



# Digital Strategies for Utilities

## Overcoming Smart Metering Challenges

**MetTel**



Evolving industry regulations and public interest in energy conservation paired with outdated telecom infrastructure are causing utility providers to adopt smart metering strategies.

## The Demand for More Data

Motivated by both environmental and cost-saving concerns, the public is mandating greater utility oversight. These conservation concerns result in more regulations for utilities as customers demand real-time, remote intelligence. Utilities storing liquid, petroleum, oil, and natural gas are being asked to provide more data points than ever before. The traditional once-a-month reporting is no longer sufficient to meet clients' or regulatory needs. Utilities are turning to smart metering in response.

The smart meter and connected utility device markets are exploding. One 2019 report found annual shipments of smart electricity meters exceeded 100 million units for the first time in 2017 and total meter shipments reached 170 million. The same report states that meter manufacturers generate nearly \$5 billion every year for hardware, software, and services.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, experts predict the smart water meter market will reach \$5.5 billion by 2021,<sup>2</sup> and the global smart gas meter market will grow to \$1.62 billion by 2025.<sup>3</sup>

Adding to the unprecedented demands of today's energy regulations for utilities is the outdated methods they use to gather data points. For example, some organizations deploy meter readers to travel to sites and manually report data. Others have automated processes but use analog, plain old telephony (POTS) to connect the data. This outdated modem technology is how many organizations read gas meters, water meters, electric meters, temperature sensors, and water sensors. But telecom companies are ending their support of these lines. Tech leaders face the challenge of sourcing an innovative, cost-effective solution to deliver vital information to meet emerging data demands.

## Identifying A Simple Solution

To upgrade to smart meters, the technology leader will look for a solution that provides the best possible outcome at the lowest cost. When it comes to this project, key decision-makers keep customer and regulatory demands in mind replacing manual data delivery or POTS in the data delivery chain. To stay competitive and meet regulations, the replacement delivery method must provide data that is:



Trusted



Accurate



Real-time

Experts predict the smart water meter market will reach \$5.5 billion by 2021, and the global smart gas meter market will grow to \$1.62 billion by 2025.



Next, to get the best possible return, the savvy leader will look for the simplest solution, utilizing the existing digital infrastructure.

Tech leaders are finding areas where the simplest solution is a good fit, such as in remote storage tanks' metering using LTE technologies leveraging existing cellular networks. As copper POTS lines are becoming more expensive to maintain and even extinct in parts of North America, LTE provides the best network availability and coverage while complementing the importance of extended battery life for most metering platforms when required.

However, there are still challenges with this solution. Often, utilities distribute these tanks across a service region. This distributed geography means that the organization will need multiple telecom providers and carriers. They might even need new towers and multiple substations, making this simple solution much more complicated. Some utilities have found a way to overcome these challenges and leverage an LTE network without adding this complexity.

## Strategies to Stay Simple

Utilities have found a way to keep it simple and upgrade their analog metering from manual and POTS data delivery methods to one digital network and one vendor contract. This solution, MetTel Single SIM LTE, is a platform that provides streamlined digital access to analog data. The platform leverages MetTel as the wireless vendor for multiple carriers (one contract instead of many). The platform also includes the hardware to convert the analog data to digital and which MetTel helps deploy. Organizations often use the software development kit (SDK) and APIs to leverage the data. Besides meter readings, utilities use MetTel Single SIM LTE as a replacement for POTS telephone, fax, and security lines.

## About MetTel

MetTel is a global communication solutions provider for businesses and government agencies. Leveraging our global private network and the industry's most comprehensive technology portfolio, we design and deploy tailored connectivity and networking solutions for voice, data, mobility, and IoT devices. Recognized as a Leader in the Gartner Magic Quadrant for Managed Network Services, we excel at transforming legacy networks with intelligence, security, and dedicated solutions management. Our unique approach enables MetTel to provide unparalleled customer experience, enhanced productivity, and significant cost-savings – freeing our customers to focus on their core operations. For more information visit [mettel.net](https://mettel.net), follow us on [LinkedIn](#), or call us directly at (877) 963-8663. MetTel. Connect Smarter.™



1. Smart Utility meter Intelligence Service, IHS Markit Electricity Meters Report (2018)
2. Markets and Markets, Smart Water Metering Markets by Meter Type, Technology, Component, Application and Region – Global Forecast to 2024 (2018)
3. Global Smart Gas Meter Market, Frost & Sullivan (2018)