

HOW TO DEAL WITH DERs

We started talking about prosumers and transactive energy a decade ago when smart metering technology came on the scene, but with DERs, utility customers now wield unprecedented influence on grid behavior. They are literally more empowered today — with generation capacity behind the meter. They expect to control their personal choices, while also demanding system reliability and pricing predictability. Utilities are thus faced with balancing individual needs with the needs of the larger system. In this uncharted terrain, managing the impact of high DER penetration will require outside-the-box thinking. Here are some key insights from our experience that we don't want you to miss.

- 1 Understand your customers' expectations.** Find out how technological expectations are being set for customers and who is setting them. They will expect a lot in terms of customer service, equipment performance, and technology integration. The aim is to meet and exceed customer needs, so shifting to service-based models will be key.
- 2 Get better data now.** Expand pilots to enhance your understanding of how customers interact with technology to ensure you'll design your DER integration well. For instance, look at the user experience during the installation process. Identifying and overcoming barriers to interconnection will set the tone for your new relationship with the customer.
- 3 Break down your silos.** It takes the whole village to deliver a good, end-to-end, customer-centric experience. Don't just house DERs in your energy efficiency departments, empower cross-functional, strategic teams to develop tactics for better engagement and delivery.
- 4 Be flexible.** DER technology is rapidly evolving, don't lock yourself into aggregation solutions that can't keep up.
- 5 Engage your regulators.** Many commissions lack time, resources, and expertise to investigate and instigate the regulatory changes needed to support DERs, so come with a plan and be open to figuring it out together. ■

