



Tresa Hussong, Iowa Lakes Electric Cooperative, IA

**1. What motivates you to want to be on the Touchstone Energy Board of Directors?**

I truly believe in Touchstone Energy's four core values of integrity, accountability, innovation and commitment to community and during my tenure at Iowa Lakes, I have successfully incorporated these core values in our marketing and public relations materials and events. The Touchstone Energy brand has given Iowa Lakes access to many powerful tools and beneficial programs that provide value to our membership. Being a member of Touchstone Energy has distinguished Iowa Lakes from investor-owned utilities. I want to continue to do my part to ensure Touchstone Energy continues to be an ongoing vital service for electric cooperatives across the nation.

**2. How has your experience prepared you to be a Touchstone Energy board member?**

As vice president of customer and corporate relations, I have been with Iowa Lakes Electric Cooperative for more than 19 years. Since 2005, when I was promoted to my current position, I have been a champion of the Touchstone Energy brand utilizing so many of its programs and services. I was elected to my first three-year term on Touchstone Energy's board of directors in 2016. I have enjoyed serving on the board and I am seeking re-election for my second, three-year term. One of the key highlights during my first term was hiring our current executive director Lynn Moore, due to the retirement of Mary McLaury. Finding the right person to fill this key position was critical to the future success of Touchstone Energy.

**3. What do you think are the biggest opportunities facing Touchstone Energy?**

One of the biggest opportunities for Touchstone Energy is its ability to recognize valuable programs that provide key essential services to its member-owners. For example, during my first term, the Key Accounts training program, formerly coordinated by NRECA, was incorporated into the Business Development section of Touchstone Energy. This is a vital program for our member-owners and Touchstone Energy recognized this fact and quickly acted to get the program secured under Touchstone Energy.

**4. What would your best advice be to engage Touchstone Energy member co-ops and build loyalty?**

Since I have been on the board of directors, one of the most reoccurring topics discussed at the board level was how to show the value of a cooperative's investment in Touchstone Energy. From those discussions, Touchstone Energy developed the Value Proposition tool. The Value Proposition is an online survey that provides a customized report about the Touchstone Energy programs that the cooperative is using and the monetary value of those programs return to the co-op. Once this information is shared with a cooperative's

management and its board of directors, the value of the co-op's investment is undeniably evident. Keeping a cooperative's management and directors engaged is the key to building brand loyalty.

#### **5. What engagement activities do you foresee for our member-owners?**

One of the first Touchstone Energy programs I implemented when I came into my current position at Iowa Lakes was the annual ACSI survey that is conducted at Iowa Lakes Electric Cooperative each year. This has been a valuable tool over the years to help us understand our member demographics and to modify programs and services we provide. Recently, the ACSI survey evaluates the members' responses to determine which attributes drive member satisfaction. For example, being involved in our communities was the second-largest individual variable, driving 23% of Iowa Lakes' ACSI score. This was extremely valuable information to know since Iowa Lakes was in the process of transitioning its Operation Round Up program from an opt-in to an opt-out structure. Iowa Lakes has had great success with the Operation Round Up change, with very few member-owners being asked to be removed from the voluntary optout program. We have had the privilege to present substantial checks to deserving organizations in our community because of the change in this program. In summary, the enhanced evaluations that are a part of the ACSI survey should be something all Touchstone Energy member-owners share with their management team and board of directors.

#### **6. When asked about Touchstone Energy, what are you most passionate about?**

When I started working at Iowa Lakes Electric Cooperative 19-1/2 years ago, deregulation of the electric distribution industry was a very big concern for electric cooperatives across the country. Because electric cooperatives are different from the large, impersonal investor-owned utilities, we needed to distinguish ourselves. It was at that time, the Touchstone Energy brand with its four core values was born. Still to this day, Touchstone Energy represents a nationwide alliance of member-owned electric co-ops for the benefit of its member-owners and their communities. In summary, I'm still as passionate about what Touchstone Energy represents and its values today as I was back more than 19 years ago. It has been a privilege to serve on the brand's board of directors and I would appreciate member co-ops giving me the opportunity to continue serving for another term.