

Turning Consumers on to Energy Management: How One Texas Electric Cooperative is Making it Happen



United Cooperative Services (UCS) is an electrical distribution utility focused on providing reliable, affordable power to rural homes and businesses in North Central Texas. In keeping with its mission, UCS wanted to enable its members to make smart, cost-effective usage choices.

SOLUTION COMPONENTS:

- Gridstream® PLC
- FOCUS® meters
- Command Center



“We really feel that’s what being a cooperative is all about,” said Cameron Smallwood, Vice President of Cooperative Planning at UCS, “helping our members to use less energy and save money.”

But in order to educate and engage consumers, UCS needed usage data that was rich, timely and precise. Fortunately, the cooperative already had the right tools in place — Landis+Gyr smart meters and Gridstream® PLC technology.

By interfacing with the advanced meter at each member’s home or office, Gridstream PLC is able to continuously stream interval data values, such as demand and voltage. The result was a comprehensive view of member usage patterns that could be mapped against other factors — from outside temperature to system loads.

Power to the People

The information that UCS gathers is used to assist the utility in performing personalized “energy audits.” Consumers are able to see not only how much energy they use, but also when they use it and what other factors (like weather) are involved.

“In the past,” said Smallwood, “we only had daily [usage] data. But with the hourly interval data that’s available now, we’re able to zoom in on the time of day, and that allows the customer to better see what process they’re doing that is causing the spike in energy usage.”

For many cooperative members, this information was eye opening. It has already led many households and businesses to change their consumption behavior.

Bringing it Home

But UCS’ ambitions go beyond conducting periodic energy audits.

“What we’re going toward in the future is using the home area network products,” Smallwood said.

In fact, the cooperative already has a pilot program underway. Through its AMI system, it is communicating directly with home area network devices, such as programmable communicating thermostats and in-home displays showing real-time consumption and cost per kWh. Eventually, the utility plans to make this data visible through a web portal, so members can look at their long-term usage trends and see how behavioral changes have impacted their bills.



“The overall goal is to take the information from the PLC system into the home and allow our members to see firsthand what they’re using and when they’re using it — so they can make adjustments appropriately and, ultimately, lower their cost.”

Being “Future Ready”

Landis+Gyr is the leader in global energy management. We use our proven experience to help utilities realize the full potential of smart grid — with solutions that are tailored for today’s needs, but that also anticipate what’s coming. We call this being “*Future Ready*.”