

The Active Consumer

How To Choose In An Open Energy Market

by Mike Beck

(NAPSA)—Choosing an energy provider is just like other household purchase decisions: You should look for reliability, direct and friendly service and the type of offering that matches your lifestyle.

In the same way that deregulation of the telecommunications industry led to a variety of value-added services, competition in the electricity and natural gas industry has prompted companies to think about new ways of providing you with value. Some of these offerings include:

- **Fixed Pricing:** Choose a payment plan that sets the monthly price for your energy costs.

- **Bundled Options:** You can choose to have your gas-, power- and electricity-related services packaged together in one bill.

- **Green Energy:** You can now choose a plan with a certain percentage of the energy coming from alternative sources, such as wind power or other renewable forms of energy.

With these options in mind, you can now go to the next step, which is choosing your natural gas and electricity provider. Check your state's energy Web site to see if you have a choice of supplier in your market and review the list of suppliers. Against this backdrop, you can now apply a filter in evaluating suppliers:

- **Cost should not be the only factor:** Customer service, years of experience in deregulated markets and a commitment to your positive experience are also very important. You can find out who has the best customer services and, on the flip side, see the complaint records against a company.



Deregulation of the energy industry has given consumers a world of choices; it's important to choose a plan that's right for you.

- **Competition is all about choice:** Take time to find out what competitors offer in your region.

- **Beware of hidden charges:** Watch out for natural gas and electricity companies that have a "customer charge" or "administration fee."

- **Don't be afraid to ask:** Friends and neighbors can share with you their experiences with energy suppliers.

With the hard work behind you, you're now ready to make a switch. Simply visit the Web site of the provider you've chosen or call its customer service number. In just a few short moments, you can find yourself in the driver's seat of your energy-purchasing decisions.

For more information on choice, visit Direct Energy at www.directenergy.com or call (866) 348-4194.

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