

CASE STUDY

AT A GLANCE



33%  
Paid in full



21%  
Overall  
collections rate



\$319k  
Amount of delinquent  
funds recovered daily

# Electric Utility Leader Powers Up Early-Stage Collections Efforts

How a leading utility recovered over \$19.8 million in just 2 months with Retain, TrueAccord’s intelligent client-labeled collections platform

## The Challenge

With over 6 million customers and over \$10 billion in annual revenue, one of the nation’s leaders in electric utility systems prides itself on the distribution, transmission, and generation of electricity, as well as energy management and other related services for over two decades. Its regulated distribution companies form one of the nation’s largest investor-owned utilities, serving several different states.

When COVID hit in March 2020, many moratoriums were extended into spring and fall seasons. These temporary COVID measures were critical for customers in financial distress, but have taken a toll on utilities across the country. In 2020 alone, the National Energy Assistance Directors’ Association estimated that residential and small business owners owed \$35 to \$40 billion in deferred utility bills.

Historically, this electric system provider had relied on direct mail and an in-house call center to contact customers with overdue accounts. But during COVID, with changing customer behavior and extended moratoriums, it had seen the engagement and revenue decline.

Like other utilities, this company was focused on finding an effective and customer-friendly way to collect delinquent utility bills.

TrueAccord is a full-service digital-first debt collection agency that has worked with more than 20 million consumers of major banks, issuers, eCommerce companies, and direct lenders. We are transforming the debt collection industry and helping consumers reach financial health with convenient payment plans, customized billing schedules, and easy documentation.

## The Solution

This electric utility provider had observed firsthand that its customers were becoming more digital, from engaging with its distribution companies' mobile apps to using online outage maps and bill pay tools – and the trend only seemed to be picking up with COVID.

But the company's leaders knew that they didn't have the expertise or resources to build a digital-first early-stage collections strategy in-house.

After evaluating a number of solutions, this utility provider partnered with TrueAccord to implement Retain, TrueAccord's client-labeled early-stage collections solution.

Retain helps the company seamlessly deploy an intelligent digital outreach strategy to drive customer engagement and resolution. Every email goes out under the provider's recognized and trusted brand name. But under the hood, HeartBeat – TrueAccord's patented machine learning engine, powered by behavioral data from over 16 million consumers – dynamically optimizes every digital touchpoint in real-time based on signals of engagement. In addition, all digital outreach harnesses TrueAccord's exceptional email deliverability rates.

The utility provider's team spent a week working with TrueAccord to customize digital outreach templates with the provider's brand look and feel and do quality assurance (QA) on all critical flows. Retain officially went live in July 2021.

## The Results

Within days of going live with Retain, the utility company saw a transformational impact from their new self-optimizing digital collections approach.

Most immediately, they observed high levels of engagement with Retain-powered digital content: **email open rates over 72%, clickthrough rates above 25%, and unsubscribes dropping to 0.38%.**

Even more importantly, these engagement numbers continued to improve as HeartBeat optimized content based on real-time signals of customer engagement on the individual level.

The financial results were impressive:

**33%**

**Paid in full rate**

**21%**

**Overall collections rate**

**\$319k**

**Amount of delinquent funds recovered daily**

Since implementing Retain, the electric systems company has been able to **collect over 59,000 payments to recover over \$19.8 million.**

Having a self-optimizing digital "engine" has driven immediate growth for the utility provider's collections business. But it has also helped them boost the efficiency of their call center – now rather than trying to get delinquent customers on the phone through outbound dialing, contact center agents can work as productive inbound solutions specialists.

Finally, the success of Retain has inspired the electric company to rethink how they interact with their customers more broadly. Seeing the potential of personalized, digital-first communication, the utility has tapped TrueAccord for help with other customer engagement campaigns outside of the world of collections.

Ultimately, Retain enabled the company to deliver an effective and empathetic approach to collections – one that is sure to transform the utility provider's relationships with its customers.