

GOLDMINE[®]

Turning Contacts Into Gold!



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COMPANY: Michigan Public Service Commission

NAME: Ron Choura

TITLE: Supervisor Service Quality

CORPORATE PROFILE: If you live or work in the state of Michigan, you have probably had contact with the Michigan Public Service Commission. This state agency is responsible for regulating public utilities including natural gas, electric utilities, intrastate motor carriers and specified telecommunications services. The commission's 160 employees are involved in the day-to-day regulation of these industries, including the review of utility company operations and finances, enforcement of safety rules, and the overseeing of service quality levels. They also answers customers' utility questions and help them solve problems with their utility companies. The agency has three Governor appointed Commissioners who report directly to the State Senate.

BUSINESS NEED AND GOLDMINE SOLUTION: Until last year, the Commission was running its entire customer service operations on a Digital Equipment Corporation VAX-based system. The system was slow and cumbersome. But, when there were only a few gas companies, a few electric companies and a few phone companies, it was all the Commission needed. All of this changed with the recent deregulation of utilities. The Commission is now responsible for keeping track of 40 electric and gas companies and over 1000 phone companies. Needless to say, call volume has increased dramatically and their old system has quickly been overwhelmed.

Ron Choura, the Commission's Supervisor of Service Quality began searching for a solution to meet the commission's growing needs. The Commission's Computer Support Group had written a program in Oracle[®], but it was not doing what Choura wanted. Don Casterline, a colleague, saw an ad for GoldMine and brought it to Choura's attention. Choura remembered that he had once bought a copy of GoldMine[®] for DOS[®] for his church a few years back and it had served them very well. Choura did some research and found that both Personal Home Computing and PC Magazine had recently rated GoldMine as #1. He downloaded the GoldMine demo, played around with it and realized, "GoldMine is great! I can make it do everything I want to do." He went back to his Computer Support Group and asked if they could write a program that could do what GoldMine does. They told him no. So, Choura called in GoldMine Solution Partner, Plain English PC Consulting, and the rest, as they say, is history.

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Today, all of the Commission's 160 employees, from the Commissioners to the inbound call team, have access to GoldMine. The Commission has 12 people answering 6,000 to 7,000 complaint calls per month. Of these complaints, approximately 600 to 1000 are tracked and investigated. Says Choura, "We needed to handle complaints in a more efficient manner. The volume of complaints was grown at a rate of 200% per month and, at the same time, we are downsizing staff. GoldMine gives us the ability to do this."

Consumers can reach the Commission by phone, fax, e-mail or letter. Every complaint is used to create a new contact record in GoldMine. After a complaint is taken, one of over 30 customized merge forms is sent to the responsible company asking for a prompt resolution to the problem. The company's response is then recorded in GoldMine, and a follow-up is scheduled to make sure that the problem has been properly resolved. This information can then be accessed by everyone in the Commission that needs it. For example, if a Senator calls and wants information because one of his constituents has a complaint, the Commissioner can look up the record in GoldMine and immediately respond to the concern.

The Commission is also using two Third Party tools in conjunction with GoldMine: GoldScan and FaxRush. Delta System's GoldScan is an integrated scanning and viewing solution for GoldMine. When a complaint letter is received, users scan and link to the contact record with GoldScan. Similarly, a utility company's written response is scanned and linked to their record. FaxRush, by Z-Firm, is an integrated faxing solution for GoldMine that allows the Commission's staff to easily send and receive documents from their desktop, eliminating many unnecessary steps.

GoldMine has also automated the Commission's reporting requirements. Before, when using the VAX-based system, a programmer was required to create a simple report. "Just an hour ago," explains Choura, "a Senator called and wanted to know how many complaints we had received last month. With GoldMine this was no problem. It created, sorted and printed the report in no time at all. I waited longer for the printer to crank out the paper than for GoldMine to compile the report. With the VAX-based system, it would have taken all day."

Choura is quickly expanding GoldMine's role within the Commission. Soon, fifty or more employees will be roaming the state, equipped with GoldMine on their laptops. These employees will be attending public hearings on behalf of consumers. Using GoldMine's built-in synchronization, staff members can take notes at the hearings and synchronize them immediately back to the home office in the event any follow up action is required.

Choura sums up his feeling about GoldMine by saying, "Between deregulation, the need to keep the customers happy, and the downsizing of the government, we had to find a solution. GoldMine was it."

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