


LOOKING FOR A CHANGE? WE CAN LIGHT THE WAY.



Recession. Unemployment. Uncertainty.

Words like these have dominated headlines recently. As a result, words like expansion are seldom heard. The instinct is to hunker down, hold tight to what you have, and weather the storm.

But this mentality could lead many to miss what is actually an excellent opportunity to consider change.

In February, President Barack Obama signed a \$787 billion economic stimulus package, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, into law. Tucked into the massive bill is approximately \$7 billion in funds for water infrastructure projects. These funds are being distributed state-by-state, and are intended for projects that can be under contract – or, ideally, under construction – within 12 months. Drinking water infrastructure, sewer system improvements, and special funding for rural systems will all be considered for a share of the funds.

Of course, not every utility is going to get a slice of the stimulus pie. But that doesn't necessarily mean that improvement projects should be put on hold. For many, these unprecedented economic times could serve as a wake-up call, prompting movement toward operations that are more efficient, more cost-effective, and, that ultimately, will raise service levels. Even without additional funding, there is a good business case for moving forward with improvement and expansion. When it's done right, such a project has the potential to pay huge dividends – the first dividend being that it could pay for itself.

So how can utilities be sure that making changes now is a fiscally responsible thing to do? It's all about getting into the details. About pinpointing exactly where revenue is being lost. About finding inefficiencies in the allocation of personnel and resources. About determining what equipment needs to be updated or replaced altogether. About shining a light into every crack and crevice of the utility's operation, making sure that no chance to improve is missed. This means asking difficult questions that have complex answers. For example:

- What is the full cost of reading a meter, taking into account not only the meter reader's salary, but the accompanying benefits, overhead, vehicle maintenance, and liabilities?

- Exactly how much potential revenue is being lost to leaks, meter inaccuracy, improper meter sizing, tamper, and theft?

With a set of analytical tools and a broad base of knowledge and experience to draw from, Neptune stands ready to help utilities find the answers to these questions. Some of the tools Neptune can call into play are:

- SEER[®] (Statistical Evaluation for the Enhancement of Revenue), which looks at a utility's Industrial, Commercial and Institutional (ICI) meters to determine which meters need to be right-sized or replaced, and calculates potential revenue increases that can result from the corrections.
- Systems Advisor[™], which analyzes a utility's operation and, based on information gleaned from over 2,500 existing systems, outlines the potential for a new system to provide enhanced revenue, reduce exposure to risk and liability, and improve customer service.

With this information in hand, Neptune can recommend solutions to meet the unique demands of the utility in question. With Systems that are backed with stringent testing and years of experience, utilities will have the means to free personnel from day-to-day meter reading responsibilities and utilize them in a more proactive manner. They will be able to recover revenue that would otherwise be lost to leaks, tampering, inefficiency, or human error. And because Neptune Systems are designed to provide a migration path, utilities will be able to prevent stranding costly assets due to obsolescence.

Taken together, these factors allow utilities to present a better experience to the customer, and to see quick returns on their initial investment. Furthermore, utilities can position themselves now to move forward boldly.

The future does not have to be uncertain. Neptune stands ready to help utilities understand where they are, where they want to be, and how to get there. Asking the right questions is only the beginning. Neptune is prepared to be there with the right answers. 