



Will you SMB my valentine?

Designing demand-side management offerings your small and midsize business customers will love

By Amy Schmidt

February 14, 2020

This Valentine's Day, E Source is doing some soul-searching on how to kindle the flame between utilities and their small and midsize business (SMB) customers. Getting SMB customers to participate in energy-efficiency programs is difficult, and although there isn't a proven formula to engage these customers, we have information and resources that can help you develop a cohesive and comprehensive strategy. Here are four high-level insights to help you get started:

Reach out to business owners through their preferred contact channels.

According to responses from the [2019 Small and Midsize Business Gap and Priority Benchmark](#), the results of which are compiled in the [E Source Business Customer Insights Center](#), customers prefer different contact channels for different kinds of communication. Energy efficiency opportunities? SMB owners say "email, please!"

Leverage your role as an energy efficiency expert.

Our [2019 Small and Midsize Business Gap and Priority Benchmark](#) results also found 60% of SMB customers already see their utility as a go-to expert on energy efficiency.

Remember to KISS (keep it simple, stupid!).

Design programs that minimize the customer's burden in terms of scheduling and paperwork. Direct-install programs and partnerships with local contractors are a great example of this.

Treat SMB owners with empathy.

Come to your business customers as a trusted ally looking to achieve shared goals: efficiency gains, cost savings, and lower energy rates.

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SMB segmentation tips from industry insiders

Knowing your target audience—as well as its energy-efficiency goals and perceptions—is the starting point for developing an effective campaign that builds trust and encourages engagement among SMB customers. At [E Source Forum 2019](#), we invited Chris Wilson of the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) to the stage to talk about how to best serve utility business customers in the session [Exploring Business Customer Nuances](#). Afterwards, we sat down with Chris and asked him a few questions about how NREL is leveraging unique data sets to better understand and target these notoriously hard-to-reach customers.



In-person learning for E Source members

[Next-Generation of SMB DSM Workshop](#)

June 16-18, 2020 | Boulder, Colorado

Note: This event has been postponed due to COVID-19. Please stay tuned for rescheduled dates.

If your utility is currently a member of the E Source Demand-side Management (DSM) Service or Technology Assessment Service, be sure to save-the-date for our [Next-Generation of SMB DSM Workshop](#), onsite at our headquarters in Boulder. This event will draw on E Source research and best practices to help you benchmark key programs within your SMB portfolio and identify gaps and opportunities in your programs.