

CASE STUDY: 4-COUNTY ELECTRIC POWER ASSOCIATION

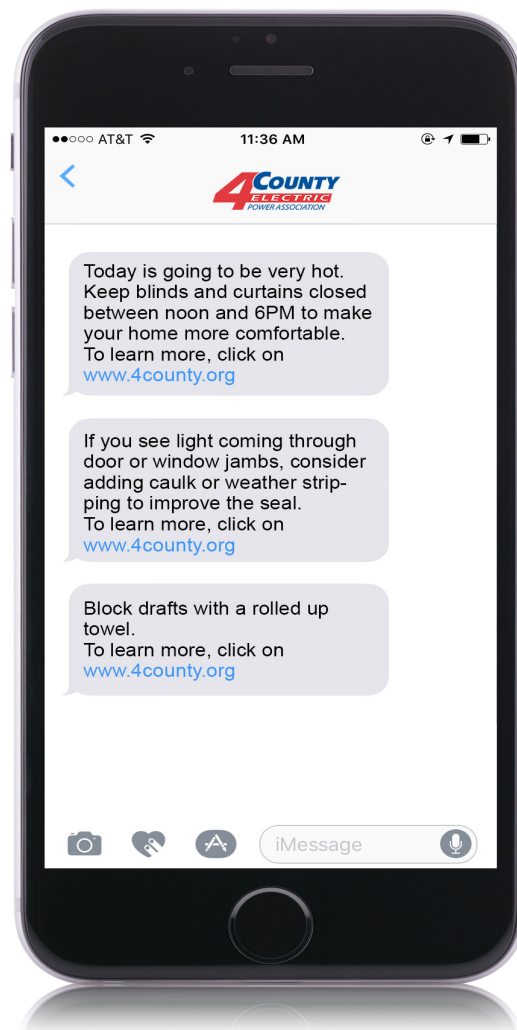
4-County Electric Power Association's EPIC Journey to Successfully Engaging Low-Income Customers.

Problem:

Communicating with Low-Income Customers

After the completion of their Extreme Energy Makeover (EEM) project, that was designed to help income-eligible homeowners increase the energy efficiency, comfort, and durability of their homes, 4-County Electric Power Association wanted to continue outreach with this group of people and keep communicating with them in a way that better fits their needs. 4-County EPA needed an easy and effective way to share follow-up information, like reminders on how to better use the equipment installed as part of the EEM program and/or how to keep energy costs down. *"We already had the attention of members that participated in our program and we wanted them to feel that we were still with them, we didn't want to just do the program and never talk to them again,"* said Jon Turner, 4-County EPA's Manager of Public Relations and Marketing.

After considering the different challenges they might have to deal with in this low-income environment, as a result of members' demographic characteristics or the large number of participants, 4-County EPA was eager to implement a simple and cost-effective solution to ensure a productive and seamless interaction with their members. Apogee's Energy Platform for Information and Communication (EPIC) seemed the perfect solution to provide these hard to reach members with low to no-cost energy savings recommendations, while at the same time it was a great opportunity to find out if texting was also an effective communication channel.



Solution:

By this time, 4-County EPA had already been using Apogee's flagship energy analysis engine called Energy Advisor. After meeting with Apogee to explore ways to be proactive with relevant, actionable messaging to this special subsection of their membership, 4-County EPA chose to expand and implement a special version of their Energy Advisor, the Energy Platform for Information and Communication (EPIC), which would allow them to target and send relevant, and timely messages to low-income customers.

The EPIC pilot was launched at the end of January 2018 and lasted for five months. The program consisted of weekly targeted text messages and was also supported by specialized on-line tools. All texts included a link to a corresponding page on the utility's website with useful information as follows:

- a. Easy low to no-cost energy savings tips.
- b. Payment options and locations.
- c. Information about programs/rebates.

"When we launched this program, we mostly wanted to see if texting was a good way to communicate with our low-income members, who face unique challenges and also see if it is an effective way to do target marketing," Jon Turner said.

"Texting allowed us the ability to send outbound, timely information immediately without our team doing the heavy lifting. This program also taught us that texting is more than just a communication solution, it can serve as a great marketing platform."

Results:

4-County EPA was pleased with the impact that the Low-Income EPIC pilot had on engagement and the level of customer satisfaction they achieved. By June 2018, 26,235 texts were sent, 18,265 out of which were confirmed received. In addition, the highest click-through rate they achieved with their branded links was equal to an impressive 24%, accompanied by a significant average click-through rate of 18%, which proved that texting can indeed serve as a great marketing platform.

ENERGY ADVISOR

[Return to Energy Savings Tools](#)

My Home

TELL US ABOUT YOUR HOME ?

1) WHAT IS THE LOCATION OF YOUR HOME?

Your Account Number

Enter Account No.

Enter City

Enter City

2) HOW BIG IS YOUR HOME?

Advanced House Details

Small House (500-1600 Sqft.)

Medium House (1600-3500 Sqft.)

Large House (3500-8000 Sqft.)

Do you own your home?

Yes

3) HOW MANY PEOPLE LIVE IN YOUR HOME?

Use the slider below to select the number of people in your home.

4) WHAT TYPE OF CAR DO YOU DRIVE?

Car 1 Type:

Car 2 Type:

Add More Cars

5) HOW MUCH INSULATION DO YOU HAVE?

RESET PROFILE

SHOW ANALYSIS

Unsurprisingly, as the targeted individuals were low-income members, the three most popular messages were the following:

1. **We offer many payment options and billing options. You can pay based on a leveled amount, for your fixed income or you can pre-pay.**
2. **Save big this summer by setting your thermostat a few degrees higher. Each degree higher can save about \$80 annually.**
3. **Your dryer uses about 20% of the total power your appliances consume. See how much your dryer costs you by filling out an on-line home profile.**

With regard to customer satisfaction, the targeted members responded warmly to the platform and messaging. More specifically, in a follow-up customer satisfaction survey,

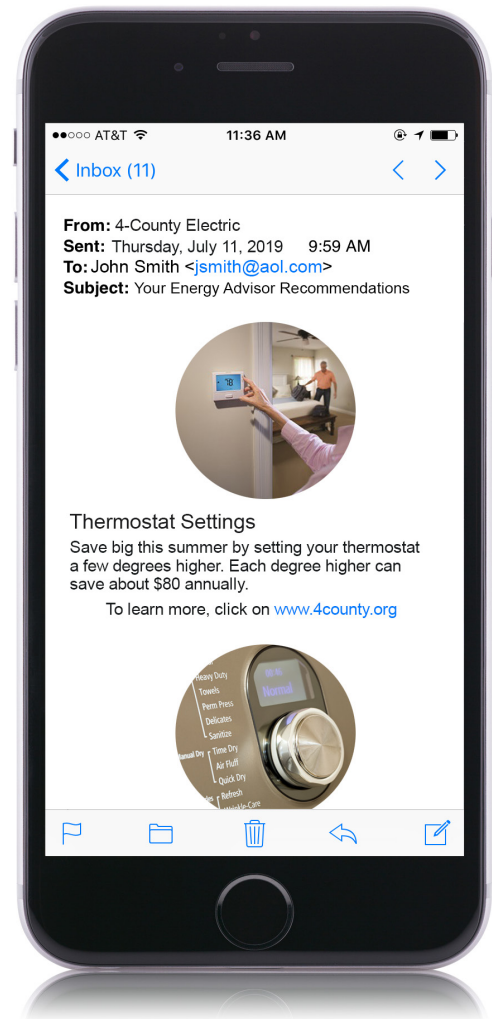
93% of respondents selected that the presented information was very or somewhat useful,

which was **15X higher** than the percentage of those who selected not very or not all useful (6%). In addition, **97% responded that they would like to receive a text message** with energy savings tips on a weekly (59%) or monthly (38%) basis. Finally, **90% of them thought that text messages are an effective way to engage** as customers.

“The lesson we learned by implementing the EPIC program was that texting is a great way to reach our low-income members. The days of waiting for our members to get their bills and then try to deal with whatever issues they have are coming to an end. You are doing a disservice to your customers if you are not doing everything you can to proactively share useful information for them to handle their energy use before the \$300 bill arrives,” Jon Turner said.

“Texting is the most efficient way to share this information and provide value to our low-income members, in a non-adversarial interaction.”

~ Jon Turner



The **Energy Platform for Information and Communication (EPIC)** for customers that lack the wherewithal to improve their residences, this not only includes low-income, but also renters, multi-family and newly independent customers and focuses on timely, relevant, and actionable information. For a program to be successful, it must provide benefits to both the customer and the utility and EPIC does both:

1. What's in it for the consumer?

- ✓ Transparency to energy costs and usage.
- ✓ Energy education.
- ✓ Improved comfort.
- ✓ Potential to save money.

2. What's in it for the utility?

- ✓ Simple implementation.
- ✓ Low program costs.
- ✓ Improved customer satisfaction and engagement.
- ✓ Increased program participation.
- ✓ Lowering operation costs by:
 - Reduced call volume.
 - Improved cashflow
 - Reduced bad debt and collection activities

Are you looking for a solution to provide value and successfully engage your low-income customers?

EPIC is a great way to make that happen!



**To schedule a webcast demonstration of our outbound services
or any other personalized messaging service,
contact Apogee at
678-684-6801 or info@apogee.net**



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