

Unleashing creativity and compassion: How exactly are utility marketers adjusting their strategy?

Part 1

Shelby Kuenzli
Analyst, E Source

Jenny DiLeo
Public Information and Marketing Program Manager,
Austin Energy



E Source

Public Information and Marketing Program Manager,
Austin Energy

Session objectives

Purpose: Articulate who your vulnerable customers are now, what they need and want, and how to market to them moving forward

Outcome: Understand what your most vulnerable customers need from your right now; gather insights from peer utilities on how to market to customers now and moving forward, how to inform your marketing strategy going forward, and how to get creative in your marketing and outreach during COVID-19

Session outline



Setting the stage: Who are your vulnerable customers now?

What your vulnerable customers need and want right now

How Austin Energy is pivoting its marketing during COVID-19

Discussion

**Setting the stage: Who
are your vulnerable
customers now?**

COVID-19's impact is ongoing

ECONOMY

U.S. Faces Rent Crisis As Pandemic Eviction Restrictions Get Rolled Back

June 21, 2020 · 7:58 AM ET

Heard on Weekend Edition Sunday

This Woman Accidentally Turned Herself Into A Potato For A Video Meeting And Couldn't Figure Out How To Fix It

Millennials were told we could be anything, so Lizet Ocampo became a potato.



Lauren Strapagiel
BuzzFeed News Reporter

Posted on April 1, 2020, at 10:34 a.m. ET

Customer Service, News

Utility customers are financially stressed due to COVID-19 and some are struggling to pay their bills

By [Clarion Energy Content Directors](#) | 8.11.20

CITYLAB

One-Third of American Renters Expected to Miss Their August Payment

An expansive census survey reveals a nation stretched to the brink by the financial toll of pandemic.

MARKETS | FINANCE

Millions of Credit-Card Customers Can't Pay Their Bills. Lenders Are Bracing for Impact.

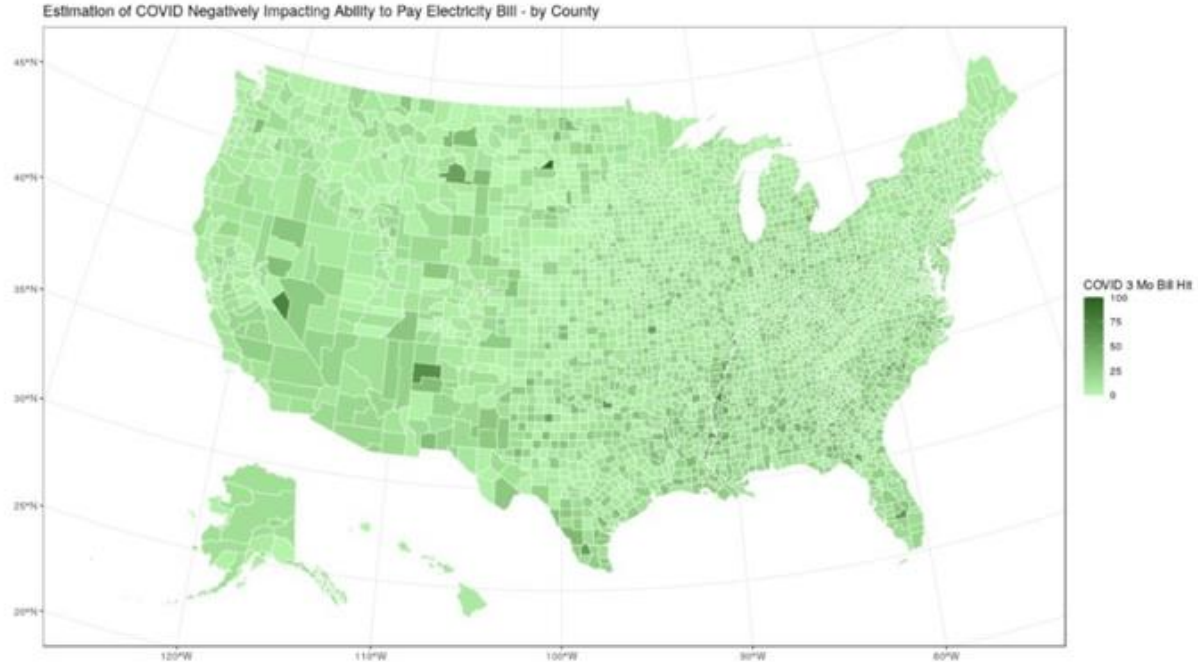
Credit-card debt kept many consumers afloat. Now that the debt bubble is bursting, lenders and borrowers alike are preparing for pain.

By [AnnaMaria Andriotis](#) and [Orla McCaffrey](#)

April 25, 2020 5:30 am ET

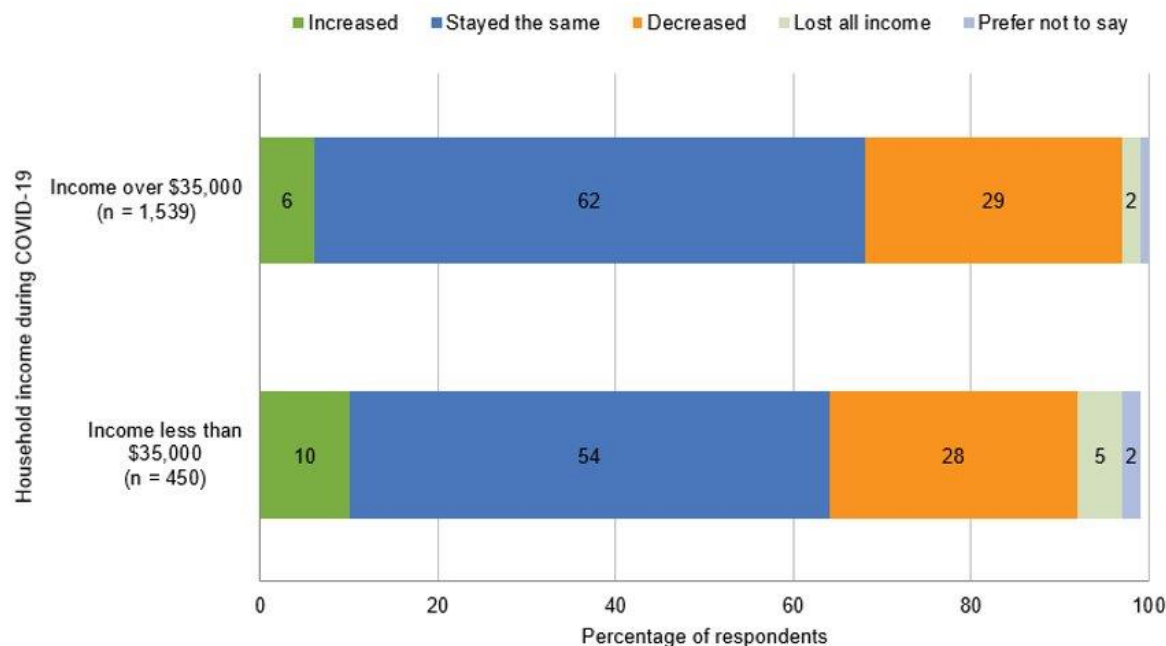
Utilities' most vulnerable customers

- As our economic recovery continues to shift, we're starting to see the long-term impacts on household finances.
- While most customers plan to pay their bills on time, we ran a propensity analysis to see which areas are most likely to struggle to pay their electricity bills.



Low income in the wake of COVID-19

From our 2020 COVID-19 Residential Survey



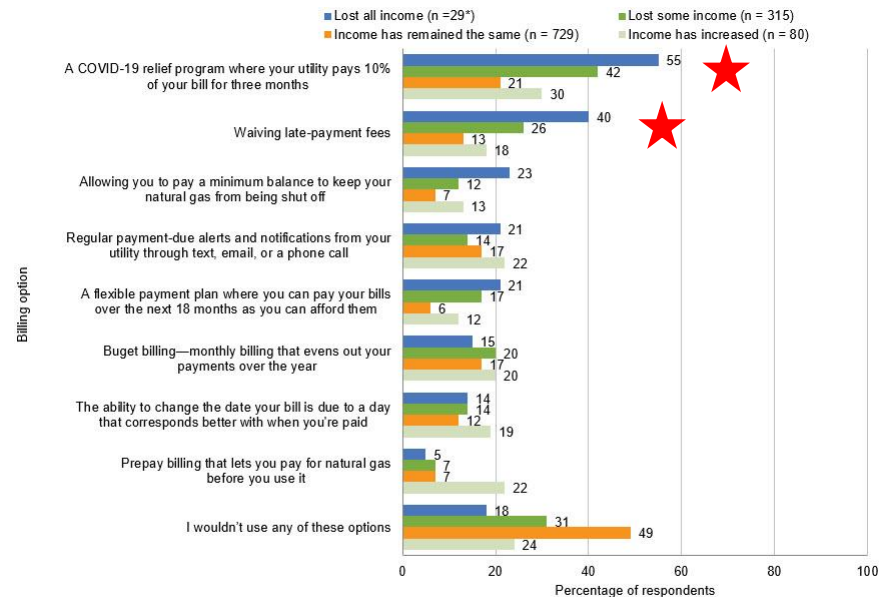
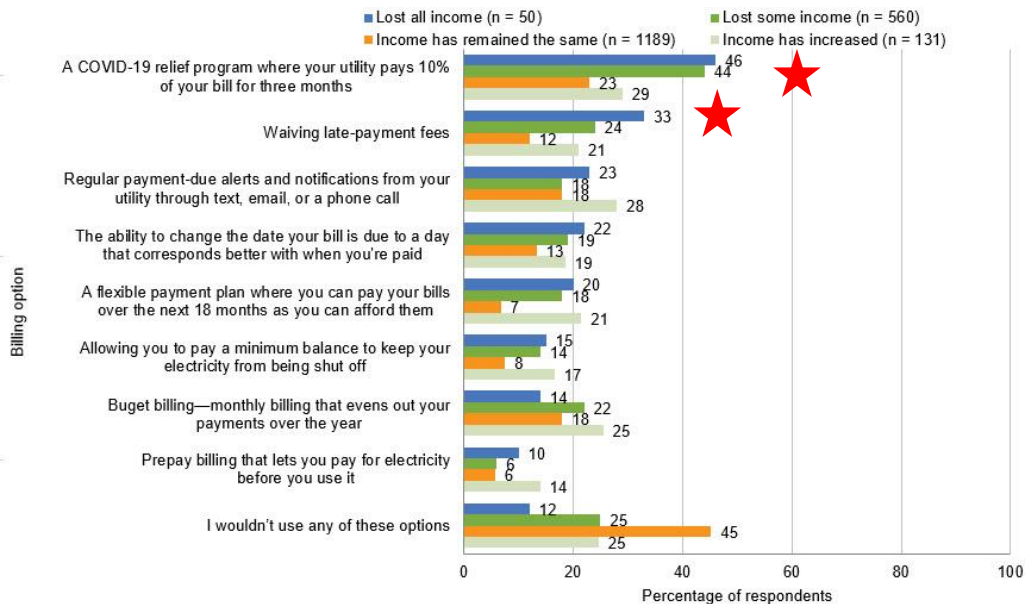
- About one-third of utility customers have lost income during the pandemic.
- It's not only low-income customers—households making less than \$35,000 a year—who have lost money during the pandemic. Customers across all income levels have been affected.

Base: US and Canadian respondents (n varies). Question S6_5a: How has COVID-19 impacted your household income? Notes: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding. We removed data labels less than 2%. © E Source (2020 COVID-19 Residential Survey)

A person is shown from behind, sitting at a desk and using a laptop. The laptop screen displays a social media profile page with a profile picture, a 'My Status' section, and a list of links including 'My Friends', 'My Photos', 'My Videos', and 'My Groups'. The background is a solid blue color.

**What your vulnerable
customers need and
want right now**

Which billing options are customers interested in now?



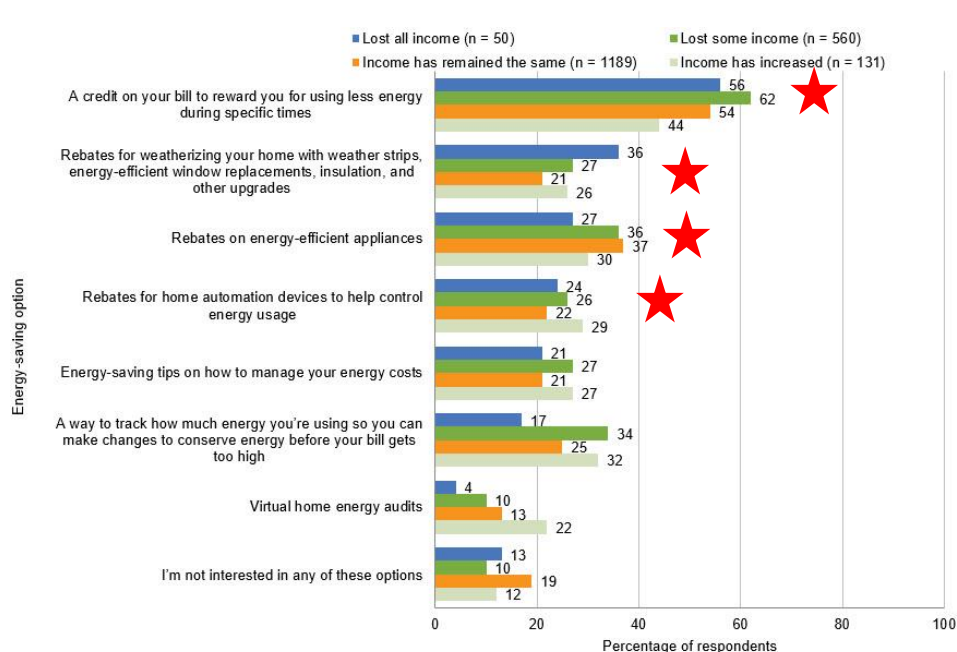
Base: US and Canadian respondents who pay an electric bill (n varies). Question S2_7: If your utility offered each of the following options, please select the ones you'd most likely use in the next three months. Select all that apply. © E Source (2020 COVID-19 Residential Survey)

Base: US and Canadian respondents who pay a natural gas bill (n varies). Question S3_7: If your utility offered each of the following options, please select the ones you'd most likely use in the next three months. Select all that apply. Note: Use caution when sample size falls below 30. © E Source (2020 COVID-19 Residential Survey)

Electric

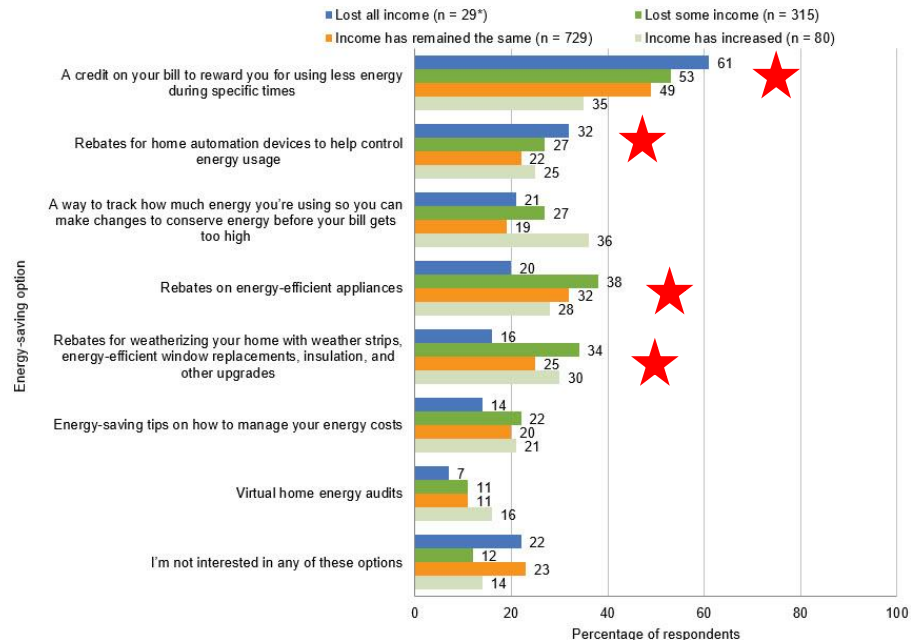
Natural gas

Which energy-saving options are customers interested in now?



Base: US and Canadian respondents who pay an electric bill (n varies). Question S2_8: If your utility offered all of the following options to reduce your monthly electric bill, which three options would you be most interested in? © E Source (2020 COVID-19 Residential Survey)

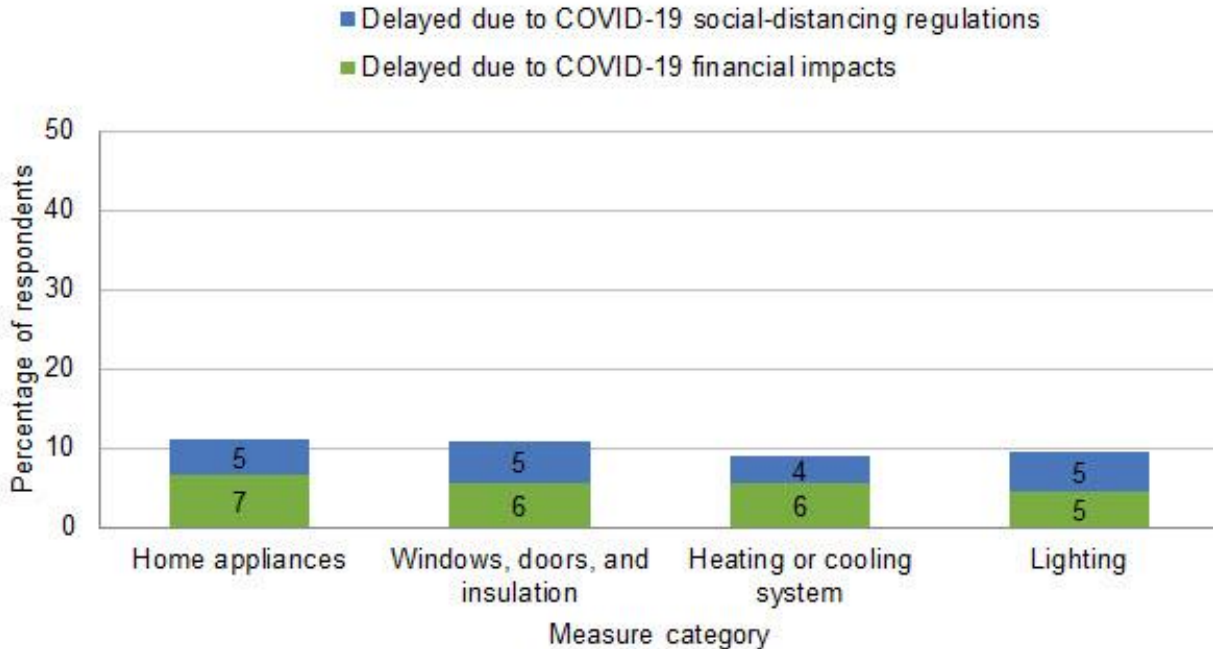
Electric



Base: US and Canadian respondents who pay a natural gas bill (n varies). Question S3_8: If your utility offered all of the following options to reduce your monthly natural gas bill, which three options would you be most interested in? Note: Use caution when sample size falls below 30. © E Source (2020 COVID-19 Residential Survey)

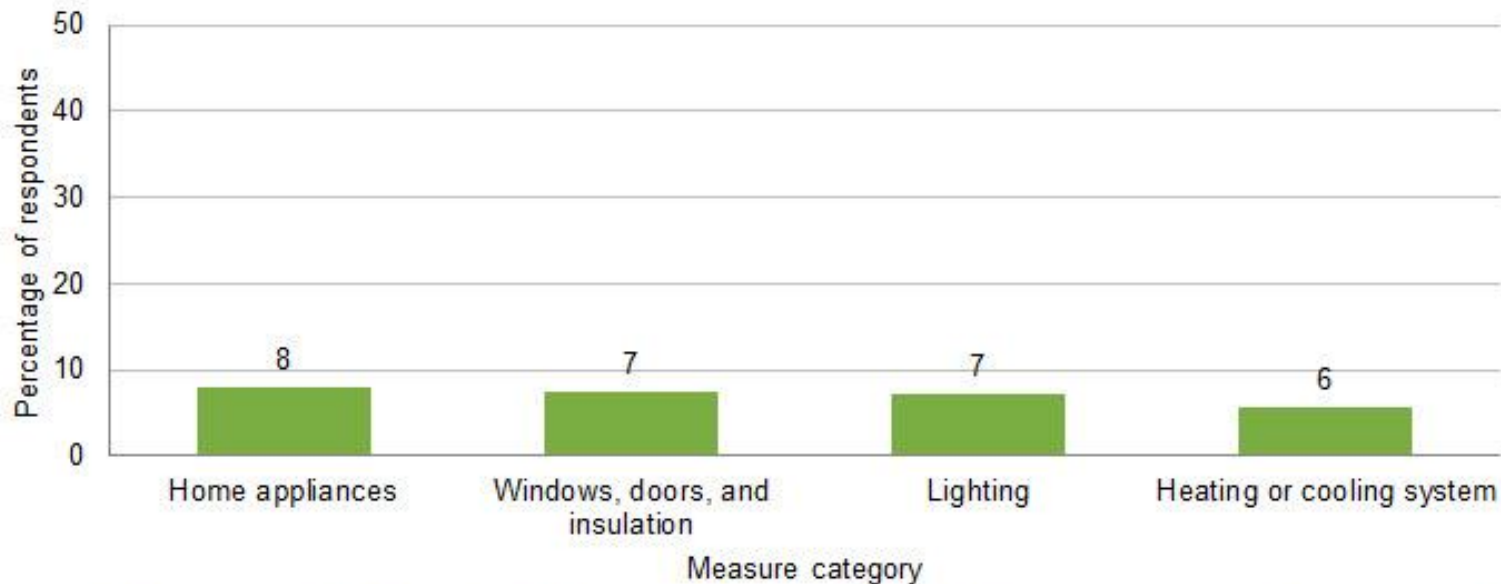
Natural gas

COVID-19 delays in home upgrades



Base: North American respondents (n = 2,024). **Question S5_4:** Thinking about upgrades to your primary residence, please select the action or actions that most closely align with your plans for 2020 for each upgrade.
Note: Data shown is from respondents who answered "I had plans to complete this upgrade in 2020, but they will be delayed due to household financial impacts from COVID-19" or "I had plans to complete this upgrade in 2020, but they will be delayed due to social-distancing restrictions." ©E Source (2020 COVID-19 Residential Survey)

Customers' plans for home energy upgrades in 2020



Base: North American respondents (n = 2,024). **Question S5_4:** Thinking about upgrades to your primary residence, please select the action or actions that most closely align with your plans for 2020 for each upgrade. **Note:** Data shown is from respondents who answered "I have plans to complete this upgrade in 2020." © E Source (2020 COVID-19 Residential Survey)

Key takeaways

- Customers who have seen the greatest financial impact during COVID-19 say they would be most likely to use a **relief program where their utility pays 10% of their bill**. **Late fee waivers** are the second most popular option for those who lost some or all of their income.
- Customers are most interested in a **bill credit** for reducing energy use during peak times. Rebates for energy-efficient appliances are also popular; however, those who have recently lost income favor **weatherization and home automation rebates** when it comes to their electric bill.
- Most customers who were planning on doing **home energy upgrades** say they're **delayed** now because of COVID-19. But a small group of customers still plan to move forward with their home energy upgrades.

An aerial view of a city, likely Austin, Texas, with a blue tint. Overlaid on the city are numerous white, glowing, curved lines that represent a network or data flow, connecting various points across the urban landscape. The lines are semi-transparent and have a soft glow.

How Austin Energy is pivoting its marketing during COVID-19

COVID-Era Marketing Pivot

FY20 Energy Conservation, Scams and Utility Bill Relief
Campaign Creative

Jenny DiLeo

Public Information and Marketing Program Manager



September, 2020

© 2020 Austin Energy

Urgent Spring Messaging

YOUR SAFETY. YOUR UTILITIES. OUR PRIORITY.



We want to keep the lights on and the water running.

The City of Austin cares about the health and safety of you and your residents. While social distancing stay connected to your City Utilities and City information channels. Resources for both residents and owners and managers of multifamily properties are available.

For more information, please visit: austintexas.gov/COVID19 or call 3-1-1.



Multifamily Print Ad



Customer Driven. Community Focused.

NEWSFLASH


Dear Key Account Customers,

In light of the current public health crisis and the "Stay Home, Work Safe" order, Austin City Council approved an ordinance last Thursday to provide utility bill relief to residents and businesses over the coming months. The ordinance helps Austin Energy's commercial customers by:

- Reducing the regulatory charge on electric bills, effective May 1 for commercial customers. This should provide a 3.5 - 4% bill reduction for most customers.
- Extending Austin Energy's moratorium on utility disconnects for non-payment through Sept 30, 2020.
- Extending Austin Energy's policy of waiving late fees through September 30, 2020. This also applies to District Energy & Cooling invoices.

We encourage customers to pay what they can in the meantime. If your business is experiencing a hardship during this time, please contact your Key Account Manager to explore options for payment and bills, especially as we

Lighting a Brighter Future



SINCE 1895

Austin Energy Corporate Communications | 721 Barton Springs Rd, Austin, TX 78704 | austineenergy.com

For immediate release:
April 13, 2020
Contact: Jennifer Herber, Austin Energy Public Information, (512) 299-1740

Austin Energy announces deadline extensions for Energy Conservation Audit and Disclosure (ECAD)

The Austin-Travis County "Stay Home, Work Safe" order requires residents to remain at home with the exception of essential activities to help prevent the spread

Commercial and Multifamily Energy Billing and audit requirements this year, extended to October 1, 2020: The commercial customers within the City of Austin, which are normally

Press Releases, Emails to Key Accounts, Large and SMB Commercial Customers and MF Properties



Stop Utility Scammers!
Report Suspicious Calls to 3-1-1

©2020 Austin Energy

HELP STOP UTILITY SCAMMERS!
Don't FALL for the CALL!

Austin Energy does NOT

- Threaten to disconnect your utilities.
- Demand payment with cash or gift cards.

Report Suspicious Calls to 3-1-1



austineenergy.com/go/stopscams

Print Ad



STOP UTILITY SCAMMERS!
Don't FALL for the CALL!

Austin Energy does NOT demand payment with cash or gift cards.

Report Calls to 3-1-1

Digital Ads



Don't FALL for the CALL!

Stop Utility Scammers! Report Suspicious Calls to 3-1-1

Sticky Note Ad



Help stop utility scammers. **Don't FALL for the CALL!**
Report suspicious calls to 3-1-1

www.austintexas.gov

OOH – Billboard



Help Stop Utility Scammers

Don't FALL for the CALL!

Report Suspicious Calls to 3-1-1

©2020 Austin Energy



Created New Energy Conservation Spring Campaign – Focus on Tips



Save Energy, Especially Now.

- » Unplug electronics, chargers and appliances when not in use.
- » Set thermostats to 78 degrees or higher on hot days.
- » Wash full loads of laundry.

More tips at austinenergy.com/go/tips

©2020 Austin Energy

Print Ads



Save Energy, Especially Now.

Unplug electronics when not in use.

AUSTIN ENERGY

More tips

©2020 Austin Energy



Save Energy, Especially Now.

Wash full loads of laundry to help save money and energy.

AUSTIN ENERGY



Save Energy, Especially Now.

Set your thermostat to 78 degrees or higher in the warmer months.

AUSTIN ENERGY

©2020 Austin Energy

Digital Display + SEM Ads



Austin Energy @austinenergy · Apr 13

Be a fan of fans while you Save Energy, Especially Now. Make sure your ceiling fan rotates counterclockwise in the warm months so the blades push cooler air down. Find other easy, no-cost ways to reduce your energy use during this time: austinenergy.com/go/tips

Save Energy, Especially Now.

Ceiling fans can help you feel about 4 degrees cooler.

AUSTIN ENERGY

Support comes from Austin Energy, encouraging customers to save energy, especially now. Unplugging electronics and setting thermostats at 78 can save energy. More at austinenergy.com/go/tips.



Social Media and Radio



Developed New COA Utilities Residential Marketing

Facing Financial Hardship? We're Here to Help.

- 1. See if You Qualify for Help on Utilities:**
 - austinenergy.com/go/cap
- 2. Explore Your Options:**
 - Utility Bill Discounts
 - Emergency Financial Assistance
 - Payment Arrangement
 - Budget Billing
 - Medically Vulnerable Services
- 3. Submit Your Application:**
 - Start today at austinenergy.com/go/cap

©2020 City of Austin

Multichannel Infographic

Facing Financial Hardship? Get Help on Utilities.

See if you qualify

©2020 City of Austin

Digital Ads



¿Tiene Dificultades Financieras? Obtenga Ayuda con los Servicios Públicos.

- Descuentos en facturas de servicios públicos
- Asistencia financiera de emergencia
- Plan de pago diferido
- Plan de presupuesto
- Servicios para clientes con necesidades médicas

Vea si califica:
austinenergy.com/go/cap

¿Tiene Dificultades Financieras? Obtenga Ayuda con Servicios Públicos.

Vea si califica

©2020 Ciudad de Austin

Print Ads

Your Safety. Your Utilities. Our Priority.

We want to keep your lights on and your water running.

The City of Austin cares about your health and safety. Smart actions can keep your utilities on and help you stay safe. Remember these tips during this time of caution:

Get help with utilities: Facing financial hardship? From utility bill discounts to budget billing, the City of Austin offers support for qualifying customers. See if you qualify: austinenergy.com/go/cap.

Continue your service: The City of Austin has stopped utility disconnects caused by non-payment. If your utilities were recently turned off because of unpaid bills, contact City of Austin Utilities today for a courtesy reconnection. Call **512-494-9400**.

Consider new ways to pay: For public safety reasons, the City of Austin Walk-In Utility Service Centers are currently closed. Check out other payment options by visiting austinenergy.com/go/paymentoptions or call 3-1-1 for more information.

Stop the scams: Watch for possible scams during this time. Contact us if you have any doubts about a suspicious billing call or email. Call **512-494-9400**.

©2020 City of Austin

While physical distancing, stay connected to your City Utilities and City Information channels. However you spend your time at home, be safe and contact us if you need utility assistance.

City of Austin Utilities For more information, please visit: austintexas.gov/COVID19

Facing financial hardship? We're here to help.

Start today at austinenergy.com/go/cap

City of Austin Utilities

©2020 City of Austin

Videos and content for social media and broadcast

Expanded Energy Conservation Campaign – Included Programs



Save Energy, Especially Now.

- Remember tips like setting thermostats to 78 degrees on hot days
- Get rebates on select smart thermostats
- Use our web app to monitor your energy usage
- Get Instant Savings on energy efficient products at local retailers
- Explore home improvement rebates from Home Performance with ENERGY STAR®

More tips at austinenrgy.com/go/summer



Customer Driven, Community Focused.™

©2020 Austin Energy

Print Ad




Save Energy, Especially Now.

Look for the green tag in local DIY stores.



Save here

©2020 Austin Energy



Save Energy, Especially Now.

Lower summer bills with home energy efficiency upgrades.



Get started

©2020 Austin Energy



Save Energy, Especially Now.

Get rebates on home energy efficiency upgrades.



Get started

©2020 Austin Energy




Save Energy, Especially Now.

Install a smart thermostat to save energy and money! Rebates available.



Learn more

©2020 Austin Energy



Save energy, especially now

Summer is here, which means warmer weather and more opportunities to conserve energy. As a publicly owned utility, Austin Energy wants to help you save energy and money with simple energy upgrades. Keep reading for easy ways to lower your energy usage and save on your summer utility bills, all while staying cool and comfortable in your home.


Get help with utility bills

If you are facing financial hardship, City of Austin Utilities has been helping those utility bill delinquents to budget billing. The City of Austin's Customer Assistance Program offers resources and support to help qualifying customers pay and manage their utility bills. See if you qualify and make your actions at austinenrgy.com/ga

Save energy, especially now

- Set your thermostat at 78 degrees or higher when possible. Every degree higher can decrease your summer bill by 1 percent.
- Unplug chargers. Turn off power strips when not in use. Electronics plugged in while "off" can account for up to 10 percent of home energy use.
- Use fans when you are in the room to make you feel cooler & require cooler fans turn off when you leave the room.
- Avoid turning on the oven during the hottest time of the day.
- Check your refrigerator and freezer temperatures. You can save up to 25 percent by setting your refrigerator temperature between 35 and 38 degrees and your freezer to 0 degrees.
- Wash full loads of laundry.
- Keep curtains and blinds down on windows lit by direct sunlight.
- Try the Austin Energy web app to monitor your energy usage.
- Use efficient lighting. ENERGY STAR qualified LEDs use at least 75 percent less energy than incandescent lights and last about 30 times longer, saving both money and energy.

For more tips on conserving energy, visit austinenrgy.com/go/summer



Austin Utilities Now Customer Newsletter

- Save Energy, Especially Now. Lower Summer Energy Bills. Austin Energy helps you lower energy bills with whole-home energy upgrades.
- Save Energy, Especially Now. End of Summer Offer! Enjoy as much as \$2,300 in rebates from Austin Energy on home energy upgrades.
- Save Energy, Especially Now. Look for the Green Tag! Save on energy efficient items at the register for utility bill savings.

SEM Ads



Save Energy, Especially Now.

Austin Energy offers programs, tools and tips to help you save energy and lower utility bills as outdoor temperatures remain high.

Look for the Green Tag to Save Energy and Money!

Austin Energy offers customers an easy way to save money on products that save energy, helping you save money on your utility bills too!

Look for the Green INSTANT SAVINGS tag on energy-efficient and DIY products like these to keep you cool and comfortable at home without over-billing your wallet.

- LED light bulbs
- Door sweeps and seals
- ENERGY STAR® air purifiers
- Window air conditioners
- High-control window film
- ENERGY STAR® water coolers
- Programmable thermostats

Visit austinenrgy.com/go/instant-savings to find participating retailers.




Save Energy, Especially Now.

Summer is here and so are high temperatures. Austin Energy offers programs, tools and tips to help you save energy and lower utility bills as outdoor temperatures rise.

Was Your House Built Before 2010?

Schedule a Home Performance with Energy Star assessment. Participating contractors will assess your home's energy performance and recommend energy-saving improvements including AC repair and maintenance, duct sealing, attic insulation and solar shading.

Earn an average of \$1,800 in rebates from Austin Energy when you complete recommended home improvements, and enjoy up to 20 percent savings on summer energy bills.

Start today at austinenrgy.com/hp



Customer Driven, Community Focused.™

See rebates for more ways to save.

Targeted Mailers + Emails



Thinking About Installing a Smart Thermostat?

With a \$25 installation rebate for each eligible unit, a thermostat you must have. Austin Energy offers \$25 rebate on the smart thermostat you choose. For more information, visit austinenrgy.com/go/thermostat.

Learn more at austinenrgy.com/powercenter

Lower Your Energy Bills With Free Home Weatherization

Austin Energy has available weatherization on energy bill credit from home weatherization. Whether you own or rent, Austin Energy can help the cost for home weatherization services. Call 1-800-477-7622. Home weatherization may include other weatherization, heat exchanger, air filters, duct repair, high efficiency lighting, and so on as needed.

See if you qualify at austinenrgy.com/weatherize

Need Help Paying Late Utility Bills?

Provide our customers dealing with a financial hardship with access to emergency assistance to help pay late utility bills.

Make a payment or have us apply it to your utility bill.

Visit austinenrgy.com/ga

Is Your House More Than 10 Years Old?

See if your house is eligible for Home Performance with Energy Star. Home Performance with Energy Star assesses your home's energy performance and recommends energy-saving improvements including AC repair and maintenance, duct sealing, attic insulation and solar shading.

Earn an average of \$1,800 in rebates from Austin Energy when you complete recommended home improvements, and enjoy up to 20 percent savings on summer energy bills.

Start today at austinenrgy.com/hp

See rebates for more ways to save.

Energy Saving Tips



- Use the Austin Energy mobile app to monitor your energy usage.
- Set thermostats to 78 degrees or higher on hot days.
- Unplug electronics, chargers to avoid an unnecessary drain.
- Use ceiling fans. Set about 4 degrees cooler.
- Wash full loads of laundry to help save money on utility bills.

Print more copies to share at austinenrgy.com/summer

©2020 Austin Energy

Campaign Timing: July - Sept

Sample Digital Display Ads

Q&A



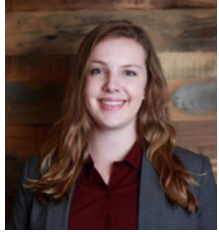
Discussion

Discussion questions

Which questions are you interested in discussing about how utility marketers are adjusting their strategy?

- What are your greatest marketing challenges right now? How are you overcoming them?
- What are your marketing goals or priorities right now?
- How are you making marketing decisions right now?
- How did your internal marketing operations have to change in order to accomplish your new (and old) marketing objectives?
- How are you getting creative with your marketing and outreach right now?
- How are you balancing your utility goals with the needs of customers right now?

Thank you! Questions?



Shelby Kuenzli
Analyst, Customer Engagement Solutions
E Source
303-345-9164
shelby_kuenzli@esource.com



Jenny DiLeo
Public Information and Marketing Program Manager
Austin Energy



Have a question?

Ask E Source!

Submit an inquiry:

www.esource.com/question

You're free to share this document in its entirety inside your company. If you'd like to quote or use our material outside of your business, please contact us at customer_service@esource.com or 1-800-ESOURCE (1-800-376-8723).

15-minute break!

Stay in this meeting!

Up next: Unleashing creativity and compassion—How exactly are utility marketers adjusting their strategy? Part 2



E Source

Unleashing creativity and compassion

How utility marketers are adjusting
their strategy

Kevin Andrews
Lead Analyst, E Source



E Source

Where we're going



Build empathy and understanding for what business customers want and need from their utility



Highlight examples of no- and low-cost support services utilities are offering their business customers



Discuss challenges, solutions, etc. with peers and colleagues

Chat questions!

Who's on the call? Enter your name, title, and utility into the Zoom chat window.

Chat questions!

Who's on the call? Enter your name, title, and utility into the Zoom chat window.

How many E Source leadership council meetings have you attended in the past?

Chat questions!

Who's on the call? Enter your name, title, and utility into the Zoom chat window.

How many E Source leadership council meetings have you attended in the past?

If you could go anywhere in the universe right now, where would you go and what would you be doing? (e.g. Hawaii, SCUBA diving or Hogwarts, quidditch)

Building empathy via E Source market research

- E Design ethnographic insights for small and midsize business (SMB) customers
- E Source SMB gap and priority benchmark—COVID-19 open-ended responses



E Source ethnographic insights

“Developing Successful Relationships with Small and Midsize Business Customers,” Adam Maxwell and Rachel Cooper, E Source (2019)

We nationally recruited 12 businesses. Screening criteria ensured participants:

- Are responsible for paying the energy bills
- Have 10 to 99 employees
- Spend \$25,000 to \$199,999 on electric and gas combined annually
- Actively or extremely actively seek ways to manage energy costs and bills

**Customer
engagement**



**Customer
experience**

E Source ethnographic insights

Daily routines and communication preferences

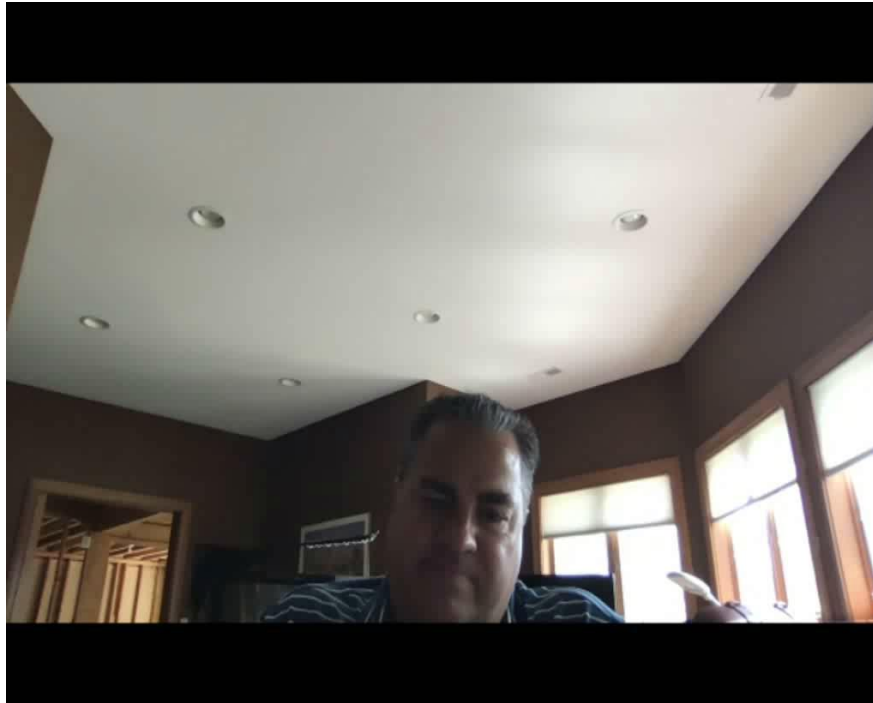
Utility relationships, perceptions, and desires



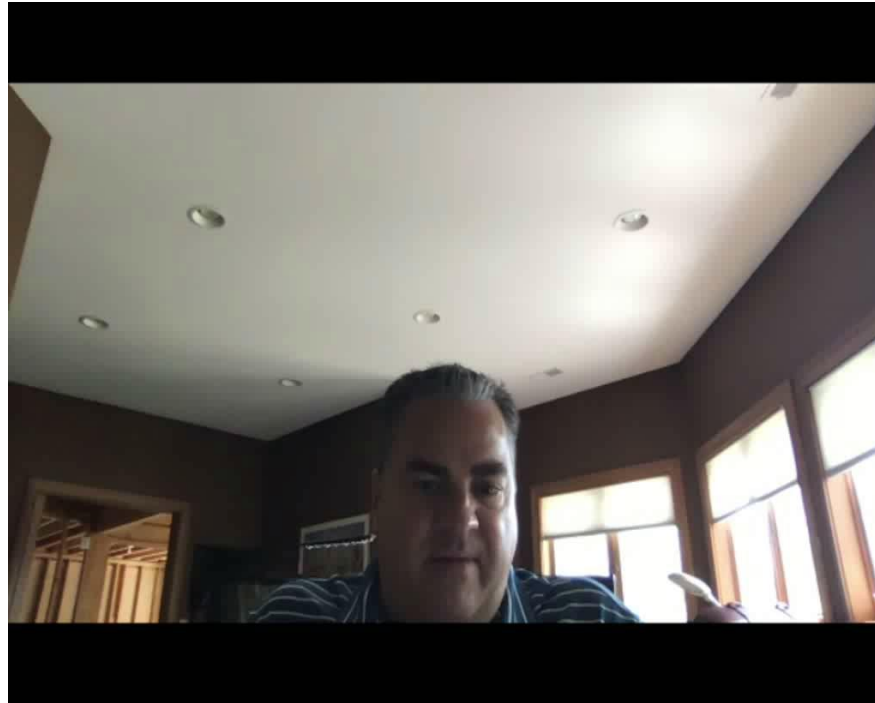
Utility credibility, visibility, trust, and brand

Characteristics of valuable business relationships

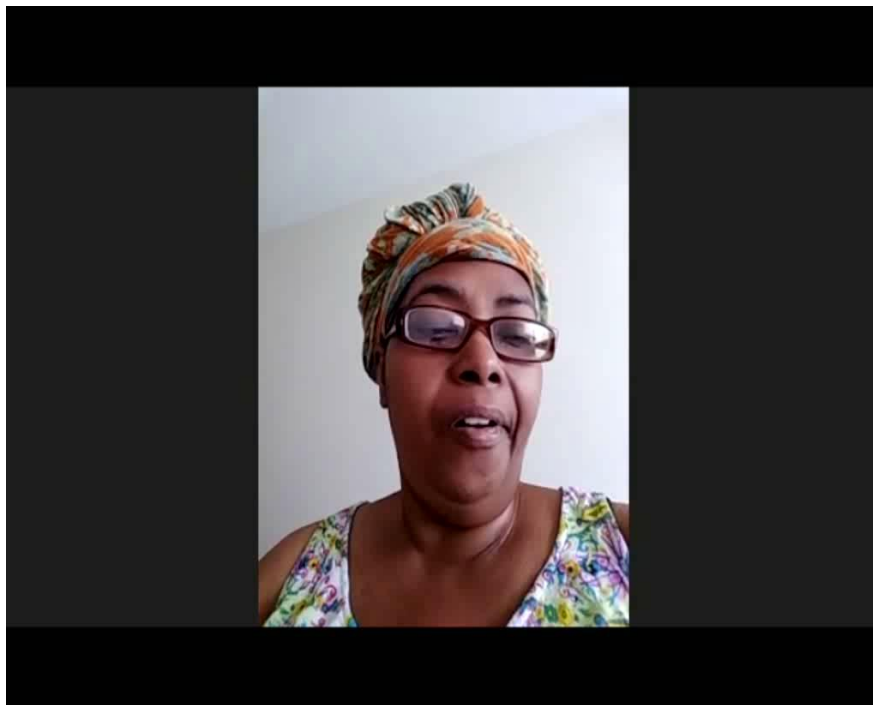
E Source ethnographic insights



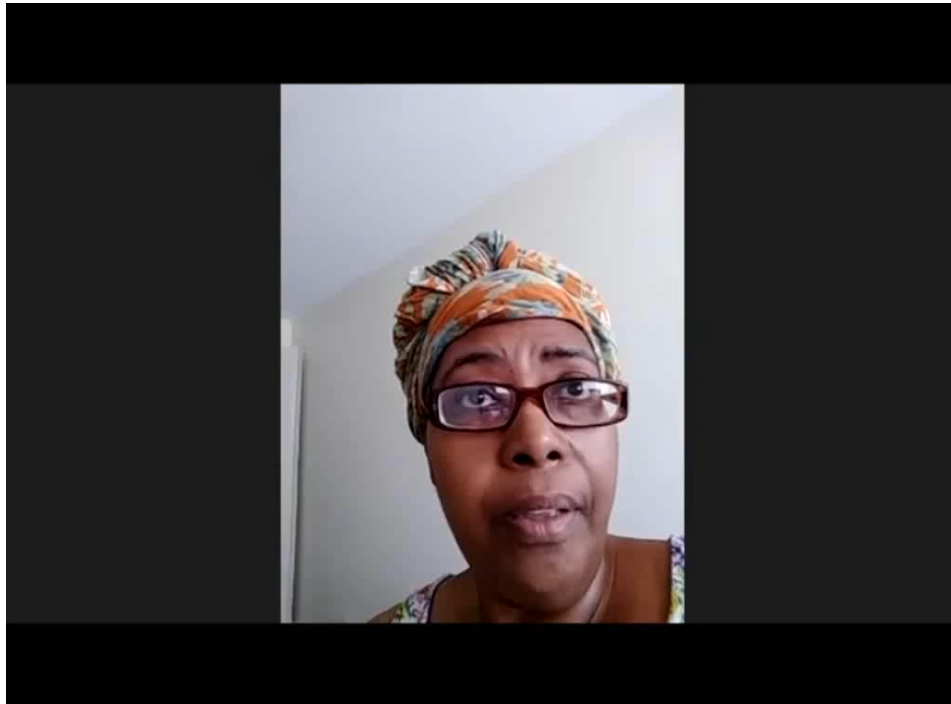
E Source ethnographic insights



E Source ethnographic insights



E Source ethnographic insights



E Source ethnographic insights



Summary of ethnographic insights



Think like a business owner



Create opportunities for active listening



Build relationships



Be proactive with support

Chat questions!

- Which SMB sector(s) have you focused on in recent engagement campaigns? (retail, restaurant, office, etc.)

Chat questions!

- Which SMB sector(s) have you focused on in recent engagement campaigns? (retail, restaurant, office, etc.)

- Are you doing anything specific to COVID-19 to engage with your SMB customers? “Yes” or “No” is fine.

Chat questions!

- Which SMB sector(s) have you focused on in recent engagement campaigns? (retail, restaurant, office, etc.)
- Are you doing anything specific to COVID-19 to engage with your SMB customers? “Yes” or “No” is fine.
- What type(s) of engagement? (call campaigns, mailed information, web-based consultation, kits, etc.)

E Source market research



2020 E Source Small and Midsize Business Gap and Priority Benchmark



Surveyed 296 business customers and included open-ended responses

Please describe anything that [Utility] could do to better serve you or your business. Is there anything specific to COVID-19 that [Utility] could be doing?

SMB COVID-19 responses

Grants and incentives

General finance

Payment plan

General help

Bill-related

Other



Bill-related SMB COVID-19 responses

“We have been hit hard by Covid-19 ... Even though we have shut down almost all lights, etc., our **bill** has not dropped significantly. I am guessing it has to do with minimums or total quantity or something. We could damn well use a break for the rest of the year where we hope to be at 20% of capacity.”

—*Service industry respondent*

Source: 2020 E Source Small and Midsize Business Gap and Priority Benchmark

Bill-related SMB COVID-19 responses

“We have been hit hard by Covid-19 ... Even though we have shut down almost all lights, etc., our **bill** has not dropped significantly. I am guessing it has to do with minimums or total quantity or something. We could damn well use a break for the rest of the year where we hope to be at 20% of capacity.”

—*Service industry respondent*

“We are non-essential and shut down for 6 weeks. We turned all appliances, lighting, a/c, heat, computers, etc. off for the entire time we were down yet our **bill** was still the same as normal. ... I do not understand how a vacant building with very little even plugged in generated the amount of electricity we were billed for.”

—*Retail industry respondent*

Source: 2020 E Source Small and Midsize Business Gap and Priority Benchmark

Bill-related SMB COVID-19 responses

“No one except the Janitor and myself, the church treasurer have been in the buildings since March. Our monthly **bill** has not reflected this at ALL. Is there a way for a person to come check where we are using electricity and why our bill is so big? Thank you.”

—*Congregational respondent*

Source: 2020 E Source Small and Midsize Business Gap and Priority Benchmark

Bill-related SMB COVID-19 responses

“No one except the Janitor and myself, the church treasurer have been in the buildings since March. Our monthly **bill** has not reflected this at ALL. Is there a way for a person to come check where we are using electricity and why our bill is so big? Thank you.”

—*Congregational respondent*

“Have billing questions that are not being sufficiently answered after three phone calls. There is an obvious error of some sort in one or more of my **bills**. After being shut down for two months for covid, **economic issues** like this are critical to be resolved. Is there a way to request an audit of my bills?”

—*Retail industry respondent*

Source: 2020 E Source Small and Midsize Business Gap and Priority Benchmark

Example SMB COVID-19 responses

“Offering **payment plans** during COVID-19 and a **budget plan** thereafter”

Source: 2020 E Source Small and Midsize Business Gap and Priority Benchmark

Example SMB COVID-19 responses

“Offering **payment plans** during COVID-19 and a **budget plan** thereafter”

“This is the first communication that I received from my utility during COVID-19. I think that they could of provided a **grant** or **incentive** to help reduce energy costs while our building was closed for business. All other vendors I work with did.”

Source: 2020 E Source Small and Midsize Business Gap and Priority Benchmark

Example SMB COVID-19 responses

“Offering **payment plans** during COVID-19 and a **budget plan** thereafter”

“This is the first communication that I received from my utility during COVID-19. I think that they could of provided a **grant** or **incentive** to help reduce energy costs while our building was closed for business. All other vendors I work with did.”

“Helping fund, through **grants**, all the projects pushed to the side by covid19”

Source: 2020 E Source Small and Midsize Business Gap and Priority Benchmark

Example SMB COVID-19 responses

“Offering **payment plans** during COVID-19 and a **budget plan** thereafter”

“This is the first communication that I received from my utility during COVID-19. I think that they could of provided a **grant** or **incentive** to help reduce energy costs while our building was closed for business. All other vendors I work with did.”

“Helping fund, through **grants**, all the projects pushed to the side by covid19”

“Response time has been great during COVID-19”

Source: 2020 E Source Small and Midsize Business Gap and Priority Benchmark

Types of low-cost utility support

Simple and supportive communication and info

Virtual audits and inspections

Free, easy-to-install measures and tune-ups

Trade ally engagement and support



Types

Simple and
communication

Behavioral

- Remove or unplug nonessential loads
- Set existing thermostat and lighting systems to unoccupied
- Adjust building ventilation systems (safely)
- Reduce lighting (safely) in parking, garages, and pathways

credits and
incentives

Installs and adjustments

Free, easy
measures and







- Low-flow water fixtures
- Pipe and tank insulation
- LED lighting upgrades
- HVAC duct sealing
- HVAC equipment servicing
- Window glazing/film

engagement
and support

Discussion questions

- How are you creating opportunities for active listening and meaningful engagement with your SMB customers?
- Which sector(s) have been most receptive to your outreach and engagement? Which ones have been the least?
- What are some of the most relevant and timely concerns that customers have shared with you?
- What low-cost support are you providing to SMB customers? Which types of support have been most impactful thus far?

Idaho Power case study

-  25,000 small business customers
-  Free energy-saving kits for small businesses: office, retail, and restaurant
-  No face-to-face interactions with customers after March 13
-  Suspended disconnects and posted energy-saving information
-  Phone campaign in June, starting with retail customers
-  Completed over 500 calls and distributed approximately 350 kits

Idaho Power case study

- 25,000 small business customers
- Free energy-saving kits for small businesses: office, retail and restaurant
- No face-to-face interactions with customers
- Suspended disconnects and posted energy-savings notices
- Phone campaign in June, starting with retail customers
- Completed over 500 calls and distributed approximately 350 kits

Questions?

Discussion questions

- How are you creating opportunities for active listening and meaningful engagement with your SMB customers?
- Which sector(s) have been most receptive to your outreach and engagement? Which ones have been the least?
- What are some of the most relevant and timely concerns that customers have shared with you?
- What low-cost support are you providing to SMB customers? Which types of support have been most impactful thus far?

Key takeaways



Think like a business owner



Create opportunities for active listening



Build relationships



Be proactive with support

Thank you! Questions?



Kevin Andrews

Lead Analyst, E Source

303-345-9209

kevin_andrews@esource.com

Have a question? Ask E Source!

Submit an inquiry:

www.esource.com/question

You're free to share this document in its entirety inside your company. If you'd like to quote or use our material outside of your business, please contact us at customer_service@esource.com or 1-800-ESOURCE (1-800-376-8723).