



How to Create a Successful Utility Brand in Five Steps

Five Steps to Brand Success from E Source

E Source developed a framework that energy service companies can follow to build their brand. The process allows flexibility to decide exactly what branding strategy the company wishes to take. These five steps can be applied no matter what is to be branded.



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1

Discover Your Customer-Brand Sweet Spot

Utilities often try to be all things to all people, but successful brands stay focused on their core brand strategies. To discover your brand, we recommend that utilities first **conduct an external brand audit** to examine the brand that currently exists in the mind of your stakeholders, followed by **interviews with employees** within the organization. Then **analyze the results** and create a brand statement as well as attributes associated with the company. Take a **look at the gap** between how your brand is perceived and how you want it to be—if they're different, it's time to focus your efforts on closing that gap. You can use your current brand position as a starting point to **create a vision** of where you want the brand to go in the upcoming years.



2

Create a Product and Service Portfolio to Support Your Brand

Utilities need to be great at both **customer service** and developing new **products and services** that the emerging generation of energy customers wants and needs. These products and service offerings should be an integral part of the brand strategy support system. Conducting market research, market tests, and pilots is part of the equation, but the primary goal is to have the product and service portfolio strongly reflect the brand image you wish to portray.

Where does your company fall?



3

Deliver a Customer Experience to Match the Brand Promise

One of the ways to harm a brand is to promise something and not deliver it. Experience and brand go hand in hand. E Source characterizes three prototypical customer personas to start the conversation about how to engage each customer appropriately for improving the brand experience:



The **casual user** thinks about the power they use only when there's an outage, and pays little to no attention to messages about the utility or from the utility.

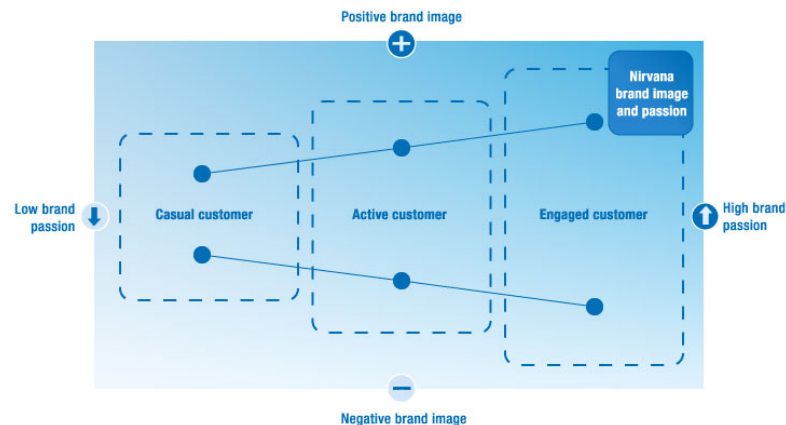


The **active user** is concerned with how high their bill is and may pay some attention to utility communications. They try to manage energy their use and have some idea about what it takes to save energy.



The **engaged user** has interacted with the utility for a variety of reasons, positive or negative.

The goal for utilities is to move customers into as high a positive brand image area as possible and attempt to engage them to enhance the “stickiness” of the brand and products.



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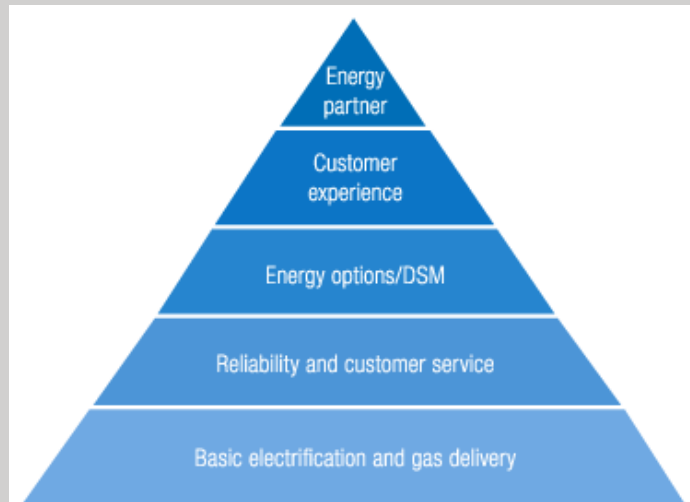
Build the Brand from the Inside Out

Building a strong brand takes time, and it begins with an organization's internal culture. Successful utilities hire employees who have skills that match the organization's culture. **Define the actions** you want employees to take, and set up a **reward** system so the outstanding employees strive to improve the brand every day, with every customer interaction and every product and system enhancement.

Utility customers' wishes begin with a fundamental core of electricity and gas delivery and then evolve until the utility is a core partner in their everyday lives and business.

Tasks involved:

- ✓ Create a concise internal brand platform
- ✓ Set up systems to measure and reward employees' success
- ✓ Set up hiring processes to focus on candidates' ability to enhance your brand
- ✓ Establish a brand champion within the organization



Note: DSM = demand-side management

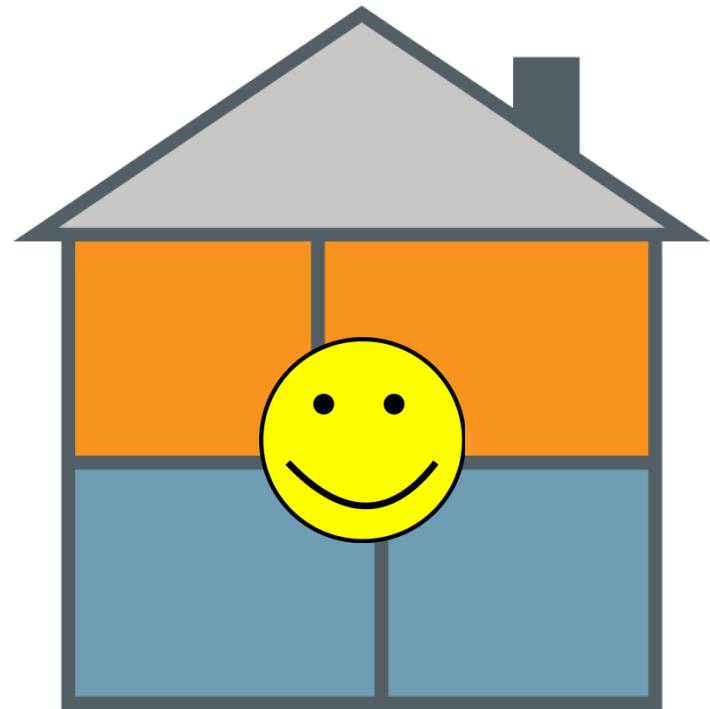
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5

Create a Connection Between Your Company and Your Customers

The emotional element is unmistakable in a customer's satisfaction and passion about a company. It comes through many different pathways, but advertising and customer experience dominate its evolution. Utilities are making constant decisions about the words and images used to promote the company as well as the products and services it offers. For example, when promoting a weatherization program for homes, a utility can focus on lower air infiltration, increasing R-values, and boosting efficiency of furnaces, or it could instead emphasize the coziness of a warm, safe home.

At the corporate level, the utility can talk about how many miles of transmission lines it has, plans for smart grid upgrades, and investments in pollution-control equipment, or it could tout the work being done in community settings, the strategic vision for how energy integrates with people's lives and businesses, and the low-income assistance that happens every year. Although various communications have different objectives, utilities should consider taking the emotional (non-engineering) approach when building the long-term brand.



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