Preparing to meet the digital expectations of the New Energy Consumer
Utilities recognize that as consumers become more social, mobile and connected, digital is increasingly important and a key strategic imperative. Many utilities are investing in expanding digital channel capabilities. But digital interactions bring new consumer expectations—and simply investing in digital channels will not satisfy your customers. The real work lies in completely transforming your business operations to facilitate a seamless digital experience.
Digital energy consumers values and preferences

Digital consumers values and preferences are continuing to evolve, but many want responsiveness, personalization and timeliness.

Research shows that when they go online to request help with a product or service, consumers want responses quickly. Sixty-six percent expect a same-day response and 43 percent expect to hear back within an hour or less.1 Meanwhile, additional research illustrates that such expectations cross generations. Forty-three percent of Gen Z (ages 18 to 23) online adults agree with the statement: “I am very likely to abandon my online purchase if I cannot find a quick answer to my questions,” and 63 percent agree with the statement: “Valuing my time is the most important thing a company can do to provide me with good online customer service.” Meanwhile, 55 percent of Golden Generation (ages 68 and older) and Older Boomer (ages 57 to 67) online adults report they are likely to abandon online purchases without a quick answer—and 76 percent agree that valuing their time should be the hallmark of good customer service.2

Research has shown that 94 percent of businesses believe personalization is critical to current and future success.3 Yet in Accenture’s Global Consumer Pulse Survey, only 39 percent of respondents said they believe companies are effectively using interactions on mobile devices to provide an enhanced and tailored customer services and/or support experience.4

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3 “94% of businesses say personalisation is critical to their success,” eConsultancy, April 22, 2013, https://econsultancy.com.
Now that's fast

Online retailer Amazon has begun replacing two-day shipping with same-day delivery. In May 2015, Amazon began offering same-day shipping on over a million items to Prime subscribers in 14 major metropolitan areas.\(^5\)

With the help of mobile shopping app Curbside, brick-and-mortar retailers are upping the ante, too. Using Curbside, which debuted in 2014, consumers can shop from their phones, visit the retailer and receive their merchandise—without getting out of their cars. In February 2015, Curbside announced a rollout to Best Buy locations in San Jose, San Francisco and elsewhere in the Bay Area.\(^6\)

With these and similar initiatives, retailers keep raising the bar for consumer expectations. As those expectations inevitably creep into other industries, consumers will no longer accept utility service levels and response times measured in days.

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Digital matters for consumers and energy providers

In the past, many energy providers have implemented self-service initiatives based primarily on cost-reduction goals. But with the rise in consumers’ desire to proactively manage their own transactions, self-service becomes much more than a tool for trimming cost to serve. It may represent a key determinant of satisfaction and loyalty—and a primary option when developing and strengthening consumer engagement.
Unlocking the full potential of digital

There is a rise in utility investments in portals, Web and mobile solutions.

A recent Chartwell review of 150 North American utilities noted in 2014, 75 percent of the utilities had a mobile-friendly site, including dedicated mobile websites, compared to 63 percent in 2013. But we also know that opening new digital channels is only part of the opportunity—and challenge—ahead.

What will it take to tap into the full potential of digital? It requires a complete transformation of customer and business operations to confirm that all customer interactions are consistent and have the potential to build off of one another.

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7 “Responsive and adaptive website design gains popularity among utilities”, Chartwell, June 4, 2014.
Accenture believes that energy providers should realign capabilities around three key elements:

- **Create an effortless experience.** To create an effortless omni-channel experience that may accelerate self-service adoption, energy providers should design digital channel interactions from a customer’s point of view. Customers are likely to adopt self-service channels but only when it is easy and intuitive. This requires both effective front-end design and back-office process efficiency and automation.

- **Flex your platform.** Across industries, the pace of change has reached an unprecedented pace. Your technology platform must keep up. Power your business and customer experiences by investing in a digital technology platform that empowers—not hinders—agility in continually enhancing the customer experience.

- **Re-orient your business.** Transform the business and operating models toward customer centricity, and make agility part of the core culture and operations. Unless operations can keep pace with digital channels, you risk disrupting the seamless digital experience.

Dialing up digital is about more than a refreshed website or a bolt-on app. It takes a customer-centric transformation—led by your business and reinforced by technology.
About Accenture Energy Consumer Services

Accenture Energy Consumer Services delivers energy provider customer solutions for both competitive and regulated markets globally. We help our clients achieve three key business imperatives: cost effectiveness, revenue assurance and extension, and customer satisfaction. Guided by New Energy Consumer insights, our electricity, gas and water clients realize higher value through industry-specific strategy, digital, technology and operations capabilities and world-class expertise, assets, tools and accelerators.

About Accenture

Accenture is a global management consulting, technology services and outsourcing company, with approximately 323,000 people serving clients in more than 120 countries. Combining unparalleled experience, comprehensive capabilities across all industries and business functions, and extensive research on the world’s most successful companies, Accenture collaborates with clients to help them become high-performance businesses and governments. The company generated net revenues of US$30.0 billion for the fiscal year ended Aug. 31, 2014. Its home page is www.accenture.com.