

NEWS RELEASE

Date December 16, 2015
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Electric Utilities Have Forged Strong Relationships with Minority-Owned Businesses *18 Electric Utilities Named 2015 Business Customer Champions*

(Embargoed until December 16, 2015 at 5:00 a.m. ET)

(Cambridge, MA) In a recent survey of almost 12,000 business customers across the nation, [Cogent Reports™](#), the syndicated division of Market Strategies International, found that electric utilities have succeeded in forging strong relationships with minority-owned businesses and with certain industry segments. This and other findings can be found in the [Utility Trusted Brand & Customer Engagement™: Commercial study](#).

Utilities earn an Engaged Customer Relationship (ECR) score of 796 on a 1,000-point scale from minority-owned businesses, which is 48 points higher than the national business ECR score (748) across all businesses. ECR is an overall measure of customer engagement and is comprised of ratings on Brand Trust, Product Experience and Operational Satisfaction.

“What we see driving higher engagement among minority-owned businesses is their extremely high levels of trust with their utility,” said Chris Oberle, senior vice president at Market Strategies. “These businesses view their utilities as trusted advisers and are actively seeking advice from them on ways to manage their energy consumption more economically and build a better business climate. Overall, minority-owned businesses are some of the best customers that utilities serve, with higher advocacy and offerings usage.”

Utilities have been able to leverage their trusted adviser positions with minority-owned businesses by encouraging them to use value-added service options and products. In fact, minority businesses have offering usage rates that are double that of non-minority-owned businesses. About 90% of minority-owned businesses have adopted at least one value-added utility offering.

“Minority-owned businesses are also more likely to be aware of economic development activities that utilities are engaged in,” Oberle added. “These minority-owned businesses have much higher advocacy levels and tend to make more positive comments about their utility.”

Across all businesses, the industry segments that score highest on customer engagement are technology, mining and manufacturing. These industry segments are also the most likely to have account managers assigned to their businesses and, like minority-owned businesses, have higher usage of utility value-added offerings.

“Everyone is aware that presence of an account manager helps raise operational satisfaction,” Oberle commented. “But we found businesses that have energy contractor assistance or are using energy consumption management offerings by their utility have much higher scores than those with account managers.”

However, utilities have some work to do to better engage smaller businesses and female-owned businesses. Smaller businesses with \$25 million or less in annual revenues score low (707) on overall Engagement, while female-owned businesses score low (716) on Brand Trust. This indicates that electric utilities need to develop plans that enable themselves to build trusted relationships with the diverse set of businesses they serve.

The study also names the 18 Business Customer Champions listed below based upon the customer engagement scores they post.

2015 BUSINESS CUSTOMER CHAMPIONS		
Utility Brand	Region	ECR
SWEPCO	South	814
DTE Energy	Midwest	797
Salt River Project	West	796
Alabama Power	South	795
Ameren Illinois	Midwest	795
Idaho Power	West	793
APS	West	790
Georgia Power	South	785
Rocky Mountain Power	West	783
Florida Power & Light	South	782
Pacific Power	West	776
Entergy	South	774
NYSEG	East	774
OG&E	South	771
Portland General Electric	West	768
KCP&L	Midwest	762
PPL Electric Utilities	East	749
PSE&G	East	739

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

2015 Business Customer Champions: Alabama Power, Ameren Illinois, APS, DTE Energy, Entergy, Florida Power & Light, Georgia Power, Idaho Power, NYSEG, OG&E, Pacific Power, Portland General Electric, Rocky Mountain Power, Salt River Project, SWEPCO, KCP&L, PPL Electric Utilities, and PSE&G

About Utility Trusted Brand & Customer Engagement Study: Commercial

Cogent Reports conducted surveys among 11,644 commercial electric and combination utility customers of the 59 largest US utility companies (based on commercial customer counts). Utilities within the same region are given equal weight in order to balance the influence of each utility's customers on survey results. Market Strategies will supply the exact wording of any survey questions 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](#).