

SMART GRID NEWSLETTER

The Smart Grid -- the application of digital technology to the electric power infrastructure.

□SmartGridCity Retrospective and Post-Mortem

Our piece describing [the Boulder SmartGridCity meltdown](#) elicited considerable response from readers. In today's issue, we've identified the top three "lessons learned" and excerpted expert comments. We've also searched out white papers and other resources that may help others side-step similar problems.

□Lesson #1: Don't set unrealistic expectations

I live in Boulder -- In the beginning we were promised all sorts of bells and whistles, like an internet connection to our meter so we could monitor our electrical usage in real time. Now that we have a smart meter, I still go outside with my notebook and write down the numbers just like I used to. In concept, I believe in the "smart grid", and this is a baby step in the right direction. Poorly planned, terribly managed, flawed conception and all, I'm still glad we tried it, and expect to end up picking up the tab. But it's telling in ways that speaks to the old days of utilities as regulated monopolies, and the deep seated DNA that persists in these organizations, that it just didn't occur to them that delivering benefits to the customer, not just to themselves, was important. - Ski Milburn

The true misstep was touting S.G.C as the world's first...It should have been named the World's Most Extensive pilot, which would have protected the merits of the lessons learned -- which will certainly come from Smart Grid City regardless of cost over runs, political positioning, and finger pointing. - James Shepperd

Xcel Energy basically said, "We're going to do this with partners we've selected, and see what we learn." They haven't failed on that score. As mentioned before, it's just that they set expectations and a budget that possibly could never have been met. - Kathleen Burns

Related resources:

- [Smart Grid Expectations and Our Changing Relationship with Power](#)
- [Study: Smart Grid Aware Customers More Satisfied with Utilities \(But There Aren't Many of Them\)](#)
- [Selling the Smart Grid to Consumers? Start By Helping Them Answer One Simple Question](#)
- [Smart Grid Point/Counterpoint: Is It Better to Be a First Mover or a Follower?](#)

□Lesson #2: Employ proven planning and project management practices

None of the utilities are factoring in the cost and need to commission each meter. None of them tapped into the sub-metering industry people to see what experiences they have had ... It's amazing how once you get into something it can become a can of worms. And just like the Gulf Oil Spill, we are capable of doing real damage to ourselves without considering all the consequences of what can go wrong. - Steven Harbauer

Looks a little like Xcel played a shell game with the project. No economic feasibility study? No allowance for the special issues with installing underground cable in rocky ground? Guess they used "build it and they (the benefits) will come" approach. Very poor project justification and management techniques. - Tom Davlin

Related resources:

- [Why Requirements Development is Critical to Making the Smart Grid Smart](#)
- [Smart Grid Cost and Benefit Analysis Framework](#)

- [GridWise Alliance Handbook for Assessing Smart Grid Projects](#)
- [Project Management for Implementing the Smart Grid](#)
- [Cross-Industry Project Management Lessons Learned](#)

□ Lesson #3: Work with regulators early

If regulated utilities need a different process for "experiments" in order to test and take advantage of fast changing technological advances, then regulators need to be brought around to that way of thinking and new processes created that will handle gracefully the many issues that arise when experimenting. - Steve Hilitibidal

Related resources:

- [Regulatory Assistance Project Tackles Smart Grid](#)
- [Federal-State Cooperation Can Remove Delays, Obstacles to Achieving Smart Grid Benefits, Regulators Are Told](#)
- [Should Utilities Shift Rate Structures - and Customer Communications - to Meet Industry Changes Like Distributed Generation?](#)

¤ Quick Links

- [earth2tech: SmartGridCity is a Smart Grid Flop](#)
- [Fast Company: Lessons From a Failing Smart Grid](#)
- [Xcel Energy's SmartGridCity website](#)
- [SGN Business Case resources](#)
- [SGN Policy & Regulation resources](#)
- [SGN Customer Care resources](#)

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