



Storm & Emergency Communications: Driving Customer-Centricity

Dr. Courtney Henderson

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Council Member & Former Mayor

Thank You!

We appreciate the opportunity to present utility storm & emergency communications insights to the Public Interest Environmental Organization User Group (PIEOUG). We also want to thank the team at Consumer Advocates of the PJM States for their tireless work.



Hawks Peak Strategies

Founded by Dr. Courtney Henderson, **Hawks Peak Strategies** employs the latest insights in behavioral science to drive policy, research-backed communications, go-to-market design and strategies, and customer-centric, equity-focused experiences. At Hawks Peak, we believe in a just and equitable clean energy transition that benefits everyone.

Agenda



The Opportunity

What We Did / Methodology

Insights & Opportunities

Next Steps

Setting the Stage

While this work focused on emergency & storm communications, it is **applicable to a variety of other areas** that impact customer communications that need to be proactively planned for & developed as it relates to **possible capacity shortages**.





The Opportunity

We communicate with our customers every day.

Drive customer-centricity through meaningful, easily understood, and motivating communications and messaging.

Why It Matters

Ease, convenience, and simplicity are crucial for frictionless customer experiences and driving consumer behaviors.

- Increase customer satisfaction
- Customer engagement
- Behavior change – from reducing energy use to installing new widgets to participating in demand response and more!

**Can customers be served
better?**



YES!

Communications can nearly always be improved, especially during emergencies, storms, & capacity shortages.

- ***Winter weather***
- ***Cold storms***
- ***Fires / wildfires***
- ***Hurricanes***
- ***Large loads (i.e., data centers) & capacity shortages***



What We Did

Reviewed 90+
pieces of PJM
communications

UPDATE: Cold Weather Alert Expanded to All of PJM for Dec. 24 PJM Asks Consumers To Conserve Electricity

Dec. 21, 2022



Dec. 23, 12:07 p.m.: PJM has expanded its Cold Weather Alert to include the footprint for Dec. 24 and Dec. 25.

PJM now has a Cold Weather Advisory through Dec. 26 and a Cold Weather Alert for the PJM Region that started Dec. 23.

The Cold Weather Alert prepares personnel and facilities for expected extreme cold weather when actual temperatures fall near or below 10 degrees Fahrenheit. Temperatures across PJM's Western Region are expected to be in the single digits through Dec. 24 and slightly higher through the rest of the 13-state footprint, with high winds expected in the Midwestern states.

Dec. 24, 2022



PJM has requested the public in its region to conserve electricity. The call for conservation is being made by continuing frigid weather.

The call for conservation is being made throughout PJM.

PJM is asking consumers to reduce their use of electricity, if health permits, between the hours of 6 p.m. on December 24, 2022 and 10 a.m. on December 25, 2022.

Electricity is expected to increase in the PJM region and the regions surrounding PJM because of the extremely cold weather. Electricity customers can take conservation steps such as:

- Set thermostats lower than usual, if health permits,
- Turn off major electric appliances such as stoves, dishwashers and clothes dryers.

The emergency procedure email will contain an operational and emergency level continuum.

Emergency Status Continuum



Each banner will contain specific messaging that details the actual emergency procedure. This will include the specific emergency procedure, the impacted zones or regions, the expected duration the event, and other relevant information.

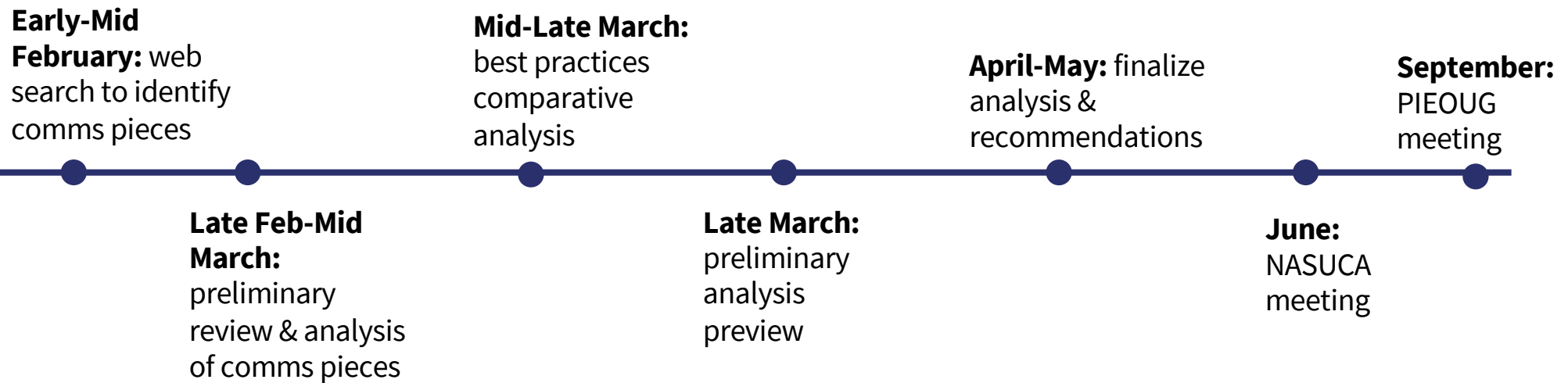
Methodology

We reviewed, analyzed, and categorized 90+ communications pieces, including pieces provided by Consumer Advocates of the PJM States and PJM.

We focused our review on cold weather and winter storm communications. However, due to a relative dearth of those communications, we included communications within other topical focus areas.

We catalogued and categorized these communication pieces, noting opportunities to better align with best practices, as relevant.

Time Frame



Communications Reviewed

Communications Type	Number Reviewed	Time Frame of Published Comms
Inside Lines	16 full articles	Jan 6, 2025-Feb 18, 2025
Emails	6 utility emails	Dates not provided (cold weather season)
PJM Manual	1	Published 2024
Facebook social media	22 posts	September 1, 2024-April 1, 2025
LinkedIn social media	24 pieces	March 1, 2025-April 1, 2025
YouTube videos	16	September 18, 2019 – December 5, 2024
Miscellaneous (Provided by PJM)	4 pieces	Dates not provided
PJM Now app	1 app	
Total	90	



Insights

Insights Summary



PJM uses a wide variety of channels to distribute messaging.



PJM's messaging is not always differentiated by audience type or channel.



There is tremendous opportunity to drive customer-centricity in communications, where appropriate.

Insight 1.

PJM uses a wide variety of channels to distribute messaging.

This is a good way to reach multiple & diverse stakeholders. However, not all channels are actively communicating or communicating in a customer-centric fashion.

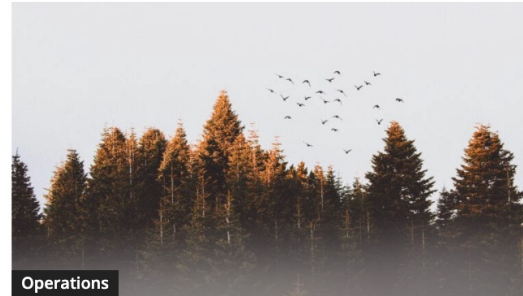
- Inside Lines
- Social media
- Email notifications
- YouTube
- PJM Now app
- Stakeholder & State Government Policy Team email alerts

Inside Lines

Highly technical messaging most likely for transmission & distribution owners/operators.

- From Jan 6, 2025-Feb 18, 2025, PJM posted 14 articles. 2 articles on cold weather posted during Winter Storm Elliot.
- Messaging is targeted more to generation and transmission owners and operators, than to consumers
- Language is highly detailed and technical, not customer-centric.
- Calls to action are buried at bottom of posts.

Tag: cold weather



Feb. 18 Update: Cold Weather Alert for PJM Western Region Extended to Feb. 19

Jason McGovern - February 13, 2025

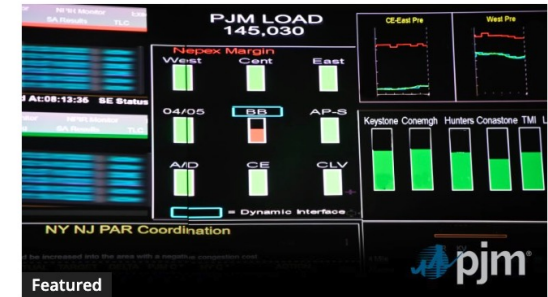
0



Jan. 16 Update: Cold Weather Alert Issued for Jan. 20–22

Jason McGovern - January 15, 2025

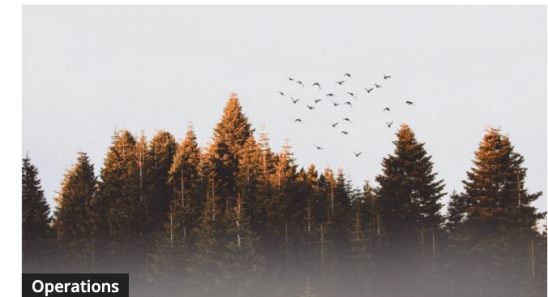
0



Jan. 22 Update: Extreme Cold Produces PJM Record for Winter Electricity Demand

Jason McGovern - January 22, 2025

0



Jan. 13 Update: PJM Issues Cold Weather Alert Issued for Western Region for Jan. 14–16

Jason McGovern - January 10, 2025

0

Social Media

A potentially under-leveraged channel.

- From September 1, 2024 – April 1, 2025, PJM made 24 total FB posts. Of these:
 - 16 were for heritage / holidays
 - 6 were staff-related
 - 2 were Eagles football-related
- 2.1k followers, low engagement
- Mostly stock images
- Infrequent posting
- Posting that may not feel relevant to followers (none of 23 posts contained energy content)
- No Instagram presence (employee and contractor account, 117 followers)



LinkedIn

One of PJM's more engaged channels.

Much more active compared to Facebook

Mar 1, '25-Apr 1, '25: 22 LI posts

10 energy/non-weather; 3
heritage/holidays; 8 staff; 1 PJM Now app

Minimal cold weather/storms posts, though
14 Inside Lines pieces Jan 6-Feb 18, '25

36k followers, engagement varies topically

Content likely matches audience
specificity; Heavy stock images/text only

The image shows a screenshot of the PJM Interconnection LinkedIn profile and two recent posts. The profile header indicates 36,475 followers and a verified account. The first post, titled 'NextGen is the latest step to support improvements in process...', includes a link to a LinkedIn article. The second post is a 'COLD WEATHER UPDATE' for the PJM Western Region, featuring a map of the service territory and a photo of a meeting. The post has 47 likes and 19 reposts. The third post shows a photo of two men shaking hands at a meeting, with 70 likes and 2 reposts.

PJM Interconnection
36,475 followers
1mo ·

PJM has extended a Cold Weather Alert for its Western Region to Feb. 19 as frigid weather continues.

The Cold Weather Alert initially went into effect for PJM's Western Region on Feb. 17.

PJM served a preliminary hourly integrated peak of 119,233 MW on Feb. 17. As of 8:30 a.m. Feb. 18, PJM currently expects to serve a forecasted demand of approximately 126,000 MW on Feb. 18 and 130,000 MW on Feb. 19.

A Cold Weather Alert is a routine procedure PJM issues in advance of significantly cold weather conditions expected for all or parts of the region PJM serves.

Read more at PJM Inside Lines.
<https://lnkd.in/e6cJvXC5>

COLD WEATHER UPDATE
PJM Western Region

Cold Weather Advisory
Feb. 17–20
Cold Weather Alert
Feb. 17–19

PJM Interconnection
36,475 followers
3w · Edited ·

PJM Sr. VP of Governmental and Member Services and fellow panelist Todd Brickhouse, CEO of Nantux Cooperative, before Wednesday's hearing

25

47

19 reposts

Like Comment Repost Send

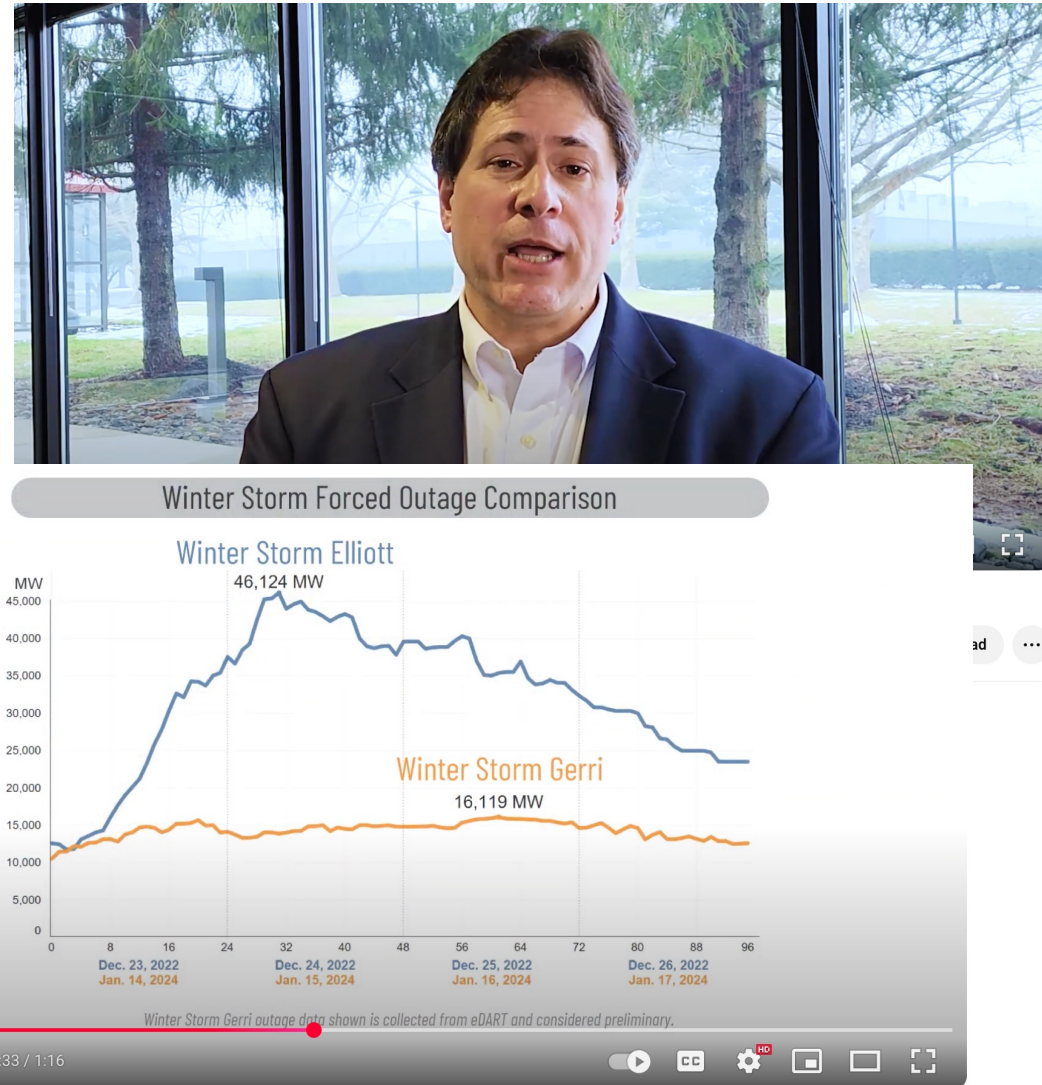
70

2 reposts

YouTube

Infrequent content with varied production quality & messaging.

- 1.63k subscribers
- All videos are short & concise (none exceeding 1 min 39 secs)
- Infrequent videos. From Dec 2023 – Dec 2024, PJM posted 8 total videos:
 - 2 "Happy Holidays"
 - 4 related to reliability (1 on Winter Storm Gerri, 1 on hot weather, 2 industry spotlights)
 - 2 PJM's people
- Highest production value video has highest number of views (678)
- Others tend to be between 250-460 views



Cold Weather Operations Review

YouTube

An opportunity for dynamic content geared toward consumers.

- Winter Storm Elliott in 2022
 - 2 videos: 3.7k and 2.7k views
 - Both are short, concise
- Opportunities:
 - Dynamic content
 - Use language that is more customer-centric, instead of: “Thank you for helping us to get through today’s challenging **operations**. Your efforts to help us **conserve electricity** helped us get through the **morning peak**.”



PJM Asks Consumers to Conserve Electricity

Insight 2.

Because PJM has multiple stakeholders, it must use varied messaging techniques.

There may be opportunities to differentiate messaging to better resonate with different stakeholder groups and across different channels.

- PJM's Inside Lines is a website that consumers can easily access. However, messaging on Inside Lines is targeted more strongly toward generation and transmission owners, not consumers.

Winter Storm Elliot

Opportunities to use customer-centric language & messaging.

- **Not customer-centric:** “Conserve electricity”, “call for conservation”, “electricity conservation steps”.
 - “Demand for electricity is expected to increase”.
- **Customer-Centric:** “Reduce the electricity you use”
 - Instead of “demand is expected to increase,” consider “electricity use is going to increase” or “go up”.
- **Calls to action:** clearly articulated.

News Operations Uncategorized

PJM Asks Consumers To Conserve Electricity

Cold Weather Continues to Push Electricity Use Higher

December 24, 2022

19523



PJM has requested the public in its region to conserve electricity. The call for conservation was prompted by continuing frigid weather.

The request is being made throughout PJM.

PJM is asking consumers to reduce their use of electricity, if health permits, between the hours of 4 a.m. on December 24, 2022 and 10 a.m. on December 25, 2022.

Demand for electricity is expected to increase in the PJM region and the regions neighboring PJM because of the extremely cold weather. Electricity customers can take simple electricity conservation steps such as:

- Setting thermostats lower than usual, if health permits,
- Postponing use of major electric appliances such as stoves, dishwashers and clothes dryers until other times, and
- Turning off non-essential electric lights, equipment and appliances.

Conserving electricity as much as possible between the hours of 4 a.m. on December 24, 2022, and 10 a.m. on December 25, 2022, will help ensure adequate power supplies.

PJM continues to carefully monitor the power supply conditions. It will do everything possible to keep power flowing in the region. If necessary, PJM may take additional steps, such as reducing voltage. PJM is coordinating efforts among generators, power suppliers and local utilities.

Winter Storm Elliot

An alternative use of messaging.

PJM is asking everyone to reduce their electricity use due to frigid weather, between 4am on December 24, 2022 and 10am on December 25, 2022.

Customers can reduce their use by:

- Setting thermostats lower than usual
- Postponing use of major appliances such as stoves, dishwashers, and clothes dryers; and
- Turning off non-essential electric lights, equipment, and appliances

Reducing electricity use as much as possible between 4am on December 24, 2022 and 10am on December 25, 2022 will help ensure your power stays on.

News Operations Uncategorized

PJM Asks Consumers To Conserve Electricity

Cold Weather Continues to Push Electricity Use Higher

December 24, 2022

👁 19523



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Identify the audience

Design messaging specific to that audience.

- **Inside Lines:** messages both to highly technical audiences & consumers
- **Lack of clarity:** Alert vs. Advisory not clearly differentiated
- **Abbreviations:** generally not advised, particularly for consumer-facing comms

home > Operations > UPDATE: Cold weather Alert expanded to All of PJM for Dec. 24-25,...

Operations

UPDATE: Cold Weather Alert Expanded to All of PJM for Dec. 24-25; Cold Weather Advisory Continues

December 21, 2022

2261




UPDATE Dec. 23, 12:07 p.m.: PJM has expanded its Cold Weather Alert to include the entire RTO footprint for Dec. 24 and Dec. 25.

The alert follows a Cold Weather Advisory through Dec. 26 and a Cold Weather Alert for PJM's Western Region that started Dec. 23.

A Cold Weather Alert prepares personnel and facilities for expected extreme cold weather conditions when actual temperatures fall near or below 10 degrees Fahrenheit. Temperatures across PJM's Western Region are expected to be in the single digits through the weekend and slightly higher through the rest of the 13-state footprint, with high winds and some snow in the Midwestern states.

The Cold Weather Advisory is a new operations procedure implemented in October 2022 that PJM may issue two to five days prior to unusually cold weather.

Transmission and generation owners must take extra care to maintain equipment, so that it does not freeze. During a Cold Weather Alert, PJM may also cancel or postpone planned maintenance outages in order to ensure availability of sufficient resources.

A large, dark blue circle with a slightly irregular, hand-drawn edge. It contains white text.

Insight 3.
**There are easily
implementable
strategies to enhance
customer-centricity.**

These are grouped into 3 categories:

- Use customer-centric language
- Make Calls to Action noticeable, meaningful, & specific
- Ensure clarity and that comms are easy to access and understandable

Enhancing Customer-Centricity

Consider language and specificity.

Not customer-centric: "While PJM is not projecting generation capacity shortages that would limit customer usage..."

Specificity: no time frame on when customers should reduce their energy use.

"Prepare now": lacks call to action specificity.

Severe Winter Weather Alert: Prepare Now

[View in Browser](#)

WINTER WEATHER AHEAD



Prepare Now for Winter Weather & Extreme Cold

PJM, the organization responsible for managing the electric transmission grid in 13 states including Ohio, and the District of Columbia, has issued a [cold weather alert](#) ahead of forecasted frigid temperatures across several states. While PJM is not projecting generation capacity shortages that would limit customer usage, we always encourage customers to use energy

Enhancing Customer-Centricity

Calls to action should follow CTA best practices.

Call to action: this contains multiple calls to action. Most consumers can only process 1-2 CTAs in a comms piece.

Other CTA considerations: placement, visibility, specificity, links to other sites.

Prepare Now for Winter Weather & Extreme Cold

PJM, the organization responsible for managing the electric transmission grid in 13 states including Ohio, and the District of Columbia, has issued a [cold weather alert](#) ahead of forecasted frigid temperatures across several states. While PJM is not projecting generation capacity shortages that would limit customer usage, we always encourage customers to use energy wisely.

Our crews are ready to go to restore power if needed. We want you to be ready too.

- Stay tuned to your [local forecast](#) for weather updates.
- Assemble or refresh an [emergency kit](#).
- Protect yourself from fire hazards and [heat your home safely](#).
- Consider [these tips](#) to save energy and money.
- Get the latest information by signing up for [text alerts](#), downloading our [mobile app](#) and

Enhancing Customer-Centricity

Prioritize calls to action.

Call to action: there are three calls to action in this communication.

Are these CTAs prioritized for the consumer?

CTA 1

< All Inboxes Severe Winter Wea... ^ v
[text alerts](#), downloading our [mobile app](#) and checking the [outage map](#), which includes warming centers.

We strongly encourage customers with life-supporting equipment to have a backup power source and an alternate plan in the event of an outage.

CTA 2

Find additional energy saving tips at [AEPOhio.com/Savings](#) and on your [Energy Dashboard](#).

CTA 3

Stay as far away as possible from any downed line and anything it may be touching — call **911** and AEP Ohio immediately.



ASK AEPRI, YOUR DIGITAL ASSISTANT

[Manage Your Preferences](#) [Contact Us](#) [Privacy Policy](#)



AEP Ohio
700 Morrison Rd., Gahanna, OH 43230
1-800-672-2231

Opportunities Summary

PJM has a diverse array of important content to share with audiences. PJM could consider:

- Bifurcating communication goals & strategies to align to different audiences (i.e., technical, consumer).
- Ensure messaging tactics, channels, & language/linguistics meets needs of different stakeholders.
- For consumers: focus on using consumer-centric language.
- Make Calls to Action noticeable, meaningful, & specific.
- Reduce use of stock imagery, text-based social media posts, & “executive speak” in videos.

Opportunities Summary – for Advocates

- Advocate for communication channels & messaging that are designed and intended for specifically defined audiences.
 - What channels are best for your consumers? Meet them where they are.
 - It's good for specific channels/messages to be non-consumer-facing – but let's be clear about which those are.
- Advocate for the proactive development & design of messaging to be deployed when capacity shortages strike. You don't want to be doing this amidst a crisis!

Opportunities Summary – for Advocates

- Elevate customer-centric communications best practices in all customer communications, regardless of channel.
 - Is this language our consumers use?
 - Do the calls to action make sense to you? To your consumers?
 - Identify where you see stock imagery, heavily text-based social content, and executive speak – and then advocate to change that
- Advocate for specific Calls to Action that will make sense to our consumers
 - Language, placement, context, tone, prioritization, etc.

**Work with your customers,
not against them.**



Conversation Igniters

- What work are you going to do now to prepare customers for possible black-outs?
- Who is going to design your messaging?
- How will your messaging be tested before it is deployed?
- Who will implement your messaging?
- What are your key audiences? Who is expecting messaging?
- What channels will be most effective?
- What can you be doing now to proactively develop & design messaging so that it is ready before you actually need it?

Parting Thoughts

- Customer-centricity can be applied to all that we do in customer communications.
- Focusing on customer-centricity can lower costs, result in better service, and happier customers.
- Capacity shortages require proactive planning, so customers aren't left in the dark.
- Embrace any discomfort. You're not failing – you're learning.





Get in Touch!

Courtney Henderson

Founder & President, Hawks Peak Strategies
Council Member & Former Mayor, Truckee CA

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Bio

Dr. Courtney Henderson is an energy, climate, and health strategist with 20 years of experience in those sectors, as well as the Founder and President of Hawks Peak Strategies, a strategy and consulting firm that provides market strategy, branding and go-to-market services, customer-centric research, policy and regulatory solutioning, and thought leadership in the utility and clean energy sectors. Her work has taken her throughout the United States and as far afield as Western Africa and Northern India. She has extensive experience helping utility companies and consumer advocacy organizations achieve their energy and customer goals to move toward a cleaner, more equitable energy future, and in public health, supporting organizations in the development of health research infrastructure and improving the provision of healthcare.

Dr. Henderson brings a unique lens to the energy landscape, in that she is also an elected official. In 2020, she was elected to the Truckee Town Council, immediately nominated to Vice Mayor, and subsequently, to Mayor. She is re-running for election this year, and serves on multiple committees, including the Legislative Correspondence Committee, League of California Cities, Truckee Chamber of Commerce, Nevada County Economic Resources Council, Sierra Business Council's Climate Action and Mitigation Partnership, and boards of local non-profits working on climate solutions.

She holds a Bachelor of Science from Cornell University, Master of Public Health from Brown University, and Doctorate in Public Health from the University of California, Berkeley. Courtney lives in Truckee, California where she is also a pro-level mountain bike racer, all-around adventure seeker, and mom to a thrill-seeking eight-year-old boy.

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/courtney-henderson-539a29a/>

Work

23-150 Rate Case

- Direct Testimony: <https://fileservice.eea.comacloud.net/FileService.Api/file/FileRoom/18851350>
- Surrebuttal Testimony: <https://fileservice.eea.comacloud.net/FileService.Api/file/FileRoom/19023313>
- Insights Brief: <https://fileservice.eea.comacloud.net/FileService.Api/file/FileRoom/19085226>

Selected Publications & Presentations

- Henderson C (2023). National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners. “Data sharing and data availability to improve affordability outcomes: humanizing data.” Webinar.
- Henderson C (2023). California Efficiency and Demand Management Council. “Government leading the way in climate innovation.” Oakland, CA.
- Henderson C (2023). National Energy and Utility Affordability Coalition. “Elevating and equitably engaging hard-to-reach populations.” San Diego, CA.
- Henderson C (2023). EV Driver Experience. “On-the-ground community EV mobilization: what it really takes.” Detroit, MI.
- Henderson C (2023). Midwest Energy Solutions Conference. “Bridging the gap between policy and programs.” Chicago, IL.
- Henderson C (2023). CS Week. “Equitably engaging communities in climate action work.” Charlotte, NC.
- Henderson C (2023). The Antenna Group. “Shaping the future of equitable transportation.” Podcast.
- Henderson C (2023). Behavior, Energy, and Climate Change. “Equitably implementing initiatives in hard-to-reach communities.” Sacramento, CA.
- Henderson C (2022). American Council for an Energy Efficient Economy. “Elevating the voice of rural communities: real-world strategies and solutions for decarbonization and resiliency planning.” Monterey, CA.
- Henderson C. From grid to human resilience: lessons from public health. (2020). *Ingenuity and Resilience, ILLUME*.
- Henderson, C, Dougherty, A. (2016). Is more data a smarter choice? Benchmarking the energy impacts associated with smart meter feedback programs and the techniques used to evaluate them. *International Energy Program Evaluation Conference Proceedings*.
- Henderson C, Dougherty, A. (2015). Learning from public health: embedded evaluation and its applications to energy efficiency. *International Energy Program Evaluation Conference Proceedings*.
- Dethman, L, Schwartz, P, and Henderson, C. (2015). Knowing more sooner: making real time evaluation work. *Association of Energy Services Professionals strategies magazine*.