



E Source Forum 2019 speaker interviews

January 8, 2020

Did you miss the [E Source Forum 2019](#)? Or did you go but missed a session or two? We interviewed a few of our Forum 2019 speakers to learn more about the technology, demand-side management (DSM), marketing, communications, customer experience (CX), account management, and distributed energy resources (DERs) topics they covered. Click the session title to learn more about it and to watch the interviews. You can find the session presentations on the [E Source Forum 2019](#) page.



[Who Cares About Climate? Your Customers Do, and They Want You to Care Too](#)

During our opening keynote, Dr. Anthony Leiserowitz from the Yale Program on Climate Change Communication explained recent trends in Americans' climate-change and clean-energy knowledge, attitudes, policy support, and behaviors, and gave advice on building public and political will for climate action. Then, Alice Jackson, CEO of Xcel Energy Colorado, shared why her utility has committed to an 80% reduction in carbon emissions by 2030 and a 100% reduction by 2050, as well as how her team is using customer data to reach those goals.



[Exploring Business Customer Nuances](#)

Business customers are unique, so you're not likely to find a one-size-fits-all approach to serving them. In this session, we shared trends and insights gleaned from our market research studies that will help utilities strategize by business type. Attendees learned about the differences between lodging, grocery, retail, industrial, healthcare, and other sectors, and they got ideas for what to focus on to best serve each of these business types. Eric Wilson, the residential building systems engineer at the National Renewable Energy

Laboratory, talked about how NREL is using business customers' energy-usage data to help builders construct smarter commercial facilities.



Taking a Stance: How Carbon-Free Commitments Affect Your Brand and Your Business

Climate change has been in the news for decades; what's different today is that people feel it personally and have strong fears about the health of the environment. Millennials in particular are making purchasing decisions based on a company's environmental commitments—or lack thereof. In this Forum 2019 session, employees from Xcel Energy, Idaho Power, and PNM discussed how their utilities made significant carbon-reduction commitments and how those commitments affected their brand and business. After the session, we asked Melissa Thom, marketing specialist at Idaho Power, a few questions about her presentation.



How Technology Is Transforming the Employee Experience

When employees are enabled and empowered with the right tools, they're more satisfied, more engaged, and more productive. A few utilities—including Duke Energy and NiSource—have figured out how to keep up with changing employee expectations. They're leveraging technology that improves communication and collaboration, making it easier to recruit, equip, and retain great employees who love their jobs—while getting better business results. After the session, we asked Martha Brown, the product owner of Duke Energy's employee portal, a few questions about her presentation.



Exploring Utilities' Roles in Decarbonization

Decarbonization is becoming a new standard for utilities. We talked to Sharon Tomkins, vice president of strategy and engagement at Southern California Gas Co., after our 2019 Forum panel session. She talked about renewable goals, the difference between decarbonization and carbon neutrality, and more.



From Lab Scale to Customer Sales: Innovative Strategies for Driving Tech-Transfer

Initiatives

New and emerging technologies can help you revolutionize your utility's programs and services, but technology alone cannot save you. From deploying new software platforms to integrating distributed resources at the grid edge, the "people problem" is often the tougher nut to crack. In this exciting session, we learned best practices for moving new technologies to market, including understanding customer needs and navigating the intricacies of market delivery channels. After the session, we asked Brian Barnacle, former marketing and proposal coordinator at Energy Solutions, a few questions about his presentation.



Partnering with Business Customers That Are Going Renewable

Goals around sustainability, renewables, and clean energy are becoming more prevalent among business customers. Utilities have to figure out how they can best help their largest business customers achieve their corporate energy goals. This session featured energy managers from Cisco and IBM. Chris Conrad, account management director at Xcel Energy, presented the utility point of view. We asked him a few questions about the panel discussion to learn more about Xcel Energy's efforts.



What Can Storytelling Do for Your Brand and Business?

Are our attention spans really so limited, or are compelling stories woefully scarce in today's content-flooded world? The fact that people binge Netflix for hours confirms that amazing stories can capture our attention. How can you tap into the power of storytelling to connect customers with your brand in meaningful, lasting, and valuable ways? After the session, GerRee Anderson of Ogilvy Denver spoke with us about using storytelling to connect with customers.



From Poles and Wires to AI and VR

We used this session to get key insights from major players in the tech space. We learned how Google and Microsoft are thinking about the energy industry and heard about developments that are poised to change the utility sector. After, we spoke with Hannah Bascom from Google and Vikram Singh from Microsoft to learn even more.



Braving the Storm: Emergency Communications in a Changing World

In recent years, we've seen devastating wildfires in the western US, a polar vortex and tragic flooding in the Midwest, and increasingly powerful hurricanes in the Southeast, mid-Atlantic, and Gulf Coast regions. These events put utilities' operations and communications functions to the test, and there's always something to learn in their aftermath. In this session, we learned the biggest takeaways from ComEd's communications and operations teams throughout the January 2019 polar vortex that brought some of the coldest temperatures Chicago has ever seen. After the session, we asked Sabrina Potirala, manager of digital business at ComEd, and Rebecca Sheperd, senior emergency preparedness administrator at ComEd, a few questions about their presentations.



Realizing Resilience: New Perspectives on Delivering Value to Utilities and Utility Customers

Resilience planning and preparedness open up new avenues for you to help customers anticipate and respond to a changing climate. This session focused on going beyond buzzwords and our panelists discussed how you can recognize and capitalize on opportunities to build resilience among various customer groups. After the session, we sat down with Austin Energy's Lisa Martin to learn more.



Achievements in Utility Customer and Employee Experience: 2019 Winners

The winners of this year's Achievements in Utility Customer and Employee Experience spoke about the exceptional projects their utilities designed that delighted their customers and made a more enjoyable and supportive workplace for employees. After this session, we talked to Arielle Resol of ComEd about the utility's virtual reality training project.



Go with the Flow: Visions for Connected Water Heaters

An untapped resource lurks in your customers' garages and basements: water heaters. Controlling these water heaters can provide load-shifting, peak-shaving, and other grid benefits with minimal customer impact, but utilities are just beginning to unlock their potential. In this session, we discussed innovative approaches to

water heater load management and explored the value these programs deliver to utilities and their customers. After, we asked Pradeep Vitta of Southern Company a few questions about his presentation.



Behavior Programs Showcase Showdown

Two of your utility peers who have explored new behavioral strategies—including high-bill alerts, prepaid billing for demand-side management, and optimizing home energy reports with connected digital solutions—talked about their successes and challenges. After the session, we asked Amanda Janaski, product manager of behavioral programs at BGE, and Ebony Whitby, customer service manager at OUC, a few questions about their programs.



Transportation Electrification: Are You Missing the Boat?

EVs are here, but it could be decades before they dominate the market. Your utility can—and should—promote EV purchases among your customers, but what else can you do to drive transportation electrification in your territory? In these video interviews, three EV experts talk about customers' needs around transportation, what EV technologies are available, and how to design and implement successful EV programs.



How Generational Differences Influence Energy Attitudes and Communications

Utilities talk about generation as a way to supply energy, but the other definition of generation—when we were born and the era we grew up in—greatly influences our views. How do millennials, Gen Xers, and baby boomers communicate and learn at work, and why do some people become “lifers” at utilities while others see it as a career stepping-stone? Our closing plenary highlighted the remarkable and entertaining insights from Dr. Elisabeth Nesbit Wagner’s research and expertise in generational differences and corporate culture. After this session, we asked Wagner a few questions about her presentation.