



Georgia Gas Utility Cuts Payment Processing Time and Headcount Costs

How ParaScript and Aperta went beyond a check box recognition problem to discover department-wide efficiency gains

The Challenge

Austell Gas System processes 2,000 customer payments on an average day and up to 5,000 on peak days. When the company added a charity donation check box to its remittance stub, its existing forms processing system couldn't read it, forcing manual handling that slowed the entire payment workflow.

The Solution

Austell's form processing provider, Aperta, brought in ParaScript to provide the needed functionality. What started as a narrow fix quickly expanded in scope, with ParaScript's capabilities improving efficiency across the entire payment workflow.



**AUSTELL NATURAL
GAS SYSTEM**

The Benefits

90%+ recognition rates across the full payments volume

\$35,000 annual savings from eliminating a planned position

Faster daily balancing with significantly reduced check processing time

Department-wide efficiency gains beyond the original check box scope

"ParaScript met and exceeded our expectations. We set out to scan and recognize donation boxes. We accomplished that, and although we didn't enter the process expecting more efficiency, the overall reduction in processing time and staffing needs proved to be a wonderful additional benefit."

- Bryan Shick, Customer Service Director, Austell Gas System

5K

peak day payments
processed

90%+

recognition
rates

\$35K

annual payroll
savings

The Challenge in Detail

Austell Gas System is a natural gas distribution utility serving 53,000 customers in Austell, Georgia. Its customer service team carries a broad range of responsibilities, handling walk-in customer visits, accounting, reporting and setting rate structures, in addition to processing every payment received.



Austell had added the donation check box to its remittance stub to let customers contribute to a local non-profit providing food and utility assistance to area residents. But because the existing forms processing system couldn't read the new field, every donation became a manual exception that the customer service team didn't have the bandwidth to absorb. With payment volume as high as 5,000 transactions per day, the team was looking at hiring a third position to keep up.

The Aperta-ParaScript Solution

Austell brought the problem to Aperta, its existing forms processing provider, who recommended adding ParaScript's image recognition engine to handle the check box. The original scope was narrow: read the donation field reliably, capture the data and pass it to a database.

During the discovery process, customer service director Bryan Shick saw that the Parascript add-on could do more than meet the check box challenge: the character and imaging recognition capabilities could boost his department's efficiency across the board. The same engine reading the check box could improve recognition across the rest of the remittance stub, optimizing the entire workflow. The expanded deployment let Austell process up to 5,000 payments per day with recognition rates over 90%, freeing up the customer service team's time for other tasks.

The Key Benefits

Donation Capture Automated: Austell now reads and processes charity donation check boxes automatically, with data flowing directly to a purpose-built database.

Higher Throughput: Austell processes up to 5,000 payments per day with recognition exceeding 90%, handling peak volume without bottlenecks.

Faster Daily Balancing: Time spent processing checks and reconciling daily totals dropped significantly.

Savings on Headcount: Efficiency gains let Austell cut a planned third position, saving \$35,000 in annual payroll.

Staff Redirected to Higher Value Work: Employees previously burdened with manual processing reclaimed hours for accounting, reporting and customer-facing work.

Department-Wide Impact: Benefits extended well beyond the original check box scope, boosting efficiency across customer service.

