

Ultimate Guide to Customer Acquisition in the Ever Changing Energy Industry.

SALES SOLUTIONS FOR THE ENERGY
INDUSTRY

In 1998, Sales Focus Inc. (SFI) pioneered the Sales Outsourcing industry. Our focus was simple; build, train and manage dedicated sales teams for our clients. Our initial focus was primarily targeting small IT firms, who were founded by technologists and didn't have the knowledge to build or manage a sales team. Within 2 years everything changed for SFI, as energy deregulation started in a few states and SFI was poised to show our strength of quickly deploying a sales team and managing the team to meet our clients expectations. The Energy Industry has always been a vast market full of opportunities across the US and within many sub markets. When deregulation occurred, the Sales Outsourcing model was a perfect fit for companies to quickly deploy dedicated sales teams and achieve immediate new customer acquisition. Over the past 20 years, the markets have matured and new methods for customer acquisition have evolved. The energy sector includes deregulation, solar, community solar and the regulated side of the business, along with many ancillary markets including home improvement, energy efficiency and reduction of carbon footprint. The markets are across the US and internationally and range from small and medium businesses to large commercial customers to residential homes and apartments. The opportunities, although very competitive, can be very lucrative with the right approach to customer acquisition.

Understanding the deregulated market can be difficult as it varies slightly from market to market and varies from SMB to Residential. Most states have adopted enough regulations to protect the consumer, but protecting your brand should be extremely important to you.

While only some states in the US operate in a deregulated market, there are many across the country that are considering the move to deregulation. These markets offer residential and business property owners with the unique opportunity to choose their energy supplier, much like many consumers today choose their own phone supplier. While deregulation is becoming more and more prevalent in this country, many consumers living in these markets actually know very little about energy deregulation. Some do not even know they have the power to choose, while others simply don't know enough about deregulation to truly take advantage of all it has to offer. While there is a library of information available about energy deregulation and all that comes with it, for most consumers, it is important to simply know some basic facts.



Think outside the box

Whether you live in a deregulated market, are moving to one, or your community is in the process of considering deregulation, it is important to know these basic facts about this type of electricity market. Here is the 411 on energy deregulation, simplified for today's average consumer.

By 2012, energy deregulation had arrived (at least in some capacity) to close to two dozen states. Some states have a deregulated electric market, others natural gas — a few with both. No state is entirely deregulated — Texas comes the closest at nearly 86% of the state being deregulated.

The basic rule of deregulation is that consumers have the right to purchase their electricity service from a Retail Electricity Provider (REP). These providers strive to offer competitive rates, promotions and loyalty plans in an effort to win the business of average consumers. Most of these companies get their energy from the same source, but package it in different ways to fit the needs of different consumers.

Although there are REPs available in these markets, energy consumers still have the right to receive their electricity from their state-appointed utility. If you live in a deregulated market and haven't switched providers, you are likely still with the original utility that serviced your area before deregulation took effect. Before you sign up for a new energy plan, there will be a contract to sign that details the length of your specific plan. Most plans range from six months to 36 months. If you end that contract early, for any other reason besides moving outside that company's service area, you will have a fee to pay. Fees range from company to company but will be detailed in your contract.

When you sign up with a REP, there will be two parts of your electricity bill, electric supply and electric delivery. Each makes up approximately 50% of the bill. These energy bills may look different than the ones distributed by your original utility, but any reputable retailer will explain the breakdown of a bill before you sign up for a service.



What you plant now, you
will harvest later

Deregulation means more than just the power to choose a supplier, it means having the capacity to choose what type of plan that you have as well. Most REPs offer options such as fixed rate plans, variable rate plans, short term options and long-term options. Most markets have at least one supplier that specializes in offering residential energy plans that feature electricity from 100% renewable resources. These plans offer the average consumer with one of the easiest ways to go green in their home. Your state appointed utility still takes care of your power lines. If you have an emergency with an outage or an issue with your power lines or poles, you do not call your individual retail energy provider. Instead you call your utility. They are still in charge of this infrastructure and will need to be contacted directly regarding any equipment related matters.

Deregulation laws vary from state to state. Not all states are deregulated and not all cities and regions within states that have deregulation are deregulated either. In states such as Texas, one of the first to adopt deregulation laws, 15% of the state is still regulated, including big cities such as Austin.

Deregulated energy markets are available in all or part of the following states: Arizona, Arkansas, California, Connecticut, Delaware, Illinois, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Montana, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Texas, Virginia and Washington D.C.

Electricity deregulation began in many states in 2000.

In 1999, California, Texas, Rhode Island, New York, Pennsylvania, and Massachusetts were all at least partially deregulated. They all had legislation in place that gave consumers access to private power suppliers — retail electric service providers, or just commonly referred to as REP's. Order 2000 helped to facilitate energy deregulation further by creating Regional Transmission Organizations (RTOs). These organizations replaced state operation and control over the transmission grid.



Don't watch the clock; do
what it does. Keep going

However, many consumers in these states have never switched or considered switching energy providers and are actually over paying for their energy service. Fortunately, there are several online shopping tools that make it simple for consumers in deregulated areas to shop for plans from local retailers in an effort to find a plan that best fits their needs.

When you get down to the details of energy deregulation, there are many different terms, laws and regulations that consumers may be inundated with. However, most consumers simply need to know the basics of electricity deregulation and take the time to really research the new plan they are considering. Taking this approach can help keep energy deregulation simple and straightforward as you, the consumer, determine the best course of action for your energy consumption needs.

Another high growth market in the energy sector is “green” or “renewable” energy, which includes wind, solar and hydro. SFI has been successfully representing companies in the green market for the past five years, including roof top solar and most recently for the past three years, community solar.

The U.S. Department of Energy defines community solar as “a solar-electric system that... provides power and/or financial benefit to... multiple community members.” These voluntary programs allow community residents to enjoy the perks of solar power without the large initial investment.

The solar panels and related equipment are set up in a central location, so residents don't need to buy and install equipment on their personal properties. The power produced by these projects is then shared by a community, and the hardware is either owned by the community itself or by a third party.

Solar communities typically work on a subscriber-based model, in which you and other members “subscribe” and receive a portion of the power generated while paying a monthly subscription fee.



What differentiates sellers today
is their ability to bring fresh ideas.

Since there is no upfront investment required, solar communities make it easier for low-to middle-income consumers to participate in reaping the benefits of renewable energy resources. They are also ideal for properties where rooftop panel installation isn't possible. Community solar projects make renewable energy more accessible than ever before.

How does community solar work?

There are multiple ways in which a community solar project can be organized, including:

Utility-sponsored communities

In this model, the utility company owns and operates a solar farm. Consumers can either purchase or lease a portion of the energy being produced by the solar farm and in return, receive a credit on their electric bill.

As energy from non-renewable resources becomes more expensive, consumers with options such as these will be able to realize significant savings.

Special Purpose Entities (SPEs)

In this model, individuals and corporations come together to form a business (an SPE), specifically for the development of a single or multiple community solar projects. The business may design, construct, and own the facility, then work with the local utility to allocate benefits to subscribers.

The SPE model is usually implemented by organizations that seek to take advantage of incentives and tax credits not available to utilities. University Park Solar and the Clean Energy Collective are examples of the SPEs model.

From the consumer's perspective, this method may not look much different than the utility-sponsored model.



The way to get started is to
quit talking and begin doing.

On-bill crediting mode

The on-bill crediting model allows energy consumers to invest in a local solar facility. In exchange, they receive a credit on their monthly power bill for their share of power produced. The credits may appear as reduced kilowatts-per-hour (kWh) or as monetary credit.

For example, if there were 10 shares total for a community solar project and you invested in 2 shares, you would receive kWh credits on your bill equal to the amount of energy your 2 shares produced.

In most states, there is a limit on the amount of credits you can receive, with many of them limiting the credits at 120% of a customer's load. What that means is, if you use 100 kWh, you can't receive more than 120 kWh credits.

While community solar offers the same benefits as any other renewable energy project does (good for the environment, diversified energy supply, economic development, new jobs), the following are some distinct features that make community solar uniquely innovative.

Community solar is great for renters

Renters have historically been excluded from the benefits of solar energy.

Owning property, a prerequisite for going solar, has prevented renters in America from adopting the cheaper and cleaner energy source. Community solar is the perfect solution to this problem.

Easier option for going solar if you're selling or moving homes

People who are selling their home or planning to move will find that joining a community solar program is much easier and quicker than buying solar panels. This would be especially helpful if you end up having the option to stay with the same solar farm in the new property.



Setting goals is the first step in
turning the invisible into the visible

Community solar takes away the hassle of having to worry about solar lease transfers, as well.

Despite that, buying solar panels for your home isn't necessarily a bad idea, even if you're selling. Studies have shown that in the mid-price range of housing stock, houses with solar panels sell for around \$15,000 more than houses without solar panels.

Given the fact that a typical residential solar system now costs less than \$15,000 after claiming the 30% solar tax credit, you might be able to sell the house as little as six months after purchasing solar panels and not lose any money.

Community solar won't affect your home's aesthetic

The look of rooftop solar panels isn't for everyone. For those who wish to take advantage of solar without installing panels on their roof, being a part of a community solar project means that they can benefit economically from solar, without impacting their home's aesthetic.

A rooftop that's unsuitable for solar panels is no obstacle

About 50% of all homes aren't suitable for a rooftop solar installation, either because they lack the required square feet of roof space, they are shaded or they do not have an orientation towards the south.

Community solar requires no maintenance

Being part of a community solar project takes away the need for solar panel maintenance.

Although long-term warranties are offered by nearly all rooftop solar installers, it's ultimately up to you as the homeowner to monitor your system and reach out to the company if you think your system may not be working properly.

There are 25 states that are currently offering virtual net metering for community solar programs.



Well done is better than well said

If you value your brand and customer care, SFI's sales outsourcing model is a good fit for your business. Our model is driven by our trademarked process S.O.L.D.™, which allows us to launch any size sales team anywhere in the world in 45 days or less. In today's competitive market, getting feet on the street quickly is essential to customer acquisition, but making sure the sales team is performing at the highest level of integrity should also be a priority. There are many forms of sales, that range from Independent Contractors, Distributors, Telemarketers, Direct Mail, Marketing Campaigns, Community Association Marketing, Partnerships and Sales Outsourcing. How do you decide what is best for your business? How do you decide what is the right balance for your company? Many times, organizations try multiple methods. You need to decide what is important, what will yield the results you demand while maintaining sales integrity and professionalism. Unfortunately, the word deregulation has a bad connotation, as many people have been scammed or slammed by providers over the years. Or, they have been put on a plan that was supposed to save them money, but it was only an introductory rate that adjusted after a few months, therefore getting locked into an increase in monthly fees. The entire model of energy deregulation was to give consumers options, to open the market to competition that would benefit the consumers and business owners. Unfortunately, too many people were sold products/solutions that really didn't help them and cost them more in the long run. Too many unscrupulous sales people took advantage of the marketplace and sold products knowing they were not going to help the business owner or homeowner. The market demands professionalism and ethics, it demands proper training and management. To ensure success, too many vendors take shortcuts with new customer acquisition, by allowing companies to represent them without proper vetting management and verification. In today's competitive environment it's easy to lose sight of what is really important, providing a product/solution that actually benefits the customer. To make sure the customer is buying a solution that is good for them and will serve them well over an extended period of time.



There is always room at the top

Exclusivity should also be important to vendors, our approach to the market provides our clients exclusivity to a particular territory. We will not compete against our clients in the same market. We ensure our sales agents are 100% focused on driving new customer acquisition specifically for you. All our sales agents work full time, dedicated to our partner client. They are not just pushing the product with the best commission or lowest price; we focus on what's important to the customer and what's important to our clients. Finding customers that stay on board for the term of the contract and beyond is key to long term success for our clients. We make sure the customer understands the product, understands the terms and conditions and is satisfied with their decision. The customer becomes a strong referral for SFI and our customer. Building teams that focus solely on our clients product has made SFI the premier provider of dedicated energy-based sales teams across the US for the past 20 years.

How does a company find the right partner? How do they ensure success and quality? How do they protect their brand? Finding the right partner and process is paramount to the success of every vendor. If you want to secure new customers and protect your brand, Sales Focus has been successfully representing energy companies across all deregulated markets. Over the past 20 years we have had the honor to represent many companies in every market across the US. The companies include our original enter into the deregulation market with Enron, we all know that didn't turn out too well, but it put us into the energy industry to stay.

We are proud to have represented the following companies in the deregulated and solar industries across all markets. We continue to expand our relationships and partnerships as we grow our clients book of business by acquiring new customers. Our rigorous recruiting and training process has allowed SFI to become the leader in sales outsourcing solutions for the energy sector. It is why the largest ESCO/REP's chose SFI. We are focused on your success. Building relationships, developing long term customer relationships and exceeding expectations is our focus for all our clients. The companies listed below are an example of some of the organizations that have focused on quality performance and professional sales techniques;



A goal is a dream with a deadline

Past and Present SFI Energy Clients

- MX Energy
- Public Power
- Relay
- Reliant
- Stand Energy
- Think Energy
- Vanguard
- Vivant Solar
- Nobel
- Energy Plus
- Arcadia
- Clearway
- NRG
- Discount Power
- Distributed Sun
- Emblem Energy
- Energy Saving Solutions
- ESCO
- TXU
- Constellation
- Direct Energy
- WGL
- Crius
- Sunrun
- US Energy
- AEP
- Hess
- Solar Farms NY
- Genie Energy
- Neighborhood Sun
- Nautilus
- IPH
- Liberty
- Marathon
- Inspire
- Great Lakes



Don't be afraid to give up the
good to go for the great

Sales Focus has 20 plus years' experience in the Energy Industry across all platforms; deregulation, rooftop solar, community solar and LED lighting. Our sales outsourcing model has allowed our clients to quickly launch a dedicated sales team that is 100% focused on their brand, and commits to targeted cost of acquisition. SFI guarantees all our programs, based on performance and quality. Over 20 years of experience, we have written thousands of contracts and not 1 time have any of our clients had to go in front of the PSC/PUC due to unethical or unprofessional sales behavior. SFI takes great pride in our commitment to sales excellence and performance. Our relationship with our clients is very close, we become an extension of our clients brand, as every sales person on the street is specifically hired, trained and managed to represent a particular brand. We provide our clients with a direct and dedicated sales approach. All our staff are full time employees of Sales Focus, who are specifically recruited based on skill sets, then they are trained to meet specific standards, and managed daily to ensure success. If you are care about quality, brand protection and sales success, we are the leaders in dedicated sales teams in the Energy Sector. Over twenty years of success in both SMB and C&I, along with residential sales has positioned SFI as the leader in the energy industry.

Our process is what sets us apart. Any size sales team, anywhere in the world ready to go in 45 days or less. We have launched sales teams as large as 300 people across the globe and as small as 2 people in our sales center. Feet on the street or inside sales, we can do what you need with the quality you demand. The SFI S.O.L.D.™ process is our key differentiation in the market, along with years of experience and knowledge. Our SOLD process positions SFI as the leader in the industry to quickly and efficiently build and manage a dedicated team of qualified sales professionals. We begin the process with the Study phase to fully understand your business and what makes you stand out. Understanding your process and keys to success so we can build the team to meet your goals and expectations. Immediately following the Kickoff meeting and the Study phase, we begin the Organization phase, which includes two parallel processes, developing a sales training document, we call the "sales toolkit" and begin the recruiting process to identify the people who best fit the qualities we demand on our programs. All the sales people go through multiple levels of interviews, background checks and drug testing. Each candidate selected must fit the profile that will lead to success.



High expectations are the
key to everything

The initial recruiting steps and stages are essential to finding a team of professionals who will represent your brand with the professionalism we demand. Once the team has been assembled, we will train them, test them and provide sufficient role play to verify they understand the key differentiators and your value proposition. We track the sales agents every day to verify quality and consistency. Since our sales team are employees of SFI, we can control the training and daily activities. Unlike a broker or 1099 model, our staff are W2 employees of SFI. Every bit of data we capture in the field becomes your data. Customer, competitive and marketing information is provided to you in our weekly program reviews. Your team will have direct management oversight from SFI, with our HR, Operations and Recruiting teams focused on providing a quality team, that is focused on success.

Our focus is simple. **Make you successful! Our goal is to exceed your goals and expectations!** If your company cares about quality and protecting your brand, then Sales Focus is the solution for you. No one has the level of experience in the energy industry as we do. Over 20 years of experience in all energy sectors, thousands of contracts executed for our clients, and Zero complaints. Call us today to a free evaluation and see what SFI can do for you. 410-442-5600 or visit us at www.salesfocusinc.com.



If You Are Not Taking Care Of Your Customer,
Your Competitor Will