E Design 2020

A three-year collaborative project

E Design 2020

Developing the customer portfolio of the future

E Design 2020 was a three-year collaborative project that used design thinking and ethnographic research to help utilities rethink, revitalize, and reimagine their programs, products, and services for the new energy consumer. Using best practices from outside industries, E Design 2020 helped utilities create customer-centric solutions.

What is design thinking?

Design thinking is an approach to problem-solving that can unveil new ideas and discover value propositions that are often overlooked by other product development processes. It can be applied to any challenge to uncover unmet needs and iteratively create solutions that resonate with the intended audience. This highly collaborative approach ultimately seeks solutions that are desirable to customers, viable to the business, and feasible within the framework of current and emerging technologies.

E Design 2020 focused on:

- Creating new ways to add value and generate revenue
- Establishing new experiences in customer engagement, demand-side management program participation, or smart meter portal applications
- Creating effective, attractive solar and distributed energy resource (DER) offerings for all customers
- Designing new services for connected homes and businesses
- Meeting the evolving needs of low-income customers

Year 1. Research and design thinking

In the first year, E Design 2020 focused on gaining deep knowledge of latent customer needs, analyzing the market, demonstrating how to apply design-thinking approaches, and developing a wide variety of new product, service, and customer experience concepts.

Year 2. Product testing, prototyping, and piloting

In the second year, we moved into iterative product development and refinement with the goal of identifying strategic partnerships with technology or software companies; improving the highest-potential products through fast prototyping; and piloting those products. Participants collaborated with the E Source design team as well as peers at other utilities who were working on similar projects.

Year 3. Customer portfolio of the future

By using advanced segmentation and persona approaches, utility customers provided value and choice for all customers regardless of whether they wanted basic service or elements that were bundled for convenience, lowest cost, greatest value, advanced technologies, or the environment. Each participating utility chose the portfolio of products and services that best fit its market, improved the customer experience, and maintained or boosted revenues and profitability.

Deliverables

Events

- Complexities of the utility-SMB customer relationship: Insights from E Design 2020 ethnographic research
- E Design 2020 ethnographic insights: Rate design
- E Design 2020 ethnographic insights: Solar and electric vehicles
- E Design 2020 SMB ethnographic insights
- E Design 2020: Accelerating utility innovation for the new energy consumer
- E Design 2020: NextGen workshop
- E Design 2020: Powering what's next for the new energy consumer (2018)
- E Design 2020: Powering what's next for the new energy consumer (2019)
- Energy in the context of low-income customers' lives: Insights from E Design 2020 ethnographic research
- From prospect awareness to electric vehicle owner behaviors: E Design 2020 ethnographic insights
- Getting to the core of SMB engagement and experience opportunities: Insights from E Design 2020 ethnographic research
- K–12 and multifamily: E Design 2020 SMB ethnographic insights
- Restaurant and retail: E Design 2020 SMB ethnographic insights
- Small manufacturing and healthcare: E Design 2020 SMB ethnographic insights
- Smart homes —Customer drivers and expectations: Insights from the E Design 2020 ethnographic research
- SMBs engage with other vendors—What can utilities learn? Insights from E Design ethnographic research

Reports

- Breaking down barriers to innovation
- Connected home mobile ethnography videos: E Design 2020 market research
- Developing successful relationships with small and midsize business customers

- E Design 2020 ethnographic insights: Residential customer interviews
- E Design 2020 residential ethnographic market research: Summary report
- E Design Week: The design-thinking workshop for everyone
- Ethnographic insights on connected homes: E Design 2020 residential market research
- Ethnographic insights on low income, connected homes, and electric vehicles: E Design 2020 residential market research
- The five design imperatives
- How to use design thinking to overcome the wall of excuses
- In-depth interview library: E Design 2020 small and midsize business engagement and customer experience ethnographic research
- In-depth interview library: E Design 2020 small and midsize business ethnographic market research
- Individual report library: E Design 2020 small and midsize business ethnographic market research
- Kick-starting design thinking at your utility
- SMB summary report: E Design 2020 ethnographic market research

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