6 utility New Year’s resolutions to benefit customers and the grid

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Happy New Year! This time of year often finds us reflecting on the year before and identifying areas of growth and improvement. But a new year also brings a lot of opportunities to make changes, set new goals, and start anew. As we gear up for another year of helping utilities tackle challenges head-on, we wanted to share a list of New Year’s resolutions that every utility should embrace consider in 2024.

What do you need help tackling in 2024? We’ve got your back

Fill out this short form to start a conversation about your needs and how we can help.

Bring it on, 2024—we’re ready for ya!

Embrace a data-driven strategy for vegetation management and more

We’ve heard a lot about how utilities now have the data but aren’t sure what to do with it. It’s understandable—utilities have been flooded with information from advanced metering infrastructure (AMI) systems, new geographic information systems, better lidar, advanced distribution management systems, smart grid information, and more. This is the year to harness all that data and let data-informed decision-making shine!

To help you, we’ll be leading several informative *Now what?* sessions, where you can learn from E Source and your utility peers how to leverage data to optimize operations. Whether you need help maximizing the ROI of your vegetation program, forecasting EV growth on your system, or something else—we’ll see you in the New Year!

Explore applicable AMI Day 2 opportunities

Oh, the places you can go with the surplus of data available to you once you've rolled out AMI. We call these Day 2 opportunities, and it can be overwhelming to decide what to prioritize. This year, we recommend exploring the use cases that would most benefit your utility and customers. AMI Day 2 opportunities will bring many benefits, including:

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- Operational efficiency improvement
- An enhanced customer experience
- Deeper analytics

Developing a roadmap may help you see your Day 2 path more clearly. The ideal roadmap would involve analyzing current AMI usage, setting goals, identifying pain points, and then prioritizing potential improvements based on the value to your utility and customers weighed against the required effort and cost.

Focus your efforts and help where customers *really* need it

According to recent E Source market research, participation in utility programs is much lower among low- and moderate-income customers than other customer groups. It's our job to make it easier for customers to prove eligibility and enroll in these programs. Make 2024 the year we achieve this! The following examples of improvements can streamline access to assistance for millions of households today and in the future.

Enable categorical eligibility. When a customer qualifies for one program, they automatically become eligible for other assistance programs.

Simplify program enrollment and digitize documents. Reduce required paperwork and allow customers to submit more digitized, qualifying documentation.

Trigger automatic renewals of customers' eligibility and enrollment in programs. Autorenewals will prevent agencies from unnecessarily removing customers from the rolls, often without their knowledge.

Keep up with customers' expectations with a CIS upgrade

An outdated, slow-moving customer information system (CIS) may be holding you back from providing a stellar customer experience. Exceed your customers' expectations in 2024 by getting started on your system transformation journey.

The first step to upgrading a CIS is a thorough current-state assessment. The last thing you want to do is proceed with an unnecessary implementation, so it's important to assess what your needs are and what the effort will be. A current-state assessment will help you determine if you should maintain, upgrade, or replace your system. Once you have that mapped out, you can tackle the next stage: finding the right vendors and software to support your project.

Prioritize collaboration with fleet customers to effectively move EV initiatives forward

This year, utilities have a unique opportunity to remove barriers to scaled fleet electrification and accelerate related projects and initiatives. Utilities need to derisk the grid integration of EVs to ensure safe and reliable service. To accomplish this, we recommend the following.

To successfully accelerate the rate of fleet electrification and meet related goals and commitments, utilities will need to collaborate and cooperate everywhere possible.

Exceptional collaboration. To successfully accelerate the rate of fleet electrification and meet related goals and commitments, utilities will need to collaborate and cooperate everywhere possible. Organizations and industries that have traditionally never worked together will need to partner closely. Pilots and programs must scale to serve all business customers and engage a larger group of implementers, trade allies, and qualified products and technologies.

Proactive grid planning. To meet increasingly aggressive transportation electrification goals, utility fleet customers require shorter time horizons for energizing new projects. Make this the year that you work ahead and be proactive with plans instead of reactive.

Treat customers like they matter—because they *do*

Customer expectations of their utility are evolving. They no longer think about or evaluate their utility in a vacuum—customers judge their utility based on their last transaction. And they compare you to the other companies they do business with. Whether they're shopping online, doing busines with another service provider, or just surfing the web, customers expect your utility to perform just as well—if not better—than other providers.

Understanding who your customers are and how they do business will drive your technology platforms and applications.

In 2024, improving customer experience will be important. A personalized customer experience versus a generalized, *one-size-fits-all* strategy is a win-win for both customers and the utility. Understanding who your customers are and how they do business will drive your technology platforms and applications.

Here are five key elements for developing and implementing a successful customer experience strategy and roadmap in 2024:

- Use data analytics to go beyond traditional customer segmentation.
- Map any unique customer experience journeys.
- Use the right technology, tailored to customer preferences.
- Measure and monitor progress to accommodate course corrections, ensuring all steps of the journeys are executed as intended.
- Continue to evolve the experience so customers are impressed and satisfied by their interactions with your utility.

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