Serving our customers

Website Benchmarking Study Results

Improving operations and customer experience

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TACOMA PUBLIC UTILITIES

E Source Website Benchmarking

- Study conducted every two years since its launch in 2002. In 2023, they assessed 93 North American electric and gas utility websites;

- Results benchmark utility company websites and gain insight into their success in serving residential customers.

- The reviews were focused on four usability components:
  - **Appearance**—how appealing residential customers found the site's overall design
  - **Findability**—whether a feature was found at all and how hard it was for a reviewer to find
  - **Functionality**—how well the feature meets customers' needs, based on our best-practice criteria
  - **Content**—whether the information given on a feature is relevant and easily understandable, plus how many pages the customer had to go through to find it

- Tested 10 features on both desktop and mobile devices:
  - Five (5) features from the **public side of the website** (Home Page, Contact Us, Payment and Billing Options, Outages or Emergencies, and—new in 2019—Energy Efficiency)
  - Five (5) features from the **secure side of the website** (My Account, Make a Payment, Account Preferences, Online Bill Viewing, and My Energy Use).

TPU's Web Experience

MyTPU.org – Public website

- Open access
- Includes Power/Water/Rail sites
- Utility-wide information/education
- Access to Power outage/Water event maps
- Program participation/enrollment
- 200k-300k monthly visits
- 66% mobile, 32% desktop, 2% tablet
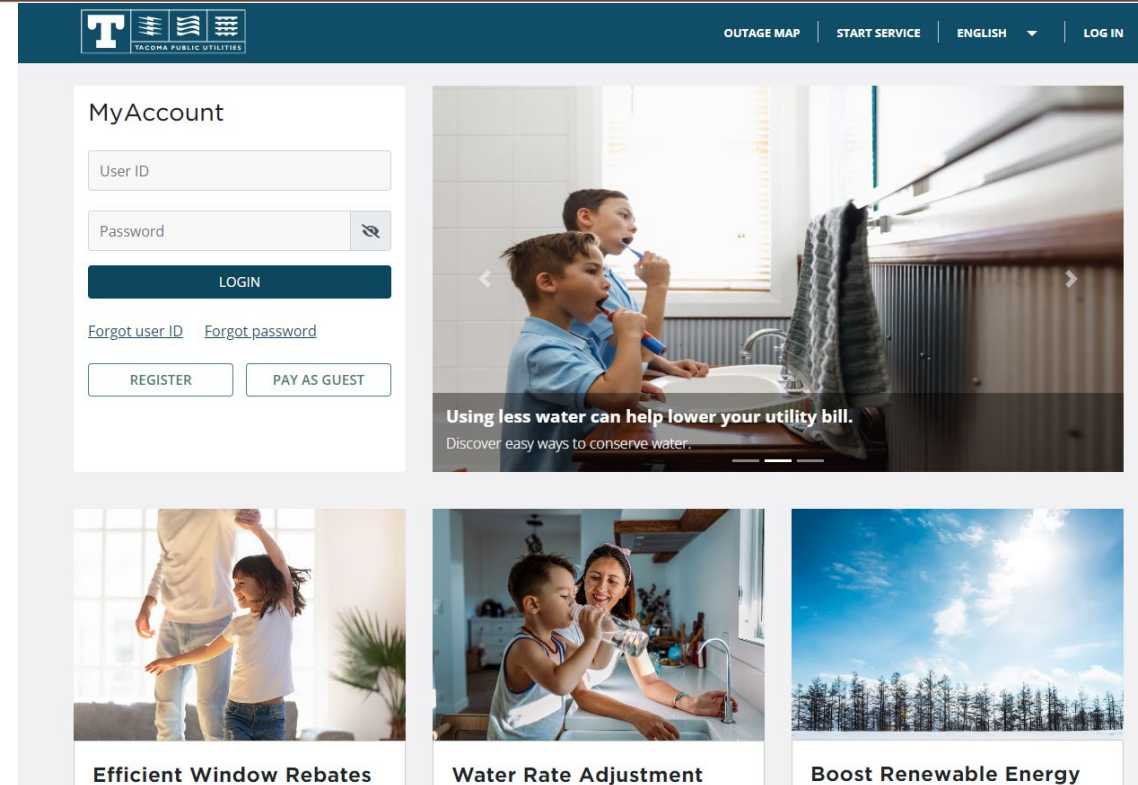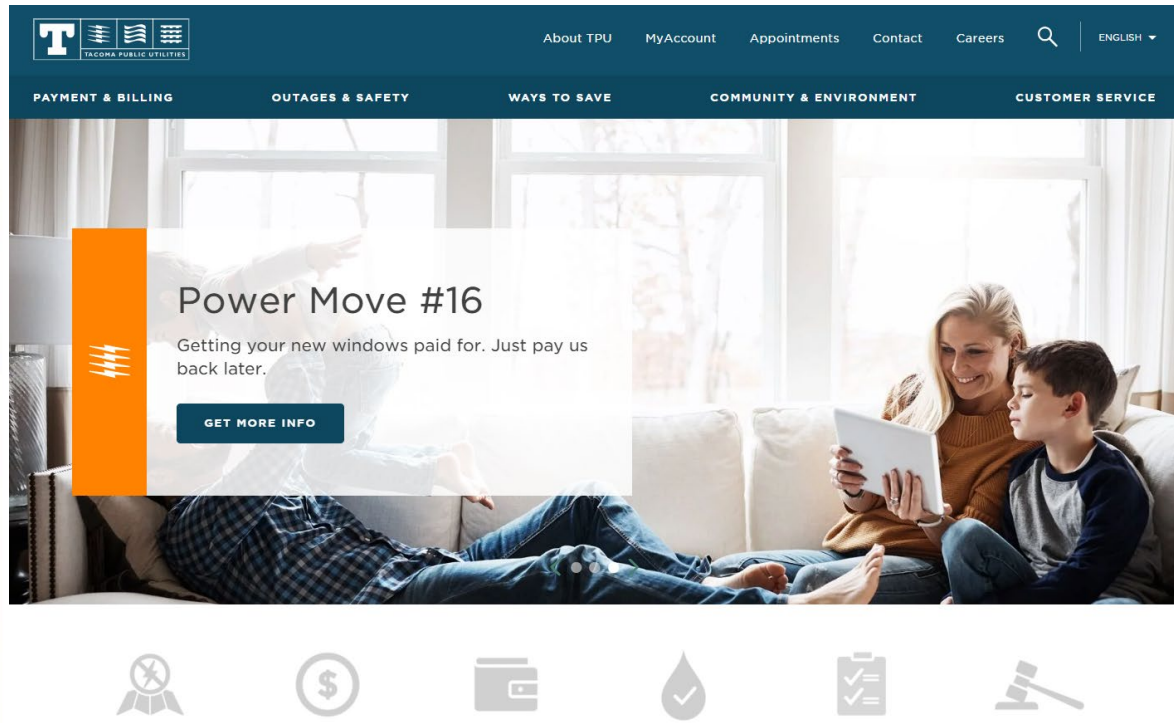
MyAccount – Secure website

- Customer-created accounts
- Payment/billing
- Access to Power outage/Water event maps
- Links to MyTPU.org
- 130k-150k monthly logins
- 57% mobile, 42% desktop, 1% tablet

Historical Scores & Improvements

Year	Note	Rank
2017	Legacy MyTPU.org & legacy MyAccount	74th
2019	Relaunched MyTPU.org with modern design, and overhauled the content and organization (legacy MyAccount)	46th
2021	Continued to refine MyTPU.org content, launched interactive Power Outage map with online/text reporting functionality (legacy MyAccount)	39th
2023	Relaunched MyAccount with modern design, enhanced functionality, featuring data from Advanced Meters	......

2023 Overall Scores

Score

2023 results: **621**

2021 results: **577**

Increased by **44**

Rank

2023 results: **20**

2021 results: **39**

Improved by **19** places

Results for all utility websites assessed

Search: _____

Utility name	2023 score	2021 score	Score change	2023 rank	2021 rank	Rank change
NIPSCO	677	628	49	1	12	-11
SMUD	668	637	31	2	8	-6
Avista Utilities	648	625	23	3	13	-10
Columbia Gas of Ohio	643	632	11	4	9	-5
SDG&E	643	605	38	4	25	-21
SRP	642	639	3	6	7	-1
WPS	638	641	-3	7	5	2
Colorado Springs Utilities	636	617	19	8	19	-11
Eversource	636	614	22	8	20	-12
Southern California Gas Co.	634	624	10	10	16	-6
AEP Ohio	634	623	11	10	17	-7
SaskPower	633	584	49	12	37	-25
Consumers Energy	632	641	-9	13	5	8
Duke Energy	630	625	5	14	13	1
NV Energy	629	557	72	15	52	-37
Duquesne Light Co.	624	596	28	16	29	-13
We Energies	624	564	60	16	50	-34
Pacific Gas and Electric Co.	622	608	14	18	24	-6
PNM	622	532	90	18	62	-44
Tacoma Public Utilities	621	577	44	20	39	-19

Overall Appearance

You ranked

6 of 93

websites reviewed

Distribution of all appearance scores

	Tacoma Public Utilities		Minimum (131)
	Median (149)		Maximum (170)
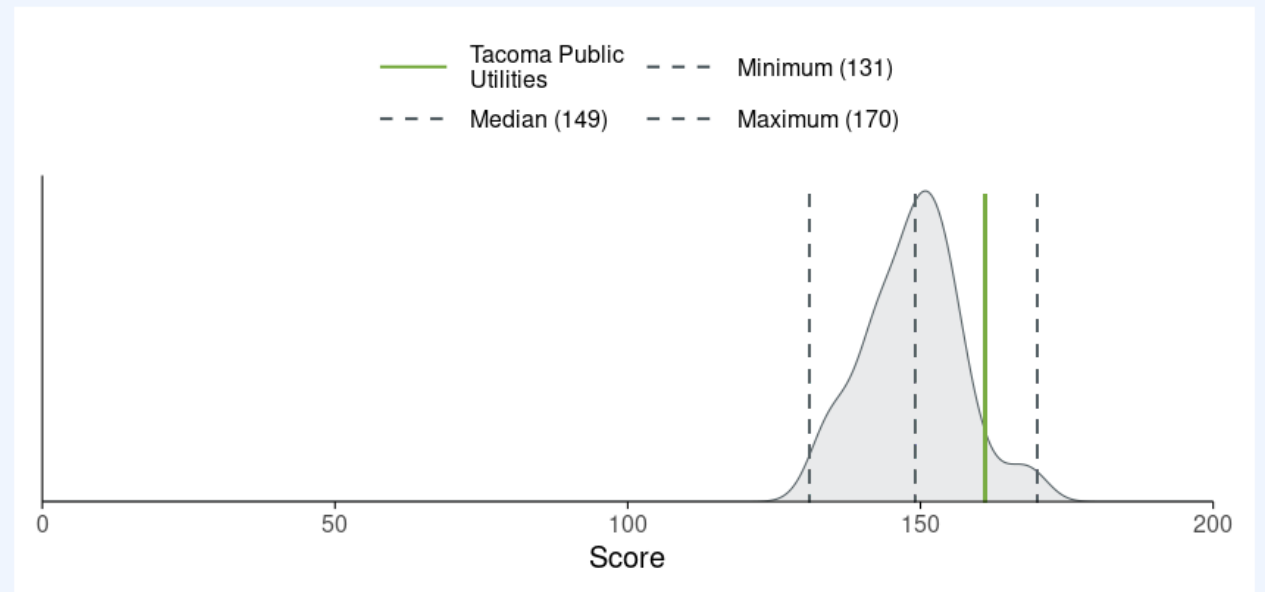
E Source experts used screenshots of up to four features on your website—Home Page, Contact Us, Outages, and MyAccount—to have utility customers review first the desktop versions, then the mobile versions on overall appearance. The customer reviewers were asked to give an overall rating for each set of screenshots on a 5-point scale where 1 means not at all appealing and 5 means extremely appealing.

Energy Efficiency Content

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You ranked

1 of 93
websites reviewed

Average time to find

51 seconds

Industry average: 1 minute 0 seconds

Average number of pages to find

4

Industry average: 5

Success rate

90% Success

10% Fail | 0% Abandon

Content checklist

✓ Displays programs in an easy-to-understand format
Essential, Desktop and mobile

✓ Shows current, not dated, program information
Essential, Desktop and mobile

✓ Lists trade allies
Additive, Desktop and mobile

✓ Includes energy-saving tips
Essential, Desktop and mobile

✓ Lays out rebate level and efficiency requirements clearly, in consumer-friendly language
Additive, Desktop and mobile

✓ States program eligibility clearly
Additive, Desktop and mobile

Power Outages Content

You ranked

1 of 93
websites reviewed

Average time to find

38 seconds

Industry average: 50 seconds

Average number of pages to find

4

Industry average: 5

Success rate

100%

Success

0% Fail | 0% Abandon

✓ Includes a dedicated emergency or outage phone number
Essential, Desktop and mobile

✓ Includes advice on what to do during an outage or gas leak emergency
Essential, Desktop and mobile

✓ Includes an estimated time of restoration
Essential, Desktop and mobile

✓ Includes an outage map
Essential, Desktop and mobile

✓ Includes number of customers affected
Essential, Desktop and mobile

✓ Includes outage status information
Essential, Desktop and mobile

✓ Includes the date or time of the last update
Essential, Desktop and mobile

✓ Includes the reason for or cause of the outage
Essential, Desktop and mobile

Power Outages Functionality

You ranked

7 of 93

websites reviewed

Functionality checklist

✓ Allows users to report an outage online without logging in

Essential, Desktop and mobile

✓ Mobile formatting (Responsive or Mobile Site)

Essential, Mobile

✗ Gives users ways to receive outage update alerts without logging in (this can include alerts sent by text, email, or phone, or through an app)

Additive, Desktop and mobile

✓ Lets users check the status of their outage online without logging in

Essential, Desktop and mobile

✓ Allows users to report an outage via text message

Additive, Desktop and mobile

✓ Provides links to social media sites where users can get outage updates

Additive, Desktop and mobile

Billing & Payment Options

You ranked

8 of 93

websites reviewed

✓ Allows one-time payment from a bank account
Essential, Desktop and mobile

✓ Allows one-time payment online via a credit or debit card
Essential, Desktop and mobile

✓ Allows users the option to receive their bill via email or online instead of paper bills
Essential, Desktop and mobile

✓ Allows users to set up recurring digital payments from a checking account
Essential, Desktop and mobile

✓ Mobile formatting (Responsive or Mobile Site)
Essential, Mobile

✗ Allows the option to pay by PayPal, Venmo, and/or Amazon Pay
Additive, Desktop and mobile

✗ Allows the option to pay by mobile wallet (Apple wallet or Google Pay)
Additive, Desktop and mobile

✗ Allows the option to pay by text
Additive, Desktop and mobile

✓ Allows users to choose their own payment date for monthly bills
Additive, Desktop and mobile

✓ Allows users to set up recurring payments with a credit or debit card
Additive, Desktop and mobile

Make a Payment Functionality

You ranked

1 of 93

websites reviewed

Functionality checklist

✓ Allows users to make a payment from their checking account
Essential, Desktop and mobile

✓ Allows users to make a payment with their credit card
Essential, Desktop and mobile

✓ Allows users to make a payment with their debit card
Essential, Desktop and mobile

✓ Mobile formatting (Responsive or Mobile Site)
Essential, Mobile

✓ Allows users to set up payment through their bank
Additive, Desktop and mobile

Account Preferences

- **Findability**
- **Content**

You ranked

8 of 93

websites reviewed

You ranked

10 of 93

websites reviewed

✘ Includes estimated bill amount notification option
✘ Includes midcycle usage alert option
✘ Includes high-energy-usage threshold notification option
✘ Includes notification of payment arrangement options
✘ Includes option to receive information on how to decrease energy usage
✘ Includes service order alert option
✘ Includes demand-response event notification option

Recommendations

Include additional Contact channels

We recommend adding features such as **call wait times**, an **online chat** option, and an option for users to **request calls from your utility**. These improve the customer experience and offer more communication channels between the customer and the utility. We also recommend listing social media links as an additional contact channel.

Expand notification options

We recommend expanding your billing and energy usage notification offerings. This gives customers choice, control, and they see you as a partner in their decisions.

Add more Energy Usage details and comparison tools

We recommend expanding your energy usage and comparison offerings. It's helpful for customers to have multiple views of their energy use and compare that to similar homes in the neighborhood. These tools help your customers create a holistic understanding of their energy consumption.

Increase Online Bill Viewing functionality

Enhancing your bill viewing experience to be mobile responsive can help customers access their billing information efficiently. Viewing an HTML bill provides a more natural viewing experience than a PDF bill, and keeping the bill shorter ensures the bill is clear and easy to understand.

Key Operational Results

- **Number of Payments**
  - +27% first year compared to the year prior
- **AutoPay Enrollments**
  - +57% first year compared to the year prior
- **Percentage of Accounts with Paperless Billing**
  - March 2022 – 18.2%
  - Dec 31, 2023 – 42.76%
- **Savings from Paperless Billing Conversion**
  - $383,958 so far
- **Donations**
  - August 2019 – March 2020: 742 donations, equaling $5,487
  - August 2022 – March 2023: 14,557 donations, equaling $82,097
  - April 2023 – February 2024: 11,961 donations, equaling $45,523

Digital Communications Strategies

- **Aligning priority messages across owned digital channels**
  - Synergy between websites, eNewsletters, social media
  - Feature mix of organizational priorities/themes and tactical customer calls to action

- **Relationship between mailed bill packet and digital channels**
  - Bill insert topics mirrored on MyAccount
  - Shifting as we move to monthly billing and drive to AMI data

- **Ongoing conversations around a true "paperless" experience**
  - How does the increase in paperless adoption influence TPU's long-term strategy for communications?

What's Next

- **2024**
    - Choose Your Own Due Date
    - High usage alerts
    - Restore same-day, online bank account payments
    - Additional payment options
        - Apple Pay
        - Google Pay
        - Venmo
        - PayPal
        - Text to Pay
    - Water high flow threshold, based on customer input
    - Usage graph navigation improvements
    - Helping Environmental Services to get onto MyAccount
- **25/26 PBC**
    - Ability to make loan payments online within the portal & guest pay
    - COT ADA compliance – AA to AAA
    - Additional notification templates
    - Back-end upgrades
    - Mailing address validation tool

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