

Can They Hear You Now? Ten Behavior Change Marketing Faux Pas

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Introduction

Behavior change programs are all the rage in energy efficiency DSM portfolios, but how to design and execute an effective program can still be a mystery. Many utilities are taking a “Field of Dreams” approach to behavior change program design: *“if we build it, (customers) will come (along).”* Based on primary and secondary research of both indirect and direct behavior change programs throughout North America, this poster will provide viewers with insight on common faux pas made by behavior change program designers and implementers. These faux pas include everything from basic marketing decisions e.g., promoting a nameless program, to the execution process e.g., “promote and forget ‘em.” Avoiding these less effective methods and keeping customer perspectives at the forefront of program design decision-making can enhance direct or indirect behavior change programs whether they’re just beginning or have been running for a number of years.

Granted, utilities often have competing interests and resources to balance. Also, we have yet to encounter or build an all-encompassing-silver-bullet ideal behavior change program design. Based on research and engaging utility clients in the evaluation process, we identified a few impediments for achieving behavior change program goals and put a spin on less than best practices. Viewers will walk away with not only a smile on their face, but with a few more successful strategies for designing and implementing successful behavior change programs.

Top Ten Faux Pas (as heard through the evaluation process)

1. Promote a nameless program--*“We don’t want to confuse our customers with another program name.”*
2. Provide long lists of energy saving tips—*“Here are some great ideas for saving money and energy...”*
3. Cast a wide net (exposure counts as participation)-- *“We take ‘participation’ credit for everyone who attends the event at which we have a booth because everyone attending has been exposed to our behavior change messaging.”*
4. Just do it! Customers should be motivated to act on the energy saving tips on their own merit-- *“Our legal counsel would rather not provide savings values because they are too risky”*
5. Play it safe: Utilities ought not think outside the box-- *“We’re a utility, besides, humor doesn’t sell.”*
6. Out of sight; out of mind. Promote and forget about them with no need for follow-up.--*“We have the web site if customers want more information.”*
7. Be all things to all people-- *“Our web site has to serve many needs. Customers will find behavior change information through our expertly designed navigation.”*
8. Everyone is on board--*“Everyone ought to want to know how to save energy.”*
9. Target tunnel vision--*“We have our targets and we’re going to stick with them.”*
10. Put all eggs in the social norms basket—*“We’re happy with 1-2% portfolio level savings attributable to behavior change using the home energy reports.”*