E Source announces winners of fourth annual Achievements in Customer and Employee Experience

2020 honorees include Con Edison, American Electric Power, Hydro-Québec, and NIPSCO
By Sannie Sieper
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Every year, E Source recognizes utilities that have implemented projects that have noticeably improved the experience of their customers and employees. E Source experts judged submissions to the fourth annual Achievements in Customer and Employee Experience based on their unique approaches and creativity, impact across the organization, metrics and results, and overall impression.

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For Achievements in Customer Experience, the top submissions were from Con Edison and American Electric Power (AEP). This category celebrates excellence in utility customer experience management, highlighting tactics and excellence that enhance the customer experience across key journeys such as billing, payment, web or mobile experience, start or stop service, new construction, community interaction and services, and outage management and communications.

For Achievements in Employee Experience, Hydro-Québec and NIPSCO took top honors. This category celebrates innovative methods in employee engagement that result in a favorable customer experience.

E Source utility members can join the web conference Winners of the 2020 Achievements in Customer and Employee Experience at 2:00 p.m. EDT on September 10, 2020, to hear details and results of each project.

Con Edison's customer outage and analytics dashboard

To better understand the outage experience and identify at-risk customers, Con Edison used text analytics to analyze and monitor customer responses to its automated outage text messages. This allowed the utility to gather real-time voice-of-the-customer feedback, understand customer sentiment

during the outage, and respond proactively to emergencies.

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“Through the advanced text analytics, the outage team can now spot, highlight, and react to customers, whether it’s to check on customers with medical needs or remedy a negative experience,” says Di Soares, project specialist at Con Edison. “This project has ultimately enabled us to [handle] customer issues during an event—a real game-changer for the customer experience.”

AEP’s two-way text payment arrangements

COVID-19 has caused financial difficulties for many customers. AEP wanted to provide information about payment assistance and payment arrangements in a fast, friendly, and convenient manner. Using two-way text messaging, the utility can contact customers when they miss a payment and offer them the ability to learn more about payment plans. Customers who respond can receive details about payment plans they qualify for and enroll directly in the plan, all via text message. The project started as a pilot and has been successful enough to move to full-scale implementation.

Hydro-Québec’s contact center customer experience evolution program

Hydro-Québec sought to empower and engage its contact center employees by inviting them to design the utility’s new contact structure and agent coaching and training program. Jonathan Beaulieu, manager of operational evolution, says, “We wanted to simplify, humanize, and redesign our approach, so we relied on the expertise of our agents to evolve our practices.”

Hydro-Québec sought to empower and engage its contact center employees by inviting them to design the utility’s new contact structure and agent coaching and training program.

The utility moved away from focusing on call-handling times and has developed coaching, training, and contact center flows that focus on customer needs and the employee experience. Employees reacted positively to the program. “According to a recent internal survey, 95% of our participants said they can apply what they learned and 97.6% said it has improved their relationship with their customers,” says David Paquin, team manager of customer approach evolution.

NIPSCO’s Your Energy, Your Future employee communications plan

Your Energy, Your Future is the utility’s transition to more-sustainable, cost-effective generation, which will reduce carbon emissions by more than 90% by 2028 and save customers an expected $4 billion. This shift caused employee concerns, especially among those working at generating stations. To form an internal communication plan, NIPSCO relied on the voice of the employee, conducting pulse surveys to identify top concerns. Using this employee feedback, NIPSCO developed a plan that has increased employee knowledge of the transition.

About E Source

E Source is the leading solver of problems facing electric, gas, and water utilities and municipalities. We provide data science, market research, benchmarking data, and consulting services to more than 300 utilities, municipalities, and their partners. Our guidance helps customers make data-driven

decisions to strengthen their customer relationships, plan for tomorrow’s infrastructure needs, and further their environmental sustainability goals while becoming more innovative and responsive in the rapidly evolving market.

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