

Conservation & Demand Management in a Sustainable Energy Future - June 11, 2012

Julia Dalla Rosa, The Summerhill Group - Opening Remarks

As an implementer, I was looking at my esteemed panel and I was wondering what perspective I could bring that was slightly different, and had a different angle, and in the interest of time, because I would love us to get to an actual discussion, I'm going to keep what I talk about brief.

There are four main areas; as an implementer I think when we think of efficiency and sustainability when it comes to programming, the conversation already starting around the customer is the central one. For me there are four key things when it comes to the customer that we could be doing a little better to create greater efficiency in our program and to create longer term sustainability in our programs. For the first thing, I'm going to come back to this one concept that I often return to which is, most employees have a home that they go back to at the end of the night. And, most residents have a work place that they go to during the day, and we often separate our programs in terms of commercial versus residential, and we don't often think about the fact that people are touching, feeling, and are actually involved in what's happening in electricity in all aspects of their lives, and we're asking them to only focus on this specific type of energy conservation at this specific time. How do we start to think about our programs in terms of cross-promotion? Coming from a marketing background, I often think about cross-promotion. You want to get the biggest bang for your buck by trying to get at somebody with as many different things without complicating it for them. But this real concept of "not just a residential customer, not just a commercial customer"; that each one of us is "a" commercial customer at some point – we may not pay that commercial bill, we may not have direct responsibility for some of the major capital improvements, but we do have a vested interest in what happens in our workplaces, and the same goes for residential. So, that's the first one; the cross-promotion between programs, and getting away from a silo approach when it comes to marketing.

The second is leveraging partnerships, and we've started down that path already, but when I think of partnerships, I think of what more can we be asking of our retailers who are giving those coupons away at the store. We ask them to bring something; what more can we ask them to be bringing? We've done some unique programs in other provinces where we actually asked the retailer to pay for part of the discount. There are lots of efficiencies when it comes to that, and for smaller markets, unlike Ontario, when you need to lure retailers to want to pay attention to you, you need to sweeten the pot, but you also want to make them actually have a vested interest in the outcome, making that programme as successful as it possibly can be. So when you're talking about somewhere like P.E.I., Saskatchewan, or Newfoundland and Labrador, they don't have the same clout that Ontario has, and a lot of our partners often look to Ontario as, "you've been giving great discounts. You've been giving great incentives for all these years. Is it ever going to stop?" How do we switch the tables? How do we ask them to be a vested partner in what we're actually trying to achieve? And, similar to that, when it comes to the residential side, what groups, associations or partnerships can we create so that you get this snowballing effect all towards the same end goal? We often talk about partnership marketing, but we don't actually go that full route of bringing them on board, giving them a role, and asking them to have a real day-to-day involvement. What does that look like for them? What I find is that by leveraging partnerships, not only

are you able to make your programmes more cost-effective, but in addition to that, you're able to actually sustain it because you've got people who are equally as invested and equally as interested in that outcome.

The third point is the concept of big data. There has been a lot of talk around big data, and I've been hearing it a little less so in the utilities sector than I have in the retail sector, and by retailers, I mean the Walmarts and Home Depots of the world, and not energy retailers. But, they are talking about big data and they are fascinated by big data and they're fascinated because of this concept of customized experiences for every single one of their consumers. So when we're talking about this customization, and we've got great big data that's coming down the road, not only in terms of social media, but also in terms of all the right smart grid data that we're getting, how are we using that? How are we using that to actually market and communicate with our individual customers in a way that's not just spreading the word out to a mass market, but a targeted and focussed approach? "Hi 29 Yonge Street! I know you've done X, Y and Z and your profile's looking like this..." What can we do with that kind of information? How can we get them involved? It's all well and good to have information and to see the data, but if you're not constantly immersed in it, well, what do I do? I'm putting in the smart meter, I'm turning out the light, but I'm not seeing a big difference when I go out and look at my meter as opposed to what my actions are. How can we give them the tools, but in a very targeted approach?

And then the final one, and I tend to harp on this a lot, is engaging with people. It really comes down to each individual. Each individual; how are they involved, what's their role, how are they spreading the word and becoming ambassadors. I constantly look back at the blue box program. It worked, it worked well. People are doing it. There's a social norm that's created. But, unlike the blue box, where there's a visible, "Oh, all my neighbours put out their blue box and I haven't". Energy conservation doesn't have that same visible connection. So, what is that piece for electricity? I don't think we've found it just yet. But when I think about green teams within organizations, when I think about community groups around green initiatives or sustainability initiatives, there is momentum. So what does that actually look like when it comes to energy conservation? I don't think we've fully tapped into the power of having people spread the word, having them actually continue the momentum so we're not pushing them towards something they're actually asking for.

Thank you.