

## **More Than The Sum: How A Whole Home Program Leads To Energy Efficiency Success**

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### **The Context**

The Ontario Power Authority (OPA) is responsible for ensuring a reliable, cost-effective and sustainable supply of electricity for Ontario. Its main activities are focused on strategic co-ordination of conservation efforts across the province, planning the power system for the long term and ensuring the development of needed generation resources. .

From 1998 until the OPA was created in late 2004, there had been no single entity in the province responsible for integrated power system planning. With over 80 local electric distribution companies (LDCs) and a geography three times the size of Germany, a central agency became an effective way to coordinate planning, procurement and conservation efforts.

Since its inception in 2004, the OPA has worked continuously to create a culture of conservation across the province by setting goals to reduce peak demand and create sustainable energy efficiency behaviour.

Ontario is working toward a target of 7,100 megawatts peak demand reduction and 28 terawatt-hours reduction in annual energy use by the end of 2030. Ontario's conservation targets and initiatives are projected to save \$27 billion on an investment of \$12 billion, with additional benefits to the environment.

### **The Challenge**

Prior to 2011 the look and feel of the provincial conservation programs was fragmented and the communications not coordinated. The same program, while marketed under the same name province wide, could take very different shapes and messaging once in market. Executions varied significantly, from quite sophisticated and homogenous in case of the larger LDCs, to at times heterogeneous in case of some of the smaller /medium sized LDCs.

This marketing approach, while relatively effective for each individual program, did not leverage provincial synergies or maximized the opportunities available: program awareness and participation research showed that there was little synergy across the programs. For example, while 14% of households participated in a province-wide consumer electricity conservation program in 2010 fewer than 3% participated in more than one.

Other than an organizational logo, there was very little to communicate to consumers that the programs were related. In addition, qualitative consumer research showed that a multiplicity of electricity conservation messages from a variety of private-sector and public-sector sponsors acted as a barrier to participation: many people simply didn't take the time to determine which sponsors and messages had more credibility and used that as an excuse to tune-out.

### **The Solution:**

In 2010 the Ontario Power Authority, in its mandate as a central electricity conservation planning agency embarked on a massive collaborative effort with representatives from the 80 local electric utilities in Ontario and other stakeholders to bring to life and to market a consolidated, comprehensive and holistic set of conservation programs for homes and businesses, under the new **saveONenergy** province wide branding. The previously fragmented consumer initiatives were brought together under one program umbrella saveONenergy FOR HOME, with businesses following the same naming convention under saveONenergy FOR BUSINESS.

### **The Strategy:**

The new direction takes the previous initiative-based consumer marketing to the next level, that of a consumer-centric marketing approach which builds on awareness and fact-based education to enable and empower the consumer to make comprehensive choices for energy efficiency at home.

Consumers are being educated in an integrated manner to understand and recognize the short and long term benefits of energy-efficiency and to become practitioners and promoters of multiple conservation behaviours, and in that way contribute to building a culture of energy conservation and the resulting market transformation.

### **Bringing The Strategy To Life:**

The new strategy conveys that it is now easier than ever for all Ontarians to participate in energy conservation through saveONenergy, which offers a range of education, tools and incentive programs. To maximize participation and encourage capability building and market transformation it addresses the “whole home” by presenting and providing energy efficiency opportunities for multiple areas of the home and by demonstrating to consumers how they all interconnect.

This saveONenergy whole home positioning yields three benefits: first, it is a unifying voice for electricity conservation awareness and resource acquisition messaging. All now use the same consumer interface (naming and creative strategy) so that behaviour change and incentive messaging reinforce each other. Second, all resource acquisition messaging uses the same theme, sending the signal that the consumer should consider the home as an energy-using unit rather than as a series of disconnected systems. Finally, saveONenergy is used in messaging from the province (via the OPA) and from each local electric utility. This enhances credibility as it comes from both the organization with whom the consumer has an ongoing direct relationship (utility) and the one consumers expect to drive electricity conservation (OPA/province). These benefits support the province’s conservation strategy of resource acquisition, capability building and market transformation as follows:

1. saveONenergy ensures that energy savings and demand reduction will be achieved by encouraging consumers to purchase and install energy efficient products that capture cost-effective energy savings and peak demand reduction. They will also be achieved by influencing builders to include energy efficiency and demand reduction capability into new homes.
2. Capability building is integrated into the program design by empowering consumers with education and tools to manage their electricity consumption to reduce energy and peak demand.

3. The customer-centric approach will further contribute to enhancing a culture of conservation among Ontario consumers, supporting the market transformation strategy.

Last but not least, the synergy inherent in marketing several resource acquisition initiatives under a single banner would produce better financial value for ratepayers.

### **The Process:**

An OPA/LDCs Marketing Working Group was formed including OPA Evaluation & Awareness staff and representatives from several local distribution companies representing small, medium and large LDCs across the province. Since each LDC operates independently, each with its own systems, practices, history and resources it was important to arrive at solutions that would fit all situations, from the largest to the smallest, from the most urban to ones serving rural areas.

This inclusive approach sought and incorporated input from key stakeholders responsible for the design, approval and implementation of the way the initiatives were presented and marketed. It was not only the way to ensure the best result but also expedient, ensuring the strategy and process was well-understood, that key players felt involved and were able to contribute and that consensus was achieved at every step along the journey.

The Marketing Working Group met frequently – often weekly – throughout the year in person or via teleconference – to ensure progress could be made on a continuous basis. The Voice of the Customer was incorporated into strategy and implementation through LDC regional based input and OPA’s expert research and marketing contributions.

Once creative and messaging had been formalized in draft form, prior to launch, market research pre-testing was done with target consumers to ensure the strategy was being executed in a persuasive, relevant and memorable manner for customers province wide. The market research confirmed that the strategy resonated as intended and identified the few ‘tweaks’ to maximize audience appeal.

The new creative expressed consistently elements of the newly developed “creative thread”: an electric cord as an iconic element, a photo concept – real people, real situations and consistent key value propositions by initiative. The new creative approach was developed such that it would withstand the test of time in a constantly changing world, while remaining relevant to the audience of millions of electricity customers in Ontario.

No matter how good the message, delivery determines whether – and how – it is heard. Media approach included a variety of traditional (print and broadcast) and new (online – standard or rich) media. In addition, templates reflecting the new creative direction were provided to all LDCs for use in their own customer communications. This dual-channel approach contributed to effectiveness as customers saw a consistent approach being used, and saw the same approach being used by their electricity utility – with whom they had an existing relationship – and a provincial government agency.

The OPA and LDCs also understood that conservation program messaging needed to be somewhat detailed. While the initiatives had been in market for years and in some cases had high awareness levels this awareness was shallow. There was not a good understanding of either the consumer obligation or the consumer benefit. To resolve that uncertainty all messaging drove people to a single source of information, a website where people could learn about the initiatives and register to participate. [www.saveonenergy.ca](http://www.saveonenergy.ca) was a new website but it was not just standalone: a customer going to his or her LDC’s site to access information about or participate in conservation programs (such as downloading

coupons for energy-efficient products) was redirected to the saveONenergy site with that LDC's branding. To the customer of a smaller or medium LDC, the experience was seamless. In the case of some of the larger LDCs, who preferred to leverage their corporate websites, they were equipped with the branding elements required to "recreate" the saveONenergy experience on their own. Once again, to customers it was seamless.

#### **The Deliverable:**

The general awareness province-wide multi-media campaign launched on February 28<sup>th</sup> 2011 for the new conservation platform and was followed by the initiative-specific campaigns that feature province-wide coverage for the consumer initiatives under the new saveONenergy banners: Fridge & Freezer Pick up, Spring / Fall Events, Heating & Cooling Incentive and one new initiative: New Home. In addition to the province-wide coverage, the local utilities feature integrated messaging to support the achievement of their targets by leveraging OPA pre-developed templates or by building their own using the common creative thread.

Exhibit 1 shows the migrations from the previously "fragmented" approach to the "one wall" coherent look and feel of the initiatives under the saveONenergy umbrella

#### **The Results:**

Market research reports that the launch of saveONenergy has been very successful. A brand awareness target of 40% in the first year has been exceeded (49% ten months after launch). Key points related to consumer benefits and to the saveONenergy strategy are being communicated: over half of Ontarians aware of the brand agree that saveONenergy will help save money, does a good job at showing that there are many ways to save energy in the home and that it makes them want to take more responsibility for the amount of energy used in the home.

This success at the strategic level was gained without sacrificing the resource acquisition initiatives now marketed under the saveONenergy banner, despite the fact that some had achieved high awareness levels under their old names. The three initiatives that had been in market in prior years saw awareness at least as high – and in two cases dramatically higher - than under their old, standalone banners. The saveONenergy Fridge & Freezer Pickup had awareness levels comparable to its old name (Great Refrigerator Roundup). Awareness of the saveONenergy HVAC incentive was 25% higher than under the previous year's 'Cool Savings': the saveONenergy Coupon initiative saw awareness 50% higher than 2010's Power Savings Event.

#### **Conclusion:**

Many utilities in North America share similar challenges to those faced in Ontario: generating improved results from programs that have been in market for several years, "doing more with less", producing higher ratepayer value, building effective partnerships. This paper has demonstrated how these challenges can be overcome in a relatively short period of time – albeit with very focused and intense effort.

This paper has shared lessons from the journey: it shows the 'before and after' marketing strategies and reported quantitative market research awareness results to demonstrate how the consolidation re-invigorated the initiatives and, from a market transformation

perspective, encouraged people to take more responsibility for the amount of electricity used in their homes. For details on the program please visit [www.saveonenergy.ca](http://www.saveonenergy.ca)

# Exhibit 1

Pre – 2011 Fragmented



2011 Coherent

