



Marana, Arizona, sits just over 20 miles northwest of Tucson. One of the fastest-growing towns in Southern Arizona, Marana offers beautiful views of the neighboring Sonoran Desert and Dove Mountain. It's a place where residents enjoy outdoor activities all year.

While the fun in the sun is great for Marana's residents, Trico Electric Cooperative's territory goes beyond the desert city. Serving 48,000 members in three different counties, Trico experiences a wide variety of climates, from extreme summer heat to snow-covered mountains. Among those climates lives a customer base that varies as much as the temperature.

"Trico has a really diverse membership with a lot of different needs," said Megan Litwicki, Manager, Digital Marketing for Trico. "We serve mountain areas where they get several feet of snow in the winter, all the way down to the desert, and across the border into Mexico. We're really looking at how we can customize the messages our members receive since they have such varying needs."

Meeting member needs can be a challenge for utility providers, even in the best of times. With such a variance in members across their territory, Trico needed to provide a variety of programs and services that can be customized to meet a diverse population, regardless of where they live in the service territory.

More importantly, Trico needed to be able to let the customers know about the specific programs that fit not only their geographic area, but their interests as well.

"Trico is very invested in data and analytics, and we're moving more in that direction," Litwicki said. "Targeted marketing fit perfectly into helping our members have the best possible experience with us."

With such a diverse membership, Trico hoped to better target their messaging for specific programs to those members that would benefit. Some programs, like Operation Roundup or promoting free weatherization kits, can benefit members throughout the territory. However, other programs are tailored for specific audiences, like Trico's scholarship program.

Trico currently offers the largest cooperative scholarship program in the country, providing more than \$500,000 to nearly 100 students in their area every year.

"It's a really big program, but a lot of our members don't know about it," Litwicki said. "It's really about helping local youth get a quality education and hopefully bring those skills back into the community that we serve. That's our big goal."

Another big focus for Trico's membership is solar. With roughly 360 days of sunshine, the area is one of the best in the country to generate power from the sun. Trico gets 35 percent of their power from solar, with more than 5,000 members utilizing rooftop panels, along with two active solar and battery energy storage facilities and a solar farm where members can purchase panels. "



TRICO
AN ENERGY COOPERATIVE

The idea with some of these solar programs is to basically give our members options,” Litwicki said. “Our solar farm filled up very quickly, so we developed some new programs this year. One is a renewable energy boost rate, which members can elect to receive either 50 or 100 percent of their power from renewables. We’re also looking into allowing members to purchase energy directly from our two solar facilities.



“A lot of members may not necessarily have access to investing in a home solar system, because those can be a big investment. If they’re still really interested in renewable energy and they want to lower their carbon footprint, this gives them options to do that in a way that’s more accessible to them.”

Each of these programs have been designed to help meet member needs, but they may not work for all members. Trico had to be able to identify members that fit each of these criteria and then have the ability to send a targeted message regarding that program to each specific group.

Litwicki and the team at Trico leveraged NISC’s Marketing solution, along with customer engagement tools like Consumer Analytics – Powered by Bidgely, SmartHub and Multi-Channel Messenger (Messenger), to create custom campaigns targeted specifically for each program, notifying only those members that are most likely to take advantage of them.

These solutions work to help Litwicki and Trico better understand their membership and identify the segments that will be most receptive to a particular message. Solutions like Consumer Analytics can provide an inside look at a members’ usage habits, while demographic data from NISC Marketing identifies non-personal household information.

“For our scholarship, I looked at who has the highest likelihood of having kids based on the parents’ age, and how many have kids,” Litwicki said. “It does also give us some information on their interest in things like tech, which could be an indicator that they might be interested in a smart thermostat program or something similar to that.”

Form assembly has been a critical piece of the process as well, allowing Litwicki and Trico to create custom forms for each program, available through the Trico website, that integrate with Salesforce – allowing for continued refinement of member data for future messaging.

“For our targeted marketing, we’ve been using the consumer data that is provided through NISC,” Litwicki said. “It definitely makes the member journey a lot easier because they can sign up for programs right there on the website. Our member reps, if they need to, can help walk them through it. All of that data comes to us instantly, so we can send them messages right away letting them know they’re enrolled. And because it connects to the Salesforce database, it makes it easier for us to further target those members down the road.”

Outside of pre-defined campaigns, Trico also leveraged NISC’s Multi-Channel Messenger for on-demand messages. Litwicki utilized Messenger for their scholarship messaging along with moving their newsletter to an email sent from Messenger rather than only including it with printed bills.

“Instead of reaching however many members are still on a physical bill, [the newsletter] is now reaching all members,” Litwicki said. “We’re seeing open rates of 50 – 60 percent. We’re getting 25,000 – 30,000 people actually reading our information, so a lot more awareness.”

With the diverse climate, Trico members can also experience sticker shock when they receive their bill during particularly extreme weather months. To combat this, Trico leveraged on-demand messaging to promote a budget billing program targeted to members that continually struggled to pay.

The best defense, though, is a good offense. In utility terms, that means being proactive. NISC’s Consumer Analytics solution has helped Trico members get a better understanding of their energy usage and with that more knowledge of how that affects their bill.

“Consumer Analytics will tell members what their projected bill is going to be and how their energy stacks up with other similar homes,” Litwicki said. “That’s been another way we’ve seen our members take control of their own usage without suddenly being shocked that their usage is way higher than they thought it was.”

Trico Electric’s biggest goal as a cooperative is increased member satisfaction. This is a goal achieved by providing quality communication



and enhanced options for members to connect with the organization through targeted programs and solutions for managing their usage.

“One of the indicators of high member satisfaction is giving members options, making them feel like they’re in control of their decisions, of their energy, and what’s going to be best for them,” Litwicki said. “I think the NISC products are definitely helping with that. All of that data is going to be right there for Trico and for our Members. If a member calls with an issue, our member rep can see everything they’ve signed up for and everything we’ve communicated with them because it’s all integrated into one central location.”

Reaching a diverse membership with a variety of needs is not a simple task for any utility provider. However, with the right tools, any program can be customized to meet member needs, from the mountains to Mexico.