Omnichannel Omniscience at the E Source Forum

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Utilities are moving into an omnichannel world, and they're facing some important customer experience decisions. In the Thursday, September 15, E Source Forum session "Leveraging Customer-Facing Channels to Support an Omnichannel Strategy," we'll present some key findings from the E Source Omnichannel Survey. In 2015, we surveyed 51 electric and natural gas utilities in the US and Canada, as well as more than 800 residential utility customers, to learn how utilities and customers view 8 different customer-facing channels. At the upcoming Forum session, we'll share our insights and hear how companies outside the energy industry are implementing an omnichannel strategy.

E Source defines an omnichannel experience as "a holistic approach to provide the customer with a seamless and integrated experience, regardless of channel." When utilities set out to develop an omnichannel experience, they should focus on creating consistent interactions. These interactions can help eliminate functional silos while enabling utilities to collect customer data from different touchpoints in coordinated and intelligent ways. By offering individualized customer service based on unique customer data, utilities can deliver a complete brand experience that inspires customers' trust.

As part of our Omnichannel Survey, we asked utilities to provide their own definition of an omnichannel experience. The respondents' answers clearly matched our own, focusing on themes of consistency, preferences, seamlessness, and integration.

Utility descriptions of an omnichannel environment

Base: Utilities providing a definition for omnichannel experience (n = 13 utilities). Question S2_3: How does your utility define an omnichannel experience?   © E Source, Omnichannel Survey 2015

And according to our study, residential utility customers agree that these attributes are the earmarks of a successful interaction with a company. Many utilities are heeding the call by prioritizing and building a business case for communication channel improvements that give customers the simplified, personalized, and user-friendly experience they're looking for.

Utilities are prioritizing customer experience, and an omnichannel strategy supports those initiatives

> ✓ Create a **customer culture** within the company
> ✓ Deploy a new **responsive design** website
> ✓ Enhance **self-service** offerings
> ✓ Use cross-channel **data and analytics**
> ✓ Increase **online** functionality
> ✓ Move from channel-based projects to **journey-based** projects
> ✓ Develop a written customer experience **strategy**
> ✓ Implement new customer relationship management **technology**
> ✓ **Reduce customer effort** across key interactions
> ✓ Continue to improve **digital** experiences
> ✓ Develop **preference** center
> ✓ **Proactively** build for tomorrow

Base: Utilities providing a response to this question (n = 40 utilities). **Question S2_15**: What are your organization's top 3 customer experience priorities for the next 3 to 5 years? **Note**: Only select verbatim responses are shown.

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Remember our definition of omnichannel? "A holistic approach to provide the customer with a seamless and integrated experience regardless of channel." Well, sometimes channels can be seamlessly integrated but poor individual interactions at each touchpoint can result in a lousy overall experience. Customers are still having an omnichannel experience; they're just having a bad one. And bad omnichannel initiatives don't win customer satisfaction (CSAT) awards, nor do they boost JD Power CSAT numbers.

During our Forum session, we'll help attendees make headway toward an omnichannel strategy by reimaging one channel at a time. We'll divide participants into two groups—one focused on improving the website, and one focused on improving the interactive voice response system. You can take key strategic and tactical learnings from these breakout groups back to your utility to help design a more robust omnichannel experience and improve your customers' journeys.

Join us at the "Leveraging Customer-Facing Channels to Support an Omnichannel Strategy" session at the

2016 E Source Forum, September 13–16. We'll help you get a more complete—daresay *omnisicent*—view of your customers and glean better ideas about how to best serve them. We hope to see you there!