Low-Income Customers: Reaching This Hard-to-Reach Customer Segment

By Meredith Ledbetter, Courtney Welch

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Low-income customers are a challenging residential segment for utilities to reach. This customer segment needs assistance not to be seen as a problematic credit and collections issue but rather as a strategic advantage for utilities.

Low-Income Segmentation

E Source embarked on low-income program design, marketing and communications, and customer experience as a primary focus. Utilities are underserved and underengaged, but utilities have the tools and business opportunity to provide tailored services.

The New England region report is available for members of the E Source Residential Marketing Service, and the remaining census regions will be available in the coming months.

Program Delivery

The E Source Demand-Side Management (DSM) team keeps a pulse on which low-income DSM programs are—and aren’t—performing throughout the year. This is often asked by our utility members through the Ask E Source service. So what’s new in low-income customer program delivery?

A number of utilities—including AEP Ohio, Eversource, Berkshire Gas, and KCP&L—direct home energy reports to low-income customers. Some of these reports have been met with enthusiasm from customers.

The E Source Affordability Loan program (employer-to-employee loans) have been well-received by low- and moderate-income customers.

Learn More

Check out our latest e-book, Using Segmentation to Personalize Low-Income Program Outreach and Increase Participation, which was born out of collaborative research efforts by our DSM and Marketing and Communications teams.

In addition, the Customer Experience research team digs into topics that can aid in creating better interactions with your low-income customers, including optimizing low-income-friendly billing programs and services.

We're bringing our low-income work to the E Source Forum this year from September 12–15, 2017. If your utility struggles with how to serve these low-income populations in a mutually beneficial way, we have several sessions for you:

• More Than a Paycheck: Segmentation and Utility Programs for Limited-Income Customers
• From Disgust to Delight: How to Sway Your Haters
• The Green Brick Road: Pathways to Serving Your Multicultural Customers

These sessions will all touch on how to create opportunities out of and serve your low-income customers.

Stay tuned for more cross-over research coming from the E Source DSM, Marketing and Communications, and Customer Experience teams. And be sure you've selected the "low-income" alert topic in your E Source alerts under Email Preferences in your online account.

About the Authors

MEREDITH LEDBETTER
Analyst
Meredith Ledbetter researches and writes on topics such as marketing for residential and business DSM programs and utility strategies for engaging customers in energy efficiency.

COURTNEY WELCH
Lead Analyst & Customer Relations
Courtney Welch provides research, analysis, and consultation to members on energy efficiency, renewable energy, and DSM policy and program issues, with a specific focus on the residential sector (including multifamily and low-income segments).

Talk back!

Let us know what you think. If you want to weigh in or chat about this topic, just email Kym Wootton, E Source vice president of Marketing.

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