



# DTE Energy<sup>®</sup>

## DEAF COMMUNITY OUTREACH PILOT & COMMERCIALIZATION



THIS PROJECT WAS MADE SUCCESSFUL FROM THE COLLABORATION OF THE FOLLOWING TEAMS



Alliance for Deaf Services (ADS) approached DTE Energy to discuss and explain gaps with traditional program offerings including DTE's Energy Efficiency (EE) offering

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### THINGS WE DID NOT KNOW

- Not directly engaging the Deaf community was resulting in little to no participation with DTE's EE programs.
- American Sign Language (ASL) is a different language than English.
- Inability to communicate with a service professional has the potential to make the Deaf customer uncomfortable in their own home.
- The technology solution of Video Remote Interpretation (VRI) can create a direct relationship with our customer rather than an intermediary.

## PRE-PILOT PROGRAM STATE

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- Michigan has roughly 100,000 people who communicate exclusively using American Sign Language (ASL).
- DTE had no specific method of field capable outreach to the Deaf Community beyond using community interpreters.
- Some videos do have subtitles but it does not fully address the language gap between ASL and English.
- DTE's was experiencing low to no engagement or participation from the Deaf community in its EE programs.



- The Pre-Pilot program state needed changing to better serve our customers. DTE became the first utility in the country to use Video Remote Interpretation to bridge the gap in communication with our Deaf customers.
- Every situation, customer and market segment may be different, but design thinking can help ensure successful program implementation.

**Empathize -> Define -> Ideate -> Prototype -> Test**



# DEVELOPING THE OFFERING



## HOME ENERGY CONSULTATION PROGRAM (HEC)

- The HEC program is DTE's flagship residential energy efficiency program
- 267,000 Homes served throughout Michigan since 2009
- Single family direct installation program.
- Program includes free basic energy savings measures (LED, pipe wrap, water flow limiters, nightlights, programmable & WiFi thermostats,)



## ENERGY EXPERTS

- Four Energy experts initially selected to participate in ADS/DTE pilot
- All received basic training in elements of American Sign Language (ASL) and Video Remote Interpretation (VRI) software prior to pilot launch
- Each performed in-home walk-throughs of an HEC using VRI tablets in a deaf customer's home
- HEC process was streamlined to better address to the needs of the deaf community





# STAGE 1: FIELD TEST & APPLIED LEARNINGS



## SUCCESSFUL FIELD TEST

To determine where process breaks would occur, a HEC for a Deaf customer was tested from sign up to completion.

## LEARNINGS

- Dedicated tablets with mobile wireless connectivity should be used to mitigate against service interruption.
- Direct communication is paramount whether or not someone else offers to or can interpret within a customer's home.
- Backup videos needed to be developed for use in extremely rural areas or areas where WiFi and data are unavailable.
- The customer voice is of paramount importance when designing a product, program or outreach event.

**DTE Energy**  
Know Your Own Power®

**SCHEDULE YOUR APPOINTMENT TODAY!**  
Please provide your contact information.

Name:	
Address:	
City:	ZIP Code:
Email:	
Telephone:	Cell Phone:
Would you like to receive an appointment reminder via text?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Do you need a Video Remote Interpreter (VRI)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

What day and time is best for us to visit your home?

<input type="checkbox"/> Monday	<input type="checkbox"/> Tuesday	<input type="checkbox"/> Wednesday	<input type="checkbox"/> Thursday	<input type="checkbox"/> Friday
<input type="checkbox"/> 8 a.m. - Noon	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 p.m. - 5 p.m.			

**For Administrative Use Only:**

Event Date:	
Event Location:	
Date Contacted:	Date Scheduled:

### WORD OF MOUTH MARKETING

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- Small scale marketing targeted 50 households prior to full commercialization in order to further improve the offering and mitigate against any customer dissatisfaction that may have been overlooked

### LEARNINGS

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- Most effective lead generation was through direct outreach at Deaf clubs and events
- To verify appointments texting permission needed to be granted during signup
- News flashes needed to be provided to existing call centers in order to route potential signups
- Appointment windows needed to be reduced from 4 hour blocks to no more than 2 hours
- A video phone was needed at the point of scheduling in order for the call in numbers to work
- Weekly meeting with learnings, best practices & new ideas for improvement

### SOFT INDICATIONS OF SUCCESS

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- Increased Deaf community awareness & surrounding energy efficiency programs
- A feeling of being an equally valued customers
- High levels of customer satisfaction & increases in programs participation
- DTE has empowered the Deaf community to request, develop, and engage in similar programs in the general market place
- Increased fire safety for Deaf households through installation of shaker type smoke alarms



### ADDITIONAL OPPORTUNITIES IDENTIFIED

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- Launched a Hard of Hearing “Speech to Text” Service as a result of the Hard of Hearing Community’s request to include individuals who have been deafened later in life but may not communicate through ASL

# STAGE 2: RESULTS



The screenshot shows the DTE Energy website for Home Energy Consultation. The navigation menu includes: Compare Programs, Home Energy Consultation (highlighted), Home Energy Survey, Multifamily Program, Home Performance, Insulation & Windows, and Limited Income. The main content area features a family photo and the headline: "Need to Lower Your Energy Bill? We're Here to Help. Schedule a FREE Home Energy Consultation today." Below this is a "Get My Free Consultation >" button. A sidebar on the left lists: Program Overview, Am I Eligible?, How Do I Participate?, and Deaf and Hard of Hearing (highlighted with a red circle). The "Deaf and Hard of Hearing" section text reads: "DTE Energy and Alliance for Deaf Services (ADS) is collaborating to provide the Home Energy Consultation Program to the deaf community by utilizing ASL Video Remote Interpretation and Speech to Text. To schedule an appointment, call 313.202.4433 (video phone) or email vrihec@michiganeficiency.com."

219 LEADS

5 OUTREACH EVENTS

19.5% CONVERSION RATE

43 COMPLETED HECs

5 JOBS CREATED





## HEC COMMERCIALIZATION

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- Focused on 1,000 homes
- Continuation of feedback loop
- Larger scale program learnings

# FACEBOOK LIVE OUTREACH



**Posts**

**Alliance for Deaf Services** was live — in **Detroit**  
Future City  
August 31 at 12:03pm

Today Nic discuss what normally happens when a energy specialist visit your home to perform a HEC analysis.

The service is free and can save your energy costs. With winter season coming up, now is a great time to get your home fully up to date with energy savings products.

Contact Nic Artese, [nartese@michiganenergy.com](mailto:nartese@michiganenergy.com) | 313-202-4433

614 Views

Like Comment Share

Nicola Artese and 15 others Top Comments

22 shares

**TUNE IN  
AUGUST 22  
AT 9 A.M.**  
as DTE broadcasts live in  
American Sign Language!

HOME ENERGY  
CONSULTATION

**DTE Energy**  
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Post Date	People Reached	Total Clicks	Engagement %	Opt-outs
8/22/2017	5200	581	10.4%	3
8/24/2017	1600	162	9.8%	1
8/29/2017	1600	155	9.5%	0
8/31/2017	1800	156	10.0%	0
9/7/2017	2100	250	9.4%	4

## STAGE 3: CONTINUING SUCCESS



1,000+ LEADS

75+ OUTREACH EVENTS

38% CONVERSION RATE

375+ COMPLETED HECs

3 PROGRAM EXPANSION



## MARKETING & OUTREACH

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- Even with the same program incentives & information, communications need to be customized because not one size fits all for program marketing.

## LEARNINGS

- ~~Live streaming social media on well respected and popular forums~~
- MOU's were developed to incentivize lead generation with Deaf clubs and Community partners
- Text responses & notifications were used with customer permission
- New outreach videos were created to show what programs were offering



## PROCESS

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- While delivering the same service need, processes behind program implementation must stay flexible to accommodate all possible customers.

## LEARNINGS

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- Dedicated email signup accounts were created for housing programmatic requests
- Specific channel flags were used during signup to determine customer needs
- Energy Specialists were assigned to Deaf customer homes first in time blocks
- Call center notifications needed to be sent out to ensure correct routing of signups

## CUSTOMER VOICE

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- **Early involvement of the customer voice will help mitigate against potential project blind spots and ensure that the initial launch will be well received.**

## LEARNINGS

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- **Don't do anything for us without us**
- **Program showed areas where DTE Energy could accommodate rather than comply**
- **Allowed for meetings with state agencies to better accommodate safety notifications, outage updates & collaborative communication with Deaf Customers**

## DESIGN THINKING

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- Every situation may be different, but utilizing Design Thinking can help ensure successful programs.

## CUSTOMER FOCUSED

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- Programs need to be continually looked at with customer centric lenses in order to see if they are as effective as possible.
- BUT... what is MOST important is remembering that DTE Serves Everyone. So complete service to every market segment is critically important.

## CUSTOMER SERVICE REQUIREMENTS

- Systematic barriers do not diminish our pursuit of the “American Dream.”
- Access to effective communication is vital to high quality customer service.
- The ability to converse freely is enlightening and empowering.
- Positive customer experience will open participation pathways to other programs and services.

## SERVICE PROVIDER TAKEAWAY

- Our responsibility as a utility is to engage all customers with the best possible communication resources
- VRI enables people without experience the ability to interact with customers who are Deaf.
- Building a successful model with our Deaf customers opens the door to explore the other language offering of this technology

**“Now I don’t have to accommodate the crew, the crew accommodates me. That is the main difference” \***



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# Questions?