

Mallika Jayaraman, Navigant Consulting

Title: Insights on Enhancing Engagement with Real-time Energy Feedback and Expanding Energy Savings

Abstract: Mobile apps are a new frontier in behavioral energy efficiency, allowing utilities to deliver energy feedback directly to customers at daily, hourly or minute-by-minute intervals. The first step to engaging customers with these apps is motivating them to download the app to their smartphone or tablet. However, unlike traditional energy efficiency programs, the customer journey does not have a clearly defined end point, such as installing equipment or receiving a rebate check. For customers to realize the full value of the app and its associated energy savings, they must continue to engage with the app over time.

This research provides insights into effective motivators for keeping customers engaged with energy feedback to maximize savings. Our analysis uses journey mapping as a tool to understand the short and long-term drivers of customer engagement with DTE's Insight App. Preliminary findings suggest that customers are most interested using the app to monitor and decrease their energy use over time, by using features such as setting a monthly budget and comparison to previous years. This research also explores how the app influences participants' energy-related habits and demographic characteristics of highly engaged app users. These insights can also be applied to other behavioral energy efficiency tools requiring continuous engagement by customers over time, including online energy management portals or dashboards.

Previous evaluations of this program have revealed that savings increase as annual engagements with the app increase. Savings also increase when a customer installs an Energy Bridge, a device that connects to their smart meter to provide them with access to real-time energy feedback. Given this finding, it was critical to develop an understanding of both how to drive greater engagement with the Insight App and how to motivate more customers to request an Energy Bridge. Our customer journey map details a participant's journey from downloading the app to becoming an engaged user over time. The final analysis will provide insights into what motivates app engagement, how the app has affected energy-saving behaviors, and result in recommendations for the utility to increase participation and engagement.