



# Utilities' Guide to Customer Satisfaction & ROI with Smart Technology

Learn about customer satisfaction & return on investment with smart technology and for your electric, gas, water, or telecom utility.

***SilverBlaze***

## How Can Utilities Meet Consumer Demand With Technology Trends?

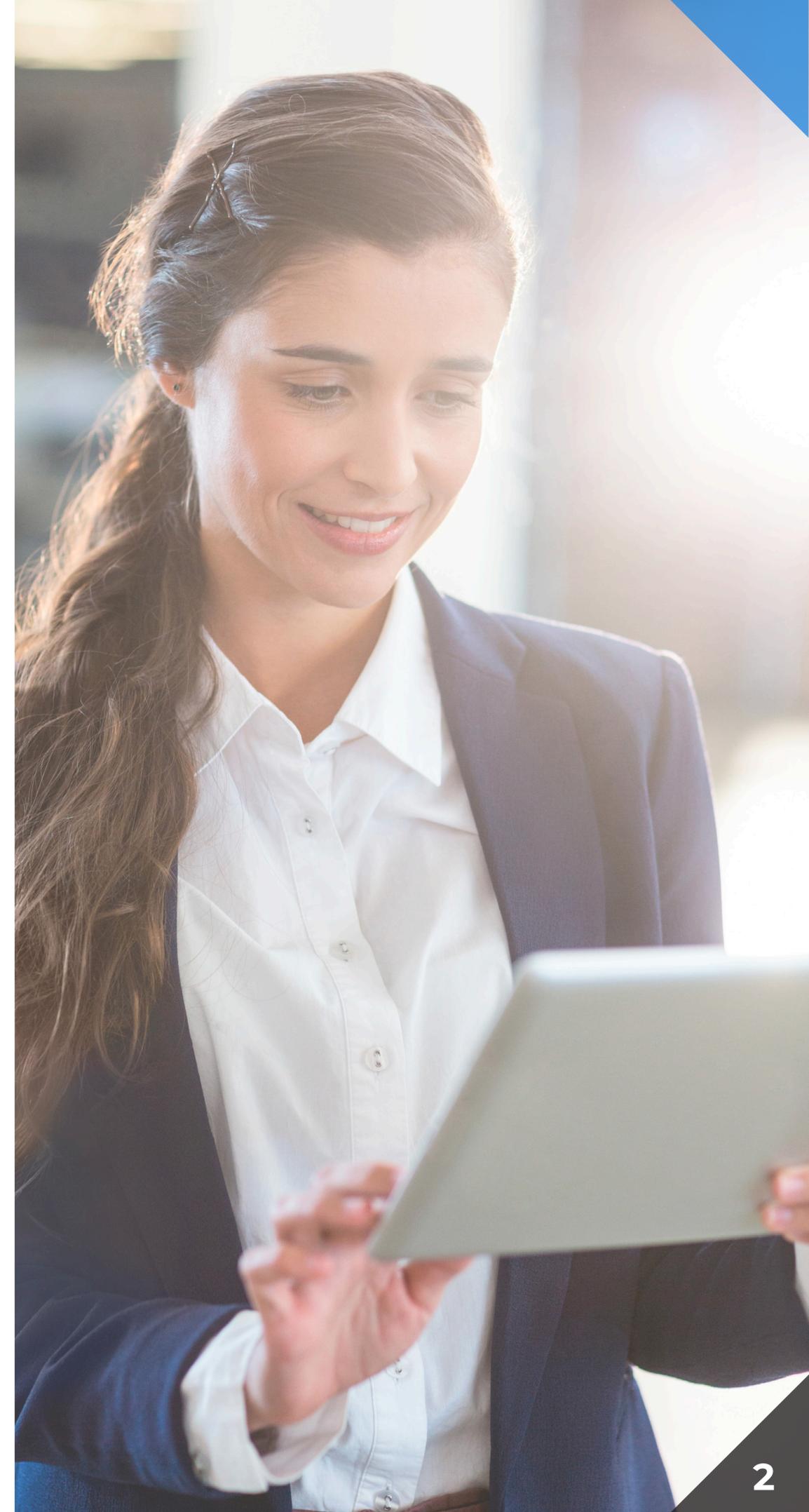
The expanding influence of technology in the day-to-day lives of consumers has changed the way they interact with the world. Today, consumers prefer to manage their accounts online through their phone, laptop, or desktop computer. With the rise of self-service and customer engagement technology, consumers expect - and demand - access to their utility providers 24 hours a day, seven days a week. As mobile access continues to expand, this demand will only continue to grow.

**Customer preference for self-service increased to 76% in 2014 according to Forrester, and is only set to increase every year.**

With this level of access becoming standard for consumers, there comes a level of expectation that service-providers need to meet in order to keep customers satisfied. Customers want to be able to instantly report outages, make changes to their accounts, and better manage their energy usage. Most importantly, they want to be able to do this at a time that is convenient for them.

Simply put, your customers are using smart technology, and your utility needs to embrace this technology to keep pace with demand.

By choosing to integrate smart technology with existing systems, public, private, and municipal utility providers can improve overall customer satisfaction, reduce strain on their resources, and save costs across the board. But which smart technology solutions can help, and what are the tangible benefits they provide? And more importantly, what should a utility provider look for when choosing the right smart technology solution for their organization?



# Smart Technology That Maximizes Customer Service

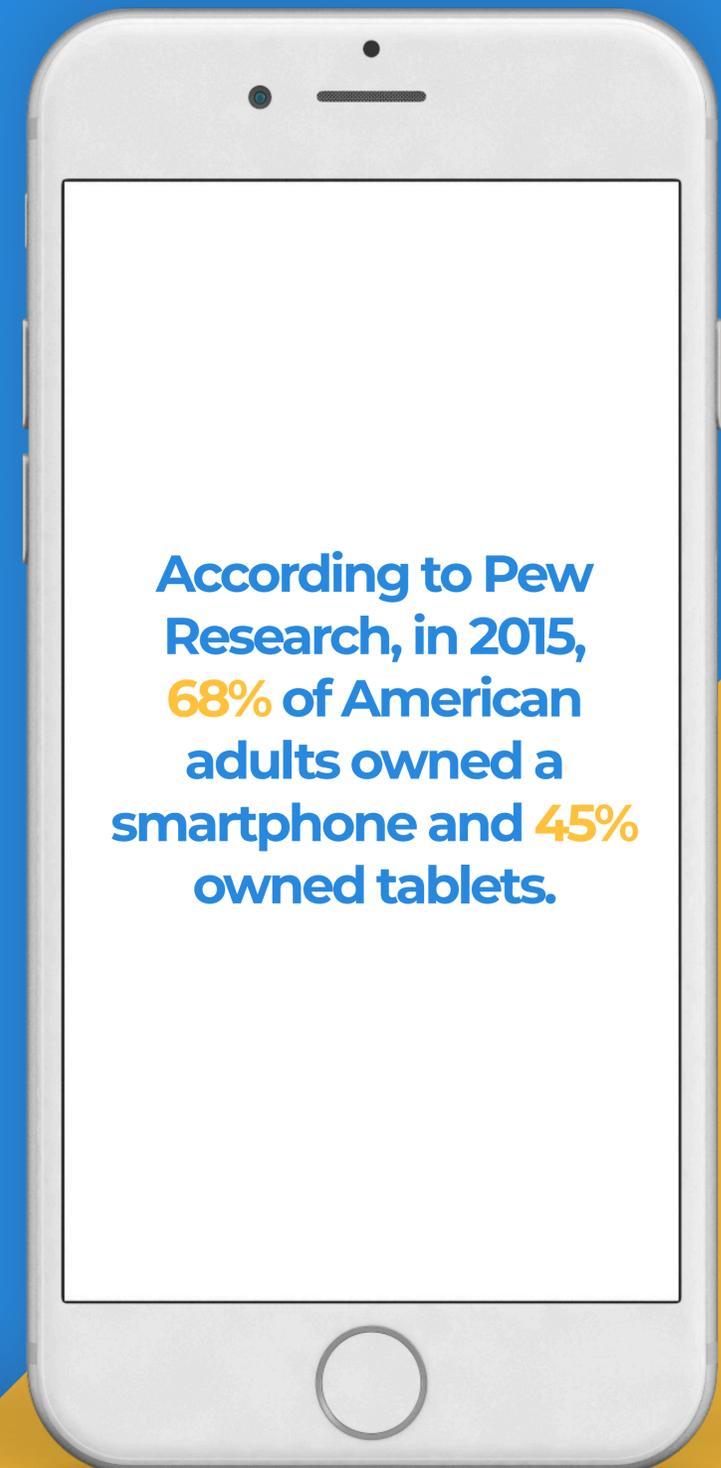
You already know that it's critical for your customers to have convenient ways to interact with you. Smart technology solutions make it faster and easier than ever for customers to communicate with you on their terms. In fact, with smart technology solutions, utilities can provide their customers with:

**Web Self-Service Portals** - Self-service solutions are quickly becoming customers' preferred method of interaction. A recent study conducted on consumer habits indicates that self-service usage has increased - rising from 67% in 2012 to 76% in 2014. A substantial increase on an already high percentage indicates that customers expect web self-service portals from their utility providers.

**Online Billing Options** - Not every customer has the time to pay a bill in person. The ability to sign-up for online billing through a self-service web portal allows customers to make their payments at the time that is most convenient for them. Additionally, smart technology makes it possible for customers to sign-up for pre-authorized billing - meaning their payment will come out at the same time, every month.

**Instant Notifications** - More and more consumers have constant access to smartphones and mobile devices. In 2015, Pew Research indicated that 68% of American adults now own a smart phone. Additionally, 45% of American adults now own tablets. When you factor in desktop and laptop computers, consumers are quickly becoming connected around the clock. Smart technology allows utilities to take advantage of this connectivity-keeping customers informed of upcoming payment due dates, service outages, usage threshold alerts, and more, through the use of push notifications that are delivered directly to their mobile device or computer.

With smart technology, like mobile-friendly web self-service portals, you're putting the power in the hands of your customers. You're also ensuring they have instant access to time-sensitive information - increasing satisfaction and trust.



According to Pew Research, in 2015, **68%** of American adults owned a smartphone and **45%** owned tablets.

# The Benefits of Implementing Smart Technology

Beyond customer satisfaction, there are a number of additional benefits associated with implementing smart technology for your utility. Most notably, choosing smart technology can:



## Reduce Hard Costs

Greentech Media recently published an article titled Utility Technology Executives Agree Technology Is Key to Transformation. This article points to research that suggests 70% of consumers - and 60% of utility executives feel as though utilities are wasting billions of dollars annually. Smart technology allows utilities to provide customers with an opportunity to sign up for billing, online payment, and other paperless initiatives immediately reducing costs associated with paper, printing costs, and postage.

## Maximize Your Resources

Enabling customers to conduct self-service via web portal will also allow your call centre and customer service staff to better allocate resources. An OPower study recently conducted on American utilities attempted to identify the main issues that drive calls to customer service department. 42% of respondents indicated that billing issues drove them to call customer service, followed by outage and reliability issues at 41%, account management at 8%, other issues at 5%, and products or services at 3%. Smart technology can automate these issues, reducing the stress placed on your customer service department.

## Improve Cash Flow

With smart technology and online billing, utility providers can send notifications to customers ahead of payment due dates, or reminders once due dates have passed. These notifications, combined with the convenience of online payments, ensure that payments arrive and are processed quickly resulting in improved overall revenue cycles.

# 5 Things to Look for in Smart Technology Solutions

Not all smart technology is created equally. To ensure you're choosing the right solutions to meet the needs of both your utility and your customers, there are a number of key considerations to keep in mind, including:

## 1 Does it integrate easily with other systems?

Over time, utilities will amass a wide assortment of solutions to meet their needs. The right smart technology for your utility will easily integrate with these solutions, ensuring that your systems are "talking" to one another so that data is up-to-date, correct and easily accessible.

## 2 Does it require ongoing management from IT?

Cost is always a factor, so it's important to ensure you're receiving the most value possible for your investment. Perhaps more importantly, it's critical to consider the avenues to see a return on your investment. The smart technology solution that works for you will be one that is not only feature rich relative to cost, but also ensures a quick ROI.

## 3 Is it customizable?

Each utility is unique, and as such, each utility needs a smart technology solution that they have complete control over. With a customized solution, you can confidently implement the intelligent forms and automated workflows that are right for you. Similarly, your solution should have a look and design that you find visually appealing and that's consistent with your brand standards. A visually attractive solution will be easier to navigate and provide functionality that any employee can understand and utilize.

## 4 Is it accessible and secure?

Your solution needs to be designed with accessibility in mind. Customers want to access their utility accounts on their mobile devices, and a solution built to accommodate this will be the ideal choice. At the same time, you must ensure that the solution you choose is secure. The right smart technology solution for you will store your data in a secure, central hub that only allows access to those with the proper credentials.

## 5 Does it offer value?

The best smart technology solution for your needs is one that can easily be implemented, without the need for constant upkeep and troubleshooting from IT. If anything, it should alleviate headaches for IT. Furthermore, the right smart technology for your utility will be intuitive and functional enough to ensure that customers and employees with no programming experience will be able to easily navigate its interface.

# SilverBlaze Customer Portal:

## Providing the Definitive Self-Service Web Portal Solutions for Utilities

The SilverBlaze Customer Portal is a self-service web portal solution designed specifically with utilities in mind. Public, private, and municipal utility providers of all sizes can benefit from the SilverBlaze Customer Portal's completely customizable, easy-to-integrate framework and intuitive design.

Providing a robust collection of features relative to cost, the software's convenient self-service web portals allow your customers to better manage their accounts and communicate with you. With the SilverBlaze Customer Portal, customers can monitor their usage, pay bills, receive alerts about upcoming work or service outages, and more all from their mobile device.

Available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, SilverBlaze helps your customers better control and understand their utility usage improving their experience across the board. With improved customer satisfaction comes a reduced strain on an employees needs to manually address every customer request.



# Alectra Boosts Customer Experience With SilverBlaze Customer Portal

For over a decade, SilverBlaze has provided Alectra - an electric and water utility providing services to more than 375,000 customers - with innovative portal technology and solutions.

By embracing innovation, Alectra has utilized the Customer Portal for everything from out-of-the-box solutions to entirely customized jobs.

Whether it's building customer-centric, responsively designed websites and self-service portals, providing paperless billing options, or implementing an accurate outage management system with real-time service notifications, SilverBlaze continues to help Alectra exceed their lofty customer experience goals.



**“ The fact that SilverBlaze has been Alectra’s vendor of choice for its customer portal and website services for more than 11 years is not by coincidence. It is a testament to the excellent customer service they provide. SilverBlaze delivers innovative approaches to website design and development while providing optimum customer support on a 24/7 basis, 365 days a year. ”**

**Eric Fagen**

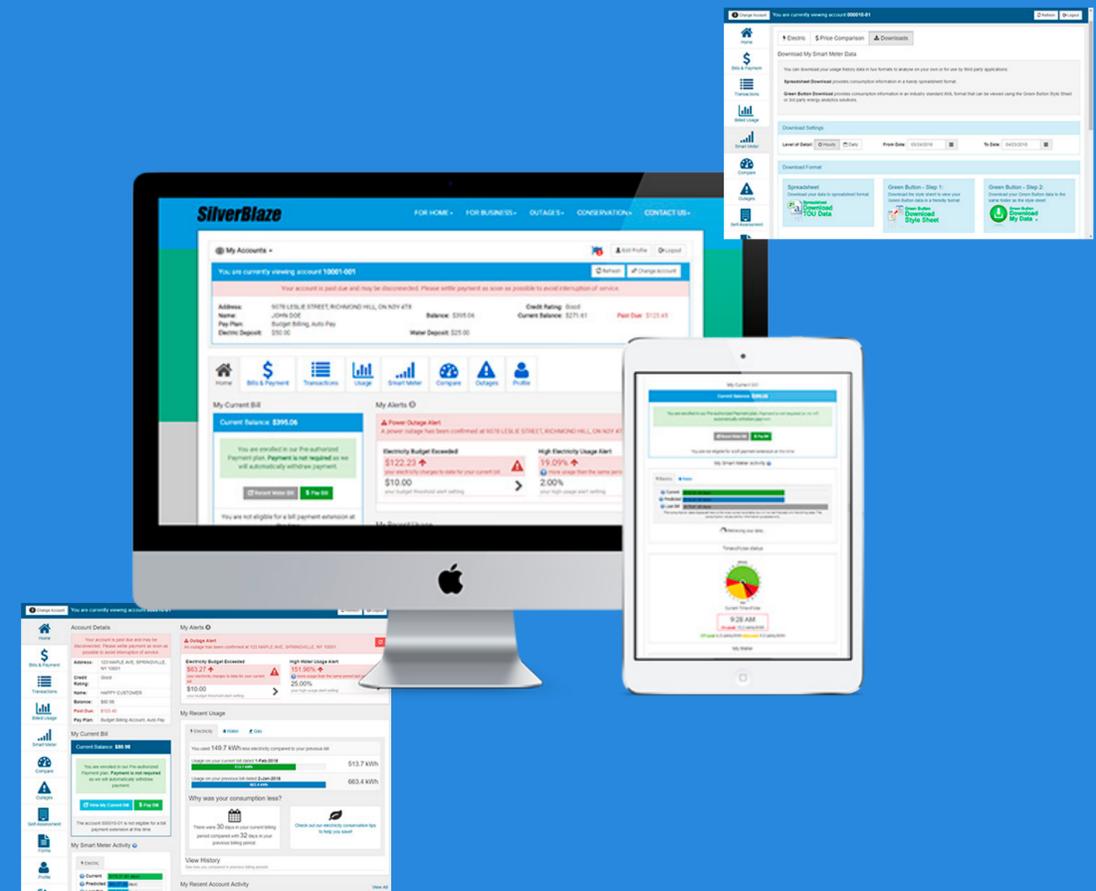
VP Corporate Communications, Alectra

# Discover the SilverBlaze Customer Portal for Yourself

## Schedule a Live Demo

It's one thing to research the right smart technology solution for your utility-it's another thing entirely to see it in action for yourself. When you schedule your free SilverBlaze Customer Portal demo, one of our software experts will provide you with a live walkthrough of our solutions. During your demo, you'll see first hand how the SilverBlaze Customer Portal:

- Performs in a live environment
- Can be customized to suit your needs
- Looks on desktop and mobile devices
- Can intuitively be managed around the needs of your utility
- Is able to integrate seamlessly into and enhance your existing systems
- And more!



**Take the next step in implementing the self-service web portal solution that's right for your utility.**

**Schedule Your SilverBlaze Customer Portal Demo Now**



# Prepare for the future!

The SilverBlaze Customer Portal, designed for public, private, and municipal utility providers, improves customer satisfaction and delivers positive ROI results.

The SilverBlaze Customer Portal provides utilities with customizable, easy-to-integrate, high-value solutions that enable customers to interact with their utility providers when it's convenient for them.

## ***SilverBlaze***

Contact us to learn more, or  
to schedule a live demo of the  
SilverBlaze Customer Portal.

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