

The Do's and Don'ts of Selling Solar

Over the past decade the solar industry in Australia has transformed from a small collection of highly specialised companies to a booming industry where dedicated “sales teams” are required to manage the large volume of PV system purchases. Rapid growth in the solar industry has resulted in faster sales times and a decrease in custom designed systems in favour of generic “one-size fits all” systems that can be quickly installed. This thriving industry is also changing rapidly as State and Federal governments consistently alter their solar policy and hence the solar market. In order to remain competitive solar companies must understand the market within which they work and keep up to date with changing legislation. A technically proficient sales team who are able to effectively communicate up to date information to customers, designer and installers is essential for the modern solar business.

Do's

Understand the market: Navigating Australia's PV market is a daunting prospect for the average person. Sales staff should be there to help the client procure a safe and reliable PV system.

Explain the limitations of PV: One of the most common questions asked by customers is “Why do I still experience blackouts?” It is important that the sales team identify the customer's needs, determine whether a PV system is appropriate and explain its limitations. An uninformed customer will be unhappy when their system does not perform as expected and is unlikely to refer your business to others. Remember misleading claims can be reported to government organisations for investigation.

Streamline the sales process: Technically proficient sales staff have a role in every step of system design and installation. They can save the business time and money by gathering the correct information (from the client and at the site) for installers and designers.

Conduct a Site Inspection: This is a crucial step that is often being avoided by many businesses. The site inspection is the time to identify factors that will affect the design and installation and explain this to the customer. Sales staff should help the customer understand that a site inspection is well worth the extra time and will ensure they get the best system for their property.

Follow Standards and Industry Guidelines: Australian Standards and the CEC guidelines include many recommendations about designing and selling solar. Following these guidelines ensures your business provides high quality systems and service.

Understand the Laws, Regulations and Standards: Aside from Standards relating to PV, companies need to ensure that they act within federal, state and local government laws. These laws cover things like contacting potential customers, quoting and providing information, warranties and customer satisfaction and are of critical importance.

Explain the Quote: To reassure the customer that they are getting a good deal sales staff should be able to explain the transparent quotation. They must also be up to date with the financial incentives available and be able to explain their effect on net system cost and payback period.

Build a Reputation as a Market Leader: Building a well-trained and technically proficient sales team will improve staff retention. Sales staff will be able to form a relationship with the customer over the life of their system and offering high quality maintenance and product replacement will improve customer satisfaction. Ensuring customer satisfaction now and into the future will greatly increase the chance of word-of-mouth referrals.

Discuss Comparative Offers: Sales staff should know the product and understand your company's place in the market. In order to discuss comparative offers with the client they should have a thorough understanding of product quality, how to identify that a product is compliant with Australian Standards and CEC accreditation. Sales staff should be able to explain the consequences of using non-compliant products and electricians who are not CEC accredited.

Don'ts

Use jargon that will confuse the customer: A proficient sales team should be able to explain the deal to the customer in terms that they will understand. They should educate the customer and leave them in no doubt that they are getting a good deal.

Size and quote a system without conducting a site assessment: Businesses advertising immediate sizing and/or quotation are not offering their clients the best service. Sales staff should be able to explain the benefits of custom design, accurate energy yield estimates and precise quotation to the client.

Make Unsupported Claims: Advertising installation specific information causes confusion and can mislead the customer. In particular terms like “annual yield”, “annual earnings/income” and “payback period” will depend heavily on the site and system installed so should not be used before a site inspection has been completed. This will be particularly important as the industry moves to “Energy Guarantees” such as those used in Germany.

Advertise Financial Benefits without Context: Advertising rebates, STCs and FiTs incorrectly can cause confusion, particularly when the value of these policies is changing and uncertain.

Relate Energy Production to Energy Use with Evidence: Claiming that a system will cover the customer's energy use without seeing their energy bills is fraught with danger. There is no such thing as an “average house” so claiming to cover bills invariably causes confusion and disappointment when the system does not perform as expected.

What You Can Do?

GSES has developed a Solar Sales Course for organisations dedicated to demonstrating their market leadership by holding their sales staff to the highest standard. This course has been specifically designed to give sales staff, as well as designers and installers, the sales skills and technical understanding necessary to deliver the best outcomes for their clients and their business.

For information about the course email info@gses.com.au or call 1300 265 525.