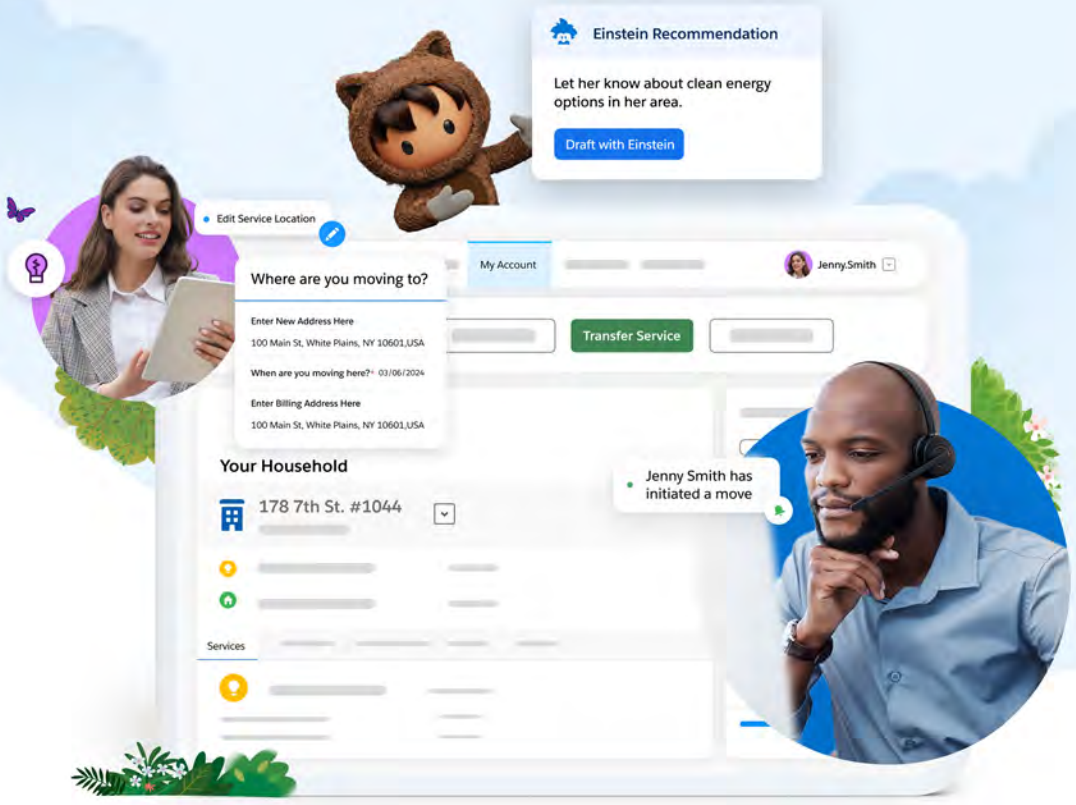
Powering the Future: Strategies for Energy and Utility Success

See how data and AI can help you optimize operations, nurture relationships, and come out on top in the clean energy revolution.



Contents

Energy and utility companies are entering a new era. 03

Addressing climate change takes center stage. 04

Grid management and energy distribution is becoming more complex. 06

Distributed energy resources and grid technology are bolstering grid resilience while also changing the marketplace. 07

Customers are a utility's most valuable asset in the clean energy transformation. 08

Legacy systems are slowing down utility technological transformation. 09

Data harmonization is the first step toward an AI-powered future. 10

Formula for the future: Insight, intelligence, and engagement. 12

Energy and utility organizations need their own CRM. 12

Energy and utility relationship management tools strengthen customer experience. 14

Increased retail energy competition necessitates better B2B and B2C sales. 17

Technology orchestrates relationships, and utilities are the conductors. 19



Energy and utility companies are entering a new era.

The energy and utilities industry is on the front lines of the clean energy revolution, and it's a major player when it comes to the future of our planet. A proliferation of new energy options is broadening the market, creating new competition, and putting pressure on the industry. Finding success in this environment necessitates that energy and utility companies split focus between preparing for and spearheading the energy revolution and more immediate concerns like keeping costs down, productivity up, and the customer front and center.

Embracing technologies like automation and artificial intelligence (AI) can help achieve both of these priorities. However, to make full use of these technologies, energy and utility companies need to forgo legacy systems and operations in favor of a more future-forward technological infrastructure. Transforming systems will not only uplevel their technology, it will effect their entire organization. Data harmonization, AI-powered solutions, and an industry-specific customer relationship management (CRM) system will enable energy and utility companies to reimagine processes, increase efficiency, and harness AI capabilities. This results in the ability to optimize operations, scale services, achieve net-zero goals, and create better customer, partner, and stakeholder relationships.



Addressing climate change takes center stage.

For today's energy and utility companies, the transition to clean energy and net-zero goals are top of mind. The industry plays a leading role in responding to climate-related disasters and switching to cleaner energy sources. Electrification in an effort to stop burning fossil fuels and making sure there is enough clean generation capacity to meet future energy consumption needs are also major priorities.

This energy transition is a once-in-a-generation challenge that will require massive transformation. And, it's already well underway. Global investment in clean energy and electrification is at its peak, and utilities are simultaneously fast-tracking new infrastructure buildout and re-imagining the grid.



Amount Invested in Clean Energy in 2023

World Energy Investment 2023

This need for a massive shift to clean energy is forcing utilities to quickly figure out how to support an influx of distributed generation – and making it imperative that they find ways to ensure they can meet the surging demand for electricity. It's also pushing them to collaborate with a broader range of service providers, such as heat pump installers, building efficiency engineers, and community planners. These providers often serve a savvier customer base that expects transparency and accountability from their energy providers.

Relationships are key to achieving net zero by 2050.

Most utilities have committed to reaching net zero by 2050. More often than not, these commitments encompass aggressive goals that speed up the journey to a cleaner and more sustainable future.

This isn't a goal that can be achieved alone. While utilities play a huge role in decarbonization and conservation efforts (which they promote via energy efficiency programs), consumers must also take action. Both everyday consumers and commercial organizations need to proactively change behaviors and consumption habits – the choices made both individually and collectively impact a utility's ability to meet their net-zero targets.

Ultimately, this comes down to relationships. To get to net zero by 2050, energy and utilities providers need to scale the adoption and rollout of new energy efficiency and demand orchestration programs that better engage customers (residential, commercial, and industrial), trade allies, and suppliers.



Grid management and energy distribution is becoming more complex.

Providing reliable power is a utility company's primary purpose. However, doing this well requires flexible, ongoing grid and customer relationship management. This is easier said than done.

Utility companies are no longer the only game in town. The proliferation of smart devices, clean energy sources, and utilities marketplaces have diversified customer options and are forcing utility companies to compete in ways they've never needed to before. As the cost of wind, solar, and battery storage becomes more viable (and more sustainable), the choices are expanding for cleaner, more local, and non-utility-owned sources of power. This has changed the way customers think about energy. Not only are they more interested in incorporating more renewable energy options into their day-to-day lives, they have more ways to do it.

As a result, today's energy grid has become more decentralized. The expanded network of energy systems has changed the way we fuel our cars, heat our homes, and power our businesses, resulting in a transmission and distribution system that has to support a more complex, distributed network of local generation and capacity.



Distributed energy resources and grid technology are bolstering grid resilience while also changing the marketplace.

The past few years have seen a proliferation in distributed energy resources (DERs) and grid edge technologies. These technologies are revolutionizing the way the industry ensures resiliency by opening up new opportunities for utilities to have visibility and leverage over customer assets that they couldn't "see" before.

Accounting for all these different technologies has made grid management and resiliency more complex. However, it also presents an opportunity. The right tools and technologies can help utilities gather real-time data on energy consumption, production, and grid conditions. This gives them the ability to coordinate and control the power load on the grid, increasing grid resiliency and flexibility, and making it possible to optimize energy flows, reduce congestion, and prevent overloads.

Let's take a deeper look at these technologies and see how they affect the grid.

What are distributed energy resources?

When we talk about DERs we are referring to small-scale power generation or storage technologies that can be deployed locally and integrated into the electricity grid. These can include things like wind turbines, battery storage systems (which can now include fleets of electric vehicles), solar energy, or any other similar technologies. DERs strengthen the grid in the face of disruption. They offer an alternate energy source that utilities can tap into in the event of an emergency or energy interruption. This makes the grid more resilient to outages, natural disasters, or other unforeseen events.

What are grid edge technologies?

The grid edge refers to the point where the utility meets the customer. Grid edge technologies are any equipment, software solutions, or controls that tie into and draw from the grid but are controlled by the customer. Examples include hardware like solar panels, smart meters, IoT devices, and automated demand response controls as well as software like distributed energy resource management systems (DERMS) and virtual power plants (VPPs) that manage demand to match capacity. These technologies have a huge impact on both the positive and negative load on the grid.

Customers are a utility's most valuable asset in the clean energy transformation.

Today's customer is both a utility's greatest asset and their greatest challenge. Customer-side DERs and grid edge technologies coupled with an uptick in the desire to use more renewable energy sources give customers more agency and power than ever before. The ability to generate their own electricity through DERs like solar panels gives customers more autonomy when it comes to managing and optimizing energy consumption. If these customers are engaged properly, they can also become highly valuable partners in a utility company's decarbonization efforts.

Increased interest in clean energy and decarbonization presents an opportunity for energy and utilities organizations to develop partnerships and incentive programs promoting things like electric vehicles, heat pumps, and other more efficient energy sources. While rife with opportunity, this shift also presents challenges. It further fragments the market and creates more dimensions to manage with respect to utility customer offerings. It also means utility companies must grow and manage partnerships with DER and grid edge technology companies. This makes growing, nurturing, and sustaining the utility-customer relationship more complex.



Legacy systems are slowing down utility technological transformation.

As new technological capabilities emerge, so too do new opportunities. It is now possible for energy and utility companies to more personally engage and partner with customers, intelligently manage the grid, and ensure operational efficiency. However, at present, a reliance on legacy systems is standing in the way.

The traditional utility platforms and the monolithic systems the industry is currently using are rigid and outdated. They don't have the agility, flexibility, or scalability to help the industry as it moves toward a clean energy future. Perhaps more importantly, disconnected systems and siloed data make it difficult, if not impossible, for organizations to become truly AI-ready. This isn't a risk utilities organizations can afford to take, especially in a world where competition is fierce, information is everything, and how well you use AI can be the difference between success and failure.

Home-grown systems often feature bolt-on solutions, which can create integration challenges that lead to data inconsistency and overall inefficiency. This combination of fragmented information and manual processes is prone to errors and inhibits data-driven decision making and productivity. It also poses a security risk, as a breach to one part of the system can take it all down.



Data harmonization is the first step toward an AI-powered future.

The path from fragmented legacy systems to an AI-driven future is paved with data. Energy and utilities organizations have a lot of data. However, as previously discussed, it's disconnected and not fully accessible. Making that data fully viable requires that it be standardized and integrated across the entirety of the organization. Only then can it fuel AI.

Harmonizing, unifying, and organizing data is one of the most important things an energy and utility company can do. Once data has been standardized, it can be leveraged with other tools and technologies to supply insights for decision makers or automate processes. Building tools and structure around a harmonized data set makes it possible to unify it and centralize access on one platform. This eliminates data silos and enables everyone across the organization to access, work from, and contribute to the same data set in real time.

Artificial intelligence unlocks opportunities and success.

The evolution of energy solutions, resources, and technologies over the past few years has occurred alongside a parallel evolution in AI. Energy companies are using these technologies in conjunction with each other to achieve a more energy efficient future.

As energy sources diversify and the future becomes more distributed, relationships are more important than ever. Energy companies aren't just managing relationships with customers, trade allies, community stakeholders, and employees, they are also dealing with grid assets, data, and processes. These relationships need to flow freely, remain open, and work together for a reliable and resilient grid.

Many energy companies are turning to AI to help achieve these goals. For over a decade they've been using predictive AI, machine learning, and robotic process automation (RPA) to optimize their operations and margins. These technologies make it possible for customer service teams to proactively provide better service, marketing teams to target specific customer segments with personalized incentives, and sales teams to more accurately forecast everything from consumption to sales revenue. While highly valuable across the board, predictive AI is especially valuable when it comes to planning and disaster response.



It enables utilities to better understand how weather-related emergencies might affect the grid or figure out how to make use of DERs in order to solve temporary outages.

The more recent emergence of generative AI provides utilities with new ways to boost productivity and improve operational efficiencies. Already, organizations using generative AI are seeing a wide array of benefits. Automated service replies, work summaries, AI-powered bots, and the creation of knowledge articles enhance customer satisfaction and efficiency. This results in more personalized service, hyperproductivity in the contact center, and a dramatic increase in efficiency when it comes to sales engagement.



of energy and utility companies have started exploring the potential of generative AI.
Capgemini



of energy and utilities executives believe the benefits of generative AI outweigh the associated risks.
Capgemini

A note on trust: As powerful as AI can be, it can also introduce risk – especially generative AI. While generative AI tools that pull data from public online sources may not pose issues to the average consumer, that's not so true when it comes to businesses. A secure platform, like Einstein 1, with a dedicated trust layer ensures energy and utility companies can benefit from generative AI while also protecting the privacy and security of their data. Dynamic grounding, sensitive data masking, and ethics and inclusivity principles provide guardrails, ensuring that your organization is promoting responsible use of AI tools and deploying accurate, trustworthy AI content and insights.

Formula for the future: Insight, intelligence, and engagement.

To succeed in the energy transition, utilities need to combine data, AI, and industry-specific solutions together onto a centralized platform. This modernization of their technological infrastructure streamlines operations. It enables them to manage, grow, and nurture myriad relationships across their environment and prepare for any future innovations that may be coming down the pike.

A trusted CRM, data, and AI platform bolstered by industry-specific solutions and insights makes it possible for you to face current and future challenges head on. It will help you more efficiently and effectively scale clean energy adoption, build better customer and stakeholder relationships, improve service and emergency response, and enhance overall operations.

Energy and utility organizations need their own CRM.

Extracting the full value from your data requires an investment in targeted technological solutions. Digital transformation can be an expensive, lengthy, and complicated process. This is made even more complicated when organizations try to use a one-size-fits-all solution that isn't tailored to fast-evolving industry dynamics.

In the past, many companies took the stance that they should find the best individual departmental solutions. Recent technological innovations have flipped that strategy on its head. In today's AI-driven world, an integrated suite of applications has become priority number one. Having one suite of solutions across sales, service, marketing, e-commerce, analytics, industry solutions, and core platform capabilities makes it easier for AI to access and act on the totality of your data. It creates one single source of truth from which you can push or pull data to achieve a multitude of different analyses, outcomes, and insights.





What should you look for in an energy CRM?

Energy and utility companies need a CRM designed expressly for the industry – an energy relationship management platform that delivers value today and can flex and scale for tomorrow. Salesforce's Energy and Utilities Cloud is one such example. It enables you to benefit from traditional CRM capabilities while also giving you the advantage of purpose-built solutions tailored to address specific industry needs.

The goal of the platform is to help energy and utility companies deliver great customer experiences while also lowering the cost to serve. It does this through industry-specific solutions and easy integrations that enable you to scale customer service, personalize engagement, and quickly launch new programs, products, and offers. And because everything is in one centralized location, actions can be taken directly in the flow of work, negating the need to toggle between screens or jump from system to system.

These capabilities stem from a foundation of data and automated workflows that are then supercharged by AI. Built-in tools enable employees to create prompts that get them the information they need, generate automatic service replies and work summaries, create knowledge articles, and use customer-facing AI-powered bots to deliver better customer experiences. And, every time the technology is used, it learns. For example, AI may begin to recognize identifying factors of a successful installation. From this it learns what it takes to pass an inspection. It can then use that information to generate and submit routine inspection approvals (with human approval). This saves an incredible amount of time and allows employees to focus less on documentation and more on valuable work.



Energy and utility relationship management tools strengthen customer experience.

Today's customers expect continual interaction with their utility that goes far beyond reporting an outage, disputing a bill, or setting up service. They want energy usage insights, customized billing options, energy efficiency programs, cleaner energy options, and more.

Energy customers also want to be engaged personally and proactively in a way that feels uniquely catered to their needs and preferences. They expect friction-free customer service, transparent, easy-to-access customer portals, and robust self-service capabilities. To meet these expectations, energy companies need integrated systems and processes that help them provide this kind of high-quality service at scale.

Utilities that are agile and responsive to customer needs differentiate themselves in a competitive market. This opens up opportunities for growth and long-term loyalty. The digitization, personalization, and automation of a trusted data, AI, and CRM platform powers omni-channel customer service anytime from anywhere, helping energy and utility companies to not only meet, but exceed expectations.

A centralized platform is key to enabling utilities to deliver personalized service that seamlessly integrates across contact centers, digital channels, and field service. Smart, intuitive tools help agents get up to speed quickly and put full customer insights and next best actions at their fingertips. So, when a customer inquires about an issue or interest in a new product, whomever is on the other end of that inquiry (whether it be contact center or field service) will be able to pull up a complete customer profile listing any past service calls, products they already have, energy programs they may participate in, and any other pertinent information. Once that call is over, they can even use embedded generative AI to create a call summary. This enables whoever interacts with that customer next time to pick up where this last call left off.





Scaling service is key to cost savings.

The top customer service priorities are delivering service that meets customer expectations and cementing long-term loyalty. Enabling service teams to deliver the right level of service for every customer interaction drives efficiency and allows them to achieve this goal. A targeted customer service solution built directly into an energy relationship platform can help energy and utility companies boost productivity, reduce costs, and deliver better overall customer service experiences. It achieves this by using automated processes to eliminate repetitive, manual tasks and embedded AI to deliver intelligent recommendations. This helps service teams get to resolution faster and ensures that service agents are spending less time on taskwork and more time on complex, high-touch cases.

When we talk about how shifting to automation will enable scaling, we use the term "shift to scale." For example, companies might shift high-touch, in-person field service appointments to virtual/video support, reducing truck rolls and saving on fuel costs and maintenance. Or, they might move less complex contact center calls to chatbots or self-service, enabling agents to focus on more complicated issues. Ultimately, the ability to handle high-touch interactions with more automated, lower-touch service increases efficiency and customer satisfaction while also saving time and money.

To be successful in a shift to scale approach, the "no-touch" experiences offered by a utility company need to be seamless, friction-free, and personalized. These experiences can take a variety of forms, for example: integrated self-service capabilities, automated, intelligent digital experiences, and smart virtual agents. Tools like AI and automation guide customers (and virtual agents) with insights and step-by-step directions directly in the flow of work. This allows customers take care of simple tasks anytime, anywhere without the need to contact or speak to an agent.

Strong self-service capabilities help energy and utility companies reduce service costs and improve satisfaction by enabling customers to:

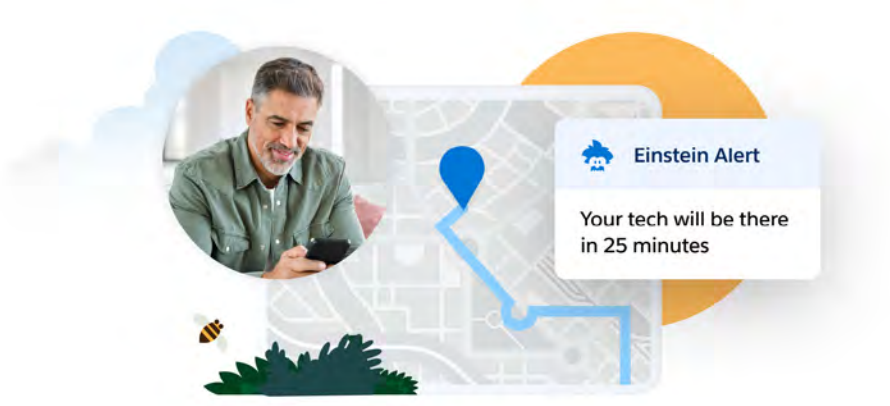
- Use automatic bill pay
- Manually pay their bill
- Move or transfer service
- Add or change a service
- Edit notification preferences
- Manage their account



Optimized field service experiences power productivity.

In many ways, field service technicians are the face of an energy and utility company. They're up close and personal with customers and hands-on with the grid. However, the naturally dispersed nature of field service work can make management and communications less than optimal. The more efficient your field service team, the more productive (and cost efficient) your energy and utility company. A mobile-enabled, AI-powered, connected platform provides field teams with real-time insights that allow them to deliver safer, more efficient service and more responsive customer care.

The ability to operate from one centralized command center enables optimized scheduling and dispatch, making it possible for utility companies to provide better customer communications through integrations to geographic information system-based apps that provide the mobile experience and transparency today's customers expect from service teams. Utility-specific mobile work process templates enhance productivity, ensure worker safety, and reduce costs by more efficiently deploying critical resources and assets for emergency services, testing, and inspections and optimizing short-, medium-, and long-cycle work.



Automation and embedded AI capabilities make it possible for field service agents to quickly and easily accomplish tasks that used to take far more time and effort. For example, they can summarize service calls at the click of a button, automatically fill in forms, or gain a 360-degree view of the issue at hand in a matter of seconds. This makes it possible for them to get more done in less time, without sacrificing experience or safety.

The emergence of AI is reshaping the role of a field service worker from one of strictly service to a more hybrid role straddling service and sales. Intelligent prompts and recommendations as to what products and services might be a good fit for the individual customer at hand allow field service agents to spur sales and promote products. This turns service visits into revenue-generating opportunities with the potential to drive growth.

Increased retail energy competition necessitates better B2B and B2C sales.

Today's energy suppliers need the ability to create customer experiences that are on par with other companies competing in the space. A trusted data, AI, and CRM platform allows them to deliver these types of experiences, exceeding customer expectations and cementing long-lasting residential, commercial, and industrial client relationships.

Intelligent, automated solutions make it possible for utilities to provide personalized customer buying experiences across residential, commercial, and industrial markets. These solutions simplify the sales process through automated workflows that guide sales agents through the appropriate energy and utilities products, services, and offers. Once a deal is in progress, the system can provide accurate pricing, eligibility, and approvals for quotes and orders (with cost-margin boundaries) – again, directly in the flow of work. This helps ensure that pricing strategies are aligned with business goals, that profitability is front and center, and that any risks associated with pricing decisions are taken into account.

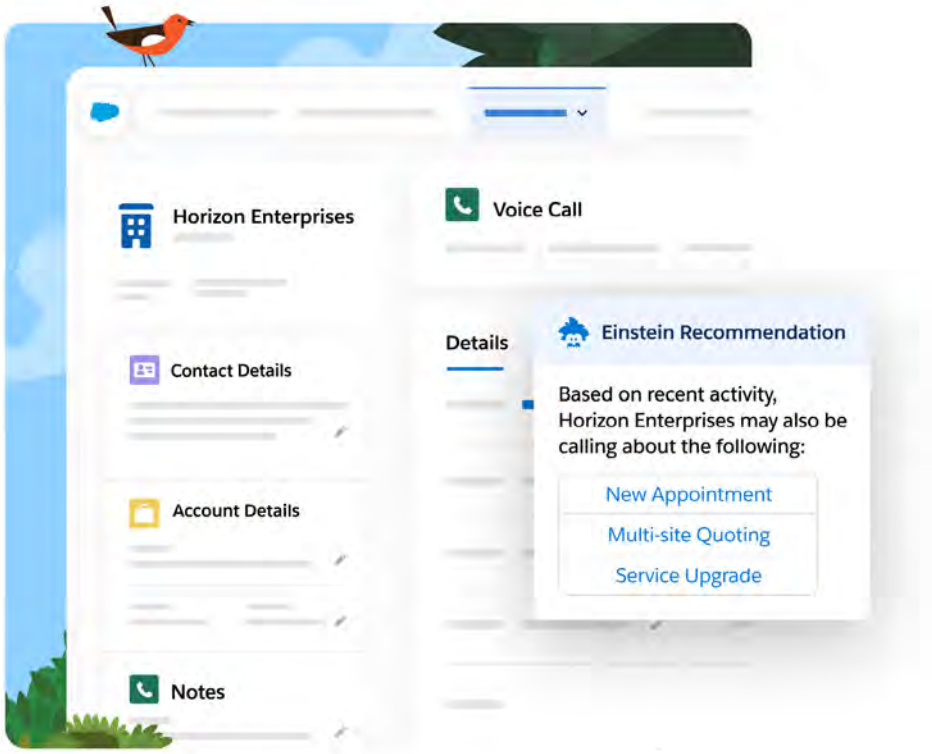
A centralized platform gives employees the ability to fully know and understand each customer and their history with the company. Furthermore, the ability to track a customer's assets throughout their lifecycle allows teams to understand purchase history across all sales channels so they can more easily identify cross-sell and upsell opportunities.

A centralized location also provides a place to document, track, and manage relationships with third-party intermediaries, brokers, and partner sales channels. It can analyze things like work done or services provided, assess results, and then use that analysis to prioritize certain relationships or identify which partner or third-party company might be best suited for the job or opportunity at hand.



Custom care solidifies commercial and industrial relationships.

An energy supplier's ability to personalize sales, provide custom product offerings, and present multifaceted energy solutions is especially important as it relates to commercial and industrial customers. The ability to gain a full portfolio view in one centralized location gives account managers and sales agents the tools and insights they need to optimize contracts, provide new energy services, become trusted partners, and meaningfully engage high-value commercial and industrial accounts. It allows them to efficiently and effectively manage and quote multi-site accounts, use AI-driven pricing engines to produce complicated, multi-site quotes in record time, and automatically surface and promote new products and services that help B2B customers reduce energy costs and meet energy goals. The end result is the ability to close more deals in less time.



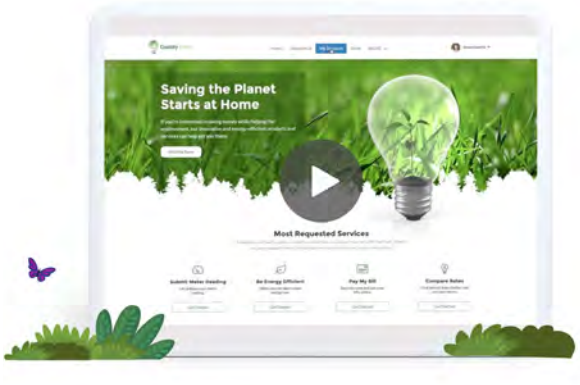
Technology orchestrates relationships, and utilities are the conductors.

The energy and utilities industry is at the forefront of our collective evolution toward a clean energy future. Residential customers are interested in clean energy solutions, and commercial and industrial partners are eager to find ways to lower their carbon footprint and achieve net-zero goals. These things coupled with the proliferation of grid edge technologies and DERs make energy and utility companies a prime player and partner, conducting customers and stakeholders to work in concert with them for shared energy outcomes.

To capitalize on the momentum and take advantage of any new innovations and technologies that might be on the horizon, energy and utility companies need to have the right technological infrastructure in place. An AI-powered, fully integrated energy relationship platform is foundational to the path forward.

A foundation of technology provides the capabilities necessary to meet modern expectations and offer a never-before-seen level of agility, scale, and flexibility. And, the cornerstone of that foundation must be trust. Building trust and security directly into the technology (or the platform) ensures transparency, data protection, and ongoing stakeholder alignment.

Bringing technology and trust together enables energy and utility companies to create the personalized, one-to-one relationships B2B and B2C customers have come to expect.



Discover how Salesforce's Energy and Utilities Cloud can help you adapt and thrive in the energy transition.

Watch the Demo



The information provided in this report is strictly for the convenience of our customers and is for general informational purposes only. Publication by Salesforce, Inc., does not constitute an endorsement. Salesforce does not warrant the accuracy or completeness of any information, text, graphics, links, or other items contained within this guide. Salesforce does not guarantee you will achieve any specific results if you follow any advice in the report. It may be advisable for you to consult with a professional such as a lawyer, accountant, architect, business advisor, or professional engineer to get specific advice that applies to your specific situation.

© Copyright 2024, Salesforce, Inc. All rights reserved.