

Hydro-Québec



LOCATION

Montreal, Quebec

PRODUCTS USED

Hootsuite Enterprise
Talkwalker

INDUSTRY

Utilities

COMPANY

Hydro-Québec manages the generation, transmission and distribution of electricity in the Canadian province of Québec. The public utility is one of the province's largest economic drivers, contributing more than \$20 billion annually to provincial GDP.



How Hydro-Québec wins social with a sassy customer-first strategy

The public utility shatters expectations
and wins brand love with smart social
listening, responsive digital customer care,
and a surprisingly cheeky tone on social.



The COVID-19 pandemic changed digital behavior forever and accelerated social media use dramatically. But long before 2020, Hydro-Québec—an organization of 20,000 employees that produces, distributes, and transports electricity throughout Québec—knew it had to get social media right if it wanted to gain the trust and confidence of its four million customers.

20% increase in overall business reputation score

1,800 brand mentions per week across media, blogs, forums, and social media

40% increase in customer service requests from digital channels



Some Internet users sometimes send us very harsh comments, perhaps thinking that they will only get a ready-made answer or no answer altogether. When they see that we take the time to talk to them and to engage in a very human way with them, the tone tends to soften and we even end up sometimes obtaining thanks for our exchange.”

Pierre-Alexandre Buisson

Spokesperson, Social Media, Hydro-Québec

The challenge

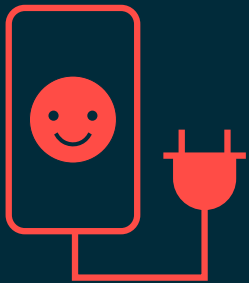
With a reputation as a “black box” that was slow to share information with stakeholders, Hydro-Québec knew it needed to take bold steps to rebuild its image and revitalize its brand.

The company needed a platform to efficiently manage the flow of information to its constituents and the media, while also ensuring timely responses to the rapidly growing volume of inquiries on social from its four million customers.

Plus, as a crown corporation, it needed a secure tool that was available in French.

Hydro-Québec partnered with Hootsuite to:

- ✓ Implement a transparent, customer-first communications strategy with social media at its heart
- ✓ Scale up customer care to support its four million customers more effectively
- ✓ Manage a fast-growing social media presence across multiple channels





How they did it

Adding capacity and speeding response times with social customer care

After moving to the Hootsuite platform, Hydro-Québec began using Hootsuite Inbox to manage conversations with audiences and customers across social accounts in a single place. Inbox allowed the team to interact with conversations directly within social media threads, providing full context to help them respond efficiently while focusing on strengthening relationships.

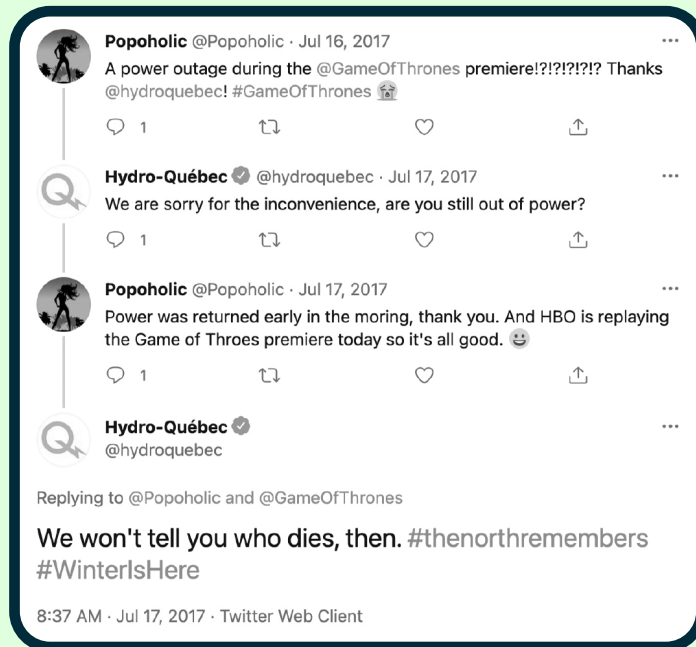
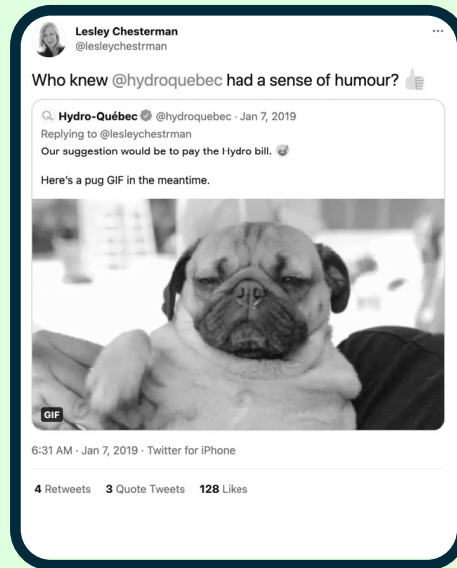
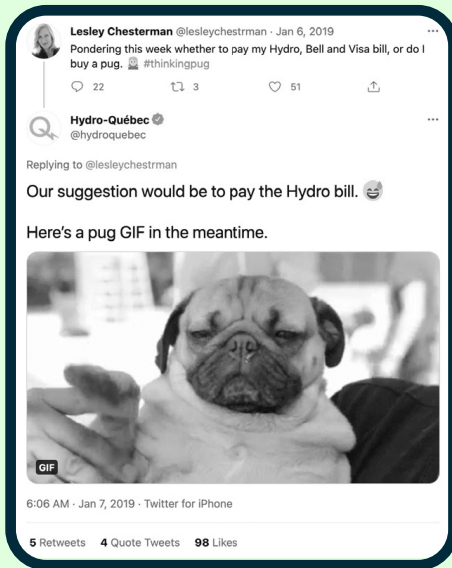
With more customers turning to social and digital channels to ask utility-related questions, Hydro-Québec saw a 40% annual growth in customer service requests through these channels—a trend that took pressure off its overburdened phone support operations. Chat from within the

Hydro-Québec website alone now accounts for 62% of conversations, while 29% take place on Facebook and 8% on Twitter.

Using Hootsuite's assignment features, the company was able to further streamline its customer care processes. From environmental impact to outage updates, the company was now able to quickly route messages to the right teams and spokespeople, enabling accuracy and consistency in messaging while significantly reducing response times.

Winning brand love and new followers by getting sassy on social

From the time of its first tweet, Hydro-Québec had played it safe with its social posts, limiting activity to sharing straightforward information about outages or distributing press releases—a traditional approach to social media from a public utility.



After years of business as usual on social, Hydro-Québec decided to take a chance and change its tone. Rethinking how government agencies show up on social media, the team decided to experiment with injecting humor, a more personal tone, and an occasional shot of sharp-tongued sarcasm into the utility's social posts.

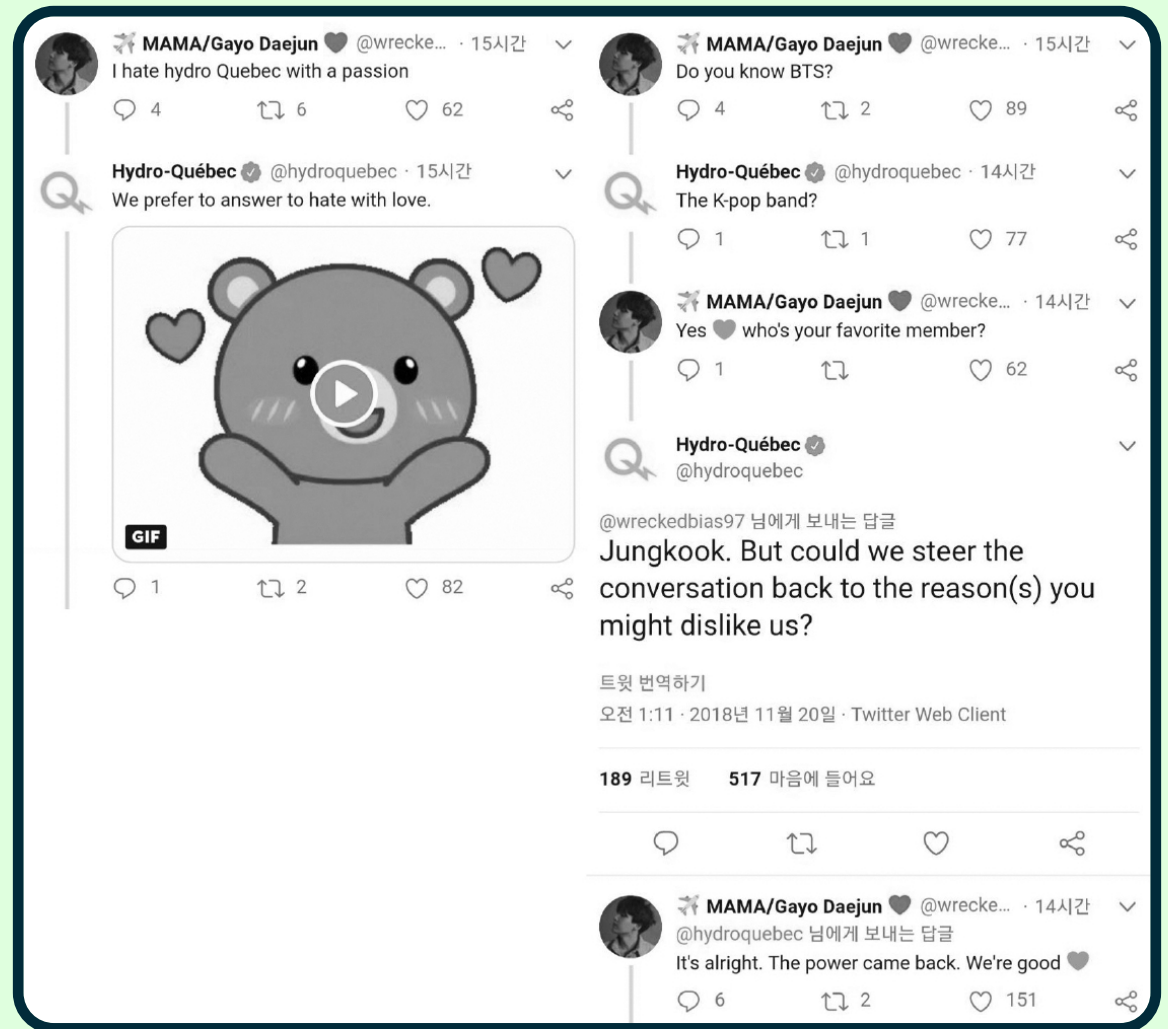
The media soon took notice, reflecting widespread surprise at seeing a historically by-the-book institution suddenly trending on Twitter and reaching individual customers with a uniquely personal touch. Soon, the team's quick-witted responses were making headlines across the country.

The cheeky tone struck a chord, with Québec residents expressing appreciation at a government entity willing to lighten the mood and

communicate authentically. Hydro-Québec's social following swelled to over 400,000 and its brand reputation score improved by 20%. Its cheekiest replies even inspired a Facebook group called Passif-agressif Hydro-Québec, which soon grew to more than 70,000 followers.

Finding and joining the conversations that matter

To maintain its growing reputation as a socially savvy agency, Hydro-Québec needed to improve the team's ability to monitor mentions of its brand and other key topics. Through Hootsuite's integration with leading social data intelligence company Talkwalker, the team was able to set up devoted listening streams for key conversations on social and within the media, enabling them to quickly make informed decisions about how to engage with their audience.



The tweet subsequently went viral with BTS fans and made the news in South Korea, prompting hundreds of the boy band's devotees from around the world to engage with Hydro-Québec on social, sending them positive and loving messages.

They found that mentions continued to grow substantially across digital channels, with a single Talkwalkersearch returning around 1,800 results per week across media sites, blogs, forums, and social media. With the ability to find and join conversations across channels in real time, the team was able to manage its digital presence more effectively than ever—and engage in more of the witty banter that they had become known for.

Delivering consistent, effective, crisis communications on social

The arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 further accelerated Hydro-Québec's focus on providing relevant social customer engagement at scale. As social media inquiries

spiked, concerned customers turned to their primary social channels to communicate directly with the corporation and find valuable resources related to their service and the pandemic. However, Hydro-Québec's communications team was now working remotely due to the global circumstances, and found they could no longer rely on in-person approvals from management when responding to customer requests.

Hootsuite's team management features came to the rescue, allowing managers to approve team members' replies right in the Hootsuite dashboard. Even as the volume of assigned responses more than tripled in the first few months of the pandemic, teams were able to

handle the added volume—while pre-publishing checkpoints ensured that all outgoing responses were correct, appropriate, and on-brand.

“The authorization feature has become a significant time-saver that is also helping our communications team feel more confident when engaging with a stake-holder on social media,” said Jonathan Cote, a strategic advisor in corporate communications and media relations at Hydro-Québec. “The final check allows the employee to gain confidence in completing the task, and the manager the confidence to give them autonomy. You can't actually win social media if you have ten levels of validation before you go ahead and reply to people—that opportunity is already lost.”

Why it worked

At Hydro-Québec, customer care is now the heart of the organization's social media presence. In fact, within 12 months after implementing Hootsuite, Hydro-Québec doubled the number of its customer care representatives operating solely on social media.

The team's ability to effectively separate and assign incoming customer service messages from those handled by the

communications team has been a key factor in the company's success in handling immense volume—and an important industry differentiator.

Today, the crown corporation has a 150+ person communications team, with 50 Hootsuite users managing the dynamic and cheeky social media presence that has transformed Hydro-Québec's reputation across the country and across its industry.

“From transparency and a new, human-first social approach, to newfound customer service efficiencies and effective volume management by way of automation—Hootsuite has transformed our social media strategy into an efficient customer-first process.”

Jonathan Cote

Strategic Advisor, Corporate Communications & Media Relations, Hydro-Québec

The global leader in social media management

With over 200,000 paid accounts and millions of users, Hootsuite powers social media for brands and organizations around the world, from the smallest businesses to the largest enterprises.

Hootsuite's unparalleled expertise in social media management, social customer care, and social selling empowers organizations to strategically grow their brand, businesses, and customer relationships with social.

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- ✓ Social selling
- ✓ Social customer care
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