



Four NISC SmartHub® Innovations You Need to Know About

For years, SmartHub—NISC’s web and mobile application—has been the gold standard billing system for broadband service providers (BSPs) across the nation. With more than 13.1 million registered users, SmartHub’s technology improves the customer experience through automation and increased convenience.

But if you still think of SmartHub as just a billing service, you’re missing out. Billing is only one of SmartHub’s features, which include program enrollment, reporting issues, service requests, order management, surveys, usage analysis, account maintenance, and payments.

This year, NISC introduced four innovations that make SmartHub’s features more powerful than ever. These new tools affect every step of the sales journey for you and your customers, from sales to signups to service. Some of these innovations put more controls in your customers’ hands, some help increase your revenue, and they all improve the experience your customers have with your company.

Lower the signup barrier with streamlined service

For years, SmartHub has offered crowdsourcing tools to help gauge a community’s interest in broadband, which in turn gives BSPs a better idea of where to build their network first. When construction is nearly complete, the SmartHub Order Management (SHOM) features walk new customers through the steps of signing up.

Unfortunately, sometimes a long and complicated signup process would frustrate potential customers, who would either abandon the process or start their relationship with a BSP on a negative note. Particularly when a BSP is moving into an area where they must compete for a customer’s business—e.g., moving out of their ILEC into CLEC areas—having a simpler tool that offered a shorter path to customer acquisition is vital.

NISC heard the feedback and implemented a streamlined process into SmartHub Order Management. Now, the process of signing up for service can be consolidated, often onto a single screen. Customers can select the services they need in just a few simple steps. The number of clicks and pageviews is reduced, as is the amount of information a customer must provide during signup. Further information can be gathered later. The important thing is to let customers say “yes” to service easily, and the new streamlined SmartHub Order Management process gives BSPs that simplicity and flexibility.

This innovation has been powerful for BSPs. With the streamlined process, BSPs report 80% of the signups they receive are now coming through SmartHub. Most of those come in the day they send a “service is now available” message to potential customers.

Track abandoned orders

Even with new tools that simplify ordering, a handful of customers will inevitably walk away at some point in the signup process. All kinds of factors pull customers away. Sometimes, daily life gets in the way: it's time to take the kids to school, a friend just called, they accidentally close the browser window, and so on. Other times, the reason might be related to the signup itself: they don't want the hassle of switching services, they're not sure if this new company will serve them well, or they're nervous about pulling the trigger.

NISC and its Members identified the need to pull these potential customers back in, which is why SmartHub now offers tracking and follow-up tools for abandoned leads. Automated messages—customizable by the NISC Members—are sent to these customers to say, “Are you still interested?” This practice is increasingly common for e-commerce platforms; we've all received a “Do you still want this?” or “We noticed you were looking at this” message after leaving an item in a shopping cart. Often, these messages are combined with an incentive that sweetens the deal and helps people cross the finish line and become customers.

The best news is that abandoned order tracking works. One of NISC's Members piloting the abandoned order follow-up tool reported that 36% of those abandoned leads became customers.

Auto-provisioning for pre-connected residences

Often, a particular residence doesn't need equipment installed or a line connected to their premise. Examples include apartments where the previous tenant had internet already or homes where the former residents had service. These locations are already internet-ready and turning on service is essentially a flick of the switch.

These situations are, generally, already simple for BSPs to manage. But what if a BSP didn't have to do anything to connect those customers? Auto-provisioning simply means customers have the ability to turn on (or upgrade) the service in their homes by themselves. With SmartHub Order Management's new tools, a customer can sign up, see that their address is already connected, select the level of service they want, and the background systems are integrated so that the customer has service within hours. (Similarly, a current customer can log in to their account, select a higher level of service, and the speed upgrade is automatic.) Auto-provisioning through SmartHub is a win-win innovation for customers and BSPs—customers are in the driver's seat and have access to service quickly, and BSPs save valuable staff time and resources.

NISC Members report that more than 50% of customers can order and turn on (or upgrade) service by themselves without the aid of a technician or installer, or additional assistance from a customer service representative.

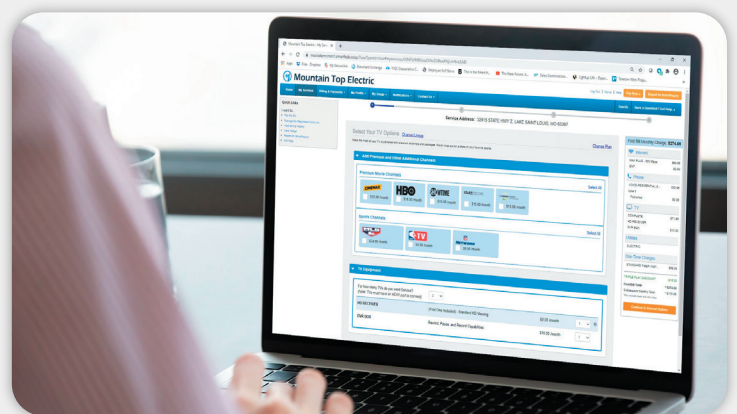
Let customers schedule their own service

People are busier than ever, so being able to schedule services in advance is vital. If you've ordered an appliance online recently, you were probably able to schedule the delivery window. This is a convenience customers have come to expect in the digital world.

In the past, scheduling installation or repair/maintenance service with BSPs was a manual process of calling a customer service representative, having them coordinate with their team of technicians, and scheduling a service call that might still be prone to delay or cancellation.

SmartHub has offered online scheduling for years, with a one-week service window. Recently, though, NISC recognized that its Members' customers often need a wider scheduling window. That's why the cooperative increased scheduling windows from a week to a month, giving customers much more flexibility. (The scheduling window is customizable for SmartHub's BSPs based on their tech team's availability.)

At the same time, NISC added messaging tools to SmartHub so BSPs can automatically send appointment confirmations and reminders, follow-up surveys, and other messages that help customers feel cared for and reassured that the service they scheduled is moving forward as planned. These innovations in scheduling and messaging make SmartHub's scheduler far more robust and customer-oriented. NISC Members report, on average, that 80% of SmartHub users use the online scheduling tool to make service appointments. For some Members, that number is higher than 90%.



Match the experience to the technology

Broadband service providers today offer internet service that gives customers access to our increasingly connected world. BSPs work with groundbreaking technology, which is truly transformative for the lives of people who live in underserved communities. The technology you offer is first-rate, and when a customer signs up for service with your company they expect their experience to match the technology. BSPs using SmartHub wow their customers by putting powerful self-service digital tools at their fingertips so they can control their experience.

At the same time, NISC designs SmartHub with Members in mind—the technology has to work for both providers and customers. With SmartHub, nearly every feature is both pre-built and customizable. For example, the new streamlined order process comes ready to be used. Customer scheduling options are available for launch. Built-in messages for various points of the customer journey are supplied: for example, when a customer declares interest in service coming to their area, when service is available, when a customer abandons an order, etc. These tools are ready for you on day one. But SmartHub also offers customization where you need it. Adapt the ordering process so it works for you (some BSPs choose a longer ordering process in ILEC areas and a streamlined process for CLEC areas), modify scheduling timeframes to your staff's preferences, change pre-written messages—customize SmartHub for your business needs.

About NISC's SmartHub

NISC's SmartHub application isn't just for billing anymore. Its tools and the recent innovations described above help bring broadband service providers into the future, give customers the self-service tools they expect, and improve the experience for everyone. If you're interested in learning more about how SmartHub can make a difference for your company, visit NISC.coop or contact NISC at 866.999.6472.

