

As consumers demand more technology-driven tools and apps to access account information and communication channels, utilities are forced to find ways to meet these demands. Utility software providers like National Information Solutions Cooperative (NISC) must produce solutions that are agile and intuitive, not only to meet the needs of a changing market driven by technology savvy consumers, but also to empower the actual users of the software to improve customer service.

## Maximizing the User Experience

While NISC offers consumer centric technology solutions, like the iOS and Android compatible SmartHub customer web portal, they also focus on the user experience by offering intuitive solutions that are fully integrated across all functional areas, including Customer Information, Accounting & Business, Engineering & Operations and Meter Data Management. These solutions are designed to leverage data across the enterprise to increase efficiency and boost productivity.

Consider the apps you use today – they do not require extensive training, you just instinctively know how to use them. Compare those apps to the software you use to serve your customers. No matter how much you've used the software, it's likely not as user-friendly as your favorite app. Why? Because it's built to accomplish a multitude of tasks, not just one. And, it may not leverage current technology advancements.

NISC's latest development initiative, iVUE Connect, takes the concept of your favorite app and applies it to each role within a utility organization, all while leveraging the power of a fully-integrated, robust enterprise solution designed specifically for utility and telecommunication companies.



“iVUE Connect is built on personas or roles,” said Nate Boettcher, NISC Customer Care & Billing Product Line Manager. “If you are a customer service representative, a dispatch person or someone that works in billing or collections, the user interface intuitively provides relative information necessary for you to complete daily business tasks.”

Much like apps on your smartphone, iVUE Connect is built to provide a personalized experience. Pertinent information specific to job tasks is viewable on a single screen, and easy to decipher through color coding. Data is displayed based on a user's natural screen navigation, providing process efficiency and reducing the time it takes to complete daily tasks. This framework also reduces time required to learn how to effectively use the software.

“With an intuitive solution, it really should minimize the time it takes someone to learn the software,” Boettcher said. “They really should be able to log in and navigate through that application without expansive training.”

## ‘Good Software Just Works’

For framework development of iVUE Connect, NISC's Usability Team worked with more than 400 NISC Members to gain a better knowledge of how iVUE was being utilized. Software design is not just about functionality, but also about intuitive navigation and data presentation for gained efficiencies.

“We spend a lot of time researching how our Members use our solutions, defining how each user navigates within the software on a daily basis,” said Laura Matthews, NISC Usability Team Lead. “We look at the time it takes to complete a task, how a user completes a task and if a user requires assistance to do so.”

The iVUE Connect interface utilizes the already robust iVUE Enterprise Solution, but is also based in the Cooperative Cloud. Users can access data not only on a desktop PC, but on tablets and mobile phones. The Cloud technology also allows for fast and easy rollout of software updates and new features.

As a leader of utility and telecommunications software solutions, NISC understands that technology changes rapidly. For NISC and NISC's Members, iVUE Connect is the future of the industry; an agile, intuitive solution that offers a personalized user experience.

“When it comes to design, good software just works,” Matthews said. “You don't think much about it. It's transparent to the user.”

More than twenty million consumers in 49 states receive utility or telecommunications services from the more than 800 companies utilizing NISC advanced solutions. NISC is a leading provider of software solutions and services for utilities and telecoms, offering advanced, integrated solutions that feature automated workflows, electronic approvals and more in the areas of billing and customer service, accounting, engineering and operations, meter data management, payment channels and mobile solutions.

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