



## **Flipping the Switch from Push to Pull: How to Get Buy-In for Your Energy Efficiency Programs**

Just because you have something to offer, doesn't mean your customers actually need it. In the energy industry, strength can be a weakness. Companies strong in creating useful programs, services and accompanying solutions also believe that's where their value lies. On the contrary, with this thinking you enter into business relationships with an unconscious liability. You believe just because you have something to offer, your customers must need it. And that's not necessarily the case.

People do not buy things based on need. Need is the pursuit of a positive. Buying is not based upon pursuing a positive, but involves overcoming or eliminating a negative. If there's no issue, problem, concern or threat, there's no need for a solution no matter how great it is, including Demand Response and Energy Efficiency Programs.

Individuals with traditional sales thinking often assume that either everyone should or does need what they offer. They burden themselves with proving the need exists. That's a *push* relationship. Even if your customers do have problems to solve, most will deny it when *pushed*. Unfortunately, relationships like these are inherently flawed. Many professionals in energy services believe the reason customers don't buy is that they lacked sufficient information, enough justification or adequate incentives convincing them to buy. This is an example of a traditional push and flawed sales philosophy.

A fundamental difference exists between trying to sell individuals on their needs vs. helping them buy into programs or pursue solutions based on their perceptions of problems. For validation, ask a current or past customer what concerns were eliminated or problems solved by signing up for your latest program *from their perspective*. You cannot create a need where one does not exist. You cannot solve problems or eliminate pain where none are present. You can, however, become the problem by trying to convince people of needs that don't exist or concerns they don't have.

In reality, your customers cannot be pushed nor expected to buy into your program unless they see it addressing an issue of *significance to them at that particular time*. To achieve buy-in, start by asking them about their concerns and then listen, rather than telling and "selling".

In addition, knowing how and why people buy means using a well-constructed consultative process that engenders trust and respect. With the use of a well-defined process, the switch from push to pull will be achieved and your customers will be encouraged to *pull* you into their current situations. At that point and only at that point, your customers will reveal their true issues and provide you with the opportunity to address these issues with your Demand Response and Energy Efficiency Programs.

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