

Restructuring Today



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Thursday September 28 2006

Texas power shoppers can get email alert when prices drop

The instant price notification is a new feature on ChooseEnergy.com's online shopping portal, a shopping website run by national energy management firm Priority Power Management ([RT, 7/10](#)).

Choose Energy's system now automatically emails customers whenever prices in their service territory drop by five mills.

It's part of a series of enhancements Choose Energy General Manager Jerry Dyess expects to roll out in the coming weeks.

The alerts educate customers and make it simpler for them to shop, he noted.

It's like customers are putting an energy analyst to work for them personally, observed Dyess.

Dyess has seen better than expected shopping numbers through September -- something other brokers have reported too ([RT, 9/25](#)).

Why?

Customers are getting more savvy, Dyess explained.

He thinks customers are linking falling gasoline prices they see at the pump with their power bills.

They know that energy prices are declining and are looking for savings in the market.

Overall traffic to the website is about

the same as it was when it launched in July but traffic is much more targeted.

That means more people are specifically logging onto the site to shop for power -- not just browse -- and the ratio of switches to traffic has grown.

Shopping levels have risen every week since the site's launch, Dyess told us.

He thinks shopping through Choose Energy will grow even more once it works out deals to market the big incumbents TXU Energy, Reliant Energy and Direct Energy.

The site is building good brand recognition, he thinks, and is getting a lot of visits prompted by positive word-of-mouth.

Word-of-mouth recommendations are particularly driving C&I traffic to the site, Dyess reported.

It's the only website that gives C&Is real-time prices, he noted.

Other sites typically list only residential prices and ask C&Is to send information to the broker to get a specific price quote.

Sites that do list C&I offers don't have as fresh prices, he claimed.

Choose Energy lets marketers update online prices themselves -- rather than having to tell an agent at Choose Energy to change prices.

That gives marketers the opportunity to offer real-time prices through the site.

Marketers are changing their prices for C&I customers daily with some marketers updating prices twice a day, Dyess reported.

Residential prices aren't changed that often -- perhaps once every two to three weeks.

First Choice Power, though, is among the more active marketers on the site and updates even its residential prices more frequently, Dyess told us.

Dyess is focused on building out the Texas website as much as possible before expanding to other states.

Creating a fine-tuned online exchange in Texas first will let Choose Energy expand rapidly into other states once the site is perfected.

He's getting feedback on what customers -- and marketers -- want from the site to add value.

He expects to expand into New York by the end of the first quarter next year.

Dyess is "excited" about the end of the price to beat coming Jan 1.

He doesn't expect incumbents to drop their prices but does see a host of new products on the horizon.

Retailers will look to alternate channels to help market those products, he predicted.