

Beyond the Three Rs

The New Customer Experience

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We're not saying the old things don't matter

- Rates
- Reliability
- Relationships



What are the “old things”?

Rates

- Affordable
- Constant



What are the “old things”?

Reliability

- Lights on “most of the time”
- Bills accurate



What are the “old things”?

Relationships

- Staffing to keep lines short
- Answer the phones or return the calls



We are saying....your strategy for “*The Three Rs*” should probably expand

- Rates
- Reliability
- Relationships



SECC is...Smart Energy Consumer Collaborative

All SECC references are taken from:

Connecting Cost to Value: A Playbook for Customer-Centered Communication



Rates: Survey says!!

Modern customers demand knowledge

- Communicate impact to bill
- Involve customers
- Provide tools for energy efficiency & understanding their bill
 - To the customer, Bill = Rate
- Educate staff (general and specific)



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Ultimately, most consumers want to know how much control they have over the cost of their electricity.

As new technologies, distributed energy resources, and large commercial loads come online, perceptions of cross-subsidization can quickly undermine trust, whether those perceptions are accurate or not. Consumers want reassurance that they are not paying more than their fair share

Reliability: Survey says!!

Modern customers expect 100% up time

- Key Account single point of contact
- Grid improvement – share the wins & results
- Modern, proactive communications
- Market the good news



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Customer expectations are also shaped by experiences outside the utility sector. Real-time tracking has become standard for even the most mundane consumer experiences, such as pizza delivery and ridesharing. Consumers want similar visibility into outage status: where crews are, how restoration is progressing, and when service is likely to be restored. In a world where other services provide continuous, granular information, static updates or vague estimates can feel like the utility is withholding information and erode customer satisfaction

Relationships: Survey says!!

Modern customers demand control & information

- Customer portals
- Looking online or calling about:
 - outage, efficiency, and bill questions
- Cost pressures (be part of the solution)



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Across all of these questions, one principle holds: Explanations must consistently tie back to what matters most to customers – affordability, reliability, and fairness. Without that connection, even accurate information may fail to resonate

Customers may not expect certainty, but they do expect candor, consistency, and a clear connection between utility decisions and customer outcomes

Early communication helps establish context before controversy takes hold.

Who owns your customer relationships?

- Who sends the bills out?
- Who answers the phone?
- Who replies to email?
- Who maintains the website?
- Who keeps the lights on?
- Who approves the budget?





Who sends out the bills?



Who answers the phone?

① The Slido app must be installed on every computer you're presenting from



Who replies to email?



Who maintains the website?

① The Slido app must be installed on every computer you're presenting from

slido



Who keeps the lights on?

① The Slido app must be installed on every computer you're presenting from

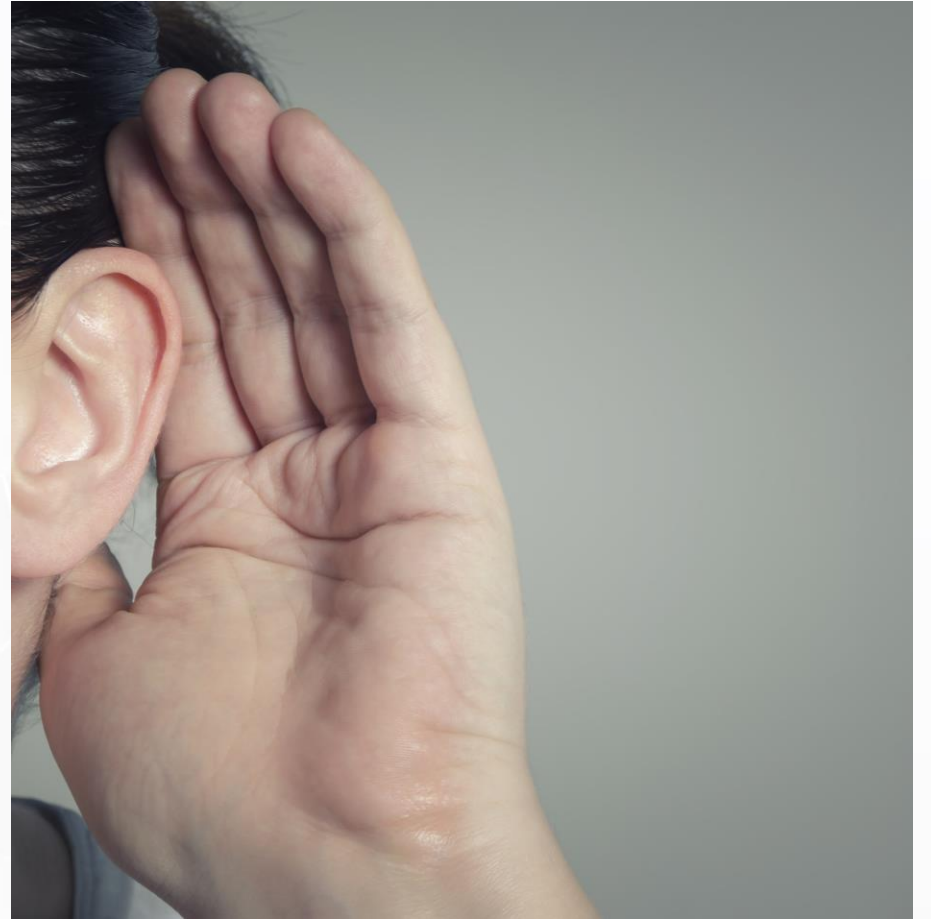
slido



Who approves the budget?

Who owns your customer relationships?

Who do they see in the hallway?



Who owns your customer relationships?

Who stays up to date on funding opportunities AND alerts the public? (recent history suggests that only 8 members have someone who does that)

Critical question – Are we serious about service or are we just checking a box?

Do you have a website AND...AND is it current?

Do you have solar interconnection standards AND...AND can people find them?

Do you have really cool energy efficiency programs AND...AND can customers understand the rules?

Do you expect your CSRs to be the face of your city/ utility AND...AND provide them with enough training to be successful?



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Program Utilization

Customers also seek reassurance that a program applies to them. Generic descriptions create ambiguity, forcing customers to determine relevance on their own. Without clear signals that an option fits their specific situation, many will run out of patience before fully engaging

So...let's work on it

Let's not reinvent the wheel

Programs already available:

Energy audits

Networking events

Rebates for Agency 1

Rebates in some NCEMPA cities

Training

- Customer Service

- Key Accounts

- Energy Efficiency

- Energy Professionals

Communications templates

Town Hall style support

HOMES/HEAR funding

Weatherization funding

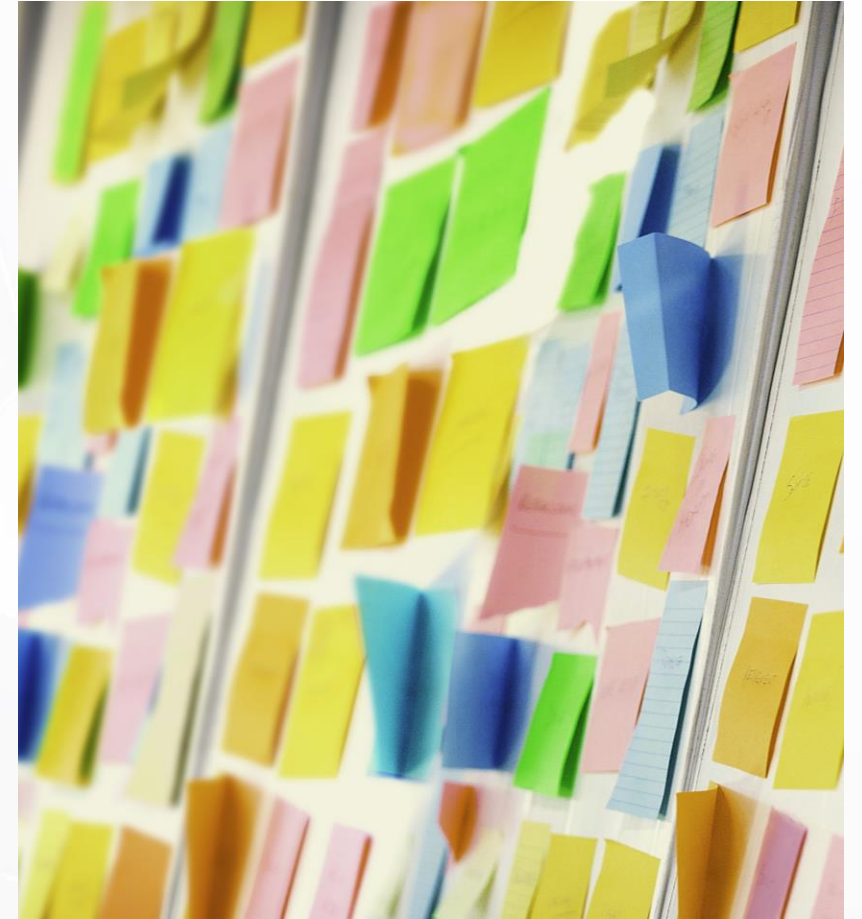
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Our goal...

Today we will brainstorm ideas

We'll compile results and...

Tomorrow, we will select some of the ideas for a deeper dive into developing action



At your table you will see...

...an index card at your seat

On the back, you will find a “persona”.

Get ready to shift your thinking to that persona



At your table you will also see...

An index card in the middle of your table.

1 minute to change tables (negotiate)

On the back, you will find your challenge.

No net gain for any table

Get ready to brainstorm potential programs that fill gaps in today's service toolkit.

Program types to consider (add your own)

- Interaction with other agencies
- Sustainability initiatives (including research)
- Interaction within the community
- Training
- Energy efficiency programs (loans, rebates)
- Targeted outreach
- Communication
- Surveys

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When customers do engage, they make practical judgments based on desired outcomes versus features alone: Will this save me money? How much? Will it complicate my routine? Will it work as expected? How certain is the outcome? Are the benefits significant enough to make it worth my time and trouble? In the absence of clear, personalized answers, uncertainty becomes a barrier to action



Personas you may see (Town/ Utility)

- Customer Service Representative
- Customer Service Manager
- Town/ City Manager
- Line Worker
- Town Council Member
- Public information Officer
- Utility Director
- City Hall Custodian



Personas you may see (Community)

- Senior Citizen/ Fixed Income
- Single Parent Working 2 Jobs
- Medical Needs Household
- Small Business Owner
- Small Family Farmer
- Remote Tech Worker
- Busy Household
- Solar Invested Homeowner



Challenges

- Address rising costs
- Solving needs of C&I customers
- Billing accuracy
- Community engagement
- Staff education
- Rate change communication



Challenges (example)

Community engagement

You may consider a specific problem (not required) such as:

*City is concerned with the future addition of large load customers (data centers)

Consider the point of view of all “personas”. What does each persona need from a **community engagement** perspective

Don’t solve the problem today....instead, and after hearing from each persona....list ideas by which voices can be heard and input received that lead to a better approach and an informed community

*How do we get youth “involved” and out of the house

Consider each persona

List (brainstorm) ideas – (Youth Council, Youth Center, Movie Night in the Park, etc)

Challenges (example)

Remember, tomorrow's breakout will be aimed at identifying ways to design programs to solve these or similar issues.

Today, consider each persona and ...

BRAINSTORM!

Report out (each table)

What was your challenge?

Important realizations from the “personas”

Ideas