Solar â?? Opt-In Leads Will Help Solar Installers Capture Emerging Opportunities

Description

By James Schulze

This article discusses some of the promising trends and opportunities that have emerged in the solar market. It also discusses how solar installers can most effectively grow their business in 2026 and beyond.

The U.S. solar market appears poised for some good news. And, based on trends in the early months of 2026, it seems that momentum may already be building. Analysts believe the convergence of several trends may fuel an uptick in sales
for solar installers. So, what are the latest trends that should bring plenty of sunshine to the industry?

Promising trends for the U.S. solar market

Some of the most exciting trends in the solar industry include:

- **Power demand is increasing** â?? The demand for electricity in the U.S. has been growing at the strongest levels since 2000. The U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA) projected that electricity usage would increase an average of **1.7%** each year between 2020 and 2026. Record highs for peak demand were set in 2025, with some estimates projecting a 14% increase in peak demand by 2030. Why the surge in demand now? Analysts suggest that the plan to build more data centers, large AI computing centers, and manufacturing facilities as well as enhanced electrification of buildings and transportation are all key drivers of future growth. According to Wood Mackenzie **Wood Mackenzie,**, â??solar will be one of the primary new sources of electricity generation that supplies this load growth in the next five years.â?• They estimate that solar generation will grow 65% between 2026 and 2030.
- **Interest in â??balcony solarâ?• products is growing** â?? â??Balcony solarâ?• installations provide an exciting opportunity to bring more American consumers into the solar energy market. These products are compact, plug-in photovoltaic systems that typically include 1-2 solar panels, a micro-inverter, and mounting hardware. They were initially designed for renters and apartment

occupants, generating 200-800 watts of power to run small appliances. No rooftop installation needed. But they are gaining in popularity with homeowners too. Not only are they a more affordable option for solar energy, they can reduce utility bills by as much as 10% to 30%. While first popularized in Germany, these portable systems have started to emerge in the U.S. In 2025, Utah became the first state to allow portable solar generation devices up to 1.2 kW without interconnection approval. More than 20 other states have now introduced bills or are considering such legislation. California and New York are the largest states to propose bills. Some others include Alaska, Arizona, Colorado, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Maine, Maryland, Minnesota, Missouri, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Vermont, Virginia, and Washington. As the number of states considering legislation grows, plug-in products will be an opportunity for nearly every solar company.

- **Solar-plus-storage options are becoming the norm** â?? While much of the early solar installation projects focused primarily on solar panels, hybrid systems that offer solar-plus-storage have become more popular in the last few years. Some of this is driven by the fact that storage is now required in many states. But homeowners have also become more educated, asking for more information on solar-plus-battery options, backup power, and grid independence. This widens the product offering and creates more revenue opportunities for installers.

Opportunities differ by region

Although every installer could benefit from the above trends, it is also helpful for installers to consider regional opportunities when targeting their sales efforts. For example:

- **Sun Belt states**â?? Sun Belt states tend to consume more electricity than other states. They experience high heat and strong sun exposure, requiring nearly constant air conditioning for several months of the year. High electric bills are a pain point in most households. And, with their populations continuing to grow, there will be an even larger base of consumers who want to explore their options and consider a solar-based solution.
- **Texas**â?? Texas has a strong and growing power demand. In addition to the hot climate and a growing population, Texas also tends to have larger single-family homes and leads all other states in building new suburban housing developments. This environment supports distributed solar expansion, increasing the amount of solar-powered electricity generated at homes and businesses rather than large centralized solar farms. This will benefit all installers, especially mid-size and smaller installers who may not always get the nod for large solar farm installations.
- **California**â?? California trails only Hawaii for the highest electricity prices per kWh. Prices have been driven up in part by wildfire mitigation costs, spending on grid infrastructure, renewable mandates, and the utility regulatory structure. Although the weather climate does not demand the same usage levels as in the Sun Belt states, energy bills in California are still tough for most households. High costs as well as a general openness to renewables in California will continue to make this a strong market for installers.
- **Midwest states**â?? The price of electricity tends to be reasonably affordable in the Midwest. There are also a number of incentives that will expand new installations.

How solar installers can grow their business in 2026

For many installers, 2026 will be a bit of a transition year. The last couple of years have been soft, forcing many installers to get creative to drive their sales. Many changed their messaging to focus on monthly savings and energy independence. They pushed solar-plus-storage packages and used more standardized products to shorten the time between lead and installation. Some walked neighborhoods, hoping to develop a swell of solar installations among neighbors. But perhaps most importantly, they better targeted their resources on the highest-intent homeowners.

Targeting efforts will continue to be a key success factor in 2026. The most successful installers will focus their sales teams on consumers who have the highest likelihood of embracing solar. In the past, these were the consumers who had high electricity bills, south-facing roofs, high credit scores, home equity, and possibly even an electric vehicle. Given the emergence of plug-in products, this likely base just widened to include all types of homes, such as rentals, apartments, condos, and more.

Connect with more target customers by using opt-in solar leads

While mining consumer data can be a viable way to identify potential solar customers with these characteristics, opt-in solar leads can move installers through the sales cycle even more quickly. These leads represent American consumers who have already expressed an interest in solar in the last 1-365 days. The most effective leads right now are:

- **Real-time solar leads**â?? These are the highest-intent consumers. They have viewed a solar-related ad and have provided long-form information about themselves and their energy situation. They are requesting to speak with a solar expert right now. Installers will need to call the consumer within seconds of receiving the leads and follow up appropriately. The greatest benefits of real-time leads are that they immediately connect installers to consumers who have a strong sense of urgency and installers are often given exclusive access to the consumer for a certain time period.
- **Aged solar leads**â?? Aged solar leads are similar to real-time solar leads, they have just aged a bit. Typically 12 or less months old, these leads are still very relevant in the solar market, as many consumers take significant time deciding whether to take on a solar project. Aged leads are considerably lower price than real-time, making them a great option for all installers, regardless of the size of their marketing budget.

The right type of opt-in lead to buy will depend on several factors, including the size and structure of an installerâ??s sales team, sales roles (openers, closers, hybrid), operation hours, marketing budget, and more. Both real-time and aged solar leads have proven effective in growing solar sales. Are you ready to talk about how you can grow your solar business in 2026 and beyond?

If you would like more information on how you can grow your solar sales, give The Leads Warehouse a call at 1-800-884-8371 or visit our website at https://theleadswarehouse.com

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