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Title: Utility Marketplace and Partnership: Utilization of Instant Rebate Platform for Incentive Distribution and Customer Engagement

Abstract: Utilities provide billions of dollars in rebates and incentives to its customers. Traditionally, customers wanting to participate in a rebate application had to submit applications online or via mail. This can be a cumbersome and inefficient process for the customer and the utilities staff involved. However, with the advent of Utility branded e-commerce marketplaces, Utilities are able to provide instant rebates at the point of sale to the customers. In the era of Amazon shopping, consumers are used to one-click buying and next day shipping. Utility marketplaces are offering customers the Amazon-style experience while increasing participation in rebate programs and enhancing customer experience and satisfaction. The presentation will tell the story of SMUD (Sacramento Municipal Utility District's) Energy Store and their partnership with City of Sacramento Utilities and Regional Water Authority to sell water efficiency products online, highlighting the use of instant rebates at checkout and other promotional tools. Launched in October 2018, the instant rebate partnership has shown participation by customers in unprecedented numbers. The team consisting of utilities, product vendor and platform vendor had to quickly scale up the program to meet the demand. The instant rebate is a perfect example of a 'nudge' in behavioral economics by Thaler and Sunstein; by changing the choice architecture of the rebate program, it altered people's behavior in a predictable way without significantly changing their economic incentives. The presentation will cover the successes and lessons learned from this endeavor.