

Leading Natural Gas Utility Revitalizes CX Program

CASE STUDY



In the past, utilities and power companies may have placed low emphasis on the customer experiences they deliver. This made perfect sense for the many service providers that faced limited competition in their regional markets.

However, rising competition and increasing customer demands are compelling utilities and power companies to rethink the customer experience (CX).

Today, companies in many other industries distinguish themselves by providing exceptional CX. Utility customers have come to expect those same personalized, efficient experiences from their power and utility service providers.

But most power and utility companies are not delivering the highest-quality experiences. In fact, in a cross-industry CX study of 10,000 consumers, utilities received below-average CX ratings from customers—and fell in the “poor” category.¹ Those that act can take the lead in an era of unprecedented change.

“Whether large or small, regulated or unregulated, utilities must ask themselves how they will define the right experience for their customers, balancing customer needs and financial limitations.”

PwC

Gaining Real-Time Insight into Customer Interactions

One large U.S. natural gas utility has recognized the opportunity to improve service to customers and implemented a strong CX program foundation. The company—which provides services to residential, commercial, and government customers—implemented eTouchPoint to revitalize their CX practice.

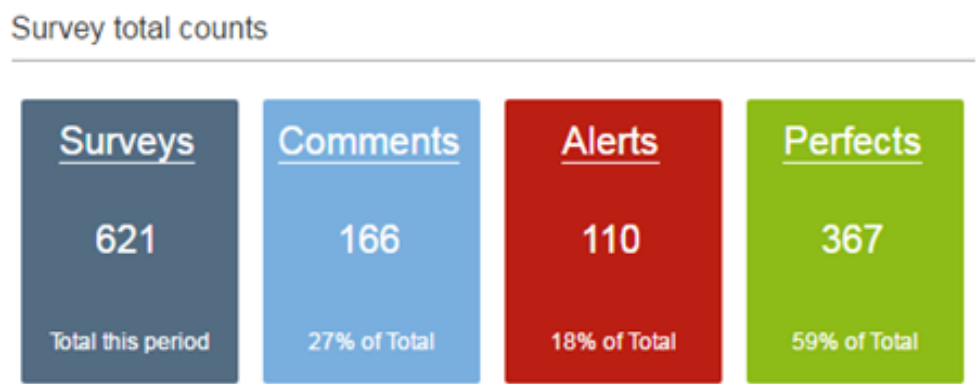
With eTouchPoint, the utility gains real-time insight into each customer interaction. The company accelerated feedback gathering and analytics approaches to measure and monitor frontline effectiveness with customers, CX leaders can now share this intelligence with internal stakeholders throughout the business and strategize ways to strengthen customer loyalty and perceptions of the brand.

Building a Dynamic Feedback Collection Process

Prior to implementing eTouchPoint, this provider relied on a manual, paper-based survey to gather customer feedback. The survey process only collected feedback from customers one time annually. Each year, the company mailed over 15,000 surveys to customers—and received 2,000 responses for a response rate of 13%.

The slow, cumbersome survey distribution and analysis process hindered the utility’s ability to make meaningful change based on customer feedback. In addition, the company could not gain specific insight on how components of their frontline team—such as contact center representatives and response rate of field technicians—were performing.

With eTouchPoint, the company quickly established a more dynamic and meaningful CX feedback gathering program. The revamped feedback gathering process features an automated IVR phone survey delivered to customers within one to three (1 to 3) days after an interaction with a frontline representative.



Another important benefit: survey results are available to internal stakeholders in near-real time via the eTouchPoint platform. Leaders can now view current CX feedback across multiple dimensions—including tracking surveys to specific customers and employees. Today, they can easily analyze the performance of their field service team—by region, supervisor, technician, and even contractors—to drive performance improvements in this key customer-facing operation.

The utility has also established an alerting process that notifies stakeholders of dissatisfied customers who provided negative survey responses. Over time, the company can use this insight to distinguish between one-off and systemic service issues. Leaders can also develop practices for following-up and closing out issues with customers—which can boost customer perceptions and ultimately improve performance of frontline employees.

Focusing on Lower Customer Effort and Higher Customer Satisfaction

To gain the most meaningful customer insight about employee performance, the utility constructed a survey featuring a mix of quantitative and qualitative questions. The first questions of the survey focus on whether a field technician completed the job and reviewed work performed with the customer.

With these questions, the company can understand if the customer needs any follow-up—or a subsequent visit.

#	Sentiment	Question
1	Request Resolved	Has your service request been resolved completely?
2	Review Work	Did the technician review the work that was performed with you before leaving?
3	# of Visits	How many technician visits were required complete your service request?
4	Customer Effort	How satisfied are you that the technician made it easy for you to resolve your issue?
5	Overall Sat.	How would you rate your overall satisfaction with the technician that completed your service request?
6	Comment	Please tell us what we could have done differently to improve your recent service experience. Please share any additional comments you have about the technician.

In addition, the survey asks customers the number of visits required to resolve their issues fully. With this question, the company can assess its “first-time fix” rate—or its capability to address issues with a single visit.

The survey also contains questions focused on two proven CX metrics:

- **Customer Effort Score (CES)** – a metric that evaluates how much effort a customer needs to expend during a transaction.
- **Overall Customer Satisfaction (CSAT)** – a metric that assesses customers’ overall satisfaction with a service or product.

“The immediate mission is clear: Corporate leaders must focus their service organizations on mitigating disloyalty by reducing customer effort.

Harvard Business Review

With CES, the utility can understand how to make visits more effective for customers—and gauge the potential loyalty of their customer base. Analysis published in the *Harvard Business Review* linked lower customer effort to increased loyalty.² And research from Ipsos Loyalty found that customers who expend higher levels of effort are more likely to leave a brand—or complain about it on social media.³

CSAT gives the business strong insight into the quality of their frontline team. This helps the utility’s CX leaders gauge the performance of specific employees or the effectiveness of any training initiatives. By studying CSAT over the long term, the company can understand customers’ overall happiness with interactions—and take steps to remedy issues if CSAT scores start to decline.

The final questions on the survey are open-ended—and allow customers to share perceptions about their experience in their own words. Each customer only receives one open-ended question to solicit more insight about their positive or negative responses to the previous CSAT question.

By offering opportunities for unstructured feedback, the company sends the message to customers that their voices and feelings do matter and can help shape the future of the business. And the company can build a repository of customer perceptions that they can examine for additional insights and feedback themes.

Establishing a Foundation for Future CX Initiatives

Although the company saw quick, measurable results from their revitalized CX program, leaders recognized the potential for greater CX gains in the future. The utility can use survey insights to enrich profiles in their CRM platforms and develop coaching for field employees. Also, CX practitioners expect to establish standard metrics and CX processes across the business.

The company has also made customer satisfaction a key metric on its corporate scorecard—with results tied to bonus compensation. By taking this step, the company ensures its employees understand that customer perceptions are vital to the business’s—and each individual’s—success.

In an industry where customers have often been a lower priority, this emphasis on customers empowers the natural gas utility to stand out as a service leader. As change and choice shakes up local markets, the utility can maintain and grow its foothold—and fortify its reputation as a customer-centric innovator.

About eTouchPoint

Powerful Insights to Perfect the Customer Experience

eTouchPoint offers a cost-effective, easy-to-use, and flexible customer experience (CX) software platform. Our software empowers companies of every scale to capture CX sentiment—across every channel and touchpoint—and take action on customer feedback.

Fortune 500 leaders know us as a flexible and knowledgeable business partner. They cite our passion for exceptional service, deep CX expertise, and innovative approaches as key reasons they rely on us—year after year.

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Notes

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