

WEF Improves Membership Retention Rates while Lowering Service Costs

CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY

Challenge

- ✓ WEF wanted to improve membership retention rates while improving operational efficiency. Its mostly manual service process detracted from both goals.

Results

- ✓ WEF reduced service costs by about \$50,000 annually
- ✓ Member retention rates rose from 87 percent to 92 percent
- ✓ The Customer Service team streamlined workflow efficiency so they now operate with four customer service representatives instead of six

Snapshot

Organization: Water Environment Federation (WEF)

Industry: Association

Location: Alexandria, VA

Website: www.wef.org

Customer Since: August 2007



Empowering the Entire Organization to Serve Customers

The most essential natural resource we have, water, is a growing global concern. Climate change, groundwater depletion and pollution threaten the quality of our water supply.

The Water Environment Federation (WEF) based in Alexandria, Virginia, works to preserve and enhance the global water environment. The nonprofit has more than 34,000 individual members and 81 affiliated member associations with 50,000 water quality professionals.

At WEF, all of the nearly 100 employees remain focused on member service.

"It's our philosophy that everyone's job is to serve the customer," said Lori Jordan, Director of Association Services. "If staff is empowered to answer basic questions easily, then our members are not being transferred all over the building."

Automating with Parature Customer Service™ Software

In recent years, WEF set out to achieve two goals: improve membership retention while operating more efficiently. For membership, WEF first reinforced recruitment efforts and then improved its renewal system. Then it looked at raising the level of service to its members.

Beyond just processing memberships and renewals, Jordan's department handles online sales and resources, subscriptions, workshops, training, eight conferences a year, and the annual WEFTEC show, the largest water quality show in the world. The organization fields questions from a pool of thousands of attendees and exhibitors.

With heavy customer service activity daily, especially during the annual show, their department needed a more streamlined workflow to process requests and enable staff and members to locate information quickly. At the time, WEF used five different email addresses for members to contact Customer Service, but the organization needed time-stamping and more sophisticated features such as self-service and reporting.

Jordan learned about Parature Customer Service™ software at just the time when she and her team were in the market for a ticket management system. A software-as-a-service (SaaS) model, Parature Customer Service provides ease of use, self-service capabilities and the potential to integrate with the company's association management software.

"It was so easy to use, and we saw the possibilities of the different ways we could use it, so it seemed like the perfect solution for us," Jordan said.

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Reducing Service Costs by More than \$50,000

Previously, WEF processed most member inquiries by phone. With the Parature Portal™, members submit tickets online – which are time-stamped – or find answers on their own. When members log-on to the portal, they see the information relevant to them. For tickets, Jordan easily set up rules in Parature to automate routing to the right employees.

Member associations also have their own access on the portal to resources such as articles, applications, letter templates and ads for their own communications.

The Customer Service team also stores a number of resources on the portal for staff only. When WEF staff log in, they have access to internal documentation that is different from what their members see, helping them to answer member inquiries more efficiently.

Centralizing service on their support portal, and providing rich resources for members, reduced the number of calls, emails and service tickets at WEF. As a result, the Customer Service team now operates with fewer customer service reps.

“Traditionally the Customer Service department has been much larger,” Jordan said. “We had six people at one time and we now have four. It’s made our lives much easier with a smaller team.”

Elevating Member Retention Rates

WEF also accomplished its second goal, improving membership retention rates. Members can now get answers more quickly – online on their own – or are more efficiently assisted by the Customer Service department or any staff member at WEF. With those changes, the organization closes more tickets in its 48-hour goal.

Customer Service also has a complete record of all tickets and the resources that members access online. With that information, for example, WEF identified the need to make its website easier for members to use.

With its renewed effort at retaining members, of which Parature played a major role, WEF brought retention rates up from 87 percent to 92 percent – representing significant revenue for the nonprofit.

“Members stick around because they see we are implementing a program that’s really working for them,” Jordan said. “So we more than get back what we spend on Parature. It’s helping us really go to that next level to provide the service that customers deserve.”

“It’s really helped us serve every one of our customers,” she added. “There’s accountability now, a trackable ticket, and members know we’re working on their issues. We’ve received very positive feedback from our members about the system.”

ABOUT PARATURE

Parature, the global leader in on-demand customer service software, makes it possible for any business to leverage the Internet to provide outstanding customer service. The company’s software-as-a-service (SaaS) delivery and integrated, intuitive design enables organizations to better and more efficiently serve, support, engage with and retain customers in today’s Web world. Founded in 2000, Parature received the 2007 Product of the Year Award from *Customer Interaction Solutions* magazine and has been named to the *Inc. 5000* list of Fastest Growing Private Companies in America. For the past three consecutive years Parature has been on the *Washington Business Journal’s* list of Best Places to Work. Headquartered in Vienna, Virginia, Parature is at work in organizations of all types and sizes, and helps support more than 10 million end users worldwide.

For more information, visit www.parature.com.