



The more the merrier at E Source Forum 2021

An interview with Michael Carter, president of Research and Advisory

By Sara Patnaude

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For more than 30 years, the [E Source Forum](#) has facilitated learning, networking, and collaboration among utility professionals from across the US and Canada. As a leading data science company, our agenda features topics that matter to you, with thought-provoking keynote speakers, data-driven content, customer panels, and insights from your utility peers.

The online 2020 Forum was a success, but we missed seeing everyone in person. This year, the E Source Forum will take place September 28–October 1 in a hybrid format. Those who can safely travel are welcome to join us in person at the Sheraton Denver Downtown Hotel. Everyone else can [attend the same sessions online](#).

I sat down with [Michael Carter](#), president of Research and Advisory at E Source, to chat about what makes our hybrid format great and what he's looking forward to most in September.

Sara Patnaude. Hi Michael. First off, welcome to E Source. How have you been settling in?

Michael Carter. Thanks for the warm welcome! It's a bit of a homecoming for me as I was intricately involved with E Source from 1998 to 2005. Granted, there have been some changes since those days, but I feel like I'm exactly where I need to be.

I'm super excited to be back at E Source, and I'm settling in well. I'm focusing our attention even more on our mission: to build a sustainable future in partnership with utilities and cities.

10 reasons to attend the E Source Forum

On the fence about attending [E Source Forum 2021](#) and learning more from a top data science company? From the ability to attend in person or online to exceptional learning and networking opportunities, here are [10 reasons why you won't want to miss it](#).

SP. This will be your first Forum as president of Research and Advisory. What are you looking forward to most?

MC. I've attended a few Forums in the distant past, but it's going to be a refresh for sure. I'm most looking forward to meeting our clients. I really enjoy hearing from clients about the issues they're facing to better understand how we can help them.

I'm also looking forward to some in-person interaction for a change! I look forward to hearing firsthand from the executives and leaders who will be at Forum in person about the issues their utilities are facing and how they're tackling those issues.

I'm also looking forward to launching our first E Source market view during the opening plenary. Our clients have been asking how we see the larger factors that are impacting the industry. We'll apply the same E Source fundamentals we do to our in-depth Research and Advisory services and provide our clients with a view on the major drivers in the US utility space.

SP. What do you think makes Forum so great for attendees?

MC. Comfortable interaction. Forum really is a unique conference experience. It's a week full of opportunities for utility professionals to learn from each other and for industry experts to stay ahead of trends. The hands-on workshops are always popular and give attendees a chance to experiment with ideas and concepts and to lend their voice to what works and what doesn't.

But Forum is more than that! It's a low-key, low-pressure environment where spontaneous conversations between executives and senior managers allows for a mixing of ideas. And it's part of our clients' annual subscription package. Also, let's face it—any conference that offers local beer tastings and foodie tours is bound to be a great one!

SP. This is our first hybrid event with attendees able to attend in person or online. Do you think online attendees will miss out on anything?

MC. I'm confident about our decision to have a hybrid event. I think this is the future of conferences and events in our space. A hybrid format allows our attendees the flexibility to choose what they're most comfortable with given the current challenges with the COVID-19 pandemic and travel budgets. There's no doubt that in-person events offer a richer experience due to personal interaction. And we're deeply

connection-oriented as humans. But there are always going to be things that limit our ability to travel and be in person.

“I’m confident about our decision to have a hybrid event. I think this is the future of conferences and events in our space.” —Michael Carter, E Source

Last year, [our online-only Forum](#) was a huge success despite the challenges of the year, and it’s driven us to focus on how we can offer a more compelling experience both online and in person.

It’s important that our clients know that we have well-developed protocols in place to deal with the range of possible contingencies. This includes COVID protocols that we’re implementing in conjunction with the Sheraton staff.

So far, we’re seeing the most in-person interest from senior management and executives. One client I spoke to is actively creating space for their wider team to attend the Forum because of our online format and sending their senior execs in person. Our long-term clients know there’s no limit to the number of attendees a utility can have—the more the merrier!

All that to say, no, I don’t feel that our online attendees are going to miss out on our content or the Forum experience at all!

SP. We have a lot of exciting tracks this year. Which ones are you particularly excited for?

MC. That’s a tough question to answer because I truly feel all the tracks we’ve planned for this year are packed with timely and exciting sessions. The keynote from Sacramento Municipal Utility District CEO Paul Lau will be compelling, for sure! Understanding how the utility is facing and dealing with the lower-carbon future offers a blueprint for proactive engagement.

I’m really looking forward to the sessions in our “Enabling tomorrow’s data-driven utility” track as well. One of the factors affecting the utility space is that companies are drowning in predictive data. [Data science](#) is becoming a necessity for utilities to make sense of thousands of data points. Our data science services are tackling these challenges head-on, and I think our Forum attendees will be impressed with the work our team has been doing bringing [E Source OneInform](#) to our customers.

We’re also working with utilities on advanced metering infrastructure and deployment and how they get the most out of their investment. It’s an exciting time for utilities! We have a focus on dealing with natural gas issues as well.

Our “Rising to the energy equity challenge” track is full of timely sessions. COVID had a massive impact on utilities, and from it, came a lot of impressive stories of how utilities pivoted to support their customers in their

time of need. We're excited to be highlighting some of those achievements and sharing tips to better reengage with customers in the future.

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