



WHY MITEL? CUSTOMER HIGHLIGHT SERIES

Dollar Energy Fund, Inc.

When they're down on their luck, and their utility bills exceed their bank balances, residents of a growing number of communities can turn to Dollar Energy and Mitel technology for a "hand up."



Mitel Contact Center Solutions Help Dollar Energy Help Others

It all started with a grassroots movement in Pennsylvania over 25 years ago. With utility deregulation came a need to help people who had fallen on hard times pay their bills. Instead of turning off the heat, water, and power those folks needed to get back on their feet, a group of utility companies agreed to match community donations dollar for dollar and give them a "hand up." Dollar Energy, the organization that would manage the fund, was born.

Today, Dollar Energy is still there when Pennsylvanians need help. But they've also expanded into parts of Maryland, New York, New Jersey, Ohio, and West Virginia. They're moving into Virginia, and Tennessee. And they have plans to continue growing southward and westward.

What's driving Dollar Energy's ability to extend a helping hand further and further? Sean Smiles, the company's Director of Information Technology, cites two reasons: "Other states have seen the benefits of the programs and software we've developed. That, and adding communications technology, is what's driving our growth."

Stick with the old, or go for the new?

The growth-enabling technology that Smiles refers to is the Mitel Contact Center Solutions that Dollar Energy has deployed.

Faced with deciding between a cash-value buyout when the lease expired on their existing system, or deploying something new, Dollar Energy took a hard look at the pros and cons.

When they took into account the growing demand for their services, their ongoing geographical expansion, and their need for greater flexibility and more effective reporting and other capabilities, the decision was easy. "We wanted to be able to support employees in our growing and increasingly dispersed workforce with a centralized contact center communications system that could grow with us," says Smiles. "With our older model we couldn't do that, but with the new Mitel solution we can."

Based on their experience with Mitel partner Prime Communications, and their familiarity with the quality of Mitel products and services, choosing Mitel Contact Center Solutions as their new solution was a no brainer.

Not your usual contact center

At first glance, Dollar Energy looks like a typical contact center. Over two dozen agents take calls from people seeking help, and make calls to deliver utility payment counseling and other educational programs that Dollar Energy has developed.

As with any contact center, dealing with call volume is a challenge. But unlike profit-driven centers, optimizing the Dollar Energy customer experience doesn't necessarily mean answering every call in under a minute. "We strive to provide a quality customer experience, but we have to balance our ability to take calls quickly with the need to spend time to fully communicate program details to our clients. This kind of capacity planning is essential to ensure that we make the best use of our funds."

Better capacity planning, more capabilities, lower costs

Smiles rhymes off a list of ways that Mitel Contact Center Solutions will address capacity planning and other challenges faced by Dollar Energy – and help them stretch their dollars.

For one, the Mitel solution will enable Dollar Energy to implement a call-back in queue system. "We have a service level agreement with our carrier," explains Smiles, "so wait times mean we're paying for people to be on hold." With call-back in queue, instead of the client waiting, a Dollar Energy agent will return the call when the agent becomes free. "The cost savings over a year will be significant," says Smiles, "and it will be better for our agents and our clients."

Replacing Dollar Energy's old reporting system with Mitel's Contact Center Management reporting will also drive performance and productivity. "We're looking to be able to know in real time what's going on in the call center," Smiles explains. "We want to be able to convey real-time information to agents, so that they can take responsibility for administering call volume and processing. Replacing our 'add on' reporting system with Mitel's means we can now do that."

Managing a growing and widespread workforce

Perhaps the greatest benefits of the Mitel solution relate to the ways that Dollar Energy will be able to manage their growing and increasingly dispersed workforce.

Already, in addition to the agents working in their central call center, they have 15 or so embedded in utility companies, where they can integrate more easily with those organizations' ongoing operations. Now they will be able to tie those agents into their central communications and reporting system.

And the potential benefits go further. "This could also open the door to bringing the utility company phone systems up to our state-of-the-art level without any effort on their part," says Smiles. He goes on to explain that, in addition, Dollar Energy is "now in a position to offer new services to utility companies, providing backup call center agents or delivering extended contact center hours. So this is a major plus, not only for the utility but for us. And it's only possible because of our new Mitel solution."

Rapid expansion, and growing diversity and mobility

To accommodate increasing demand and their expansion into new territory, Dollar Energy plans to double their number of agents in the next year. This will mean an even more dispersed workforce that the organization wants to manage from a central location. "We've traditionally found success in acquiring a local contact who becomes our employee," explains Smiles. "Their office space is their home, or they are a true mobile agent always on the road. The Mitel Teleworker Solution makes it much easier to accommodate these agents. With Mitel we can tie all of these agents into a central system."

Even employees at head office are working differently. "All of our employees, including those at our central office, are becoming much more mobile," says Smiles. "But the Mitel Unified Communicator® (UC) Mobile and Mitel NuPoint Unified Messaging™ (UM) solutions mean that we get our calls no matter where we are – in the office, on our cell, or at another phone."

COMPANY

Dollar Energy Fund, a rapidly expanding non-profit organization that teams with utility companies to help the needy out of debt and back on their feet.

EVALUATION

Buy out a soon-to-expire lease, or deploy a new communications solution.

CHOICE

Mitel Contact Center Solutions, a scalable, resilient, and virtual solution for contact centers of all sizes across one or more locations.

WHY MITEL?

- **More capabilities – today and tomorrow.** Meets current needs more effectively and accommodates capabilities planned for the future, including an interactive voice response (IVR) system.
- **Significant cost savings.** Call-back in queue means fewer lines on hold, and lower service payments.
- **Superior reporting.** Replacing an "add-on" with integrated reporting means call center agents know how they are performing in real time – and how to perform better.
- **Positioning for expansion.** A centralized communications system that facilitates ongoing growth into new geographical areas.
- **Support for mobile workers.** Unified messaging and Unified Communicator Mobile keep an increasingly mobile workforce connected and productive anywhere, any time.
- **Teleworking.** Flexible and cost-effective teleworking addresses the needs of a workforce of contact center agents that is increasingly widespread, and realizes savings in real-estate.

"Our mission is to serve the population and our employees to the very best of our ability. And our new Mitel Contact Center Solution is an integral part of being able to do that."

– Sean Smiles, Dollar Energy Fund Inc.



A "hand up," not a "hand out"

Sean Smiles makes it very clear that Dollar Energy offers people a "hand up," not a hand out. "We promote a one or two year enrolment for our clients. And during that time we help them become self-sufficient. We give them the push needed to get out of a cycle and become better bill payers, better citizens and, ideally, new Dollar Energy donors."

"Our mission," explains Smiles, "is to serve the population and our employees to the very best of our ability. And our new Mitel Contact Center Solution is an integral part of being able to do that."

About Dollar Energy Fund, Inc.

Dollar Energy Fund was founded in 1983 and has grown to become the fourth largest hardship fund in the United States. Dollar Energy Fund is a 501 (c) 3 organization operating in Pennsylvania, Maryland, New York, New Jersey, Ohio and West Virginia. Throughout its history, the organization has provided over \$60 million in utility assistance grants to over 250,000 low-income families and individuals. Dollar Energy Fund has helped people from all walks of life: some who needed temporary relief from a bad situation, others who needed help lifting themselves out of poverty and along the path to self-sufficiency.

www.dollarenergyfund.org



About Prime Communications

Prime Communications, Inc. is a Pittsburgh-based communications integrator with over 25 years experience providing converged voice, data, video, and internet applications to western Pennsylvania enterprises. Prime presently serves well over 10,000 users with a client base that includes major national accounts, high profile locally based corporations, and communications-critical institutional and government users.

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