



# Mount Pleasant Waterworks Creates a New Customer Service Experience

SENSUS AMI TECHNOLOGY MEETS HIGH EXPECTATIONS FOR ACCURACY AND SERVICE

Mount Pleasant Waterworks AMI pilot resulted in 100 percent meter read success.



## CHALLENGE

*Meet customer demands for usage data and insight*

## SOLUTION

*Deploy a Sensus Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) solution*

## REACH FARTHER

*Use Sensus Managed Services and shift focus from operation to innovation*

## Lowcountry charm, high expectations

Just a few miles from the South Carolina coast, the town of Mount Pleasant exudes the southern charm and rich historical resonance that typify the "Lowcountry." And though this may conjure up images of laid-back residents sipping sweet tea on their porch swings, the reality is a little different for the town's water utility.

"Our customers are generally well educated, have a high household income and are technologically savvy," said Nicole Bates, customer services manager, **Mount Pleasant Waterworks (MPW)**. "This all adds up to a customer base that has high expectations for the data and services we're able to provide them."

In 2000, MPW installed an automated meter reading (AMR) system that enabled its technicians to perform drive-by data collection from their vehicles, a system that soon became



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**NICOLE BATES** *Customer Services Manager, Mount Pleasant Waterworks*

outdated and inefficient. It also led to missed meter reads, billing delays and equipment failure, none of which were acceptable to MPW's customers.

"When we told them we couldn't provide the exact moment the water went through the meter to explain their high usage, they were in disbelief," said Bates. "Our old way of doing things just wasn't going to cut it."

### Seizing on opportunity

MPW realized that the problems with their AMR system were placing unrealistic demands on their workforce, so they decided to upgrade to advanced metering infrastructure (AMI) to automate the data collection process.

"We felt that with the improved technology available and all the data that was offered, AMI would provide us with the best

opportunity to meet our customers' needs and provide them with the insight they expected," said Bates. "Additionally, it would support the growth of our utility and provide our meter technicians with valuable new skills they didn't previously have."

After securing buy-in on the upgrade from the necessary stakeholders, MPW began the journey toward finding a solution. The selection team mapped the needed criteria, including the ability to:

- Read meters in a consistently accurate and timely manner
- Automate data collection to reduce the time needed to analyze data
- Maintain high meter reliability
- Improve efficiency relative to operations and maintenance of the system
- Detect and report leaks to customers quickly



"We knew that our customers wanted to know when a leak started, how much was going through the meter and when," said Bates. "This was something we could not answer and it frustrated our customers."

## The best of both worlds

MPW chose to pilot the Sensus **Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) solution**, which met all of their demands for an efficient and reliable system for collecting meter data and improving service for their customers.

They began by replacing 50 water meters in the harshest environment for obtaining reads with Sensus **SR II® water meters**. Additionally, MPW deployed the **FlexNet® communication system**, a long-range radio network that provides a scalable, reliable and secure infrastructure to transmit data seamlessly between the utility and their meters. Finally, MPW leveraged Sensus **Managed Services**, including **Network as a Service (NaaS)** and **Software as a Service (SaaS)**, to take the operational and maintenance burden off their IT staff and focus on what they do best: serving their customers.

"We wanted the best of both worlds," said Bates. "With Sensus Managed Services,

we didn't have to drain our IT resources or spend a lot of time and cost on maintenance. Sensus does it all and we have 24/7 access."

## 100 percent meter read success

The pilot was a resounding success. Sensus integrated the FlexNet system with the utility's existing meters with 100 percent meter read success. Best of all, by freeing up the time and resources needed to manage the network and software, MPW could devote more time to better serving customers.

"The Sensus solution enabled us to begin building a new customer service experience," said Bates. "More data means more knowledge, which equals more opportunity."

With the Sensus AMI pilot and replacement of 5,000 failing AMR meters in the rearview mirror, MPW is moving forward with a full roll-out of the technology to all its customers.

"The pilot and initial roll out convinced us that this was the solution we needed to help scale our infrastructure for the future," said Bates. "We're embracing this journey and excited about what's in store for our customers."