

# ONLINE ENERGY PORTALS FOR BUSINESSES

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HOW WELL DO THEY ALIGN WITH  
THE VALUES AND PERSPECTIVES OF  
SMALL AND MEDIUM BUSINESS  
OWNERS?

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OCTOBER 21, 2016



NAVIGANT

# EFFECTIVENESS OF ONLINE PORTALS

Online portals offer SMBs energy use feedback and provide them with tips and a strategy to save energy. But how effective are they?



The image shows a promotional email for DTE Energy's Business Energy Checkup program. At the top left is the DTE Energy logo. Below it is a photograph of a woman with curly hair talking on a mobile phone in what appears to be a retail or warehouse setting. The main heading reads "INTRODUCING DTE ENERGY'S BUSINESS ENERGY CHECKUP". Below this, the text says "Boost your bottom line by understanding your energy usage and find easy ways to save." It then lists benefits of the program: "With the Business Energy Checkup Program you can:" followed by a bulleted list: "Establish an energy profile", "Better understand your energy use", "Assess your energy opportunities", "Take actions to realize energy savings, and", and "Participate more actively in DTE Energy programs". A blue "GET STARTED" button is positioned to the right of the list. At the bottom, there is a small disclaimer: "This email was sent by: DTE Energy, One Energy Plaza, Detroit, MI 48226-1279 USA. If you'd prefer not to receive these messages in the future from DTE Energy Business Energy Checkup, you can [unsubscribe](#) here. We respect your right to privacy - [view our policy](#)."

Source: C3 Marketing Materials Summary Presentation for DTE, 2013

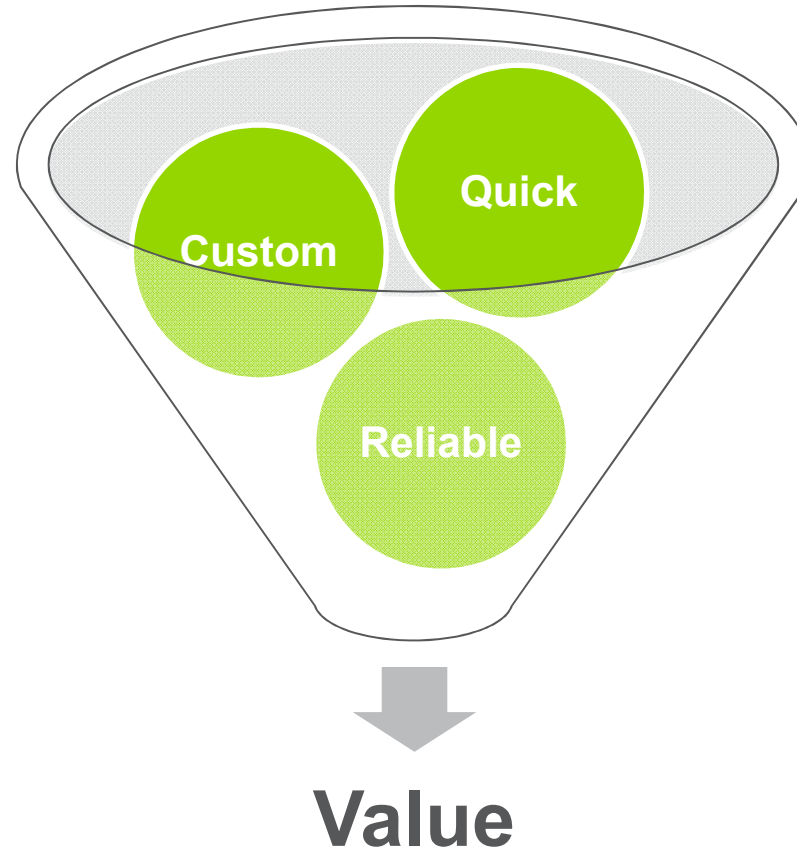
**Business Value:** reduced operating expenses to support business viability.

**Utility Value:** enhanced energy efficiency and customer engagement.

**Program Challenge:** attracting and retaining participants.

**Research Question:** Is the program well-aligned with customer expectations, perceptions, and experiences.

## FINDINGS: SMB PERSPECTIVES



# WHAT SMALL & MEDIUM BUSINESSES WANT: **QUICK**

Small business owners have limited time and staff to handle energy efficiency initiatives.

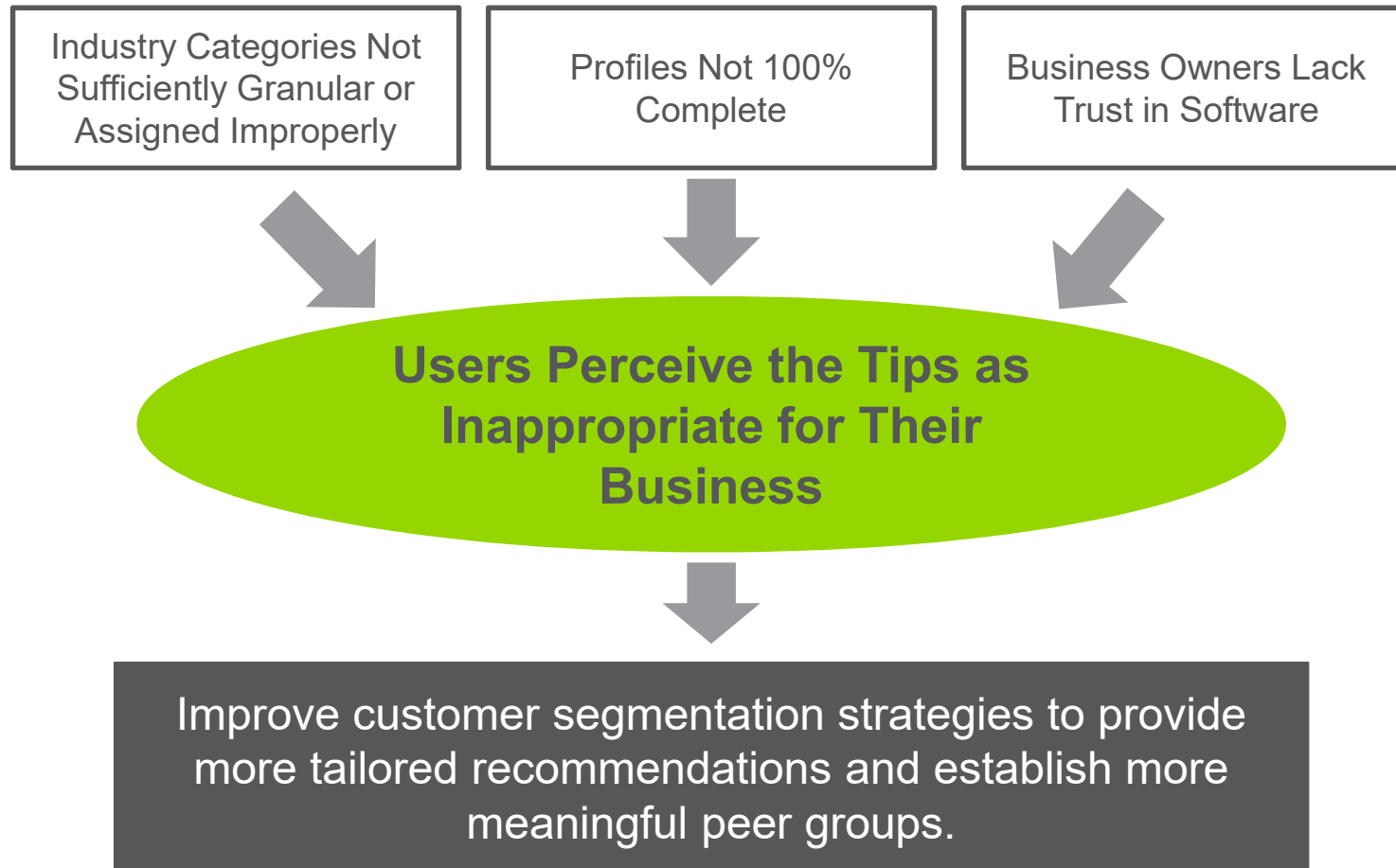


**Offer a  
One-Step  
Assessment**

Most frequent web visits are right after sign-up

Competing priorities and a lack of time prevent users from engaging with the portal and program

# WHAT SMALL BUSINESSES WANT: CUSTOMIZATION



# WHAT SMALL BUSINESSES WANT: RELIABLE SOURCES

Business owners already value utility partner as a trusted source of information

Point to testimonies of business owners in similar industries, neighborhoods, or backgrounds

Provide live guidance (e.g., live chat and/or call center functionality)



Capitalize on existing trust with the **utility** and with **other business owners** to facilitate opportunities for interactive communications.

# CONCLUSIONS

QUICK

CUSTOM

RELIABLE

One-Step  
Assessment



# OPTIONS FOR REALIGNMENT

## ONSITE AUDIT

- Pros
  - Highly tailored to the individual circumstances of the SMB
  - Reduce instances of technical difficulty
- Cons
  - Expensive—will require financial contribution from the company
  - More time consuming

## ONLINE AUDIT

- Pros
  - Cost-effective to implement
  - Requires little time on behalf of the business owner
  - Most users are web-competent
- Cons
  - Difficult to create customized recommendations
  - Customer doubts concerning reliability

## TARGETED AUDIT WORKSHOP

- Pros
  - In-person guidance at the neighborhood level
  - Brings utility-sponsored information together with similar business experience
- Cons
  - Organizational challenges—identifying groups, communication, hosting
  - Potentially expensive



# CONTACTS

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