Using data-driven decisions to navigate challenges and unlock opportunities in 2024

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Upon reflection, we see 2023 as the year utilities began to fight back using data science. *Fight back against what?* you might ask. Utilities know all too well. It used to be all about running a safe, reliable grid. Then came resiliency. Then equity. And it was all wrapped in sustainability. Now there are combinations, like equitable reliability, to consider.

Dive into 2024 with data science on your side

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

It's difficult and expensive to achieve any of these goals, but when you have so many of them on your plate at the same time, it can be easy to lose sight of the big picture. You need solutions that enable you to provide better service and a more reliable grid for customers.

We're excited to see what utilities will accomplish in 2024. Here are a few ways we're doing our part to support the demands of the new year.

Data science can inform decisions and create more economic breathing room

In 2024, you can consider data science as the great clarifier. Data science is starting to help utilities better understand the impact of every dollar invested. For example, you can weigh the benefits of certain reliability measures. That ability does two positive things for utilities.

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First, data science creates efficiencies, giving utilities a little economic breathing room and head space to tackle other objectives. For example, when you use data science to direct dollars in a vegetation management program to the highest impact areas, you can redirect the savings to other programs.

Second, data-driven decision-making not only helps utilities make optimal decisions, but it also makes those decisions defensible. With data science, your rationale is transparent to stakeholders and regulators.

In 2024, more utilities will let the data show them where to invest in the grid to achieve tangible gains and use that same data to build consensus about those decisions among stakeholders.

How data science is helping actual utilities: A conversation with Alabama Power and DTE Energy

Recently, we asked data science practitioners Jesse Woods of Alabama Power and Yong Li of DTE Energy to reflect on these issues and to reflect on their accomplishments in data science at their respective utilities.

How data science is helping Alabama Power make 2024 a transformative year

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“When I step back and look at 2023 as a whole, I think it’s the year we put the right pieces in place—technology, tools, data, architecture, problem-solving mindset—so that we can hit a home run in 2024,” said Woods, manager of data analytics for distribution at Alabama Power. “Another way of putting it is, we’ve been a little bit like scientists building our prototype in the lab. In 2024, we want to get it out into the field, get it used, and refine it further based on user feedback to really deliver value to our customers.”

Read more about Alabama Power’s recipe for success in our blog post Unlocking value: How data science is helping Alabama Power make 2024 a transformative year.

How DTE is steering the bus through a data-driven transformation in 2024

“I think our data science ability at DTE is getting better each year, and that includes asking the right questions to build out the most impactful use cases,” shared Li, data science manager at DTE. “I’d like to see the data science function evolve even further at DTE so that the majority of our data scientists’ time can be focused on the highest-value use cases rather than ad hoc data analysis.”

He continued, “That said, we’re a utility, which means we don’t often have the luxury of time (or money) to solve big systemic problems. I do think data science will be the lever that gets us there, but in the meantime, there’s a business to run and customers to serve!”

Read more about DTE’s journey in our blog post How DTE Energy is steering the bus through a data-driven transformation in 2024.

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We hope you recognize yourselves in their efforts and encourage you to ask us any questions inspired by their stories.

Looking forward to an expanded and stronger 2024

Five years ago, it was a challenge just to convince utilities of the problems data science could help them solve. Today, utilities know the gains and improvements data science and data-driven decision-making can unlock. We’ve moved from push to pull, and are feeling the pull more strongly and urgently every day.

Just as the discipline of data science has opened new opportunities for utilities, we’re thrilled to also be expanding our offerings. As 2023 wrapped up, we welcomed Utilligent to the E Source family. A leading management consulting firm guiding utilities to deliver energy safely to millions of customers, Utilligent brings deep utility expertise and a data-driven approach that furthers E Source’s capabilities.

We also welcomed UMS Group to E Source in the fall. Doing so enhances our services to major investor-owned electric, water, and gas utilities, emphasizing C-suite-level strategic and operational excellence with expertise in areas like change management, process design and improvement, wildfire risk reduction, and advanced AI modeling for EV adoption.

Here’s to an effective, impactful, and successful 2024! We’re excited for what’s to come and are proud to guide your utility through any challenge that comes your way.

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