

# Australian Power & Gas



## Customer

- Australian Power & Gas

## Industry

- Utilities

## Challenges

- Accurate capture of field agent competency, complaints and action tracking
- Error-free compliance reporting

## Solution

- Enable complaints to be managed in a consistent manner
- Automate tasks such as escalations

## Results

- Aggregation of information for insight into emerging issues
- Reduced complaints via the Ombudsman resulted in massive cost savings
- Evidence-based marketing direction

## Services

- Information Management
- Development of a case management and escalation system
- Business Analysis

## Applications

- Microsoft Dynamics CRM

## The Customer

Publicly listed energy retailer Australian Power & Gas (ASX: APK) set out to challenge the big incumbent energy retailers and help Australians save money on their home energy. Australian Power & Gas has been ranked one of BRW's fastest growing companies, currently providing electricity and gas to 340,000 customers in New South Wales, Queensland and Victoria.

Australian Power & Gas's team of 72 experienced professionals manages its business systems with key partners providing customer acquisition and back office processes. It also relies on outsourced door knockers working as a sales channel on its behalf.

In January 2011, the Australian Consumer Law was introduced to define the strict conditions to which all door-to-door salespeople must adhere, new options for consumer redress and considerable penalties for any breaches.

In response to the changing compliance framework and in support of its own Corporate Governance Policy, which expects employees and agents to act with integrity and maintain appropriate ethical standards, Australian Power & Gas was an instigator of the energy industry's self-regulation initiative to provide field agents with a code of practice and procedural guidelines.

# NEC empowers Australian Power & Gas to achieve customer service excellence.

## The Challenges

Hilary Priest, Compliance Manager at Australian Power & Gas, said: “By making a success of self-regulation we would be able to keep all sales channels open and available to us, and we saw door knocking as a growth driver. We needed to be able to capture customer issues in their nascent state, prior to escalation and the direct involvement by Regulators. We needed proactive control.

“To meet the stricter provisions and raise the bar on compliance, we had to be able capture and track complaints and information to feed through the organisation and our marketing channels.”

Australian Power & Gas decided to augment its existing complaint management system for the specific capture and review of problems arising from the sales activities of external field agents.

The complaints management system, based on Microsoft Dynamics CRM, already catered for issues made directly to Australian Power & Gas by consumers or via the Energy & Water Ombudsman in each state. Australian Power & Gas had received many thousands of customer enquiry emails, of which there were approximately only 360 complaints, during the first nine months of its implementation. With automated, quality-controlled processes in place, staff no longer had to undertake the time consuming and error-prone manual assessment of each email and pass it on to the relevant person within the business.

## The Solution

NEC was engaged by Australian Power & Gas to design, implement and develop the complaint management and escalation system. The review of door-to-door complaints required the design of a special form for the specialist team tasked with this area and the specific workflow rules. NEC undertook the data migration and training for this web-based application that allows remote access from anywhere, anytime.

The augmentation of the CRM functionality was to ensure the accurate capture of field agent competency; management of any complaints made against them in a consistent manner; and that appropriate action is taken when guidelines are breached.

The company’s rapid expansion path and the regulatory compliance strictures demanded a sophisticated, scalable response. Error free compliance reporting and intuitive, ease of user access were essential.

**“Australian Power & Gas was identified as being in the Top 3 in process excellence in the independent compliance audit. And the drop in escalated complaints resulted in substantial cost savings.”**

**Hilary Priest**  
Compliance Manager, Australian Power & Gas



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## The Results

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Complaints and marketing teams are now notified early in the advent of a consumer problem. Australian Power & Gas provides timely, tactical resolution of each individual customer complaint. Hilary Priest said: “Customers now feel they are being heard and are kept up to date with how their complaint is being addressed.”

Importantly, Australian Power & Gas is also able to better manage its sales channels, with a direct response path to individual doorknock agents and how they are interacting with consumers. “We can aggregate information for insight into emerging issues and take a constructive approach to higher strategic level resolution. Now we have the ability to see that we may need to change an approach or retrain a pool of agents,” she said.

“The CRM is our backbone. We have greater ability to change the behaviour of our marketers based on detailed evidence the CRM allows us to gather and track. With detailed processes in place, everyone knows their responsibilities in the chain. We’ve seen the fruits of what the tool can give us and with these new levels of responsiveness, we are looking to expand its use to other forms of marketing,” Hilary Priest said.

Within the first nine months of the introduction of self-regulation, the Ombudsman network has seen a 47 percent drop in Australia-wide complaints regarding doorknockers.

Hilary Priest said: “We had a good sense of confidence in the package we put forward to the independent compliance audit for our complaints handling processes. Australian Power & Gas was identified as being in the Top 3 in process excellence. And the drop in escalated complaints resulted in substantial cost savings.”

“Australian Power & Gas’s complaints management was also assessed as being amongst the most structured, detailed and advanced of those energy retailers audited. It was a real pat on the back.”

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