

ILLUME



GEORGIA POWER

MULTICULTURAL SMB OWNER RESEARCH

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January 2020

Hello!

IT'S NICE TO MEET YOU

AGENDA

INTRODUCTION AND RESEARCH APPROACH

OVERALL FINDINGS AND INSIGHTS

COMMUNITY-SPECIFIC FINDINGS

WRAP UP

Meet Our Team



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Research Director



KATHY WARREN
Account Manager

Meet Our Team



SILVIA VAN RIPER

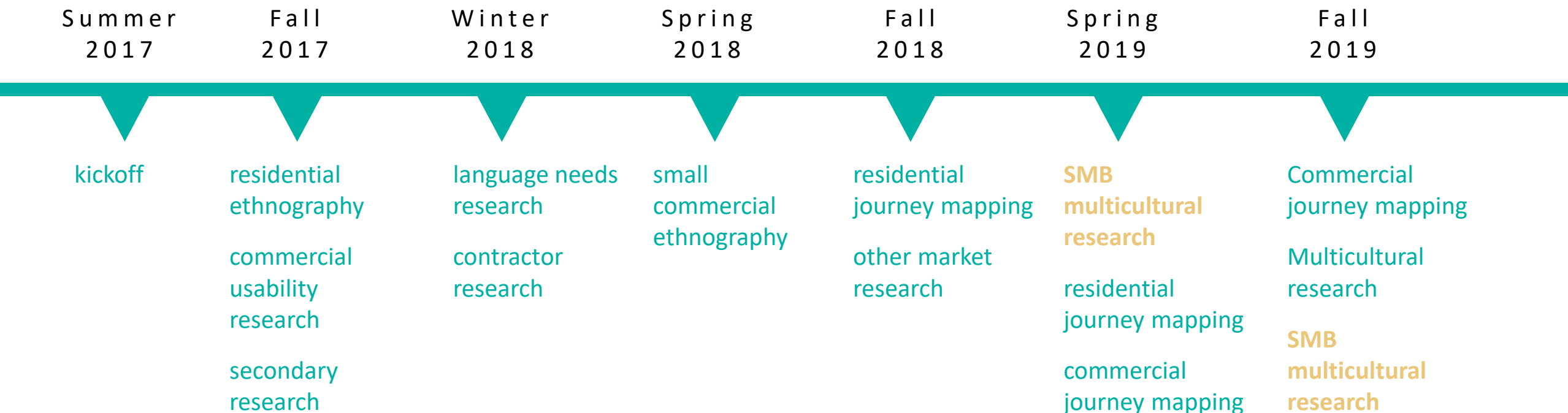
Analyst



ALLISON T. MUSVOSVI

Analyst

ILLUME Research History





INTRODUCTION



Research Objectives

Culture, community, language barriers, and other demographic characteristics can impact how customers and businesses interact with their utility, and in turn, the way they engage with the services and programs provided to them.

The Small and Mid-Sized Business (SMB) Multicultural Research aims to assess the specific needs and current business climate for business owners of diverse minority racial and ethnic backgrounds in Georgia. This research was designed to gather information that can inform Georgia Power's outreach to and engagement of minority-owned small and mid-sized businesses.

Goals

Explore barriers to
program participation
within small and
mid-sized businesses

Identify unique engagement
and messaging strategies

Understand what, why, and
how business owners think
about energy efficiency



What we did Who we talked to



DECEMBER
2018

Census Memo to understand small business owner demographics in Georgia



JUNE
2019

4 interviews with ERG leads at Georgia Power



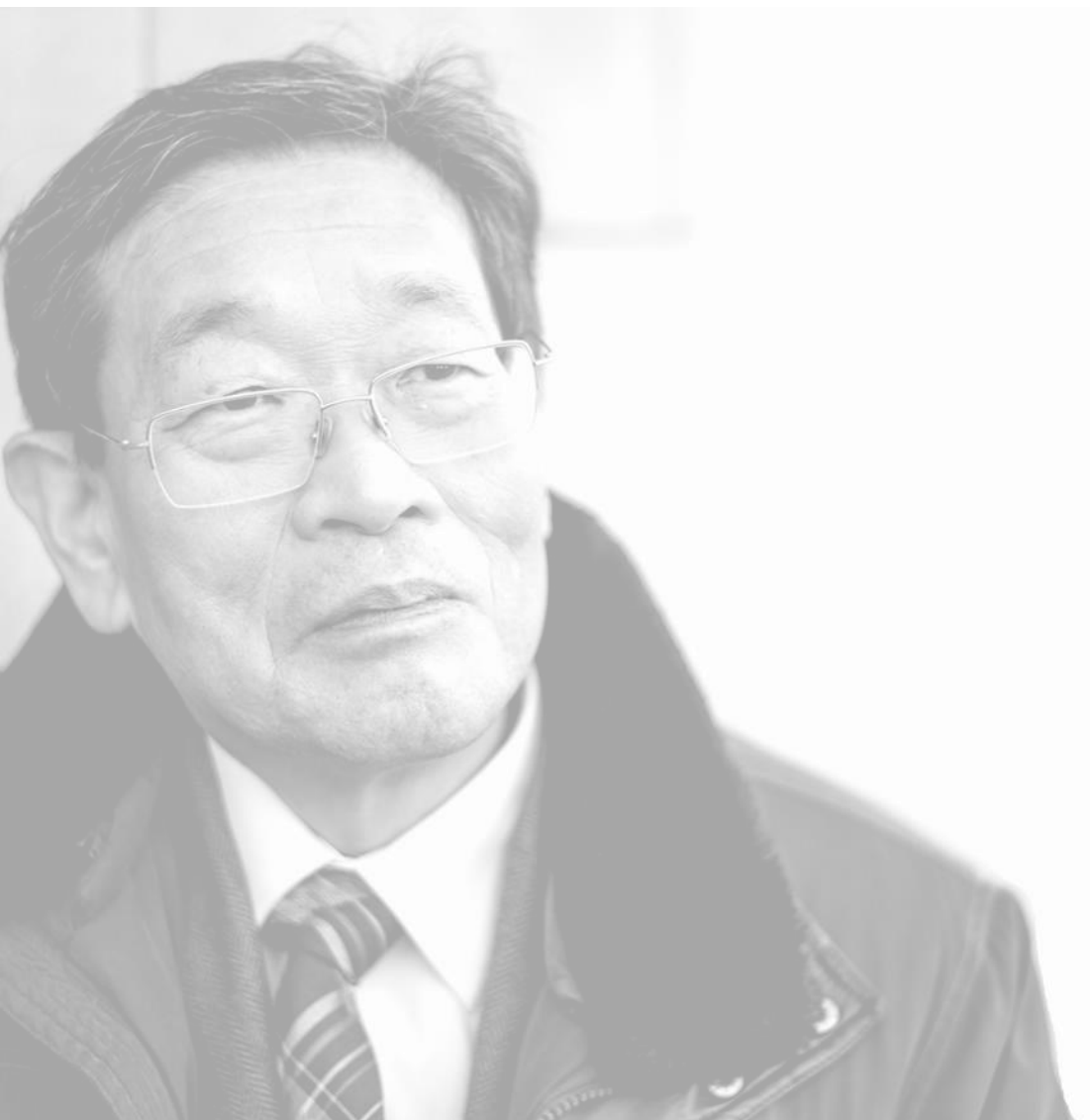
JULY/AUGUST
2019

5 Community organization interviews with staff at organizations serving small businesses within each cultural community



OCTOBER
2019

15 in-person and 4 phone interviews with small business owners in the African American, Latinx, Asian Indian, and Vietnamese American communities in the Atlanta Metro region.



“People my age (Vietnamese Americans), we opened small businesses, that’s what we did – just tradition. That’s what my generation did.

*Not my kids though – they are getting a good education and will be a professional or work for a big company. That’s what they want. **When you have small business, you are always working.** That’s why they do not want to get into small business.”*

—Duy

Overall Findings and Insights

A black and white photograph of a woman with her hair in a ponytail, wearing safety glasses and work gloves. She is focused on using a power tool, possibly a sander or grinder, on a piece of wood resting on a workbench. The background is plain white.

Culture

What do we mean by culture?

“Culture” is a taken-for-granted set of practices, values, attitudes, and habits that a community shares.

How does this relate to small and mid-sized businesses in metro Atlanta?

In this research, we explored how small and mid-sized business owners felt (or didn't feel) their ethnic culture impacted their business approach and operations.

Business Culture

We found that most business owners identified their business approach in terms of a broader **culture of business** in America or in Atlanta.

Narratives of American identity highlight the multiplicity of cultures that make up American culture.

Not all business owners we spoke with identified strongly with a particular cultural group, instead highlighting that they are an American business.

"We speak English all day, and all my customers speak English. So I consider my business community to be American, not Vietnamese."

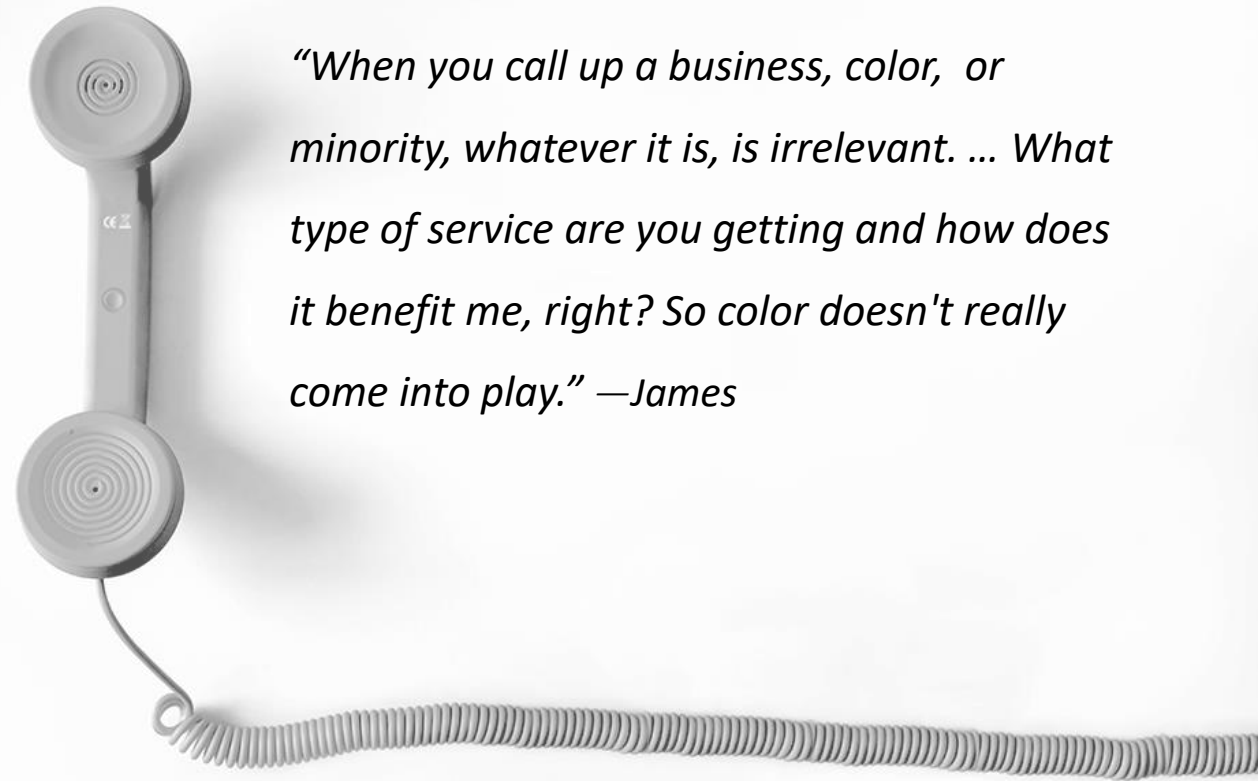
– Minh



Race is both very real and very risky

Many of the business owners we spoke with in these conversations rejected or expressed **discomfort with engagement strategies that explicitly hinged on race in a superficial or tokenizing way.**

Race was both seen as that which may define a person's experience, but also which can limit a person's experience – especially given the historical racial inequalities in the American South.



“When you call up a business, color, or minority, whatever it is, is irrelevant. ... What type of service are you getting and how does it benefit me, right? So color doesn't really come into play.” —James

“A good ad is a good ad. I don't need to see somebody who looks like me just to get me to buy some bathroom tissue or something like that. If it works, it works.”

—Nikhil

African American is American culture

Black and African American business owners emphasized that African American culture is American culture.

To distinguish African American culture was to otherize or isolate African Americans in an exclusionary and potentially offensive way.



It's about community not culture



"I want to keep money in the community, to have dollars circulate within the Black community before they circulate out"
—Keisha

While a discussion of culture did not resonate with these business owners, discussions of community did.

Many business owners talked about how they worked to **give back to their community** or wanted to support other businesses within their community.

"We should be like other communities and circulate our own dollars amongst our own communities, five, six, seven times before we let one dollar out, and we could make a huge difference in our own economic position.... We have to try because if I can't support another African American business, surely who else is going to do it? We have to learn how to support each other" —Gabrielle

Generational culture

Several participants noted that age and generation had large impacts on the business approach and orientation, where older generations may have prioritized working within their cultural community in a way that younger generations did not.

“Because the way any of us interact and bring different things as far as culture, experience, how we operate, how we work in the world, and deal with other people, it's really based on generations. It's a generational thing because my generation is not the same as my mom's generation. How she interacts with people is different from how I do.”

—Gabrielle, African American

“My dad always complained about his way of doing business, and how I do my way of doing business, because he sees the margins, “Look, you guys aren't making anything now!” And to be honest with you, the store pretty much went out of business, I mean, there was no more walk-in traffic, and he couldn't use a computer. So I was like, “There's no other choice, you have to put your stuff online. There's no other choice”. So you have to accept that, or you're pretty much gone.” —Nikhil, Indian American

Engagement Considerations



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:

How might Georgia Power

- Increase visibility of Georgia Power's community presence?
- Foster and enhance partnerships with chambers of commerce?
- Provide more consistent support to small and mid-sized businesses?

Engagement Considerations



COMMUNICATION AND MESSAGING:

How might Georgia Power

- Provide more customized messaging (by sector)?
- Leverage the online portal, email, and text messages to communicate with account holders?

SUPPORT NEW ACCOUNTS:

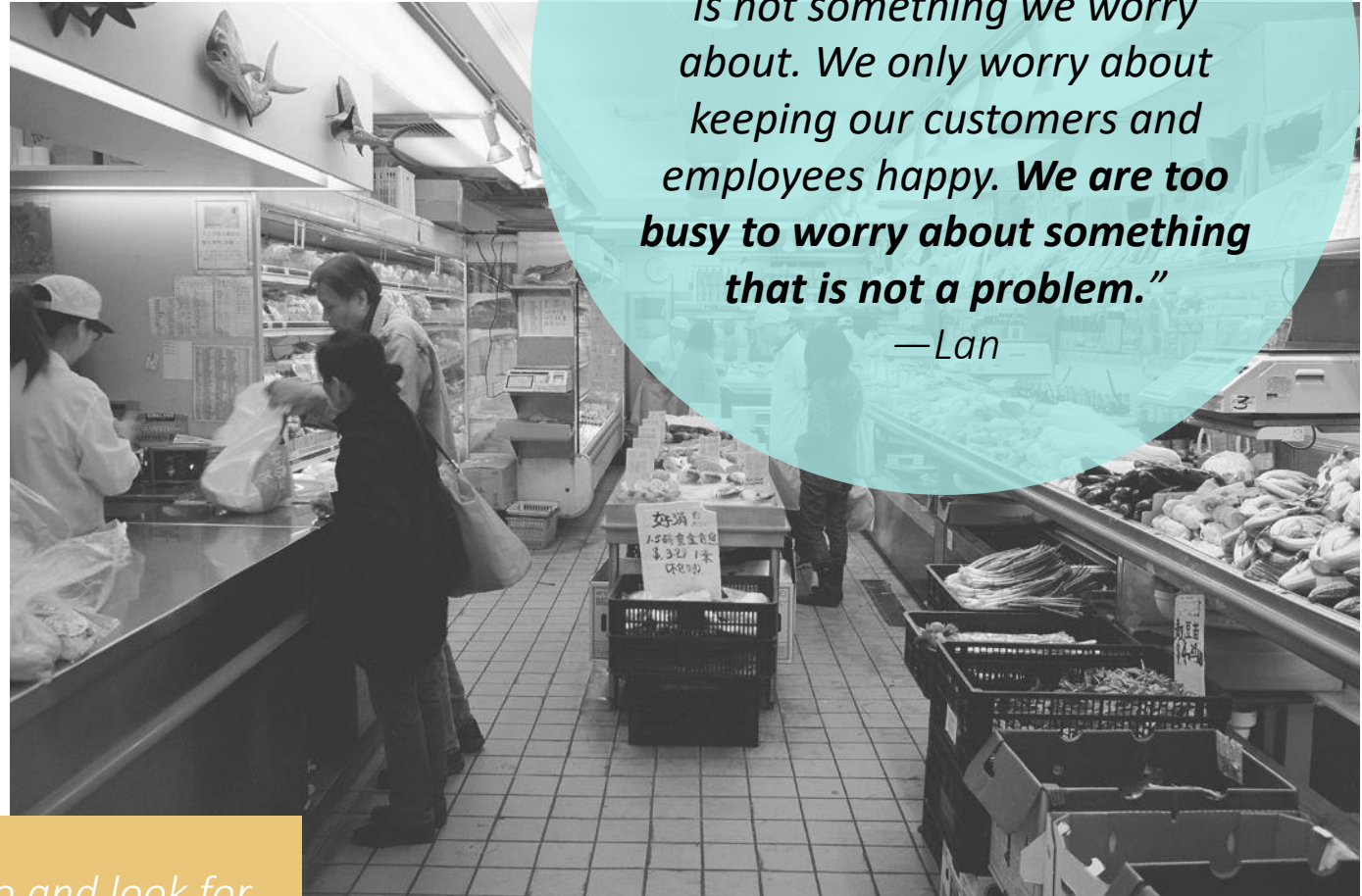
How might Georgia Power:

- Help new business customers as they navigate the business landscape?

Staying afloat

Small business owners emphasized the many demands and challenges they face just to stay afloat. They were uniformly resource- and time-constrained, and juggling multiple concerns.

Paying their power bill was not the greatest business concern they faced, as a result, the individuals we spoke with did not seek out energy efficiency programs or other ways to lower their bill.



*“The owner does not have concerns about these bills. This is not something we worry about. We only worry about keeping our customers and employees happy. **We are too busy to worry about something that is not a problem.**”*

—Lan

“We're focused on managing our business. Having to go and look for contractors is something I don't want to get involved with, you know? Especially changing out lighting.” —Nikhil

Money is
Green

It's about
dollars and
cents

Business Approaches

It's about
keeping money
in the
community

It's about
dollars NOT
cents

It's about
giving back

Engagement Considerations



Small business owners are resource and time constrained and appreciate communications that are:

- Clear and concise
- Just-in-time (immediately relevant)
- Immediately actionable (ROI clearly demonstrated)

How might Georgia Power create a streamlined experience for small business customers?

How might Georgia Power identify opportunities to support existing customers and welcome new customers?

Trust vs Reliability

The business owners we spoke with described their business relationships with their vendors and other trusted partners.

Some characteristics we heard that were valued across communities included:

- Transparency
- Reciprocity
- Relationships

“So if they trust me, I've got to trust them. You have to have that relationship. ... And with my Ecolab, the chemical vendor for my properties, for the sheets and towels and things, I've got one guy. That helps, because they know what I need. They know what I do. They know what I'm looking for. That one rep can take care of it for me?” —Ishaan

“Now, if you want to talk about real vendors, my vendors are our mortgage people who come in and provide my agents with breakfast and give them mortgage updates, and support them at their open houses and do things that you can see and that are tangible who are really relationship building.... People want to talk to people when they got problems. People buy people before they buy products and services” —Gabrielle

Networking Styles

The business owners we spoke with most commonly rely on informal networks for information, from either their own culture or those who share the same industry or business needs.



▶▶ *“Because this guy came in, and talked to us, and he was a really nice guy, so, he won the bid” —Javier*

Engagement Considerations



How might Georgia Power

- Ensure communications provide adequate information to help owners make decisions with confidence?
- Create feelings of reciprocity, for instance through mutual risk, obligation, and follow-through?
- Leverage personal relationships with owners?

Being frugal is a value

In several interviews, we heard an “If it’s not broken, don’t fix it” approach to EE upgrades and improvements.

In communities where unnecessary consumption is viewed as waste, upgrading working equipment for potential savings may contradict a deeply-held value of conservation.

For many business owners, the perspective that if equipment is working well, there is no need to change it. If it is causing an inconvenience, they just put up with it.

Investment in EE upgrades or improvements was seen as a distraction from core business focus.

“If we don’t have something broken, we keep the same usually. We are too busy to worry about what we do not have to worry about.”

—Lan

“Because it costs a lot to keep this place going. I've got to be very honest with you. I look at my net profit and I'm wondering ... My net profit, it's not that large.”

—James





“They say they're Energy Star, energy efficient. I'm sure they all are. GE makes them. LG makes them. So many companies make them, so I really don't pay attention. I know the voltage is pretty much the same. Everything's the same, so I think they're all pretty consistent, but I honestly don't pay attention to that. We just know we need them, and we'll buy them. ”

—Ishaan

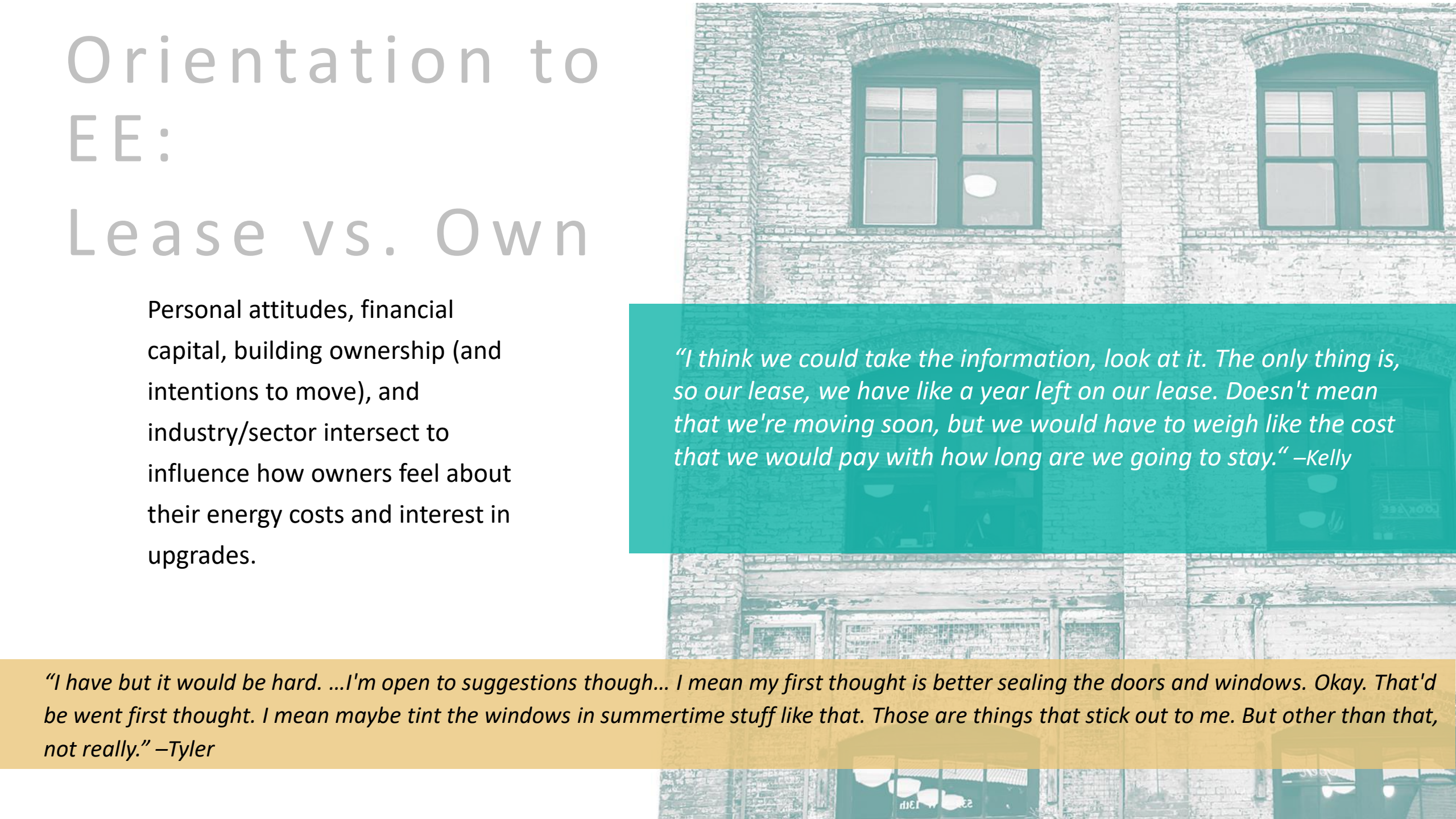
New = Efficient

We heard from several business owners that they did not specifically look for efficient equipment when they had to make a replacement because they assumed that all new equipment was efficient, or more efficient than their older equipment.

When changing equipment, some business owners may use a heuristics around newer equipment being necessarily efficient. Lack of time and expertise prevents them from more thoroughly investigating different types of products/equipment.

Orientation to EE: Lease vs. Own

Personal attitudes, financial capital, building ownership (and intentions to move), and industry/sector intersect to influence how owners feel about their energy costs and interest in upgrades.

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“I think we could take the information, look at it. The only thing is, so our lease, we have like a year left on our lease. Doesn't mean that we're moving soon, but we would have to weigh like the cost that we would pay with how long are we going to stay.” –Kelly

“I have but it would be hard. ...I'm open to suggestions though... I mean my first thought is better sealing the doors and windows. Okay. That'd be went first thought. I mean maybe tint the windows in summertime stuff like that. Those are things that stick out to me. But other than that, not really.” –Tyler

Engagement Considerations



How might Georgia Power communicate around energy efficiency in ways that align with customer values of conservation?

- Where conservation is understood as more than efficiency, owners may be critical of programs that emphasize or promote consumption

How can messaging around energy efficiency programs highlight non-energy benefits to the business—and their customers—as well as financial benefits?

Georgia Power Findings

Power is power

Many business owners we spoke with expressed their expectation that Georgia Power serves people equitably.

Several business owners pointed out that with no choice of vendors or possibility of opting out of electric service, Georgia Power was their only option. In general, Georgia Power was seen as a neutral service provider.

Perceptions of Georgia Power also included experiences of power outages.

Business owners were generally not aware of EE programs but most showed interest in them

“They provide a service. I don't think they go beyond that. They just provide a service. I don't get warm and fuzzy with them. I think all public utilities are in that sort of mode. Nobody stops by and say “Hi.” You know what I'm saying?”

—Dennis

“I think number one priority is ... giving people a service. Number two I think that they basically, it doesn't matter to them what color you are. It's just about the end game, and that's the dollar”

—Brenda

“I know in certain areas you have a different power source, but Georgia Power's in a monopoly, so there is not much you can do.”

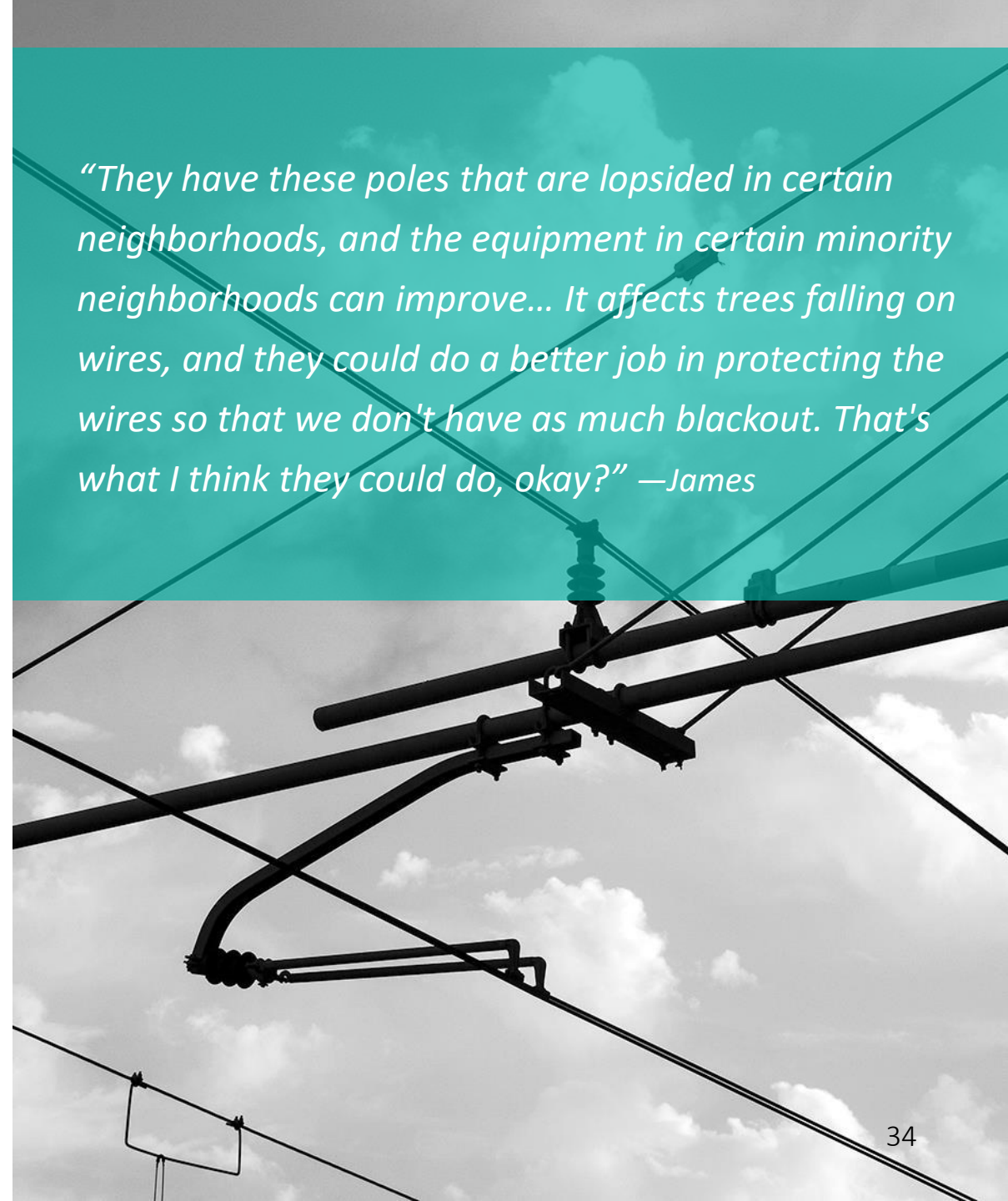
—James

Does power have a color?

Yes and No —

Some business owners expressed a sentiment that Georgia Power may not be truly equitable – for instance, that the infrastructure may not be the same across the territory, leading to more outages in some areas than others.

“They have these poles that are lopsided in certain neighborhoods, and the equipment in certain minority neighborhoods can improve... It affects trees falling on wires, and they could do a better job in protecting the wires so that we don't have as much blackout. That's what I think they could do, okay?” —James

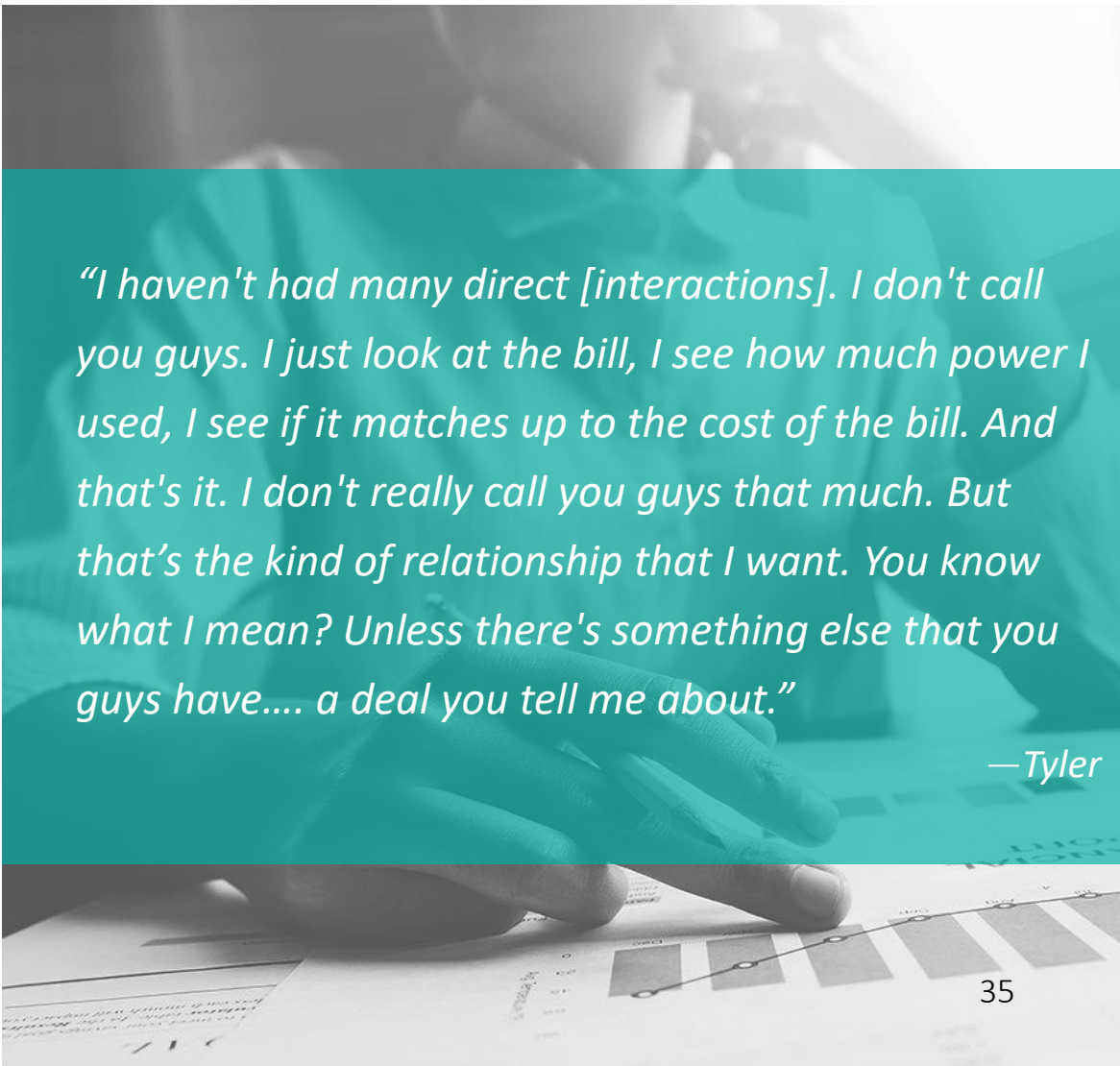


It's a transaction

Most business owners we spoke with considered Georgia Power to be consistent and reliable, but described interactions with Georgia Power as transactional, consisting mostly of bill payment or outage alerts.

The primary touch points for business owners were paying their bill or reminders of payment deadlines.

"I don't have a lot of interaction with them. They send the bill every month and I pay it"
—Imani

A photograph of a person's hand pointing at a bar chart on a document. The image is partially obscured by a teal overlay containing text.

"I haven't had many direct [interactions]. I don't call you guys. I just look at the bill, I see how much power I used, I see if it matches up to the cost of the bill. And that's it. I don't really call you guys that much. But that's the kind of relationship that I want. You know what I mean? Unless there's something else that you guys have.... a deal you tell me about."

—Tyler

The Gift

Anthropologist Marcel Mauss wrote about several indigenous cultures with trading systems based on gift exchange. In these communities, social relations between tribes were instantiated through gift-giving, with the obligation to reciprocate.

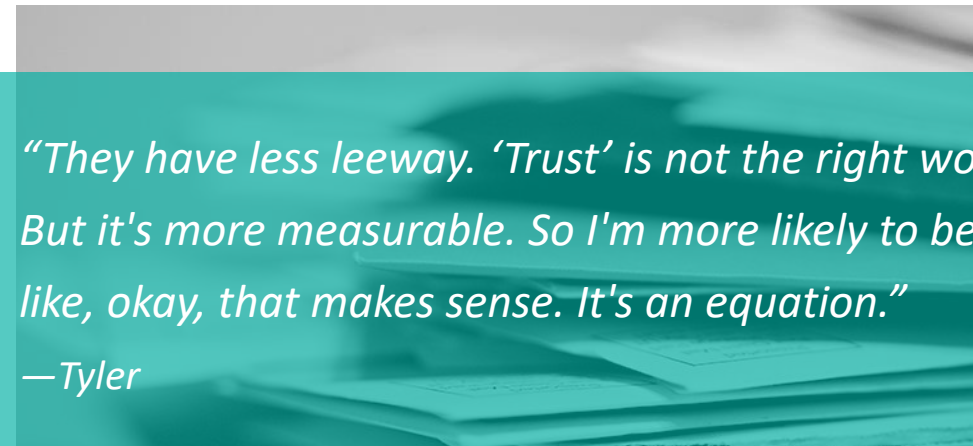
The businesses we spoke with described their trusted vendors as those businesses with whom they had this kind of reciprocity.

*“Honestly, we have astronomical bills. We have old units, so there're times where our bills are maybe \$1500 or \$2000 a month. If I call [Georgia Power] and say, “Hey, this really seems wrong because my neighbor has a bill that's half of that....” He has a different unit, I understand there's different efficiencies there, but they're like “Yeah, we'll come out there and check it, but it's \$100 to come out there and check it.” So **whether something's wrong or not, it's going to cost you \$100.** And I think typically **it should be some courtesy.** We've never asked you guys to come out, ever, and clearly it seems that there may be something wrong with the usage amount, but honestly we can't really fight that. Because even when we do call, they have good analytics, **there's nothing I can really, openly refute.** It's just something we have to pay, you need your lights on. There's no other choice that I have there.” —Nikhil*

Trust is reciprocal

Several business said that Georgia Power was “reliable,” but they did not always feel comfortable using the word “trust” to describe that relationship. “Trust” for these individuals implied reciprocity and a relationship.

Some business owners explained their preference to do business with trusted vendors, including those who shared their community values or who took the time to get to know them personally.



“They have less leeway. ‘Trust’ is not the right word. But it's more measurable. So I'm more likely to be like, okay, that makes sense. It's an equation.”

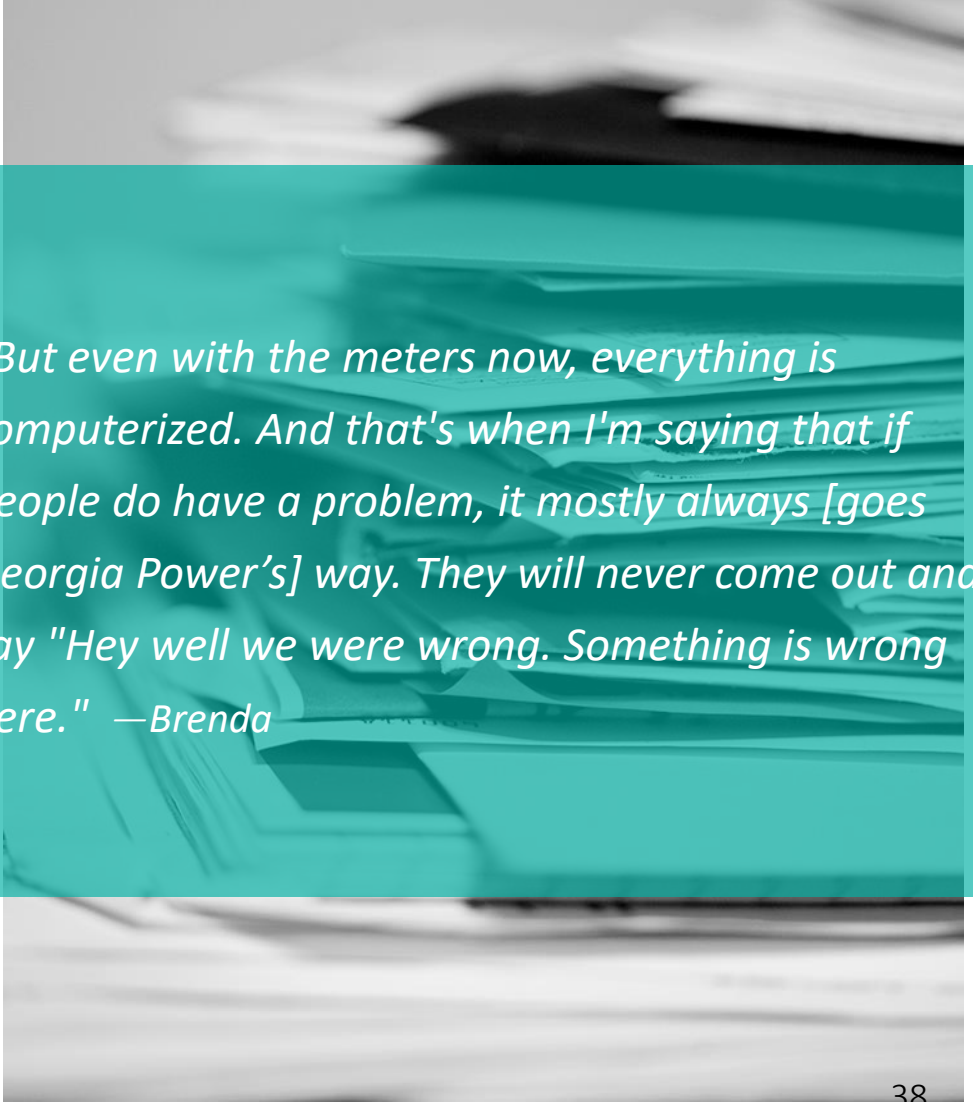
—Tyler



“Even though sometimes it's been two months when I didn't pay the electric bill, I was never left without power” —Maria

A trusted source?

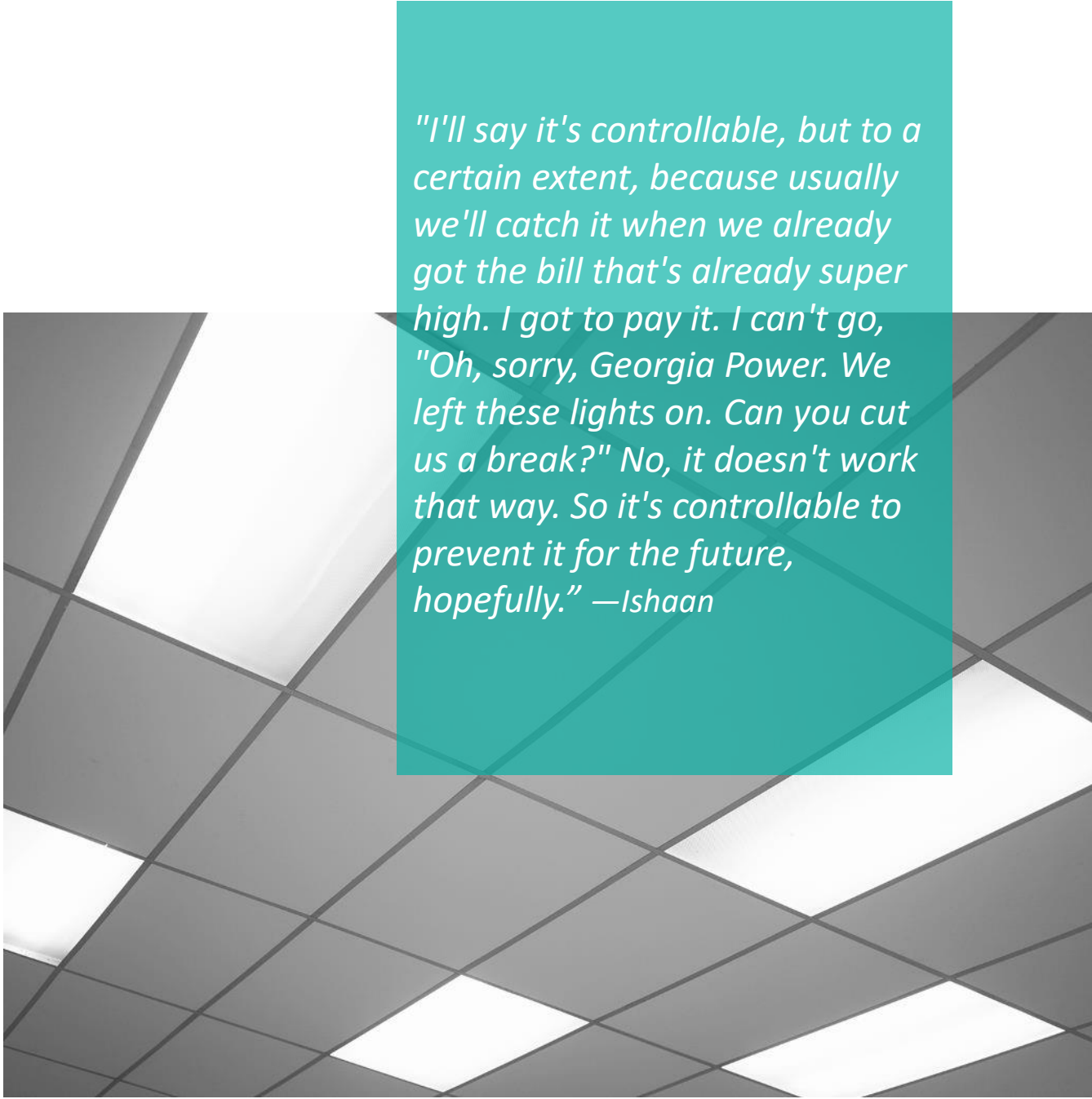
Given this attitude toward Georgia Power, when business owners need to make a replacement or have a question about energy usage in their facility, Georgia Power might not be the first place they turn.



"But even with the meters now, everything is computerized. And that's when I'm saying that if people do have a problem, it mostly always [goes Georgia Power's] way. They will never come out and say "Hey well we were wrong. Something is wrong here." —Brenda

Feedback Loop

One business owner pointed out that although he felt like he could impact his expenditures on electricity, he could only do so retroactively. Even though he used software to manage his expenses, it was frequently after he had received a high bill that he was able to address the issue.



"I'll say it's controllable, but to a certain extent, because usually we'll catch it when we already got the bill that's already super high. I got to pay it. I can't go, 'Oh, sorry, Georgia Power. We left these lights on. Can you cut us a break?' No, it doesn't work that way. So it's controllable to prevent it for the future, hopefully." —Ishaan

Conversation Igniter



What kind of relationship does Georgia Power (EE team)
want to have with customers?

Engagement Considerations



How might Georgia Power:

- Enhance customer interactions outside of bill payment?
- Implement rewards or loyalty programs to build feeling of trust and reciprocity?
- Support new businesses in their first five years?
- Provide timely information to support customers in the process of thinking about upgrades and improvements?
- Leverage current Georgia Power contacts and touchpoints to provide information about energy efficiency?

Potential interactions

What's the best way for Georgia Power to communicate with you?

"Just pay the bill [through online business portal] and keep it going.... Text messages. Everybody's on their phone 24/7, so text messages with a link to click on to look at whatever it is that's going on. Email and text."

—Gabrielle

"When I pay my bill, if they had a splash up there on the screen when I logged in and say, "Dennis. You at ... Bakery need to schedule a visit from a rep. ...Just make me aware through a text, through an email, in my bill.. They do it ...in your residentialWhy not do that for commercial customers as well?"

—Dennis

"in the old days, it's like an account exec...So I think that it'd be nice to have a Georgia Power person assigned when you are new business, kind of walk you through your first year, check on you on a quarterly basis, look at your bills. Just somebody to check in with you and just see."

—Kelly

Giving back

Many business owners were unaware of what Georgia Power is doing to give back to the community, or how Georgia Power might be supporting small businesses

"I know they partner with the Chamber. I see their logos on stuff, which means they probably give them, you know, couple \$20, \$50, \$100,000 a year to put on programs to educate the business owners... They need to diversify their money."

—Gabrielle

"So every year the NBA, the National Black Community Association has a conference in a different city and they have different vendors, like part of the little conferences, like a job fair situation. So they can see a lot of people would eventually be business owners or current business owners. That's the one good thing for them to go to and to get even outside of getting talent to hire. Just the visual of them being there says a lot."

—Tyler

Program awareness is limited

Most business owners we spoke with were unfamiliar with the energy efficiency programs Georgia Power offers.

Given the time and resource constraints many small business owners are operating under, few had the time or inclination to seek out information about Georgia Power programs.

But some business owners expressed great interest in the programs once we shared information about them.

“Hey if you did x, y, z this would save you x amount of dollars on your light bill every month...I’m going to do it.”

—Brenda

“It sounds good. It sounds good... We would need to budget and build a plan once the numbers came in and we kind of see what that is. Also, could it be financed? Could it become a line item in our budget? I would like to see the numbers” —Dennis

Leveraging awareness of residential programs

Although program awareness for commercial programs was low, several business owners mentioned that they were aware of Georgia Power Energy Efficiency programs in the residential context.

Some owners have an expectation that Georgia Power will leverage account data to inform and advise customers on ways that they can save energy and about potential waste due to faulty or old equipment.

“I know there's like all this energy efficient stuff...I mean, we get reports for our home as well. And I haven't seen those for a business yet, so I don't know if those are available where somebody will come and say, “You know what?”

You really need to have your property management come and redo your electricity....”

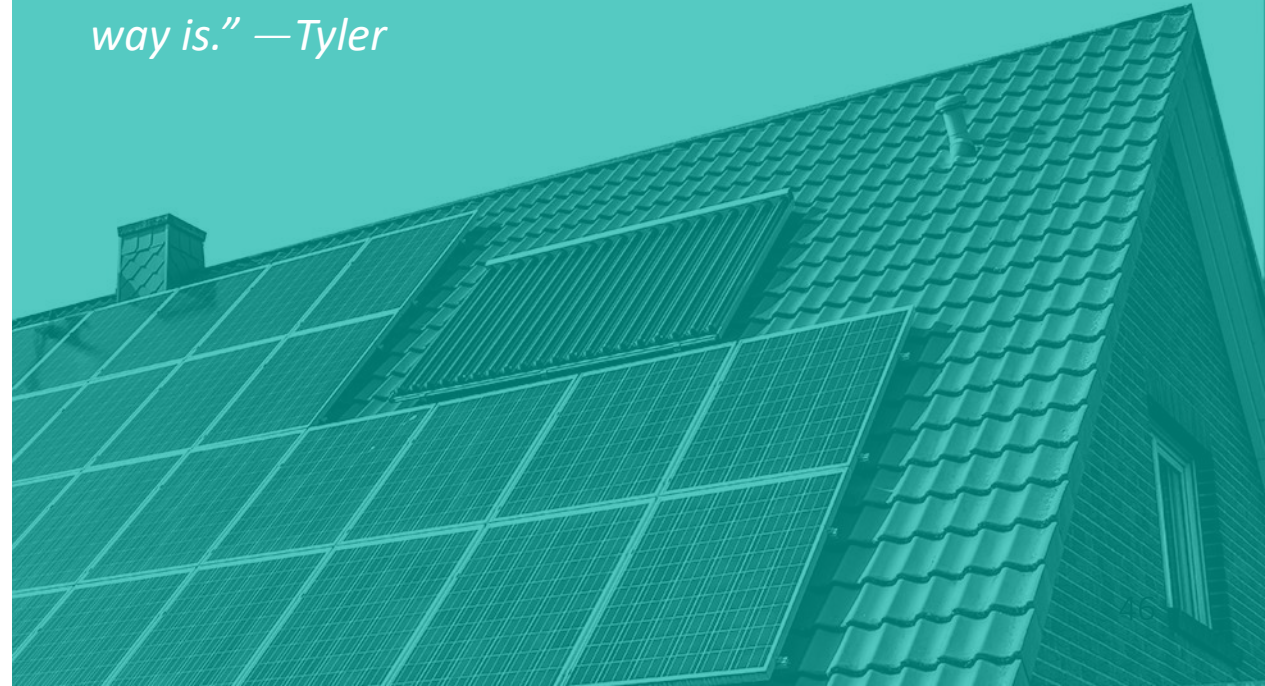
—Kelly

“Only with my house with the thermostats, and then I do the same monthly payment where you pay the same rate a month, but that's it. The only other rebate program I think we did was with LED lights” —Ishaan

Too good to be true?

Some business owners expressed skepticism about programs that Georgia Power provides. They wanted to know what Georgia Power stands to gain by offering these programs and an assurance that the program was not “too good to be true.”

*“It makes me skeptical, but it doesn't make me reject it. **So my first thing is like what's in it for them?** They ...have to be reciprocated somehow. And I want to know how that way is.” —Tyler*



“We used to know”

Some business owners noted that there had been changes at Georgia Power at an organizational level. Whereas they felt they had personal relationships with people at Georgia Power in the past, now, they didn't know who to call.

“Well, I'll put it like this. The management team for the African Americans down at Georgia Power has been very supportive over the years and now that they're all out, they got a whole new regime in there and I don't think they follow what's happening now, in terms of the recognition, the advertising, all that kind of stuff.”

—Kenneth

Community-Specific Findings



it's not
a one size
fits all
approach

Differentiation Between Communities

How not to be offensive:

Understand business owners and the communities they serve

Targeted messaging must be robust and nuanced

Emphasize the complexity of their identity

Recognize shared challenges and experiences

"I mean, when they have their procedures and their ... they do not say, "This procedure is for Black people, this is for Indian, this is for White people." It's a procedure right across the board. That's it, right?."

—James



African American Business Owners

CONTENTS

Culture: African American culture is American culture

- Culture is largely invisible
- Adaptation is automatic

Business and Financial challenges:

- Social Capital: Starting from Scratch
- North vs. South
 - Surviving vs. Thriving

Business and community Orientations:

- Keeping resources in the community
- Orientation to EE
- Giving back

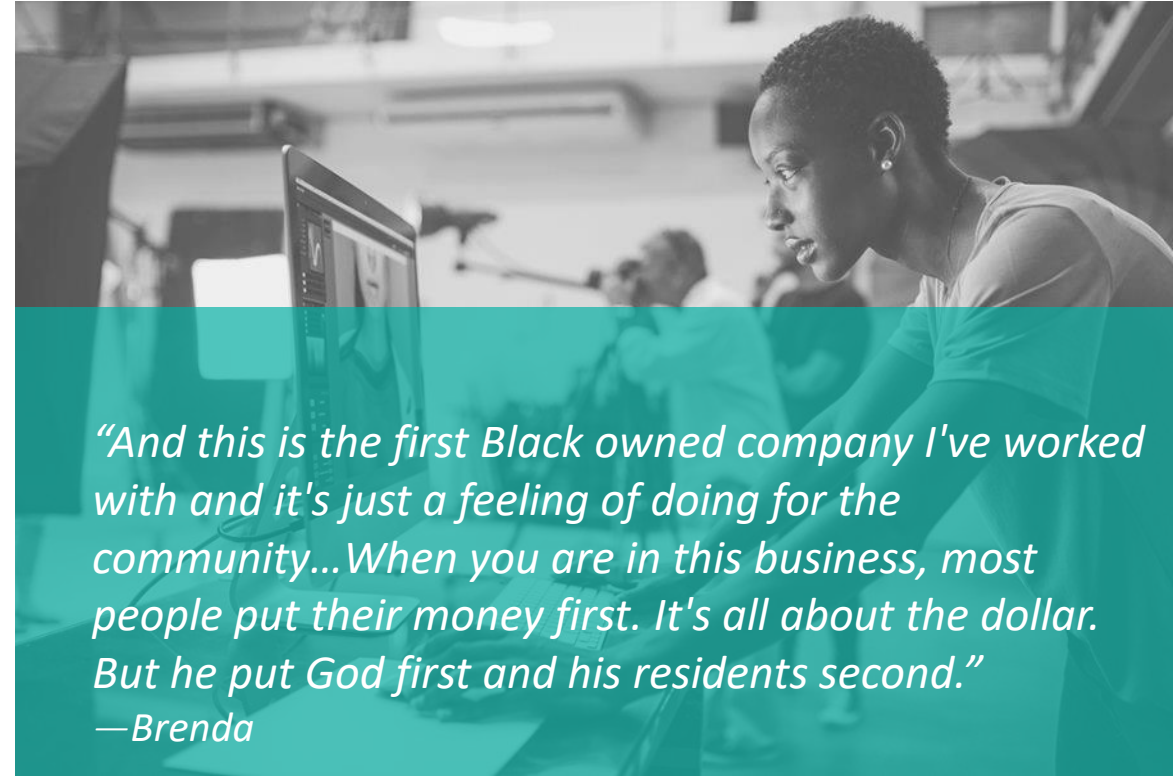


Culture: Invisible but impactful

Owners we spoke to did not directly attribute business practices with culture, however we observed that culture does impact the way people communicate, conduct business, and interact with non-African Americans.

Giving back is a core ethos for African American business owners and corporate culture doesn't always fulfill these needs.

"It's not just about elevating yourself to partner in a firm, but who am I serving? Who am I helping? Am I making a difference?" —David



*"And this is the first Black owned company I've worked with and it's just a feeling of doing for the community...When you are in this business, most people put their money first. It's all about the dollar. But he put God first and his residents second."
—Brenda*

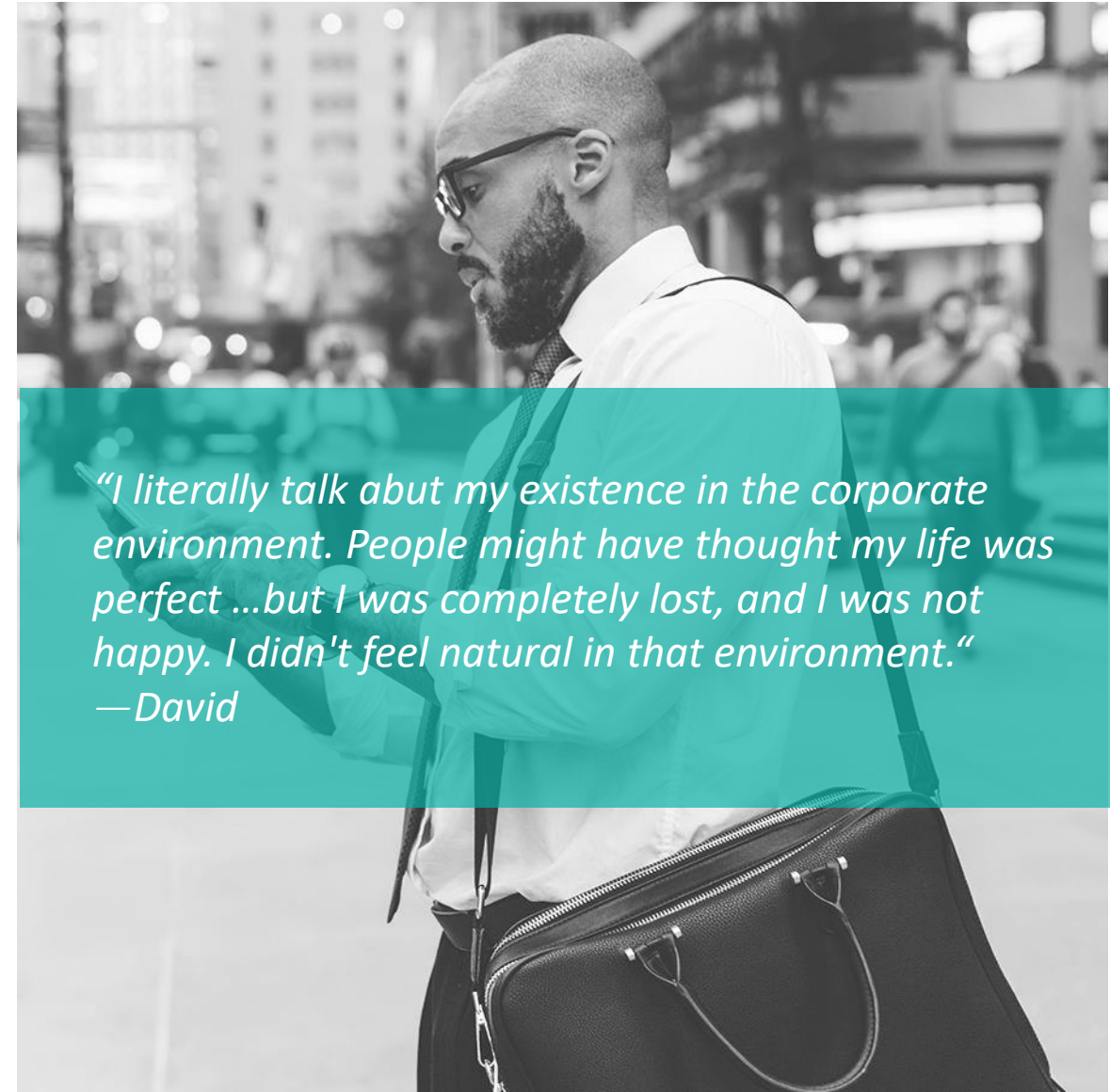
*"I can't really gauge how much that would change if I wasn't black. I just know that's part of the equation."
—Tyler*

Adaptability is a default

In certain instances, African Americans automatically adapt to a corporate environment, **but it is not always comfortable.**

As an organization, people may be relating to you in a way that is comfortable for you but not for them – just because people adapt doesn't mean it's easy or without a cost in *energy*.

“When I'm working with corporate America it's ‘CEO.’ They understand that language. In the nonprofit world, I'm the ‘Executive Founder’ and the ‘Executive Director’ for this agency.” —William



*“I literally talk about my existence in the corporate environment. People might have thought my life was perfect ...but I was completely lost, and I was not happy. I didn't feel natural in that environment.”
—David*

Social Capital: Starting from scratch

Intergenerational business ownership does not always occur in African American families. In many instances established, family-owned businesses fold for a variety of reasons including lack of social capital, financial resources, or interest from the next generation. At the same time, there is **no lack of entrepreneurial spirit in the community, but there's a mismatch between that entrepreneurial spirit and those who are running a business already.** Those with an entrepreneurial mindset often start new businesses from scratch.

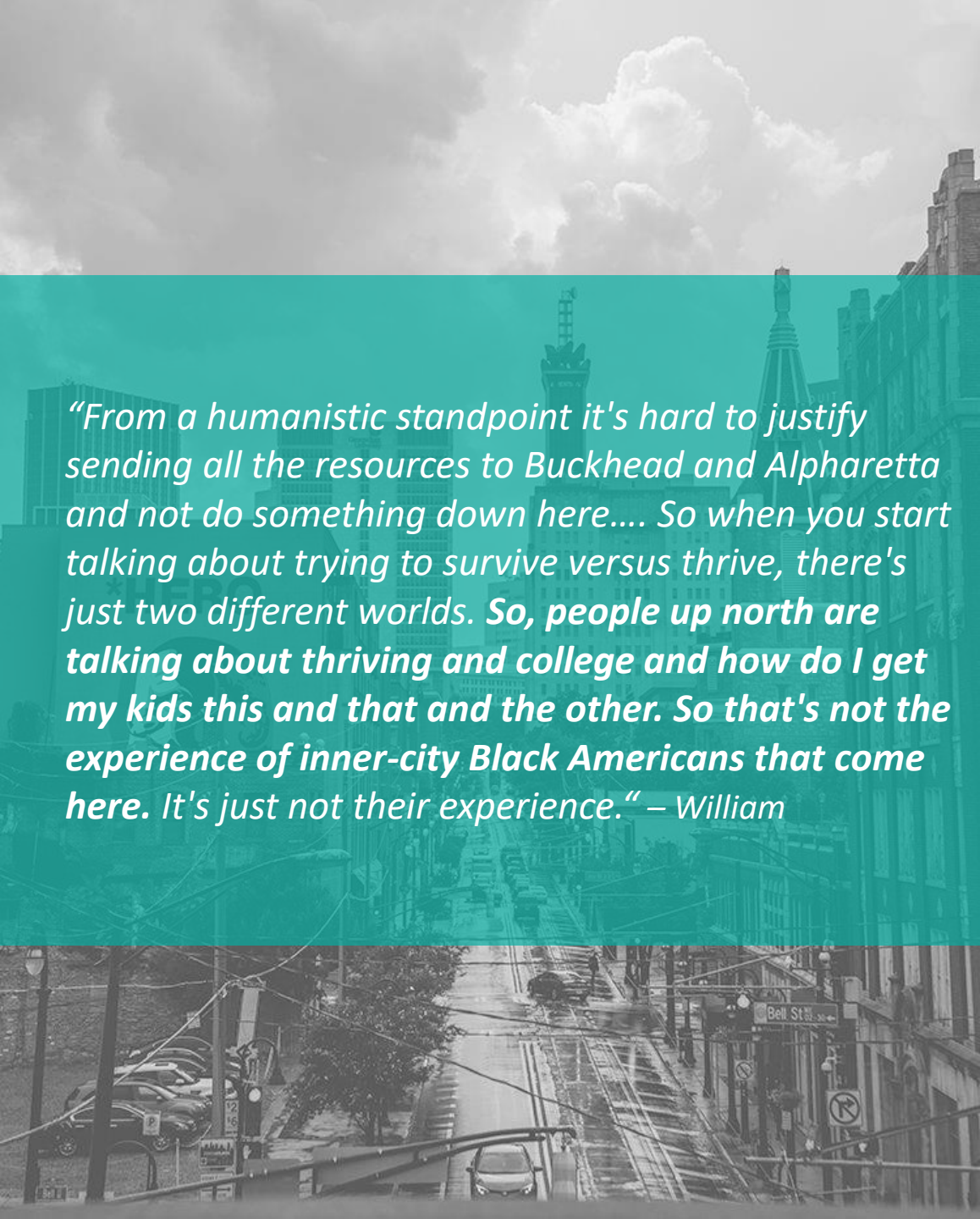


“There's a drug store here in Hapeville, that has been in operation for four generations. Son, grandson, it just keeps going. That's one of the things that you don't see a lot... The one thing we are not culturally doing is having children ...grooming people to be part of the future [of business ownership].” – Dennis

North vs. South Atlanta

Resource allocation and interest in developing business **in the South Atlanta area has only recently increased.** Many in the Atlanta metro area had no interest in investing resources in the South until now.

The **“North vs South”** conundrum has existed for decades and is a part of the regional Atlanta culture which is underlined by racial (Black vs. White) divides.



*“From a humanistic standpoint it's hard to justify sending all the resources to Buckhead and Alpharetta and not do something down here.... So when you start talking about trying to survive versus thrive, there's just two different worlds. **So, people up north are talking about thriving and college and how do I get my kids this and that and the other. So that's not the experience of inner-city Black Americans that come here. It's just not their experience.**” – William*

The background of the slide is a grayscale photograph of a city street, likely in Atlanta, showing buildings, a streetcar, and a street sign that reads 'Bell St'. A semi-transparent teal rectangle is overlaid on the left side of the image, containing a quote.

North vs. South Atlanta

“Yeah, I'm saying people in Buckhead are spending their money in Buckhead. It's really, it's your power. It's not just about North and South, Black and White.... They live in a certain place. They would never come down here... I think some of us are starting at in the situation where we're at a disadvantage and we make it even more of a disadvantage when we focus on getting away from the community we were raised in. That's why I live down here.” – David

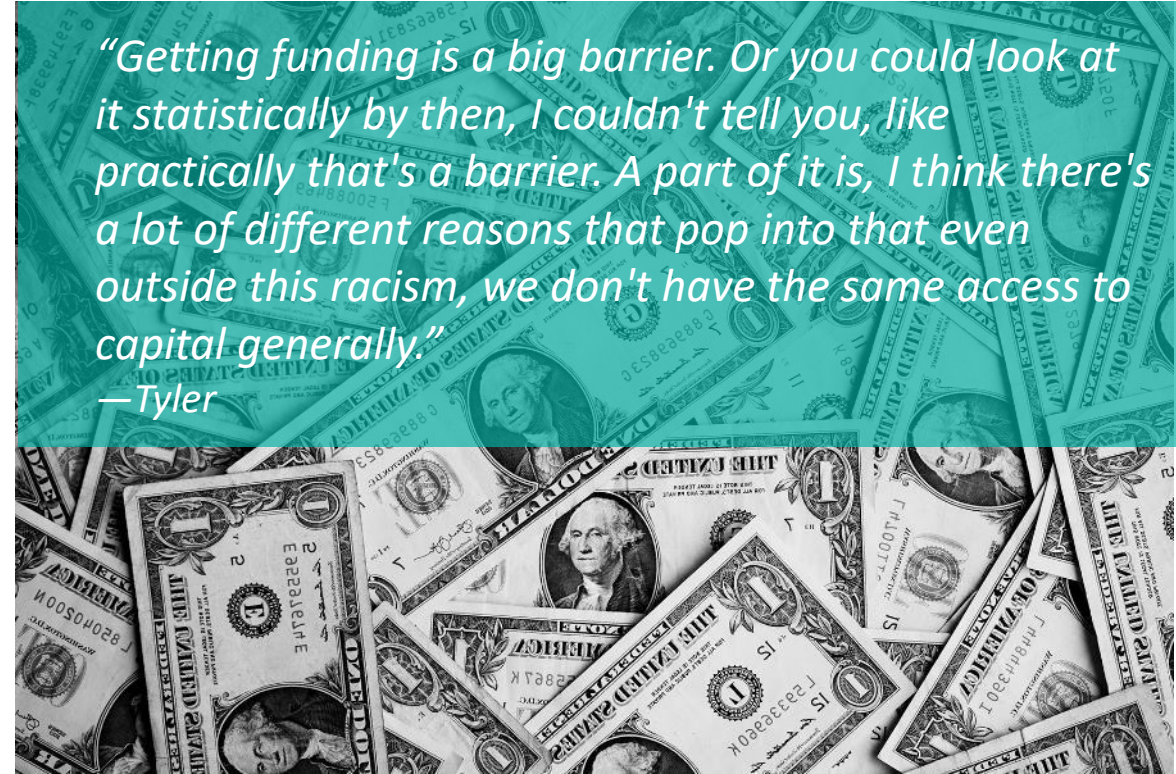
Customers express a sentiment that those in the North and those with power tend to concentrate their wealth amongst themselves, while those in the south in efforts to grow their business risk alienating or abandoning their community roots and contributing to inequality within the African American community.

Financial capital: It's a challenge

The barriers to upfront capital and startup resources are longstanding with African American businesses.

"So, resource acquisition. Resource acquisition's absolutely huge. For instance, case in point, I got some of my colleagues over in Atlanta who own their own buildings. I've been leasing for 20 years so therein lies this great divide. People are so busy trying to survive it all." —William

"Getting funding is a big barrier. Or you could look at it statistically by then, I couldn't tell you, like practically that's a barrier. A part of it is, I think there's a lot of different reasons that pop into that even outside this racism, we don't have the same access to capital generally."
—Tyler



Thriving Vs. Surviving

Money is
Money

It's about dollars
NOT cents


It's about
dollars and
cents

It's about
keeping money
in the
community


It's about
giving back

Orientation to EE: Individual Attitudes

Concern about bills and interest
in EE upgrades are very
personally determined.



“Okay. It's just going to be a high energy bill, just call it what it is. And so just kind of expected that. I think it's been like a couple of hundred every month, but that was probably because of a deliberate effort too. Like it goes off when nobody's here, and then too, we just now really started picking up traffic.” — Kelly

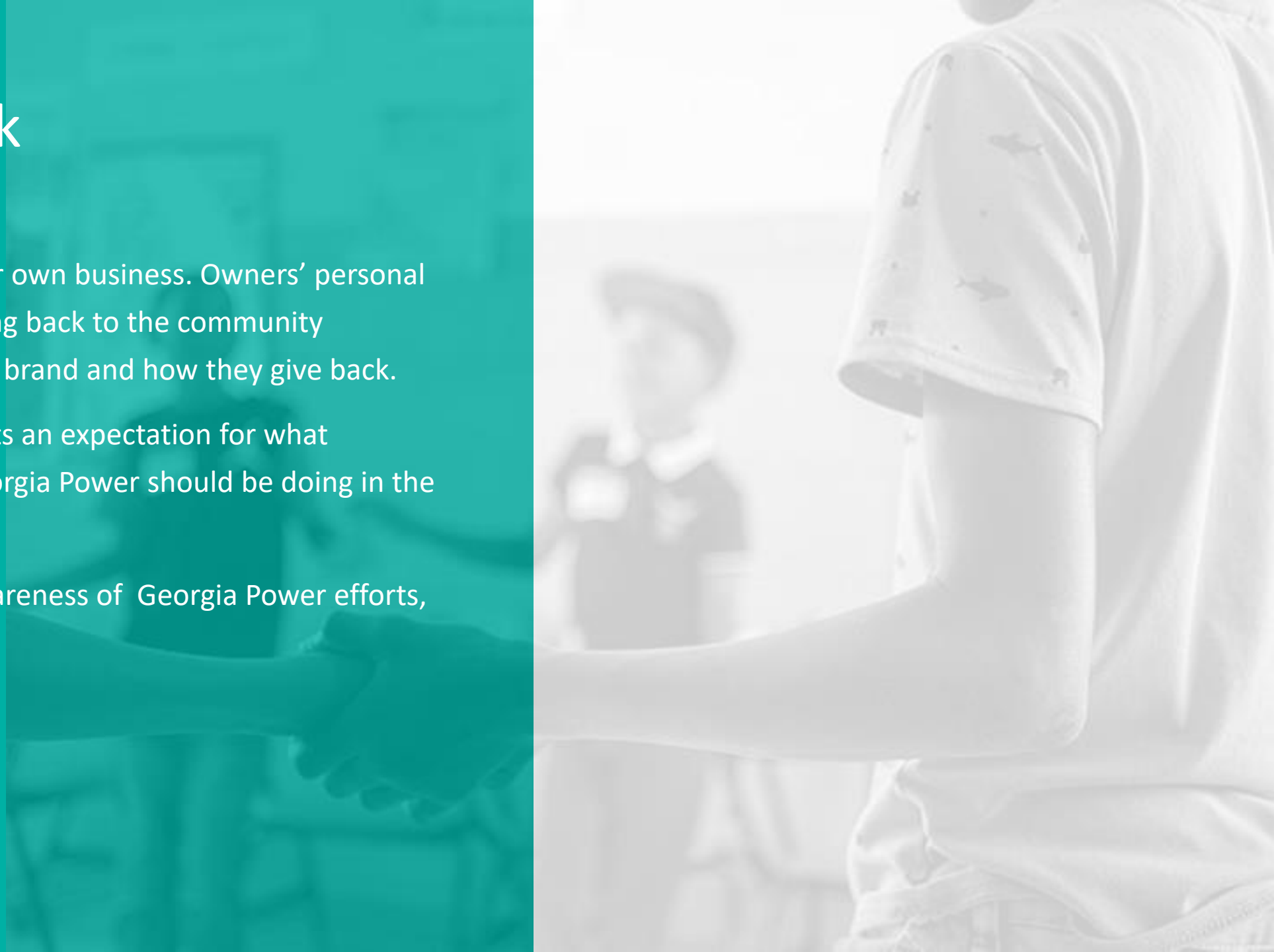


Giving Back

Orientation to their own business. Owners' personal feelings about giving back to the community transcends to their brand and how they give back.

This orientation sets an expectation for what companies like Georgia Power should be doing in the community as well.

General lack of awareness of Georgia Power efforts,



Engagement Considerations

How might Georgia Power support African American small businesses?

- *“Stay local” campaigns may foster community and build trust by leveraging the inclination to work within close networks.*
- *Consider promoting contractors and partnerships within communities to encourage local support.*



“To me the biggest barrier that we have is, and this is racial, but it's also kind of community in a sense, we live in communities that will spend outside of their community when there's nobody that's coming in their community to spend. That's a huge problem to me.”
—David



DISCUSSION

Conversation Igniter



How else might Georgia Power support small business customers within these communities?

Conversation Igniter



What questions does this spark for you?

Contact:

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A grayscale photograph of a city skyline, featuring several prominent skyscrapers. A semi-transparent orange horizontal band is overlaid across the middle of the image, serving as a background for the text.

APPENDIX

Engagement Considerations

Engagement Considerations



Leveraging the most significant moment (new account enrollment)

Provide a “New Business Owner” course or welcome package when setting up new accounts

Provide dedicated support through dedicated account managers who regularly check in

Clear communication with complete and specific information to help owners make decisions with confidence. Demonstrate both ROI and non-energy benefits to the business

Consider special rewards or programs for SMBs, such as a loyalty or ‘first five years’ program for SMB; these loyalty programs can ensure customers feel valued

Keep in touch by sending holiday greetings or milestone compliments to show that you value and remember them

Use casual, personal language in all communications with SMB owners

Engagement Considerations



Create a presence in the communities, without announcing that the reason they are building relationships is because of the SMBs being a certain ethnicity

Consider creating a single point of contact to create a more streamlined experience reducing time spent with the automated system and to build trust

For long term customers, consider programs that allow refurbished equipment that replaces outdated equipment. Leverage account history to build a compelling case to encourage equipment or property upgrades. Consider promoting “stay local” campaigns that allow owners to work with energy efficiency contractors and vendors and build trust for Georgia Power by association

Ways of showing the value of EE offerings should be hands-on such as through show rooms and comparable business examples

Engagement Considerations



Business is also very personal. Emulate the values that drive business owners

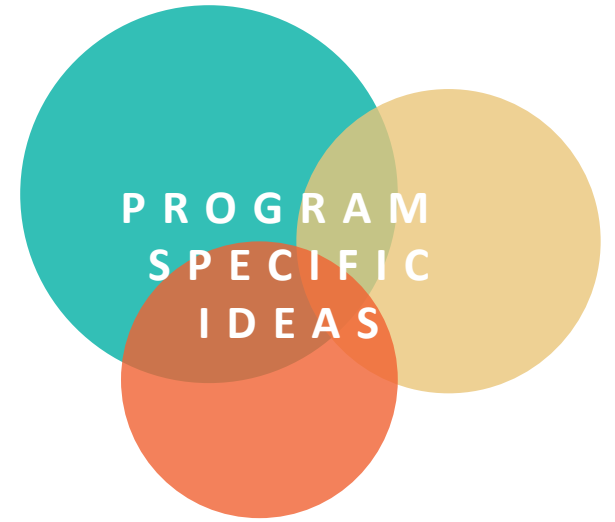
Participation and engagement at community events, sponsorships, and partnerships with Chambers show that Georgia Power cares

Use casual, personal language and acknowledge business milestones and special events in communications with SMB owners. Share in the passion that business owners have

Provide heartfelt customer service

Leverage the account portal, emails, and text messaging to reach owners

Engagement Considerations



Consider offering special rewards or loyalty programs for account owners

Allow different levels of engagement with programs so that owners can determine their level of investment, for example offering both brand new and refurbished equipment for upgrades

Emulate the inclination to work within close networks by fostering “Stay local” campaigns that allow owners to work with contractors and vendors within their communities

Provide hand’s on show-room style demonstrations to show the value of products and services.
Demonstrate the energy and non energy benefits while making a clear case for the ROI

Consider distributing Business Energy Reports similar to the Home Energy Reports

A small business is like a second home, consider adapting more residential programs to suite small business owner’s needs