Politecnico di Torino

Politecnico di Torino

Master's degree in engineering and management

A.y. 2024/2025

October Graduation Session

From Monopoly to Energy Market Liberalization: Strategic Implications for the Consulting Sector between competitive opportunity and trust Disruption

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Sommario

Abstract 3
CHAPTER 1 – THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CONTEXT 5
1.1 The evolution of the modern consumer 5
1.2 The structure of public utilities 7
1.3 Market liberalization 8
1.4 Liberalization through Porter's Model 11
1.5 Energy market players 13
1.6 Management of the electrical system 16
1.7 The emergence of multi-service companies 17
1.8 The impact of the energy and geopolitical crisis 19
CHAPTER 2 – Brokers as drivers of the free market 23
2.1 The Central Role of Brokers in the Evolution of Multi-Service Companies 23
2.2 The importance of energy consultants in the current context 25
2.3 Multi-service companies and digitalization 26
2.4 The strategic importance of energy consultants in market dynamics 29
CHAPTER 3- Implementation of ActiveCampaign at GDN Consulence: a path to business transformation 31
3.1 Digital Transformation in a Multi-Service Company 31
3.2 Implementation of ActiveCampaign in GDN Consulence 34
3.3 ActiveCampaign at GDN — Intake, Routing & Operations (Figures A–F) .. 37
CHAPTER 4- Contact Overview as the Operational Nucleus 45
4.1 From Data Management to Customer Experience 45
4.2 Operational conclusion 46
BIBLIOGRAFIA 50
SITOGRAFIA 51

Abstract

We live in a historical era in which everything is constantly changing: markets are unstable, technologies are evolving rapidly, and people find themselves having to make important decisions every day in increasingly complex areas. In this scenario, the figure of the consultant – or broker – is emerging strongly as one of the fundamental references in modern society. Until a few years ago, most people chose their electricity, gas, internet, insurance, or banking providers passively, often without knowing about alternatives or having the tools to compare them. But today, thanks to market liberalization and digitalization, every citizen can – in theory – access hundreds of different offers. However, the ability to choose is not always synonymous with freedom: when information is too abundant, confusing, or unclear, consumers risk making the wrong choice.In this context of information chaos and growing mistrust, the need for reliable professionals has emerged strongly. These are figures capable of guiding people through the jungle of offers, analyzing personal or family needs, and suggesting the most suitable solutions, explaining them in simple terms. Today, the consultant is no longer a salesperson: they are an ally, an educator, a mediator between the customer and the market. They are someone who knows the suppliers well, reads between the lines of contracts, and takes care of their client's economic and management situation over time.

This thesis was created with the aim of enhancing the role of the broker/consultant in modern society, analyzing their evolution, their impact, and the value they can generate for families, businesses, and the economic system as a whole. In particular, it will focus on the role of the energy consultant, a figure that has become crucial in recent years

due to the instability of utility prices and the increase in energy costs From the transition to the free market to international crises, people have felt disoriented and vulnerable. In many cases, it was the energy consultant who represented a beacon in the storm, offering not only savings but also security and continuity.

During my university studies in Management Engineering and Management, I did a curricular internship at GDN Consultancy, an innovative Italian company that operates as a multi-service consulting agency. This hands-on experience allowed me to understand how important this role is and how digital tools such as ActiveCampaign can enhance the effectiveness of consulting work, automatically monitor clients, and build stronger relationships over time. The second part of my thesis is dedicated to studying the implementation of ActiveCampaign CRM within the GDN model. Through the analysis of the work carried out, it will be shown how CRM software can radically transform the organization of a consulting firm, making it more efficient, structured, and capable of offering value on a large scale.

The ultimate goal is to demonstrate that brokers are not only useful but necessary in today's world. And that, with the right tools and an ethical approach to their work, they can become a fundamental pillar for the well-being and economic peace of mind of citizens.

CHAPTER 1 – THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CONTEXT

1.1 The evolution of the modern consumer

Originally, the Italian energy sector was regulated by a protected market, a centralized model in which customers had no real choice and tended to remain with the same supplier for life. In this system, energy prices were set by the public authority, which suppliers had to strictly adhere to. This mechanism ensured stability and predictability, but at the same time excluded any competitive dynamics and limited consumers' freedom of choice.With the liberalization of the energy market, which was gradually introduced in Italy following European directives, the scenario has changed profoundly.The term liberalization refers to a series of measures aimed at eliminating barriers that prevent or hinder potential competitors from freely entering the market.

The market that is formed is characterized by the presence of several companies, all capable of providing the service required by the community. It is a competitive market where companies operate in a situation of free competition and consumers are free to access it. Prices are no longer imposed by the state but are determined by the commercial policies of individual operators or even defined as public utilities, giving rise to a context of open competition.

This has triggered a real “race” between suppliers, committed to attracting and retaining customers through more advantageous economic conditions, personalized offers, and additional services. In this new structure, consumers are no longer passive subjects, but become active players called upon to evaluate alternatives, manage their own contracts, and navigate often heterogeneous proposals.

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The transition from a protected market to a free market has therefore marked an epoch-making change: from a static system governed by state intervention to a dynamic and competitive market, in which the ability to differentiate and the transparency of information play a decisive role.In recent decades, the consumer profile has undergone a profound transformation. Whereas customers used to be passive, poorly informed, and often tied to a supplier out of habit or lack of alternatives, today they have become more aware, connected, and potentially autonomous in their choices.However, this evolution has also brought new difficulties: information overload, the variety of offers on the market, and the absence of reliable reference points have generated confusion and disorientation. The abundance of choice, if not accompanied by expert guidance, risks paralyzing the user instead of liberating them.The modern consumer is therefore in a paradoxical situation: they have access to more information than ever before, but they do not have the time, skills, or confidence to make the right and most advantageous decisions.This is why there is a growing need to rely on external professionals who can offer advice, support, and ongoing guidance.

1.2 The structure of public utilities

The term “public utility” refers to both the services provided and the company itself. Let's analyze the different types of structures that the latter can take:

- in-house management: these are small, legally unformalized entities within local administrations that meet the needs of small communities located in specific areas of the territory;

- small and medium-sized local companies, single-utility or multi-utility companies: we distinguish between single-utility companies, which provide only one type of service, and multi-utility companies, which provide several types of services. We are referring to around a hundred companies, which have decreased in number as a result of integration processes. Companies in the electricity sector, in particular, have expressed the need to merge in order to provide a single service and achieve greater levels of efficiency.

- Large companies with supra-regional and national significance: these are a few companies that have grown to a large size through mergers; one example is Acea.

- Large multinational groups: these are large companies with a continental or intercontinental focus, providing services in several countries, such as Enel, which is vertically integrated both downstream and upstream, and Eni. The national electricity system is defined as the set of production facilities (power plants), transmission and distribution networks (power lines), as well as auxiliary services and interconnection and dispatching

devices located throughout the country. Today's society is fundamentally based on the consumption and exploitation of energy, a significant part of which is represented by electricity; therefore, power plants play a fundamental role in the economic and industrial development of the country. Services, their capillarity and distribution, and good quality, as stated above, are an expression, and also somewhat a consequence, of a country's economic and social development.

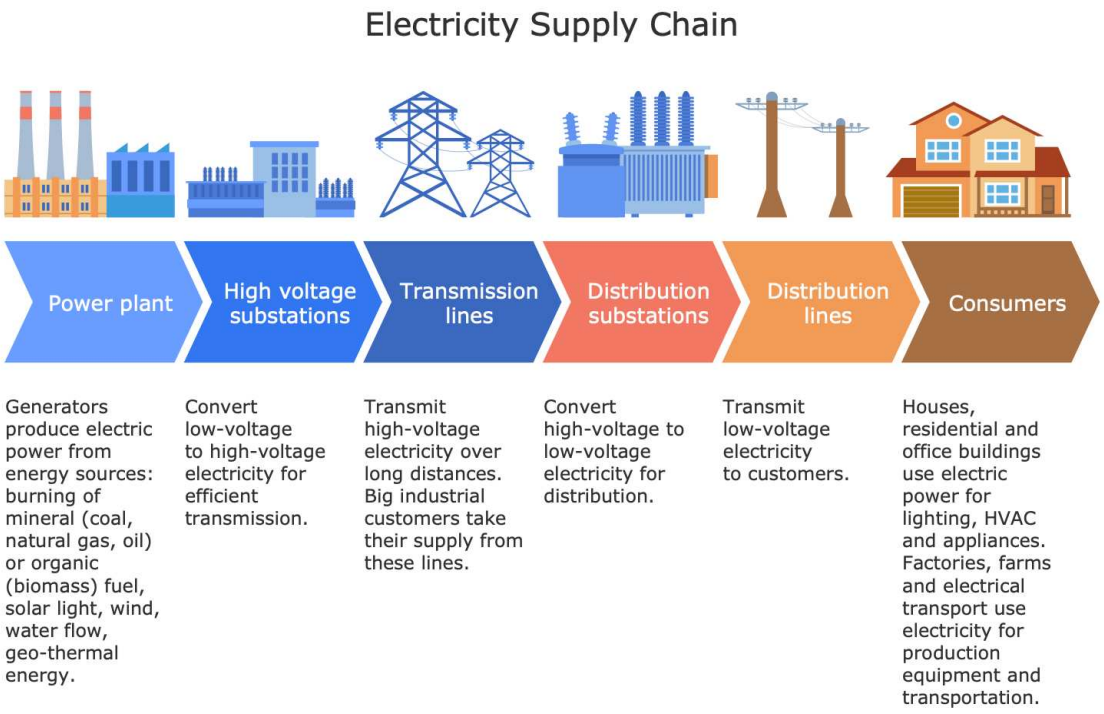

Figure 1: Public Utilities(from concept.draw)

1.3 Market liberalization

Prior to 1999, Enel was entrusted with the task of managing the production, transmission, dispatching, distribution, and sale of electricity, handling all stages of the supply chain and operating as a vertically integrated monopoly. The Italian energy market has changed significantly in recent years, as reforms introduced at both European and national level have altered the structure of the sector, moving from a structure with a single monopoly operator, present in all stages of the supply chain, to a situation with multiple competing operators. It was precisely the start of the slow and gradual liberalization process and the Bersani Decree of 1999 that marked the birth of the electricity market.The decree contained the 16 provisions of Directive 96/92/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of December 19, 1996, aimed at creating a single energy market in Europe.

The document provided for the gradual liberalization of activities throughout the value chain (production, export, import, purchase, and sale of electricity) to promote free competition in the energy sector for the benefit of consumers. It can therefore be said that the Bersani Decree, a symbol of market liberalization in Italy, represented a historic turning point, innovating the regulation of the electricity sector. The major change brought about by the decree was the vertical and horizontal unbundling of the sector, with the aim of minimizing the power of the former monopoly.

This process can be said to have been completed with the Bersani bis Decree of 2007, which marks the complete liberalization of the Italian energy market, opening the doors to new suppliers and allowing users to freely choose to turn to the free market and thus not continue to remain in a protected market situation.

This led to the unbundling of the sector, a term which refers to: 'The separation of the various components of the production chain of a vertically integrated company with the aim of introducing greater competitiveness in the relevant market. Unbundling promotes the opening of the market in potentially competitive segments (production, supply, and sales), separating them from structurally monopolistic activities and promoting real and non-discriminatory access by third parties to the services offered by infrastructure owners (Third Party Access, TPA). Activities characterized by natural monopoly are typically those related to essential facilities that cannot be duplicated, as they are burdened by high fixed costs and sunk costs. In the energy sector, which is the subject of the following thesis project, this separation has played a fundamental role in promoting the liberalization process.

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1.4 Liberalization through Porter's Model

In order to better understand the transition from monopoly to liberalization, but above all to study the transformation of the energy market, Porter's five competitive forces model can be used. This model is used by companies to assess their competitive position; in fact, it identifies the forces (and studies their intensity and importance) that operate in the economic environment and which, through their action, could reduce the long-term profitability of companies. These forces act progressively and, if not properly monitored and addressed, lead to a loss of competitiveness compared to other companies in the market. Analyzing these forces enables companies to:

- obtain a complete picture of their competitive position;
- make strategic decisions;
- establish the behaviors and attitudes to adopt in relation to these forces.

According to Porter, competitiveness is not solely the result of competition between companies in the market, but rather the competitive environment in which a company operates depends on five forces25, known as competitive forces, which interact with each other; in particular:

1)direct competitors, i.e. those offering the same type of product;

2) the threat of new entrants: the entry of new competitors depends on the presence of barriers to entry, obstacles that make it more difficult to enter the sector; the higher the barriers, the lower the threat;

Figure 2: Porter's five forces(from thestrategyinstitute)

3) the threat of substitute products: this occurs when products similar to existing ones are introduced into the market

4) the bargaining power of suppliers;

5) the bargaining power of customers. Porter's model can be used to better understand the transformations that have taken place over time within the energy market. The five competitive forces have undergone changes, both before and after liberalization, as they have had to adapt to changes in the market and various regulations at national and European level. The five forces model can be used to understand the competitive forces at play in the energy market.

1.5 Energy market players

Each player in the energy market has a role that is clearly defined by legislation, in order to ensure the effectiveness and efficiency of the sector. In addition to Parliament and the Government, these players includes:

- the Ministry of Economic Development (MSE), which defines the strategic and operational guidelines ensure the security and cost-effectiveness of the national electricity system;
- the Electricity and Gas Authority (AEEG), which guarantees the promotion of competition and efficiency in the electricity and gas sectors, with regulatory and control functions; it therefore guarantees all end users, from businesses to households, access to the national grid, which is provided through procedures regulated by the Authority;

- Terna S.p.A., which safely manages the national transmission grid and electricity flows through dispatching, i.e. balancing energy supply and demand 365 days a year, 24 hours a day;

- Gestore dei Servizi Energetici (GSE), the public holding company that supports the development of renewable sources through the management and provision of the relevant incentive mechanisms;

- the Single Buyer (AU), which is responsible for guaranteeing the supply of electricity within the framework of the enhanced protection and safeguard service referred to in Decree-Law No. 73 of 18 June 2007, converted into Law No. 125 of 3 August2007. The Single Buyer is an important figure in that, in addition to purchasing electricity on favorable terms for resale to distributors operating in the regulated market, it is responsible for guaranteeing the supply of electricity to users in the regulated market, in accordance with the criteria of continuity, security and efficiency of service. This is a very unique service, as the guarantee of continuity of service provision is fundamental.

- the Energy Markets Operator (GME), which organizes and manages the energy market, better known as the Electricity Exchange, according to criteria of neutrality, transparency, objectivity and competition between producers; it also acts as a guarantor for the availability of power reserves.

Efficiency is represented by the ratio between the results obtained and the resources used to achieve them, while effectiveness is measured by the ratio between the results achieved and those that should have been achieved. To understand this, just think of the risks of blackouts and the significant consequences that these could cause. We recall that the largest and most serious blackout in history, after the unification of Italy, was on 28 September 2003, when at 3:20 in the morning, the whole country was plunged into darkness

1.6 Management of the electrical system

The management of the electrical system is highly complex and requires proper coordination in order to ensure its operation. It is therefore necessary to identify a central coordinator with full control over all the production plants that are part of the system. This person, known as the dispatcher, is the hub of the electricity system and is responsible for ensuring that it operates in conditions of maximum safety in order to guarantee continuity and quality of service. In fact, it ensures that production is always equal to consumption and that frequency and voltage do not deviate from optimal values, in compliance with the transit limits on the networks and the dynamic constraints on the generation plants.

The dispatcher is therefore responsible for balancing the system in real time; in fact the aim is to achieve a continuous balance between inputs and withdrawals at every node of the network.

There are also automatic regulation and control systems for the production units, which increase or reduce the input into the network in order to compensate for any imbalance in the network itself. The subject actively intervenes, sending orders to the tertiary reserve units to start up, increase or reduce the power supplied, only when the operating margins of the automatic regulation systems are below safety standards in order to replenish them.

1.7 The emergence of multi-service companies

Multi-service companies were created precisely to respond to this social and economic evolution: entities capable of offering a single point of reference for multiple needs, such as energy, internet, SIM cards, tax advice, mobility, and more. Multiservice companies now play a central role in the free energy market, as they do not just offer a single product, but act as intermediaries between the customer and the supplier, guiding consumption choices and influencing competitive dynamics.

Their role as consultants allows them to aggregate a vast fragmented demand and direct it towards the most advantageous solutions in terms of price and contractual conditions, generating significant shifts in customer base from one operator to another. This phenomenon gives multiservice companies market power that goes far beyond the simple function of intermediary: in many cases, they are able to determine, at least in part, the very trend of the sector, as suppliers are forced to adapt their commercial and pricing strategies taking into account the indications coming from these intermediaries. As a result, multi-service consultants act as indirect market decision-makers, capable of influencing the fate of operators and guiding customer acquisition and retention policies.

This influence has ambivalent effects: on the one hand, it promotes greater competition, increased transparency, and the possibility for consumers to access more favorable conditions; on the other hand, it can generate instability, as suppliers experience sudden and

significant changes in their customer portfolios, accentuating the unpredictability of market balances. Ultimately, multi-service companies are not just an accessory element of the system, but constitute a strategic hub without which the free market could not develop in its current form, playing a leading role in determining the periodic movements and developments of the entire sector.

1.8 The impact of the energy and geopolitical crisis

The energy crisis that erupted in 2022 had a profound impact on both household and corporate budgets. Russia's invasion of Ukraine caused severe instability on international energy markets, leading to sudden and unpredictable increases in the cost of electricity, gas, and fuel. According to ARERA data (2023), the wholesale price of electricity reached an annual average of €303.95/MWh in 2022, more than double that of 2021, with peaks exceeding €870/MWh in August of the same year (GME, 2023). Natural gas followed a similar trend: between 2019 and the summer of 2022, the price rose by almost 900%, with an increase of 171% in the first eight months of 2022 alone (Nomism Energia, 2022).

The impact on Italian households has been significant: average annual expenditure on electricity rose from around €616 in 2021 to almost €2,000 in 2022, while expenditure on gas rose from €1,400 to over €4,400 in the same period (UNC, 2022), resulting in an unsustainable economic burden for many domestic users. Businesses have also suffered heavy price increases: in the tertiary sector, between January and April 2022, electricity prices rose by an average of 61%, while gas prices rose by 21%, with estimated annual effects of between +110% and +140% (Il Sole 24 Ore, 2022).

To mitigate the social and economic impacts, the European Union has mobilized a total of over €657 billion in support measures, of which

approximately €50 billion has been allocated by Italy to curb costs for households and businesses (Bruegel, 2023). Despite this, at the end of 2023, consumer prices for electricity and gas were still more than 30% higher than pre-crisis levels (ARERA, 2023).

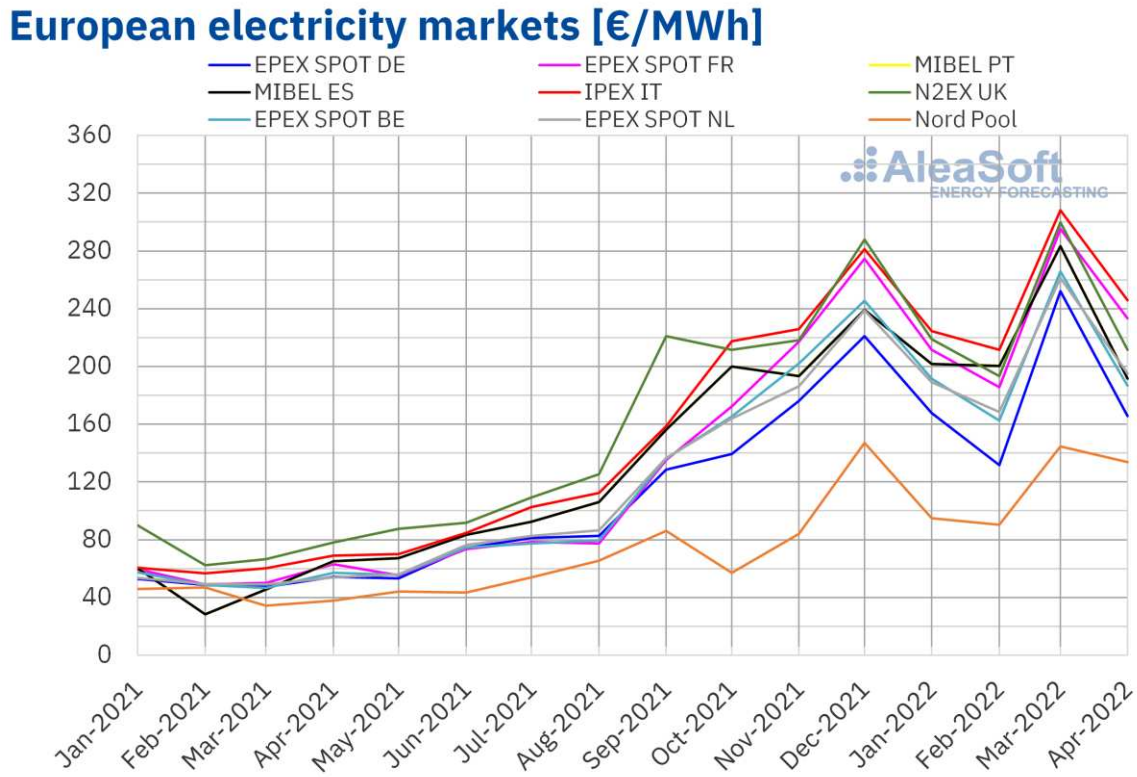


Figure 3: Europan electricity markets(from epexspot)

Utility bills have risen by as much as 300% compared to previous years, bringing many Italian families to their knees. Added to this is rising inflation, which has made it even more urgent to optimize every recurring expense. Many citizens, suddenly finding themselves exposed to opaque offers and unclear contracts, began to look for a point of reference: someone who could read their bills for them, explain the differences between tariffs in a simple way, and above all help them to no longer passively suffer the trends of the market.

Their role as aggregators of demand allows them to steer customers towards the most convenient offers, generating significant shifts that directly affect operators' market shares. The data confirm the extent of the phenomenon: according to QualEnergia.it, in 2024 (January–September) the rate of domestic electricity switching was 19.4%, with an annual projection of around 26%; Of these switches, as many as 77% took place within the free market, demonstrating that the phenomenon concerns not only the transition from the protected to the free market, but above all the mobility of customers between suppliers already in competition.

Added to this is the overall volume of switches: ARERA has indicated that in 2024 alone, over 2.9 million domestic customers changed supplier or contract using the Offers Portal and the annual expenditure indicator, a sign of a highly dynamic market. It is important to note that no public source breaks down precisely how much of these switches is directly attributable to brokers or multi-service companies; However,

the combination of (a) switching volumes certified by ARERA, (b) membership numbers for purchasing groups and online comparators, and (c) mass exits from transitional regimes provides robust quantitative evidence of intermediaries' capacity for concentrated switching and, therefore, their periodic influence on competitive dynamics. In this sense, multi-service companies do not merely follow the market, but help shape its trajectory, acting as true indirect decision-makers in the energy sector.

CHAPTER 2 – Brokers as drivers of the free market

2.1 The Central Role of Brokers in the Evolution of Multi-Service Companies

The reason why multi-service companies are now able to exert such significant influence within the free energy market lies mainly with brokers, i.e. the professionals who made the creation and development of these companies possible. Energy brokers were the first to understand that end customers would not be able to cope with the opening up of the market to competition without technical and commercial support capable of interpreting the complexity of the offers and translating them into concrete choices.

This insight led to the development of a brokerage model that transformed brokers from simple salespeople to trusted advisors, capable of establishing an ongoing relationship with customers based on the search for advantageous economic conditions and active contract management. It was precisely the action of brokers that laid the foundations for the emergence of multi-service companies: structured organizations that were able to multiply the individual impact of each consultant, aggregating increasingly large customer portfolios and collectively directing their consumption behavior. If today's data show that millions of customers change suppliers every year and that, in 77% of cases, they move within the free market, this is due to the ability of these intermediaries to drive demand mobility. In this sense, the broker is not only the original figure, but remains the beating heart of the mechanism: without their role, multi-service companies would have neither the bargaining power nor the ability to influence the

market, and it would be impossible to explain how they have become truly decisive players in determining the competitive balance.

In conclusion, the economic and social context has generated a new relational need between customers and advisers. People are looking not only for savings, but also for protection, clarity and ongoing support. The modern consultant therefore becomes a crucial figure capable of simplifying complexity, generating real value and building trust over time. It is in this new scenario that the figure of the broker – and in particular that of the energy consultant – has found fertile ground to fully express its value.

2.2 The importance of energy consultants in the current context

In recent years, the energy sector has undergone a profound transformation, fueled by three main factors: market liberalization, the urgency of ecological transition, and the high price volatility caused by geopolitical and economic events. In this scenario, energy consultants have taken on a central role, becoming not only a point of reference for consumers, but also players capable of influencing the balance of the entire market. Today's average consumer is exposed to hundreds of offers, opaque contract terms and technical complexity that makes it difficult to choose independently.

It is in this lack of clarity that the energy consultant steps in, guiding households and businesses towards the most suitable solutions.

Value for the customer:

Personalized analysis: the consultant analyses the customer's consumption, habits and needs, identifying the most convenient solution not only in terms of price, but also in terms of efficiency and sustainability.

Transparency: they clearly explain bill items, incentives and bonuses, becoming an interpreter of market rules.

Technological innovation: they illustrate the opportunities related to photovoltaics, batteries, heat pumps and energy communities, accompanying the customer through the bureaucratic process.

Ongoing assistance: they do not limit themselves to sales, but follow the customer over time, monitoring consumption and proposing improvements.

The most significant, and often underestimated, aspect concerns the collective influence that energy consultants exert on the market. Each individual customer who changes supplier represents a small movement, but when thousands of customers are directed by energy consultants towards certain offers, the impact becomes enormous. Acting as trusted intermediaries, consultants are able to shift large volumes of users from one operator to another, influencing competition and helping to determine market share trends. In other words, consultants are not only interpreters of the market, but become de facto regulators, because they guide the mass decisions of consumers. This power to influence the flow of customers makes energy consultants a crucial element in the strategies of suppliers, who often tailor their offers precisely to attract or retain the network of contacts managed by consultants.

2.3 Multi-service companies and digitalization

In the current landscape, multi-service consulting companies are emerging as key players in the value chain of services to end consumers. Their competitive advantage stems not so much from a single service, but from their ability to offer a single point of contact for a variety of needs, from energy to telecommunications, insurance to taxation.

Customers no longer have to chase offers and suppliers through different channels: they find an integrated point of reference here, which knows their history, their needs and their preferences. In an era characterized by regulatory complexity, variable tax incentives and fierce competition between operators, the centralization of consulting becomes a huge competitiveadvantage.
Underlying the success of these businesses is a model based on three pillars:

Network of local consultants – they are the “face” of the company, the ones who establish relationships with customers and maintain them over time.

Strategic partnerships with suppliers – contractual agreements with energy, telecommunications and financial services operators to ensure competitive conditions.

Digital tools and automated processes – the enabling element: CRM, marketing automation, digital signatures, online funnels, data analysis systems. Without digitalization, managing thousands of contacts with diverse histories and multi-channel interactions would be impossible.

These tools make it possible to maintain relationships with each customer, track the history of consultations, segment the audience by interest and send personalized offers at the right time.

2.4 The strategic importance of energy consultants in market dynamics

In this context, energy consultants play a particularly important role, not only at the local level but also at the systemic level. According to data from ARERA and Segugio.it, between January and September 2024, the supplier switching rate in the gas sector was 16.3%, an increase of 4.8 points compared to 2023. In the electricity sector, the 18-29 age group showed a supplier switching rate of 28.9% in the same period. This means that customers are mobile and ready to switch providers if properly guided. As of March 2024, 74.4% of electricity customers and 85.9% of domestic gas customers had already left the protected market to switch to the free market. This shows that the absolute majority of Italian users are now “contestable” and open to new proposals, increasing the importance of the role of the consultant as a guiding figure.

Not only that: from 2026, as a result of the ARERA reform, switching suppliers will be possible in just 24 working hours, a drastic reduction in time that will make the role of energy consultants even more decisive in capturing quick purchasing decisions. In economic terms, the Italian energy sector recorded record revenues of €643.8 billion in 2022 (+84% compared to 2021), with approximately 86,000 employees and a turnover of €32 billion linked to technologies for the energy transition (efficiency, renewables, components).

In such a vast context, consultants who manage customer networks and switching flows become strategic players, capable of concretely influencing suppliers' market shares. In practice, consultants are not only interpreters of the market, but also become de facto regulators: by moving their customers, they influence commercial policies, prices and the competitive structure of the sector.

Multi-service companies represent a natural evolution of the need for simplification. They offer value to customers and stability to businesses, combining personal trust, digital technology and integrated consulting. Energy consultants, in particular, are not just professionals who help customers understand their bills, but true drivers of market dynamism, capable of guiding large volumes of customers and shifting entire market shares.

In light of the latest data (over 16% switching in gas, almost 30% among young people in electricity, more than 74% of users already in the free market), it is clear that the role of the energy consultant is now an essential pillar: for customers, as a trusted guide in a complex environment, and for suppliers, as a strategic lever to gain or lose ground in the market.

CHAPTER 3- Implementation of ActiveCampaign at GDN Consulence: a path to business transformation

3.1 Digital Transformation in a Multi-Service Company

GDN Consulence is a multi-service business that operates across a range of sectors: energy, telecommunications, electronic devices, tax services, mobility and energy efficiency solutions. The company's mission is to simplify its customers' lives by offering a single point of reference capable of responding to multiple needs. In a context characterized by fragmented offers, different rules and complex contractual deadlines, the added value of a company such as GDN Consulence lies in its ability to provide personalized and continuous advice, accompanying the customer through all stages: from choosing the most suitable service to after-sales support.

During my internship at the company, I had the opportunity to closely analyze the organizational structure and operational processes. I carefully studied the strengths that make GDN competitive in the market – such as the variety of services, its widespread presence throughout the territory and its direct relationship with customers – and at the same time I identified some critical issues that slowed down daily activities, particularly in information management and internal communication.

At the same time, I was able to follow all the steps of the sales cycle, closely observing the process that starts with the initial contact with the

customer, continues with commercial negotiations and ends with long-term customer loyalty.

This process of observation and analysis allowed me to better understand the problems that needed to be solved, the processes that needed to be optimized and the areas that deserved further investment in order to consolidate the company's competitive advantage.

Based on these considerations, the decision was made to introduce advanced CRM software capable of centrally managing information, optimizing workflows and ensuring faster internal and external communication.

The choice fell on ActiveCampaign, a platform that combines CRM and marketing automation features.

The implementation was designed by clearly dividing roles and responsibilities: secretaries were tasked with uploading customer data and handling the initial contact phase; consultants were responsible for managing negotiations and monitoring sales opportunities; external collaborators were given the opportunity to interface with the company through standardized processes. This division of tasks has made the working environment cleaner, more orderly and faster, avoiding overlaps, information leaks and slowdowns in procedures.

Of course, the change did not happen overnight. Adapting to the new processes took time, training and constant change management. Many employees initially showed resistance, struggling to change established habits and perceiving the new system as an obstacle rather than an opportunity. The first few weeks were characterized by slowness, uploading errors and difficulties in coordinating the various people involved. However, through daily practice and support provided

to employees, the company gradually managed to overcome these difficulties.

As the months passed, the benefits of the new system became clear. ActiveCampaign made it possible to reduce customer response times, increase the accuracy of information, monitor sales trends in real time, and tailor marketing campaigns to customer profiles and behavior. Optimizing workflows led to greater efficiency, improving both internal productivity and the quality of customer service

In conclusion, GDN Consulence's experience demonstrates how essential it is for a multi-service company to have a structured CRM system capable of collecting, organizing, and analyzing data, following the entire sales cycle step by step. In a constantly evolving market, characterized by increasing competitiveness and digitalization, tools such as ActiveCampaign are no longer optional, but rather an essential element for the sustainability and development of the business. The ability of a CRM to integrate processes, coordinate different professional figures and transform data into concrete operational strategies translates into a lasting competitive advantage, capable of strengthening customer relationships and ensuring the company's steady growth over time.

3.2 Implementation of ActiveCampaign in GDN Consulence

1) **Company profile and operational functioning**

GDN Consulence is a multi-service company that integrates six main sectors:

1) **energy and telecommunications**;
2) **renewables** (photovoltaics, storage, heat pumps);
3) **water treatment**;
4) **retail electronic devices**;
5) **CAF & Patronato**;
6) **mobility** (car/van rental and charter).

The model is customer-centric: a single relational hub that intercepts different customer needs, reduces information friction and consolidates trust over multi-year life cycles.

Operationally, before the CRM project, data was distributed across spreadsheets, chats, email inboxes and vertical management systems, resulting in fragmented information, duplication and non-standardized response times.

2) Internship: end-to-end mapping of the sales cycle

During my internal internship, I reconstructed the entire journey:

- **Acquisition** (form, walk-in, WhatsApp/telephone, referral, social media, trade fairs/banquets).
- **Qualification & site inspection** (minimum data collection, pre-consumption analysis, appointment).
- **Offer & negotiation** (quote, documents, plan/product selection).
- **Execution/activation** (installation or administrative procedures).
- **Loyalty building** (assistance, maintenance reminders, cross-selling/upselling on other GDN lines).

The study revealed three key area:

- **Problems to be solved**: lack of unique records, untracked follow-ups, poor management of “who does what/by when”.
- **Processes to be optimized**: lead assignment, minimum data standards, response times, document checklists.
- **Areas to focus on**: educational nurturing, cross-selling between verticals, KPI monitoring and forecasting.

3) Project decision: introduce Active and redesign the organization

We chose ActiveCampaign to combine CRM + marketing automation in a single layer: sales pipelines, email automation, tag segmentation, lead scoring, tasks and reports.

The architecture was designed to divide work and responsibilities:

Secretarial: standard intake and data entry, data quality, agenda, reminders.

Consultants: pipeline opportunity management, notes, attachments, quotes, follow-ups.

Collaborations: dedicated entry channels (forms/landing pages with source tags), limited visibility and automatic assignment.

The result is a cleaner, faster, and more traceable environment, with unified data and scalable processes.

3.3 ActiveCampaign at GDN — Intake, Routing & Operations (Figures A–F)

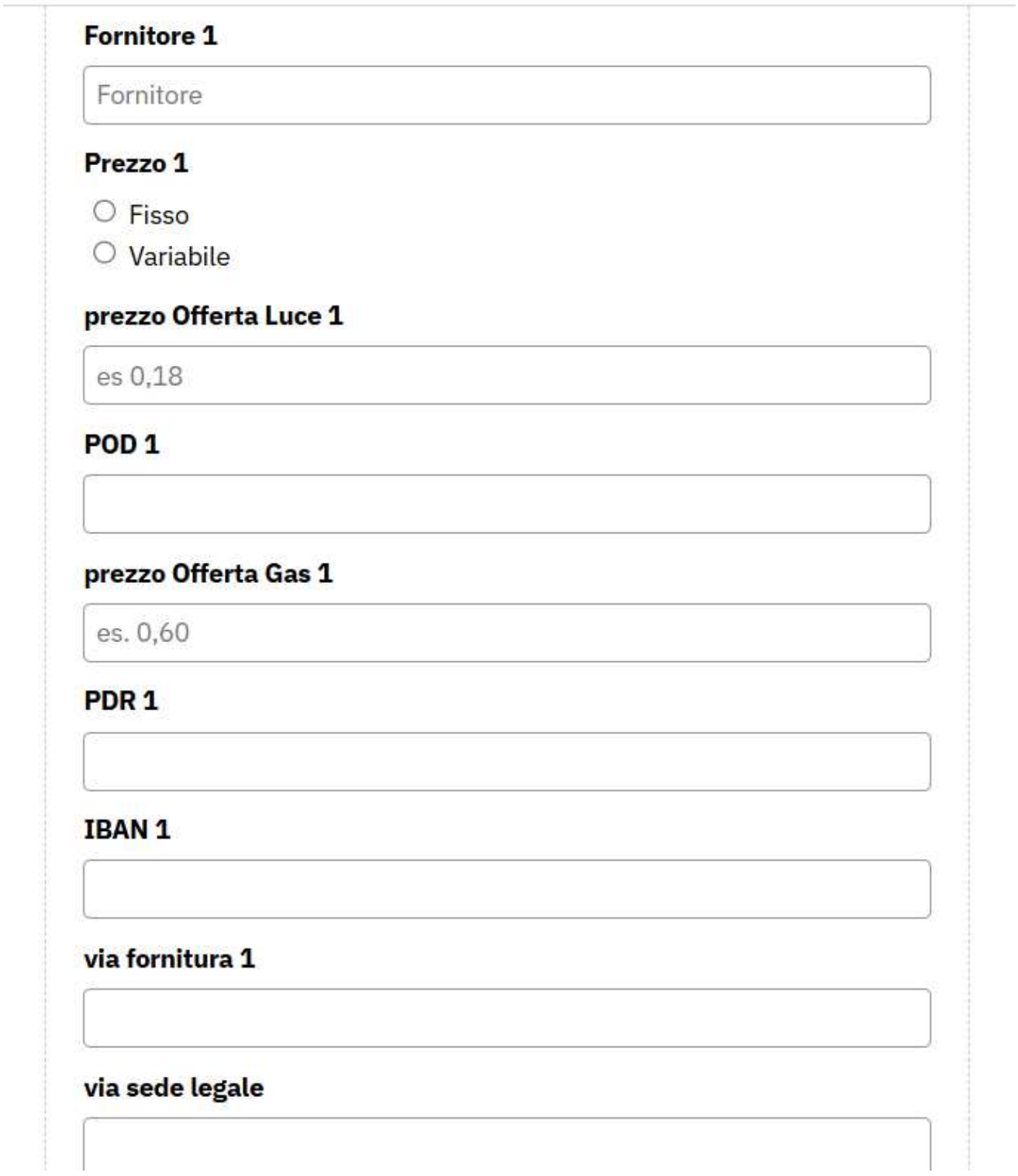
Intake and operational segmentation modules.

The three modules illustrated in Figures A–C form the backbone of the data acquisition system in ActiveCampaign. The first (Figure A) focuses on the personal data and internal codes necessary to ensure the traceability of activities (SLA, ownership, referral). The second (Figure B) delves into the technical parameters for energy and gas offers, standardizing formats and enabling error prevention through masks. The third (Figure C) manages the multi-service nature of the GDN portfolio: the selection of services writes vertical tags and triggers the opening of one or more deals, allowing granular routing of customers to specific pipelines and content.

Figure A — Intake Module: Personal Details & Internal Codes

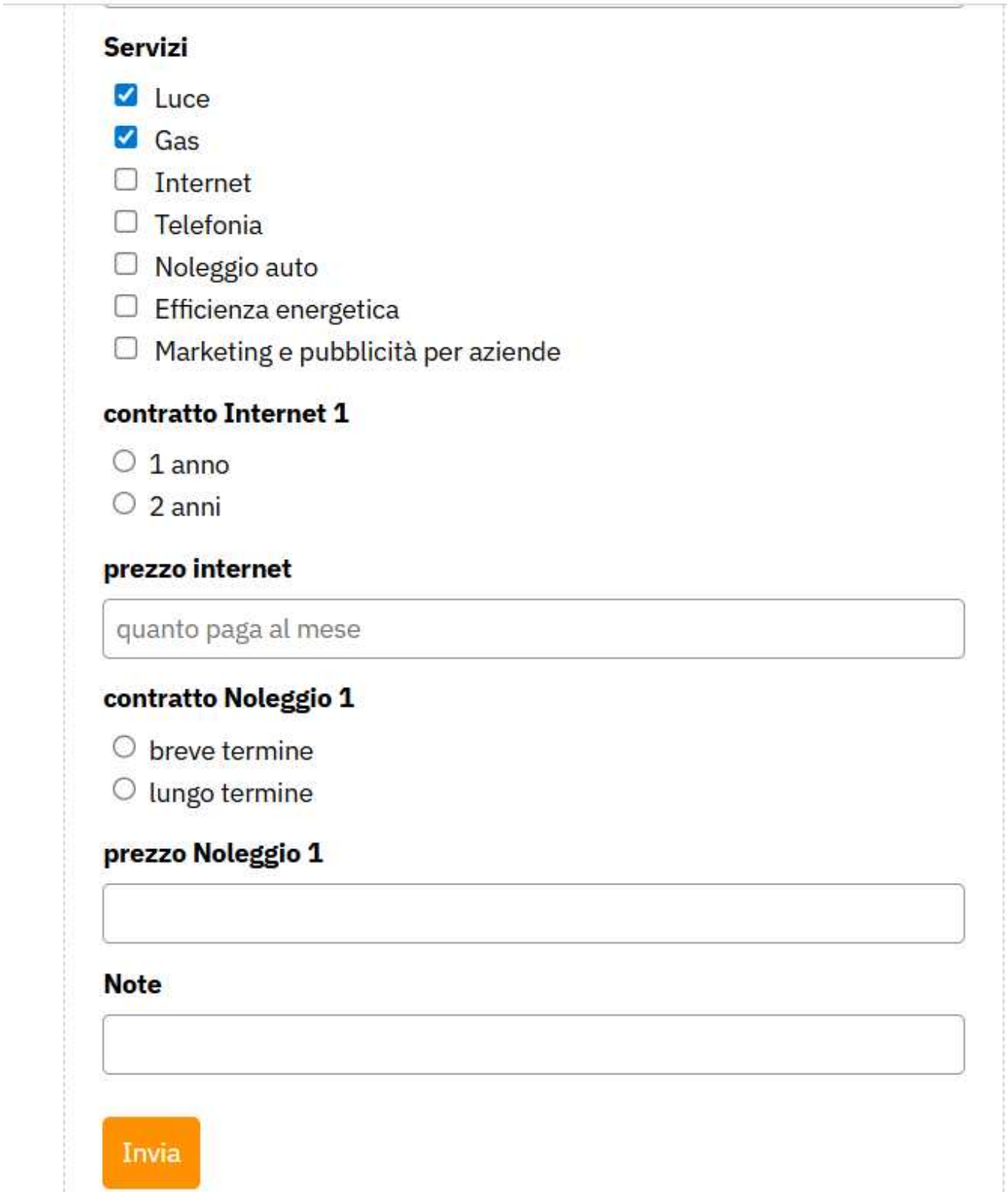
This form standardizes the master identity and internal routing fields (consultant/secretary/referral codes). Mandatory fields ensure clean data and immediate SLA creation for first contact.

Figure B — Technical Data: Energy/Gas Offer 1



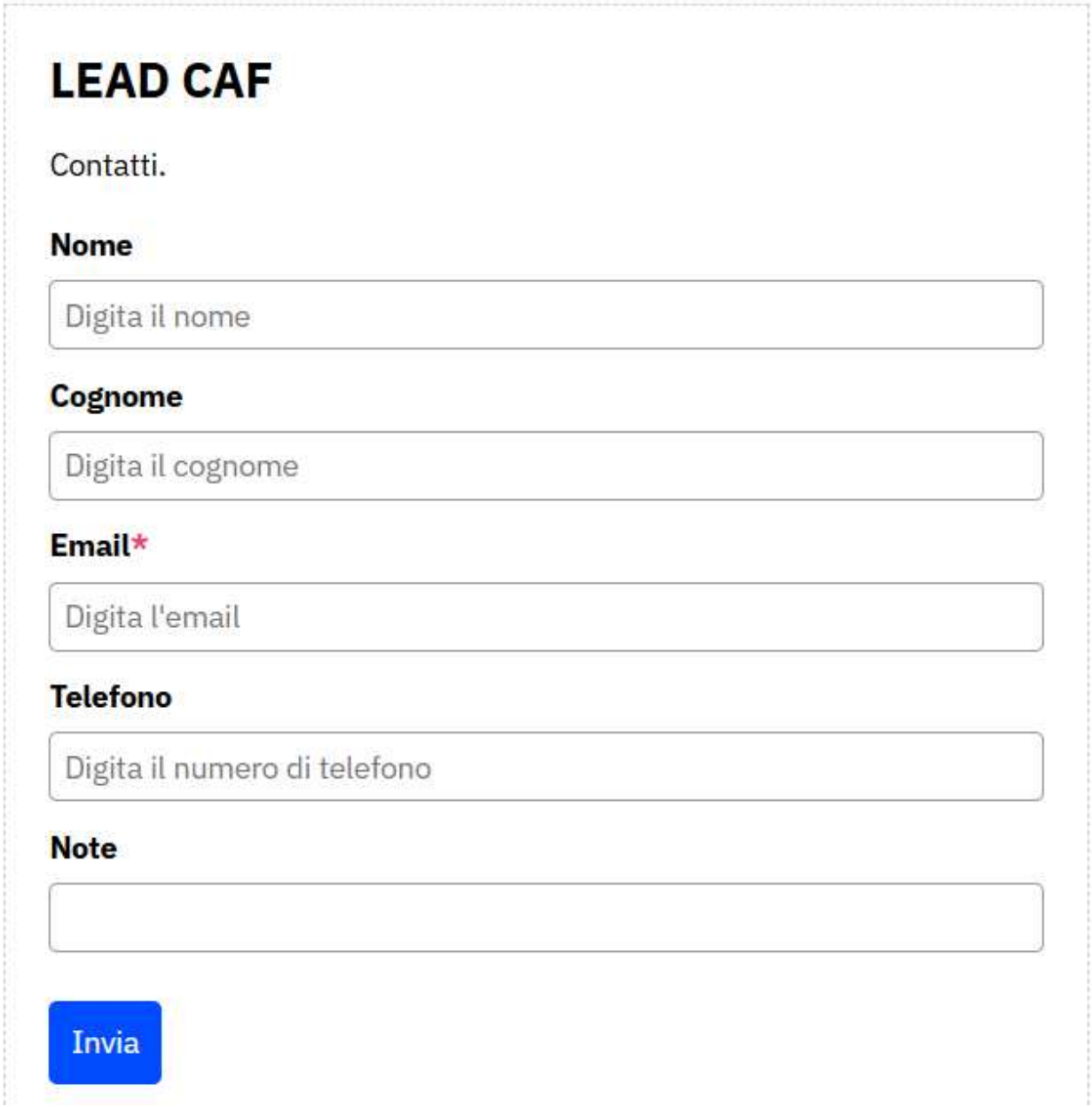
Here we collect supplier, price type, €/kWh and €/Smc, POD/PDR, IBAN and addresses. When complete, the Energy Offer automation builds the quote and assigns a 48h task to the consultant.

Figure C — Service Selection & Contract Parameters



Checkboxes write vertical tags ([VRT]) and open one or more Deals in the proper pipelines. Conditional subsections appear only for selected services (Internet, Rent) to reduce friction.

Figure D — CAF Partner Lead Form

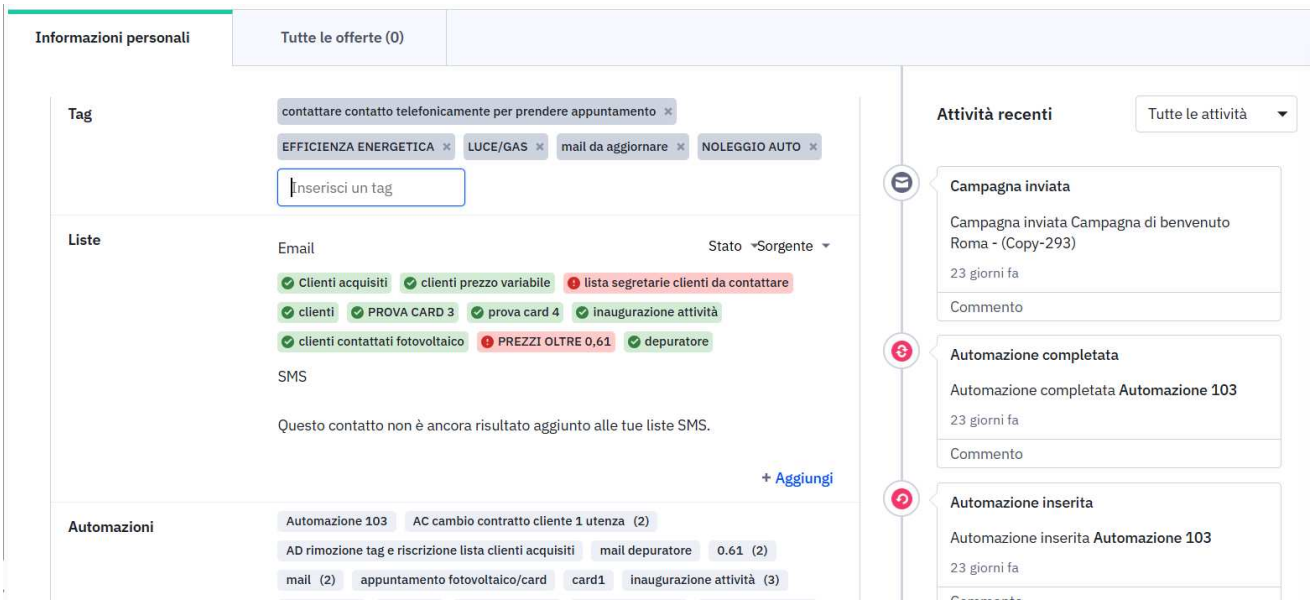


A lightweight partner form that captures only essential details. Hidden parameters attribute the specific CAF partner and trigger a dedicated CAF workflow with controlled visibility and clear SLAs.

Figure E — Consultant Code Routing & Price-Watch (Full Width)

Automation branches by consultant code to subscribe contacts to the right alert segment/list and raises a renewal task when the market price deviates from the client's contracted price beyond a threshold. Cooldown logic prevents over-alerting.

Figure F — Contact Record: Tags, Lists and Recent Activity



On a single screen the operator sees operative tags (e.g., call-back, verticals), list membership, and the time-ordered activity timeline of campaigns and automations. This provides immediate context on what happened and why.

Centralized storage of client artefacts (utility bills, signed PDFs) and a historical log of emails/SMS. This allows back-office teams to complete bureaucratic steps and upload applications without repeatedly requesting sensitive information.

CHAPTER 4- Contact Overview as the Operational Nucleus

4.1 From Data Management to Customer Experience

From the contact information pane we obtain a general, end-to-end overview of the journey and the automations the contact has gone through. Tags are a shared operational language that signal the next best action (call now, renew tariff, book a survey, request documents), while lists and segments place each client in the correct process. With all key data saved per client — prices and suppliers for each contract, renewal dates, preferences and technical fields — we can run precisely targeted, truly personal email campaigns and then review, for each contact, the full history of campaigns and outcomes. We can also demonstrate the client's 'savings path' with clear price points. Files are stored securely, so the admin team does not have to ask again for sensitive data. Access is protected by passwords and role-based permission

All together this makes work faster and more professional: secretaries, consultants and partners collaborate on one up-to-date record; clients feel guided and important within our company. ActiveCampaign becomes the backbone of a multi-service organization, aligning people, processes and data to deliver consistent service and measurable value.

4.2 Operational conclusion

The adoption of ActiveCampaign marked a clear transition for GDN Consultancy: from the skill of individuals to the solidity of a system.

The centralization of data, the automation of critical steps and shared visibility on pipelines have made work more orderly, faster and more measurable. It has not been an easy journey: the start-up phase brought to light resistance, slowness and process imperfections.

But it was precisely this period of adjustment that forced the organization to choose what to standardize, what to simplify and where to invest skills.

Today, the company has an “engine” that supports growth without compromising quality, transforms customer signals into concrete actions and makes everyone's contribution transparent.

Looking ahead, the direction is clear: more data culture, simple and shared operational playbooks, continuous feedback on what works and what needs to be reviewed.

On this basis, the consultant can evolve into a hybrid figure — a customer growth consultant — who combines listening, analysis and responsibility for results. For a multi-service company, having a CRM that tracks the entire sales cycle step by step is not optional: it is the infrastructure that allows you to keep your promises, leverage every contact and turn opportunities into lasting relationships.

Over the next three years, effective consultants will increasingly become “translators” between three worlds: **technology** (photovoltaics, storage, heat pumps, EVs), **finance** (PPAs, energy communities, dynamic tariffs) and **customers'** real lives (consumption, comfort, budget).

It will not be enough to know the offers: it will be necessary to read data in real time, understand consumption profiles, simulate scenarios (how much do you save if you shift loads? if you add 5 kWh of storage? if you switch to a heat pump?) and contract solutions that combine supply, efficiency and self-production. In this sense, CRM is no longer an archive: it is the “control room” that connects energy data, moments in the relationship and the customer's economic decisions.

The free energy market will move towards four main areas:

Widespread electrification: heating and transport will switch to electricity, doubling the importance of energy bills.

Energy communities: customers also become producers and exchange energy; local networks are created with cooperative logic and dedicated financial instruments. More volatile but smarter prices: dynamic tariffs and demand response reward those who optimize loads; those who do not manage peaks pay more.

The value of resilience: storage, micro-grids and flexible contracts become a policy against future shocks.

And this is where the point I have been trying to make comes in: **energy is the pump that drives everything.**

Striking it means bringing industry, logistics, healthcare and information to their knees; we have seen this with recent crises. Today's society is fundamentally based on the consumption and exploitation of energy, a significant part of which is represented by electricity; therefore, power stations play a fundamental role in the economic and industrial development of the country. Services, their capillarity and distribution, and good quality, as stated above, are an expression, and also somewhat a consequence, of a country's economic and social development.

Precisely because energy is the beating heart of a country, in the coming years customers and businesses will be looking not only for the “right price”, but also for security of supply, cost predictability and progressive autonomy.

The advanced consultant will therefore need to know how to build resilience strategies: combining self-production and storage, choosing risk-controlled contracts, distributing smart loads, participating in energy communities and, when necessary, hedging against price risk.

For GDN, this means orienting the consultant's role towards three key skills:

Data & scenario design: using tools (including within ActiveCampaign) to profile consumption, estimate ROI and orchestrate step-by-step interventions.

Supply chain integration: energy + renewables + efficiency + mobility = modular packages with maintenance and guarantees.

Customer education: explaining why energy management is not an expense but a strategic, personal and business asset.

If the last century rewarded those who bought energy well, the next century will reward those who manage it: those who know how to produce it when it is convenient, store it when it is needed, consume it when it costs less and share it when it creates value. The consultant of the future is the director of this production.

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