CenterPoint Energy  
*Natural Gas - Customer Attrition Reversal Study & Strategy*

Presented By: Dan Dippon, Director, Marketing & Sales

During the summer of 2012, CenterPoint Energy conducted a four month research study to better understand the drivers of the customer attrition that the company was experiencing in their southern footprint. Savitz Research conducted the market research and a summer intern and MBA candidate; conducted further analysis to quantify the impacts.

The research gauged both qualitative and quantitative preferences around natural gas: (1) Reasons for leaving natural gas; (2) Reasons for not connecting available natural gas upon move-in; (3) Evaluation of perception of natural gas safety, cost and efficiency; and finally (3) what factors might encourage a return to the use of natural gas.

Builders and developers were also approached to gain their perspectives on both what can be done to better motivate inclusion of natural gas in new developments; and to get a sense of what they believe will motivate customers to use the energy source.

They’ve taken the research findings and created a multi-faceted plan that involves their Gas Operations, Marketing, Sales, Regulatory, Call Center, a team of analysts; and a special team START (Service Technicians Attrition Reversal Team). The plan lays out a framework that first will increase and re-focus their Customer Education. This would involve leveraging targeted and segmentation technology with their bill inserts emails, etc. to better reach impacted customers. CenterPoint will also reinforce the safety of natural gas and technological advancements with natural gas appliances in addition to their traditional gas safety messaging.

Finally they plan on implementing a customer-centric retention plan that proactively uses mobile data to seize the opportunity for understanding what is in the home and then in turn: increasing natural gas appliance real-estate within that home. CenterPoint is also positioning their call center and service technicians to provide a more probing front for customers who might want to cancel. They’d like to arm them with a suite of retention tools: (1) The ability to do call-backs to reach customers with recent safety issues; (2) The ability to offer (and design of) appliance voucher programs; (3) Clear and customer-friendly tags and collateral explaining how to get their appliance back on service after being disconnected for safety; and (4) Perhaps even the ability to waive costs to deter seasonal drop-offs.

CenterPoint Energy is very proud of their operational, marketing and call center’s ability to rally together around the very important task of retaining customers and continuously emphasizing the benefits of natural gas.

CenterPoint Energy will continue their efforts, both strategic and tactical, to reduce the number of customers leaving their system as they also look for opportunities to extend their system by new meter acquisitions, expansions and even promoting natural gas to a whole new generation: The Millennials.

In 2014, CenterPoint Energy plans to expand their Dealer Circle programs across their southern footprint; align their efforts with new technician and customer incentives; and look at grass-root and guerrilla tactics for really engaging their customers in what are at times sparse and hard-to-reach areas.
2013-2014
Marketing Excellence Awards Honorable Mention

ONE Gas

*The ONE in Energy: New Home Program*

Presented By: Steve Dudley, Oklahoma Natural Gas