Voluntary Code of Conduct
Marketing Plan

I.   BACKGROUND

The US Department of Energy (DOE) has facilitated development of a multi-stakeholder, consensus-based Voluntary Code of Conduct (VCC) for customer energy usage data. In order to properly implement the VCC adoption and implementation processes, additional consumer research is needed to drive its adoption and effectively communicate it to consumers.

II.   RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- Determine consumer sentiment towards energy usage privacy as compared to privacy issues around financial/credit card transactions, consumer package good purchasing habits, internet usage, cellular usage, and cable television viewing habits.

- Understand consumer reaction to the concept of an energy-themed VCC: questions, concerns, sentiment.

- Discover consumer reaction to VCC adoption by utilities and third-party service providers and its impact to brand favorability.

- Determine appropriate VCC communication topics and mediums/channels for rollout; what consumers would like to know, how they would like to learn about the VCC, and how frequently they would like to receive those communications.

- Test the VCC name and alternate names.

- Understand the potential impact the DOE's association with the VCC has on consumer sentiment regarding the VCC.

III.   RESEARCH APPROACH

- Task: Test VCC concept and consumer sentiment via initial set of focus groups in six regional markets around the US:

    - Northeast

    - Northwest

    - Southwest

    - Southeast

    - Midwest (north)

    - Midwest (south)

    - Focus groups will include a general mix of consumers in each market, with one or two identifying characteristics per market: age, income, gender, tech-savvy, education level, etc.

    - Once these initial groups are completed, feedback will be used to craft test communications for the VCC effort. Suggested names will also be reviewed and several logos created for testing.

    - Once research is completed, a set of talking points, a logo, and logo use guidelines will be created and made available to service providers adopting the VCC.

IV. MARKETING IMPLEMENTATION

- Working with industry trade associations, begin to communicate broadly within the industry about the VCC and its requirements.

- Develop seal for rollout based on consumer testing.

- An adoption workshop, where interested companies collaborate on the specifics of adoption among business-units such as Information Technology and Ethics and Compliance, may be conducted to facilitate communication and dialogue.

- Adopting service providers will complete the adoption form and submit to DOE. Adopting service providers may communicate about their endorsement of the VCC using the logo and materials developed during the research phase.

- Convene revision committee and set up regular meetings as needed

V. MEASURES OF SUCCESS EXAMPLES

- In considering VCC adoption at a particular service provider, the following measures of success are offered as goals for a positive adoption and implementation experience:

    o Employees can clearly articulate the value of the VCC to consumers and other stakeholders.

    o Consumers feel their energy usage data is protected.

    o The brand image of the adopting entity (and potentially DOE) is positively enhanced.

    o Stakeholders/Executive Management feels we have mitigated potential risk to the enterprise.