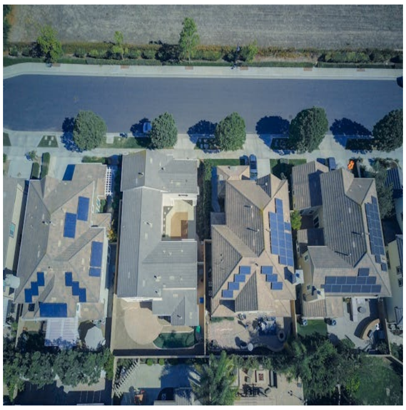

Exclusive vs. Shared Solar Leads â?? What Actually Converts In Todayâ??s Market?

Description

By James Schulze

This article discusses exclusive and shared leads and which leads convert better. It also offers insights on the best solar leads strategies and how installers can effectively use leads to grow their pipeline.

Buying the right leads for your company involves many decisions, all which can impact your success in converting leads to customers. How many leads can your sales team manage? Whatâ??s the budget? What types of leads will work best with the size and composition of your sales team and your systems? Perhaps one of the more perplexing questions facing solar installers is: should they buy exclusive or shared leads? Letâ??s start with an understanding of the difference between the two.

What are exclusive solar leads?

Exclusive solar leads are leads that are sold to only *one* company. This means that the lead is not resold to multiple buyers or offered as an aged lead in the future. Exclusive leads are marketed as â??premium,â?• typically selling at a price of $80 to $200 more per lead. They can command a higher price because of the perceived higher value they deliver: less competition and often a more seamless customer experience that makes them easier to close. For some installers though, exclusive solar leads can be too high priced and offer too little volume to truly scale.

It is also important to understand what exclusive solar leads are *not*. An exclusive lead does not mean zero competition. Every homeowner is constantly being marketed to. Homeowners may complete multiple online forms, call more than one solar installer, and respond to different solar-related ads in their quest to learn more about solar solutions. An exclusive lead just means that a particular lead is only sold to one installer. They can provide significant value if used properly.

In practice, we regularly see exclusive leads underperform when follow-up speed and scripting are weak. Execution often matters more than lead type.

What are shared solar leads?

Unlike an exclusive lead, a shared lead is sold to multiple installers. Shared leads have become very common in solar due to their lower cost (between $20 and $80 per lead) and the high volume available. Shared leads can also be aged, meaning sold in a second position after being sold as a real-time lead. To effectively use shared solar leads, installers must have a strong sales process and quick follow-up. Across millions of solar leads processed through our platform, our data shows that most homeowners are sold between touch 5 and 12 (ask for The Leads Warehouseâ??s matrix of the number of calls vs. connections vs. contacts to closes). With shared leads, installers can let their competitors help with those touches, but they will want to have their own deep cadence to make sure they get the last touch.

Quick comparison of solar lead types

- **Exclusive leads** â?? Higher cost ($80-$200+), lower volume, reduced direct resale competition
- **Shared leads** â?? Lower cost ($20-$80), higher volume, require strong speed and follow-up
- **Aged leads** â?? Lowest cost, highest volume, often already warmed up through prior outreach. Aged leads can cost as little as $0.15 and $7.50 on the high end.

Do exclusive or shared leads convert better?

So, are exclusive or shared leads more effective in growing your solar customer base? The reality is that conversion is not just about exclusivity. It is also about **speed and process**. A fast team using shared leads can outperform a slow team using exclusive leads.

Key factors that drive conversion include:

1. Speed to contact â?? You want to be the first to call.
2. Number of follow-up attempts â?? 90% of homeowners answer if you make 6 attempts.
3. Sales script quality â?? Make sure your script is appropriate for the lead type and be ready with well-rehearsed objection rebuttals.
4. Ability to manage volume â?? The length of the selling cycle provides many chances to close a deal. You can only convert lower cost leads if you can handle the volume of leads and the number of outreaches required.

Our clients have stated that these four factors are more impactful than whether a lead is exclusive. In fact, they cite scripting as being the single biggest differentiator. Solar installers who can perform in the above areas will be able to convert both exclusive and shared leads.

Why many installers overpay for exclusive leads

So, why then do solar installers often overpay for exclusive leads? Many installers believe that exclusive leads must convert better and are willing to pay a premium to get a higher conversion rate. Sometimes they convert. But not always. Exclusive leads can actually be risky because:

- They are priced two or three times higher.
- Installers can get fewer leads for their budget.
- They must rely on fewer opportunities.
- They do not always mean less competition, but sales teams are often lulled into complacency thinking they have a lock on the business.

Why shared leads can work best in 2026

Shared leads continue to work well primarily because they give installers more opportunities to close deals. If an installerâ??s sales team is fast and consistent, shared leads can be a better deal. For example, consider a budget of $1,200 and these two options:

- An installer can purchase 10 exclusive solar leads at $120 per lead. If they achieve a typical conversion rate of 10%, that means one closed deal. Their cost per acquisition (CPA) is $1,200 (i.e., $1,200/1).
- Alternatively, this installer could purchase 30 shared solar leads at $40 per lead. If they sell two deals (7% conversion rate), their CPA would be $600 (i.e., $1,200/2). So even though the conversion rate may be slightly lower on shared leads, a 50% lower CPA makes them highly attractive.

More installers are looking at shared leads, particularly aged solar leads, as part of their leads strategies (read our blog for cost benefits of aged solar leads). Aged solar leads are nearly always shared leads. They are homeowners who have already indicated an interest in a solar installation and have likely been *warmed up* by competitorsâ?? outreaches. Our research shows that 50% of deals close 90 days after the lead was created, so lower-cost aged solar leads can be a goldmine . So, what types of leads should solar installers be buying this year?

What is the best solar leads strategy for 2026?

Our fastest growing solar clients are achieving sustainable sales growth with a *balanced* lead strategy. A good balance involves:

1. **Using exclusive leads for high intent** â?? Exclusive leads are higher priced and have lower volume, but they play a strong role in installersâ?? sales strategies. Installers use these strategically as their budget allows. They gain high-quality conversations with high-intent homeowners while competition is a bit lighter.
2. **Using shared leads for volume** â?? Not only are shared leads lower priced, there are larger volumes. Installers use shared leads to scale their operations. They pay close attention to their scripting and response times to make sure they make the most out of their shared leads.
3. **Using aged leads for maximizing ROI** â?? Aged leads have the highest volumes available at the lowest cost per lead. Used properly, they are a key component to optimizing revenue generation from your lead spend.

The right mix of leads for each installer depends on a few factors. What is the budget? How quickly can the sales team contact the leads? How strong is their follow-up? If their team is strong, shared and aged leads work well. If their team is weaker, exclusive leads may help. If an installer does choose to incorporate shared leads, especially aged leads, theyâ??ll want to make sure they:

- **Call leads fast** â?? Speed is everything. Call within minutes.
- **Use multiple touches** â?? Most deals happen after several attempts. Donâ??t forget to vary your outreaches with phone calls, text messages, and emails.
  Use the right messaging â?? Sales teams are often thrown off script when homeowners ask, â??How did you get my name?â?• Rather than losing control of the conversation about the source of the lead, focus on your script. Talk about lower bills, energy savings, and incentives.
- **Stay consistent** â?? Many sales reps quit on a lead too early. Follow up longer, stay organized, and track your results.
- **Buy from a reputable leads provider** â?? Look for a leads provider who can offer clean data from real sources, deliver quickly, and has a strong understanding of the solar industry.

Conclusion

Although many installers believe exclusive leads are *better* than shared leads, both lead types can perform well with the right sales effort. That means quickly contacting a lead, following up extensively, managing volume well, using a strong script, staying consistent, and sourcing your leads from a reputable provider. Installers who use a mix of lead types achieve the best results. Are you ready to talk about how you can grow your solar sales?

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 balanced mix of leads is essential. Our team works with solar installers to maximize their ROI on solar sale leads. Call 1-800-884-8371 or visit The Leads Warehouse to get started.

Date Created
2026/05/11
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