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Sense drives 25% increase in Virtual Power Plant (VPP) enrollment

In 2023, Sense expanded its successful partnership with OhmConnect, now Renew Home, incorporating Sense's real-time, device-level insights with OhmConnect's platform to create a Virtual Power Plant (VPP). The partnership merges the strengths of each technology, giving consumers a unified, approachable experience and empowers them to take control of their energy use and benefit from demand flexibility incentives during peak times.

> I loved the messaging from Sense. Would go around and turn off at least a couple of the mini splits during events and loved seeing savings afterwards.
>
> **Alex M., SanDiego, CA**

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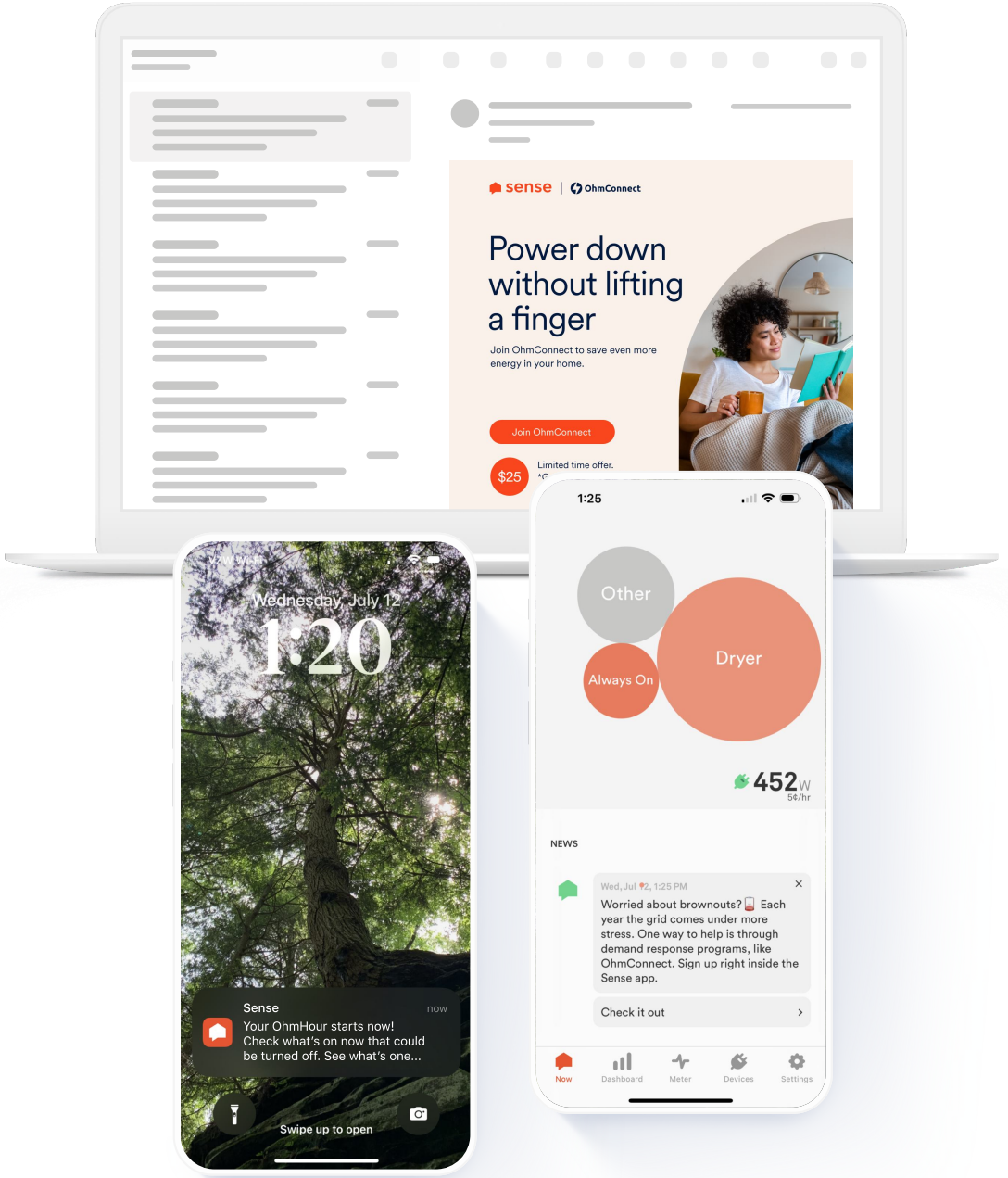
Approach

After a successful pilot in 2021 which saw Sense users reduce home energy use by 18% during peak events, Sense looked at its base of customers in California served by PG&E, SCE, and SDG&E as well as customers in New York's Con Edison service area to expand enrollment.

Understanding the potential pitfalls on the road to enrollment from prior years and in other programs, Sense aimed to streamline the process. With a new native-enrollment feature built into the Sense app, users were able to seamlessly enroll in the VPP, connect their utility, link smart devices and sign-up for notifications all through the Sense app.

During peak events, Sense continued nudging users with personalized notifications in the Sense app to drive savings actions. Customers used this information to turn off items like their AC, dryers, washers, water heaters, and dishwashers during events.



Through a/b message testing, Sense found that social proof ("201 people have already joined"), appealing to values in a loss frame ("expensive and dirty energy"), and novelty ("now available in the Sense app") messages were effective to recruit users to join the VPP.

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Impact

With an improved on-boarding experience, Sense saw enrollments improve dramatically. In fact, Sense enrollment rate was 25% higher than the average rate with other VPP partners. Sense also continued to see strong adoption of the option to connect devices for automation.

Sense's real-time device level insights also enabled quicker feedback to customers so they knew how they performed, something lacking in many other programs. "I used to participate in a different program that controlled my AC, but was frustrated. I couldn't quantify what I'd given up and what I'd gained," said one participant. "With Sense I was able to see it...afterwards and figure out how much I'd saved. I found myself very engaged by that." This type of fast feedback is valued by customers, and keeps them engaged and feeling positive about the program.

300
Customers

Additional customers enrolled

5000 kWh
Savings

Peak savings in summer 2023

2K
Devices

Devices connected for automation:
223 thermostats and 29 EV's

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What's Next

The path is clear. To accelerate the deployment of VPPs, we need customers to adopt DERs, choose to participate in VPPs, and then not override or leave the programs due to dissatisfaction. And we need to make the benefits of VPPs available to everyone. With next-generation smart meters enabled with **Sense now being deployed to millions of homes nationwide**, we can help boost VPP participation at scale.

Unlike legacy smart meters where AMI interval data is often missing or lags and the process of getting it in the first place can be cumbersome, next-generation smart meters with Sense's embedded edge-intelligence enable VPP administrators and participants to get data faster and more reliably, relieving customer frustration and rewarding them faster and more reliably. The ubiquity of these meters will also help ensure equitable benefits of VPPs, allowing customers to participate and earn incentives even if they haven't adopted specific types of technology.

Learn more about how Sense helps drive demand flexibility:

https://sense.com/utilities/

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