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Playbook

Five Proven Strategies to Improve the Utility Customer Experience While Cutting Costs

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"Organizations that effectively organize and manage the customer experience can realize a 20% improvement in customer satisfaction, a 30% lower cost-to-serve, and a 30% increase in employee engagement[1]"

In uncertain economic times, utilities like yours need to do more with less by increasing operational efficiency and cutting costs. At the same time, a customer experience revolution is underway. Today's customers expect more—more personalized engagement, through more channels, accessed anytime, anywhere.

Balancing these imperatives means finding ways to control costs while giving your customers the experience they want. Part of that balancing act is to create a flexible game plan that sets you up for success today, and in the future.

This playbook outlines five proven strategies for utilities to enhance customer experience in ways that improve—instead of impact—their bottom line, including:

- Mapping the customers' journey
- Shifting from print to digital
- Embracing omnichannel engagement
- Improving bill accuracy and;
- Outsourcing non-core activities

[1] Deloitte Outsourcing Study

Five Ways to Improve the Utility Customer Experience while Cutting Costs:



To understand the wants and needs of the modern customer, it's crucial to analyze their experience with your organization—from their perspective.

1) Mapping the Customers' Journey

The customer journey never ends, and neither does customer engagement. But by visually mapping out the steps a customer takes as they interact with you across touchpoints, you can better understand and improve the customer experience.

Once the process your customers take is mapped out, you can analyze customer data, identify pain points and opportunities for better engagement, and take steps to get the right messages to the right customer, at the right time, through the channels they prefer. And for utilities, the most significant communications touchpoint along the customer journey are often related to bill presentment and payment.

Bill design, for example, is often overlooked as an opportunity to improve customer engagement. With a fresh design that incorporates the right data and makes your bills easy to read and understand, you can maximize customer engagement, increase satisfaction, reduce customer service costs, and more. Digital reminders combined with simple and engaging payment methods are also important.

Sound complicated? Consider engaging an industry partner with experience mapping customer journeys. They can suggest which paths to map first and ways to optimize engagement, so you realize some early ROI and begin strengthening customer ties right away.



2) Shifting from Print to Digital

Print and mail remains an important channel in which many customers prefer to receive communications. The challenge is, the cost of printed and mailed documents is skyrocketing—so how can you keep costs low without sacrificing timely communications in the customer's preferred channel?

Focus on Digital Adoption

You can lower you material and operational costs with a concerted effort aimed at moving customers to digital communications. Keep in mind your customers want what's best and easiest for them, which means companies that want to drive digital adoption must first understand why customers like paper, and then invest in technology that offers a genuinely superior experience. Otherwise, customers will resist any change they suspect doesn't offer them additional benefits.

In addition, you can consider opting new customers into digital communications by default, or incenting a switch to digital through environmental savings initiatives.

Optimize Your Postal Handling

Postal handling is another huge opportunity for savings. There are several ways to qualify for USPS full-service discounts and even programs and initiatives that help reduce costs.

What Does a Best-in-Class Digital Communication Look Like?

When evaluating a communications partner to accelerate your digital adoption, you'll want to be sure they can deliver exceptional documents in a variety of formats which are optimized for your delivery channels.

Explore the items below to see how many formats are included in your vendor's Customer Communications Management offering.

Digital Statements Done Right

- ✓ Professionally designed flexible templates
- ✓ Data integrity, security, QA process
- ✓ Compliant with ADA / AODA accessibility regulations
- ✓ Stored in a centralized ECM for secure access, document lifecycle management, and omnichannel presentment
- ✓ Document production and delivery status tracked, insight into customer engagement

Digital Document Formats



PDF/PDF UA

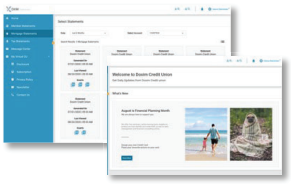


HTML/Interactive HTML



Interactive Video

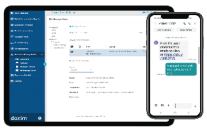
Digital Document Delivery Channels



Web Portal ePresentment



Mobile-First ePresentment



SMS notification 'your bill is ready'



Email notification 'your bill is ready'



3) Embracing Omnichannel Engagement

Today's customer expects convenience and flexibility from bill design to payment thanks to retail and technology giants who've set the bar high for personalized and seamless engagement.

Engaging your customer with the right content, at the right time, in their preferred channel helps accelerate payments, promote strategic business priorities, and connect with your customers to build loyalty. Because customers want options and they particularly want options for when, where, and how they pay their bills.

Omnichannel engagement can also mean offering customers a variety of agent-assisted and self-serve payment methods and the ability to switch between them based on their preferences. By offering payment flexibility, it's possible to increase loyalty while you accelerate a customer's days-to-pay.

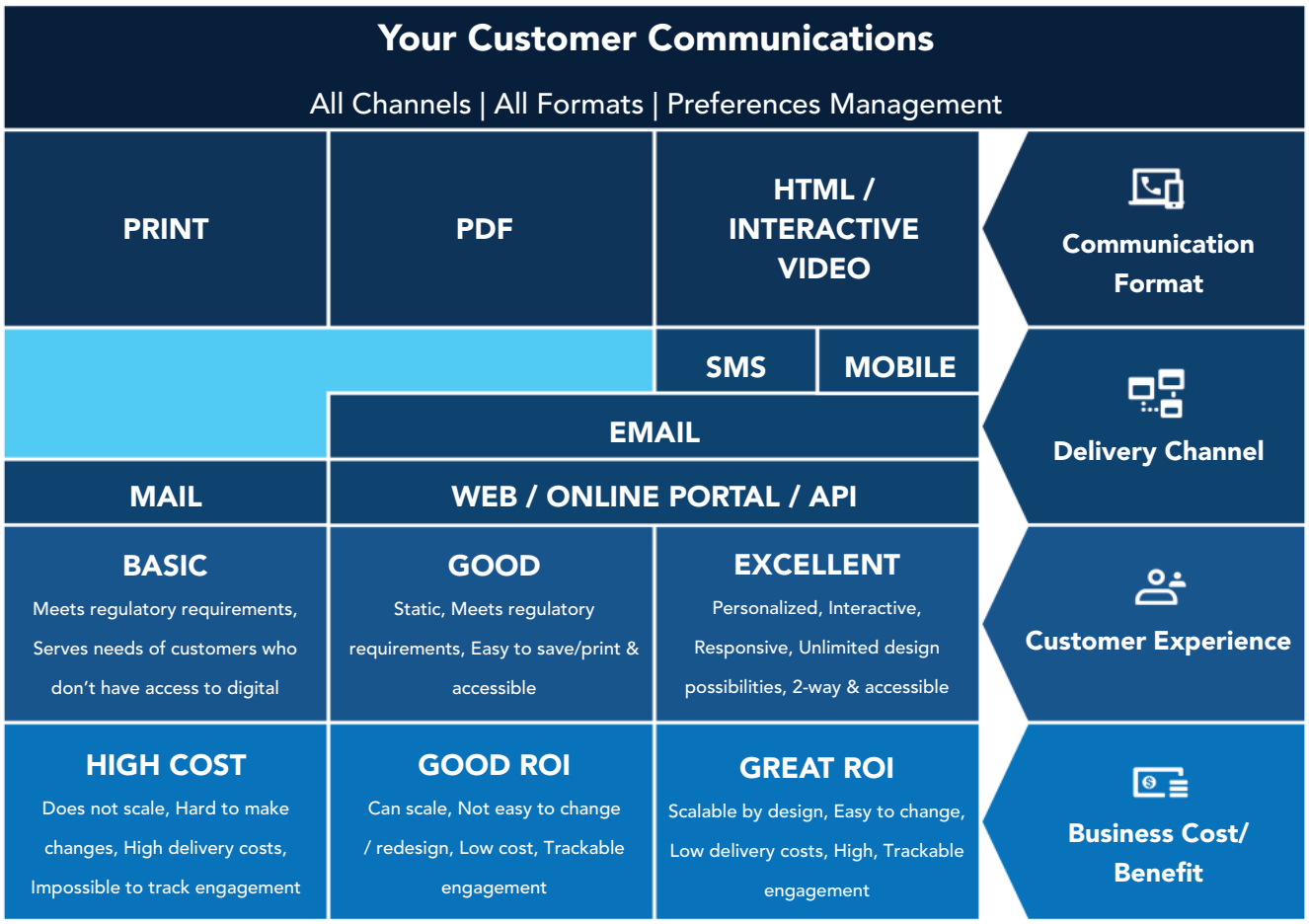
When embracing omnichannel engagement you can also consider the delivery of instant SMS and/or email notifications, alerts, and transactional updates. In other words, you can send relevant and timely communications to your customers in the channel(s) of their choice for things like, when a bill is ready to view, when a payment is processed, and/or even to remind them when a bill is overdue.



Personalization Strategies Can Drive Great ROI Across All Channels

By leveraging personalization strategies in the regulatory communications that your organization needs to send, you can turn documents that have traditionally been cost centers into opportunities for improved engagement, satisfaction and loyalty.

Here's how the progression can look, as an organization evolves from providing basic printed documents towards offering fully interactive HTML communications with integrated video and/or targeted messages.





4) Improving Bill Accuracy

Bill accuracy is crucial to prevent damage to your brand, decrease days sales outstanding, and increase customer satisfaction—because billing errors don't just drive customer dissatisfaction, they also drive up your labor costs and delay customer payments.

Want to know how? Let's look at an example where a utility accidentally sends a $1M invoice to a customer. The impact of this billing error doesn't just end with customer service or your staff spending valuable time correcting and re-issuing the bill. The media can get involved, which can negatively impact your reputation.

With the right solution, it's possible to:

- Pull accounts based on pre-defined criteria for review and verificationto validate billing data and eliminate errors before they reach the customer.
- Keep mailing list addresses up to date. All addresses must conform to the standard USPS address format, CASS, and by using the National Change of Address (NCOA) database you can further improve accuracy.
- Preview and approve bill sample sets via a self-serve portal that allows you to verify business rules are correct, and that documents display correctly prior to production.

When it comes to billing, a proactive approach is the best approach. Investing and implementing the right tools to prevent inaccurate bills sooner rather than later will save your staff valuable time and reduce labor costs while increasing customer satisfaction and accelerating payments.



65%
of Organizations

say that outsourcing helps them focus on core functions. 63% mention cost-cutting as a key benefit of outsourcing[4].

5) Outsourcing Non-Core Activities

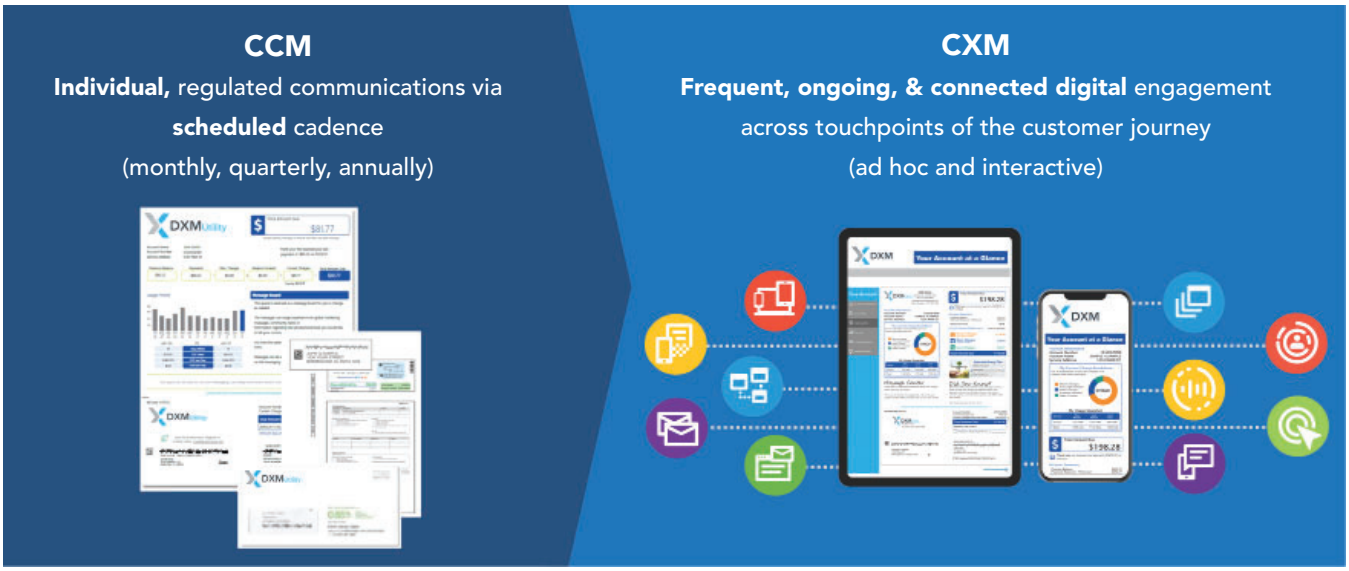
Organizations in highly regulated industries, like utilities, often balance a complex series of priorities. On one hand, they must comply with strict mandates around privacy and ensure data protection at the highest level. On the other hand, utilities must seek innovative ways to enhance customer communication, but with outdated infrastructure, this makes getting an actionable, centralized view of the customer incredibly challenging.

Working with an industry-leading expert is one way to navigate the complexity of managing regulated communications to get the right results.

When selecting a partner, it's crucial to choose one with experience in utilities. Keep both short-term business goals and long-term outcomes in mind when assessing their expertise and technology stack.

[3]Deloitte Outsourcing Study

Unique Industry Pain Point	Addressed by Outsourcing Partner	
Onerous Regulations	Multiple Security & Compliance Certifications	AICPA SOC, FFIEC, HIPAA COMPLIANT, PCI Security Standards Council, HITRUST CSF Certified, GDPR, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, nqa ISO 9001 Registered Quality Management
Complex Documents	Industry Expertise	✓ Vertical-specific expertise across multiple recurring regulated communication channels ✓ Integrated and automated communications for consistency
Outdated, Disparate Systems	Consolidated System Management	✓ Full service, consolidated platform with integration and management of disparate systems and vendors ✓ Liberated clients are able to focus on growing the core business
Sensitive Data Security	Verified Security Posture	✓ Stellar Assessment levels ✓ Top ranked security processes across all criteria
Business Continuity Requirements	Continued Service Throughout Crisis	✓ Full redundancy to ensure continued operations ✓ Real-time client communication, education, support, and troubleshooting
Change Management Speed & Agility	Business User Self Service	✓ Self-service/admin portals reduces reliance on Operations/IT ✓ Business user control over key tasks (authoring, change mgt, personalization)



To Thrive in Uncertain Times, Find New Ways to Deliver Old-Fashioned Value

As the world becomes more digital, utilities must find ways to make personal connections with their customers across all touchpoints of the customer journey ensure continued engagement.

One way to do this is to move away from Customer Communications Management to true Customer Experience Management (CXM).

A CXM strategy, along with the right technology and partners to make it happen, holds tremendous promise for utilities seeking to lower costs and adapt to the modern customer's expectations.

By working with a trusted CCM partner like Doxim, you can remove the complexity from this shift and improve the day-to-day CX, to provide value, now.



How Doxim Can Help Transform your Customer Experience While Cutting Costs

Doxim's experienced consultants and omnichannel technology platform can help transform your customer experience in many ways, including:

- Gathering, analyzing, and using customer data for increasingly personalized communications.
- Displaying value-added content, like information about ways to reduce energy consumption, directly on customer bills.
- Leveraging video technology for interactive bills and other engagement, providing real-time interactivity and customized outcomes.
- Delivering bills and notifi cations with the right information, at the right time, in the right channel via print, PDF, HTML, email, SMS, or interactive experience.
- Putting customer bills and information at the fingertips of your service representatives for immediate and personalized service.

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Doxim is the customer communications management and engagement technology leader serving highly regulated markets, including financial services, utilities and healthcare. We provide omnichannel communications and payment solutions that maximize customer engagement and revenue, while reducing costs. Our software and technology-enabled managed services address key digitization, operational efficiency, and customer experience challenges. Learn more at www.doxim.com.

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