

INFORMATION AND NEW ENERGY FRONTIERS

REFLECTIONS OF CON ED'S R&D CHIEF

By **MARTIN ROSENBERG**

Artie Kressner, as the director of research and development, is the resident technology guru at Consolidated Edison in New York. As such, he devotes considerable thought to information and technology and how they will shape the future of the utility enterprise. With change occurring at an ever faster pace, Kressner relishes the moment. "I've been in this business a long time, and now is the best time to be in it," he said.

In a recent conversation with *EnergyBiz*, he touched on some of the reasons he believes the power sector is about to undergo a technological renaissance.

energybiz: Where is information technology headed?

KRESSNER: There's going to be increasing need for information. The cost won't necessarily be proportional to the increase in the amount of information. If we are going to need ten times the amount of data, it doesn't mean that we're going to need ten times the amount of spending on information.

energybiz: What excites you about the future of IT?

KRESSNER: A whole range of new kinds of information is available that's under a general heading of AMI, advanced meter information. It's the next evolution of automated meter reading, AMR.

energybiz: How will it be different from AMR?

KRESSNER: There would be different kinds of information that is more operational in nature for the utility and potentially more related to financial matters for customers or for their service providers.

energybiz: How fast do you think it will be before this rolls out?

KRESSNER: AMR really hasn't seen a very wide deployment. Forward from now, we are going to see AMI. I think it's going to happen within a year.

energybiz: So, where is the technology headed?

KRESSNER: The meter could be a form of a hub, a communication hub, and the communication could be with appliances and other devices.

energybiz: Would homes then become more efficient?



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KRESSNER: The home will become more efficient, but there also would be additional functionality, services and capability of various kinds of devices. What's going to really make this kind of technology happen is going to be these new levels of capability and functionality. So, the communication between things, I think, is going to drive the creation of new ways of these things working and what they can provide and do for us.

energybiz: So, how profound a change will this be for the utility?

KRESSNER: In terms of the ability to really affect demand, if that's one of the functions, it could be very significant. But there will be new uses for electricity and an expanding load density. Electricity is an extremely beneficial form of energy, considering its uses and applications. We haven't seen the end of them.

energybiz: Such as electric-powered vehicles?

KRESSNER: Sure. Electric transportation is a very desirable evolution of transportation. The grid would be the source of the energy that's charging the batteries and doing that in a most environmentally appropriate, cost-effective way. Private vehicles and small trucks would be the new electrical appliances.

energybiz: Will IT play a role in enabling utilities to better accommodate new renewable energy projects?

KRESSNER: Absolutely. It's actually a critical component to the success of renewable energy. If it actually comes up to be something like 10 or 20 percent of the total generation mix, the industry will have to integrate it all. When you get into that kind of complexity, information is vital. You just plug it in and it will just happen on its own.

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