E Source Blog

Welcome to the E Source Blog! Our staff will share insights and observations about life at E Source, our events, our research, and other fun stuff.

- **NEW!**
  Four Discoveries About On-Bill Financing: How Does Your Offering Stack Up?
  May 20, 2013 | Kate Drexler - Research Manager | 0 comments

  While benchmarking 39 on-bill financing offerings for an E Source report, I learned four fast facts:

  - One-third of utility financing packages are of the on-bill variety, where monthly loan payments are set up through customers' utility bills.
  - On-bill tariff programs, in which the debt obligation resides with the meter rather than the customer, are on the rise. Nearly one-third of the programs we examined were on-bill tariff.
  - Single-family residential customers have the greatest access to on-bill financing offerings; multifamily customers have the least.
  - Three-quarters of on-bill financing offerings have bill-neutrality requirements in which monthly bills are set up to make customers' cash flow neutral or positive.

  For more of the juicy details we uncovered, E Source Efficiency and Demand-Response Programs Service members can check out part one of the benchmarking results, titled Utility On-Bill Financing: A Profile, which examines how different on-bill offerings are structured. And stay tuned for the sequel report later in 2013 that will benchmark the impacts of these on-bill financing packages.

  ... read more >>

  Categories: Financing

- **Best Practices for Stakeholder Relations with DSM Activities**
  May 13, 2013 | Rachel Reiss Buckley - Research Practice Director, DSM | 0 comments

  In general, administrators of public energy-efficiency programs expect and welcome feedback from various business and public interest organizations as well as members of the community concerning the design and delivery of their programs. We've heard from our member utilities that these meetings can either be productive or a waste of time. In an effort to advance the demand-side management (DSM) industry, we've presented some best practices for gathering public input for utility DSM programs in the report called Incorporating Stakeholder Input into DSM Activities. This report is based primarily on case studies from Avista Utilities and Xcel Energy Colorado.

  We also dedicated an entire session to this topic at our February 2013 DSM Executive Council meeting, where 20 leaders of utility DSM departments gathered for one and a half days of roundtable discussions. The consensus was that DSM executives value input from participants in the stakeholder process because up-front input and agreement can accelerate regulatory approvals. Utilities definitely appreciate when commission staff attends so they can listen to and gain various perspectives before a formal hearing.

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  Categories: DSM department & portfolio management

- **Is It Time for Marketing to Look in the Mirror?**
  Chasing Our Tails, Peeking Out the Window, and Soul-Searching

May 13, 2013 | Peter Haid - Research Practice Director, Customer Experience & Marketing | 0 comments

By way of housekeeping, I'm Peter Haid, the newest E Source team member, and I'm writing this blog on my ninth day on the job (yikes!). What is my job? I'm a research practice director who's honored to help serve all of our members with their customer experience and marketing needs. I've been told that one of the reasons I was selected for the position is because I bring some experience from outside the utility industry, but trust me, I'm learning by fire hose every day.

Marketing is getting a lot harder to do because customers are scattered, both physically and mentally. How do we know this? We watch people. People—your customers—are frantically racing around trying to keep up with everything demanding their time, and their faces are buried in devices, to the point where they even walk into manholes. Scattered people are creating some new challenges for marketers, and I'd argue it's time we look in the mirror to find out if we too are scattered.

Are We Chasing Our Tails?

Social media can be your best friend and worst enemy. As businesses, we're told to go where our customers are, right? ...

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Categories: Customer relations

- **Drinking from the Fire Hose Never Tasted So Good**

  Wrapping Up the 2013 Energy Managers' Roundtable

  April 29, 2013 | Bryan Jungers - Research Manager | 0 comments

  It's been a wild week at the E Source Energy Managers' Roundtable. From building energy analytics and information technologies to deep energy retrofits and behavior-change strategies, we covered a lot of ground in just a few short days. I was impressed this week by the level of engagement of attendees and the high-quality information that was shared at each session. Today was no different; the two morning sessions were jam-packed with useful and actionable information.

  An all–E Source panel kicked things off this morning with a session on energy-efficiency upgrades to the new E Source office building. Peter Criscione presented on his experience working on the building's new rooftop units. E Source staff originally requested evaporative cooling units for the building, but the contractors working on the renovation were uncomfortable with the technology. The second choice—single-zone variable-air-volume units—were installed and are expected to provide relatively efficient space conditioning for the new building.

  Ira Krepchin showcased the new building's light-emitting diode (LED) troffers, lighting controls, and daylighting ...

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  Categories: Daylighting, LEDs, Daylighting, HVAC controls & strategies, Air conditioners, Education & information, Commercial, Business, Offices

- **Energy Policy in Washington Is Even Worse Than You Think**

  April 29, 2013 | Kate Drexler - Research Manager | 0 comments

  Energy policy in Washington: "It's even worse than you think."

  Those are the words former Governor Bill Ritter (D-Colorado) spoke to a group of energy professionals on Wednesday, April 24, to kick off the 20th Annual E Source Energy Managers' Roundtable in Boulder, Colorado. His message: Don't hold your breath for Congress to pass any meaningful legislation on energy in the next four years—it's not going to happen. Instead, he called on states and the business community to lead the charge.

According to Ritter, state policies on efficiency and renewables are trumping the feds' ability to act. This was certainly true of Colorado when I worked at the Governor's Energy Office under Ritter from 2008 to 2011: Ritter's vision of a new energy economy got legislators talking and thinking about energy and the economy synonymously. And it was this message and political thinking that made companies like wind-turbine manufacturer Vestas choose to set up shop in the state.

After leaving office in 2011, Governor Ritter founded the Center for the New Energy Economy (CNEE), a privately funded organization with roots ...

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- **Day Two of the 2013 Energy Managers' Roundtable**

  April 26, 2013 | Essie Snell - Senior Research Associate | 0 comments

  With great weather (despite the snow still on the ground), a room full of some of the top energy managers in the country, and sessions packed full of fascinating content, it was another fantastic day at the 2013 E Source Energy Managers' Roundtable.

  The morning started off with a session on commercial plug loads. I briefly set the stage by talking about the importance of this often-overlooked energy end use, mentioning that plug loads and server closets can use up to 50 percent of the electricity consumed in new energy-efficient office spaces. Cathy Higgins, research director at the New Buildings Institute (NBI), spoke about the work she's done both to directly measure plug load energy use in commercial offices and to quantify the potential energy savings that can be achieved using measures like effective power settings, smart power strips, behavior change, and equipment replacement. That research culminated in the creation of NBI's freely available Plug Load Best Practices Guide: Managing Your Office Equipment Plug Load (PDF). Mike Walker, president at Beacon Consultants Network Inc., closed out this session by talking about his experiences improving ...

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  Categories: Design, Energy information tools & services, C&I equipment, Plug loads

- **Balancing Perspectives: A Roundtable Discussion with Xcel Energy and Energy Managers**

  April 26, 2013 | Kevin Vranes - Director of E Source Energy Management Services | 0 comments

  Here at E Source, I often think of ourselves as being at the forest's edge. We serve multiple business types in the large-scale energy services space, from utilities and end users to third-party service providers. Even though we get deep amid the trees with our customers, we always try to make sure that we're seeing the forest in any answer we provide or report we write. We try to balance those forest and trees perspectives.

  During day one of the 2013 Energy Managers' Roundtable, we sat right at that edge in a high-level session between the top energy managers in the US and David Eves, the CEO of Xcel Energy's Colorado electric and gas utility. For an hour, members of the E Source Energy Managers' Network engaged in a strategic discussion with Eves that covered everything from stranded generation assets, grid infrastructure upgrades, and utility-owned behind-the-meter demand generation to utility workforce turnover. In a sense, the session ended up being a two-way focus group, with a top energy supplier entity and top energy users both benefiting greatly.

  My personal highlight was when Eves directly asked the 30 energy managers, "Who ...

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  Categories: Energy information tools & services

- **It's Performance Review Time. How Many KWhs Did You Save?**

  Impressions from Day One of the 2013 Energy Managers' Roundtable

  April 25, 2013 | Andrea Salazar - Senior Research Associate | 0 comments

I go to work every day with high aspirations of changing the world via energy efficiency, cultivating meaningful relationships with our members, checking off everything on my overzealous to-do list, and getting my inbox emptied out. But at the end of the day—and more specifically, near performance review time—it turns out that I care mostly about making sure I've hit my performance goals and that my boss thinks I work hard. Sound like anyone you know?

One message I heard throughout yesterday's (very different) sessions at the 2013 Energy Managers' Roundtable was that putting energy performance goals into employee performance metrics is a surefire way to save energy.

During the 30-second drill where each attendee introduced him- or herself, many of us were awed and slightly terrified to find out that energy performance is tied to compensation for every single employee at one of our members' companies. That means that the energy management team has to answer to all staff members if they don't hit their goals. Talk about pressure!

At our session on data center efficiency, Mark Monroe, chief technology officer at ...

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Categories: Efficiency & conservation, Energy information tools & services

- **The Best Utility Brands of 2013**

  April 25, 2013 | Matthew Burks - Associate Director of E Source Customer Experience Services | 0 comments

  E Source would like to congratulate the top-ranked 2013 US electric utility brands. It's an impressive group again this year, with several new utilities jumping up into top slots. We split this year's findings between an overall national ranking and a top 10 ranking for only investor-owned utilities (IOUs). The reasons for this approach are obvious to industry insiders; however, I still think there's value in comparing all utilities to one another. At the end of the day, our goal is to understand what actions and attributes separate high-performing utility brands.

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  Categories: Customer experience

- **Day Two of the 2013 Utility Marketing Conference: The Power of Partnerships and Emotional Connection**

  April 8, 2013 | Lindsey Sajban - Marketing Assistant | 0 comments

  We hit the ground running for day two of the 5th Annual Utility Marketing Conference.(Be sure you read the recap from day 1 of the event). I hope you're ready for this!

  Tapping the Power of Partnerships

  Ted Flanigan, President, EcoMotion. Ted has some very fun and creative ways to get people educated about energy efficiency. He partners with businesses, colleges, government, and others and comes up with ways to promote energy efficiency in the community. There's nothing Ted won't try. He helped to develop the "Bulbman" character along with comic coloring books that educate kids on the importance of the evil "energy sucker." He even dressed up like Santa Claus and gave away compact fluorescent lamps with education materials to people who ride the train around California. A solar-powered Ferris wheel can also be added to the long list of things they've done to help educate people. Ted is so excited about what he does, and he's doing some really fun things to get people motivated to make changes. I also caught this video of him talking about the power of partnerships and the importance of third-party implementers.

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