



Hawaiian Electric Company

Inspired by the vision of an ancient king, HECO sets its sights on the future with a complete end-to-end EBP solution from CheckFree i-Solutions



Hawaiian Electric Company (HECO) may be the only electric utility in the United States — perhaps in the world — inspired to go into business by the vision and enthusiasm of a king. That king was David Kalakaua, a monarch with a technical and scientific bent and an insatiable curiosity for modern devices.

In an era of gas lamps, Kalakaua was shrewd enough to recognize the potential of “electricity,” and helped pioneer its introduction to the Hawaiian kingdom. His vision led to the formation of HECO, and for more than 100 years, HECO has provided the energy that has fueled the Hawaiian Islands’ development through its colorful history; first as a kingdom, now as a modern state.

Today, that forward-thinking visionary philosophy still prevails. Hawaiian Electric’s motto is “Giving You the Power,” so when HECO embraced an e-business strategy with the purpose of “giving customers more power and control,” it seemed only natural that electronic billing and payment (EBP) be chosen as a cornerstone of that strategy.

According to Rich Eber, e-business project manager for bill presentment and payment at HECO, “What initially began as a project to empower our customers, has now come full circle to empower HECO. We started with a hosted EBP system that not only allowed more payment options for our customers but also immediately transformed the resources available to our customer service department to provide real value to our customer’s experience.”

Delivering the Bill

For HECO, determining that EBP was to be part of its e-business model was easy. The challenge lay in finding a solution provider that could consolidate their many different billing formats. In fact, HECO has more than

20 different bill layouts, each of which can potentially contain different messages depending on the services available to a particular customer. So, when HECO began its search for an electronic billing solution, the implementation team knew that having the “big picture” perspective of an EBP veteran to consolidate the various billing models was imperative.

“We turned to CheckFree i-Solutions because they were the only vendor that could offer the seasoned experience and software to both Web-enable our already complicated billing structure and to distribute the bills for payment through an established network of locations,” says Eber.

By the end of that summer, the e-billing initiative was launched and HECO was successfully extending bills to their customers over the Web. By implementing CheckFree i-ProcessingSM Services, HECO’s bill summary data and payment information would now be hosted at CheckFree. This allowed HECO customers the ability to view and pay their electric bill online at any one of the nearly 300 CheckFree Consumer Service Provider Web sites, including various portals and financial service organizations.

“We realized the value of the EBP system right away. Not only did it allow our customers online account access to billing information, the CheckFree solution made it possible for us to provide our customers with an avenue to pay all their e-bills in one location,” Eber explains.

Of equal importance, implementing an electronic billing and payment solution had a very positive impact on the services HECO could offer its customers. Because not only had the variations in bill structure historically complicated the billing system, they had posed challenges for HECO’s customer service department as well.

“From electronic billing software to an unequalled number of distribution points, CheckFree’s comprehensive solution has enabled us to not only extend services to our customers and reduce our costs, but has opened many untapped avenues for marketing opportunity.”

Rich Eber
E-business Project Manager
Hawaiian Electric Company

Your single source for e-billing and payment and e-statement delivery solutions

Industry-specific solutions include:

- i-Banker
- i-Broker
- i-Insurance
- i-Telco
- i-Utility

CheckFree i-Processing Services include:

- Distribution Services
- Payment Services
- Customer Care

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“Before the EBP solution was implemented, a customer service representative couldn’t actually see what the customer was seeing on their paper bill. So if a customer called to inquire about text in the “lower right hand corner,” the representative was left guessing,” says Debbie Yoshino, customer service quality administrator for HECO. “CheckFree i-Processing changed that. Now, when we talk to a customer, we see the same bill they are seeing, it has made

for a much easier conversation with our customers,” says Yoshino.

Expanding the Value

Not long after the initial EBP initiative was launched, HECO realized the benefits of electronic billing could be extended to offer value beyond the obvious customer convenience and services issues. By implementing CheckFree i-Utility™ software, HECO would not only have greater flexibility to customize its online bills and provide an interactive interface, it would also give them opportunity to engage customers in a personalized, one-on-one experience.

“After reviewing CheckFree i-Utility, we knew an in-house software solution was the way to go. What’s more, CheckFree was the only company that could offer us a complete end-to-end electronic billing solution, and they have been doing it longer than any other company. But the principal reason we chose the CheckFree software was because i-Utility was more robust and advanced than any other solution we had seen,” explains Eber.

With the software operating in-house, in addition to extending its customer services, HECO is garnering marketing benefits as well. HECO now takes advantage of the functionality of i-Utility and the resident billing data

to deliver bills with customized messaging. “Combining personalized customer data with the functionality of i-Utility allows us to up-sell products to our customers with targeted, one-to-one messages delivered right on their e-bills. The solution has opened the door to a new and dynamic channel for reaching our customers, and we are extremely excited about the potential,” anticipates Eber.

Reaping the Benefits of EBP

What initially started as an e-business strategy to lower billing and postage costs has reaped many unanticipated benefits for HECO. According to Yoshino, “With i-Utility software and i-Processing distribution services, our customer service representatives are empowered.”

She adds, “What CheckFree i-Processing did for our customer service capabilities has been “one-upped” only by the addition of the in-house software. CheckFree i-Utility easily adapted to integrate all of our customer service programs, including the ability to provide and apply rebate coupons, ‘tickle’ a customer’s bill, and even include a bar chart on the e-bill.”

When reflecting on the implementation, Eber has this to say, “The real advantage to working with CheckFree is that they provide all the components needed to complete an e-commerce EBP strategy. From electronic billing software to hundreds of distribution points, CheckFree’s comprehensive solution has enabled us to not only extend services to our customers and reduce our costs, but has opened many untapped avenues for marketing opportunity.”

Staying true to the visionary leadership of King Kalakaua, HECO follows his leading edge thinking by offering its customers an opportunity to step into the future convenience of a paperless environment today.

To learn more about how CheckFree i-Solutions can improve your services offering, visit our Web site at www.checkfree.com/i-solutions. Or, call 1-800-964-4552.



4411 East Jones Bridge Road
Norcross, GA 30092
678-375-3000
1-800-964-4552
www.checkfree.com/i-solutions

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