

“What are smart meters all about?”



Smart meters

Category - 2 Print

Sub Category - 2.2 Consumer

Printed material as a product in its own right, such as a newspaper or product services literature

Client Company - E.ON

Design Consultancy - Michon

Current Date - 16th July 2012

e.on

“**24%**
response rate
80%
conversion rate”



Executive summary (299 words)

Smart meters help people track energy usage in their home and send meter readings automatically to energy companies. There are lots of benefits to having a smart meter and the Government is urging energy companies to install them nationwide over the next 10 years. This doesn't begin until 2014 but E.ON wanted to do trials to get a head start in developing a customer journey and experience that would set them up for a successful customer centric roll-out when the time came.

Michon created a direct mail that would engage customers to not only consider getting a smart meter fitted but to really want one. The smart meter itself was free but as people had to make time to have it fitted there was no guarantee they would want one just because of this. There was a lot of negative press too, so communicating the many benefits to the customer was very important. With a lot of confusion in the marketplace messaging was key and was developed to clear up any misconceptions and tell the customer what they needed to do next.

The DM was sent to 37,000 customers and achieved a staggering 24% response rate and 80% conversion rate. Results from a limited survey of respondents showed 76% were pleased to receive the mailing and 86% thought it gave a more positive impression of E.ON. Following the mailing, E.ON had to open a second centre of excellence to keep up with demand following a 300% increase in smart meter enquiries.

“I read the whole thing - and much of my mail goes in the bin. I read it because I liked the idea of a smart meter and it was written in a way that was easy to understand. It was very straightforward and left few questions.” E.ON customer

Project overview

Getting the nation energy fit

In March 2010, E.ON's 'Helping you get energy fit' positioning was introduced for the first time with their Why? Campaign. Research revealed that there was confusion in consumers' minds as to why an energy company would want them to use less energy. So, E.ON started their energy fit communications explaining it all in an open and honest way - they wanted to differentiate themselves from their competitors and lead the way in the area of saving energy.

Where smart meters fit in

Smart meters are a key way of helping people to track their energy usage with both electricity and gas using a portable smart energy display in the home. Essentially it allows consumers to see how much energy they're using and a good idea of what it's costing, giving them more control over how that energy is used. Smart meters also send meter readings automatically to energy companies so they can provide more accurate billing for customers putting an end to estimated bills and having meter readings taken, which some customers find intrusive.

The Government has set out its carbon reduction targets and is urging all energy companies to fit smart meters to every home in Great Britain by 2019. Everyone will have their meters replaced with smart meters over the next few years, but E.ON is ahead of the game and fitting them now for free as part of their trials ready for the national roll-out of free installations. The roll-out of smart meters will give people better information about their energy consumption and far better control over it. Smart metering will also play an important role in Britain's transition to a low-carbon economy and help meet some long-term challenges such as ensuring an affordable, secure and sustainable energy supply.

Key Facts

- 27 million properties will require a smart meter in the next 10 years
- It will take 4 million days to install them all
- It's an £8 billion national programme
- There are 27 million electricity and 21 million gas meters
- This is the biggest programme since North Sea Gas Installation in the 1970s or de-privatisation in the 90's
- It's estimated to save around 2% of the UK's energy use
- And cut £100m from the UK's bills by 2020
- Not to mention that it will reduce CO₂ emissions by 2.6 million tonnes
- National roll-out starts officially from 2014
- The smart meters themselves will be free to customers

Getting a head start

As the national mass roll-out of smart meters wouldn't begin until 2014, E.ON has had time to make sure that they got the customer comms journey and experience right, and to trial new initiatives and propositions to understand their customers' appetite and what the appeal of smart meters would be. A successful trial would mean that E.ON are ready for a successful and customer centric roll-out. They have committed to installing 1 million meters by 2014 in the foundation period of the roll-out.

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increase in smart meter enquiries.”

“80% did not require any additional details/clarification”



What E.ON needed

A direct mail, for existing residential customers that was both engaging and informative and that didn't just encourage consideration of a smart meter but that created a need and desire to have one fitted.

E.ON's strategy was to begin talking publicly about their approach to smart meters and to take on the role of educator. They would be the brand that listens to customers and explains what smart meters are and what they can do for them, in a straightforward and honest way.

Making it clear

Messaging needed to be clear and simple. It needed to clarify E.ON's position and shouldn't confuse customers further (there is and will continue to be confusion over what smart meters are and can do). Also, messaging should not over promise or sound like a marketing campaign. Instead it had to be framed as "This is what you can expect from E.ON, what we'll tell you, what we'll do, what happens next".

The communications needed to make the customer:

Think: This is interesting, I think I should have a smart meter.

Feel: E.ON is providing good customer service by offering me a new meter that will give me real benefits.

Say: I'd like smart meters installed please, when can you do it?

Do: Directly respond to the communication.

Objectives

1. Create interest and drive response - with a view to getting 50,000 smart meters installed in customer homes by the end of 2011.
2. Inform and educate - give the right level of information to help customers understand what a smart meter is and how it can help them save energy, now and in the future.
3. Test and learn - to shape the approach for mass roll-out and gain a competitive advantage.

“88%

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Overview of market

E.ON residential customers

We also needed to be aware of the wider smart audience and stakeholders, although they should not be targeted directly with the trial comms:

Stakeholders: DECC, Ofgem, Consumer Groups - Consumer Focus, ICO, Which etc

Charities: NEA, AgeUK, green groups etc

Local Authorities

E.ON have been and are continuing to work closely with these stakeholders to shape the smart agenda. They have been recognised across the industry as putting their head above the parapet and leading the way for customers. Their feedback into consultations around future smart license conditions has been based on first hand experiences from customers and trials.

Some customers would have seen other energy fit campaigns, both above and below the line. A very small proportion will have a smart meter, so they have some understanding of it already. Customers may have been aware of (or have) E.ON's energy monitor, or they may have seen competitor advertising for energy monitors (i.e. npower, EDF, British Gas). There is a common misunderstanding, instigated mainly by energy suppliers themselves, that an energy monitor is the same as a smart energy display. Whereas an energy monitor will give customers a good estimate of the electricity that they're using, a smart energy display is more accurate and will give more information including gas usage.

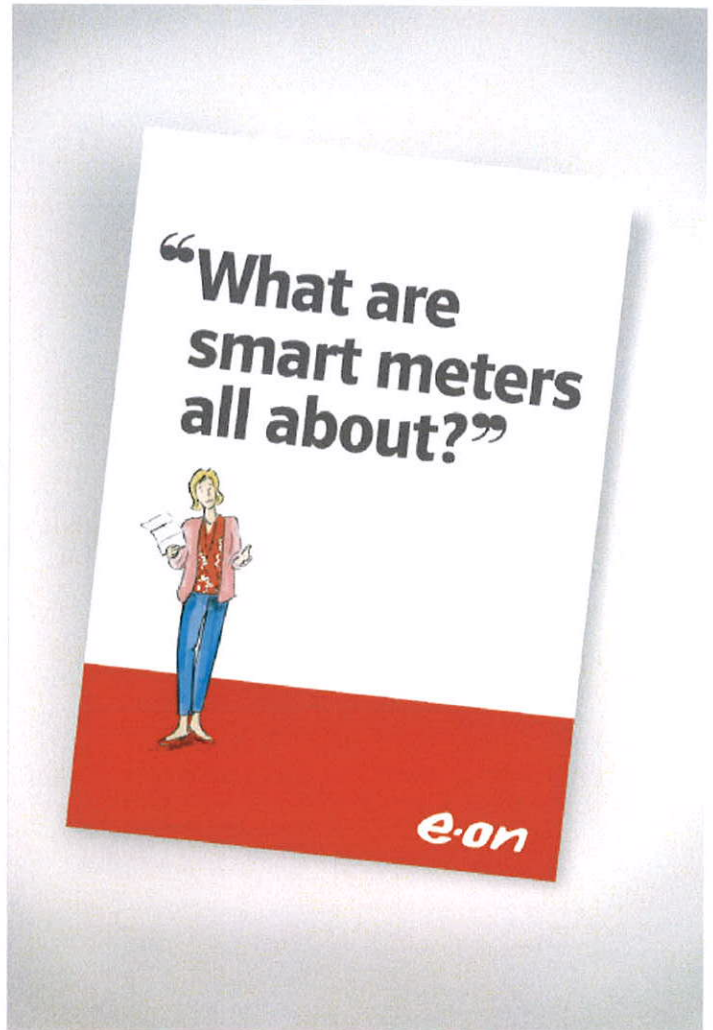
Project launch date - Mailed April 2011

Size of design budget - £7.5k excluding print costs

Outline of design solution (170 words)

The direct mail was designed to tie in with E.ON's illustrative brand platform and Michon developed a question and answer approach to get the messages across simply and effectively in a down to earth conversational way throughout. We worked closely with E.ON's brand team as we were keen to push the guidelines to make sure the messages had good standout and were as effective as possible, using bold questions and statements engaging the reader directly in conversation which hadn't been done before on DM or other below the line materials. Following the success of this piece, other work has been created in the same style.

Following the mailing, broader E.ON research, carried out as part of E.ON's strategy to become a Trusted Energy Partner, found that there is a shift in how customers want to be communicated to. They don't want sales and marketing gimmicks, they want simple, honest and transparent communications which build trust. The results from this DM reflect the benefit of a shift to meet this trend.



Summary of results

The DM was sent to 37,000 residential customers in April and received a 24% response rate and 80% conversion rate. The aim was to fit 50,000 by the end of 2011 and E.ON exceeded this by 5,000. Since then, they're on target for 2012 with 125,000 fitted to date. The mailing was followed up with a survey to customers who had opted in to smart meter research. Of 9,000 surveys sent, over 4,000 were completed. The following facts and figures relate to this survey about the DM.

- Recall is good and customers are clear it's about smart meters.
- It gets most key messages across effectively.
- It delivers a positive brand impact.
- Over 79% recall receiving it.
- Over 90% read it.
- 24% have phoned E.ON.
- 32% have visited the website.
- Over 80% did not require any additional details/clarification - they contacted E.ON simply to arrange an installation.
- 89% said the mailing told them clearly what smart meters are for.
- 88% said the messages of the mailing were clear.
- 76% were pleased they received this DM from E.ON.

Following the mailing, E.ON has opened a second centre of excellence to keep up with demand following a 300% increase in smart meter enquiries. Including the initial mail out in April 2011, a total of 400,000 mailers have been sent to date following the success of initial campaign.

Improvements in consumer attitudes/behaviours

E.ON research shows positive customer responses about the DM. It has been described as:

- Informative
- Clear/easy to understand
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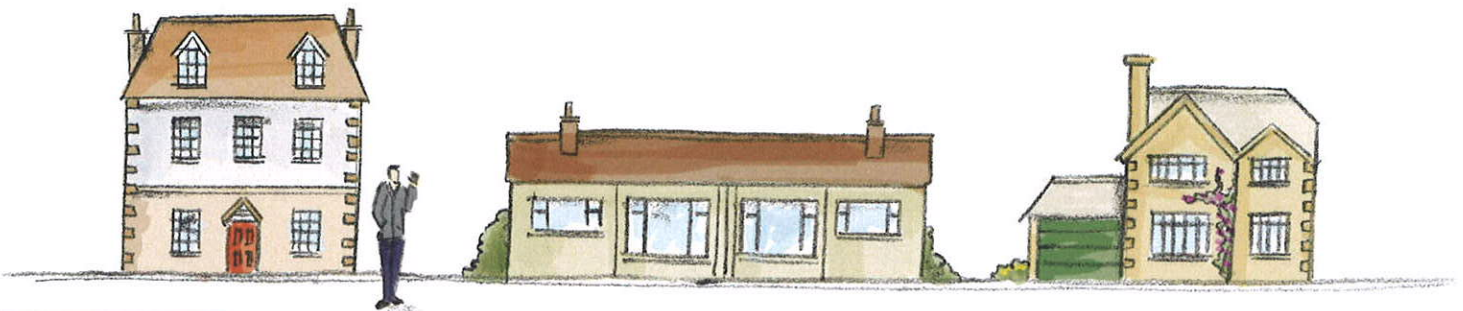


"It gives enough detail and information to get your attention without being overpowering".

"I liked it. It caught my attention and I read it thoroughly. I could determine easily and quickly how it was relevant and of interest to me from the bullet point list of benefits and question headings."

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- Innovative - 25% more customers than brand tracker
- Helpful - 17% more customers than brand tracker
- Knowledgeable - 13% more customers than brand tracker

The DM has directly influenced people to have a smart meter installed, which is a benefit not only to them but to E.ON and the environment too. It also gets people thinking and talking about the energy they use.

88% of homes with 2+ people are communicating about energy usage.

In 97% of homes where smart meter/smart energy displays have been installed, energy usage behaviour has changed in a variety of ways:

- 84% switch things off
- 52% have the heating on for shorter time
- 43% use less appliances
- 86% customers say smart has increased awareness of how much energy they use
- 78% customers say smart has made them think about taking energy efficiency measures in the home.

Changes in spending patterns of target market

90% customers are using smart energy displays

37% bought energy efficient light bulbs

21% buying energy efficient appliances

Other influencing factors

2011 media coverage and third party scrutiny of the programme has been significant and across a broad spectrum of issues from customer, industry, political, regulatory and technological viewpoints. This has only added to the confusion surrounding smart meters and strengthened the case for needing a very clear marketing campaign.

Smart meters 'must not deter switching'

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BBC, 07/02/11

Smart meter savings 'uncertain' says audit office

Uncertainty surrounds the extent to which householders will change their behaviour when new smart meters are introduced, a report has concluded. The Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) estimates that the meters will help the average customer save £23 a year. But the National Audit Office said current evidence left this in doubt.

BBC, 29/06/11

Smart meters: Nothing can possibly go wrong, says government

A UK government minister has reassured Parliament that upcoming deployments of smart meters will be secure. The assurances follow admissions by a senior civil that the government's £12bn plan to roll out smart energy meters in the UK by 2019 might yet be shelved, depending on the outcome of a review next year.

The Register, 03/11/11

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The Guardian, 13/04/11

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Financial Times, 21/10/11

Smart meters offer companies 3 new lessons in competitive advantage

Information derived from smart technologies can show organisations where and how to innovate. It can help identify new markets, increase efficiency and cut costs, says report. "Crucially, it can help them stay one step ahead of the competition."

Future of Business, 18/10/11

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Research resources

- E.ON DM Research - Smart Meter Installation Programme: Insights from initial DM contact and topline from appointment booking process/eDigitalResearch, 19th September 2011
- E.ON UK - 2011 Lessons learned/April 2012
- E.ON UK Press releases: E.ON opens second centre of excellence in Bolton following 300% increase in smart meter enquires/19th June 2012
- E.ON - For informed direction: Ongoing Smart Meter Research/eDigital Research, June 2012

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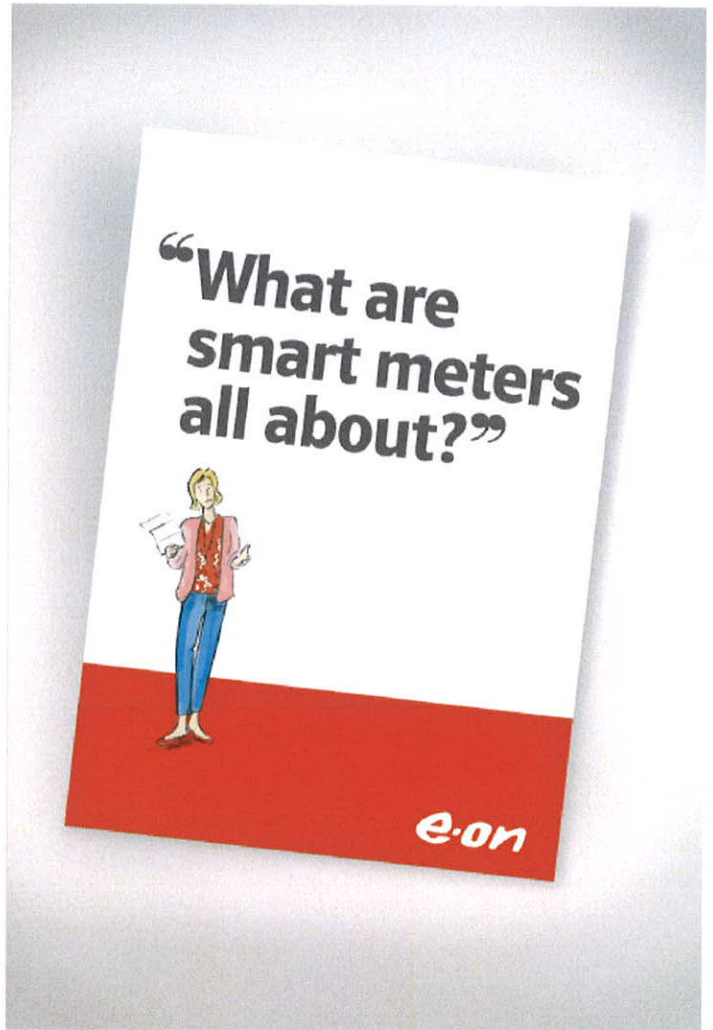
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Smart meters put you in control of your energy. They'll help you stay on top of your bills by showing you how much electricity and gas you're using, both right now and over time. By doing this, they can help you to reduce your energy use and your bills too.

But that's not all they can do. Smart meters send your meter readings automatically to us. That means your bills will be spot on, every time. You'll say goodbye to estimated bills and by having your smart meters installed now, you can take advantage of tomorrow's technology, today. What's more, it won't cost you anything to have smart meters installed.

"Now we're talking"



"Why is E.ON installing smart meter technology now?"

Smart meters are a new and exciting innovation. They'll help us to offer you a much better service, with no more estimated bills and meter readings will be automatic. Eventually, everyone will have smart meters, but we'd like to install yours early, so you can take advantage of the benefits straightaway.

Smarter benefits

- See how much energy you're using
- Spot where you could make savings
- Automatic meter readings
- Up to date, accurate bills, no more estimates
- Dedicated smart meter customer service centre



Summary of results

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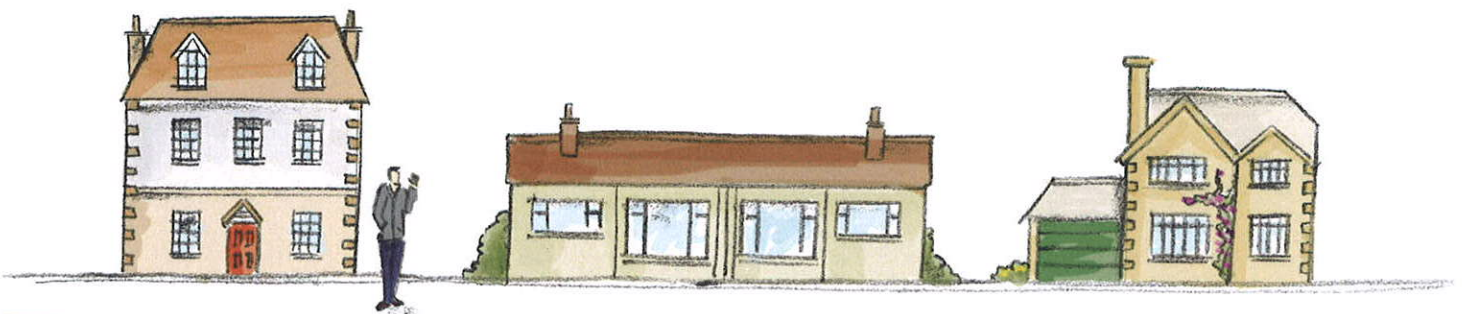


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