HOW TO OPTIMIZE YOUR UTILITY PROCESSES WITH MOBILE OCR

Increase Customer Satisfaction, Reduce Your Costs and Eliminate Risk During Meter Exchange

ANYLINE

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Utility processes all over the world are being modernized. This brings many benefits to providers and customers alike. However, we also need to upgrade the tools that interact with these processes in order to optimize their potential benefits.

In this white paper, you'll learn how you can do this while saving money and improving the quality of your data. The tool that can help you achieve this is known as Mobile OCR. You'll also find out what it is, how it works, how you can successfully apply it to your own processes and where it's already been implemented.

Some of you may be aware of Mobile OCR and its potential to optimize utility processes. Read on for a full preview of what we will cover in this white paper.

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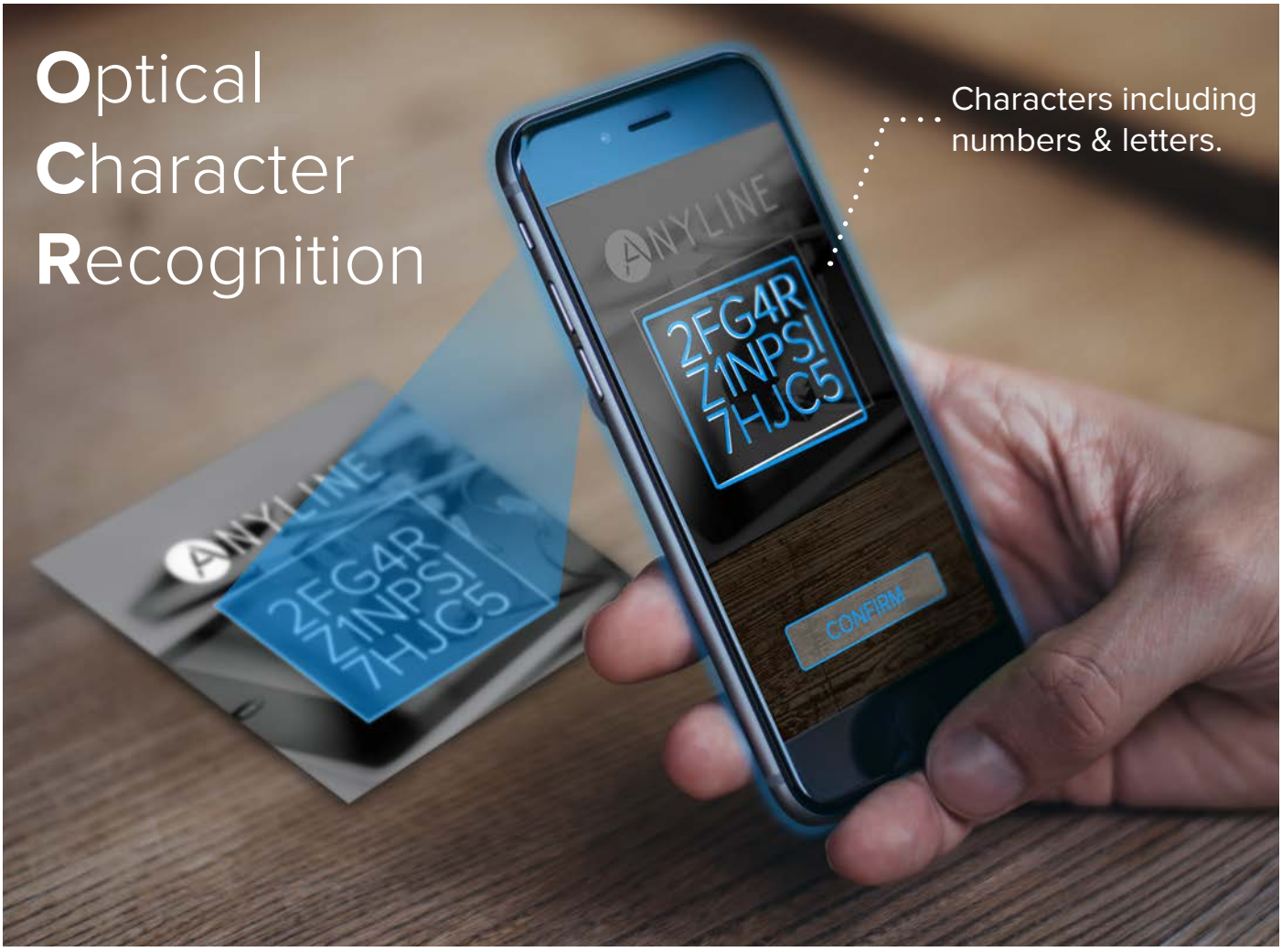
If you want to speak with someone rather than reading, you can contact Anyline at hello@anyline.com. Once we have more details about your use case, a member of our team will be happy to call you to discuss integrating mobile OCR from Anyline in your processes. We're happy to hear from you and look forward to helping you optimize your utility processes.

01 WHAT IS MOBILE OCR?

Mobile OCR is a modern adaptation of technology that has existed for more than **100** years [1]. OCR stands for optical character recognition. It turns written or typed text into machine-readable text. You can use this machine-readable text in all the same ways as text you've typed yourself.

For the average user, mobile OCR lets you 'copy and paste' text from the real world into a computer system using a mobile device. For example, a hotel could use mobile OCR to scan the text in a passport and autofill a guest registration, rather than needing to type out the information manually.

Mobile OCR has become a popular alternative to typing processes in many industries. This is because of advantages like improved accuracy, speed and reliability. Businesses are starting to recognize this and have begun adapting Mobile OCR for a wide range of use cases.



[1] Schantz, H. F. (1982) The history of OCR: optical character recognition, Recognition Technologies Users Association.

02 HOW CAN MOBILE OCR HELP UTILITY COMPANIES?

Mobile OCR has multiple benefits that utility companies can take advantage of. To start with, it's the perfect tool for reading utility meters. You can point your phone at your meter and use an app or website enabled with OCR to scan it in an instant..

Then you can securely upload your meter reading to your utility provider's backend. It's as simple as that.
Along with this primary use case, most mobile OCR solutions are capable of reading bar codes. This means mobile OCR can identify utility meters as well.

In addition, Mobile OCR has 3 main benefits over traditional meter reading processes.

1. Mobile OCR is Accurate

The main advantage of mobile OCR when compared with manual readings or data entry is accuracy.
For example, **Anyline has an accuracy rate of more than** **99%** when tested in laboratory conditions.
In comparison, human accuracy can vary greatly, and due to a number of factors.

Human accuracy can be affected by typing mistakes, fatigue, stress, and more. Mobile OCR never makes any of these mistakes. As a result, Mobile OCR meter readings have a much higher accuracy than human readings. **Poor data quality has been shown to cost companies up to** **6%** of their annual revenue in the UK [2]. In 2016, it was estimated that poor data cost the US economy $3.1 trillion [3]. The improved accuracy of a tool like Anyline can help you to improve data quality and offset these costs.

2. Mobile OCR is Fast

Anyline is able to detect, scan and upload the data from all kinds of utility meter **20x** faster than a person, and offers instant feedback on readings. Once scanned, the user can then check their results before uploading them to the utility provider.

The ability to create instant readings makes it easier for customers and technicians to log readings on a regular basis. In addition, it will reduce the duration of your processes. That means utility companies no longer need to wait for

[2] Rogers, C. (2016) 'Poor data is costing brands 6% of annual revenue', Marketing Week, https://www.marketingweek.com/2016/12/01/poor-data-costing-brands/ (Accessed 30 July 2021)
[3] IBM. (2015) 'Four Vs Of Big Data Infographic From IBM Big Data And Analytics Hub', Cloud Computing Today, https://cloud-computing-today.com/2015/09/25/1073736/ (Accessed 30 July 2021)

readings to reach them in the post or for a technician to return from a site visit. This reduction in process time gives your workforce more time for primary tasks. They can use this to improve customer service or process more readings in a shorter space of time.

3. Mobile OCR is Reliable and Secure

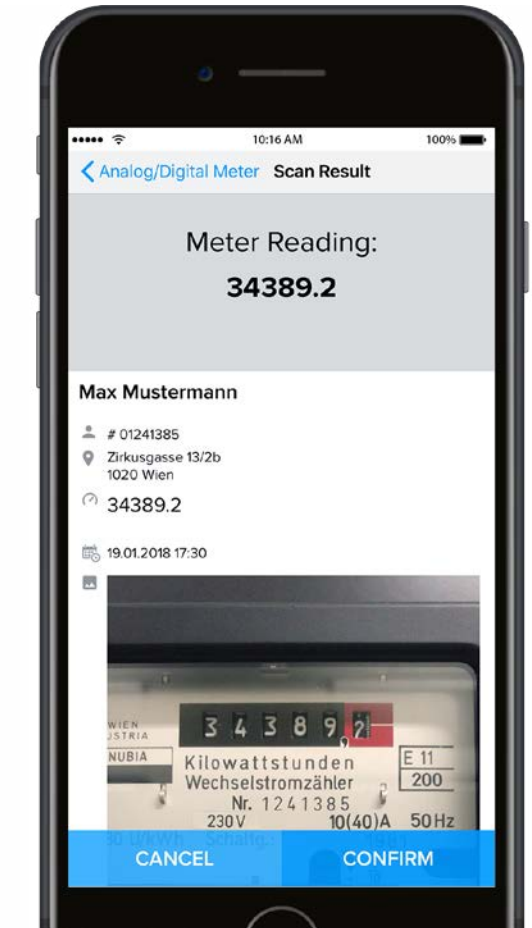
Many mobile OCR solutions are cloud-based and need an active internet connection to perform scans. They're also more at risk of security breaches. They need to send your scan data through the cloud for processing and then return results to your phone. There are a number of points in this process where your data can be accessed.

In comparison, you can use Anyline to perform scans without an internet connection.

It performs all scan processing on your device. Not only is this safer from an IT point of view, it means you can scan in places that don't receive Wi-Fi or mobile signal. This should be a huge plus to anyone in the utility industry. Many utility meters are located in cellars and basements. These places commonly lack an internet connection or don't receive any signal. Once you've completed your scan and established a secure connection, you can use Anyline to upload your scan data to your backend. This gives you the ability to perform scans at any location.

Another advantage to consider is Anyline's ability to scan in low-light and challenging environmental conditions. Apps that integrate Anyline automatically activate your device torch in dark settings, while our extensive testing ensures accuracy even in poor weather conditions.

Offline and low-light scanning functions make it the most reliable and secure mobile OCR solution for reading utility meters.



03 WHAT IS ANYLINE?

Anyline is a tech firm based in Vienna and Boston, which was founded in 2013. Using the latest in Optical Character Recognition (OCR) technology, we make data capture simple, giving you and your customers the power to read, interpret and process visual information on mobile devices, websites and embedded cameras.

Thanks to our partnerships with some of the greatest minds and organizations in machine learning, we have created the market-leading character scanning solution for companies around the world.

Anyline provides data capture solutions to industry leaders in utilities and energy management, policing and government services, supply chain and logistics, and even hospitality and tourism.

Why is Anyline the Best Choice for Utility Meter Reading?

Anyline has developed a feature set with utility meter reading in mind. You'll find that the Anyline meter-reading module is ready to let you scan meters as soon as possible. Anyline can read electricity, gas, and water meters without any additional development input. Additionally, our scanning solution has been developed to work on all varieties of meter types, scanning analog, digital and even dial meters straight. Once integrated into your application or website, it's ready to be tested on your scanning target.

Anyline has taken environmental and business factors into account too. This ensures that utility meter reading with Anyline is as successful as possible. Offline scanning and torch support makes sure that you can work in any environment, no matter where the meter is. Parallel scanning lets users collect both the meter reading and barcode simultaneously, increasing the efficiency and workforce potential. Haptic feedback for users decreases the chances of human error during meter reading, which supports a higher quality of data compared to manual data entry.

The Anyline team has experience working with world leading utility and energy providers around the world. Whether for electricity, water, oil or gas, we have helped companies to integrate meter reading directly into their websites or applications for use by their workforces and customers.

Companies that work with us include:

GRDF · tieto · mainova · WIE EINFACH · WIENER NETZE · EDISON EDF GROUP · rms remote metering solutions · werra energie · octopus energy · WIEN ENERGIE · Wattler · waterloo · ohra energie · co2online · energy app provider · Stadtwerke Münster · STADTWERKE RADOLFZELL · Stadtwerke Düsseldorf · STADTWERKE ITZEHOE · innogy · Stadtwerke Velbert · bulb · STADTWERKE OBERURSEL · STADTWERKE GÜTERSLOH · enviaM

How Do I Get Anyline in My App or Website?

If you want to see Anyline scanning in action, download our free demo app for iOS or Android.

To see how the Anyline SDK will work on your app or website, take advantage of our free 30 day trial. Once downloaded, mobile developers should be up and running with mobile scanning in just a few hours.

When you're happy with your tests, you can contact us about commercial licensing. Get in touch at sales@anyline.com.

Once you've chosen your license type and scan volume, you can roll-out your integration to your workforce or customers. Anyline is simple to integrate and support is available from the Anyline development team.

Supported Platforms

04 ANYLINE | CASE STUDIES

How Northumbrian Water Helps Customers Monitor Water Usage with Mobile Meter Scanning

Northumbrian Water is a UK water company providing mains water and sewerage services to over 2.7 million customers across England.

As one of the principal water suppliers in the North East of England, Essex and Suffolk, Northumbrian Water decided to significantly upgrade its customer experience by integrating Anyline technology into its customer facing application.

Customers can now scan their own meter readings quickly and accurately. This innovation not only streamlines and improves the customer experience, but also allows for more accurate readings. Customers can now manage their own water consumption more efficiently, saving them money, time and effort.

Here's how it works in practice. When it's time to provide an updated meter reading, customers of Northumbrian Water receive an email notification. With the company app downloaded onto their smartphone or tablet, they can simply point their device at their water meter and perform the reading using their device camera.

The user then submits the reading directly through the app to complete the process in under a minute.

"We're delighted with how Anyline has made submitting meter readings even easier for our customers. Feedback from customers has been really positive and customers who submit meter reads via our app rate their experience higher than any other channel available."

Harry Lovell,
Northumbrian Water
Digital Experience Manager

Benefits for the User

- *Accurate water usage and billing*
- *Easy handling of water consumption*
- *Comfortable and convenient mobile application*

Benefits for Utilities

- *Digital customer loyalty through whole customer journey*
- *Process efficiency and cost reduction through connection with internal systems*
- *Improvements to meter reading accuracy through automatic updates*

How co.met simplifies Utility Services with Meter Self-Reading

co.met is a leading meter reading provider in Saarbrücken, Germany. The company provides meter reading services for both domestic and industrial uses, with over 240,000-meter points across the Saarland state capital, and millions more across Germany.

As a forward-looking company, co.met wanted to find a cutting-edge solution to instantly digitize meters with the highest degree of accuracy.

After testing with Anyline, it was clear that mobile meter reading was the solution co.met were looking for. By implementing Anyline mobile scanning for utilities into both their workforce apps and website, co.met staff and customers can now scan meters in seconds – with just their mobile devices!

co.met now has two different ways to receive their data. Firstly, co.met personnel can collect readings on-site by simply scanning customer meters with their workforce app. This scan is then coupled with an additional photo for verification and is transferred to co.met's back-end system, along with additional data, such as the GPS location. The result is a faster, more accurate work process, helping staff to work more efficiently.

co.met
www.co-met.info

But that's not all. Anyline also offers a second innovative option to co.met customers – the ability to perform a meter self-reading through the co.met website!

By activating their phone camera and capturing a QR code on their utility meter, customers open a webpage on the co.met website, which activates the Anyline utility meter scanner on their own device. Customers scan their own meter and send the results of their utility meter self-reading directly to co.met.

This means customers will no longer have to wait for a visit from co.met and can complete their meter reading at their own convenience.

"The new process supports both meter fitters and reading personnel alike, who can now record a meter reading in just one step and also document it with a photo. Manual typing of each meter reading can therefore be avoided. This saves valuable time, while at the same time avoiding transmission and reading errors, and storing proof images for later checks."

Thomas Hemmer
co.met Managing Director

05 HOW TO MAKE THE QUICK SWITCH TO SMART METERS

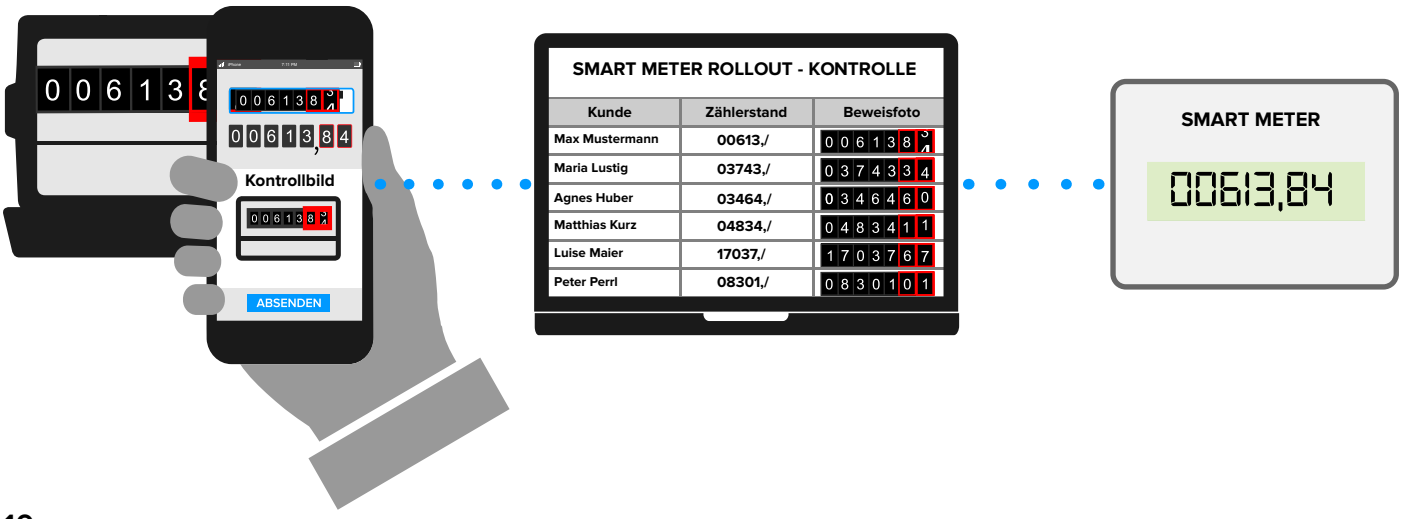
Intelligent Meter Reading Systems with Cost-Efficiency

The EU-wide aim of digitizing traditional analog electricity meters by 2020 has a number of people in the industry on the edge of their seats. The scheme is expected to require €45 billion worth of investment. This will see close to 200 million smart meters for electricity and 45 million for gas rolled out in the EU. By the end of 2020, almost 72% of European consumers will have a smart meter for electricity and about 40% will have one for gas. The average cost of a single meter switchover is between €200 - €250.

This change in processes has challenged the energy industry and forced providers to include digitization in their plans. As a result, companies have had to increase investment and rethink their organizational efforts to meet the ambitious goals of regulators.

With that in mind, industry leaders need to ask how they can make the switchover to digital meters as efficient as possible. According to regulators, the introduction of smart meters to homes and businesses will play a key role in helping companies in the energy industry to achieve this goal. By digitizing meter reading, companies can streamline their processes and reduce costs. Automated processes will then be able to save companies time and help them to collect more accurate meter readings by eliminating typing from their processes.

The versatile text recognition technology of Anyline offers another solution. In fact, it can play a key role in the transition from analog to digital meters as it can both identify and read meters in an instant. This eases the path to smart meters for utility companies in the energy sector.



Make the Transition to Smart Meters Complication-Free with Anyline

Before the transition to smart meters can be made, a reading must be taken of the existing meter. It's key for companies and customers that this reading is accurately documented. This is simple to achieve with Anyline's mobile OCR technology. A technician or homeowner can point their mobile device at their meter to ensure a perfect reading of the meter in question. This reading can then be uploaded directly to the utility company's database. In comparison to existing processes for meter switch-over, using Anyline makes digitization seem like child's play. In addition, Anyline scans barcodes so it can also document the meter and its location at the same time.

Benefit From Automation - Even in Non-Mandatory Situations

Companies that only read meters for internal purposes are not required to upgrade to smart meters. But they can still benefit greatly from mobile scanning. Anyline enables the automated evaluation of various power consumption points in your processes. This level of automation can uncover enormous resource-saving potential within your organisation. This is another case of Anyline being the convenient solution through smart technology.

Anyline Turns Old Meters Into Smart Meters

Anyline's technology lets households with old, non-digital meters take advantage of smart metering - without having to retrofit a new meter. Energy providers just need to integrate Anyline's text recognition software in their consumer-facing app or website and let customers read their own meters. It's no longer necessary for technicians to visit homes to gather readings. This greatly reduces the effort required by customers to provide readings and for companies to gather them.

Anyline provides meter reading solutions that are installed as a tool on smartphones or tablets. Meter readings and numbers are read automatically and fully integrated into Anyline's workflow. This reduces the time required to change an analog meter to a smart meter. In addition, Anyline's mobile text recognition technology drastically reduces error rates. The documented readings can also be supplemented by digital images to automatically generate and integrate metadata such as meter location.

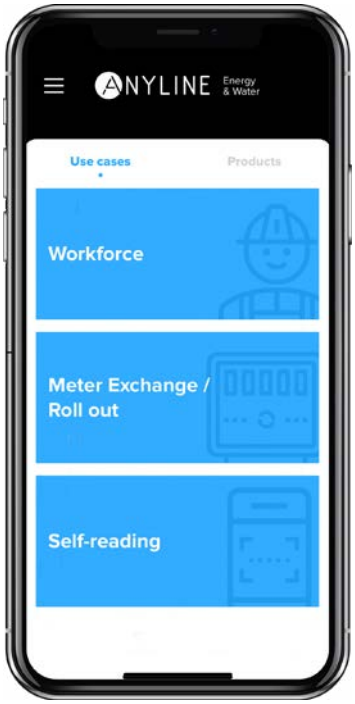
In short, Anyline is the most versatile and robust tool available for meter switchover right now.

06 LEARN MORE ABOUT ANYLINE

We're always happy to hear from companies and entrepreneurs that want to streamline utility processes. Whether you're interested in integrating Anyline into your workforce devices, customer-facing app or website, or need help with your meter switchover campaign, we're happy to help!

If you'd like to talk with a member of the Anyline team about automating your meter reading process or any other use case, contact us at sales@anyline.com. Our sales team is happy to hear your requirements and give you feedback on how you can get the most out of Anyline.

You can test Anyline for free.
Just download our free 30 day SDK Trial



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Ebin Thomas is an expert in mobile OCR solutions, process optimization and improving user experience in the utility industry.

His insight has influenced companies all over the world to introduce meter reading solutions for both customers and workforces, as well as optimised smart meter rollouts.

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