How Southern California Edison resolves 1 in 6 social customer issues using Sprout Social chatbots

[Southern California Edison](#) (SCE) is one of the largest electric utility companies in the U.S., providing power to 15 million people every day.

Covering 180 incorporated cities, 15 counties, 5,000 large businesses and 280,000 small businesses across 50,000 square miles, it's safe to say customer service is a top priority.

That's why the company invests in modern consumers' communication channel of choice: social media.

Using Sprout Social's **Bot Builder**, SCE is able to expand its service capabilities and deliver exceptional customer experience in addition to safe, reliable and affordable electricity.

Automating assistance

According to Carollyn Montales, an Online Community Management Senior Specialist at SCE, social media presents an opportunity to create connection.

"We want our social channels to be a platform where we can build relationships with our customers," Montales said. "A place where we can connect with them on a one-on-one basis and let them know about all the cool stuff Edison is working on to help create a clean energy future."

And while SCE is dedicated to providing customers with a human touch, it also realized automated conversational workflows, or **chatbots**, could complement its existing customer service strategy.

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Online Community Management Senior Specialist, SCE

"Chatbots are an additional resource that help us fill in some of the gaps," Montales said. "Our team isn't necessarily monitoring social media 24/7. If people need to reach out to us overnight, chatbots allow us to provide customers an immediate response."

This is important when you consider that social is the second-most popular channel for **addressing customer service issues** overall, as well as the top choice among Millennials. In a world where nearly half of people have used social to call out or complain about a business, providing mediocre customer experiences isn't an option.

Over the past few years, SCE recognized an increase in customer service inquiries on social and decided to implement Sprout's Bot Builder.

Building bots

The **chatbot creation process** is intuitive and easy to navigate.

The company was able to get the bot up and running within a few weeks and designed it in a way that catered to its customers' needs.

"We wanted it to make sense for our customers and to make it easy for them to find answers to some of the common issues that they reach out to us about," Montales said. "We built out decision trees for the bots based on our previous reports regarding the most popular types of social messages we receive, such as outages or billing inquiries. We're able to collect that information using Sprout's **tagging capabilities**."

In addition to its regular customer service bot, which is active during normal conditions, SCE also created several other bots that are activated during certain situations, including a:

- "Crisis" bot that is activated during events such as storms or heat waves, which informs customers that SCE is experiencing high volumes and provides links to updates.

- "Limited Availability" bot that is activated when the company is experiencing high volumes or limited resources and is unable to respond within its normal timeframe.

Customers who initiate conversations via Facebook Private Message or Twitter Direct Message are greeted by a pre-programmed chatbot designed to help resolve their issues.

Sprout's Conversation Map tool enables users to assign chatbots to specific social profiles and set up Welcome Greetings, Quick Replies and Auto-responses. Users can visualize multi-level workflows to preview what customers will experience, as well as add imagery and CTA buttons that link users to external web pages.

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Optimizing outcomes

SCE evaluates its chatbots by calculating how many customers who reach out on social are able to resolve their issues solely through a bot.

"We have robust self-service tools that customers can use to help answer common questions," Montales said. "It's often just a matter of directing them to the right place, and chatbots can do that."

In the first quarter of 2018, of the more than 1,500 customers who interacted with a chatbot, 17%, or approximately 1 in 6, were able to resolve their issues without human assistance.

SCE's chatbots also help reduce turnaround time for issues that require agent assistance.

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SCE has been using chatbots for less than a year, and plans to continue refining their design to maximize results.

With Sprout Social chatbots, the company will continue to deliver outstanding customer experiences by streamlining social customer service, filling in gaps during off hours and providing immediate assistance during high-volume conditions.