


Do
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Not
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to **Create a Positive Experience**
for Customers on your
Utility Solar Website

Highlights from the
E Source Utility Solar Website Benchmark 2017





Residential customer awareness of and interest in solar energy continues to grow in the US and globally. E Source research, conducted in partnership with The Nielsen Company, showed that 51% of US residential customers who are at least somewhat familiar with rooftop solar had purchased or were considering purchasing the technology in 2016, up from 46% in 2015. According to our 2017 research, this number is 48% for Canadian customers.

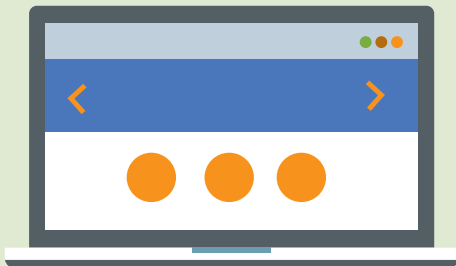
This interest provides an opportunity for utilities to positively engage with residential customers by providing useful and actionable solar-related information and decision-making tools on their website. Doing so not only improves customers' experiences with their utility, but it also has a positive brand impact. For example, 2016 E Source research showed that customers who believe their utility supports their use of solar are twice as likely as other customers to rate their utility as excellent.

To help utilities effectively provide the solar-related information and decision-making resources residential customers want, in May 2017 we conducted a benchmark review of 104 utility solar-related websites and 7 solar installer websites to identify best practices and highlight opportunities for improvement.

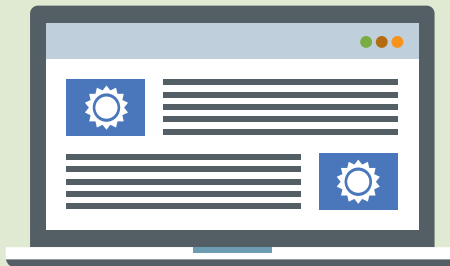
This e-book contains some of the highlights of this detailed benchmark and includes examples of what you should—and shouldn't—do on your solar website.



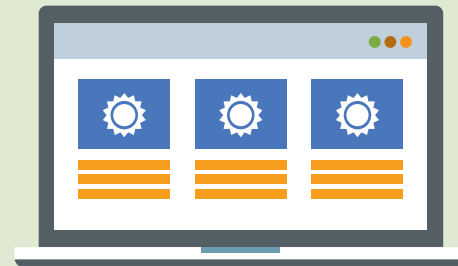
Highest-Ranked Websites Included:



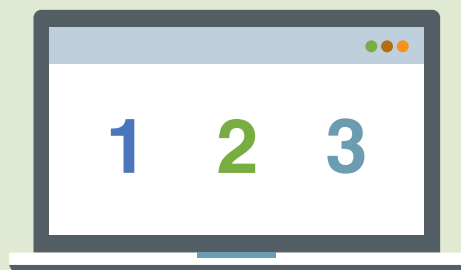
Pages that were easy to find and read, and were professional in appearance



Customer-friendly language



The full range of types of information customers might want on solar



Easy-to-follow steps on the entire rooftop solar process



Tools or calculators to help customers determine whether rooftop solar is right for them



Four Key Elements of Usability



Navigation

How easy is it to find the solar web page(s)?



Appearance

How appealing is the look and feel of the solar web page(s)?



Functionality

How easy are the solar web pages to use?



Relevance

How pertinent is the content on the solar web page(s)?



Most Common User-Cited Challenges with Utility Solar Websites



Absence of key information reviewers wanted
(such as a way to compare solar options directly)



Confusing technical information and jargon



Poor navigation



Text-heavy layouts





Provide the Range of Information Customers Want

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SNOMOMISH COUNTY PUBLIC UTILITY DISTRICT NO. 1 Customer Service (M-F 8a-5:30p): 425-783-1000 [Q Search](#)

PUD [RESIDENTIAL](#) [BUSINESS](#) [CONSERVATION](#) [EDUCATION](#) [POWER SUPPLY](#) [YOUR ACCOUNT](#) [PAY YOUR BILL](#)

[Mostly Cloudy, 61°](#) [WATER](#) [SAFETY](#) [CONSTRUCTION](#) [BIDS](#) [NEWSROOM](#) [CYBERSECURITY](#) [VIDEOS](#) [CAREERS](#) [ABOUT US](#)

How Can We Help?



I'm interested in solar for my home or business





I'm already a generating customer (net metering)



Information for Solar Contractors



I'd like to support local renewable energy





Just want a quick overview of how solar electricity works?
[Check this out.](#)

Energy Hotline:
425-783-1700
(M-F, 8am to 5pm)
[Submit your conservation question](#)

COMMUNITY-BASED RENEWABLE PROJECTS

Since 2006, [redacted] has invested \$4.3 million in more than 55 community-based renewable energy projects that help demonstrate the benefits, operation and performance of wind, solar and biogas technologies.

Schools and municipal buildings are often chosen for the projects to teach community members about renewable energy technologies. [redacted] grant funds have helped cover the cost of materials and installation for these systems, which include 51 solar photovoltaic installations, three wind turbines and one biogas project.

[▶ PROJECTS LISTED BY COMMUNITY](#)

[▶ PROJECTS LISTED BY TYPE](#)



Use Customer-Friendly Language, Not Utility Jargon

Do
THIS



You

prepare your home for energy efficiency and choose a qualified contractor.



Your Contractor

helps choose the right system size needed for your home, walks you through the necessary forms, and installs your system safely.



PG&E

reviews your interconnection application, performs an engineering review, completes any necessary system upgrades, and gives final permission to operate.

For details on the role of your contractor and PG&E, along with steps and timelines, [visit the Steps to Install page](#).

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Distributed Generation


Small, Mid-sized & Large Embedded Generators (Over 10 kW)



Forms for Generators Over 10 kW

Form A - Pre-FIT Consultation Application
Form B - Connection Impact Assessment (CIA) Application
Form B Instructions and Form B Checklist
CIA (Form B) Study Agreement (NOTE: Must submit with Form B)
CIA (Form B) Study Agreement Checklist
Connection Cost Estimate Study Agreement
Distribution Connection Agreement (DCA) Application

Information for Connecting Generators Over 10 kW

Available Capacity on  Distribution System
Connection Process
Connection Impact Assessment (CIA)
Distribution Connection Agreement (DCA) Application
Distribution Operating Map (DOM) Request
Embedded Generation Single Line Diagram (SLD) Requirements

Micro-embedded Generators (10 kW or less)



Forms for Generators 10 kW or Less

Form C - Micro-Generation Connection Application Form

Important Notes for microFIT and Net Metering Customers 10 kW or Less:

- *NEW UPDATE***

Streamlined Services now in effect for microFIT and Net Metering customers 10 kW or less: On November 28, 2016 we consolidated two teams into one to serve you better. This means the original team that helped connect your microFIT or Net Metering account/project will continue to assist you with any customer service needs after your project is connected.

**Distribution Generation Department
for microFIT and Net Metering Customers**



Provide Simple, Clear Navigation

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The screenshot shows the OUC website with a clean, organized layout. The header includes navigation links: Pay My Bill, Doing Business With OUC, News, Customer Support, En Español, Register, and Login. Below the header is the OUC logo and tagline "The Reliable One". A search bar is located to the right of the logo. A horizontal menu bar contains links for myOUC, RESIDENTIAL, BUSINESS, ENVIRONMENT & COMMUNITY, and ABOUT OUC. The main content area features a "Solar" section with a large image and text describing solar options. Below this are six smaller tiles, each with a title, description, and a "Learn More" link. The tiles are: Community Solar, Solar at OUC, Solar FAQ, Solar Programs, Information for Solar Installers, and How to Apply For Your Home.

The screenshot shows a website with a cluttered navigation structure. The navigation menu is a vertical list of links: Generators, Transmission, Connection Process, Pre-Consultation, Technical Requirements, Important Considerations, Distribution, Distributed Generation, Station Capacity Calculator, Net Metering Program, Webinars, Combined Heat and Power Standard Offer Program 2.0, and Metering Requirements. The links are not grouped or categorized, making it difficult for users to find what they need.



Use Images and Avoid Text-Heavy Layouts

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The screenshot shows the SCE&G website with a navigation bar at the top. The main content area is titled 'Solar For Your Home' and features a sidebar with links like 'Manage My Service', 'Start My Service', and 'Solar For Your Home'. The main content includes two large images: one of a couple looking at solar panels and another of solar panels on a roof. Below these images are sections for 'Learn all the Solar Basics' and 'Weigh your Solar Options', each with a call-to-action button. The layout is clean and uses images to convey information.

The screenshot shows the 'Net Metering' page on the SCE&G website. The page is dominated by a large block of text, which is highlighted with a red border. The text is a notice about net metering rules, mentioning a notice from May 5, 2016, and detailing the process for net metering. The layout is text-heavy and lacks visual elements to break up the text.



For 30 years, E Source has been providing market research, data, and consulting services to more than 300 utilities and their partners. This guidance helps our utility members better understand their customers and engage them more effectively through more customer-centric programs, experiences, and communications efforts.



For more information, visit **www.esource.com**,
email **esource@esource.com**, or call
1-800-ESOURCE.



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