

CASE STUDY



Elevated Member Communication with Personalized Solutions

Innovative tools boost engagement and satisfaction for 13,000 members in central Alabama.

CHALLENGE:

For nearly 90 years, Pioneer Electric has been steadfast in delivering a big promise: to safely deliver reliable service in a timely and courteous manner at the lowest possible cost to its members. The central Alabama cooperative certainly has its work cut out for itself, serving 13,000 of its closest neighbors across nine counties.

“We pride ourselves on being more than just an electric utility,” says Pioneer Electric VP of Communications Christi Scruggs. “As a hometown cooperative, our team lives and works in the same communities we serve. Our members are our friends and neighbors. These are our roots. That’s why we work so hard to ensure our communities grow and thrive.”

At the heart of everything the Pioneer Electric team does is strategic, personalized, and effective communication. Sending the right message to the right person at the right time is critical to maintaining a healthy, educated, and responsive cooperative. Communication helps Pioneer Electric employees continue to build that sense of community and ensures it can fulfill its mission while staying aligned with the needs and values of its members.

While Scruggs already had a successful social media presence, member magazine, and bill stuffer campaign, she wanted to take their member communication to the next level.



Profile:	Pioneer Electric Cooperative
Total Customers:	13,000
Location:	Alabama
Primary objective:	Enhance member communication with personalized messaging.

(Continued)

SOLUTION:

Scruggs tapped into benefits and resources available through PowerSouth Energy Cooperative, their generation and transmission (G&T) partner. Through PowerSouth, the Pioneer team first implemented Brillion's home energy advisor tool to help members visualize and understand their energy usage. With the self-serve calculator, members could quickly assess their energy consumption and learn easy ways to reduce their household energy use.



▲ *Cooperative members review and update their pre-populated home energy assessment report.*

"As a mighty marketing team of one, I'm grateful to PowerSouth. I appreciate their willingness to offer these types of tools and programs to us along with the rest of their members," says Scruggs.

Following the success of the interactive calculators, Scruggs implemented Brillion's personalized video bill explanations and mid-cycle alerts. Through artificial intelligence and behavioral science, the video bill series walks each member through their actual electric bill—highlighting what's changed month over month.

The series outlines big-picture factors that affected their bill—from weather spikes to the number of days in a billing cycle. Through a billing integration, the video bill series further breaks down the member's energy usage by appliance and offers quick tips to help them save in the future.

"The beauty of these emails and calculators is that they're customized to that member. When they open it up, they're getting information specific to them—their home size, their appliances—all of that," explains Scruggs. "It's a wonderful way to provide members with actionable insights about their energy usage. When they understand how weather impacts their energy usage or that they can save X dollars by running their dishwasher off-peak times, they're empowered to make informed decisions."



Each year we challenge ourselves to do better than we did last year. For me, that's continuing to enhance our member satisfaction, engagement, loyalty, and reputation in the ever-evolving energy landscape," says Scruggs. "We have a diverse membership. To 'reach members where they are' and hyper-personalize their experience, I knew I needed to team up with a trusted partner in the space."

CHRISTI SCRUGGS, VP OF COMMUNICATIONS, PIONEER ELECTRIC

RESULTS:



Personalized Messaging at Scale

Leveraging the latest marketing tools and technologies, Pioneer Electric continues to provide the highest standards of accountability, integrity, innovation, and commitment to its community. With the help of Brillion, Scroggs can now provide members with the one-to-one communication and personalized touch that they would expect from their neighbor—but this time it's at scale.

"Brillion's ability to customize thousands of membership messages by connecting to billing data is something I could never do on my own," adds Scroggs. "The technology gives an extra level of personalization that general, mass communication lacks."



Improved Engagement and Satisfaction

Members love the customized outbound messages, and Pioneer Electric has the data to prove it. With Brillion, Pioneer Electric's outbound emails have held industry-leading open rates ranging from 60-77%. Additionally, their 9-15% outbound click-through rates—almost three times the industry average—show their members actively engage with the tailored content they're receiving.

"It all comes back to member satisfaction and the cooperative commitment to member needs," Scroggs explains. "Members have continued to give positive feedback about the bill explanation videos, and our board members are recognizing the power technology can have in building stronger relationships with our members."



Effective Communication Improves Education

"Anything we can do to help our members understand their energy usage and make informed choices is a valuable resource," Scroggs says.

The proactive communication educates members by clarifying bills on the spot and highlighting the direct correlation between energy consumption habits and their bills. Plus, Pioneer Electric's member services team has access to the same tools, allowing them to provide enhanced support and tailored solutions to any member who calls. By continuing to elevate communication across the utility, Pioneer Electric is, in turn, improving member engagement, building trust, and increasing understanding and satisfaction across the board.



Email Engagement Summary:

Pioneer Electric's outbound emails boast top-tier analytics:

Open Rates:

60-77%

Click-through rates:

9-15%

(Nearly 3x the industry average)



ABOUT PIONEER ELECTRIC

Pioneer Electric Cooperative serves nearly 13,000 members in portions of 9 counties in central Alabama. Since 1937, their mission has been to safely deliver reliable service in a timely and courteous manner at the lowest possible cost to our members.

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