

# Energy Innovation Charrettes

“Big thinking precedes great achievement.” - Wilferd Peterson

## What is a charrette?

A charrette is a focused team brainstorming process for rapid development of an innovative design or strategy solution. First developed by architects and urban designers, charrettes bring together a diverse group of experts to create and refine new concepts through structured interactions, idea generation, and synthesis.



Photo Credit:  urbed <http://www.urbed.coop>

## Charrettes in the energy sector

Devising next-generation demand-side management or energy efficiency solutions requires a forward-thinking and multi-disciplinary approach, an opportunity well-suited for the charrette process. Focused interactions among a wide range of stakeholders lead quickly to prototyping new end-use efficiency products and programs, or breakthroughs in existing ones.

The Rocky Mountain Institute conducted one of the most influential energy innovation charrettes in 2003, with the goal of establishing a new paradigm for high-performance data centers. For four days, over 90 professionals met at the Pacific Gas and Electric Company Energy Center in San Francisco to explore technologies, system integration, and business strategy, challenging existing approaches to data center design. The charrette yielded ***breakthrough design principles with an 89% reduction in energy demand by servers and related infrastructure***, along with improved reliability and equivalent computing power as compared with conventional data centers.

## Charrette benefits

- Obtaining a concise, integrated solution from a team of subject matter experts
- Blending creativity, collaboration, and friendly competition for problem-solving
- Rapidly producing actionable results in a concise format
- Saving time and money through focused efforts and early resolution of potential obstacles

## Who participates?

The process engages experienced, innovative, and technically-adept subject matter experts and industry stakeholders from a broad range of backgrounds. These professionals collectively address all aspects of the potential outcome, to generate fresh ideas, perspectives, and business models leading to the solution.

## How does it work?

A charrette applies a workshop format to accelerate the design or problem solving-process. It involves the following steps:

- Participants are introduced to each other and to the problem
- The entire group conducts an initial brainstorm
- Participants break into subgroups to work on components of the problem
- Subgroups report back to, and receive feedback from, the whole group
- Ideas that resonate are combined to create structure (“merge, purge, and converge”)
- Subgroups refine the best ideas in additional rounds, as needed
- The group reconvenes to establish an implementation plan for the consensus solution

## Getting started

Livingston Energy Innovations (LEI) plans and hosts charrettes that partner cross-disciplinary experts to generate demand-side management business and technology breakthroughs. Tapping into talented individuals from your networks and ours, these intensive, one-to-three day sessions are designed to connect professionals from a variety of backgrounds, empowering them to confront complex problems facing the energy efficiency industry, and to develop innovative solutions.

For more information, contact Jonathan Livingston of Livingston Energy Innovations at [jonathan@livingston-ei.com](mailto:jonathan@livingston-ei.com) or 415.383.7480, or visit our website at <http://www.livingston-ei.com>.