

## Using Personalized Communications to Secure Customer Loyalty in Times of Change

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With our new administration there have come recommended changes and improvements in the nation's energy supplies. These changes may affect some utilities more than others, but without a doubt, new programs will have an impact on all companies in some way, and raise many questions for home energy consumers` and business customers.

The one constant all utilities will have in common is a greater need to establish and maintain useful and cost-effective communication channels with their customers. With possible changes in service, rate increases or -- more positively -- reductions, customers will need to know what to expect so that they, like power companies themselves, can plan power usage accordingly.

### Facilitating the need to know

Utility companies striving for efficient customer interaction can use the monthly invoice for a variety of needs, including relaying updates on energy usage, or offering different payment packages. After all, customers are much more likely to closely review their bills than any other form of correspondence. Fortunately, today's document composition software and systems allow for such customer camaraderie without huge IT involvement.

Transpromotional documents, otherwise known as "TransPromo," combine transactional and promotional information in one package, or even on the same page. Some of the most effective TransPromo strategies for fostering excellent customer communication utilize personal billing information such as service usage stored in a database to create extremely relevant correspondence. Many companies have already implemented a type of TransPromo strategy by bundling information about special service offerings, rate changes, and hints on conserving energy along with the regular monthly bill. Utilities can take TransPromo a step further to get even more mileage out of their mailings by using statements to cross-sell or upsell the services offered exclusively through their company, or relay timely news on industry-wide regulatory changes.

The software applications and printing technologies utilized in producing TransPromo have been tested over the past decade and are now proven systems that allow printing data-driven marketing and informational messages directly onto the invoice, significantly reducing those constantly rising postal costs while still relaying the same amount of information. Here are just some of the benefits and capabilities available to incorporate messaging into your statements, notices, and other communications:

### 1. Significantly enhancing every customer communication

- Include information in columns, tables, or bulleted points for easier reading.
- If legislative responsibility necessitates the inclusion of complex jargon within the statement, include explanatory messages highlighting the fundamentals of the information in available white space.
- Include bar graphs or pie charts to illustrate a customer's energy usage from month to month or even week to week --



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this illustration will clarify periodic stresses on the utility.

- Highlight the most relevant customer information -- such as payment due dates or payments received in alternate colors.
- If the knowledge is available, provide your statements in the customer's primary language.

## **2. Creating more relevant communications**

- Always send statements through a customer's preferred channel -- print/mail, email, or the web.
- Take advantage of customer profiles to send more relevant information based on the customer's needs -- customers working night shifts will have different energy needs and interests than customers who are primarily active during the day.
- If space is available in your statement, include helpful energy-saving tips for improving appliance efficiency or reducing power usage when rooms are unoccupied.

## **3. Reducing operational costs**

- Include all correspondence for a single household into one envelope.
- Include survey information on payment coupons -- customers will be returning the document to the utility already. A survey may also help identify what information is important to a particular customer, and whether or not they desire to continue receiving such information.
- Include all marketing correspondence on the customer's statement rather than sending messages on separate documents or as first class mail items.
- Reduce call center costs by helping customers understand the charges on their statement.

## **Will it work for your enterprise?**

Nearly every power supply company is striving for more efficient and effective methods of customer communication. However, legacy systems could certainly hinder a particular company's adoption of digital communication technology. Another consideration is the mergers and acquisitions that often leave one organization with several different and occasionally incompatible computer infrastructures. Finding the best way to respond to market demands is also becoming increasingly difficult because our country's energy industry is evolving more rapidly than ever, and long-term planning for both utilities and its customers becomes more complicated. However, these changing times certainly call for transparent understanding between a utility and its customers -- and with new innovations in TransPromo being developed at swift rate, companies would be wise to improve their customer communication with transpromotional documents.

While initiating TransPromo yourself may not be possible, especially when other issues claim the top of your priorities list, external service providers are able and willing to provide the support you need -- quickly, efficiently, and at an affordable cost. Now may be the best time to explore these possibilities and take advantage of the opportunities they have to offer.

Any big change in the way we do things, while it may be helpful and lay the foundation for a better future, creates uncertainties and raises a number of questions. As utilities meet the challenges of new technologies and regulatory systems, they will need solid communications with their customers, who will also feel the impacts of these programs. Incorporating a TransPromo strategy into your document processes is one reliable and cost-effective tool that utilities can use to immediately establish a viable and proactive communications program that secures customer loyalty and supports everyone involved during this time of change.

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