

## User Experience Insights

After working through our user experience insights, we decided to first answer questions around the best incentives that would intrigue users to participate in the events and program. From a total of 57 interview surveys, we were able to speak with 21 current solar owners and random 36 everyday people, neighbors and friends. We described the pilot program idea and asked the respondents their first impressions:

**Solar owners:** In reaction to the appreciation event, the top incentives to attend the event was food, drinks then meeting their neighbors. Distance from their home and events scheduled on the weekend were major conditions that would also intrigue most of them to attend. They liked a family oriented type of marketing scheme, an event something they could bring their family to. For current solar owners who were primarily motivated by their care for the environment to go solar, they liked that there was finally an opportunity they had to engage others about it. For solar owners motivated by money, they were interested in the marketing scheme which helped them increase their referrals (some solar companies offer a referral program where they can earn money if someone they know signs up). In reaction to door knocking, almost everyone would feel uncomfortable knocking on their neighbor's door even if it is to invite them to a family friendly event. They liked the idea of the solar company/non-profit doing the door knocking and using their name. They would feel most comfortable inviting their own friends and family close to the area, over the phone.

**Everyday people:** In reaction to the 5 doors up, 5 doors down campaign, they would most likely would not answer their door if they saw a person who looked like a salesperson, but would open the door for a neighbor to have a conversation. If their neighbor they knew would invite them, they would go over a neighbor they never interacted with, seeing it as a hidden agenda. Again, would depend on the flyer, information given. Community sponsored events were most trustworthy. If a solar representative were to invite them, many admitted to reacting in skepticism. In rating the image of a person they would most likely welcome if someone knocked on their door, younger looking people, women and casual dressed people were most likely to be most non-threatening or uninviting. In reaction to marketing about the opportunity event, If there was a flyer/content given showing that it was not just the solar company, but other organizations, especially local groups, they would more likely be interested in going. Family oriented events were also another great marketing scheme, not necessarily bringing the community together to improve the block. Incentives for free raffle giveaways for home improvement were also a favored incentive. Distance and time of day also affected how whether people were willing to attend. Parks were often mentioned as a place of preference since there are many in the local suburban neighborhoods where these surveys were taken. Two everyday people mentioned the crime rate in the neighborhood, would not open door.

The next set of questions to be answered were the logistical questions around which non-profits or community organizations would best for solar companies to partner with in this pilot program. Some key characteristics that were identified were: experience in community

organizing, creating safe spaces of dialogue between diverse people, experience in helping others tell their story, experiencing with canvassing, telling and strong ties to the local area. One non-profit organization identified was Transition Towns, a non-profit organization that encourages neighbors to work together in their neighborhoods to reduce their carbon footprint. Another non-profit mentioned was the American Solar Energy Society that could help provide volunteers willing to help coordinate the opportunity events. The upcoming US Solar Decathlon of 2015 would be a great event to partner with in helping local suburban neighborhoods in Orange County learn about going solar and could be featured as an event partner/funder for the events. A non-profit called the Pachamama Alliance has experience in creating positive visions for our planet and could also be a great source of support. Of course, organizations with local LA chapters such as the Sierra Club, 350.org, Citizen's Climate Lobby, Food and Water Watch and any other non-profit dedicated to raising awareness about environmental issues would be a great resource for volunteers to canvass and simply invite people to a block party in their neighborhood. After surveying one city mayor, helping in an initiative such as this to help communities learn about water conservation could be a great opportunity to partner and have one activity dedicated to such an event. From this comment, we realized that solar companies encouraging their current customer base to use their social value capital with their friends, family and colleagues is a great strategy to helping many city governments interested in bringing communities together around other environmental concerns, such as drought here in California. While renewable energy may be too big of a leap for some homeowners, there is still the opportunity to help everyday people take the small steps in learning more about actions to take in reducing our environmental/carbon footprint, eventually planting the seed towards adopting renewable energy.

### **Further research on innovation adoption**

A research on the main drivers around someone to adopt solar energy was knowing a neighbor, friend, family member or colleague who converted to solar energy and had a positive experience. We found in our surveys that respondents who opposed solar knew a friend who converted and had a negative experience. Using the first phase of the pilot program, customer appreciation events, solar companies can take advantage of the event as a way to reach out to those customers with negative experiences and address them. After surveying about 20 current solar sales representatives, they find that positive experiences of current customers often led towards referrals that were likely to convert to renewable energy over customers that were solely engaged by a sales representative in a retail or formal setting. The "close ratio" as they would call it is higher for people who know someone who went solar. Furthermore in a recent article published by the Washington Post, a Yale study is best summarized by the following quotes:

"According to a [new study](#), though, politics and income may not be such important factors after all. Examining the spread of solar photovoltaic residential installations in Connecticut, two researchers at Yale and the

University of Connecticut found instead that the single most important factor driving whether a given house installed solar was peer influence -- whether other houses nearby had recently done so.”

“And hence the dramatic finding: The installation of one additional solar photovoltaic rooftop project within the past six months in a given area increased the average number of installations within a half mile radius by .44, or almost one half.”

Furthermore, we look at this program as a possible solution to influencing the early-late majority of adopters as described in the sociological model “diffusion of innovation curve”. In surveying current solar sales representatives, many attributed to the social setting at the time of interaction to be a great factor in a person’s willingness to listen to the benefits of solar energy. In surveying customers who converted to solar as a result of being engaged by a solar representative in retail stores such as Home Depot, Best Buy, Lowes, Costco, etc., they most often identify with the characteristics of being innovators and early adopters. Thus, this program has the opportunity to reach the number of remaining early to late adopters in reaching the 50.1% critical mass needed to rapidly convert the other 49%. As a special note, out of further group brainstorming, we recognize the common preference of a homeowner to have the solar panels hidden from street view is a hinderance of adoption. Perhaps to accelerate the rapid adoption of renewable energy in our neighborhoods, solar companies could provide incentives to homeowners who allow their system to be visible to the street. Whether the incentive be to offer a discount on the system or a few months of electric generation waived, this small change could potentially significantly increase awareness and faith in solar technology.