

*Consumer Education
Honorable Mention*

***Flex Your Power Campaign
State of California: California State and Consumer Services Agency,
and Department of Consumer Affairs***

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Flex Your Power Campaign, sponsored by the state of California, initiated several energy efficiency programs during its two-year campaign (2001–2002). Although there were sixteen separate “mini-campaigns,” all were coordinated under the banner of Flex Your Power.

One of the underlying premises of the campaign was the need to promote behavior change (conservation) as a foundation for more lasting efficiency behavior (purchasing energy efficiency products.) At their peak (literally and figuratively), these efforts cut a historic 14.1 percent of peak energy use statewide in California (5,570 MW) and prevented power outages during a summer predicted to have 36 straight days of blackouts. The various components of this energy conservation/efficiency campaign affected market sales of energy efficiency appliances, lighting, and equipment; resulted in previously unheard of energy savings; changed California consumers’ conservation habits; educated a diverse population; and achieved measurable results.

The Energy Conservation/Efficiency Media and Education Campaign included statewide programs, which included paid and earned media, collateral material, events, and other means of communication. This effort, unprecedented in its size and scope, educated Californians on the importance of energy and methods to reduce it. The campaign also encouraged businesses and citizens to reduce peak demand and energy usage. Flex Your Power included use of nontraditional mass media, a toll-free phone line with information available in seven languages, and direct mail and the distribution of collateral materials in several languages, as well as coordination with community and consumer groups.

The message of the overall campaign in general, and the media campaign in specific, unfolded in three planned stages over the two-year course. During the first phase of the campaign, which ran roughly until the beginning of the summer of 2001, the message was: “Conserve, and it’s not even hard.” Collateral and television and radio commercials emphasized that not only did the public have the power to conserve and make a difference, but also that conservation measures were not difficult to undertake. The second phase of the campaign, which ran through the summer of 2001, broadcast the message: “Together, we can get through this.” During this phase, the emphasis was on the fact that solving the energy crisis required the help of all California residents, and was tightly coordinated with the announcement of the partnership efforts listed above. The final phase of the campaign focused on locking in conservation behavior and making the purchase of energy-efficient lighting, appliances, and products a habit for years to come. The message was: “Saving energy, it’s a way of life.”

Flex Your Power consisted of a number of separate campaigns and initiatives (including The Energy Conservation/Efficiency Media and Education Campaign mentioned above) across all major customer classes. The following list of selected examples helps illustrate the extensive range of targeted audiences and the wide variety of tactics employed to achieve the program's overall objectives. Campaigns and initiatives include:

- Business Leadership Energy Initiative
- CEO Business Declarations
- Quarterly Home Improvement and Appliance Efficiency promotions
- Local Government Initiative
- The Community-Based Organization Initiative
- Light Brigade (a successful effort to hand out 2 million CFLs in low-income areas)
- Partnerships with grocery stores to hand out 13 million bag stuffers
- Load-shifting strategies with agriculture
- Energy audit homework assignments for all 4th–6th grade students

Space does not permit us to provide details of all the many campaigns and initiatives, but a couple of these are highlighted below to illustrate some of the approaches taken by Flex Your Power.

Business Programs

The Business Leadership Energy Initiative had several components aimed to dramatically reduce peak energy use, instill conservation practices, and foster expedited energy efficiency measures among California's businesses. The "Lights Out" project was a partnership between the Building Owners and Managers Association (BOMA), and the janitors union (SEIU) and building operators union (the Operating Engineers). The five-point plan specifically called for: (1) implementing energy-efficient cleaning practices; (2) developing conservation programs; (3) conducting conservation training of building users; (4) retrofitting buildings for energy efficiency; and (5) disseminating conservation and efficiency information to building workers. A small business campaign had Flex Your Power employees canvassing business districts lining up energy audits performed by workers from nearby home improvement stores.

Another initiative was to get chief executive officers of major corporations to sign a declaration to take a variety of immediate efficiency and conservation measures, including de-lamping 25 percent of their lighting, setting room temperatures at 78 degrees, and shutting off all outside and decorative lighting possible. The CEO Declaration was expanded into a broader energy efficiency effort with over 1,200 participating businesses. Flex Your Power directly approached hundreds of CEOs and asked their major businesses to make a commitment to cut energy consumption by 20 percent and commit to building energy efficiency into their buildings.

Residential Programs

The campaign targeted to the residential community also had several components aimed at dramatically reducing peak energy use, instilling conservation practices, and fostering expedited energy efficiency measures. They ranged from the “grassroots” door-to-door walk in low-income communities to massive media efforts in TV, radio, and newspapers. The media campaign achieved an overwhelmingly positive reaction and brand identification with the state’s residents.

The campaign built a partnership with over 1,200 retail appliance and home improvement stores and most manufacturers to design and implement a quarterly energy efficiency promotional campaign. Flex Your Power recruited energy efficiency appliance and home improvement product manufacturers, independent retailers, and chain retailers to encourage consumers to purchase more ENERGY STAR[®]-labeled products and educate customers about rebate programs available through utilities or manufacturers. To date, this initiative has run four appliance and home improvement promotions between the summer of 2001 and the summer of 2002

Each initiative featured products specific to the season in which it was held. The participating retailers agreed to (1) make best efforts to reduce energy use in their stores by as much as 20 percent, (2) train all sales associates on the benefits of efficient appliances and home improvement products using salesperson training cards and pocket cards provided by Flex Your Power, and (3) display promotional materials provided by Flex Your Power that were designed to educate consumers on the value of energy-efficient appliances and distribute Flex Your Power consumer brochures that provided valuable energy efficiency and conservation tips. Participating retailers were listed in at least one of more than 30 newspaper ads that ran throughout the state promoting the awareness week and the value of energy efficiency products.

PROGRAM PERFORMANCE

Although many factors lead to increased energy conservation and efficiency, no one can deny the dramatic results achieved by California business during this period. There were no blackouts in the summer of 2001 or since the beginning of the Flex Your Power campaign. During the all-important summer of 2001, 27 percent of the state’s businesses cut at least 20 percent of their energy consumption, with some businesses cutting energy use compared to the prior year in excess of 40 percent. Many of these businesses implemented successful energy efficiency retrofit projects, such as lighting and HVAC systems, conservation programs, and public and employee awareness programs. Many businesses documented their savings to the state for its awards program.

All four residential product promotions realized great success. During those promotions, sales of ENERGY STAR products dramatically increased. While actual sales numbers are considered highly confidential in the appliance industry, program staff was able to gather the following numbers for the first Appliance Awareness promotion (held during August 2001) from one of the major retailers. Staff analyzed the number of ENERGY STAR-qualified sales for the week of this promotion as compared to the same period in the prior year.

- Clothes washers—110 percent increase in California compared with a 50 percent increase nationally
- Refrigerators—50 percent increase in California compared with a 12 percent increase nationally
- Dishwashers—100 percent increase in California compared with a 50 percent increase nationally.

The results of California's overall energy conservation and efficiency efforts in 2001 and 2002 have been staggering. Over 33 percent of the state's residents conserved at least 20 percent from the prior year in 2001 and the conservation behavior and the growing impact of efficiency measures have the numbers staying nearly as high in 2002. Flex Your Power was instrumental in promoting messages about energy conservation and efficiency, and how customers could take actions or avail themselves of a wide variety of utility and statewide energy programs.

LESSONS LEARNED

The major lesson learned is that a comprehensive media campaign can be effective in eliciting a significant direct customer response to calls for curtailment and conservation because of reliability concerns. California faced unique conditions and consumers had actually experienced blackouts—the condition the campaign addressed directly. Therefore, it is not clear how well this kind of program would be in a non-crisis atmosphere.

Another lesson that seems to be emerging is the synergy this extensive media campaign had on customer response to other programs and resources available to reduce customers' demand through energy efficiency improvements.

PROGRAM AT A GLANCE

Program Name: Flex Your Power

Targeted Customer Segment: All

Program Start Date: Summer 2001

Program Participants: Through “Flex Your Power” and related utility and statewide programs in California, over 33% of customers saved 20% or more off their utility bills in 2001 compared to 2000.

Approximate Eligible Population: All California electricity customers

Participation Rate: See above.

Annual Energy Savings Achieved: Electrical energy use decreased an estimated 6.7% statewide in California in 2001 after adjusting for economic growth and weather as the result of all California’s energy efficiency and conservation programs and initiatives, including Flex Your Power.

Peak Demand (Summer) Savings Achieved. The total impact from all California’s energy conservation and efficiency efforts in the summer of 2001 yielded an estimated 5,570 MW of peak demand reduction (14%).

Budget

Year	Program Costs
2001	\$57.4 million
2002	Not available
2003 (projected)	Not available

Funding Source: California systems benefits charge

Best Person to Contact for Information about the Program

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