

○ Analyze and pay your energy bills by efficiently integrating your EDI, accounting and energy analysis software packages.

ECLynx Case Study

Santa Barbara EDI and Utility Accounting

Scenario:

The City of Santa Barbara wanted to analyze its utility bills so that it might make smarter energy decisions. It also had an interest in eliminating the horrible load of paper bills it was keypunching into its AP System. The solution needed to save money and improve efficiency in its AP Dept and at the same time better manage its energy costs.

Solution:

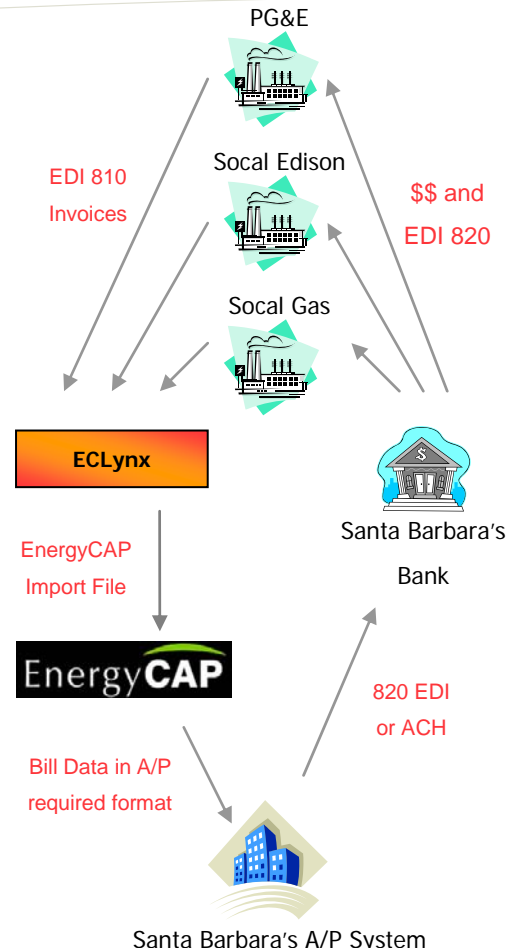
Santa Barbara decided to purchase the market leading energy management tool, EnergyCAP, that would allow the City to compare its facilities' utility performance, find opportunities for cost savings, and to ensure that only correct bills get paid, and paid efficiently. The next challenge was to be able to import its 1000+ monthly PG&E, Social Edison and Social Gas bills and avoid keypunching the data into EnergyCAP. The City decided to use Xebec Data's ECLynx EDI services to solve this problem.

Here is how the project was implemented with all parties working on their portions simultaneously.

- Xebec Data submitted a complete list of Santa Barbara's accounts to the utilities.
- Xebec Data set up an EDI mailbox for Santa Barbara on the nuBridges' EDI Network.
- Xebec and EnergyCAP worked with the utilities to receive test 810 EDI invoices.
- Santa Barbara worked diligently the utilities to clean up Santa Barbara's accounts in preparation for their conversion from paper to EDI delivery. This includes balancing out summary bills so they can be unmerged into individual accounts for EDI. As all outstanding issues with bills must be resolved and accounts must be paid in full, this process can sometimes take a month.
- City staff gathered information and provided it to the EnergyCAP technical team who built the EnergyCAP databases. All 1000+ accounts had to be entered into the EnergyCAP, including 3 years of billing and usage history as well as City assigned building codes.
- Santa Barbara provided EnergyCAP with the file format their AP System needed to facilitate importing invoice data. They developed the an AP Link module to feed bill data into AP.
- Since Santa Barbara was already paying the utilities with ACH CCD+ payments so no payment changes were required. Ehen moving to EDI billing, the utilities require that payment remittance data be provided to them electronically to assure accounts can be updated automatically as payments are made.
- EnergyCAP technical team completed ____ days of training. Day 1 included training on both ECLynx and Energy CAP and the steps required to process bills from start to finish. Day 2 included an in depth review of EnergyCAP's auditing and data analysis capabilities.

Every morning, ECLynx logs into nuBridges' EDI Network, downloads a day's worth of invoices, translates them from EDI format, runs them through a custom programs designed to handle each utility's unique codes and formatting, and then produces an EnergyCAP import file containing all the bill data in the required EnergyCAP format. In addition, a Summary Report is generated compiling the results with a total number of invoices and the total value of those bills. If any errors are encountered during the process (for example, PG&E sends an unrecognized charge code or the total line items sent on a SCE EDI bill do not add up to the total due reported), an Error Report is generated. Santa Barbara also chose to display any previous balances in this report so they can check their validity and avoid double-paying the balances. ECLynx also creates PDF bill images of each bill. All these files are dropped to a Xebec FTP server and Santa Barbara pulls the data to the EnergyCAP server.

Next, Santa Barbara imports the file into EnergyCAP, then validates, analyzes, and approves the bills for payment. When a batch is approved, they use their normal payment process to generate the ACH CCD+ formatted payment that they send to the bank. From there the money transfers to PG&E, Social Gas and Social Edison's bank accounts and the Payment Remittance data updates the accounts statuses within the utilities accounting system.



Summary:

So what does Santa Barbara get out of the process? They save money by efficiently importing utility bills and avoiding the time consuming and error-prone process of manually keypunching bill data. The City no longer pays erroneous bills since most problems are caught by ECLynx's error reporting and the EnergyCAP validation process - catching bills outside certain 'normal' parameters. They avoid late payments since they import bill data the same day the bill is sent and can schedule an accurate payment before the bill due dates. The system helps avoid double paying invoices when the utility reports a balance due on an invoice because payments are posted as soon as they are received. And maybe the best benefit of all is that they can use all the features of the EnergyCAP application to analyze building efficiencies and figure out which buildings may need a retrofit investment to save money. Santa Barbara is managing its energy costs confidently and using the data to make better business decisions.



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