

SUPPORTING SMALL BUSINESSES DURING COVID-19 WITH VIRTUAL ENERGY COACHING

Through a DNV-led implementation team, Franklin Energy administers Small Business Virtual Energy Coaching Program for Consumers Energy, to provide Michigan's small businesses with a personalized coaching experience tailored to their unique energy efficiency needs.



12,103
CALLS

400
VIRTUAL
ASSESSMENTS

100
IN-PERSON
ASSESSMENTS

5
MONTHS

The story: Consumers Energy offers a robust portfolio of no- to low-cost energy efficiency programs for small to mid-size business customers. With an omni-program approach to informing and engaging customers, their programs include direct installation of energy efficiency products; energy assessments; a business rewards program to engage in simple energy savings through gamification; a highly incentivized, award-winning business marketplace for the DIY business owner; direct-to-business kits; and a contractor-based rebate program.

The goal: In 2020, with shelter-in-place orders, they needed to pivot from in-person interactions to something that complied with local and CDC guidelines—while sustaining energy savings throughout the pandemic.

The solution and results: Franklin Energy quickly launched an award-winning Virtual Energy Coaching Program that provided Consumers Energy with a path to achieving their energy savings goal, cross-promoting other small to mid-size business programs (e.g. marketplace), and providing the customer with a welcomed distraction to lower their energy bills.

Through a series of calls, eligible small businesses could speak with an energy coach to help them connect to the right program available through Consumers Energy's energy efficiency programs for businesses. From answering questions to reviewing energy usage, conducting assessments, identifying savings opportunities and more, the energy coach was available to help small businesses put money back into their pocket when it mattered most.

Within five months, virtual energy coaching resulted in 12,103 customer calls, 400 virtual assessments, 1,423 marketplace \$100 gift vouchers sent to customers, and led to nearly 100 in-person assessments, once it was safe to do so. The Get to Free initiative was limited to 100 customers, and with postcards, social media, digital ads and a landing page update, those 100 customers were collected within a month of program launch. With so many project leads coming in, expansions were made to the already robust trade ally network to accommodate demand and provide more work for local contractors.

Within seven months, 1,204 thermostats were ordered through the free thermostat promotion, and the store reached 124% of its electric goal and 101% of its gas goal.



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