

Thought Leaders Speak Out 2021

ENGAGING CUSTOMERS WITH TECHNOLOGY

Key Takeaways: Implementing Advanced Communication Technology to Benefit Customers – Ameren’s Private Broadband Network

A Fireside Chat with Ameren and Anterix (September 2021)

The Institute for Electric Innovation’s *Thought Leaders Speak Out 2021: Engaging Customers with Technology* series brings together electric company executives with customer responsibilities to share lessons learned and the results of successful customer engagement strategies.

The sixth dialogue of the series focused on Ameren’s deployment of a private wireless communications network and featured discussion between Bhavani Amirthalingam of Ameren and Rob Schwartz of Anterix. As electric companies continue to digitize their operations technologies, integrate increasing amounts of distributed energy resources, and enhance customer programs, more and more data is being generated. Ameren’s investment in a scalable, flexible, private wireless broadband network is foundational to accelerating grid modernization benefits and unlocking future use cases built off a secure communications backbone. Mary Kipp of Puget Sound Energy moderated the discussion and Warner Baxter of Ameren provided opening remarks. Key takeaways are summarized and highlighted below.

[Click Here for the Agenda and Speaker Bios](#)

[Watch Ameren’s Opening Remarks Here](#)

Secure, wireless broadband networks will be vital to achieving a customer-centered, clean energy grid.

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Ameren describes how deploying a private, wireless broadband network enables two-way energy flow with greater control and management of data and devices, thus helping to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050, affordably and reliably.

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Ameren explains the importance of stakeholder education and outreach to their regulators during their multi-year due diligence process to assess and validate customer and grid modernization use cases using Anterix’s communications technology.

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Anterix details the opportunity to enhance mutual aid across electric companies using private, wireless broadband networks.

As more and more data creating devices are connecting to the grid, electric companies have an opportunity to replace aging communication networks with a scalable, flexible private wireless broadband network.

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Puget Sound Energy discusses the 2020 FCC decision approving under-utilized 900 MHz spectrum for electric company application, alleviating a barrier to deploying utility-grade private, wireless broadband networks. Guidehouse Research suggests that electric companies will increase the number of connected data-creating devices by a factor of eight in the next decade.

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Anterix explains how electric company access to the 900MHz spectrum helps companies pivot from single purpose communication technologies to a network or platform approach to support multiple applications (akin to an app on a smartphone). Ameren's initial pilot confirmed 14 'apps'.

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Ameren highlights their assessment to replace aging communications networks onto one standardized network because the 'purpose built' telecom technology from more than 20 years ago will not meet the needs of future grid and customer innovations.

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Anterix is working with an ecosystem of more than 55 communication technology vendors and others to standardize network solutions for electric company purposes. With this scale, deploying private broadband networks can be seamless and scalable to support future customer programs.

Closing Remarks

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EEl summarizes that the new availability of spectrum can unlock many innovations for electric company communications networks and in turn can be a major asset to enhance the security and resilience of the grid.