



For Immediate Release

Utility Customer Service Quality Determines a Third of Overall Customer Satisfaction

BOULDER, COLO, July 6, 2006—Recent E SOURCE research shows that, for utilities, 34% of overall customer satisfaction is determined by the quality of customer service operations. Reliability, price, and company image are the largest drivers of customer satisfaction. However, customer service operations, in aggregate, combine to have a major impact. Easy-to-understand bills, convenient payment methods, effective communication during outages, and professional responses when customers make contact, among other factors, combine to represent an average 34% of overall customer satisfaction.

In conducting this research, E SOURCE completed a comprehensive review of the overall utility-customer relationship for 15 utilities, and determined the best ways utilities can achieve improvements in customer satisfaction, as detailed in the report “Top Ways to Improve Customer Service Satisfaction.” The utilities were selected because of their dramatic improvements in customer satisfaction scores over the past five years. The improvements in score for all the reviewed utilities were largely achieved through sustained organization-wide progress in listening to customers, communicating with customers, and treating employees well. Additionally, each company was able to achieve a shift in focus toward infusing the organizational culture with an awareness of the importance of customer satisfaction.

The study was completed through detailed analysis of the J.D. Power and Associates data and in-depth interviews with the most improved companies. Andrew Heath, director of customer satisfaction services at E SOURCE, commented, “We found many specific actions that utilities can do to improve satisfaction. Our analysis found over 20 important steps; of those, we found 10 consistent actions that are absolutely critical.” These steps go significantly beyond the call center—the study’s findings point to a number of compelling opportunities that exist throughout the utility to provide enhanced service to customers and show that customer service plays a pivotal role in influencing overall electric and gas utility customer satisfaction. Communication with customers during crisis events and power outages and access to a number of convenient billing and payment options are among the top ways utilities can improve the customer’s overall experience. Sandy Goodwin, director of the E SOURCE Utility Customer Care Service, stressed that “This is one of the few areas a utility has complete control over. Excellent customer service can play a crucial role in mitigating the satisfaction fallout from rising prices, weather-related outages, and any number of other issues.”

Information extracted from this press release must be accompanied by a statement identifying E SOURCE as the publisher and the E SOURCE report, “Top Ways to Improve Customer Service Satisfaction,” as the source. No advertising or other promotional use can be made of the information in this release without the express prior written consent of E Source Companies LLC.

This E SOURCE research is the latest and most in-depth look at the key drivers to improving electric and gas customer satisfaction. It provides a roadmap for the implementation of best practices and offers strategies for incorporating metrics and measuring results to achieve sustained, incremental, progressive improvement.

In mid-July 2006, E SOURCE will be hosting a webinar to present the report and discuss it with its members. A sample of the webinar will be available to nonmembers on the E SOURCE web site beginning the third week of July. To learn more or to purchase the report, please visit www.esource.com.

About E SOURCE

For more than 18 years, E SOURCE has provided information services focused on retail energy markets, services, and technologies. At our core is an exceptional team of research professionals whose technical and analytical skills and real-world experience have earned E SOURCE international acclaim. Clients include roughly 300 electric and gas utilities, other energy service providers, large energy users, government agencies, and other organizations from nearly two dozen countries worldwide.

Contact

Charley Schollaert

E SOURCE

Tel 303-444-7788 ext 144

E-mail charley_schollaert@esource.com