

## **What drives business customer satisfaction? Communication.**

by Jared G. Dovers

The challenges of a modern electric utility are many. New technology has reinvented the way you operate on a daily basis and promises to keep those changes coming. A challenging regulatory environment and door-to-door solar panel salesmen only add to the things that utilities have to respond to.

But, despite the new challenges, the big picture remains the same: Are you keeping your customers satisfied with their service and their experience interacting with your utility?

Satisfying customers is a challenge for any company, and utilities have their own customer satisfaction challenges. Each year, J.D. Power conducts a national satisfaction survey for various utilities. From these results, they come away with generalizations about what makes a satisfied electric customer.

This year's survey was all about business and what you can do to help keep your industrial and commercial accounts satisfied. According to their website ([www.jdpower.com](http://www.jdpower.com)), consistent communication is the key to keeping your key accounts satisfied. And, not just about outages. The survey showed that taking the time to explain your various energy-efficiency programs, often in person, to businesses resulted in a more satisfied customer.

As utility communicators, most of our focus is getting residential members to recognize, appreciate and participate in your programs like pre-pay, bank draft or an energy audit. We suggest auditing these communications often to make sure your message is both consistent and comprehensive. However, this same practice should be applied to your commercial and industrial customers.

These members have unique needs and should be approached differently. Can you name 10 of your offerings that you've marketed just to your business customers? The J.D. Power survey found that the more products and services these customers are aware of, the higher their overall satisfaction. Specifically, businesses that were aware of 10 or more offerings were far more satisfied than those only aware of four or five offerings.

To the extent it's possible for your utility, consider having a dedicated person (or team) that these customers can contact. That same survey found overall satisfaction among businesses who had assigned account managers scored 100 points higher than among those that did not have an account manager.

Not every utility has the resources to have multiple account managers, but a single person could manage several accounts, or accounts could be spread among your entire CSR team. The important thing is that these customers felt they had an individual with whom they had a relationship to contact if there was a concern.

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