Panel 6 Introduction

Commercial Buildings: Program Evaluation—Being a Libra in the Age of Aquarius

The utility business is going through a fairly public reincarnation, and the demand-side management (DSM) programs that survive the changes will likewise be reformulated. The field of evaluation should play an integral role in such areas as raising awareness of the importance of market effects and the potential for market transformation programs. This panel captures both the best of the old and the foreshadowing of the new world of the programs being evaluated.

Many of the papers presented represent the culmination of many years of the development of theory and practice in the art of program evaluation. These are found in headings associated with traditional gross savings and net savings. The state of the art on the estimation of net impacts can be fairly intimidating, as described by Mast and Ignelzi, Heitfield et al., and Randazzo et al. The tracking of consistent results for a consistent program over multiple years, as detailed by Zebedee et al., or across multiple programs, as in Eto et al., are the pay-offs of years of growing science and professionalism.

Some of the papers, such as Paquette's, demonstrate the refinement and improvement of measurement techniques that can only come with years of experience. Many of the papers in the panel will read a lot like studies done for regulators. This is an inescapable function of the utility environment as we have known it for the last 15 years. (The development of the scope and sophistication of the field of evaluation is much in debt to regulators!)

We have also accepted papers for this panel that have potential for serving the new utility environment. Energy program evaluation traditionally focused on ''program'' impacts and tried to avoid case study approaches. However, as the DSM program technologies became more sophisticated and programs began to move into major commercial and industrial facilities, evaluation techniques diversified to meet needs that older techniques couldn't meet reliably. This has resulted in a growing body of information on site-specific measurement techniques.

Energy service businesses, whether operated by utilities or energy service companies (ESCOs), are likely to focus on large and complex commercial and industrial facilities. Utility customer service/customer retention activities will inevitably require attention to the energy use in the businesses of large customers. Power marketers will often supply efficiency advice and loans as part of their offerings to aggregations of customers or to large industries. Each of these future activities will depend on the expertise and experience in understanding and measuring energy use in large commercial and industrial buildings that has been developed by the field of evaluation in the last six years or so.

Some of the papers in this panel are excellent examples of the methods, problems, and solutions that can enhance the quality and reliability of the energy service businesses. The paper by Mowris et al., as well as that by Englander et al., are excellent examples of the measurement issues that an energy service provider will need to understand. One increasingly important point addressed by several papers is the development of methods for maintaining the effectiveness of evaluation while reducing costs. The papers by Newberger, and Amalfi, Jacobs, and Wright are examples.

As panel leaders, we anticipate that the quality and mix of these papers will contribute to the education of Summer Study participants and readers of these proceedings. It is our hope that presentations reflect the quality of the research efforts that underlie these papers.

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