

NEWS RELEASE

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Utilities Increase Engagement with Consumers; 44 Named 2015 Customer Champions

Despite improvements, some customer segments continue to be underserved

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(Cambridge, MA) In 2015, many of the nation's 125 largest electric and natural gas utilities made significant strides in strengthening bonds with residential consumers compared with 2014. Along with the release of its [2015 Utility Trusted Brand & Customer Engagement™: Residential Study](#) which includes these results, [Cogent Reports™](#), a division of Market Strategies International, also named 44 Customer Champions, an elite group of utilities that achieved top-tier Engaged Customer Relationship (ECR) scores based on feedback from more than 52,000 residential ratepayers.

Details of the report show year-over-year industrywide gains across a spectrum of 74 attributes related to Brand Trust, Operational Satisfaction and Product Experience, the three core components that comprise the overall ECR scores first introduced by Cogent Reports in 2014. However, the biggest gains in 2015 were related to the emotional connection consumers feel with their utility—a key aspect of Brand Trust—satisfaction with safety and reliability, and improved ratings for education efforts to promote the benefits of utility value-added programs.

In the wake of the industry's current mergers, mandates and new market entrants, Chris Oberle, senior vice president at Market Strategies notes that improved customer engagement performance bodes well for all stakeholders and believes the current momentum will continue.

"These results prove that the industry is in transition and is becoming more engaged with its customers on important topics and forming stronger relationships with them," said Oberle. "This is proof the industry sees value in and is getting focused on building real franchise value beyond its pipes and wires presence."

According to Cogent, an area where there is room for improvement is better targeting by utilities to increase engagement with specific customer segments on the offerings, products and options they have developed. This is a reflection of the fact that along with the obligation to serve defined geographies, comes an industry challenge to build relationships with a very diverse customer base.

"We have found that customer ratings on brand, product and satisfaction vary greatly by customer type. Utilities that have successfully targeted customer segments based upon their product offering needs have much higher customer engagement scoring," Oberle added. "In addition, some utilities lag on serving diverse customer bases. For instance, among 23 utilities

that were top performers on engaging Hispanic customers, only three come from border states. Top performers in the future will be utilities that have built a successful customer management strategy.”

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2015 UTILITY CUSTOMER CHAMPIONS*								
Engaged Customer Relationship (ECR™) Strength Scores								
ELECTRIC			NATURAL GAS			COMBINATION		
Utility	Region	ECR	Utility	Region	ECR	Utility	Region	ECR
Salt River Project	West	775	TECO Peoples Gas	South	796	CPS Energy	South	764
Florida Power & Light	South	765	NW Natural	West	785	Louisville Gas & Electric	South	759
PPL Electric Utilities	East	759	Piedmont Natural Gas	South	771	MidAmerican Energy	Midwest	758
Georgia Power	South	756	Virginia Natural Gas	South	771	DTE Energy	Midwest	748
Entergy	South	755	Columbia Gas - South	South	770	Consumers Energy	Midwest	744
Idaho Power	West	753	Southwest Gas	West	768	NYSEG	East	730
Pacific Power	West	749	SoCalGas	West	765	Puget Sound Energy	West	726
SMUD	West	749	PSNC Energy	South	762	RG&E	East	719
OG&E	South	746	Alagasco	South	758	Delmarva Power	East	711
Gulf Power	South	742	New Jersey Natural Gas	East	754	SDG&E	West	711
OPPD	Midwest	741	Texas Gas Service	South	751	NorthWestern Energy	West	711
Portland General Electric	West	739	CenterPoint Energy - South	South	750	PSE&G	East	710
Kentucky Utilities	South	733	Columbia Gas of Ohio	Midwest	750	BGE	East	709
Alabama Power	South	732	National Fuel Gas	East	738			
Nashville Electric Service	South	730	CenterPoint Energy - Midwest	Midwest	732			
Central Maine Power	East	729						
Indianapolis Power & Light	Midwest	727						
Ohio Edison	Midwest	714						
Indiana Michigan Power	Midwest	709						
Dayton Power & Light	Midwest	707						

* Utility Customer Champion designation is based on the Cogent Reports™ Engaged Customer Relationship (ECR) index. The ECR index is a composite score based upon over 50,000 residential customer interviews, and takes three separate measures into account including Brand Trust, Operational Satisfaction and Product Experience. All utilities that are in the top quartile in their region and score above the regional average, or score 750 or higher on a 1000-point scale achieve Customer Champion status.

Source: Market Strategies International. Cogent Reports™: Utility Trusted Brand & Customer Engagement™: Residential. December 2015.

COGENT™ ENERGY REPORTS

2015 LEADING UTILITIES ENGAGING WITH HISPANICS

Utility	Region	Hispanic ECR Index
OG&E	South	813
TECO Peoples Gas	South	808
Southwest Gas	West	808
Seattle City Light	West	806
CPS Energy	South	793
Portland General Electric	West	792
Piedmont Natural Gas	South	791
Pacific Power	West	787
Rocky Mountain Power	West	785
SoCalGas	West	778
CenterPoint Energy–South	South	775
Texas Gas Service	South	767
NV Energy	West	765
Florida Power & Light	South	762
Virginia Natural Gas	South	762
Black Hills Energy	Midwest	760
Southern California Edison	West	759
Citizens Energy	Midwest	758
New Jersey Natural Gas	East	758
Elizabethtown Gas	East	751
Eversource Energy	East	746
PSEG Long Island	East	741
Atmos Energy–Midwest	Midwest	733

Source: Market Strategies International. Cogent Reports™: Utility Trusted Brand & Customer Engagement™: Residential. December 2015.

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About Utility Trusted Brand & Customer Engagement Study: Residential

Cogent Reports conducted surveys among 52,007 residential electric, natural gas and combination utility customers of the 125 largest US utility companies (based on residential customer counts). The sample design uses US census data and strict quotas to ensure a demographically balanced sample of each evaluated utility’s customers based on age, gender, income, race and ethnicity. Utilities within the same region and of the same type (e.g., electric-only providers) are given equal weight to balance the influence of each utility’s customers on survey results. Market Strategies will supply the exact wording of any survey question upon request.

About Market Strategies International

[Market Strategies International](#) is a market research consultancy with deep expertise in consumer/retail, energy, financial services, healthcare, technology and telecommunications. The firm is ISO 20252 certified, reflecting its commitment to providing intelligent research, designed to the highest levels of accuracy, with meaningful results that help companies make confident business decisions. Market Strategies conducts qualitative and quantitative research in 75 countries, and its specialties include brand, communications, CX, product development, segmentation and syndicated. Its syndicated products, known as Cogent Reports, help clients understand the market environment, explore industry trends and monitor their brand and products within the competitive landscape. Founded in 1989, Market Strategies is one of the largest market research firms in the world, with offices in the US, Canada and China. Read Market Strategies’ blog at [FreshMR](#), and follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#).