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24

Rewiring the Utility Industry:

Re-Thinking Customer Experience (CX)

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Regardless of size or scope, utility companies that provide exceptional customer experience (CX) are more likely to achieve long-term growth and sustainability. Regardless of industry, company leaders can learn from success stories in the utility industry. That means placing four key priorities front and center:

Resiliency

Providing a consistent product, regardless of external pressures.

Reliability

Quickly acting to resolve any disruptions to service.

Affordability

Balancing infrastructure investment with keeping costs reasonable for consumers.

Customer Choice

Empowering customers with tiered product and pricing options.



The Challenge: Keeping Pace with Digital Demands

Meeting these expectations can be a tall order. Customers don't compare your organization to the competitor down the street per se. Instead, they measure you against Amazon, Uber, and other digital leaders. This high bar should challenge you to continuously innovate to bridge the gap between your product offerings and the digital world.

Finding Common Ground

Developing a successful solution requires collaborating with different stakeholders. It's a balancing act — you likely need to gather input from diverse groups, including customers, government bodies, local communities, and customer service representatives (CSRs).

Reaching the best outcome can be challenging. It involves iteration, gathering feedback, and adapting to new information. You can't get fixated on a single approach. Conversely, you must be flexible and adaptable as needed to find the best solution for all parties.

Embracing Customer Centricity

A winning strategy centers deeply on the customer experience. You might leverage multiple channels to connect with customers, from traditional voice calls to social media. Many younger customers appreciate self-service options, accessible through mobile apps and online portals. They can manage accounts, track outages, and make payments at their convenience.

That being said, digital transformation is more than infrastructure. It's about fostering a culture of empathy and understanding with every customer. It's worth your time and energy to actively solicit customer feedback through surveys, focus groups, and social media engagement. Analyzing this data allows you to tailor solutions and continuously improve the customer journey.

A Model for Success: Elevating The Customer Experience

Here are some real-world examples of how you can use digital transformation to enhance the customer experience:

Personalized Communication

Data analytics can inform and personalize communications. For example, you can empower customers with relevant information about energy usage, billing statements, and outage updates.

Omnichannel Engagement

Convenience is everything today. Make it intuitive and seamless for customers to reach you through whatever venue they prefer — voice calls, text messages, email, social media, etc.

Talent Development

You need a workforce that reflects both technical acumen and business knowledge to keep customers happy. With this in mind, consider rotational assignments and upskilling to bridge the gap between IT and operations. You might also consider non-traditional paths for attracting talent (i.e., cybersecurity certificates) to attract the brightest and the best who may be hiding in plain sight because they lack a four-year degree. Moreover, don't discount the importance of mentorship and creating a safe space for honest feedback within the organization.

The Future of Business Is (Responsible) Digital Adoption

The era of digital adoption has arrived — and it's here to stay. Those serious about applying technology to solve real-world problems must place the customer at the center of digital transformation.

Much like the printing press, the advent of AI represents a significant shift in the business world. The responsible use of GenAI cannot be overstated. Unleashing its power and potential without proper guardrails would be akin to opening the floodgates. You, as a technology or business leader, must establish a framework that reflects thoughtful innovation while maximizing benefits and acknowledging risks.

By taking a proactive stance on GenAI governance, business leaders like yourself can unlock its potential while doing your best to anticipate potential liability. This intentional approach will pave the way for a future where GenAI serves as a powerful tool for progress and a force for good.



The rStar Advantage: Innovation and Adaptability

The utility industry is on the cusp of a significant transformation, driven by factors like renewable energy integration, grid modernization, and evolving customer expectations.

There's no time like the present to actively explore and implement emerging technologies like artificial intelligence and blockchain to improve grid operations, elevate customer service, and enhance security. At the same time, that means nurturing a culture of innovation, encouraging experimentation, and adopting new ideas to stay relevant and competitive. This culture allows organizations to stay agile and adapt to changing customer needs and technological advancements.

Integrating new innovations, especially in highly regulated industries, can be daunting. But you do not have to go it alone. rSTAR, with its years of experience in CX and AI for the energy and utilities sector, offers a path forward. rSTAR has helped utility companies achieve the following outcomes:

- Accelerate customer support through an omnichannel AI chatbot
- Increase customer satisfaction through responsiveness and self-service experience
- Reduce wait time and improve customer experience
- Create a personalized service using AI
- Integrate chatbots into the company's existing service framework

Ready to become an All-Star?

Schedule a free assessment session and get on the path to transforming your customer service experience.



About Mark Browning

Mark Browning joined the rSTAR Advisory Council in 2024. Prior to serving as an Advisor, Mark retired from a 35-year career at Exelon. He held numerous roles there, including Enterprise Architect, IT Director of Large Utility Projects, IT Director Utility Solutions, VP of IT for ComEd, and Vice President IT and CIO Exelon Utilities. He most recently served as Senior Vice President IT and CIO.

In 2023, Mark was recognized as the Chicago Large Enterprise CIO of the year by Inspire ORBIE Awards for his outstanding leadership, management effectiveness, and business value created through technology innovation as Senior Vice President and Chief Information Office at Exelon. The Awards are presented by ChicagoCIO, the preeminent peer leadership network for Chicagoland's leading Chief Information Officers.