THE SATISFACTION OF CUSTOMERS AND STAKEHOLDERS – THE SUPPLIER’S FUNDAMENTAL WISH

INTRODUCTION

The customers’ satisfaction increases along with the concern of suppliers to offer energy services and meet their clients’ demands. The transformations that took place and are still on the way on the energy market have determined the “shock” of mentality change. Thus, utilities don’t consider themselves anymore simply energy suppliers; they offer electricity services, in order to meet the needs of their clients and hence the satisfaction of the shareholders. This important shift of mentality in Romania has emphasized the concept of meeting the needs of a new philosophy of cooperation with the client in the management of the energy supply demand. What the client expects from the supplier is not just a product labeled “electricity”, but also a service represented by the availability of meeting the demand of energy at a certain quality level and when the customer needs it, including especially the terms in which this service is offered. As regards the satisfaction of shareholders, the motivation determined by profit should be introduced as a top priority in the activity of energy supply (the packet of services that can be offered automatically by a distribution and supply company or another commercial agent, formed by: ensuring the energy requested by the client, measurement, billing and collecting its value), as well as “support” activities, of maintenance and repair.

I. INCREASE OF DOMESTIC ELECTRICITY CONSUMPTION IN ROMANIA

One of the utmost wishes of both suppliers and domestic customers is to increase the domestic electricity consumption; this is a sign of welfare and increase of civilisation status in Romania. Many years, Romania was among the countries with small electricity consumption per capita. After 1990, this consumption started to increase, from 242.5 kWh/year/capita in 1990 to 362.3 kWh/year/capita in 2003. This means an increase of 50%, during this period, of this specific consumption. The primordial wish is to continue this trend. As regards the electricity consumption for economic agents, the wish is to increase their consumption in an efficient manner.

One of the methods of stimulating the increase of electricity consumption at end users is to stimulate the tariffs diversification, so that they have the opportunity to choose and opt according to what is most suitable for everyone.

Figure 1 presents the evolution of domestic consumption during 1990 – 2003. The types of tariffs offered to economic agents customers offer now 33 possibilities of billing the electricity consumption, according to the absorbed power, the manner and duration of its use, the connection’s voltage level, the specific of activity (see Fig. 2).

Dynamics of domestic electricity consumption during 1990 - 2003

![Dynamics of domestic electricity consumption during 1990 - 2003](image)

Fig. 1
The rational choice of the type of tariff, associated with an orderly energy behaviour, lead to a convenient average price for the customer; for the supplier, it means the optimisation of electric energy acquisition and distribution, hence reasonable costs.

For the domestic customers, the types of tariffs offer 18 possibilities of billing the electricity consumption (Fig. 3).

The customers have the right to choose from a wide range of payment methods:

- Cash payment;
- Settlement through direct debit (bank account);
- Settlement through bank card, at POS terminals;
- Settlement through bank card at ATM terminals;
- Settlement through cashing automates (EASY PAYMENTS);
- Payment in supermarkets and 24/7 shops (gas stations);
- Settlement through prepayment systems;
- Payment through Internet.

The payment methods are illustrated in Fig. 4.

II. THE CONTRACTUAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SUPPLIER AND CUSTOMER

In Romania, electric energy is supplied based on firm contracts concluded between the supplier and the customer. Contracts have in view the following:
- entirely meeting the demand;
- establishing correct supplier-customer relations, based on economic principles.

For the domestic customer, the duration of contract is unlimited; for the other categories, the contract is concluded for each serviced point, on a duration that is agreed upon.

The electricity contracting activity for all categories of customers (Fig. 5) is made according to the terms of the supply request.

The supplier is obliged to supply electricity to the customer at normal operating parameters of the National Power Network (frequency and power), according to the contractual clauses, and to ensure continuity of supply within the limits of safety level established by the contract.

We have to note the fact that the present regulations give special attention to the activity of electricity supply to customers. We can say that a new concept was defined: to offer to the customers “more than light”.

III. CONSULTING SERVICES OFFERED BY THE SUPPLIER TO THE ELECTRICITY CUSTOMER

According to the Council Directive 54/2003 of the European Union, the opening of the market is done gradually, and the customers who satisfy the terms have the liberty to choose their supplier. On such a market that undergoes a continuous transformation, our main concern will be to have loyal customers; this implies, above all, customers’ satisfaction about the goods and services offered. Unlike other goods and services, the electricity cost
is highly dependent on two aspects: **WHEN AND HOW THIS ELECTRICITY IS CONSUMED.**

![Percentage distribution for the categories of customers of SC Electrica SA](image)

This is why the electricity consumer needs informed advice. This advice can be given by specialised consulting companies. But the electricity supplier can play an important part here, offering energy advice for free or in more profitable terms. We must not forget the fact that the supplier enjoys credibility in the client’s eyes; this credibility is enhanced by the contractual relationship between supplier and customer.

The consulting activity can take place on several occasions: when the energy supply contract is concluded; during periodical area meetings between the supplier and its customers, especially the most important economic agents, big customers; and whenever the clients request it, though the supplier’s specialised departments. However, the only way in which a company can create value for its customer is to get to know him well.

The energy consulting activity implies to recommend the optimum energy supply solution, to explain the available tariffs and to recommend the most suitable. In the supplier’s customer relations centres, domestic customers receive advice about energy efficient household appliances and energy labels.

### IV. CUSTOMER PROTECTION THROUGH THE INCREASE OF SUPPLIER’S CONTRACTUAL LIABILITY

The energy supply contracts for domestic customers have a special clause which stipulates that the supplier has the obligation to pay damages to the client, if the electrical appliances of the latter, except lamps and electrochemical receivers, are deteriorated due to supplier’s fault, when in the point of delimitation between supplier’s and customer’s installations have appeared voltages higher than those admitted by technical norms in force.

Also, the supply contracts for economic agents stipulate that the supplier has to pay damages to the client for any interruption in energy supply that exceeds the safety limits stipulated by the contract and whose cause have been identified as being due to supplier’s fault.

### V. PROBLEMS ON THE SUPPLIER’S AGENDA FOR THE NEAR FUTURE

The process of liberalization of the energy market will continue during 2005-2007. Thus, the opening degree will reach 100% at January 1st 2007 for industrial customers and June 1st 2007 for domestic customers, respectively, according to the *Road Map for Energy Sector of Romania*, approved by Government decision no 890/2003.

Although the market will be fully open, the experience of other countries, who have already taken this road of liberalization, showed that there will be captive end-users who will buy electricity at regulated tariffs, through specific mechanisms. It is estimated that a great part of domestic customers and small commercial customers will choose regulated tariffs. The last option suppliers will be responsible for supplying electricity to these customers.

The National Energy Regulatory Authority will maintain unique tariffs at national level, using a transparent mechanism, approved after a public consultation with all stakeholders.

Here are just a few of the major problems on the agenda for the near future: ensuring transparent access to the power network, at a fair price; protecting small and vulnerable clients; assuring non-discriminatory transport and distribution tariffs; information regarding energy sources and the impact on the environment.

Costumers want reasonable, stable, predictable tariffs, reduced costs and especially a quality of service at least equal to the present one.

The tariff system, hence the electricity price, has to ensure transparency, efficiency, corectness for customers and financial viability.

Costumers have to be equiped with modern measurement systems, which give them the flexibility to choose their energy behaviour and allow them to obtain bills with values as low as possible.

### CONCLUSIONS

The opening of electricity market for all customers, both industrial and domestic, will bring definite major changes in the structure and operating mode of this market. The offer of services for customers will be higher and higher, and the competition between operators of distribution...
systems will become more intense.
The present trend in Romania, regarding the diversification of supplier-customer relationships, with a view to an increased competition in the power sector and the imminent privatisation, has the following characteristics:
- The energy sector is about to define new politics, the institutions undergo structural changes, technologies need to be improved and, last but not least, the offer for services need to be diversified.
- It is necessary that electricity suppliers diversify their energy services activities, in order to keep their existent customers and attract new ones.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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