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Arizona Public Service (APS) produced the first sweep in the history of the Chartwell awards program, winning the Best Practices Award for Customer Service and sharing top honors with the Ameren Illinois Utilities in the Best Practices Award for Marketing.

The Chartwell Best Practices Awards are presented throughout the year in several categories, with its largest award program—The Chartwell Best Practices Awards for Marketing and Customer Service—held annually in conjunction with Chartwell’s Energy Marketing and Customer Service Conference (EMACS) – The Customer Experience Conference.

Phoenix-based APS is Arizona’s state’s largest and longest serving electric utility. A subsidiary of the Pinnacle West Capital Corp., APS serves about 1.1 million customers in 11 of Arizona’s 15 counties.

APS’ Web site and the utility’s efforts to increase customer adoption of online services stood out among the customer service entries, according to Chartwell. Chartwell received 56 entries—36 in marketing and 20 in customer service—for consideration this year. A panel of Chartwell researchers, who are subject matter experts in the areas under consideration, judge the entries. In particular, the judges felt that APS’ Web site’s level of customer service interactivity and functionality was very impressive.

The Phoenix-based utility added 11 new functions on its Web site to attract customers and encourage them to use the Web site for their service needs. In winning the Best Practices Award in Customer Service, the APS “Increasing Customer Site Usage through Interactivity” initiative launched features such as the rate wizard which allows customers to compare rate options online, an interactive bill, My Account Orientation and a carbon calculator. Web site traffic increased in both visits per user (up 16%) and pages per visit (up 47%).

In “A 2009 Green Success for APS!,” its award-winning entry for Best Practices in Marketing, APS enlisted the help of NBA and Phoenix Suns star Steve Nash to promote its energy efficiency home improvements and green energy purchases. APS used a mix of traditional—Nash starred in a series of commercials encouraging customers to adopt green methods—and non-traditional, such as social media, channels in the campaign.

Chartwell felt that this type of innovative approach was able to cut through the clutter and move people to action. The APS initiative led to an increase in solar rebates, Green Choice Rate enrollment, renewable installations, duct test and repair rebates, and CFL sales.

For more information about Arizona Public Service and its award winning programs, please visit www.aps.com