

**SESSION TITLE:**

Plugging In to Consumers: How do you impact behavior to help individuals become more energy efficient?

SPEAKER SUMMARIES:

Sheril Kirshenbaum, Director, UT Austin Energy Poll

- As Director of the UT Austin Energy Poll, Kirshenbaum is interested in the attitudes of consumers and the relationship between energy efficiency and public policy. She shared that according to the UT Austin Energy Poll, 53% of Americans believe that there doesn't need to be a trade off between the environment and economy.

Danielle Sass Byrnett, Director, Better Buildings Neighborhood Program, U.S. Department of Energy

- As Director of a 500 million dollar program, funded through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA), Byrnett shared lessons learned from the 41 grant recipients working to increase energy efficiency in communities through the Better Buildings Neighborhood Program. She stated the grantees that were the most successful inspired residents in their consumers through targeted marketing, carefully crafted messaging, and supportive programming that work with clients from energy audit to energy retrofits.

Erwin Furukawa, Senior Vice President of Customer Service, Southern California Edison

- Furukawa, Senior Vice President of Customer Service, Southern California Edison, shared the engagement strategies used by a large utility with nearly 14 million customers in over an 50,000 square mile territory. He reiterated the need for tailored marketing that provide opportunities for energy efficiency and highlighted some of the Southern California Edison's recent strategic partnerships, including a collaboration with Nest Learning Thermostat.

Chuck Wilson, Program Director, Small Town Energy Program for University Park (STEP-UP)

- As the Program Director of STEP-UP a local Better Buildings Neighborhood Program grantee, Wilson shared some lessons learned from his energy efficiency program. Wilson stated that the key to successful community-based energy efficiency programs is to reduce transaction and trust barriers, and leverage local infrastructure when possible.

SESSION WRAP-UP

Thought-leaders in this session discussed successful strategies for consumer-targeted energy efficiency programs from the federal, utility, and local community perspective. Chuck Wilson, Program Director, Small Town Energy Program for University Park (STEP-UP) shared that in order to be effective energy-efficient programs that are targeted to households must reduce transaction and trust barriers and leverage local infrastructure. Other speakers echoed his experience and added that across the country, the programs that have been most effective in achieving results have use tailored messaging, partnered with organizations that have credibility in the community, and used grassroots and word of mouth campaigns to deliver energy efficiency programs to households.

Session participants asked panelists about smart meter deployment and how this has positively or negatively impacted their programs, particularly with perceived health concerns related to the transmission technology.



Furukawa stated that there were some initial issues with the deployment of smart meters in their territory and concerned citizens. However, they offered an opt out program which seemed to mitigate these concerns. Overall smart meters are providing accurate and timely energy data that is changing the way that utilities can best respond to consumer needs.

Session participants also asked for the speakers to elaborate on the most effective ways to engage with consumers. From the utility perspective, Furukawa shared that it is important to find the right value proposition for consumers when it comes to smart technology. Furukawa shared that he likes to think of their programs for different audiences - green customers, cost-savers, technology leaders - as 'Energy Happy Meals' and the utilities offer tailored programs and products for energy efficiency and demand response to fit their customers needs.

Byrnett, Director of the Better Buildings Neighborhood Program shared examples of successful grantees who used customer testimonials to engage more clients. She offered the example of a Michigan grantee who elevated senior leaders who were respected in the community as program champions. These stakeholders were both program participants and advocates. The Michigan grantees also used this neighborhood champion idea to get neighborhood-wide adoption of their energy efficiency programs. Other grantees used phone banking and other peer to peer engagement tools. Using this peer to peer marketing model they were able to get higher absorption with a quarter of the typical marketing budget.

Session participants also asked for tips engaging stakeholders through social media. Byrnett shared that in the Better Buildings Neighborhood Program grantee experience social media is valuable in the way that advertising works. Social media enables grantees to establish a brand and gain local community exposure and trust. However, social media has not been as effective at getting a household to schedule an energy audit or initiate an energy efficiency improvement. Wilson, a Better Building Neighborhood Program grantee reiterated that social media does not drive decision-making but does drive awareness and STEP-UP has found it to be a useful way to get community members to attend outreach events. Furukawa added that from the utility perspective, social media plays a huge role in customer engagement, particularly during outages and severe weather events. Southern California Edison uses social media to more acutely identify areas where there are service delivery areas and more rapidly respond to these communities.

During final comments, Kirshenbaum, Director of UT Austin Energy Poll shared that among those who were polled, those who were the most concerned about energy consumption were not always making the most energy efficient choices. Panelists all agreed that there is a lot to be learned from the successes of the Better Buildings Neighborhood Program grantees and others, including utility programs, that are trying to motivate behavior change to achieve energy consumption reductions. However, they all agreed that tailoring programs to meet the needs of different types of consumers was key to the success of residential energy efficiency programs. They agreed that in order to be successful these programs must be championed by local, trusted, leaders.



ACTION ITEMS & TAKEAWAYS

- Byrnett encouraged session participants to stay tuned on the Better Buildings Neighborhood Program website for case studies, innovations, and best-practices from the Better Buildings Neighborhood Program grantees.