Best Solar Lead Generation Strategies For Installers â?? In-Home vs. Call-Based Models

Description

By James Schulze

This article discusses different models that solar installers can use in running their solar operations. It touches on the strengths and weaknesses of each model and why many installers are now adopting a hybrid model. It also offers insights on the best lead types and how installers can win more business under each model.

Solar companies are changing how they generate and close leads. The old playbook does not work the same in 2026. Costs are higher. Buyers take longer. Competition is stronger. Consumers are more jaded. Many incentives are gone or have changed, notably the tax rebates expiring due to the â??One Big Beautiful Billâ?• Act. This leaves many solar installers asking, â??Should we focus on door knocking? Or should we have a telemarketing team?â?• The answer is not necessarily one or the other. In fact, many of the fastest growing installers tend to use both models. But before installers can make any decisions about their sales strategy and structure, it is important to really understand these two different approaches to running a solar sales operation and their strengths and weaknesses.

What is the in-home solar model?

The in-home sales model involves a solar installation salesperson visiting a home to speak directly with a homeowner who may be interested in solar. In most cases, this involves canvassing neighborhoods and knocking on doors, essentially generating a lead from the ground level. But some installers also make appointments for in-home visits, moving a little further down the sales funnel before getting in front of the consumer.

In the past, the door-to-door sales approach has been commonly used for residential solar sales. Numerous large national installers, regional players, and local solar companies have all used this approach with solid results. The greatest **strengths** of this model are:

- **Higher close rates** â?? People are often more comfortable buying from someone who is in front of them. And, field salespeople can better read nonverbal communication to push through objections to close deals.
- **Stronger trust with homeowners** â?? Being face to face with homeowners allows installers to build a strong level of trust that would be hard to replicate over the phone or online. In-person communication allows homeowners to observe body language, eye contact, and other key indicators of trustworthiness. Most consumers can quickly size up if they want to keep listening to the sales pitch.
- **Ease in explaining complex systems** â?? Most homeowners know very little about solar installations. They require more in-depth discussions and visuals to fully understand the benefits and be willing to invest.
- **No TCPA violations** â?? The Telephone Consumer Protection Act (TCPA) primarily regulates telemarketing phone calls and texting (read our blog, â??Why Is It So Hard To Connect With Prospects Today?â?• for more information on TCPA), but they do not rule on door knocking.

And, while these are all compelling reasons to include in-home sales as a part of their sales strategy, astute solar installers will also want to understand the **limitations** of this model:

- **Higher cost of acquisition** â?? A door-to-door sales approach is the most costly way to obtain a lead (read our blog, â??How Much Do Solar Leads Cost in 2026?), costing upwards of $400 or more per appointment.
- **Slower sales cycle** â?? While close rates might be stronger with in-home sales, the overall sales cycle takes longer. This is not surprising, as it is essentially a cold lead. Homeowners have not opted-in to speak with someone about solar, even though they may be interested. It takes many knocks to even get homeowners to answer their door. And it can take several more tries to warm them up to a conversation about solar.
- **Requires more staff and logistics** â?? Field sales teams require more support and thought around logistics than a telemarketing team.
- **Consumer reluctance to letting â??strangersâ?• in their home** â?? Americans are cautious in general about letting people into their homes. When installers do get a homeowner to open the front door, it can still take several minutes and possibly multiple visits to be invited in for a sit-down discussion.

The net-net is that this model works well, but it is expensive and a bit outdated.

What is the call-based solar model?

Similar to the in-home model, the call-based model involves solar installation salespeople speaking directly with homeowners. The difference is these conversations occur over the phone or through virtual consultations. This model has gained in popularity in recent years, largely due to these **strengths:**

- **Faster sales process** â?? As call leads largely represent homeowners who have already expressed interest in solar installations, these leads can move through the sales process quicker. They do not need to be warmed up to the concept of solar.
- **Lower cost** â?? All types of leads for telemarketing, SMS, and email campaigns cost less per lead than door-to-door efforts, with aged leads being priced from pennies to $10 per lead.

- **Easier to scale** â?? Solar installer sales teams can reach a much larger number of homeowners with call leads. A massive amount of aged leads exist that are consumers who may now be ready to take on a solar project.
- **Can be done remotely** â?? No logistics (and associated costs) required.

But there are some **weaknesses:**

- **Lower close rates *(sometimes)*** â?? Call leads can have lower close rates than in-person selling, lacking some of the advantages of being face to face with homeowners. However, some highly skilled telemarketing teams with strong processes and technologies can close at rates that rival in-home selling.
- **Requires strong sales scripts** â?? Because salespeople are not in front of homeowners, they need to work harder to keep conversations on track and moving through the process.
- **Depends on lead quality** â?? The quality of call leads can vary. Data may not always be *clean*. Or providers may not be transparent about the data sources. Installers will need to ensure that their leads provider is reputable.
- **TCPA issues** â?? Installers will need to be compliant with TCPA, or risk fines or worse.

The bottomline is that this model works best when paired with volume and first-class telephony processes.

Why installers may want to use a hybrid model

Top solar companies often choose a hybrid model, leveraging the strengths of each model. Many of our solar clients follow this best-practice approach:

- Use calls to qualify leads at a high volume.
- Augment with door knockers.
- Set appointments when needed.
- Close either remotely or in-home.

This hybrid model gives solar installers speed and flexibility, while making the best use of their sales resources. But, all of these models will only work if the lead flow is strong. Installers need consistent volume, and this is where many companies struggle. So, what are the best lead generation channels to ensure lead flow is strong?

The best solar lead generation channels

There are several lead generation channels that will give solar installers a consistent lead flow:

1. **Paid Ads (Google and Facebook)** â?? Paid ads on Google or Facebook are sponsored marketing placements that lead generation companies buy to reach targeted audiences online. These generate high-intent leads and provide immediate volume. But they can be expensive and highly competitive. These are often used to generate real-time leads, which are homeowners who want to speak *immediately* to a solar installer. Given the long selling cycle, strategic-minded installers will also turn these leads into their own aged solar leads and continue to pursue them.

2. **Search Engine Optimization (SEO) and organic traffic** â?? SEO and organic traffic generate leads by helping companies appear naturally in search engine results when homeowners are actively searching for information on solar installations. They are not derived from a paid ad. This channel has a lower long-term cost and builds authority, but it can be difficult to scale and requires continuous content development. This is a strong long-term play for an installer with a solid marketing team.
3. **Door-to-door** â?? Door knocking creates exclusive solar leads, available only to the installer who develops them. They have high consumer engagement, but they are labor intensive and harder to scale. Many solar installers are limiting their efforts with this channel due to cost and low volume.
4. **Purchased leads** â?? For installers who want to focus more on closing deals rather than lead generation, they can buy solar leads. This includes real-time leads, inbound calls, and aged leads (read our blog, â??What Are Solar Leads? Types, Costs, And How Installers Use Themâ?•). This channel helps solar installers scale, as they close solar deals and leave lead generation to dedicated marketing companies.

What lead types work best for each model?

The above channels can be used to generate a variety of lead types. But which lead types work best in each model?

- **In-home model** â?? The best lead types for this model are real-time (homeowners asking for a conversation now) and exclusive (sold only to one installer) leads. Why? The intent is high and there is less competition, which makes it easier to set appointments. Installers will move consumers through the funnel quicker when intent is already there, which will optimize their marketing dollars in this more expensive model.
- **Call-based model** â?? The best lead types for a call-based model are aged (homeowners who have shown interest in solar in the past) and shared (sold to multiple installers) leads. Why? These leads are lower cost, high in volume, and they work well with follow-up systems.
- **Hybrid model** â?? The best lead mix for a hybrid model includes real-time and aged solar leads. Use real-time solar leads for getting high-intent conversions. And, use aged solar leads for volume. This gives installers a balanced lead strategy.

How installers can win with each model

Installers who choose a **call-based model** will need to rely on strong lead volume. That means theyâ??ll need a system that incorporates the following steps:

1. **Call leads quickly** â?? Once a lead is delivered, call immediately. Speed increases contact rates.
2. **Use strong scripting** â?? You only get so much time on a call with a homeowner. Get right to the things that matter to them, like energy savings and incentives. And, keep it simple. An overwhelmed homeowner is not likely to say â??yes.â?•
3. **Follow up consistently** â?? Use calls, text messages, and emails to connect with homeowners. And, donâ??t quit too early on a lead. Most deals happen after multiple attempts. With 6 or more phone calls, 90% of homeowners can be reached (ask for The Leads Warehouseâ??s matrix of the number of calls vs. connections vs. contacts to closes).
4. **Track performance** â?? Measure contact rates, appointment rates, and close rates. This will allow you to adjust your tactics as needed and buy more leads if numbers dip. Keeping fresh

leads in the funnel will keep the conversations flowing.

Installers who wish to incorporate an **in-home model** will want to focus only on the highest quality leads. To make this model work well, they will want to:

1. **Pre-qualify leads** â?? Use calls to filter serious buyers.
2. **Set strong appointments** â?? Confirm time, interest, and decision makers upfront.
3. **Deliver a clear and relevant sales pitch** â?? Focus on energy savings, financing options, and long-term value.

Conclusion

The best-performing solar companies use a hybrid of the traditional in-home model and a call-based model. They recognize the need for a consistent lead flow and are choosing to purchase solar leads to supplement their own marketing efforts. Those who tend to win are able to stay disciplined with their sales process and cadence and build a balanced lead strategy that keeps their pipeline full year-round. Are you ready to talk about how you can win more solar deals?

About the author

James Schulze is the President and CEO of The Leads Warehouse, a marketing data company with over 20 years of experience in bringing lead generation solutions to companies selling into the home, automotive, financial, insurance, health and life, and legal sectors. He works directly with clients to optimize conversion strategies and ROI across multiple verticals.

If you are serious about improving your solar leads strategy, a strong mix of leads is important. Our team works with solar installers to maximize their ROI on solar sales leads. Call **1-800-884-8371** or visit The Leads Warehouse to get started.

Date Created
2026/05/18
Author
jimtlw-media