

**ORIGINAL SITUATION**

BGE needed a strategy to help their staff take customer interactions to a more positive, solvable level so that they could meet senior managers' goal to "delight and outclass the competition". Call center staff needed to learn how to manage callers' frustrations and not personally feel attacked.

**BUSINESS IMPROVEMENTS**

Signature Service has had some unexpected benefits. For example, call center employees see the investment in their professional development as an indication of management's respect for their contribution to the company's overall vision. This has, in turn, helped to reduce employee turnover and improve satisfaction on the job. In addition, field technicians enjoy a customer satisfaction rating of 97% and service contract sales are the highest in five years.

Partnership Brings Vision Home.

*When senior managers at BGE Home announced their goal to "delight customers and outclass the competition," they were confident employees could achieve it – given the right tools and support.*

But what tools and support were needed to delight customers contacting the company's busy call center where opportunities existed to take the customer experience to a new level? Powerful ones that would support a strategy that would assure customer loyalty and retention.



"It's easy to take a caller's frustration and anger personally when you feel like you're being attacked," explained Vivian Ziegenhein, Director of Customer Service for BGE Home. "We needed a strategy to help our staff take customer interactions to a more positive, solvable level."

**RESULTS ACHIEVED**



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**VIVIAN ZIEGENHEIN**  
BGE Home

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The HVAC and home repair and improvement affiliate of Baltimore Gas and Electric (BGE) and Constellation Energy Group sought help from experts outside the company. Searching for the right partner helped BGE Home crystallize its vision of exceptional service.

### **Walking the Talk**

“We knew our partner needed to be creative and understand service quality. After just a few meetings, it was obvious that Strategic Enhancement Group was the perfect partner,” said Ziegenhein. “Everyone at BGE Home involved in the process was struck by their professionalism, responsiveness, flexibility and attention to detail.”

“Strategic Enhancement Group definitely ‘walks the talk.’ It’s inspirational to work with an organization that delivers on its promises and follows its own advice,” she said, noting that Strategic Enhancement did much more than simply provide a training class.

“They helped us build management support, customized the curriculum, created a detailed implementation plan and helped reinforce what was taught,” she said.

According to Ziegenhein, Susan Hall, Strategic Enhancement Senior Consultant for BGE Home, played a crucial role and continues to offer practical assistance several years later, including feedback on the company’s service based on her personal experience as a BGE Home customer.

### **Success By Design**

Strategic Enhancement Group recommended customizing the award-winning *Signature Service* program to reflect the specific challenges encountered by BGE Home call center staff and ensure that the training was valid. As part of the customization,

a facilitator worked with call center managers and employees to identify common situations that were then integrated into the course.

“The training was remarkable. It spoke directly to our employees’ concerns. Participants came away with practical tools and information as well as the confidence to apply them,” said Ziegenhein. “Strategic Enhancement Group’s staff clearly understood our company and our goals.”

Implementing *Signature Service* in a hectic call center environment presented unique challenges. Obviously, shutting down the call center for two business days to train 80 staff members wasn’t an option. Instead, Strategic Enhancement Group suggested breaking the training into shorter modules that could be delivered over several weeks. This solution allowed BGE Home to maintain customer service levels while rotating staff through the class.

Ongoing reinforcement of *Signature Service* principles also played a key role in the effort’s success.

“We provided a framework and some initial recommendations. Vivian and her team then added their own ideas to create an exceptional reinforcement strategy that has continued for nearly three years,” said Hall. Among the more memorable strategies: Soliciting and publicizing best practices, integrating *Signature Service* principles into existing training modules, and a contest that featured a drawing to win a new bicycle.

BGE Home also introduced *Managing Signature Service*, the counterpart to *Signature Service* to ensure that call center managers had the skills to support employees and reinforce the training.

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**VIVIAN ZIEGENHEIN**  
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## COMPANY PROFILE

Co-founded in 1816, Baltimore Gas and Electric Company (BGE) is the nation's oldest gas utility. BGE, a subsidiary of Exelon Corporation, is also Maryland's largest gas and electric utility. For nearly 200 years, BGE has been an innovator in meeting the energy needs of central Maryland residents and businesses.

Constellation Energy's home services division, BGE HOME, provides Maryland residents with energy-focused products and services to help make their homes comfortable. BGE HOME is the one source for heating, air conditioning, plumbing, electrical and appliance service needs, along with window, door and siding upgrades, and much more.

## Building on Success

Based on this success, BGE Home soon introduced *Signature Service* to other parts of the organization where it has been adapted to reflect the unique needs and character of each unit.

Strategic Enhancement Group worked with BGE Home to create a one-day version of *Signature Service* for more than 275 field technicians that focused on techniques for delighting customers. It also included a sales component to increase field technicians' comfort asking for referrals and selling additional services. The facilitator, a former field engineer for a national competitor, played a key role.

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"We work hard to find and recommend the right resources for client projects. Because BGE Home had had a negative experience with another company in the past, it was especially

critical that they felt comfortable with the facilitators. Our consultants are very professional and we make sure that their personality, background, experience and facilitation styles fits with the customer's culture" explained Hall.

## Supporting the Vision

In the three years since its introduction, *Signature Service* has become an integral part of the BGE Home vision.

All BGE Home employees are required to complete *Signature Service* within weeks of hiring and current employees attend regular refresher sessions.

*Signature Service* principles and language also have been integrated into the company's hiring process, quality monitoring models and performance appraisals and feedback systems. For example, some quality criterion was changed to reflect "soft" skills and is used to evaluate employees' skill in handling sensitive customer situations.

*Signature Service* has had some unexpected benefits as well. For example, call center employees see the investment in their professional development as an indication of management's respect for their contribution to the company's overall vision. This has, in turn, helped to reduce employee turnover and improve satisfaction on the job.

In addition, field technicians enjoy a customer satisfaction rating of 97% and service contract sales are the highest in five years.

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To learn more about these concepts and how Strategic Enhancement Group, Inc. can help you in addressing these issues, contact us at (630) 377-4300, (888) 668-9382 outside of IL or [StrategicEnhancement.com](http://StrategicEnhancement.com).