



CASE STUDY NUMBER 90: National Grid/Balfour Beatty/tRiIO – Main Replacement Communications Pilot

WINNER OF THE NJUG KEEPING THE PUBLIC FULLY INFORMED AWARD 2016

The National Joint Utilities Group (NJUG) is the UK industry association representing utilities solely on street works issues. NJUG represents some 56 utility companies and contractors engaged in the street works sector, and 18 specialist sub-contractors who provide equipment, materials and services supporting street works activities. Our members represent major contributors to economic growth and work to deliver gas, electricity, water and telecommunications to both individual consumers and UK plc. In order to continue this drive for further improvements within the industry - we have developed the NJUG Vision for Street Works, which revolves around seven main principles:

- Safety
- High Quality
- Minimise Disruption
- Keep the Public Fully Informed
- Sustainable Methods and Materials
- Avoid Damage to Underground Assets
- Innovation

This case study is an example of the street works sector delivering on these principles and turning the vision into reality.

Overview

The "Planned Works Customer Journey" project was introduced to improve Ofgem Customer Satisfaction (CSAT) scores and reduce complaints and enquiries for mains replacement. With more than 17,000 customers a month disrupted by our replacement programme, and whole communities affected by street works, it has the biggest direct customer footprint of any National Grid activity.

Case Study

Focus group testing and analysis of customer surveys revealed a number of problem areas – reinstatement, behaviors, planning and communications. Customers said that National Grid's communications were poor, and when they did communicate it was inaccurate or misleading. Many perceived their letters to be junk mail and threw them straight in the bin.

Engineers found the National Grid customer update cards used during the works confusing, which made it difficult for them to communicate effectively in the field. The engineers often found they accidentally posted the wrong information through doors or sometimes didn't have time to sort the correct cards, so didn't bother.

National Grid felt that the key to solving this was putting customers at the heart of the solution. They scrapped the phrase: "What does National Grid want customers to know" replacing it with "What do customers want from us?" and used customer focus groups, feedback from surveys, complaints and enquiry data to answer this question. They asked Engineering Teams about what inhibits their ability to be good communicators and sat with their enquiry teams to understand customer frustration. National Grid gained a clear understanding of what their customers needed at each key point.

National Grid, for the first time, looked at how their customers absorbed information, using the latest Ofcom and ONS statistics to get an understanding of 'channel' use. This revealed siloes in our own communications. Once they understood the problem they set about with a solution.

They also raised the profile of the mains replacement pages on the website and simplified the wording. National Grid embedded a 'roadworks map', created direct links

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(www.nationalgrid.com/inyourstreet) and put these in our letters. Webpage visits rocketed from 600 to 13000. Analytics showed our 5-minute video was only watched for a minute meaning people missed important information about the works. So National Grid swapped this for four, minute-long videos about the areas that cause most customer concern. Our shorter 'bite-sized' videos had over 2000 views a month, compared to just 100 for the old video. And they simplified the email addresses (wecare@nationalgrid.com).

National Grid's leaflet was revamped, and rewritten using enquiry and complaints data to ensure it specifically answered the most frequently asked customer questions and concerns.

National Grid broke the mains replacement programme down into four key elements: "Before we start work" "Laying the Pipe", "Turning on the gas" and "Filling the holes" and colour coded each using our van livery so it matched what customers saw in the street.



They also changed their information cards so they all looked different and matched the leaflet, meaning customers always knew which part of the process their card was referring to. To help this further they added a progress chart to the front of the cards. Customers always knew where we were with the work and what was likely to happen next.



Finally, they created new website bettergaspipes.co.uk which was more interactive with more information more pictures and shorter bite-sized videos all focussed on key customer questions and concerns

To measure the effectiveness, they piloted their new material with 1400 customers. The pilot saw a 51% reduction in telephone enquiries and 'no gas' calls fell by 55%. Being honest and open and providing videos and pictures about what people should inspect when they filled the holes helped to better manage expectations and deal with issues up front resulting in a 52% reduction in complaints.

CSAT in the pilot areas improved by an average of 11%. In their worst performing areas, it increased as much as 30%. Significantly, 95% of customers surveyed said that they remembered receiving the communications, suggesting we'd resolved the junk mail issue.

The success of the pilot and customer feedback was so strong that National Grid has begun rollout of this system across all four network areas.

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Strategic Partnership