

Optimizing a Utility Voice-of-the-Customer Program

Consulting Case Study



Key Highlights

To support its customer-focused strategy, South Jersey Gas (SJG) partnered with E Source Management Consulting to implement a comprehensive voice-of-the-customer (VOC) program that included:

- Identifying that the utility's greatest opportunity to improve the customer experience across touchpoints lies with making customers feel valued
- Achieving an increased focus on customers throughout the company
- Increasing the emphasis on data-driven decision-making
- Developing a three-step approach to optimize contact center operations
- Creating a multiyear strategy roadmap to address pain points and future business needs



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We're seeing a real culture shift within SJG—across the organization, individuals and departments are eager to participate in surveys, get results from surveys, and are really responding to the data they're getting as a result of our VOC program.

—Robin Christmas, Program Manager,
Customer Experience, South Jersey Gas

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Challenges

SJG delivers safe, reliable, affordable natural gas and promotes energy efficiency to approximately 385,000 residential, commercial, and industrial customers in seven southernmost New Jersey counties. It has been providing natural gas for over 100 years. As an organization, SJG has embraced the need to be customer-focused and based its customer experience (CX) strategy on three key pillars:



**Technology
advancement**



**People
resources**



**Process
optimization**

SJG identified the need for a VOC program to guide these pillars. At the outset of the project, the utility examined the current state of its customer experience and identified the following challenges:

- A disjointed and inefficient survey process
- Cumbersome and incomplete sharing of results across the organization; surveys were limited to a few specific departments and weren't providing a holistic picture of customer feedback
- Limited improvements stemming from customer feedback

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Solution

SJG and E Source designed a VOC program that has transformed the entire customer feedback process. The project began with internal stakeholder interviews to inform a comprehensive VOC relationship survey that asked customers to reflect on their impression of SJG in the past 12 months. The survey helped connect the CX dots. The utility also launched transactional surveys across 10 customer touchpoints to gather and share real-time feedback based on customer interactions. To share insights, the team created a stakeholder dashboard and incorporated alerts and tracking of closed-loop follow-up.

Results

The response rate for both the annual relationship survey and the transactional surveys has been impressive at 10% and 9%, respectively. The utility attributes this success to a few factors:

- The content is relevant to customers
- The surveys are short
- The utility limits the per-customer frequency to once every 30 days to avoid survey fatigue
- The utility offers an incentive for customers to participate—entry into a sweepstakes drawing

Next steps

As a result of these surveys, the utility prioritized key initiatives to improve the ease of doing business with SJG, response time, and quality of information. The utility is performing root-cause analysis to give an operational context to customer feedback with the goal of identifying issues and prioritizing improvements.

Next steps include:

- Conducting further root-cause analysis for all channels
- Continuing to use a ticketing system to drive process and technology changes
- Fielding a second relationship survey to measure improvements over baseline



Contact us

www.esource.com | esource@esource.com | 1-800-ESOURCE

