

CASE STUDY

Consumers Energy Provides 100,000 Pre-Enrolled Smart Thermostats to Save Money and Energy





Partnering with Uplight and Google, Consumers Energy Empowers Their Customers

Consumers Energy is committed to helping the environment and their customers at the same time. Based in Michigan, Consumers Energy's bold Clean Energy Plan aims to eliminate coal and achieve net-zero carbon emissions by 2040 and double energy efficiency from 10 to 20 percent of peak capacity by 2030—eliminating the need to build more power plants.



"Consumers Energy is committed to Michigan's success, and we're excited to help so many of our friends and neighbors during these challenging times by putting this powerful technology into their hands at no cost. We want to give our customers more control to manage their energy use, helping reduce their bills while protecting the environment."

PATTI POPPE
PRESIDENT AND CEO, CONSUMERS ENERGY



Staying True to Commitments During COVID-19

But as customers spent more time at home due to the COVID-19 pandemic, utilities across the country faced spikes in residential demand, often seeing bill increases of up to 20% or more even before the cooling season started. During the crisis, Consumers Energy continued to prioritize helping their customers via their triple bottom line—committing to people, planet, and prosperity in all decisions.

Many typical energy efficiency measures weren't possible as either contractors weren't allowed to go into people's homes or people weren't comfortable having them there. Consumers Energy needed an innovative approach to help customers save even more energy and money at such a critical time, while continuing progress towards their clean energy goals.

During COVID-19

Residential Bills Increased

20% or More



Leveraging Technology to Help Customers Save Energy and Money

Consumers Energy partnered with Google and Uplight to provide free Google Nest thermostats to up to 100,000 households, helping Michigan residents power through the COVID-19 pandemic by saving energy and money. These smart thermostats help customers save an average of 10-15% on their energy bills each year. Coupled with the Consumers Energy Peak Power Savers program, these households can shift usage away at times of peak demand, creating the potential to collectively reduce demand by 14 MW or more this summer.

With the Peak Power Savers program, the utility aims to shift customer energy use away from peak times, typically 2-7 p.m. weekdays in the summer, when demand rises and wholesale electricity is generally more expensive to provide.

Before a DR event, Uplight's software strategically cools a home so that a customer can stay within their desired comfort range without the HVAC having to run during an event. During an event, the program never exceeds 1-2 degrees of the pre-existing temperature settings and doesn't penalize the customer for adjusting the thermostat if needed.



Program Potential



10-15%

Average Energy
Bill Savings



14 MW

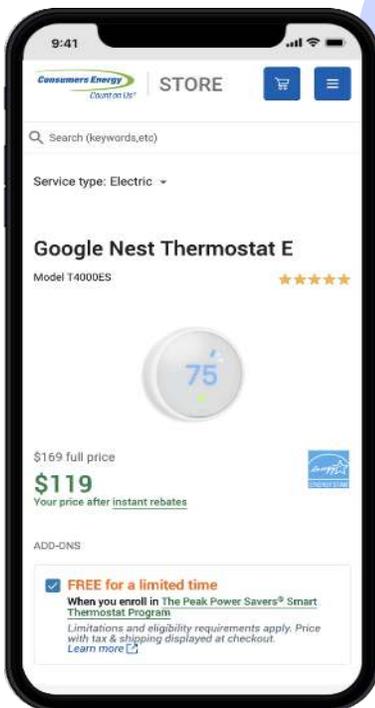
Reduced Household
Demand Potential

A Connected Customer Experience

As a partner of Uplight's since 2016, Consumers Energy utilized Uplight's Marketplace, Home Energy Reports, and Orchestrated Energy products - along with the unique feature of automated demand response pre-enrollment. The result was a connected, customer-centric experience that is helping customers save money and energy—all with the added benefit of helping the utility meet their ambitious clean energy targets.

To maximize enrollments into their Demand Response program, Consumers Energy leveraged Uplight's easy check-out experience on the Marketplace site and seamless Demand Response pre-enrollment process alongside thermostat purchase. Customers on the Marketplace do not need to visit another site to enroll in the Peak Power Savers program and can sign-up in their thermostat check-out flow. This has resulted in over 4X more enrollments than typical standalone enrollment methods. Pre-enrollment enables customers to pre-authorize the thermostat at check-out so that when the customer installs and connects their thermostat, it is instantly ready to respond to Demand Response events.

4X
more demand
response
enrollment



If customers are a good fit for the program, they will receive a recommendation on their paper or emailed Home Energy Report directing them to the Consumers Energy Marketplace.

315,000 Customers

of Consumers Energy Receive
Home Energy Reports

What is Demand Response Pre-Enrollment?

Many Demand Response program enrollments entail complicated multi-step eligibility checks and post purchase rebate processes—often resulting in customer drop-off and low enrollment rates. To overcome this, Uplight developed DR Pre-Enrollment (DRPE), an Uplight connected solution, to streamline the customer experience.

By placing DR enrollment within the Marketplace purchase flow, and sharing information back and forth to bring forward key customer information like account, rebate and eligibility data, customers can successfully purchase a device and match it with their account and a DR program in one simple flow.

From the moment the pre-enrolled, pre-authorized device is delivered and installed, customers and their new devices are already live participants in the DR program and begin receiving communications from their utility and the program.



Stand-alone, bring-your own device DR programs have an enrollment rate of 20%, while those bundled with smart thermostat purchases have 80% or more customers enroll, proving that connected solutions can create more value than the sum of their parts.

“Never before has anything been done at this scale. Our original goal was 10,000 thermostats. Thanks to our partnership with Google and Uplight, our goal is now 100,000. This created a unique opportunity to reduce costs for our customers when they need it most and increase the resiliency of our grid—furthering the execution of delivering on our Clean Energy Plan and commitment to People, Planet, and Prosperity.”

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All residential electric customers with central air-conditioning and Wi-Fi in the Consumers Energy territory were eligible to participate in the promotion. To do so they visited the Consumers Energy Marketplace website and purchased a Google Nest Thermostat E. Together with direct discounts from Consumers Energy, customers also received Energy Efficiency and Demand Response rebates to enable the free thermostat.

Natural gas-only customers could also receive the free thermostats. And any household that was not eligible for a Google Nest Thermostat E could receive a free Consumers Energy Care Package, which includes four LED bulbs and three night lights to help them save energy. These customers were also enrolled in the Peak Time Rewards program, which provides payments for shifting energy use away from late afternoons in the summer—one more way to save energy and money.

Consumers Energy has created a seamless, connected customer experience that helps customers save money and energy by providing free thermostats alongside an easy demand response enrollment—enabling the utility to continue to engage their customers as they achieve their ambitious clean energy targets.

About Uplight

Uplight is the technology partner for energy providers and the clean energy ecosystem. Uplight's software solutions connect energy customers to the decarbonization goals of power providers while helping customers save energy and lower costs, creating a more sustainable future for all. Using the industry's only comprehensive customer-centric technology suite and critical energy expertise across disciplines, Uplight is streamlining the complex transition to the clean energy ecosystem for more than 80 electric and gas utilities around the world. By empowering energy providers to achieve critical outcomes through data-driven customer experiences, delivering control at the grid edge, creating new revenue streams and optimizing existing load and assets, Uplight shares a mission with its clients to make energy more sustainable for every community. Uplight is a certified B Corporation.

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