
Managing a Successful Utility Conservation & Renewables Program from a GM's Perspective

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Critical Elements:

- Board, Commission or City Council Approval
- Acceptance from Customers
- Dedicated Professionals in the Trenches

Insights to Consider:

- Policy makers are elected and the focus of the board can change after an election
 - Support and funding can vary substantially
 - Programs based on business principals persevere better than programs based on political or feel good ideologies
 - Focus on ways to keep the dollars at home – green tags are fine but usually those dollars leave your community

Insights to Consider: (cont.)

- Program offerings need to appeal to as many customers as possible – what’s in it for me?
 - Program detractors often impact programs more negatively than supporters impact programs positively
 - Technological advances provide opportunities to revisit a customer/location multiple times – good records are a key to targeted marketing
 - Customer education will sustain a program more than anything else – give them the whole story including the “warts”

Insights to Consider: (cont.)

- Timing is everything – avoid lost opportunities
 - Cost-effective conservation means that incentives alone will rarely initiate a project
 - New ownership, a change in business type or a product change is what drives projects – conservation is often an after thought
 - You need to have input into a project before too many decisions are already made - cultivate contacts in your local planning/building permit department(s)

Insights to Consider: (cont.)

- Be visible and tell your story
 - Regular communications and a presence at community events raises awareness
 - Partner with your local merchants – they will be on your side if you send them business and don't compete
 - Let your staff be the “face” of the program – they do the work and should get the credit

Conclusions:

- The ideal utility program has consistent funding and the flexibility to meet changing customer desires.
- For a program to achieve this you need support from a significant proportion of your customers and acceptance from the vast majority of your customers.
- If your customers want something and are willing to pay for it there is considerable incentive for management and the board to make it happen.