



WHAT IS AN INTEGRATED CONTENT STRATEGY—AND WHY DOES IT MATTER TO YOU?

Peter Troast, Founder & CEO

Energy Circle Webinar Series

December 9, 2020

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Director of Digital Strategy**~~

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Oct. 2020 Update: What's New with Google Local Services Ads? (A Lot.)



By Shawn Cohen | October 21, 2020

Google's Local Service Ads allow businesses, like HVAC and better building contractors, to run prominently displayed ads, geo-targeted at their service area, and pay for leads directly. As Google expands the LSA product, adding features like bidding options (yes, you read that correctly! Bidding has come to LSA's), and new service categories, we've got the latest on what's new with LSAs and how best to leverage them.

A Little Local Service Ads History

Google launched Local Service Ads (LSAs) in 2015 with fixed per lead pricing (set by Google) and limited eligibility to certain geographies and service categories. Over the next few years, they slowly and quietly tested the product in specific markets, and by 2018, had begun a more comprehensive rollout—expanding availability to include nearly fifty service verticals, and widespread geographical availability across the country and beyond. Of course, at Energy Circle we've been keeping a close eye on LSAs [since the comprehensive roll out began](#), and tracking their impact on other digital marketing tactics and channels—including SEO and Local SEO, as well as traditional PPC through Google Ads.

In April 2019, we [published an update](#) to our original LSA overview which included details about what had changed since the broader rollout began, and what had remained the same. We also shared our analysis and recommendations about how marketers in the home performance, solar, and HVAC industries could best leverage LSAs and incorporate the new ad product into their greater digital marketing mix.

LSAs are still a prominent and influential feature in SERP, and as Google continues to expand the product, it's important for marketers to understand the capabilities and the implications of running Local Service Ads. Today, we'll outline some of those most recent changes, and update our recommendations and predictions around how best to incorporate LSAs into your marketing strategy.

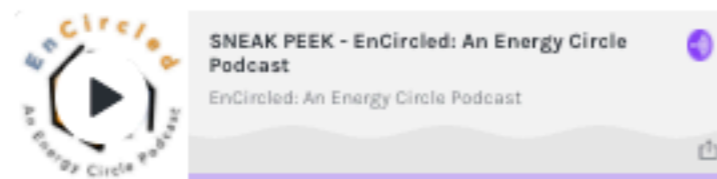


Here at Energy Circle, we love a good podcast. So we decided we want to make one ourselves. Focused on all things marketing and specific to the better buildings sector we serve, the EnCircled podcast brings our hosts, resident audio-visual whiz Jake Van Paeppegem (whom you may recognize as our weekly webinar Host with the Troast) and Director of Marketing Operations Josh Kennon together each episode to discuss marketing trends and industry intel with our team of experts. Each episode, conversations will include topics like current solar industry shake-ups, IAQ in our current COVID-19 climate, and how we really feel about Tom Brady. (Hint: it's... not great.)

You can find our episodes right here—available for listening now! We'll be sure to let you know each time a new one drops. You can also find Encircled: an Energy Circle podcast everywhere else podcasts can be found, such as Apple Podcasts and Spotify.

Available Episodes

Sneak Peak — EnCircled: an Energy Circle Podcast Trailer



What We'll Discuss

- 1 INTEGRATED CONTENT STRATEGY—WHAT DO WE MEAN?**
- 2 FIRST: WHO'S THE TARGET?**
- 3 CONTENT TAKES EFFORT—GETTING MAXIMUM IMPACT**
- 4 INTEGRATED PRODUCES BETTER RESULTS**

An Integrated Content Strategy

- **Get's Maximum Impact for Each Content TOPIC**
- **Lowers Cost of Content Production**
- **Focuses on Most Critical Services/Topics**
- **Feeds Back on Itself with Data**



WHO'S THE TARGET?

(and what do they need?)

Personas

Techie Tom

Overall Goal: To save energy and make his house more efficient because it's the smart thing to do, and (secondarily) because it's the right thing to do.

Level of knowledge: Very high. Knows what tools are out there, which are best. Up to date on consumer reviews and reports.

Attitude toward shopping: I want to buy from people like me, who know their stuff.

Informational Sources: Web - blogs, Twitter, Major Media, Green focused media, Renewable media

What he wants: I need more information than they have on their site - details, practical experience, proof that they are the experts, and the product will do what I need it to do.

Motivation for efficiency: Two-prongs: 1). it's just smarter living. 2). it's the right thing to do for the planet - and (3) soon, people are going to catch on to it, and efficiency is going to be the next big thing. He wants to be at the top of that wave.

Age: 35

Profession: Software developer

Location: Boston

Personality: Type A. Over- educated energy geek. Likes to feel engaged, to be a part of the process.

Home Life: Married. No kids.

Hobbies/releases: Mountain biking, long-distance running.



Personas

Last-home William

Overall Goal: Envisions a dream home in a beautiful location where he and his spouse can spend their retirement years living well, at low operational cost.

Level of knowledge: High, but willing to take new input. He has read as much as he can and understands the basic parameters. It's not his first time working with contractors or building a new home. If he trusts you, he'll listen and learn.

Informational Sources: Economist, local paper, reference books, trusted friends and family members, sometimes a blog or email newsletter.

What he wants: A great overall result. Executive decision-making power. A source of pride and a site for family reunions, now including grandkids. Freedom from high monthly bills. The ability to enjoy retirement, travel.

Motivation for efficiency: It's a soft investment. He knows it may not pay off entirely in his own lifetime, but he can afford it. The concept of home.



Age: 62

Profession: Doctor

Location: Suburbs or somewhat rural

Personality: Thoughtful, active and generally social, but likes his quiet time.

Home Life: William has seen his 3 kids through college. 2 of them are married and have homes of their own. The youngest has a job and her own place to live, although she has not completely solidified her finances yet. William and his spouse like to cook and go for walks together. They host a monthly revolving dinner party with about 10-12 friends, also babyboomers.

Content to Meet Audience Needs

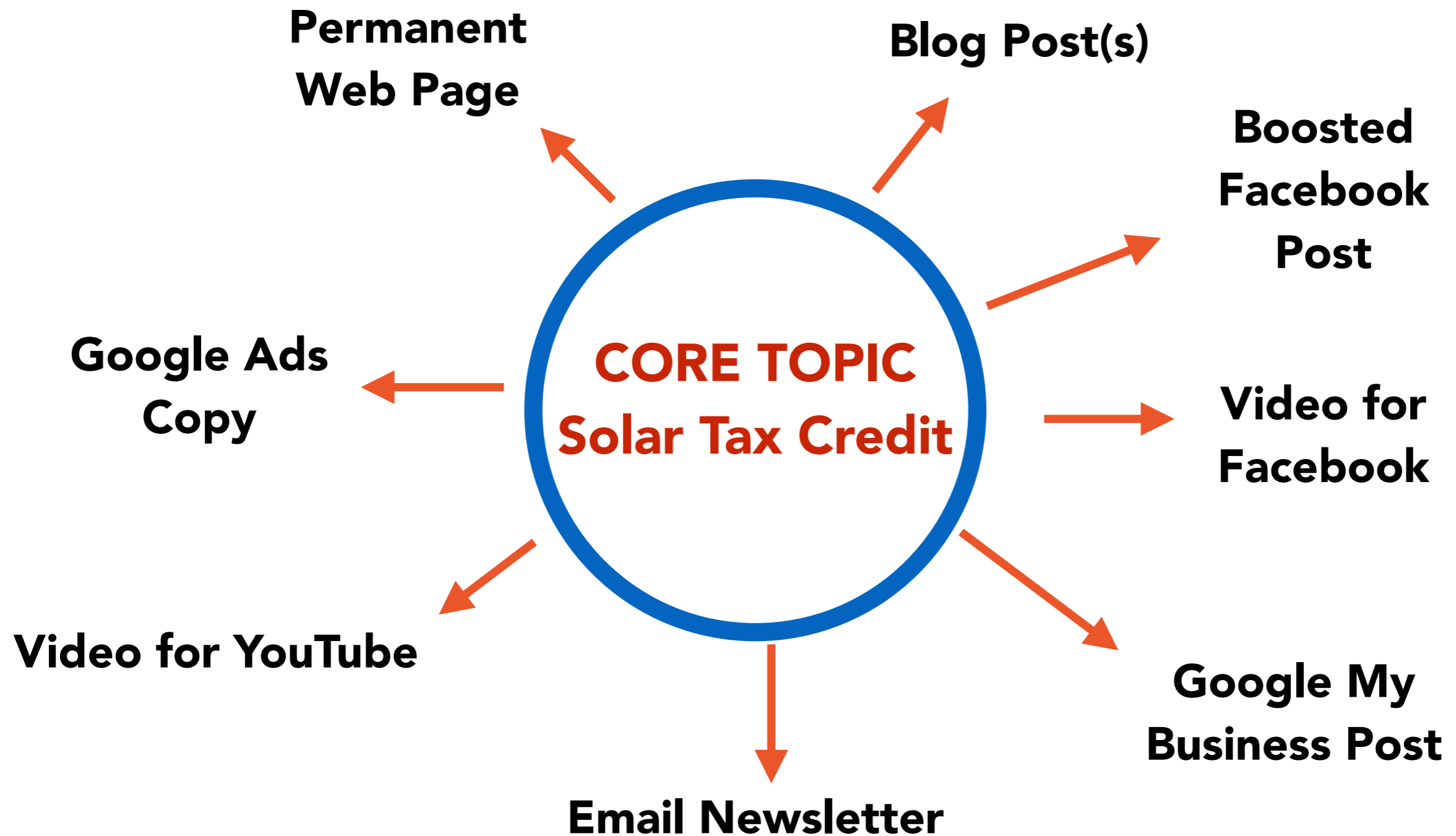
Target	Needs	Goal
Techie Tom	Performance Data Transparency Detail	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. View Case Studies2. Download Planning Worksheet
Last House William	Cost Data Aging In Place Features Process	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Read the "Predictable Home" blog post2. View "Elements of a Permanent Home" page3. Sign up for site visit



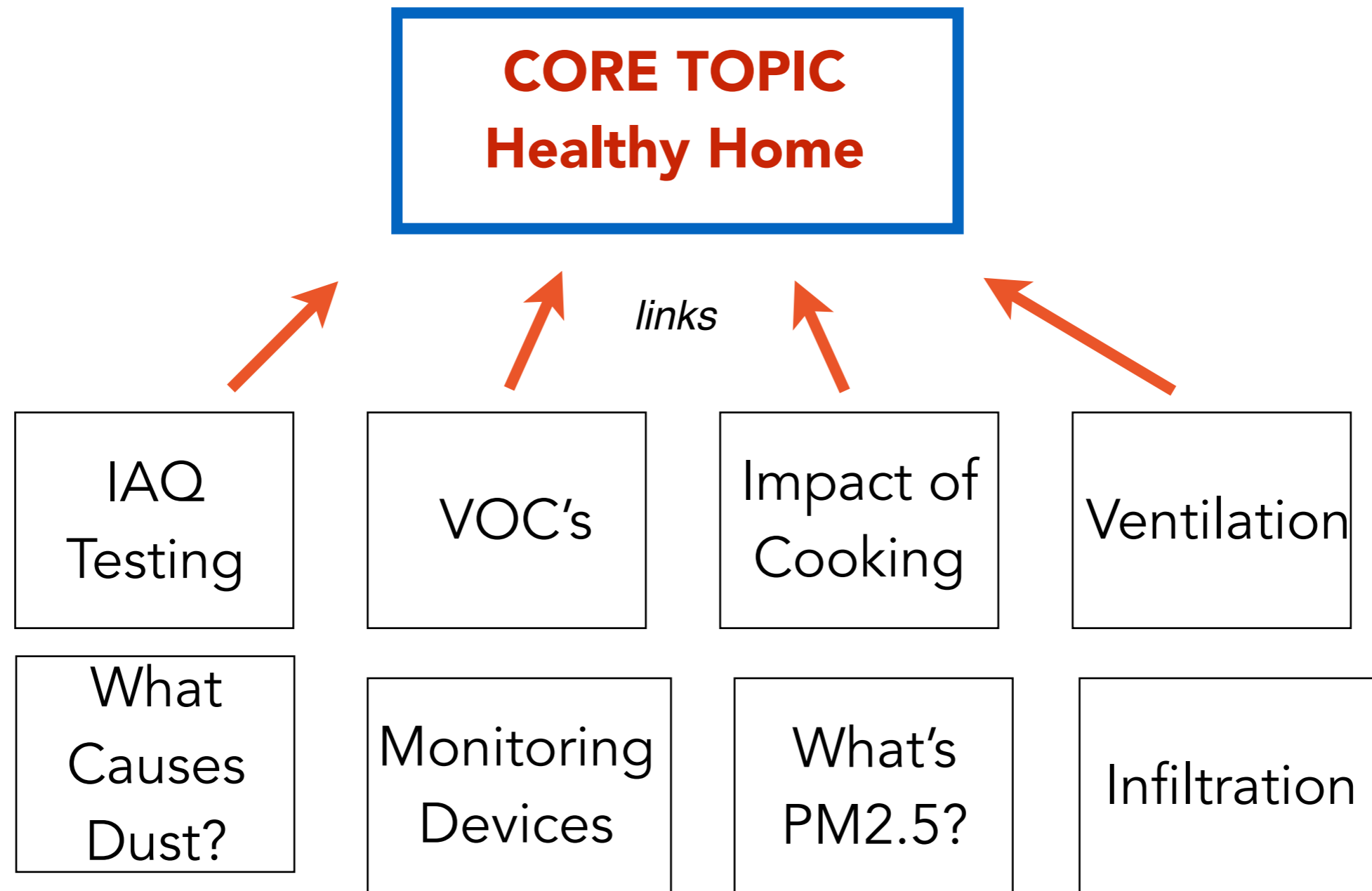
GETTING MAXIMUM IMPACT

(content takes effort)

Integrated: Maximizing the Value of Content



Clustering Content for Complex Topics





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(lift + continuous feedback)

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06 **The Federal Solar Tax Credit in 2020**
JAN


If you've been staying abreast of the tax savings that the Federal Solar Tax Credit (officially known as the Investment Tax Credit), you may already know that there are some changes coming now that 2019 is over. This has many solar-curious Massachusetts homeowners wondering, "Will the federal solar tax credit be available in 2020?"

YES — and at a rate of 26%. Here's what you need to know about this solar panel tax credit in 2020, how it has changed, and how you can cash in.

How Much is the Solar Tax Credit in 2020 and Beyond?
This year in 2020, that federal tax credit is worth 26% for homeowners and businesses. In 2021, the federal tax credit will reduce to 22% and in 2022, it will be eliminated for homeowners but remain at 10% for businesses.

So, what does that 26% tax credit savings look like for the average solar installation here in Massachusetts? Let's take a look.

How To Claim the Solar Tax Credit
All these percentages don't mean much if you can't apply them to what a solar installation actually costs! So:



Curious about what incentives are available to reduce your solar costs? We are here to help!

First Name *

Last Name *

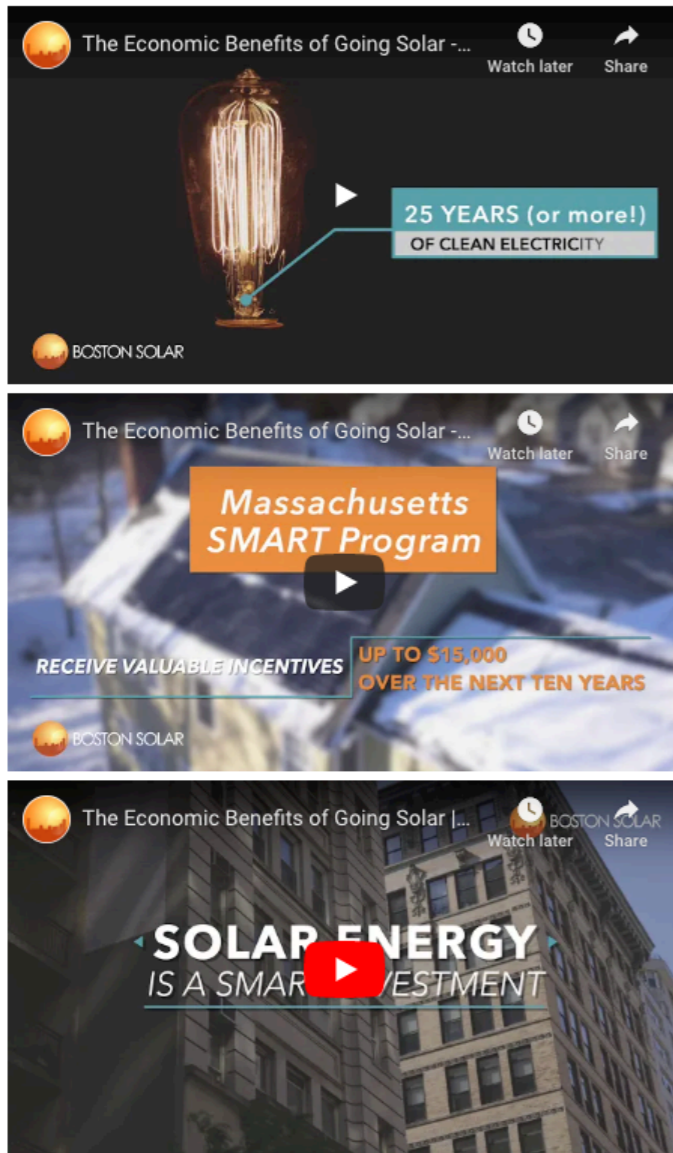
Email *

Phone *

Zip Code *

<input type="checkbox"/>	Search term	Match type	Added/Excluded	Campaign	Ad group	Clicks	↓ Impr.	CTR	Avg. CPC
Total: Filtered search terms						463	1,270	36.46%	\$5.72
<input type="checkbox"/>	solar tax credit 2020	Exact match	✓ Added	NB - Programs Beta	Solar Tax Credit	64	298	21.48%	\$3.71
<input type="checkbox"/>	federal solar tax credit 2020	Phrase match (close variant)	✓ Added	NB - Programs Beta	Solar Tax Credit	25	137	18.25%	\$6.82

Modular Video Approach



Video Cut	Total Impressions (Paid + Organic)	Total Views (All Platforms)	Reach (Facebook)
Save on Energy Bill	135,047	20,032	87,611
Cheaper, Cleaner Energy	288,535	193,681	66,989
SMART Incentives	69,726	2163	53,263
Economic Benefits of Solar (Full Length)	811	264	
Total	494,119	216,140	207,863

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Why Is My Furnace Making Noise?

December 3, 2020

The optimal furnace noise is no furnace noise at all! At their best, your home's heating and cooling systems should be delivering quiet, reliable home comfort, but unfortunately, sometimes that doesn't happen. If you've woken up in your home in Mercer, Middlesex, or Somerset County, NJ or Bucks County, PA to a strange sound coming from your vents or from your furnace down in the basement, you're likely confused (and maybe a little worried).

Don't worry—here's what you need to know about the different unusual sounds that a furnace can make, and what they all mean, from your local HVAC expert, Princeton Air.

Grinding, Scraping, Or Clanking

Furnaces that are making a grinding noise could have a loose blower wheel that's hitting up against the blower housing. Without attention from a qualified HVAC technician, you could end up damaging both.

Low-Pitched Loud Rumbling


The most common reason for a furnace making a loud rumbling noise is a dirty burner, where soot or dirt buildup is blocking airflow to the burner. This is especially likely if your furnace hasn't been serviced recently. Similar to issues with your burner, a pilot light that's dirty or not properly adjusted can also cause your

Recent Posts

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- Home Electrification
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Is your furnace making a squealing, rumbling, grinding, or banging noise? Here's what could be going on, and how you can get heating system help ASAP!



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4 Heating Myths That Raise Energy Bills



December 13, 2018

Keeping your winter energy costs down is a worthy goal, yet sometimes even the smartest homeowners in the Harrisonburg, VA area fall for these common heating myths. Rather than helping you save energy, these four myths could end up costing you more!

Myth #1: Using space heaters & fireplaces can save energy.

While it may seem like using a space heater or your fireplace can save energy, these heating options can actually end up costing you more!

Discover how you can save on your heating bills.

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Name

Phone

Email

How can we be of service?

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5 Heating Myths Busted: Fact vs Fiction

Looking to keep your Shenandoah Valley home warmer in winter? Separate rumor from truth and take the educated approach to home heating with Excel, as we debunk some of the more popular inaccurate tips and heating hacks.

Fiction	Fact
<p>Closing your ductwork vents in unused rooms saves you money.</p> 	<p>Central HVAC systems distribute conditioned air in a house through both a blower fan and pressure differentials. Closing vents increases pressure, negatively affecting the air blower's performance and increasing duct air leakage, wasting energy and money. If you're trying to take full advantage of your central heating, schedule ductwork evaluation with an HVAC professional.</p> 
<p>Ceiling fans are only useful in summer.</p> 	<p>Ceiling fans in the winter can actually help keep you warm! Did you know your fan has a reverse setting? When it gets cold, switch your fan's direction, and rising warm air will be pushed down from the ceiling to where it will most benefit you.</p> 
<p>Space heaters are a smart way to save money on heating in the winter.</p> 	<p>The cost of electricity is significantly higher than natural gas—in most of the country, it's double, if not more. That means your heat usage would need to be cut in half before you saw any savings with electric space heaters. For most homes, that makes space heaters an unsustainable heating solution.</p> 
<p>The higher you crank your thermostat, the quicker your home will heat up.</p> 	<p>Your furnace works just as hard whether it has to raise the temperature 1 degree or 10. By cranking up your thermostat higher than you actually want it, you are running the risk that you'll forget you set it so high and waste energy on heat you don't actually need. The better option is to upgrade to a programmable thermostat, set it, and then forget it!</p> 
<p>The bigger your heating system, the better.</p> 	<p>If your heating system is too big for your Virginia home, it will constantly be short cycling—turning on and off in rapid succession. Incorrect furnace sizing leads to more wear and tear, more heating maintenance calls, and a shorter lifespan. HVAC systems use the most energy when they are turning on and turning off, meaning you will likely be seeing higher energy bills as well.</p> 

WHEN IT COMES TO SMART HEATING, THERE'S NO SUBSTITUTE FOR FACTS.

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Topic Clues from Paid Search (Long Tail)

<input type="checkbox"/>	Search term	Match type	Added/Excluded	Campaign	Ad group	Clicks	↓ Impr.	CTR
Total: Filtered search t...						247	878	28.13%
<input type="checkbox"/>	how long do solar panels last	Phrase match (close variant)	None	CO - Denver Solar Panels Beta	Solar Panel	4	16	25.00%

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HOW LONG DO SOLAR PANELS LAST?

If you find yourself asking this question, it likely means you are already considering installing a solar electric system in your San Antonio, Austin or Denver home. But solar panels are a big investment, and of course you want your investment to last.

So, after your solar installers clean up the last of their tools and leave you and your family to your energy savings, how long will those solar panels last?

DECADES OF ENERGY SAVINGS WITH SOLAR ENERGY

As the technology involved in solar photovoltaic (PV) systems has advanced, so has the life expectancy. Most solar panels come with a warranty covering 25 to 30 years, but a well taken care of system can last upwards of 40 years! Let's take a look at just how much money you can save in energy costs over the lifespan of your solar electric system.

THE NUMBERS OF GOING SOLAR

When you look at the total cost of going solar, it can be intimidating to see the sticker price. But when you take into account available federal and state incentives, the upfront cost looks much more manageable — especially when you are investing in a solar PV system that will last for decades.

Let's say for argument's sake that you are looking at a \$15,000 6.0 kWh solar PV system for your San Antonio home. For CPS customers, CPS offers a \$0.70 per watt rebate for a system that utilizes locally manufactured materials (with a cap of up to 50% of the initial cost of the system). So, for a 6.0 kWh system, the math is: \$0.70 x 6,000 watts = \$4,200 in savings. This drops your initial cost to \$10,800. Then factoring in the federal tax incentive, you will save 30% of the cost of your system on your taxes come April. For a now \$10,800 system, you save an additional \$3,240. That brings the net cost after tax season down to just \$7,560 (and we haven't even gotten to your energy bill yet).

LONG LASTING SOLAR ENERGY SAVINGS

Now that we have a view of what the upfront cost of a solar PV system could be (\$7,560 — though you can get a more exact number of what your home solar system will cost with a [free CAM Solar Consultation](#)), we can calculate your energy savings and how long it would take for your solar investment to pay off. With the average Texas home saving \$100 per month on their energy bill, that adds up to \$1,200 in savings per year. So to fully pay off the \$7,560 upfront cost, it will take only 6.3 years. That means for the remaining 23.7 years of your 30+ year system, your home's solar system is saving you at least \$1,200 in yearly energy costs that goes straight into your pocket (that's \$28,440!)

Best with a Plan

CONTENT TYPE - NAME	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLES
Highlight / Mini Project Story	<p><i>Client Supplied Content / Info & Creative Copy + Visuals:</i></p> <p>Brief digestible snippet of a WW project highlighting a specific component of a Custom High Performance Home design / build project with a high level / vanity metric - at least one high quality photo + 3 to 5 sentences with call to action</p>	<p>Photos, details / descriptions about specific components of a custom build project, IE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - an all electric kitchen with humidity control so you can grow your herbs and cook your organic meals - window design that allows for huge amounts of natural light all year round - expertly sealed and insulated so you get all the benefits with none of the heating/cooling energy waste or drafty pitfalls - fully automated temperature control that's integrated into smart home technology which runs security, thermostat, door locks, etc - new reduced VOC paint and APCO air filters that control and improve IAQ reducing indoor allergies / improving quality of sleep and breathing for the whole family
Life Hack / Pro Tip	<p><i>Creative Copy + Visuals:</i></p> <p>Relating to organization, steps to right size your life, ideas for simplifying all in the context of your home and with the ultimate objective of leading a more environmentally friendly, sustainable, manageable, affordable life. Brief checklists, articles, galleries, or simple tips aimed at connecting the concept of</p>	<p>Copy (and images if available) that detail specific advice, tips, or resources to help people right size their life, that also place the concept of rightsizing into the context of better building, high performance retrofitting practices and methods. IE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Electrify everything in your home - reducing your dependence on fossil fuels to power your home simplifies your life: less need for maintenance or worry about "running out", fewer health & safety concerns as they relate to combustion appliances, better control and convenience with more options for automation and connectivity, and all while reducing your carbon footprint! - Durable, effective waterproofing for your home is a vital component to simplifying your life. Sustainable, high performance construction practices involving proper insulation, air sealing, encapsulation, and ventilation reduce wasted energy, help control temperature, dust and moisture, and improve the quality of the air you breathe inside - even when the weather is extreme. Right-size your life by planning for the future - stop worrying about maintenance, repairs, or even health and safety issues in your home caused by weather wear and tear. Rest easy knowing your home is built to last for you, your family, and the planet.
Project Gallery / Customer Journey Story	<p><i>Client Supplied Content / Info:</i></p> <p>Comprehensive case study with more anecdotal content centered around the homeowner's personal story / motivations and objectives in custom building a high performance home, editorial (almost magazine like) article / long format posts with multiple images that show the final results interspersed</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Photos (labeled and organized by project) - Corresponding project details (see Case Study Form) - Corresponding customer testimonial
"How To" Guide	<p><i>Creative Copy + Visuals:</i></p> <p>Checklist, infographic / video, or instructional article that details projects to help improve a home's flow, layout, accessibility or general "usability"- these would be a combination of smaller, DIY tasks to capture people researching specific home "flow" issues, mixed with more comprehensive home improvement / remodeling projects requiring more advanced design/ construction services.</p>	<p>Copy and graphics that can be compiled into checklists or instructional guides that serve as downloadable assets or landing page content amplified via facebook posts. IE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Converting to an "Open Concept" Floor Plan - How to make my home feel more open and spacious - Decluttering and Organizing - Storage and organization solutions for a busy family - Safety Modifications for an Elderly Relative - How to prepare your home for an elderly loved one - Entertaining and Hosting - Tips for hosting guests in a small space (furniture arrangement, amenities and conveniences that make entertaining easier and more enjoyable) - Keeping it Clean - Avoid dust, moisture, allergens and pests with these home improvement projects aimed at getting your home clean and healthy, and keeping it that way!



QUESTIONS?

Peter Troast

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