How to use ethnography to build energy equity

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Plans for the E Source Forum 2021 are well underway, and we're thrilled to be offering a hybrid experience this year. Those who wish to attend in person are welcome to join us in Denver. Those who can't make it to the Sheraton Denver Downtown have the option to tune in online.

We're counting down the days until we see you again, so we thought it'd be fun to revisit some of the great moments from the E Source Forum 2020.

Our Forum keynote speakers always knock it out of the park. In a recent blog post, Energy equity: Utilities can and should lead the way, we remembered our 2020 opening keynote with DeAndrea Newman Salvador, CEO of the Renewable Energy Transition Initiative. Now we're reminiscing about our closing keynote with Nick Allen, vice president of user experience with Fidelity Investments. He walked us through what it takes to be truly customer-focused in creating experiences, products, and services.

Equity always starts with empathy and passion

It all starts with empathy and passion. Combine that with courage and you can give your customers what Allen refers to as their perfect day. Like the process of an architect designing their customer's dream home or an event planner helping a couple craft their perfect wedding, we should meet our customers at their level to better understand them, learn about their passions and desires, and create a customer experience that fully supports and resonates with them.

"I truly believe that nothing is impossible. We just haven't found the way to do it yet. —Nick Allen, vice president of user experience, Fidelity Investments

Allen's advice to achieve this effectively and create a great experience for customers is to take their worst day and turn it into their most perfect day. He shared a story about how children who were hospitalized due to long-term illness were afraid of getting routine shots as part of their treatment. Was it possible to turn their fright into joy? Surprisingly, yes!

GE found a solution in the form of virtual reality (VR). By wearing a VR headset during treatment, the children were distracted from the trauma of the procedures. They were in another world, a happier world, and they began associating their medical treatments with the joy they found in VR play. Their

worst day at the hospital had become their perfect day.

Using ethnographic research to get to the heart of the matter

Using ethnography to help solve problems or plan future programs helps you truly understand what customers need in order to give them the perfect experience.

Allen talked about how during outages, utilities's frontline workers are always at risk while assessing damage and fixing power lines. To turn those dangerous experiences into great ones, he suggested utilities simply ask their workers what would make those rough days perfect days. To find the best solution, Allen's team went right to those experiencing the problem firsthand.

This way of connecting to customers through their experience and feelings is part of ethnographic research. Using ethnography to help solve problems or plan future programs helps you truly understand what customers need in order to give them the perfect experience.

At E Source, we often rely on our ethnographic research methods to help our clients better understand their customers' needs and desires. It helps ensure the success of new programs and initiatives such as electric vehicle adoption. If you're ready to connect with your customers on an ethnographic level, call us at 1-800-ESOURCE or send us a message.

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