Meeting your customers where they are
Communicating in today’s environment

Karen Duncan & Ethan Smith
City of Morganton
Who are we?

Karen Duncan
Finance Director, City of Morganton
• Maintains the fiscal integrity of the City of Morganton as well as administers, directs and manages its financial operation

Ethan Smith
Public Information Officer, City of Morganton
• Oversees public and press relations, website maintenance, social media communications and more
Where does good communication begin?

Effective communication begins with your utility bill

Needs to be easy to read and digest

Design should be simple, straightforward and consumer-friendly
Why is good bill design important?

Your bill is the only point of contact with your City for the majority of customers

A bad bill design results in more customer calls, complaints and confusion
How did we do it?

Several different elements aligned at the right time that prompted overhauling our bill design

At the same time we created a new bill, we also gave our customers the option to pay online with the help of ElectriCities
Morganton’s Story…

About ten years ago Morganton recognized that its current utility billing system was no longer meeting its current needs and it was time to begin seeking another solution - one that could provide consumers in the 21st century what they expect from their utility provider.
Morganton’s Story…

After a lengthy process, the decision was made to partner with ElectriCities, as a hosted client, utilizing the Harris NorthStar solution.

New software…

New ideas…

More options…
Morganton’s Story…

Objective:

Fully integrated payment portal with access to invoices generated by three different billing systems

Solution:

ElectriCities designed and hosted payment portal
Payment processing utilizing Point and Pay
Morganton’s Story…

Objective:

Provide ebilling option with email information gathered/stored by third party

Solution:

Southdata
Morganton’s Story…

Objective:

Outsource bill printing and mailing

Solution:

Southdata
Morganton’s Story…

Objective:
   Redesign utility bill

Considerations:
   What information is most important to the customer
   How do we present the information in a way that it is easy to understand
Morganton’s Story…

Asked Customer Service Representatives what questions customers most often ask or complain about and used those comments to select the top 3 items we would change/emphasize in the new bill design.

1. Need to have the service being billed be easily identified
2. Need to have the amount due in bold print
3. Need to have the due date also be bold print
Morganton’s Utility Bill

Public Information Officer redesigned bill and customers responded favorably to the change.
Our communications philosophy

Meet your customers where they are

• What does this mean?
  • Find what works for your customers, and utilize it
  • Everyone is different
Our communications philosophy

Meet your customers where they are

- Multi-pronged approach
- City website, press contacts, social media
- Always be willing to work until you have a resolution
Our communications philosophy

Meet your customers where they are

• We are on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter
• Captures the majority of customers across diverse demographics
Our communications philosophy

Meet your customers where they are

• Diversify your content
• Be consistent
• Each social channel has a different function
• Build trust between you and your customers
Utilizing social media for your benefit

The more you can get information out ahead of time, the better

Make sure your customers know what’s happening

This makes it easier on employees doing the work in the field

Show AND tell
Utilizing social media for your benefit

The more you can get information out ahead of time, the better

Make sure your customers know what’s happening

This makes it easier on employees doing the work in the field

Show AND tell
Utilizing social media for your benefit

Show AND tell

Get your message out while being as concise as possible

Establish reasonable expectations
Social media pitfalls

Beware of trolls

You can’t please everybody

Have a strategy

Who responds? And when? What do you respond to?
Our social media policy

Don’t feed the trolls

Have conversations through direct messages

Team of people established to respond to messages and make posts
Other strategies to reach customers

The press can be your friend

Make your websites and social media channels the “go-to” points of contact for your customers

Always follow-up when necessary
Our flow of information

Information comes to the PIO
PIO discerns how to best get the information out
Posts information to City website
Publishes on social media
Sends to the media

This is how we “connect citizens to City Hall”
Make sure your customers know where to go

• Direct customers to the right point of contact as quickly as possible
• Help quickly, be friendly
• Building rapport builds trust
Questions?

Thank You
FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA:

@ncpublicpower

facebook.com/Electricities

@ElectriCitiesNC

www.electricities.com