



NorthWestern Energy expands our Contact Center to offer employment opportunities throughout our three-state service territory

Prior to the pandemic in March 2020, all calls to NorthWestern Energy's Contact Centers were answered in one of our two Contact Centers: Butte, Montana or Huron, South Dakota. When the pandemic hit, employee health and safety was our top priority, and we had to quickly find a way to move our Customer Service Representatives (CSRs) to work remotely.

A remote workforce was something NorthWestern Energy had talked about in passing for years. However, with the pandemic upon us, we had to figure out a way to successfully transition an onsite workforce to a remote workforce in a timely manner, while ensuring a safe and secure remote work environment.

"As the pandemic continued, we became more comfortable considering a permanent remote workforce," said Tricia D., Manager of Customer Interactions. "Mid-

year 2020, discussions began on creating a Home Based Agent (HBA) program, a hybrid model that would allow CSRs the ability to work remotely."

Initially, we pulled together a small group of CSRs and management to begin discussions of the pros and cons of working remotely. Feedback from CSRs ranged from their ability to quickly respond to emergency call outs by working remotely to having the ability to work when not feeling 100%, giving them the ability to reserve their paid time off banks.

During these small group meetings, we considered the employee experience, the organizational benefits and the impact to budgets. In the end, the decision was made to pursue the hybrid model.

Our hiring processes continued throughout the

pandemic and in November of 2021, postings for CSRs expanded to candidates outside the traditional Contact Center locations of Butte and Huron to hiring throughout our service territories of Montana, Nebraska and South Dakota. We currently have remote CSRs in Aberdeen, Yankton, Sioux Falls, Grand Island, Missoula and Great Falls Divisions.

"Being able to hire from a larger geographic area has been extremely beneficial," Tricia said.

"Over the past year, the company has invested in technology," she added. "Remote agents have a dedicated NorthWestern Energy ISP line brought to their home and a complete workstation setup to include softphone technology. The model has been developed and tested and we are now in the process of a phased rollout."

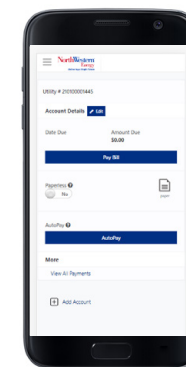


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