

## **Case study:** **British Gas Operation Bill Shrink**

### *Client*

Centrica (British Gas)

### *Date the work was carried out*

May – September 2006 (bills went live in November 2006)

### *The brief*

When British Gas were introducing a new billing system average bills were 2.8 pages long. To get average pages down to 2 (i.e. 1 sheet) they came to Boag Associates – bill design experts with the skills to ensure the bills are an excellent manifestation of the British Gas brand, that they contain all content required by the regulator, and that they encourage take up of efficient payment methods.

### *The audience*

17 million residential gas and electricity customers receiving a bill or direct debit statement from British Gas every three months.

### *Our approach*

- Large document titles clearly tell the customer what the document is.
- The account status, whether in debit or credit, was made immediately clear, with a clear call to action (or inaction).
- The account history (last bill total, and payments received) were provided at the front of the bill – this provides immediate reassurance.
- A concise summary aimed at both skimmers and checkers is provided on the front – and all detail is provided on the reverse. This helps reduce visual clutter on the front.
- The text is written using brand-inspired plain language.
- Helpline number at the top right – where customers expect to find it.

### *Results achieved / Added-value*

The new bills were designed, tested, specified, and implemented in just over 6 months – record time for a document of this kind (and scale).

We reduced the amount of sheets used by British Gas by 50%.

**Before (2 sheets)**

**British Gas**  
Your Energy Bill  
Customer Reference Number: 8500000003  
Bill date: 5 July 2006

**Your electricity details**  
4 March to 30 May 2006

**Electricity used - your meter readings**  
Meter Serial number: 50201720  
Current reading: 45379  
Previous reading: 45236  
Electricity used: 143 kWh

**Electricity Charges**  
For 243 kWh used over 88 days:  
rate 1 = 21.94p at 18.43 pence per kWh: 39.98  
rate 2 = 12.44p at 9.57 pence per kWh: 12.07

**Charge for electricity used: £52.05**

**Electricity discounts**  
Dual Fuel discount: or 3.44  
VAT: £3.44

**Your benefits** or £3.44  
Cost of electricity used excluding VAT: 48.61  
VAT at 5.0%: -2.43

**Total cost of Electricity used: £51.04**

**Value from British Gas**  
This bill does not include standing charges. How we calculate your electricity charges. This bill does not include standing charges. As your bill covers more than one billing period we have used your last one calendar value to calculate your 1996 consumption. We have only shown the highest of the calendar values used. This means you may notice a small difference between your own calculations and the amounts shown on your bill.

**Summary**  
4 March to 30 May 2006  
Balance from your previous bill: £242.16  
Energy Charges: £143.98  
Electricity used: £52.05  
Savings for you: credit £3.44  
VAT: £9.72  
**Total now due: £446.47**

**Ways to pay - your payment slip is on the reverse**

**After (1 sheet) – Front**

**British Gas**  
Mrs X Smith  
21 Smith Street,  
Smithampton,  
Smithshire  
SM1 2MS

**Questions?**  
0845 955 5300  
If you have a problem with your bill, please call us on 0845 955 5300. We'll be happy to help you. Please read page 2 before calling.

**Customer reference number 8500 XXXX XXXX**  
This is your new customer reference number. Please quote this when you talk to us.  
Bill date: 21 Mar 2007

**Your gas bill**  
Price Protection 2010  
Please pay £159.98 by 3 Apr 2007

**Billing summary**  
Bill period: 15 Dec 2006 - 30 Mar 2007  
Your last bill: £95.48  
Payment received on 29 Dec 2006: £25.48  
Balance before this bill: £69.00  
Gas you've used (estimated reading): £152.36  
VAT at 5% on gas used: £7.62  
Please pay: £159.98

**Ways to pay your bill**  
Your payment slip is on the back of this bill.

**Internet or phone banking**  
24 hour service  
You can see an payment with your own bank's phone or internet banking service.  
Our new code: 40-85-28  
Our account number: 77888888  
You will also need your business reference number.

**At a bank**  
You can pay by cash or cheque at any bank using the payment slip code card. Please make your cheque payable to British Gas Trading Ltd and attach your customer reference number to the back. Some banks may charge for this service.

**By post**  
Please make your cheque payable to British Gas Trading Ltd and attach your customer reference number to the back. Send your cheque with this payment slip to: British Gas, Payment Area 15, Cambridge, GU20 1AB. Please do not send cash through the post.

**By phone**  
Call us on 0845 955 5300 and have your debit card and customer reference number handy.

**By PayPoint**  
You can also pay at any PayPoint outlet by taking the copy of this bill and your debit payment with you. PayPoint specific terms and conditions may apply to this service.

**Back**

**Gas you've used - in detail**  
For more information about this calculation, go to: [www.house.co.uk/billing](http://www.house.co.uk/billing)

Meter readings for meter number: XXXXXXXXXXXX  
Your current tariff is: Price Protection 2010

Previous reading	Recent reading	Gas units used	Gas units converted to kilowatt hours used	Pence per kilowatt hour (kWh)	Charges for gas used
10223	3425	2402	6349	First 1177 kWh at 3.717 pence	43.75
15 Dec 2006	29 Mar 2007		54 days	Next 5172 kWh at 2.100 pence	108.61
<b>Total charges for gas used</b>					<b>152.36</b>

**Billing questions?**  
0845 955 5300

**How we calculate your gas charges**  
Our standard units are based on the amount of your previous gas use. When we do not have this, our estimated units are based on average consumption levels. Our units are based on 10 units of gas used in your meter in each month. £100 is your annual reading to allow for our standard gas flow meter to be replaced on a regular basis. This will increase our meter to your actual meter. Our meter will be replaced on a regular basis. This will increase our meter to your actual meter. Our meter will be replaced on a regular basis.

**Estimated meter reading?**  
Our standard units are based on the amount of your previous gas use. When we do not have this, our estimated units are based on average consumption levels. Our units are based on 10 units of gas used in your meter in each month. £100 is your annual reading to allow for our standard gas flow meter to be replaced on a regular basis. This will increase our meter to your actual meter. Our meter will be replaced on a regular basis.

**How we convert gas units used to kilowatt hours**  
1.283 (natural gas)  
1.024 (LPG gas)  
1.024 (LPG gas)  
1.38 (diesel gas)

**British Gas Home Energy Care Register**  
We'll help if you have specific needs. For example, we can send your bills in a large print format or Braille, or on audio tape. To find out about the range of services we can offer, simply call us on 0845 955 5404.

**Gas payment slip**  
Reference (customer account number):  
Credit Account Number:  
Amount due: £  
By separate from Alliance & Leicester account number:  
Your signature:  
Date: 30-00-00  
RRRRRRR MDAAAAAA 41