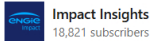




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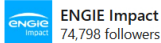


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Ask the Expert: The Evolving Role of the Energy Buyer



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March 13, 2026

As the energy market continues to evolve, the energy buyer faces changes in their roles and responsibilities. Over the past few years, energy buyers have expanded their roles beyond procurement—especially in the manufacturing space, where energy is directly tied to production continuity and often represents a significant input cost.

As organizations rethink how they manage utility data, we asked our Director of Renewable Advisory, [Peter Liska, CEM CEP](#), to provide his expertise and help clarify what this means for energy buyers.

As we look ahead to 2026, how do you see the energy buyer's responsibilities evolving within manufacturing organizations? What new expectations are emerging from finance and executive leadership?

There is a greater expectation and, frankly, need for energy buyers to understand the energy market in which they operate at a granular level, as well as the greater energy market as a whole. Energy costs have gone from a simple cost per unit to potentially dozens of line items. And rising energy costs increase the importance of a sharp eye for an operation's smaller details. Energy buyers must know how and when the company is charged, and which of those charges can be managed or mitigated. These are all necessary parts of daily operations.



For manufacturers operating across multiple plants and regions, how important is a strong foundation of utility data governance?

Utility charges have become much more granular over time. Invoices may be based on dozens of variables, and data management that cannot keep up with how the organization is being charged leaves the company with significant utility spending blind spots. Data capture and management that considers all the net cost details puts an organization in an advantageous position—they can now understand how and why costs are generated, what issues may need attention, and what risks need to be managed. Foundational utility data governance enables energy buyers to build more resilient energy supply strategies, improve budgeting accuracy, and support operational reliability at a facility level.

In 2026, how should energy buyers in manufacturing rethink risk management? What proactive steps separate prepared organizations from reactive organizations?

Manufacturers currently face heightened exposure to market volatility due to factors like capacity price spikes, growing load from electrification, production

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onshoring, increased automation, and ongoing regulatory shifts. The first step to prepare for volatility is to acknowledge and accept that increased volatility is a reality in the current market. It does not have a short-term fix.

The second step is to understand what volatility means for the organization. Understanding risk exposure starts with a granular understanding of what cost components impact the operation and when they pose the greatest risk.

The third step is to conduct an honest assessment of what actions your company can take. Can longer-term contracts be executed? Can additional hedges be layered? Can demand response use avoid or mitigate the effects of price spikes? Organizations can also use energy efficiency and on-site generation to reduce grid exposure.

Finally, companies should look to see if pushing the added risk of the market upstream or downstream in the supply chain is possible.



Want to learn more about how energy buyers can keep up with the evolving energy market? Reach out to our experts and [schedule a 1:1](#).

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