



EDF Energy operates rostrvm-supported Call Centres to enhance customer service and improve efficiency across range of departments.

Industry Sector

Energy Utility

What is the background to EDF Energy and its current position in the marketplace?

EDF Energy is a vertically-integrated energy company, which means we are involved in everything to do with energy, from generation and distribution to supplying customers throughout the United Kingdom. We employ nearly 13,000 people.

The company is owned by the French energy company EDF (Électricité de France) and was formed in 2002 following the acquisition and mergers of Seaboard Energy (formerly South Eastern Electricity Board), London Energy (formerly the London Electricity Board), and SWEB Energy. We have now updated our look, uniting these regional names under our new EDF Energy logo.

We're committed to providing the best service possible to all our customers, and in a sustainable way. We supply power to over five million customers and generate about 5GW of energy (8% of the UK demand). We continue to make efforts to ensure all of our generation plants are adapted to minimise the impact of carbon emission. We are also committed to developing renewable energy sources.

We are also one of the UK's largest private network operators. In addition, EDF Energy Networks provides power to over a quarter of the UK's population via our distribution networks in London, the South East and the East of England.

How did EDF Energy first get involved with rostrvm?

Our initial involvement with Rostrvm goes back to the 1990s predating the huge changes to our business that has been driven by deregulation and building the EDF Energy business.

We were introduced to **rostrvm** by our call centre switch supplier Rockwell (now Aspect Software). The **rostrvm** system came on board as a cost-effective, tactical solution to a technical problem. In the pre-millennium period we needed to update all of our call centre technology to be date compliant and this included replacing a dialler that we were using for arrears management. We selected **rostrvm** because of its technical ability to work with our call centre technology, link with our IT systems and support our business processes.

What were the key challenges and business drivers facing you when you entered the open market?

Looking back on nearly 10 years of the open energy market, it's quite amazing to consider the number of changes in our business. Before the open market the basic concept of changing your electricity supplier was unheard of and obtaining both electricity and gas from a single supplier hadn't been considered.

Energy suppliers such as EDF Energy have had to build customer management systems and customer service processes to accommodate the change from a broadly-fixed customer base to a new dynamic environment.

In our case we have also faced the challenges of consolidating a number of businesses into a single efficient entity with dramatic changes in scale. In the year 2000 the group (when we were called LE Group) had less than 3 million customers. Today we have over 5 million.

And, of course, in the same period, we have changed our identity which has meant building trust in a new-to-the-UK consumer brand.

This interview with Steve Hayfield, Director of Customer Service – Retail, EDF Energy provides an overview of Rostrvm Solutions' long standing relationship with EDF Energy's call centres.

This interview first appeared in **Customer Management** magazine.

"As processes and operational locations change rostrvm evolves with us."

Steve Hayfield
Director of Customer Service - Retail
EDF Energy

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You can then add to this the challenges of a fiercely competitive market, adaptation to a world of product innovation, complexities and cost exposure in wholesale energy markets and operating through an evolving deregulated market. Finally, like all businesses providing customer service over the telephone we need to meet and exceed Ofcom guidelines.

Have you worked with rostrvm to help solve those issues across EDF Energy's various sites across the country?

rostrvm has been instrumental in helping us in many ways in different parts of the business. As I mentioned earlier, the first **rostrvm** implementation was in the arrears management area. Cash flow is critical to any business and **rostrvm** OutBound dialler has proven to be a highly effective tool to support the efficient collection of money. Of course, the fact that we are proactively talking to customers means that we also quickly identify vulnerable customers that need extra help.

As the market became more competitive, **rostrvm** came into play in the customer acquisition process. In the early days of the open market, changing suppliers was a fairly protracted process. By introducing the **rostrvm** system into our Hove call centre we have streamlined the process and enhanced our service. We phone proactively to advise the customer that their account is open and call them again when the first bill comes through just to check it matches meter readings and that the amount to pay is correct. This eliminates any complaints or delay in making a payment due to bill queries.

In the past we have used the system for traditional 'cold calling' telephone-based customer acquisition. But more recently we have used **rostrvm** to refine and focus our customer retention

activities. With the Telephone Preference Service (TPS) putting millions of UK consumer phone numbers out of bounds for telemarketers, the industry has had to rethink the way it works. With little opportunity to contact people who are not already customers (and have given permission to be contacted), the onus has turned to retaining existing business. We have worked with **rostrvm** to link call centre data with our corporate CRM system (Siebel). This means that our telesales team can make calls and, depending on the circumstances of each customer, make an appropriate, relevant offer.

rostrvm has also been supportive in the inevitable organisational and system changes induced by the group's growth and consolidation of the different business. **Rostrvm** has worked with us to bring together diverse call centre technologies. As processes and operational locations change **rostrvm** evolves with us.

What are the key business benefits to you of the relationship?

At the basic operational level the **rostrvm** system delivers better utilisation of our Customer Service agents in order to increase productivity and keep costs down.

Perhaps more importantly we value the close business relationship. We particularly appreciate **Rostrvm's** open and independent advice - we can approach **Rostrvm** with a new idea or call centre operational problem to solve confident that we will get professional advice. Often **Rostrvm** will be able to help us directly, but equally they are happy to recommend and work alongside other technology and service providers. A good example of the business-based relationship is the way **Rostrvm** helps us deal with compliance issues. The day after Ofcom issued its guidance on the use of automated diallers, EDF Energy staff were already being given practical advice at a **Rostrvm**-organised workshop to ensure that we comply.

What are your customers saying about the work you are able to do as a result of the relationship with rostrvm?

To be frank, I don't want individual customers to notice the fact that we are using technology to provide service. The fact that our systems, including the **rostrvm** component, enable us to provide a service tailored to the individual customer should not be a surprise to our customers.

But we are proud of the fact that our Worthing call centre gained peer recognition by winning the National Sales Awards for Outbound Contact Centre of the Year 2006!

How critical is the relationship with rostrvm to EDF Energy and how do you see it developing in the future?

One of our key ambitions is to care more for our customers and continually improve customer experience. This ambition is increasingly important in today's competitive market. Last year around 4 million UK households changed energy supplier. We want as many customers as possible to switch to EDF Energy and stay with us. Customer service is an important factor in the consumer's choice.

In any well-run operation, no supplier should be classed as truly 'critical' but we do view **Rostrvm** as a key partner in maintaining and evolving customer relationships.

In our view improving customer service is more than just looking at how we can enhance existing current service delivery methods. We also need to take into account the way our customers work with us.

To give you a couple of examples, a very significant proportion of our customers use the internet to research and choose their energy supplier. When potential customers use our web site we provide a support telephone number to help users with on-line applications. We are also seeing a rapid growth in customer use of mobile phones and email. **rostrvm** will help us to interact with our customers using SMS and email delivering a service that matches customer preferences.

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