

# Voice Control Changes Everything

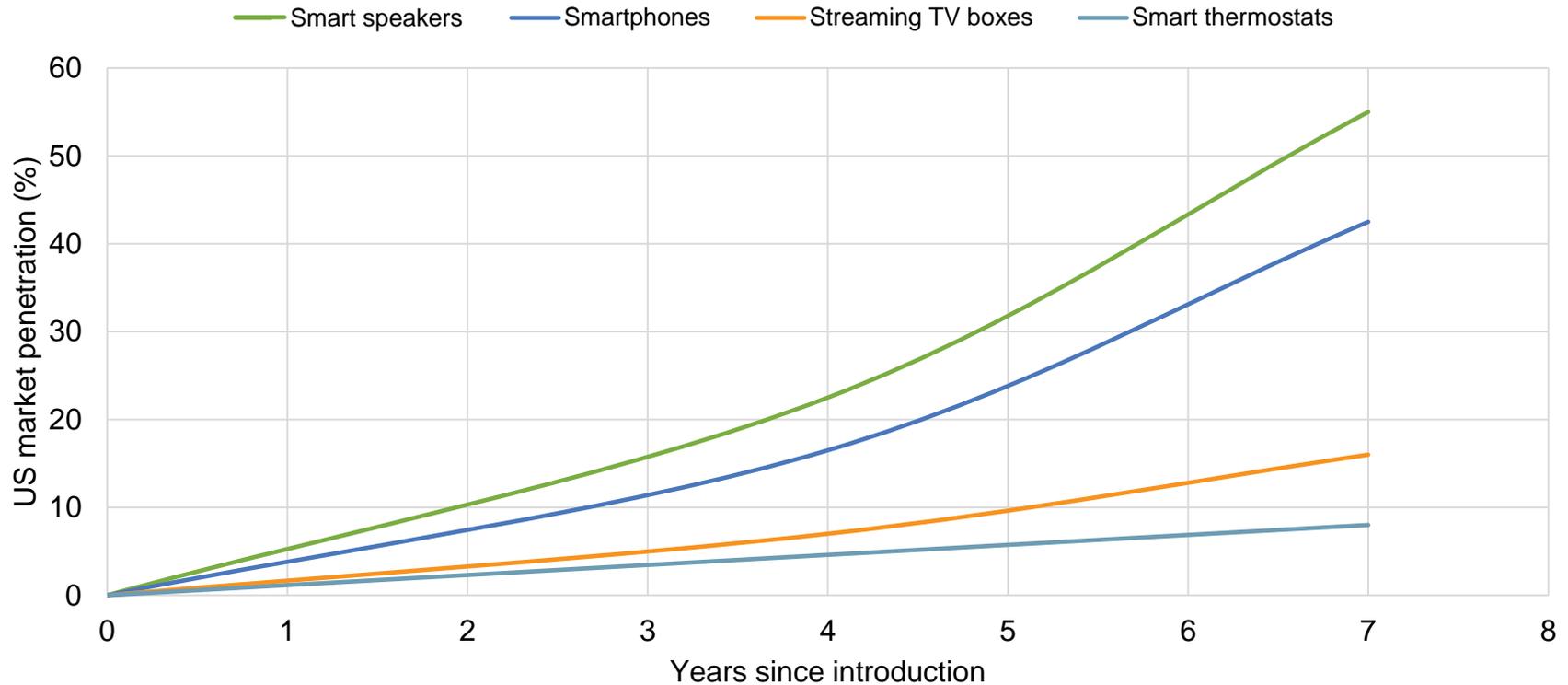
## Why Utilities Should Care About Virtual Assistants

**Essie Snell**

Senior Research Manager, E Source

E Source Forum 2018

# Smart speaker adoption is booming



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**Smart speaker owners are increasingly using the devices in place of radio, smartphones, or TV.**  
—*National Public Radio (NPR)*

**Thirty-two percent of smart speaker owners have controlled household devices with a smart speaker in the past week.**

*—NPR*

**Sixty percent of smart speaker owners  
said they are “probably” or  
“definitely” interested in a utility app  
that utilizes voice activated skills.**

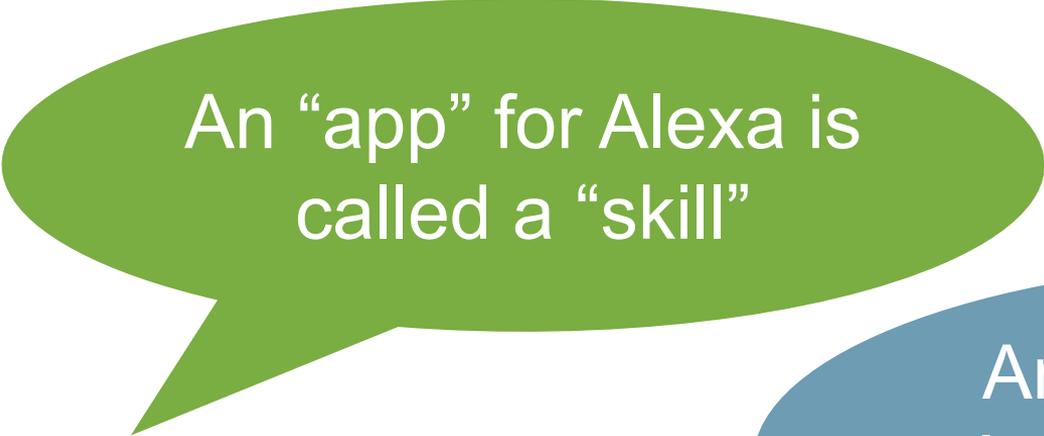
*—E Source*

# Alexa and the Google Assistant dominate the market

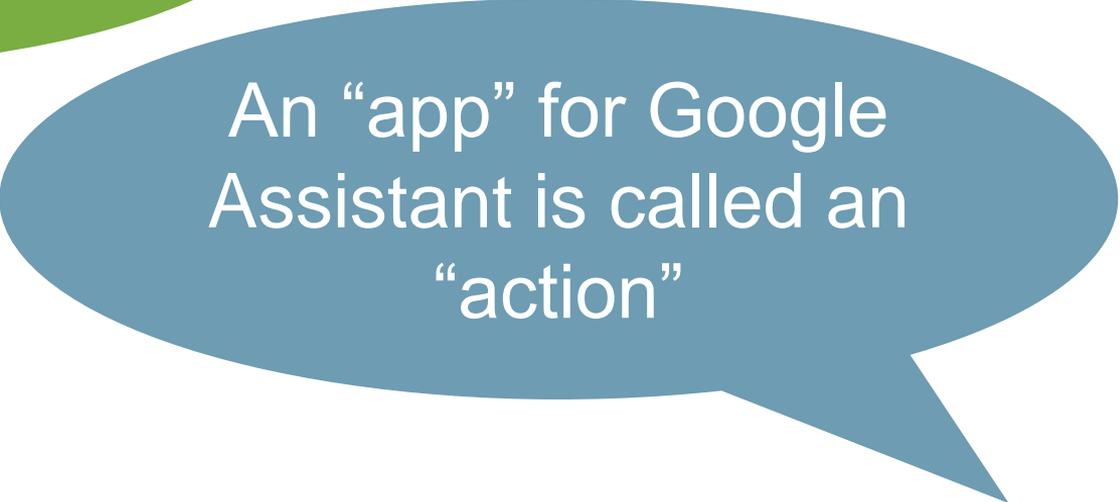


Sources: Amazon, Google, ecobee, LG

# A quick terminology lesson



An “app” for Alexa is called a “skill”

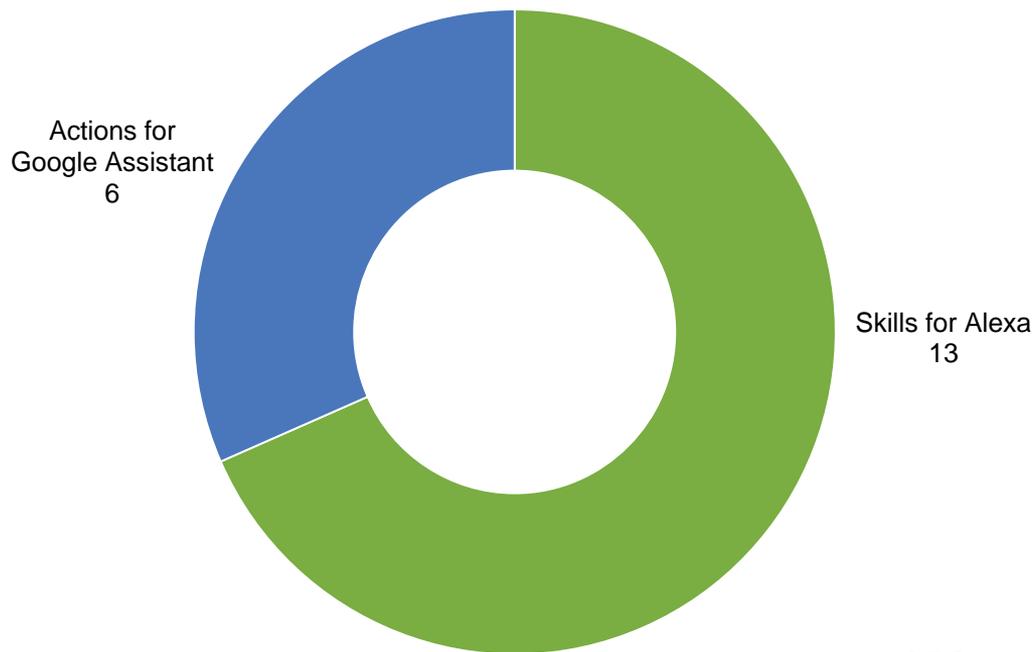


An “app” for Google Assistant is called an “action”

# A handful of utilities have created skills or actions to date

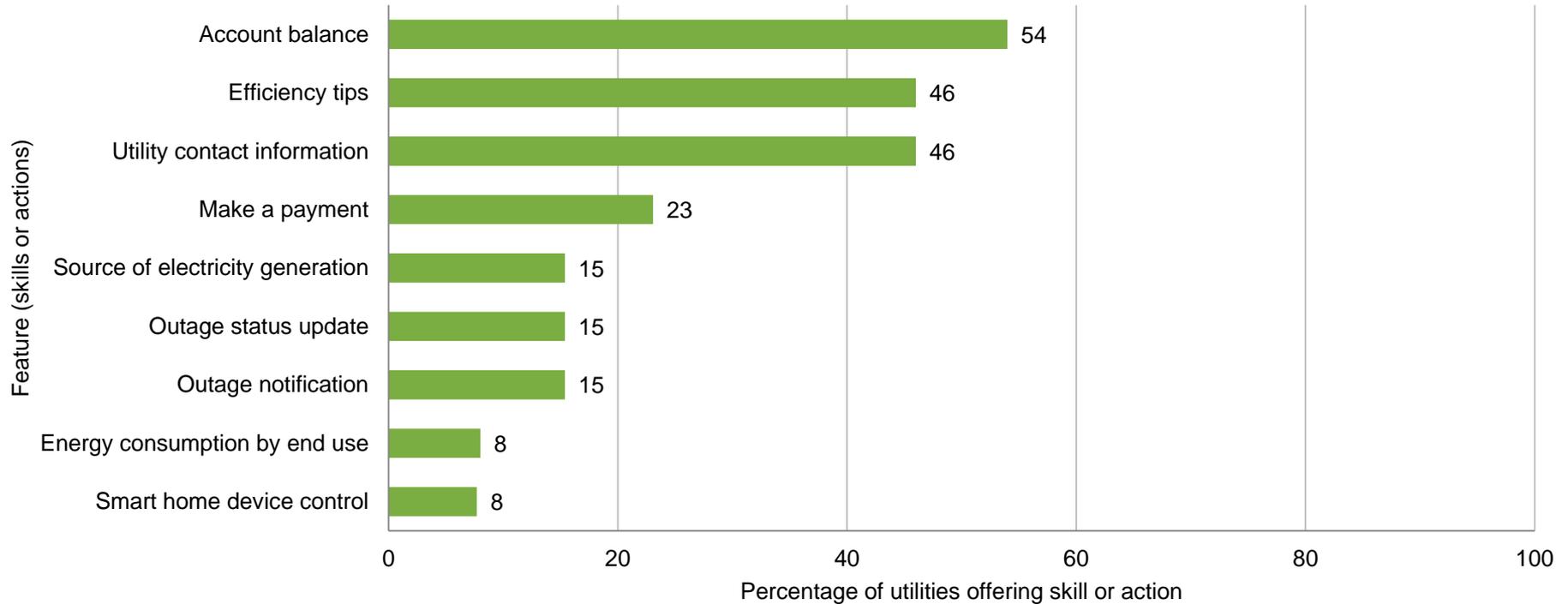


# Utilities have built roughly twice as many skills as actions so far



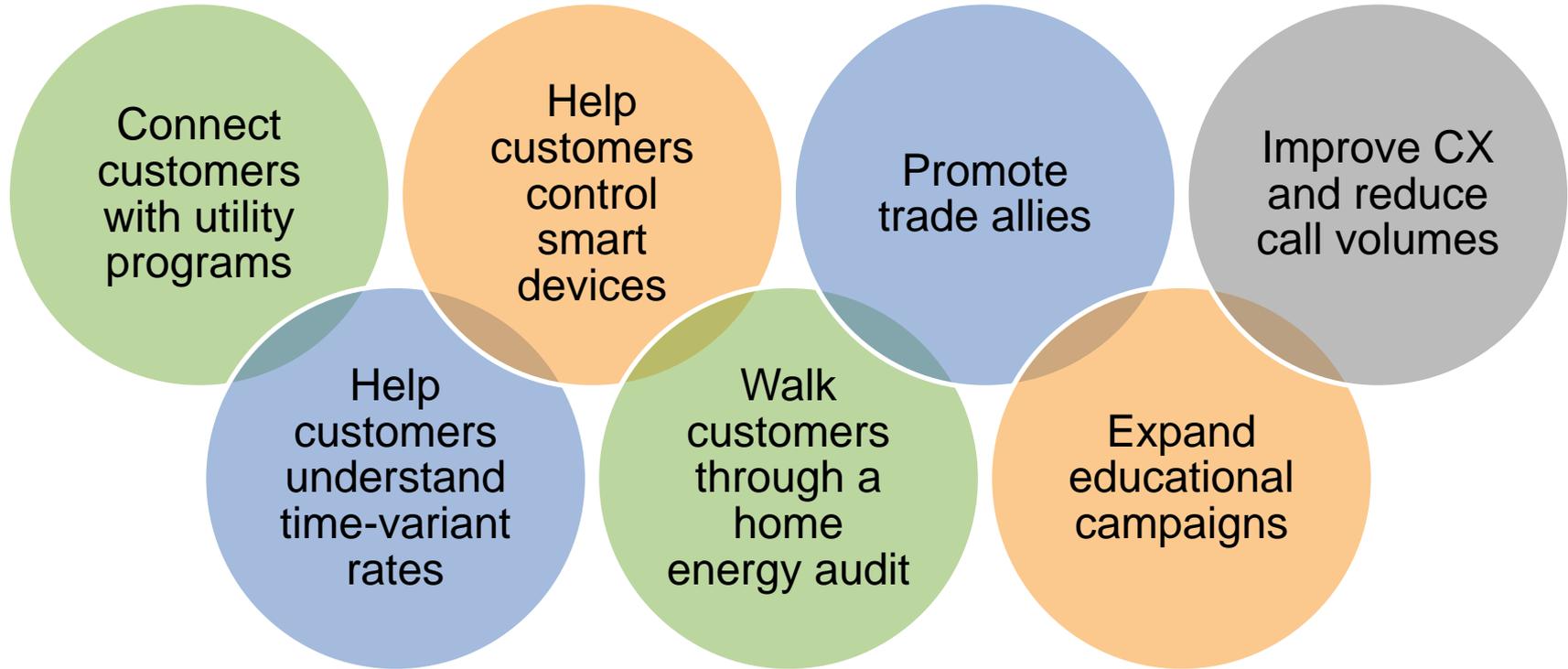
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# What features are they offering?



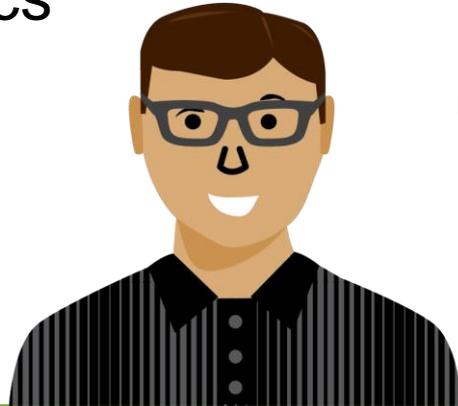
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# There's much more that could be done!



# Share information and connect customers with utility programs

- Smart speakers are responsive, not proactive, so they require different marketing tactics
- Consider folding relevant info into the daily tasks that customers perform with virtual assistants
- Daily news summaries or “flash” briefings may be an especially effective channel for news or advice



# Help customers understand time-variant rates and energy generation

- How their rate structure affects their bill
- What they can do to take charge of their energy use
- What the connection is between energy generation and current pricing



# Walk customers through a home energy audit



# Help customers control smart devices



- Alexa and the Google Assistant can each control 5,000+ smart home devices!
- Could help customers build energy-savvy home modes:
  - Improve efficiency
  - Dynamically adjust power draw in response to time-variant rates or demand-response signals

Sources: ecobee, ThinkEco

# Promote trade allies

- Let customers ask about trusted local contractors for home upgrades or maintenance
- Build in info on current demand-side management offerings
- Smart devices facilitating remote diagnostics could prompt this conversation



# Expand educational campaigns



# Improve the customer experience and reduce call volumes

Virtual assistants are hands-free, intuitive, and simple for customers to use:

- Unlike interactive voice response systems, websites, and even mobile apps
- Could provide an excellent platform for communicating with customers



# For more information, check out our new white paper!

## Voice Control Changes Everything: Why Utilities Should Care About Virtual Assistants

### Voice Control Changes Everything: Why Utilities Should Care About Virtual Assistants

Essie Snell

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#### Contents

The time to engage is now

What should a utility skill or action do?

What we've learned

What's next?

Acknowledgments

When Amazon released the first voice-controlled smart speaker—the Amazon Echo—to a limited number of customers in 2014, few could have predicted how popular it would become. Device sales have skyrocketed, with shipments now in the tens of millions per year, and it has spawned competing devices from companies like Google and Apple. Because virtual assistant platforms are so popular, they're quickly becoming a key interface for a range of smart home systems and devices. Market research from the E Source Residential Utility Customer Survey and ethnographic research completed for E Source E Design 2020 reveal that customers across the US are familiar with these devices, have had positive experiences with them, and even want to interact with their utilities via this channel. Additionally, new data from manufacturer ecobee suggests that even with devices like thermostats, customers are using voice-control functionality in unique, creative, and unexpected ways.

For utilities, voice-control devices are worth paying attention to because of the smart home interconnectivity they enable as well as the unique marketing and communications opportunities they provide. For example, these devices could help you:

#### RELATED CONTENT

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# And we hope to see you at the E Source Alexa Utility Consortium!

- Limited to about 20 utilities
- In-person workshop in Seattle, Washington, with Amazon from December 4–5, 2018



**“Computing is moving from mobile-first to AI-first, with more universal ambient and intelligent computing that you can interact with naturally”**

*—Sundar Pichai, CEO, Google*

**“We want customers to be able to use Alexa wherever they are ... the number of Alexa-enabled devices has more than tripled in the past year.”**

*—Jeff Bezos, CEO, Amazon*

**How will your utility use voice in  
2019?**

# Thank you! Questions?



Essie Snell

Senior Research Manager, Customer Energy Solutions,  
E Source

303-345-9140 [essie\\_snell@esource.com](mailto:essie_snell@esource.com)

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