

## **2017: For Your Consideration....**

I myself use Labor Day for making resolutions. Somehow I feel so refreshed after the summer period, no matter how much time I took off, that I look at September as a fresh start for reflection and the making of new commitments. But of course the unusual day for doing that is New Year's Day. So here for your consideration is a list of resolutions that those of us in the electricity and clean energy community might adopt. I have touched upon some of them before, and will likely be expanding upon some of them in the coming year.

### **1. Reassess your terminology and jargon**

Think about how you refer to yourself and your company or organization. Do you say you are in the energy industry? The utility industry? The electricity sector? The energy industry? The clean energy space? Do you use DER or just your kind of DER (e.g. storage, DR, etc.)? I suggest we all think about trying to start the year by thinking of us being the electricity industry or sector. I also as you know like the idea of speaking of us as the electricity community. Electricity is certainly not all about utilities anymore. In many ways it is not really about anything it used to be about.

### **2. Tackle the needed reform of Federal-State jurisdiction**

The court cases are starting to add up. The electricity industry (see #1 above) is not what it was and it is going to be even different in the future. The bright line of jurisdiction is too blurry and needs to be re-examined and modified. The 1933 Federal Power Act needs to be opened up.

### **3. Accept that both sides of the argument over NEM and DER procurement are legitimate and get on with negotiating a way to move forward faster**

You have heard me on this before. Clean energy deserves a fast entry with no barriers. Utilities deserve to not be screwed. Let's keep working it out but do it even faster in 2017.

### **4. Figure out if there is something special about IoT and infrastructure in the electricity sector when it comes to cybersecurity**

I am not anything close to a cyber-expert. My simple question is whether or not there is something special about the electricity sector (see #1 above) such that it requires special treatment from any others? I understand it is critical infrastructure, and that makes it different from other things. But I still feel like in too many instances it is being talked about as unique.

### **5. Put those meters to work!**

At the risk of beating a dead horse, let's get this pony more firmly on the track. Let's have policymakers, utilities, stakeholders and clean energy companies work together to initiate some Time-Based-Pricing proceedings.

## **6. Don't assume that a new Administration can do anything it wants**

I have been through several new administrations, although I admit that this new one looks like nothing I have seen before. But every time a new administration comes in, people talk about how it gets anything it wants. It doesn't happen.

## **7. Don't assume that Federal policy *can't* happen**

Yes, it has been a swamp on Capitol Hill with red and blue alligators spending all their time snapping at each other. But there is a reason for federal policy and federalism in general - it simply makes more sense than doing things state-by-state leading to 50 different policies. A ubiquitous economy-wide commodity like electricity should not be overly subjected to Balkanized state-by-state policy. That means that our community should try to move things in Congress, whether we use a pirogue or an outboard. (Also see #9 below)

## **8. Don't assume that Federal Policy *will* happen**

The obvious corollary to #7. Don't ignore the Hill but don't put all your eggs in that basket. Get out to the states, where sometimes you can make progress. In fact, some states will allow more progress to be made this year than Washington will.

## **9. Pay a visit to a policymaker**

No matter how many times I say it, I have to keep saying it. Don't assume that a policymaker - state or federal - is sitting around trying to think up new policy. Don't assume that they know the problems you have. They and their staff do not like being in the dark and being uninformed. Pay them a visit - but don't just go in and present your problem and complain. You need to present a problem or challenges and then give them your "ask", i.e. how they might help you on that. You might get some help.

## **10. Help out a state**

Following on #8 and #9 above, think about how you can help a state. With the exception of a few obvious ones, the states do not have a lot of resources at commissions and in the legislatures. Find out how you might help them in terms of the information they need and the problems they are trying to solve.

## **11. Invest in the future - and not just on R&D**

If you are in the private sector you are on a tight leash from a budget standpoint. Yet you know that if you rest on your technological laurels you will pay for it. You need to keep peddling and invest in building a better bike. Same with policy, where things can get murkier. It is hard for me to respond when a potential client asks me what the ROI will be next quarter of some policy advocacy. That can happen, but rarely. Think about policy as a strategic investment - not a tactical one.

## **12. Make sure younger workers get out and about**

This may be happening more than I realize but not that long ago it was not occurring, largely due to that stingy devil known as the travel budget. The next generation of workers, because of the Internet, is getting more information than previous ones ever did, but that is not enough. They need to talk to their peers, maybe kick some steel somewhere and listen to some opinion leaders and experts.

## **13. Assess your news sources**

The web is now awash with news and information and much of the same items appear on multiple websites. More are popping up all the time. I am obviously one of your sources since you are reading my newsletter at the moment. My renewed resolution will be to curate the things that I think you may not want to have missed and present them to you, along with a few of my own humble thoughts

and opinions. If you have other ideas on how you would like me to help you in this area, adopt a resolution that you will reach out to me to suggest it.

#### **14. Don't do a pilot when it is not needed, and don't wait for someone to go first**

Sometimes pilots are needed and sometimes they are not. The dreaded "death by pilotitus" seems to not be as prevalent as it was a few years ago, but it is still something to guard against. If you going to phase something in that has been proven to work everywhere else, then call it is phase-in, not a pilot. And unless the laws of physics are changed, someone has to try something that hasn't been tried before, and not wait for someone else to do it. Widespread among utilities, the piggybacking syndrome of looking for whom else has done it if not wrong, but it has to be assessed and monitored. Sometimes you have to be first. But if you do step out on something new, you can call it a pilot (:

#### **15. Don't lose a day when it comes to climate change**

The data is speaking so loudly it is practically shouting at us. But regardless of your stance on that data and the issue in general, there is one thing that no one, not even climate deniers, have tried to refute -when a GHG unit goes into our atmosphere it stays there for a very, very long time. That means that the concentrations are building and building - nothing is filtering out. The situation is totally

additive day after day and year after year to the point that the earth just spent its first entire year at a concentration milestone (400 ppm) many thought would never be reached at all. Things can only move so fast in our economy, our policy world, our society and our personal lives, but every day counts. We should all do what we can as individuals in 2017, but we all work in a sector where significant differences can be made. Make climate-thinking part of your mindset, just like other core decisional parameters. Pay it forward instead of letting those in the future foot the costs, which they may end up doing in more ways than one.

Happy New Year!

Dan

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