



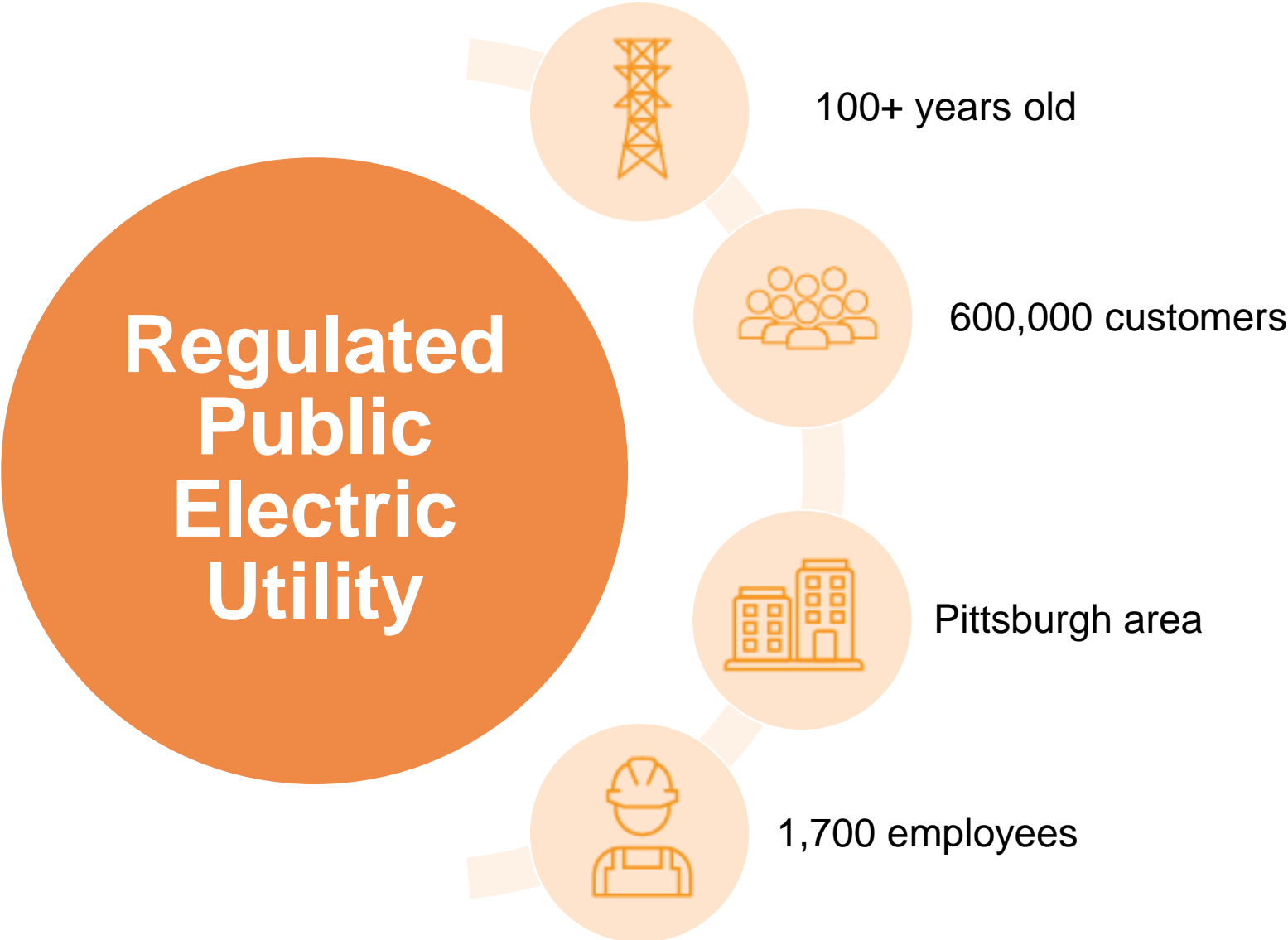
# That's my story and I'm sticking to it:

## How storytelling in employee research can drive a customer-focused culture

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Duquesne Light Company (DLC)

# About DLC

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# Objectives

This session will illustrate:

- How to get respondents to tell a story rather than just answer a question.
- How to leverage human-centered design methodologies to connect employees (or anyone!) to purpose and meaning.
- How you can connect the dots between employee stories and brand.

# Introduction

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**Turn to the person next to you and tell them your name and what you do for a living.**

# Introduction

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**Turn to the same person. Tell them about something you've done at work that makes you feel especially proud or about the best day you've ever had at work.**

**What did you notice?**

**What was different between your first interaction and your second one?**

# Humans are Hard-Wired for Stories



“Research shows that our brains are not hard-wired to understand logic or retain facts for very long. Our brains are wired to understand and retain stories.”

- Jennifer Aaker, marketing professor,  
Stanford Graduate School of Business



**Stories are how we make sense of the world and give it meaning.**

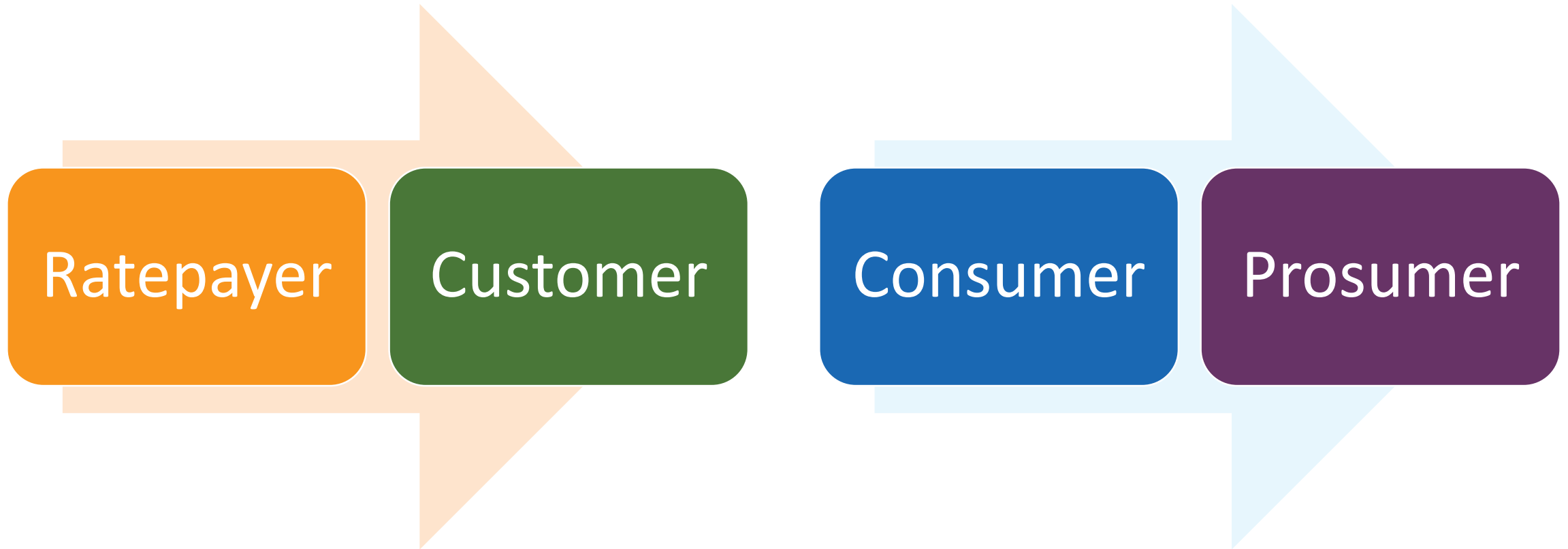
“Stories enable us to make meaning out of the experience by tapping into existing schemas, scripts, cognitive maps, mental models, metaphors, and archetypes.”

-Pamela Rutledge, PhD, MBA



# The Customer-Centricity Journey

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# The CX=EX Connection

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**“For all intents and purposes, CX = EX.**

If business leaders are truly invested in boosting and maintaining a positive customer experience, they must first take a hard look at their *employee* experience.”

- - Mike Meisenheimer, *Forbes* Council Member, *Forbes*

# Initial Employee Research

## Project Overview



### Background

- In 2022, Duquesne Light is rolling out a company-wide initiative focused on customer centricity, aimed at expanding accountability for the customer experience across departments and levels.
- Prior to the initial rollout, research is needed to gain baseline performance metrics from employees.

### Objectives

- Assess current familiarity with DLC's focus on the customer experience across departments and contribution levels (i.e., individual contributor, manager, director, etc.).
- Evaluate employee perceptions of their role in the customer experience (e.g., understanding of their role, empowered to take action, etc.).
- Evaluate sufficiency and effectiveness of resources available in support of enhancing the customer experience.
- Assess effectiveness of related communication and support from DLC leadership in everyday activities.

### Methodology

- DLC programmed and hosted the survey and invited all employees to provide their feedback before the AEM meeting on March 12<sup>th</sup>.
-  **Field Period:**  
03/01/2022 – 03/14/2022
-  **436 Completed**
- A post-meeting survey was sent and only focused on evaluating the value of meeting topics and presentations.
- Later in 2022 (timing TBD), a follow-up survey will be sent to employees to gauge perceptions and familiarity of the customer centricity framework.

DLC Internal



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## Detailed Research Approach Employee Perceptions of Customer Centricity

<b>Format and Benefits</b>	<p><b>Virtual Focus Groups (Employees)*</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Six virtual focus groups</li> <li>Real-time participation through webcams</li> <li>75 to 90 minutes in length</li> </ul> <p><b>Benefits</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Access participants in multiple locations</li> <li>View non-verbal cues; flexibility for questions/probing</li> <li>Use of whiteboard for capturing/exploring ideas</li> </ul>	<p><b>Telephone In-depth Interviews (Executives)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6 Executive IDIs             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5 IDIs at 30-minutes each with Executives</li> <li>1 IDI with the Executive Sponsors - Dave Johnson/Christine Waller (45 mins)</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>Benefits</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Scheduled at participant convenience</li> <li>Personal, confidential approach</li> </ul>
<b>Guides</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Screeners/Discussion Guide developed jointly with DLC. DLC will have final approval.</li> </ul>	
<b>Notification / Confidentiality</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DLC will provide a written or email communication to employees and their managers explaining the research, requesting participation and ensuring complete confidentiality/anonymity.</li> <li>We recommend that DLC C/X not attend the employee focus groups to keep the discussions confidential and unbiased.</li> </ul>	
<b>Recruitment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Schmidt will recruit/schedule employees via email.</li> <li>Each group will include 4-5 participants (total 24-30 participants); mix of genders/ethnicity, tenure roles, etc.</li> <li>Group composition TBD by DLC</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DLC will provide names, titles/roles, telephone and email addresses</li> <li>Schmidt will schedule interviews directly with participants</li> </ul>
<b>Homework</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Short assignment (5-10 mins) to be given to encourage higher engagement. Homework does not need to be sent to Schmidt.</li> <li>Example: Write a few occasions in the past two/three years when you were able to show a customer (directly or indirectly) that DLC had their best interest at heart.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not Applicable</li> </ul>
<b>Reporting</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Analysis and reporting with anonymized verbatim quotes.</li> </ul>	



\* Assumes employees have email access and can be provided with temporary access to a PC or laptop for focus group participation. Schmidt is willing to consider alternative approach if this is not the case.

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# Initial Employee Research

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*“The customer is why we get paid, but we focus too much on the customer and don’t focus on employees.”*

*“The customer is not always right. Sometimes we bend over backwards to please a customer, but we shouldn’t do that if we weren’t in the wrong.”*

*“It’s important to resolve issues so they don’t rise to the level of PUC complaint. Complaints to the PUC increase if we don’t do a good job.”*

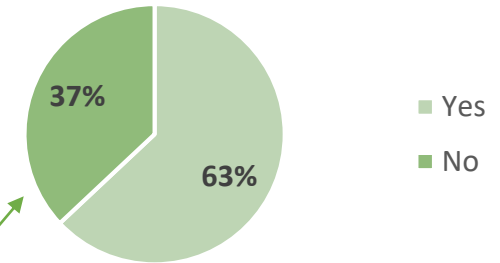
*“Internally, we are not very concerned about the customer.”*

**This is not a good story.  
What are we missing?**

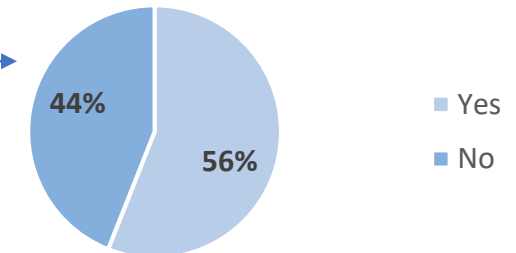
# Initial Employee Research

Results by Employee Type			
% Agree		Most interaction n=87	Least interaction n=343
DLH's Customer Focus	Cares about providing an outstanding experience across all aspects of the customer experience	60%	80%
	Puts forth the voice of the customer in everything we do in order to serve customer's needs today and in the future	47%	70%
	Understands its customers and knows what they need	46%	67%
	Prioritizes delivering an outstanding customer experience in their strategic plans and in the initiatives/projects that are chosen and prioritized	44%	68%
	Will meet its performance goals by focusing on customer needs	39%	68%
Incorporating Customer Insights	I understand the value of including the voice of customer in the work that I do	52%	75%
	I know how to obtain the customer insights that I may need to do my job	40%	55%
	I have resources available to me to incorporate the voice of the customer into important initiatives and projects	28%	52%
Importance of Role	Delivering an outstanding customer experience is the responsibility of all employees	74%	90%
	The work I do directly has a positive impact on our customers lives	63%	76%
	My role at DLH is valuable to providing an outstanding customer experience	56%	77%
	I feel empowered in my current role to raise thoughts, ideas, and opportunities for improvement	51%	80%
	Improvements in customer satisfaction will be beneficial to my personal success at DLH	48%	69%
	My manager effectively communicates DLH's strategy regarding customer centricity	37%	61%

The work I do directly has a positive impact on our customers lives.

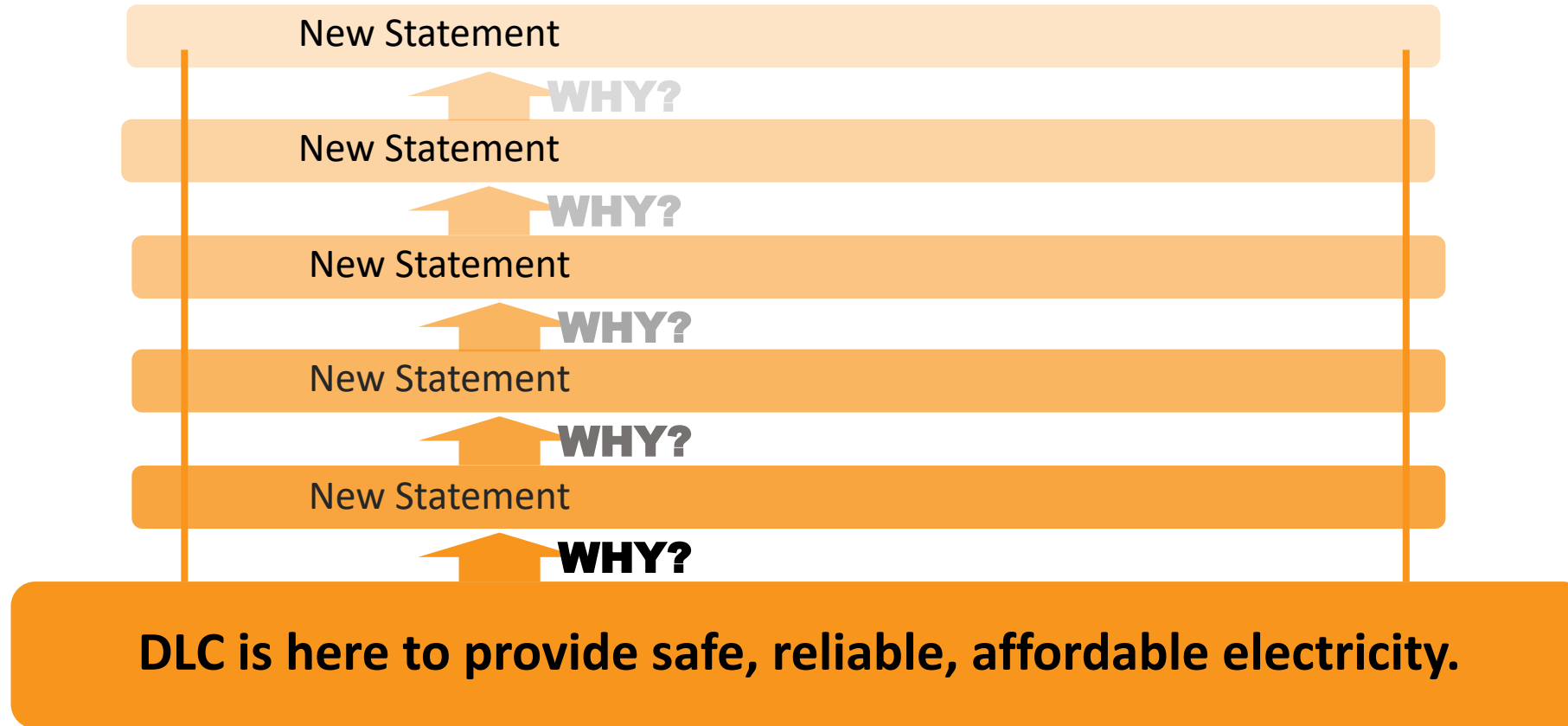


My role at DLH is valuable to providing an outstanding customer experience.



# Abstraction Laddering

Getting to the why behind the what



# Digging Into Meaning and Purpose



“Looking at the world in this way, an electricity company no longer just produces electricity.

Crucially, it enables its customers to heat or cool their homes, run appliances and machines, watch movies, or communicate with one another.”

– CB Bhattacharya, H.J Zoffer Chair in Sustainability and Ethics, Katz Graduate School of Business, University of Pittsburgh

# A New Story Emerges

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“What I do matters to people. I have a purpose beyond making money. I stay in this industry because what I do is important. I am energized to do it.”

“This is an everyday life sustainability function. We power the moments in our customers’ lives.”

“DLC employees are selfless, especially the men and women working through holidays, at night, giving up time with their family. That takes a very special kind of person.”

“Pittsburghers are so proud of Pittsburgh and the people who work at DLC are both proud of their community and proud of the work that they do.”

“Community is everything here. We give back to the community, yes, but we *are* the community. 70% of DLC employees are also DLC customers!”

“We are what separates modern life from the Dark Ages.”

“I feel like I’m part of something bigger. I’m making a difference in people’s lives.”



# Employees as Co-Authors

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“This is an everyday life sustainability function. We power the moments in our customers’ lives.”

## We Not Only Power the Grid – WE ARE THE GRID

Duquesne Light is built on the belief that nothing stands in the way of us getting the job done safely. **Much like Pittsburgh, the city and region we call home, there’s a sense of pride in the work we do.**

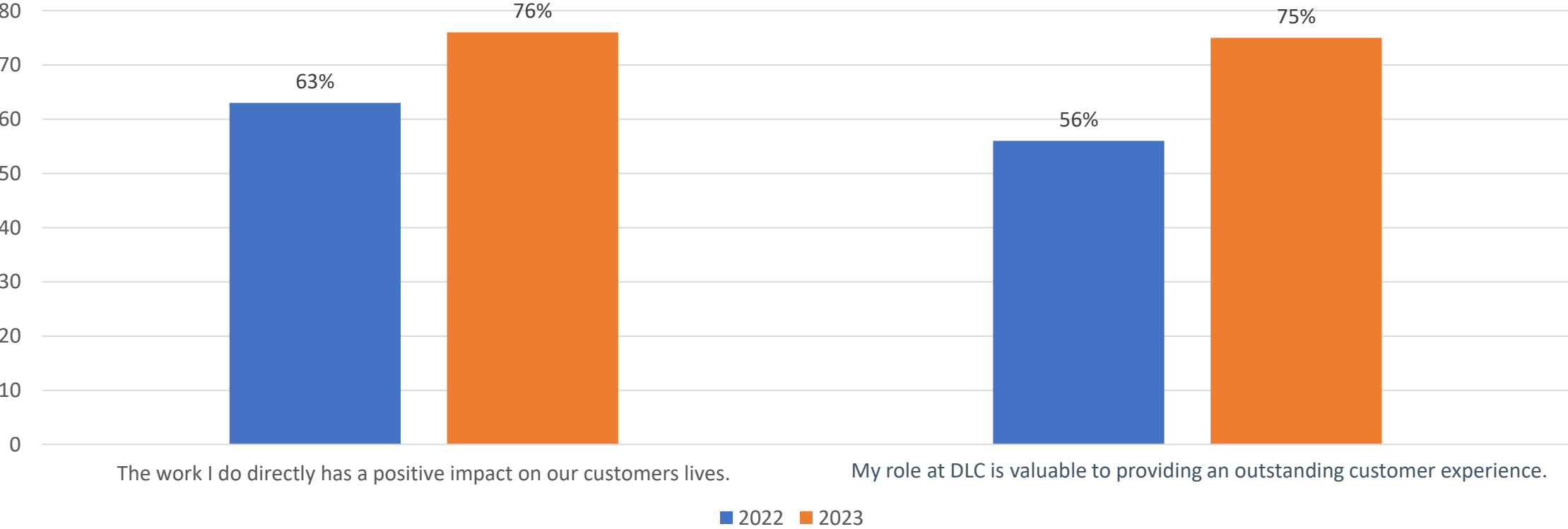
**Community is everything here. We not only hire in the community and give back to the community, WE ARE the community. Seriously. 70% of our employees are also our customers.**

What does that mean? It means our customers’ special moments are OUR special moments. Whether it’s taking in the season opener at PNC Park, riding the carousel late into the night at Kennywood, or sitting around the dinner table sharing about the day – for over 100 years, **we’ve POWERED the moments that matter.**

**Keeping the community powered is hard work. It’s long days and nights. It’s weekends and holidays.** The work never ends but GRIT is in our DNA. It’s this grit that fuels our commitment to the neighborhoods we serve and to one another.

Like the grid itself, we are connected. By the work we do, the community we do it in, and the people we do it alongside. The future is now, and it needs each one of us. Together, WE ARE the grid.

# Results



# Actions

How you can apply this to your own work

- Use human-centered design techniques like abstraction laddering to get respondents to share the meaning and the story behind their initial answers.
- Leverage employees in design, development and testing. Invite cross-functional teams to provide input on concepts and ideas.
- Integrate voice of employee in your brand storytelling and marketing efforts.



# QUESTIONS?

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