

## **Bill LeBlanc, E Source**

**Title:** Empathy, Ethnography, Engagement: Accelerating Change through Human-Centered Design

**Abstract:** Companies such as Apple, Airbnb, Starbucks, and Amazon use the power of design thinking to discover unmet customer wants and needs and grow their markets how might we use that same human-centered design approach in the utility industry to accelerate adoption of clean energy solutions? Through the use of ethnographic research, we will share a selection of both disturbing and refreshing insights discovered through intimate conversations with nearly 100 utility customers. Using video clips of customers describing their own frustrations, barriers, and experiences, we will show how design thinking charts a path to creating new perspectives on old problems such as low income solutions and energy efficiency, but also in fast-emerging areas such as electric mobility, solar, and connected homes. Examples of design insights and imperatives, along with product/solutions concepts, will be shared. For example, EV drivers don't have range anxiety after about a week of owning one...yet this keeps coming up as a primary sales barrier. How might our knowledge of behavior science help people overcome this unnecessary fear? How might we use the power of social norms to multiply the effect of regional EV adoption through social media, rewards, events, and peer sharing? Would a 'carrot-mob' approach to bulk buying EVs work? Our designers are using these and other innovative concepts to accelerate adoption of technologies and solutions that can truly shift markets. Conference attendees will get to experience, with their own eyes and ears, real customer issues; this form of storytelling can be extremely powerful, often to a greater degree than data. This allows us to empathize with the people whose behavior we are trying to nudge and shift, informing and reminding us that if we don't design based upon customer needs, we are likely to fall flat with our efforts. And attendees will also get to see how customer insights are built upon sometimes cryptic messages we hear during these interviews. These techniques can be used to solve almost any design problem.