



What Does the Future of the Utility Industry Look Like?

By Wayne Greenberg

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An approach at the end of the year. I had myself reflecting back on our signature event: the [E Source Forum](#), which brought together more than 700 utility professionals for a week of education, innovation, networking, and fun in Denver. As the CEO of E Source, it was my honor to host and moderate several keynote sessions. These conversations tackled some of the biggest issues facing utility customers such as [Smart Climate Change](#), and [How Should We](#).

In the first keynote session, [How Should We Smart Climate Change?](#), we welcomed Dr. Anthony Lombardi of the Yale Program on Climate Change Communication to the stage. Lombardi's presentation focused on his work on understanding the attitudes and views about climate change, and the movement across all political affiliations toward a post-carbon future. Lombardi explained the diverse views Americans have about climate change. There are numerous audiences within the US and each view climate change from a different perspective, lumping people into groups of believers and non-believers oversimplifies the issue.

What this means for utilities is that there isn't a one-size-fits-all approach to climate change and clean-energy communication or implementation. He challenged utilities to empower their customers to feel like they're part of the solution and to contribute to the behavior shift that will tackle climate change and bring clean energy to the masses. Watch the full keynote session, which also features [Allie Jackson](#), CEO of Xcel Energy C&I, and the post-session interview by visiting the [How Clean Energy Change? Your Customers Do, and They Want You to Own Tag](#) session page.

How Google and Microsoft view the utility industry
On the second day of the Forum, during the [How Google and Microsoft View the Utility Industry](#) session, I welcomed Hannah Baconn, director of energy partnerships at Google, and Vikram Singh, head of utility partnerships at Microsoft, for a conversation about how these tech giants view the energy industry and how they're poised to change the utility sector. When asked about the key technological trends to watch, Baconn and Singh shared their insights.

Singh spoke about the importance of technologies that enable utilities to achieve two specific goals: become more agile and flexible and become extremely customer focused. Specific examples of this include technology that allows utilities to better leverage the data they already have about their customers, as well as artificial intelligence (AI) that can help optimize and automate a number of Baconn agreed about the importance of data but focused more on the importance of that data in context with the grid. "There's a ton of data flying around out there, and I think making sense of all that data is really challenging," said Baconn. "I think about the operational side of utilities, your grids are getting more complex and transfer, and the foundation on which the grid is built and it's changing. During the rest of the session, we tackled additional topics such as the democratization of the smart home, the regulation of the utility industry, how utilities should work with tech companies, and the safety of the cloud. We also conducted individual interviews with Baconn and Singh after the session, which are available on the [How Google and Microsoft View the Utility Industry](#) session page.

Join us next year
The E Source staff might tell you that it's hard to beat a broken record because for certain that every year we continue to catch ourselves, and we again hosted the best E Source Forum in 2019. For every Forum, we do our best to go above and beyond to ensure that our attendees are equipped to carry the utility industry into the future. If you're an E Source member who wasn't able to attend or if you attended and want to see which sessions you missed, you can [revisit the sessions](#) now. We also did a few new things this year: We conducted [interviews with some of our speakers](#) to dive deeper into the topics they covered, and we recorded select sessions that [will soon be available as podcasts](#). I hope you'll join us next year for the [2020 E Source Forum](#) September 22 to 23, in Denver, where we're sure to line up an equally impressive roster of speakers, topics, sessions, and workshops.

About the author



WAYNE GREENBERG
CEO
Wayne Greenberg is a senior executive with over 35 years in business management, including two stints at E Source. In the 1990s, he joined E Source to a position on the Inc. 500 List of fastest growing companies prior to the sale of the company in 1996. Since that time, Wayne has been CEO of several companies, all in the energy technology and information sector. He returned to E Source in 2014.

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