# FirstEnergy, generating excellent service.

Energy company optimizes websites, mobile websites, and apps with Adobe Experience Manager to improve customer interactions.

"With Adobe Experience Manager, our behind-the-scenes marketing, business, and development processes are much cleaner and more efficient."

Scott Infante, Manager of IT Enterprise Technologies, FirstEnergy
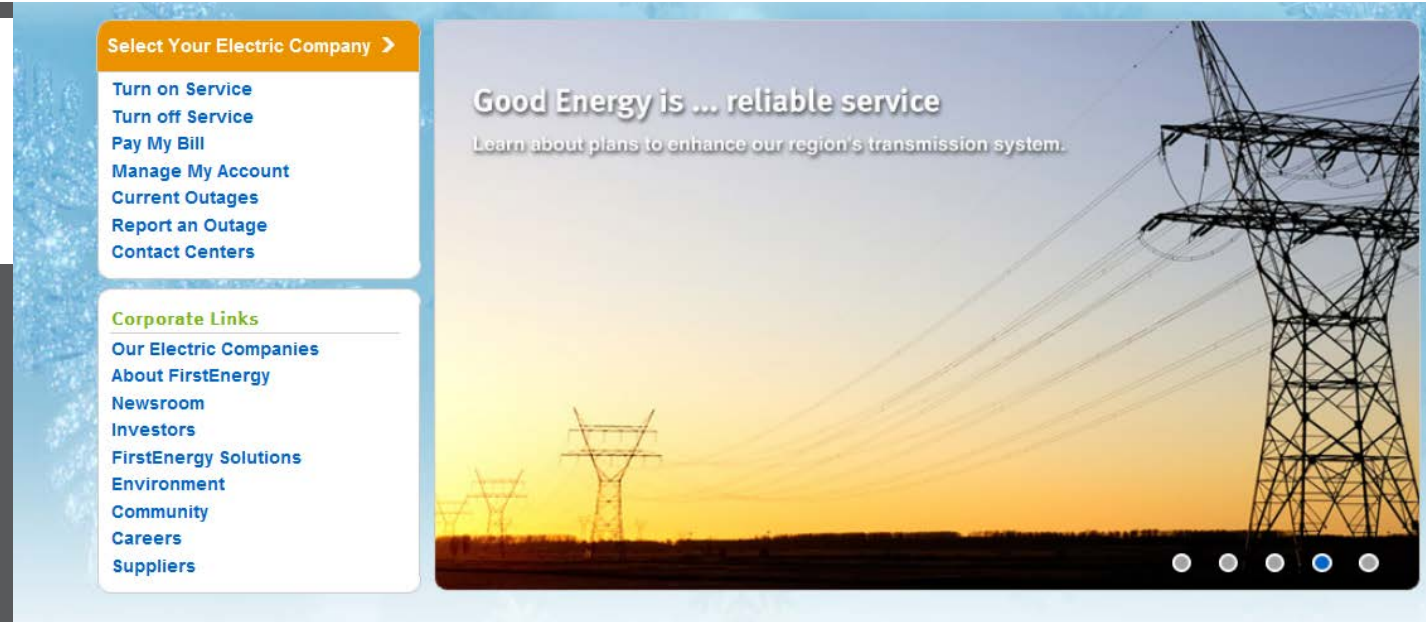
SOLUTION

Adobe Experience Manager solution within Adobe Marketing Cloud

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH

ICF OLSON

RESULTS

FAST UPDATES
Reduced time to market for new content and features by leveraging reusable components across websites, mobile sites, and apps

EFFICIENT SUPPORT
Automated processes previously accomplished by call centers, reducing operating costs and improving the customer experience

ONLINE FUNCTIONALITY
Easily integrated with back-end systems and enhanced customer interactions through online bill pay and account status

TAILORED MESSAGING
Customized messages to provide customers with local status updates and relevant advertisements

FirstEnergy

Akron, Ohio

www.firstenergycorp.com

ICF Olson

www.ICFOlson.com

CHALLENGES

· Improve online experience for customers
· Link to back-end systems including ERP to provide rich functionality such as bill pay and service monitoring
· Streamline internal processes and reduce IT costs for development and customer support

Reaching out to customers

With more than six million customers, operations in six states, and 65,000 square miles of service territory in the U.S. Midwest and Mid-Atlantic, FirstEnergy's 10 regulated distribution companies form one of the nation's largest investor-owned electric systems. The diversified energy company, headquartered in Akron, Ohio, is dedicated to safety, reliability, and operational excellence.

FirstEnergy's web presences play a vital role in the business, giving customers complete information and tools to interact with the company. Today, web endeavors span traditional and mobile sites, as well as apps for Android and iOS devices. Until a few years ago, web development and the ability to go to market quickly with enhancements and mobile capabilities was an ongoing challenge.

FirstEnergy, which manages its own site as well as the sites for its 10 distribution companies, used a proprietary web development platform that lacked key functionality and was slow to incorporate the latest Java features and updates. Its integrated development environment (IDE) was separate from its content management system (CMS), and the system lacked digital asset management capabilities altogether. Managing two separate tools—an IDE and CMS—manually added IT overhead and made it challenging to keep information up-to-date across multiple domains.

"Our objective is to make FirstEnergy websites the best place to pay bills, initiate service requests, track energy usage, report power issues, and manage other activities," says Scott Infante, Manager of IT Enterprise Technologies, at FirstEnergy. A superior online experience would do more than build customer satisfaction and loyalty; it would also meet the regulatory need to immediately deliver comprehensive outage and status information during major storms. During Hurricane Sandy, for example, page views soared to 23,408,396 across the 10 operating companies.

Finding a more robust, "future-proof" solution

To improve its customers' online experiences, FirstEnergy set out to adopt a more advanced platform that would support robust web content management and an integrated IDE based on the constantly updated Java Content Repository (JCR). The aim was to quickly and accurately respond to customers' changing demands and continually introduce new web content and capabilities that would strengthen the company's brand and increase customer awareness during emergencies such as storms.
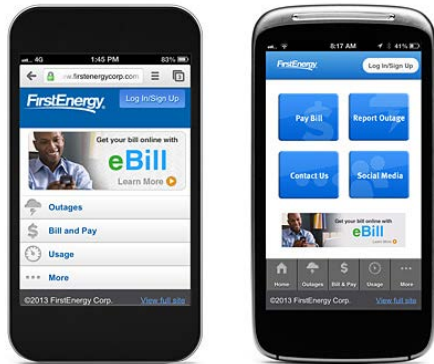
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Another key goal was adopting an open platform that would streamline integrating customer-facing webpages with back-end ERP systems and other third-party applications such as smart meters, so customers could pay bills, track energy usage, and more. In addition, FirstEnergy wanted to engage more people via social networks and incorporate more mobile capabilities to enable customers to access vital information on their mobile devices, even during power outages. For FirstEnergy, these efforts were all part of a larger goal of creating optimal customer experiences by providing more avenues to access critical services and information from anywhere at any time.

Working with its internal team and development partner ICF Olson, FirstEnergy completed a rigorous evaluation of options for improving the online customer experience and selected the Adobe Experience Manager solution within Adobe Marketing Cloud. "We saw how powerful Adobe Experience Manager was and the flexibility it offers with reliable templates and page components that can be commonly used and completely customized," says Infante. "Adobe Experience Manager enables us to provide a very visual experience for our internal teams, making it easy to create and publish content. Combined with Adobe's leadership on open standards and its record of innovation, Adobe Experience Manager is miles ahead of the competition."

Simple integration with multiple data sources and applications

After choosing Adobe Experience Manager, including Web Content Management, Digital Asset Management, and Mobile capabilities, FirstEnergy began implementation, working side-by-side with ICF Olson to leverage the firm's proven expertise in web experience management and mobile application development.

The way ICF Olson worked with FirstEnergy to accomplish its site redesign and back-end integration was a departure from FirstEnergy's previous processes, which relied more on separate workflows and systems. Today, FirstEnergy and ICF Olson developers focus on creating reusable components in Adobe Experience Manager and designers can place them optimally on pages to enhance online experiences. For web developers, it is now easier than ever to create and deliver reusable components for designers due to the integration between Adobe Experience Manager, Eclipse IDE, and other standard enterprise software tools as well as the use of ICF Olson's Adobe Experience Manager Library—a jumpstart framework for implementing the Adobe solution.

According to Infante, Adobe Experience Manager makes it easy to almost instantly create a new look and feel and update content. This process is quick and easy because the back-end integration supports the company's move to a service-oriented architecture that interacts with myriad other systems and data sources simply by using Adobe Experience Manager components and dropping them onto pages. "ICF Olson offered unmatched expertise in enabling us to get our enhanced websites up and running quickly, with extensive back-end integration and rich front-end features," says Infante.

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Scott Infante, Manager of IT Enterprise Technologies, FirstEnergy

The revamped websites are now fully integrated with multiple systems to empower customers to serve themselves in ways never before possible. Paying bills, tracking energy usage, reporting problems, and initiating other tasks used to require traditional mail or a phone call to a call center agent. The enhanced online services have automated many of the processes that used to require support from a call center or back-office standpoint, dramatically reducing operating costs and enhancing the customer experience.

Going mobile

With its successful rollout of powerful new website capabilities, FirstEnergy took its advanced sites and optimized them for mobile devices. Creating high-impact, convenient experiences for mobile users was a process that was greatly simplified using Adobe Experience Manager. "Among the greatest value-adds of Adobe Experience Manager is the concept of component reusability, with reuse extending across traditional and mobile platforms," Infante says. "We were able to trim down content for smartphones, giving customers 'task-oriented' functions, like paying a bill or checking outage areas with great speed and ease."

The mobile-friendly sites have become a popular way to interact with the company. Since they went live at the end of November 2012, the mobile-optimized sites have garnered nearly 6.2 million page views.

An app for every operating company

Once the mobile-friendly sites were running, FirstEnergy further engaged ICF Olson to create apps for Android and iOS devices, each tailored to FirstEnergy's 10 regional operating companies. Using the OSGi framework within Adobe Experience Manager to provide a reusable service layer, ICF Olson was able to use common code from the mobile and desktop sites within the apps; this helped ensure that the customer experienced the same data across all three channels, as well as reduced time to market for the apps. Created using PhoneGap, the apps are available on Google Play and on the Apple App Store, and since their introduction in late 2012, have together amassed more than 10,000 downloads.

The branded apps provide a way for customers to identify and interact with their regional utility, localizing an otherwise large company. "Customers know the name and logo on the truck that's repairing the line in front of their homes," says Infante. "The brand recognition of our regional operating companies is usually stronger than that of the parent company, and is more easily reinforced with the apps. Adobe makes it easier for us to deliver these mobile apps than ever before."

The ability to tailor messaging to regional conditions has received a significant amount of positive notice from local government and safety officials. Beyond timely delivery of service updates, FirstEnergy is beginning to use the apps to market new services and link to social media outlets to assist with customer interaction, encourage feedback, and build customer trust and loyalty.

SOLUTION AT A GLANCE

- Adobe Marketing Cloud, including the Adobe Experience Manager solution. Capabilities used include:

  - Sites

  - Assets

  - Mobile

- PhoneGap

For more information
www.adobe.com/solutions/digital-marketing.html

"ICF Olson brought its expertise with Adobe Experience Manager and coupled it with a focus on solid enterprise architecture strategies to make the applications truly a part of the overall FirstEnergy system," says Matt Van Bergen, President at ICF Olson. "This, paired with FirstEnergy's vision and enthusiasm around transacting with its customers through a multichannel approach enabled our teams to deliver so much in a timely, cost-effective manner."

Multiple business benefits for FirstEnergy and operating companies

All three platforms—traditional and mobile-friendly websites, as well as the apps—provide a strong marketing platform that can encourage customers to reduce their impact on the environment. This can be done in several ways: from signing up for paperless billing to monitoring and mitigating energy usage. Messages are tailored for the most impact. For instance, customers already signed up for electronic billing will not be presented with ads encouraging them to do so.

Although many of the mobile initiatives are new for FirstEnergy, the benefits are already starting to show. Website developers can spend less time managing content and more time creating reusable components that link to back-end systems and enhance the customer experience across both traditional and mobile platforms.

From a corporate standpoint, Adobe Experience Manager makes it easier for FirstEnergy to continue to grow. For example, when Allegheny Energy (with three operating companies) merged with FirstEnergy in 2011, the Adobe solution helped simplify the process of incorporating the operating companies into the FirstEnergy family.

"We can integrate new companies and update content with much greater flexibility and speed," concludes Infante. "Working with ICF Olson and the Adobe Experience Manager solution, our behind-the-scenes marketing, business, and development processes are much cleaner and more efficient. Our customers are more engaged, we're saving money on everything from not having to send out paper bills to streamlined content publishing and access. At the same time, we are continuing to reduce our impact on the environment."

About ICF Olson

ICF Olson is a full-service customer experience agency purpose built to address the new realities facing organizations today. ICF Olson helps brands engage with their connected customers through brand and creative campaigns as well as development and deployment of digital properties. The company also helps brands increase customer retention with relationship and loyalty programs, and promotes advocacy and sharing through social and media channels. ICF Olson creates and delivers holistic solutions where they matter most.