Will you SMB my valentine?

Designing demand-side management offerings your small and midsize business customers will love
By Amy Schmidt
February 14, 2020

Will you SMB my valentine?

This Valentine's Day, E Source is doing some soul-searching on how to kindle the flame between utilities and their small and midsize business (SMB) customers. Getting SMB customers to participate in energy-efficiency programs is difficult, and although there isn't a proven formula to engage these customers, we have information and resources that can help you develop a cohesive and comprehensive strategy. Here are four high-level insights to help you get started:

Reach out to business owners through their preferred contact channels.
According to responses from the 2019 Small and Midsize Business Gap and Priority Benchmark, the results of which are compiled in the E Source Business Customer Insights Center, customers prefer different contact channels for different kinds of communication. Energy efficiency opportunities? SMB owners say "email, please!"

Leverage your role as an energy efficiency expert.
Our 2019 Small and Midsize Business Gap and Priority Benchmark results also found 60% of SMB customers already see their utility as a go-to expert on energy efficiency.

Remember to KISS (keep it simple, stupid!).
Design programs that minimize the customer's burden in terms of scheduling and paperwork. Direct-install programs and partnerships with local contractors are a great example of this.

Treat SMB owners with empathy.
Come to your business customers as a trusted ally looking to achieve shared goals: efficiency gains, cost savings, and lower energy rates.

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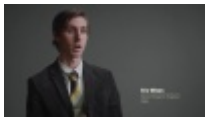
SMB segmentation tips from industry insiders

Knowing your target audience—as well as its energy-efficiency goals and perceptions—is the starting point for developing an effective campaign that builds trust and encourages engagement among SMB

customers. At E Source Forum 2019, we invited Chris Wilson of the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) to the stage to talk about how to best serve utility business customers in the session Exploring Business Customer Nuances. Afterwards, we sat down with Chris and asked him a few questions about how NREL is leveraging unique data sets to better understand and target these notoriously hard-to-reach customers.



In-person learning for E Source members

Next-Generation of SMB DSM Workshop
June 16–18, 2020 | Boulder, Colorado
Note: This event has been postponed due to COVID-19. Please stay tuned for rescheduled dates.

If your utility is currently a member of the E Source Demand-side Management (DSM) Service or Technology Assessment Service, be sure to save-the-date for our Next-Generation of SMB DSM Workshop, onsite at our headquarters in Boulder. This event will draw on E Source research and best practices to help you benchmark key programs within your SMB portfolio and identify gaps and opportunities in your programs.

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