Connecting with Utility Customers

With an industry benchmark of 68/100¹, municipal energy and utility (E&U) companies remain among the worst industries for customer happiness. Though every E&U company faces unique challenges, the underlying problem is not being able to create a connected customer experience (CX).

To provide the individualized CX people now demand, company leaders must identify weak spots in their current environment and take a proactive approach to remedy shortcomings.

1. **Assess your current customer journey and pinpoint areas for improvement**
   To evaluate how customers interact with the brand, CX leaders must ask themselves a few key questions: What does your current customer journey look and feel like? How does that vary from an optimal version? Which communication channels do customers use to interact with agents? Are these channels accompanied by convenient access to information customers need so you reduce customer fatigue? What types of complaints are frequently expressed by customers? Once you’ve gathered answers, determine how customers might perceive an ideal journey.

2. **Connect channels to improve efficiency and the CX**
   When companies offer multiple channels of interaction (mobile, social, voice or agent), they often fail to effectively connect the associated channels, functions, and/or data to foster enterprise-wide visibility. Customers may receive the same message multiple times or be asked for the same information twice, which can cause them to feel overwhelmed and dissatisfied. Such inefficiencies tend to result in a suboptimal outcomes for everyone involved, including less-than-ideal operational productivity, financial returns and customer satisfaction rates.

3. **Evaluate mutual value to the company and your customers to determine next steps**
   It’s not feasible (or wise) to make every improvement at once. Organizations that primarily offer voice customer service should start by exploring automation systems and creating more seamless integration between their interactive voice response (IVR) system and contact center. Those with mobile strategies in place might start by implementing SMS/texting capabilities – an approach that reduces inbound care costs and satisfies modern customers’ demands for choice and convenience. No matter the route, E&U providers should recognize that cross-channel visibility into customer behavior and data is vital to maturing the CX.

A robust ecosystem of communication channels and ongoing optimization empowers utility providers to earn and maintain strong customer satisfaction and loyalty in regulated and deregulated markets alike.

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