

White paper



Customer Engagement

Three digital approaches to a smarter, more engaging customer experience for Utilities

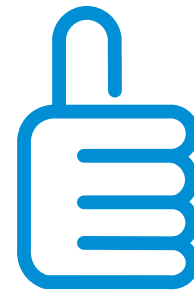
Increase customer satisfaction, reduce call center costs and drive signups for additional services.



Traditionally, bills have served as the primary method of communication between utilities and their customers. Increasingly, these interactions occur across a variety of channels and digital touch points, where customers expect a smooth, convenient experience. Anything less may increase the cost of service, reduce productivity or damage your brand.

To meet these expectations, more utilities are now looking to transform customer communications from one-way transactions to powerful relationship-building opportunities.

Digital technologies make it possible: Tools like Interactive Personalized Video, digital self-service and chatbots make it easy to provide meaningful, personalized experiences. With the right approach, utilities can improve bill clarity, pre-empt problems and deepen engagement while evolving from being generic suppliers to trusted partners.



Learn how easy it can be to deliver experiences that grow customer loyalty and your bottom line.

Energize customer relationships with a superior digital experience.

The utility-customer relationship is evolving fast. The old paradigm of one-way, paper-based communication is becoming increasingly obsolete. Digital-savvy customers expect an engaging experience that offers information, tools and services geared to their specific needs.

What's more, customers like to feel that their utility is looking out for them. They appreciate information on how to control costs. They enjoy seeing how their energy consumption compares with their neighbors. They want help deciding which billing plan is the best fit for their needs. They want to learn about the benefits of new technologies like smart thermostats and energy monitoring systems. They value timely updates on outages and disruptions to service.

Customers aren't the only ones with a lengthy wish list. In de-regulated markets, utilities are striving to compete for new customers and minimize attrition. They're seeking cost-effective ways to build engagement, and tools to provide self-service options and promote energy efficiency. They want to lower the cost of customer service and increase first-call resolution. They would like to increase sign-ups for additional services such as home-repair plans or emergency alerts.

Utilities are re-imagining the customer experience.

Today, innovative tools can help energy and water providers deliver personalized, more customer-pleasing experiences at every step, from onboarding to billing, communications and customer care. Three technologies in particular can help utilities to add value while engaging customers in more personal ways.

01. Interactive Personalized Video

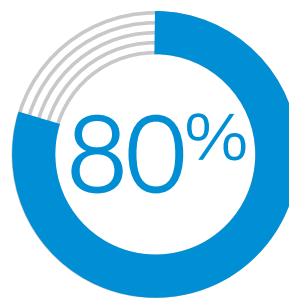
02. Digital self-service

03. Chatbots

Each of these technologies can be used to create unique, informative and engaging experiences tailored to customer profiles, needs and preferences. They expand customer choice, augmenting or replacing traditional bill delivery and communication channels. Employed strategically, they can also help to increase Customer Lifetime Value and achieve higher Net Promoter Scores.



Less than a third of consumers say that their utility's digital channels are very easy to use.¹



Nearly 80 percent of Millennials are willing to consider switching providers if their utility does not provide a seamless experience.²

01. Enhance engagement with interactive videos that make information come alive.

Anyone who's visited Facebook or YouTube recently knows that consumers love videos. Dynamic, colorful and appealing, they engage the mind, senses and emotions. Enrich video's entertainment and educational value with personalization and interactive functionality and you create an exceptionally effective tool for delivering information.

Interactive Personalized Videos can transform customer communications into engaging, highly memorable experiences. Static usage graphs become dynamic tools for comparing energy consumption with past billing periods. Energy-saving tips become more actionable. Navigable choice-based video tutorials help new services generate greater response.

Streamline your onboarding process.

Make a great impression with a personal video welcome during the critical 90-day onboarding window. Customized videos help customers derive the most value from their new relationship. They're greeted by name and invited to take a self-guided tour that explains billing, products and services and lets the viewer drill down for more information as needed.

Empower customers to self-educate at their own pace.

Minimize customer service calls with unique, one-to-one learning experiences. You'll be able to pre-empt problems and put the customer in control, deciding what content to view and easily navigating to specific areas of interest. Because videos are generated on the fly using actual customer data, the information is always accurate, up-to-date and personally relevant.

Video explainers prevent bill shock and increase loyalty.

When a customer's bill is unusually high or contains new charges, utilities can minimize angry calls to customer service with an Interactive Personalized Video that can explain the charges and include information on how to keep energy costs low.

Utilities can use Interactive Personalized Video to:

- Anticipate questions and provide easy to understand answers.
- Improve bill clarity and interaction.
- Simplify transactions with click throughs to the online portal.
- Improve Net Promoter Scores.

Capture data to gain deeper insights.

Track and analyze clicks, accessing a feedback loop that can help improve messaging and offers. Understand customers' video interaction, device usage, viewing times and more to continually make videos more effective and engaging.

Easy to implement with pre-built templates.

Despite its sophistication, Interactive Personalized Video is surprisingly easy to implement. The technology can be deployed in as little as a month. The cost of entry is kept low by utilizing standard templates that can be customized with customer and brand-specific information and images. No backend system integration is needed.



Videos: versatile and impactful

- Onboard new customers.
- Explain bills/rate changes.
- Introduce new products/services.
- Support cross-sell of new services.
- Explain and compare rate plans.
- Educate customers on energy conservation.

02. Easy does it: Make self-service simple and convenient.

Residential gas, electric and water customers want to easily connect with their utilities but on their own terms. Whether they're looking to find answers to common questions such as the amount and due date of their current bill, to update account details or to get information about a service outage, their expectations are high. That means that self-service portals need to emulate the experiences delivered by Amazon, Apple and eBay. Every interaction must be simple, quick and convenient with a decidedly personal touch.

Self-service has become the preferred channel for interaction, and customers of all ages are choosing it as their first point of contact instead of picking up the phone. Digital self-service needs to be simple and effective so that customers can achieve the desired outcome as quickly as possible and get on with their lives. The best self-service portals enable customers to review their bills, make payments and manage their accounts 24x7 from anywhere with just a few clicks.

Put customers in control.

When a utility's self-service portal gives customers the effortless, consistent and intuitive experience they demand, satisfaction skyrockets. Customers also become much more receptive to new offerings such as solar panels, connected home services or energy audits.

A robust portal that provides transparency into billing and usage can minimize bill shock. Customers who can monitor their energy consumption often become more interested in energy efficiency. They're good prospects for smart thermostats and other energy-saving devices and programs.

The self-service portal can also play a valuable role in the onboarding process, welcoming new subscribers and explaining policies and billing plans. Provide ways to easily manage costs and payments. Show customers how to set up proactive alerts and optimize their energy consumption. Find new, more effective ways to grow revenue by offering customers new products and services.



The right answer is just a click away.
Empower your customers with easy access to the information they need, 24 hours a day.

- Online payment
- Billing history
- Account management
- Plan details
- Proactive alerts
- Service requests – transfers
- Usage comparisons/forecasts
- Energy management/cost saving tips
- Outage information
- Appliance tax credits

Prevent complaints with real-time alerts.

Smart self-service isn't just for energy providers. With smart metering, water companies can encourage customers to set up proactive leak alerts that notify them in real-time whenever there is an unusual spike in water usage. Controlling leaks before they become disastrous and expensive is a win-win situation. Homeowners can fix leaks before they become a serious problem, and the water company is better able to control service costs and conserve water.

03. Chatbots mean business. Join the conversation.

No one truly enjoys calling their utility company. Contacting customer service departments is all too often a painful experience that takes valuable time out of the working day. Customers face long hold times, complicated processes and delays while representatives search for the relevant information. For utilities looking to solve these problems, chatbots may be the answer.

Using chatbots for self-service on any channel, including the web, mobile, social or IVR provides a seamless, personalized experience in a way that is automated, simple, quick and natural. Powered by artificial intelligence, natural language processing and speech recognition, chatbots can understand spoken or text questions, and deliver the correct information in seconds at any time of day or night.

Automation with a human touch

Interacting with a chatbot “feels” just like a conversation with another person. Instead of forcing the customer to adapt to the technology, chatbot technology adapts to the customer. The result is a much smoother, more intuitive experience than clicking, tapping or scrolling and viewing multiple screens. Utilities can use chatbots for:

- Account inquiries
- Basic customer service
- Emergency updates
- Outage alerts

Chatbots are able to learn about each individual and make intelligent predictions based on past interactions. The experience they deliver becomes more personal and relevant with ongoing usage. They can also recommend best next steps, engaging customers for deeper conversations on topics like billing plans, conservation or alternative energy at a time when they are most receptive to learning more.



“Messaging is evolving from simple social conversations to business-related conversations.”³

Take a more proactive approach to customer care.

Service interruptions are a major source of inconvenience and frustration. Chatbots are an ideal way to send proactive alerts that inform customers of planned or unplanned outages. During an outage, everyone is eager to know when the lights will be coming back on. Alerts keep them updated on the situation and eliminate the need to call customer service.

Reduce the burden on your call center.

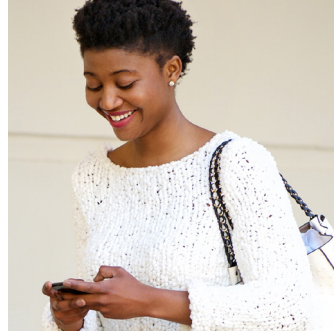
Chatbots complement your contact center agents, but they’re not ready to replace them. What chatbots can do is improve first-contact resolutions for most basic inquiries and seamlessly escalate more complex queries to the appropriate live agent, while preserving the context of the conversation.

Drive deeper engagement with digital solutions from Pitney Bowes.

We offer a full suite of technologies designed to help utilities know their customers better and provide a personalized, multichannel experience that educates and engages customers, reduces attrition and drives new revenue opportunities.

- 01. Interactive Personalized Video** transforms bills into informative, customer-centric experiences that consumers appreciate and even enjoy. Explain charges, make personalized offers and embed self-service options for faster payment.
- 02. Digital self-service** respects your customers' valuable time while reducing the volume of customer service calls. It's easy to get started; simply select the turnkey solution that suits your needs. Let customers view their account history, offer account management tools and multiple options for paying bills.
- 03. Chatbots** make self-service more conversational and convenient with an interface that mimics one-to-one human interactions.

All Pitney Bowes solutions work with your existing systems and can be integrated to deliver a more relevant, engaging customer experience at every interaction and across all channels.



United States

3001 Summer Street
Stamford, CT 06926-0700
800 327 8627
pbsoftware.sales@pb.com

Europe/United Kingdom

The Smith Centre
The Fairmile
Henley-on-Thames
Oxfordshire RG9 6AB
0800 840 0001
pbsoftware.emea@pb.com

Canada

5500 Explorer Drive
Mississauga, ON L4W5C7
800 268 3282
pbsoftware.canada.sales@pb.com

Australia/Asia Pacific

Level 1, 68 Waterloo Road
Macquarie Park NSW 2113
+61 2 9475 3500
pb.apac@pb.com

For more information, call 888 540 3813
or visit us online: pitneybowes.com