



DTE's Strategic Technology Transformation for People Empowerment and Cleaner, Safer, and Smarter Energy

Challenges and Objectives

DTE Energy, faced with the dual challenge of **evolving energy demands** and the need for **inclusive customer support**, embarked on a transformative project. Serving a diverse customer base in Michigan, including a significant segment of low-income individuals, necessitated a more efficient and accessible approach to customer service and financial assistance.

The company recognized the urgency to streamline its customer service operations and enhance financial inclusivity. This led to the adoption of SEW's Digital Customer Experience Platform and the development of innovative energy assistance programs, aiming to meet the varied needs of its customers while ensuring a sustainable, inclusive energy future.

Key business challenges and drivers include:



Promote Financial Inclusivity: Enhancing programs to provide real-time payment relief and prevent service interruptions for low-income customers.



Community Empowerment: Strengthening support initiatives to provide aids and create financial stability.



Collaborative Governance: Coordinating with federal and state governments to align energy assistance programs with local needs.



Customer Engagement: Maintaining high levels of customer satisfaction through evolving digital platforms and personalized services.



Debt Management: Addressing uncollectible accounts receivable and managing collection expenses without compromising customer relations.

DTE

Customer

DTE

Website

www.dteenergy.com

About Customer

DTE Energy stands as a pillar of reliability in the ever-evolving energy landscape. With a commitment to serving **2.2 million electric customers** and **1.3 million natural gas customers**, DTE Energy is illuminating homes and powering businesses. It is committed to community growth and citizen prosperity.

The provider's mission is grounded in creating impact for its customers and stakeholders. With initiatives, ranging from energy assistance programs to innovative digital platforms, the utility is steadfast to build a cleaner, safer, and smarter energy future.

Platform Implemented

SmartCX

Key technical challenges and drivers include:



Technological Integration: Seamlessly integrate digital tools to streamline utility account management for both internal and external users.



Strengthen Agency Partnerships: Improving collaboration with internal and external agencies to ensure efficient communication and prompt issue resolution



PCI Compliant Solution: Implementing a system that adheres to Payment Card Industry Data Security Standards (PCI DSS).



Robust Security: Delivering a solution in line with industry best security practices, including Authentication, Authorization, and Auditing (e.g., MFA, OTP, Self-Service Password resets)



Aligns with DTE Technology Investment Strategy: Ensuring the solution aligns with DTE's broader technology investment strategy.



Digital Customer Experience Innovation with SEW

DTE Energy was confronted with a critical issue: its technology solution was outdated and unstable. Operating on an unsupported technology stack, the system was unable to effectively support the needs of approximately 300 external agencies responsible for reviewing and committing funds for low-income customer assistance. This instability presented a significant business risk, threatening the efficacy of DTE Energy's low-income support initiatives.

To address these challenges, DTE Energy entered into a strategic partnership with SEW, which has facilitated the adoption of **SAP Self Service Accelerator (SSA) Platform**. This platform has streamlined customer service and enhanced operational efficiency.

As part of the digital transformation strategic initiative, DTE closely collaborated with federal and state governments, and third-party agencies to provide essential energy assistance to households in need. To provide timely assistance to low-income customers, DTE deployed SEW's digital platform to streamline processes across different stakeholders as well as to efficiently manage uncollectible accounts receivable and collection expenses.

This platform has the necessary tools and features to assist the management of utility accounts for low-income customers and provide them with the required financial support. The transformation project is part of a multi-phased project focused on introducing innovations powered by advanced technologies.

Key features include:

Commitment Management: Ensure the transparent handling of customer pledges and commitments. The platform enables the creation of new pledges, editing existing ones, maintaining accurate records, and tracking the history of pledges made, providing a transparent and organized system for managing contributions and holds.

Agency Approval: Conduct thorough background checks, verify information, grant necessary approvals, and provide authorizations to agencies involved. This process ensures the credibility and authenticity of agencies collaborating with DTE Energy, establishing a reliable network of partners.

Increased Customer and Community Savings: Increased customer and community savings involves implementing various assistance programs. These programs not only provide financial aid to customers in need but also elevate the involvement of agencies, fostering a collaborative effort to maximize savings for both individual customers and the community.

Assistance for State-Funded Programs and Regulations: Engage in state-funded and federal assistance programs, such as MEAP (Michigan Energy Assistance Program), and adhere to relevant regulations.

Making Payments: The platform enables agencies to make payments on behalf of customers, ensuring a streamlined process for settling energy bills. This feature enhances convenience for agencies and customers, fostering a more efficient payment experience.

Facilitate Connection Holds: Empower agencies by allowing them to raise pledges to hold a customer's connection for a specified period, ranging from 30 to 90 days. To streamline this process, the platform offers agencies a hold calculator, enabling them to assess and manage connection holds accurately. This capability ensures that vulnerable customers facing temporary financial challenges can retain their energy connection, providing essential support during difficult times.

Real-time Notifications: Agents receive real-time notifications, enabling them to stay informed about customer interactions, service requests, and updates. This instant communication ensures that agents are always up-to-date, allowing prompt responses, efficient issue resolution, and seamless customer support experience.

Enhanced User Experience (UX) with 24/7 Digital Connectivity: Prioritize customer experience by offering an intuitive platform and user-friendly dashboards. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) sections provide instant assistance, and dedicated customer support is available 24/7. This seamless digital connectivity ensures customers can access information, resolve queries, and seek support anytime, enhancing their overall experience.

Nurture Community Empowerment: Community empowerment initiatives encompass providing discretionary grants to local organizations, actively assisting low-income communities, contributing to economic development projects, and engaging in various social service activities. By nurturing community empowerment, DTE Energy strives to create a positive impact, fostering sustainable growth and well-being within the communities it serves.

Ease of Use: Simplify agent onboarding with intuitive interfaces and features that require minimal training, ensuring smooth adoption by agencies.

Drive Meaningful Assistance Initiatives: By providing essential energy assistance to households in need, the utility plays a pivotal role in ensuring that vulnerable families have access to vital resources, thereby enhancing their quality of life and contributing to a more equitable society.

Robust Security & Compliance: Ensure a secure and compliant experience with features such as PCI-certified payment processing, ensuring data protection and adherence to industry standards.

Win Results

- ✓ Over a three-year period, DTE prevented shutoffs for more than **397,000** customers by providing agencies with a digital platform that connects customers' needs to state assistance programs.
- ✓ Agency interactions increased by **27%** using the platform, enabling real-time customer assistance.
- ✓ Over the past three years, DTE has provided more than **\$160 million** in financial assistance to support low-income customers.
- ✓ With the enhanced ability of the Agency Platform for real-time payments, **\$70,000** in funding has helped the utility's customers in achieving financial stability.
- ✓ Over **1.8 million residential customers and 500,000 businesses** benefited from energy efficiency programs
- ✓ Focused on community development, DTE created **400 new jobs**, contributing to economic growth in service territories.
- ✓ Improved **J.D. Power customer satisfaction scores** since 2015 reflect the platform's seamless experience.
- ✓ DTE's initiatives transformed lives, providing energy assistance to an estimated **780K** income-qualified customers.
- ✓ The utility's legacy extends beyond energy provision, shaping a future where energy catalyzes **positive change** in lives and communities.
- ✓ With the digital platform, DTE ensures accurate funding for low-income customers, promoting **financial inclusivity**.
- ✓ The Digital CX Platform offers **24x7 connectivity**, enabling agencies to manage Pledges, Payments, and Low-Income Plans, improving user experience.

Customer Testimonial

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The platform deployment effort is a brilliant example of what can be achieved through collaboration when we are all working to achieve a common goal. The team's ability to deliver a multifaceted solution on schedule, is a reflection of the commitment by every person on the team.

DTE

About SEW

SEW with its innovative and industry-leading cloud platforms aim to deliver the best Digital Customer Experiences (CX) and Mobile Workforce Experiences (WX), powered by AI, ML and IoT Analytics (IX) to the global Energy, Water and Gas providers. We partner with utilities to deliver solutions that are easy-to-use, integrate seamlessly with utility systems, and help build a strong technology foundation that allows utilities to become future ready, by harnessing the power of digital technologies.



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