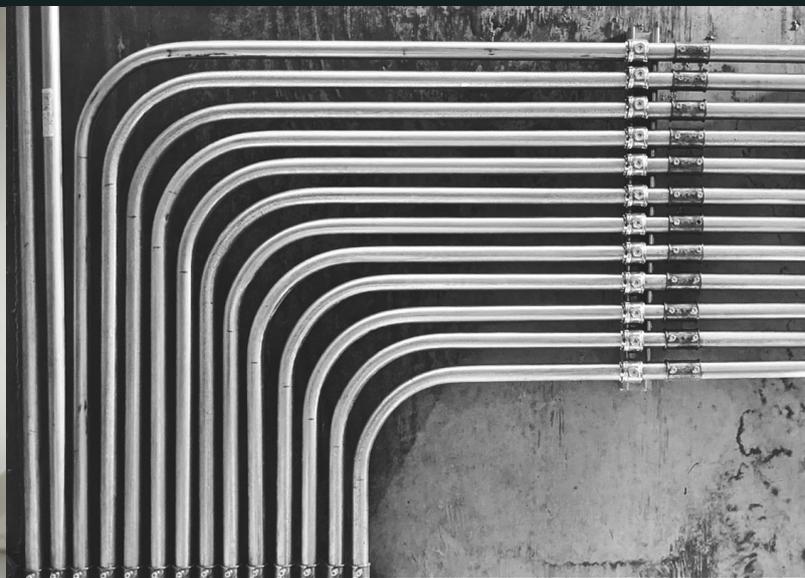


Keeping Western Power Distribution in the picture

Case Study



“ We demonstrate to our clients that we do things differently from our competitors. Triopsis is a big differentiator and helps us stand out.”

Roger Sparks, Metering Manager
Western Power Distribution

‘Keeping the lights on and fixing problems when they go out’ is one of the ways in which Western Power Distribution describes its work, although behind this modest phrase lies a much bigger story.

As one of the UK’s vital electricity distribution network operators, the company delivers electricity across an area that straddles two nations – a region that stretches from the east midlands to the tip of Cornwall, with a large portion of south west Wales included too.

Within this huge area, almost 8 million customers rely on Western Power Distribution to keep those lights illuminated – and their computers running, their televisions flickering, and their mobile phones charged. With over 6,500 staff employed to maintain the highest levels of service, the company faces a wide range of workforce challenges, and with the ongoing smart meter roll-out creating additional work, there was a need for a new approach to workforce management.

Triopsis is no stranger to scenarios like this, and as experts in workforce management and scheduling for utilities companies, it has been more than happy to help Western Power Distribution’s Smart Metering team achieve more effective and efficient working across its region.

► The challenge

The original problem that the Smart Metering team faced was one of health and safety during the installation of new smart meters. As Roger Sparks, the company’s Metering Manager, explains:

“ We started off taking photographs so we could highlight health and safety standards to our contractors. We had health and safety issues with one contractor, for remedial work carried out.”

In this age of mobile digital technology, the obvious answer was to take photographs of substandard work, using it as evidence when making a claim against the contractor. Western Power Distribution took this course of action using its own existing IT infrastructure, but soon began to run into new problems. Sparks says:

“ We were starting to capture photos in the field and had no way of managing or sharing these photos. So we asked ‘how on earth can we start tackling this?’. The need for a system for use within smart metering and revenue protection evolved from there.”

▶ **The challenge**
(continued)

This was the issue that Western Power Distribution's Smart Metering team presented to triopsis in 2011, and the one that triopsis initially set out to solve. After all, the triopsis system is designed specifically to help utility companies and their contractors, and includes capabilities for capturing images in the field – as well as enabling those images to be easily accessed, managed and shared throughout the business.

▶ **Our solution**

As with all triopsis solutions, the company's problem-solving, people-first approach meant that the first steps were to build a relationship with Western Power Distribution, listening to their issues and discussing ways in which they could be resolved. And because the triopsis system is a 'no code' platform, this learning process wasn't the precursor to a long, drawn out development period. Instead, triopsis quickly delivered a system that worked on day one, with tightly controlled feedback cycles allowing the Smart Metering teams to use the software, feed back on it, and contribute to its rapid refinement.

The triopsis visual intelligence system gave Western Power Distribution the ability to take the photographs they needed, and the online data management package allowed the time-and-date stamped images to be managed and shared as required, all from a mobile phone.

The system's initial roll-out covered a relatively small number of users, but Western Power Distribution quickly realised that the triopsis system was so adaptable and easy to use, it had the potential to bring improvements for other workforce teams.

The triopsis system was soon being used in revenue protection too, allowing teams to support their investigations into suspicious power usage by capturing photographic evidence of the unauthorised alteration of equipment. Safety implications drive the urgency of this work, but because legal action often also follows, all evidence must be clear, detailed and irrefutable – and with triopsis, it is. As Roger Sparks states,

“ triopsis proved to be a powerful solution.”

“ Triopsis has made everything quicker and more flexible. Speed, efficiency and quick turnarounds have been proven results.”

Roger Sparks, Metering Manager
Western Power Distribution

▶ The triopsis difference

The triopsis team prides itself on its friendly, people-focused approach – a way of working that makes it very different to many other technology-focused companies. Likewise, Western Power Distribution also aims to take a refreshingly different approach in its own work. Sparks says:

“At Western Power Distribution, we offer specialist services. Part of our proposition is to demonstrate to our clients that we do things differently from our competitors. Triopsis is a big differentiator and helps us stand out.”

Although the company had already begun capturing photographic evidence using its own IT infrastructure, the improvements that triopsis introduced were immense.

“Compared with using our own IT, triopsis has made everything quicker and more flexible. But using triopsis has also helped us review our own processes to make sure we have proper business processes in place. It’s great to have a partner who has dealt with other companies going through the same challenges and processes.

A lot of what we’ve done has been to do with quality and safety rather than being efficiency related. But we recognise that having better standards and processes does improve our efficiency, and we’re now offering more value to our customers.”

Not only has Western Power Distribution’s ability to capture images and contextual data been greatly enhanced by triopsis, it is also now able to share information with its own customers quickly and efficiently. Billing processes have also been improved, and claims for aborted works are now very much easier to manage than was previously the case.

It all helps Western Power Distribution live up to its own stated company ethos of ‘Get it right, first time, every time’.

▶ Facing the future

Triopsis doesn’t just solve clear and present workforce issues, but also stays with clients and encourages continuous business improvement. The triopsis system is designed to be able to adapt and evolve as business needs change, and its work with the Western Power Distribution Smart Metering team is already evidence of how effective this sustained involvement can be.

In fact, there are already plans for triopsis to begin a new project within Western Power Distribution’s smart metering programme – a project that’s currently being implemented.

It’s all part of ‘keeping the lights on and fixing problems when they go out’ – an understated way of saying that Western Power Distribution (with triopsis’s help) is definitely doing something right.

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Better is possible