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Title: Scaling Up Requires a Paradigm Shift for Data Access

Abstract: The Green Button Connect My Data Standard (NAESB REQ.21, the Energy Service Provider Interface) is an industry adopted open protocol to allow a consumer to securely share personal utility data with a designated third party. It is not, however, an implementation strategy.   With the intent of supporting authorized access to data, to support innovation in customer services in the market place, regulatory commissions have directed utilities to recognize this standard. Utilities, to honor this guidance have paid to make Green Button solutions available for their customers. These data access portals have all differed in significant ways, however, and we have learned from practice that, even were they identical, this approach presents a new barrier to expansion and market penetration for emerging technology and services. It is simply not commercially viable for a third-party service provider to separately integrate its online marketing, enrollment, and operations systems for each utility. Furthermore, only the largest utilities can afford or manage these portals, and third parties can only afford to offer services in the largest service areas, where there are incentives or subsidies. Customers of small and medium utilities will likely never see competitive service offerings that require data access under this paradigm. Capital is turning away from smart home solutions too, because of market barriers, chief among them this barrier to data access. So, what began with good intentions all around is costing millions of dollars, and obtaining few customer benefits.   What is needed is analogous to the ATM system in retail banking: a simple, single, solution to which every utility can be connected, and to which each third-party entrepreneur can integrate one time, to reach customers across geographies, or service areas. Such a system could have something else in common with the interbank security software solutions that support the ATM system. Today, utility customers fund the creation of Green Button Portals, and the data, although little used, is available free. If instead we encourage the collaborative development of a Green Button Connect global solution, it will cost less up front. Third parties will be drawn to use it, because the massive duplication of effort required today is eliminated, presenting one simple portal through which to offer broad markets their innovation. This is so attractive, third parties will be willing to pay some small fee for use of this platform. Venture will be attracted back into this sector, animating the market. Utilities, and their customers, can actually be compensated for investment in AMI. A single platform can provide better security than many utilities implementing their own, be widely available to customers of utilities of every size, be constantly upgrading and updating, and insure better customer experience.