

Prospectus



An E SOURCE Market Research Multi-Client Study

Internet Customer Care in the Energy Industry: The Residential End-User's Perspective

The Internet provides a valuable opportunity for energy service providers (ESPs) to improve service to customers. Many utilities already use their Web sites to provide customers with information about such things as saving energy, community events, rate options, special energy programs, and the location of local offices. Fewer are taking full advantage of their Web sites to reduce operational costs for such customer service transactions as paying the energy bill, connecting or disconnecting service, or asking general billing questions.

Providing online customer service can be a “win-win” move for ESPs and the customers they serve, but the experience needs to be mutually beneficial. Because of the speed, convenience, and ease of access afforded by online customer service, some consumers find it to be a useful and attractive resource. By offering customers additional ways to conduct transactions, utility companies can move toward lowering operational costs while increasing service options and ultimately boosting customer satisfaction. The challenge for utilities is aligning online service offerings with the needs and requirements of their customers.

This study will provide a wealth of information to utility customer service organizations as they continue to refine and expand their online customer service offerings. It provides valuable insights from the customers' point of view that will help ESPs plan and implement continued development of Internet-based customer service, both as a stand-alone resource and as a solution that is fully integrated with traditional customer service processes and procedures.

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Study Objectives

Our survey, which will focus on residential customers across Canada and the United States, will capture and quantify answers to questions such as these:

- Who's using the Internet? Who's purchasing products and services online? Who's paying bills online? Who's conducting customer service-related transactions online at their utility's Web site or at other service providers' sites?
- What are the top reasons consumers have for using Web-based customer service?
- What are key user preferences surrounding online customer care?
- How satisfied are consumers with their online customer service experiences? Does satisfaction vary by transaction type or by type of service provider (that is, for cable, telephone, or credit card companies)?

- Who's visiting ESP Web sites, what are they looking for, and what transactions are they most interested in conducting online?
- What do consumers see as the benefits of conducting online transactions with their utility, and what are the perceived drawbacks?
- What expectations do customers have surrounding accessibility, functionality, and service levels for utility-specific transactions?
- Do channel preferences (e-mail, self-service, online chat, live agent over the phone, automated telephone system, in-person) differ by transaction type?

Study Benefits

Through our analysis of primary market research data, we'll provide you with:

- Information on the customer segments most and least likely to conduct specific customer service transactions online at their utility's Web site.
- Suggestions regarding the transactions that customers would like to conduct with their utility online.
- Customer requirements surrounding functionality and service levels for online service-related activities.
- A demographic profile of respondents, including age, income, education level, estimated monthly energy bill, and other variables.

Survey Methodology

We'll conduct 20-minute telephone interviews with 1,000 randomly selected heads-of-household in the United States and Canada. The study sample will be geographically segmented within 10 North American regions. We'll break

out the U.S. sample by the nine U.S. Census divisions, and the Canadian sample will be a random sample from all provinces. The aggregated results will be weighted to reflect the actual number of households within each region.

Study Deliverables

Subscribers will receive:

- Print and electronic copies of a comprehensive final report analyzing the data and presenting the most important findings in text, charts, and graphs.
- A data notebook containing the survey instrument, sample plan, codebook, and a graphic presentation of topline results for each survey question.

- A CD-ROM will be included with the notebook. It contains extensive data tables (tabs) for each question as well as the raw survey data in Excel, SPSS, and ASCII formats, enabling subscribers to conduct their own analyses. In addition, the CD will contain the PowerPoint graphics for the topline results.
- Segmentation data for use with Claritas Inc.'s PRIZM NE® geodemographic segmentation system.
- A private teleconference call with the project team to discuss findings and implications specific to the subscriber's company and business strategy.

Optional Oversampling Surveys

You can arrange to have us perform proprietary oversampling within a community, state/province, or region. This is a unique opportunity to gather in-depth information about your market and to develop comparisons with the broader U.S. and Canadian study sample across a common set of questions. We can also add custom questions to the survey for

sponsoring subscribers. Oversampling results will be furnished only to the sponsoring subscriber.

Contact a member of our business development team for more information on oversampling or to obtain a cost estimate.

Related E SOURCE Reports

This year's study, "Internet Customer Care in the Energy Industry: The Residential End-User's Perspective," builds on work completed in the 2002 *E SOURCE Market Research Multi-Client Study "Consumers' Use of the Internet,"* which was conducted with a random sample of 1,025 online consumers. Interested subscribers who purchase this year's study will be able to order a copy of the 2002 study at a discounted rate. Together, these two reports provide a comprehensive overview of Internet attitudes and opinions, coupled with a focus on requirements surrounding customer care.

Members of the *E SOURCE E-Business Service* receive reports that rank the usability and functionality of more than 100 U.S. and 70 international utility Web sites and offer insight into improving the top customer-related features and functions. Subscribers to this *E SOURCE Multi-Client Study* who are not members of the *E SOURCE E-Business Service* will be able to purchase these additional reports at a discounted rate. When taken together, the study and these reports will allow subscribers to compare customer priorities on key features and functions with individual utility ratings on the same set of features and functions.

For More Information

E SOURCE services focus on retail energy markets, services, and technologies. At our core is an exceptional team of research professionals whose technical and analytical skills and assimilation of real-world experience have earned us international acclaim. Clients include roughly 350 electric and gas utilities, other energy service providers, large energy users, government

agencies, and other organizations from nearly two dozen countries worldwide.

Contact a member of our business development team for more information on this or any other *E SOURCE Market Research Multi-Client Study*.

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