Using data-driven insights to design a meaningful payment assistance campaign for LMI customers

Research and advisory case study
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Key takeaways

- JEA was on a mission to better serve and support its low- and moderate-income (LMI) customers. The utility was looking for an effective way to connect with its most vulnerable customers.
- After attending an event where E Source shared eye-opening survey results, JEA was inspired to develop a more informed and empathetic strategy to spread awareness of bill payment assistance options.
- JEA's compassion-driven email campaign reached more than 30,000 customers. Its emails received over 1,000 clicks in the first two weeks of the campaign, and content about payment extensions resonated with 25% of recipients.
- The utility plans to use E Source data to inform future marketing campaigns and provide LMI customers with assistance that meets their needs.

The challenge

JEA is a community-owned multicommodity municipality located in Jacksonville, Florida, that serves an estimated 488,000 electric; 352,000 water; and 271,000 sewer customers. The utility is dedicated to improving lives and building community. JEA has been on a mission to discover new opportunities to better serve and support its LMI customers. It needed to connect with customers who would benefit most from payment assistance. But first JEA needed to find the most effective outreach approach.

Design an email campaign that will resonate and connect with your LMI customers

Contact our team to learn more about our expertise and how we can help.

The solution

JEA attended the annual meeting of the E Source Low-Income Energy Issues Forum, hoping to gain insights into its target demographic. Like many at the event, JEA was surprised to learn that 30% of customers are unaware of options available to help them pay their utility bills. And that rate increases to 39% among 18-to-34-year-olds.

The E Source data motivated JEA to act for its customers. After the event, JEA launched an email campaign to make sure its LMI customers know that the utility offers several programs to help them pay their bills.

The campaign focused on customers 18–45 with an annual household income of $50,000 or less. Using compassionate language, the email explained the variety of options available to customers, including:

- **Payment extensions.** Delaying the due date to give customers extra time to pay; customers can request an extension online through the self-service system
- **Monthly payment arrangements.** Allowing customers to pay an outstanding balance via interest-free monthly installments
- **JEA Guest Pay.** Providing the ability to pay on someone else's behalf

JEA also provided information on local resources that offer utility bill payment assistance or other forms of financial, food, employment, or housing support.

The E Source Low-Income Energy Issues Forum

The Low-Income Energy Issues Forum is composed of a unique group of professionals focused on energy affordability. The members work for utilities, state regulatory agencies, social service agencies, research institutes, consumer organizations, national associations and other nonprofit organizations, and creative, analytical, and software businesses. The group's mission is threefold:

- Conduct research on utility bill affordability
- Share information
- Identify and propose innovative and integrated policies and approaches that help close the widening gap between what vulnerable energy consumers can pay and their current utility bills

The results

JEA's multiweek email campaign was a success. Many customers returned to the email multiple times to take advantage of the payment assistance options. JEA reported impressive results in the first two weeks of the campaign:

- More than 30,000 opens
- Over 1,000 clicks
- 25% of readers clicked on the section about payment extensions, indicating that this content resonated with them

The utility plans to use more of the data available through its E Source membership in the future to fuel its marketing campaigns and successfully provide LMI customers with specific assistance that meets

their needs.

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