




COVID-19 SERIES: HOW CONTRACTORS CAN ADAPT TO THE NEW "LOW TOUCH" WORLD

Peter Troast, Founder & CEO, Energy Circle

Energy Circle Webinar Series

May 13, 2020



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Resources for Responding to COVID-19

We are working with our clients around the clock to help craft careful and direct messaging for their customers and service area communities. Below is a list of resources that home performance, HVAC, and solar companies can use to get out ahead of the evolving COVID-19/coronavirus crisis and take a strong position as a leading local business. Included are ideas for blogs, emails, social media, and more, as well as links to examples of already published material from some of your colleagues across the country. This page will be updated continuously moving forward, so feel free to bookmark and check back in, or to reach out to our team for assistance.

Energy Circle-Provided Resources

- [Draft of Company Statement Outline](#)
- [Recommended Communications Strategies](#)
- [What Should I Tell My Customers About Coronavirus?: Communication Ideas for COVID-19 Blog](#)
- [What Should I Tell My Customers About Coronavirus? Webinar](#)
- [COVID-19 Strategies Part 2: Evolving Communication Approaches & How to Prepare for the Rebound Blog](#)
- [COVID-19 Strategies Part 2: Evolving Communication Approaches & Preparing for the Other Side Webinar](#)

Examples of Company Statement Communications

- [EcoPerformance Builders](#), California (home performance)
- [Insource Renewables](#), Maine (solar, heat pumps)
- [Healthy Home Energy & Consulting](#), New York (home performance)

March 2020: COVID-19 Impact Report from the Energy Circle Google Ads Dataset

Wednesday, April 1.
Shawn Cohen, Director of Digital Strategy



COVID-19 Google Ads Impact Report - April 2020



By Shawn Cohen | May 13, 2020

We're now over 2 months into actively monitoring the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic is having on Google Ads performance and user search trends in the HVAC, Home Performance, and Solar industries. We are actively monitoring and analyzing patterns across KPIs such as impressions, clicks and conversions and forming hypothesis and conclusions as to how the crisis is impacting consumer demand and conversion behavior in the better building and clean energy sectors.

Here is a detailed analysis of the PPC data we've been tracking as it relates to the potential impact of the COVID-19 health crisis:

GOOGLE ADS PERFORMANCE SUMMARY

- There were clear signs of decreased competition for target keywords in April with declining CPCs across the board - both year over year (YOY) and month over month (MOM).
- Campaigns for companies who "leaned in" and took advantage of less expensive CPCs (ie: dialed up click spend budget or maintained a steady spend even in the face of declining impressions) thrived in many cases - earning significantly more impressions, clicks, and conversions MOM as competition backed off.
- Demand / search volume for home services in general was definitely down in April, but Click-Through Rates and Conversion Rates were both up. This indicates that fewer people were searching, but among those searchers, more of them were clicking on ads and reaching out to contractors than they were in March, indicating a more motivated pool of consumers (and probably longer attention spans among a vastly home-bound audience).
- **HVAC** - All KPIs (including CPCs, impressions, CTR, and conversions) are following the same trends (both up

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- **HVAC** - All KPIs (including CPCs, impressions, CTR, and conversions) are following the same trends (both up and down) as we saw from March to April last year, indicating that performance in the last 30 days has been less impacted by COVID-19-specific changes to consumer search behavior than it has been by typical seasonal factors.
- **Home Performance** - Impressions (search volume) were up dramatically MOM. As predicted, searches for air purifiers, UV light filtration, IAQ testing, and also mold related tests and services saw the largest gains over March. Conversions were also up. COVID-19 and the related “stay at home” regulations have clearly had an impact on how people view the health and safety of their home environment.
- **Solar** - MOM impressions, clicks, and conversions are all down (as was ad spend for EC’s Solar PPC campaigns), but Click-Through Rates and Conversion Rates were both up significantly. Again, indicating fewer people searching, but those who are searching are more motivated.

What We'll Discuss

- 1 THE NEW LOW TOUCH WORLD—HERE TO STAY?**
- 2 THE EMERGING HOMEOWNER PERSONAS—WHAT WE'RE SEEING**
- 3 CHANGES AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THE LOW TOUCH WORLD—WHERE ARE THE BIGGEST IMPACTS**
- 4 ACTIONS YOU CAN TAKE NOW**

Rise of “Digital and Low Touch”

© Consumer changes to digital and low-touch activities fall into three primary buckets



User growth since COVID-19 ²	High (>40%)	<p>Works for now</p> <p>Activities necessitated by COVID-19 that are poor substitutes for in-person counterparts, and consequently have lower intent to continue</p>	<p>Accelerated shifts</p> <p>Satisfactory digital replacements for in-person activities and connectivity, with growing adoption</p>
	Low (<40%)		<p>Potentially here to stay</p> <p>New and familiar forms of entertainment and interaction with medium-high intent to continue</p>
		Low (<45%)	Medium-high (>45%)
<p>Intent to use after COVID-19¹</p> <p><i>Percent of new or increased users who intend to keep doing activity after COVID-19</i></p>			

- **User growth** is defined as the percent of respondents who replied that they are **new users** over the percent of respondents who replied that they were **using this service pre-COVID-19**
- **Intent to continue** is defined as the percent of respondents who replied that, after COVID-19, they will **keep their usage at the same level or will increase usage**

¹ Q: Compared to now, will you do or use the following more, less or not at all, once the coronavirus (COVID-19) situation has subsided? Possible answers: "will stop this"; "will reduce this"; "will keep doing what I am doing now"; "will increase this."
² User growth is calculated as % of respondents who replied that they are new users over % of respondents who replied that they were either: increased usage users, same usage users, or reduced usage users.

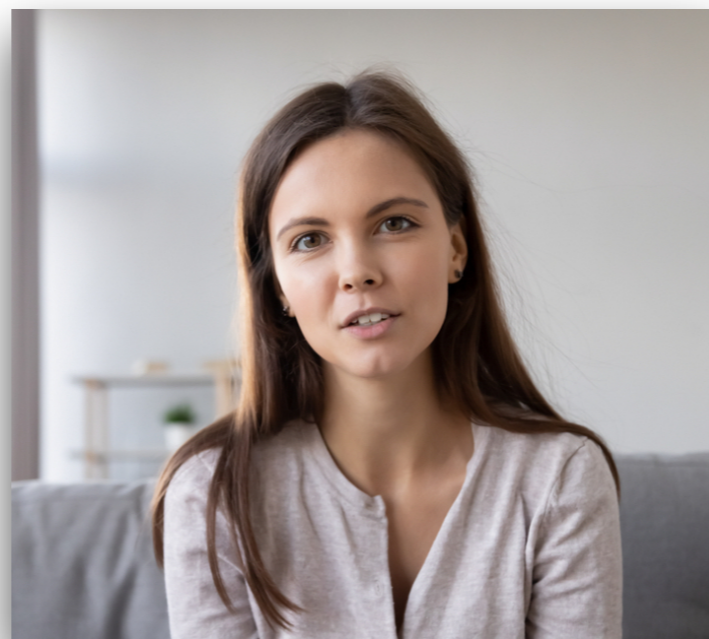
Source: McKinsey & Company COVID-19 US Consumer Pulse Survey 4/20-4/26/2020, n = 1,052, sampled and weighted to match US general population 18+ years

The New COVID-era Homeowner Personas



C'mon in Jim

Unperturbed
Not super worried



Cautious Kristina

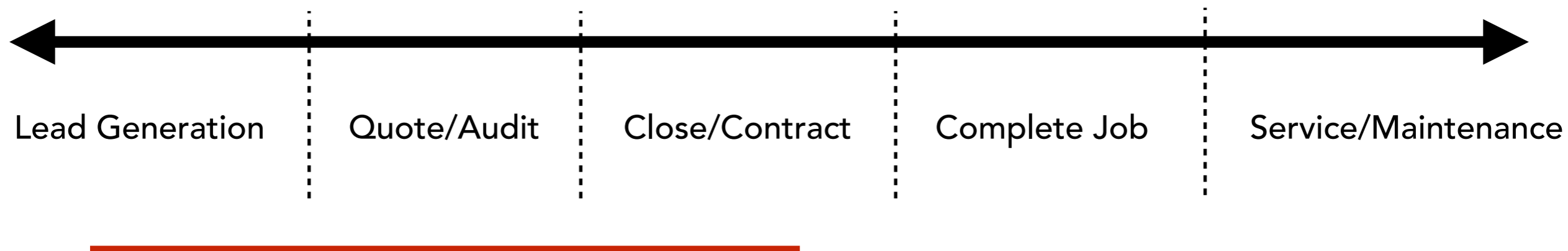
Expects new protocols
Respects overcommunication
Will put you to the test



Hell No Helen

Nothing is important
enough to let you in
my house

Identifying Changes Across the Cycle



Lead Generation

TACTICS

Digital Marketing
Online Presence
Traditional Advertising
Direct Mail
Email
Active Referrals
Events
Open Houses
Community Speaking
Tabling
Canvassing

IMPLICATIONS

- Your dependence on direct contact approaches will determine how big a shift
- Increasing competition in digital will require excellence
- Company presence online elevates in importance
- Referrals even more important—time for a reward program?
- Shift to webinars for person to person, along with everyone else
- Door to door may be dead
- Resurgence of telemarketing?
- Digital approaches to first touch meetings will be the norm—zoom is your new friend
- Far fewer opportunities for face-to-face relationship & trust building
- Increased burden on company brand strength, online reviews
- May require lower touch initial jobs to build relationships and trust—water heaters, pool pumps

Quoting/Audits/First Visit

STD APPROACH

Free Quote
Site Visit
Full Energy Audit
Service Visits

IMPLICATIONS

- Remote estimates without a site visit
- Exterior only—Hover for measurements
- Alterations to pricing—estimates & change orders
- Rise of the “virtual” energy audit
- Homeowner assisted walk arounds—using video technology like Stream
- Less opportunity to educate directly means more explainer content—videos, infographics
- Changing expectations of homeowners—less costly sales process?

Closing/Contract Signing

STD APPROACH

Kitchen table close
Kitchen table contract

IMPLICATIONS

- Digital contracts & signatures
- Inevitably less in-person opportunity
- Trust and relationship building now has digital barrier
- New skill sets for sales personnel
- One meeting close is harder online
- Digital proposals must be strong selling documents on their own
- Online proposal software (with engagement metrics)

The Job/Completing the Work

STD APPROACH

Employee safety
Home cleanliness

IMPLICATIONS

- Clearly demonstrated safety protocols for employees and clients
- More homeowner attention on your team members
- Pre-visit communications
- Pre-visit safety checks
- Call from the driveway
- New processes and approaches to minimize interior contact
- Portapotties

Service & Maintenance

STD APPROACH

Emergency Calls
Routine Service
Annual Checkups

IMPLICATIONS

- “No Entry” Maintenance Approaches
- More remote monitoring like Sensi Predict
- Higher demand for filter maintenance
- Healthy home check as add on
- Reduced time in home may result in fewer cross sell opportunities

Actions Everyone Can Begin to Take

- **Embrace and Get Comfortable with Video Technology**

Zoom, Google Meet, Etc

Take care to set up properly—mini studio

Digitally delivered company story

- **Clear Safety Protocols and Elevated Communications**

- **Assess Your Marketing Mix/Shift Priorities**

How much previously dependent on in person tactics?

- **Sales Tools to Bridge the In-person Trust Gap**

- **Fill in the Digital Tools Gaps**

Online proposal software, dispatch, CRM, etc.



QUESTIONS?

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