

## Content Strategy

### What is the purpose of our content?

The company's mission statement expresses what Shop Solar Kits is all about:

***To accelerate the adoption of solar power by making it simple and affordable.***

The mission statement for content is more specific to the audience, format, and outcome of all our content:

***To match people interested in solar power with the solution that's right for them through simple-to-understand content that's easy-to-find.***

This mission guides all aspects of content planning, creation, and distribution. For every piece of content we should ask the question "why should the customer care?" and be able to answer "because it helps them easily find the solution that's right for them."

### What makes it stand out?

There are a lot of competitors out there and they're all producing their own content. Just like our company's success depends upon making us shine brighter than the competition, the success of our content depends upon standing out in a crowded, noisy field. We need to know our differentiators and apply them to all content.

### Our story

The content we produce should be considered part of a larger narrative about the company. It tells the company story, one facet at a time. Our story conveys what we are passionate about, which is this:

***We are passionate about accelerating the adoption of solar power by putting it into the hands of our customers.***

Our story also reflects the hook that makes us interesting, which is this:

***We make solar simple and affordable.***

This should sound familiar, it's right there in our company mission. So here's how we talk about it:

*Shop Solar Kits is the #1 source for off-grid, hybrid, portable and emergency backup solar power systems in the USA.*

*We're empowering the DIY/DIY+ (DWY) market to invest in and harness the power of solar energy themselves.*

*We do this by being a one-stop shop for complete systems, while offering competitive and transparent pricing, education, and legendary customer support.*

*We allow customers to act as their own general contractor and save thousands in the process.*

Extrapolating from this we can see what makes us special and sets us apart from the rest.

## Our differentiators

Our company's differentiators are our rallying points:

1. We're your one-stop shop for solar
2. We cut out the middleman to save you \$\$
3. We're with you all the way
4. We promise you peace of mind
5. We'll help you get it done
6. We're the best in the business
7. We're people just like you

## USP taglines

### **Transparent pricing**

We cut out the middleman to save you money with great prices and free shipping on all solar kits and lifetime customer service on everything we sell.

### **We make solar simple and affordable**

Our legendary lifetime customer service and transparent pricing mean you'll get the right solar system for your individual energy needs at the best price.

### **The best in the business**

Your one-stop shop for all things solar with transparent pricing, free shipping on all solar kits, and legendary lifetime customer service.

### **Peace of mind**

No more worrying about blackouts or other emergencies because we'll set you up with the right solar system to protect your family and your home.

### **Get 'er done**

We'll not only get you the right solar system for your individual energy needs, but we'll also help you set it up and start making your own power.

### **Your one-stop shop for solar**

With low transparent pricing and free shipping on all solar kits we make solar simple and affordable.

## Applying the differentiators

There are several ways to apply these differentiators in practical ways to make our content stand out:

- Speak directly to the company's differentiators
  - Choose subject matters that demonstrate the hows: how we're the best, how we save you money, how you get peace of mind, how you can get it done, and so on
- Make our content better than the rest
  - Top-tier writing and design
  - Consistency in tone, message, and delivery
  - Respect for our audience by not wasting their time or being inauthentic
  - Covering topics that matter
  - Keeping it simple
  - Creating an easy pathway to discovery and conversion
- Help customers find our content easily
  - Apply best practices in SEO
  - Seek innovative ways to reach the audience
  - Use omni-channel methodology to pack a punch
  - Assist their progression through the funnel
- Address our customers' needs
  - Understand and speak to their pain points
  - Remember that what we can do for them matters more than how we do it
  - Answer their questions before they have a chance to ask them
  - Arm them with all the information they need to make the right choice for them (even if we are not that choice...this time)
- Create trust and respect
  - Speak the truth they need to hear
  - Establish credibility
  - Guide them along their journey

- Stay ahead of the curve by knowing where the technology is going and explaining what that means for customers
- Be different
  - Find new channels to reach customers
  - Constantly seek innovative ways to use existing channels
  - Be interesting, engaging, provocative, and challenging
  - Find a twist
  - Give a shit

## What do we hope to achieve through content?

Our mission talks about what we do. Our differentiators address how we do it. What comes next is our goals: why we do it and what we hope to achieve through it.

Our goals are the reasons we make content, so every piece of content must target at least one of our content goals:

- Increase inbound traffic
- Grow subscribers
- Become recognized as thought leaders
- Boost word-of-mouth
- Guide towards conversion
- Encourage repeat customers

## Focus on one primary goal and let the others follow naturally

Our message will be simpler and clearer—and therefore more effective—if we focus each piece of content on one particular goal. If successful, that piece of content will end up hitting more than one goal because there is an innate holistic interconnection between them; finding success in one goal will increase the probability of success in the others, for example if someone considers us an expert thought leader they will be more inclined to subscribe or recommend or buy.

We should always look at content from a similar holistic perspective: no single piece of content works alone but is part of a greater collection of content elements that work together to meet our goals. Keep it simple: focus each piece of content on one topic and build organic pathways for it to connect naturally to other related content.

## Increase inbound traffic

The first challenge we must address is getting people into our business ecosystem. There are several ways of doing this, but from a content perspective this mostly means piquing their interest enough to make them choose to look at our content: inbound or organic traffic.

Ads are one way and ads do count as content, but the main way is to use online search to attract interest. When it comes to search, several things matter:

- The technical ways of making content rank through SEO best practices
- The technique of luring visitors through appealing design and imagery and enticing top-level copy in headlines, snippets, descriptions, etc.
- Having content that people want to see

The most important of all these is the last one: you need to have content people are actually interested in viewing. Search engines are smart enough to detect meaningful content and use that as a factor in rankings. But even if your content ranks number one in a search, it doesn't matter if it doesn't contain information that someone cares about. Even worse than being ignored is if someone views it and is turned off by it, creating a negative impression of the company and working counter to the purpose of this content goal.

## Grow subscribers

Growing our subscribers list will be one of the most powerful ways we can make our content work. When someone provides us with their email or phone number, they are demonstrating a tangible interest in what we can offer, which is immensely valuable from a marketing perspective.

With subscribers we no longer have to worry about attracting them with top of funnel content, we can feed them content directly: it's a sniper rifle rather than a shotgun. The more information we can collect about them, the better our rifle scope can be to make us even more targeted with the content we feed them through emails, newsletters, and texts.

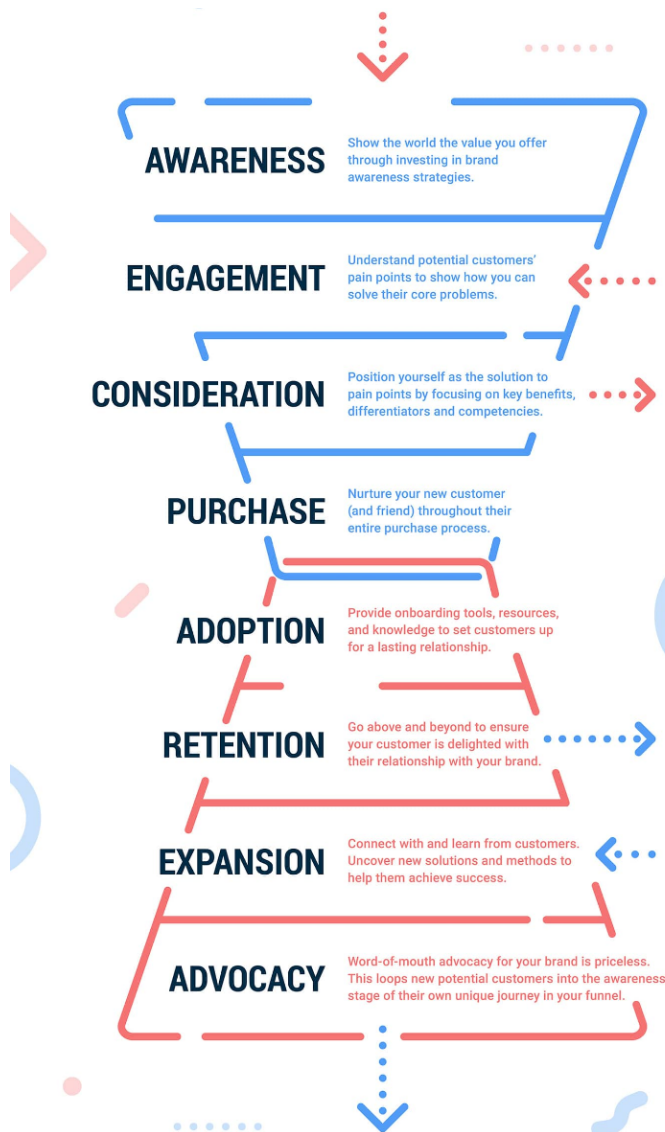
We can also create a valuable conversation with them, engaging them in a way that not only builds trust and credibility, but also gives us the opportunity to hone our content based on their feedback and suggestions, as well as the chance to collect reviews and testimonials that will help achieve our goals with other customers.

## Be recognized as thought leaders

Our content needs to create a favorable impression of the company. One way to do this is to establish credibility as experts in the field. Being known as a thought leader builds trust that could make the difference between a customer choosing us over another solution and sticking with us as they explore more solar solutions for their growing needs.

Thought leadership also creates more opportunities for us to build brand recognition and expand our reputation as experts through things like media attention and speaking engagements.

## Boost word-of-mouth



Free advertising. Instant credibility. We all know how this works. It's why everyone wants their content to go viral.

The more we can inspire someone to share our content or our message or even just our name, the more we will succeed. Being provocative, taking a stand, and generally challenging people can do this. Our content should also make it easy for someone to share it through CTAs, sharing links, and other more innovative ways we should seek to create or discover.

Guide towards conversion

Content's job is not to make sales, content's job is to pave the way for sales to happen.

This means that our content isn't salesy. It doesn't overtly push our product or praise our company. What it does is forge the impression upon our potential customers that we are

praiseworthy and our product is worth buying.

This is visualized in the [content marketing hourglass](#), the top part of which comprises what people have traditionally called the funnel.

Every piece of content targeted at guiding customers towards purchase must fit into one of the funnel's stages:

1. **Awareness:** show potential customers that we exist and are an option (create brand awareness)

2. **Engagement:** show them we understand their pain points (and help them understand them too)
3. **Consideration:** show them what solutions will solve their pain points (and that we have those solutions)
4. **Purchase:** show them how to get what they need from us (make that conversion happen)

At this stage in the company's growth, we are heavily invested in the first stage, awareness. We have a lot of confidence that once we get people into our ecosystem we can convert them: we believe in our product and our ability to deliver. But we can't do anything if nobody knows we're here.

Although we will still create content targeting the other stages, most of our efforts in the short term will focus on awareness. For the most part, this means using inbound marketing methods to draw people in. As soon as we get contact information, we switch to outbound techniques to directly engage with them and create a conversation.

## Encourage repeat customers

Consider these stats:

- Acquiring a new customer can cost 5 times more than retaining an existing customer.
- Increasing customer retention by 5% can increase profits from 25-95%.
- The success rate of selling to a customer you already have is 60-70%, while the success rate of selling to a new customer is 5-20%.
- One customer experience agency found loyal customers are 5x as likely to repurchase, 5x as likely to forgive, 4x as likely to refer, and 7x as likely to try a new offering.
- U.S. companies lose \$136.8 billion per year due to avoidable consumer switching.
- American Express found 33% of customers will consider switching companies after just one instance of poor customer service.

[Source](#)

Clearly, it is faster, easier, and costs a lot less to retain a customer for cross-sell and up-sell opportunities than it does to land a new customer. So it is also important to create content devoted to post-purchase activities as well, and this is where the bottom part of the content marketing hourglass comes into play. It is devoted to what happens after someone becomes our customer:

1. **Adoption:** help customers set up their new purchase (ensure satisfaction)
2. **Retention:** exceed expectations in customer service (build loyalty)
3. **Expansion:** engage with customers to learn what else they need and provide it (create repeat business)
4. **Advocacy:** create customer evangelists (build more awareness)

For these stages outbound content works best, meaning emails, newsletters, texts, and so on. We already have direct channels to existing customers so this is the best way to engage with them.

That said, customer testimonials and ratings are worth their weight in lithium, so we must make a big effort to collect this kind of content and use it to assist in mid-funnel pre-purchase stages that will help smooth the pathway to initial conversion.

## Who are we trying to reach?

Good, effective content depends upon knowing your audience. Every piece of content must keep the audience in mind and be crafted in a way that:

- Matches what matters to them (values)
- Understands the uses and applications they need to fulfill (personas)
- Addresses their direct concerns (motivations and pain points)
- Speaks to them in the way they will best respond to (tone and voice)
- Reaches them in the places where they prefer to find things (distribution channels)

## Values

We have identified a number of common things our customers tend to value, and our content should try to emphasize these factors wherever possible:

1. **Quality support:** they like knowing that at any time they can quickly and easily get help from a trusted source
2. **Long-term relationship:** they don't want to have to search for someone every time they need something, they want someone they can always rely on
3. **Saving money:** they're not cheap but at the same time they are frugal and economic and want to get the best deal on a solution that will save money both in the short-term and the long-term
4. **One-stop shop:** they want to be able to get everything they need in one place without having to shop around or go to multiple sources
5. **Quality components:** they don't mind investing in quality and getting the most bang for their bucks with something they can be confident will work and be relied upon
6. **Self-satisfaction:** they value independence from start to finish and appreciate the feeling of a job well done; they like DIY and want to GSD
7. **Best for them:** they prefer a custom solution that is tailored to their needs rather than an off-the-rack solution that might work but might also not have everything they need or have things they don't necessarily need



## Personas

Through experience, we've managed to identify four general buckets into which all our customers tend to fall, our customer personas.

### Off-grid Gary

Off-grid Gary is trying to build an off-grid property, has a place in the woods, or is moving away from town and has no option for running power or wants power independence. He might also want to power an outbuilding without the use of the grid or running a new line.

### Prepper Pam

Prepper Pam is either worried about the end of the world or lives somewhere with lots of natural disasters and is trying to prepare for brownout/blackout/apocalyptic situations.

### Outdoors Oscar

Outdoors Oscar is an RVer/Van lifer who travels around in his mobile living quarters. He might boondock in different parks and places or maybe he just loves the outdoors. He can also own a boat or other mobile vehicle that requires power.

### Hybrid Harry (Sophisticated Sam)

Hybrid Harry is a homeowner and conscious consumer whose primary goal is to save money on their electric bill, while gaining some independence from not being 100% reliant on the grid.

We have product categories related to the solutions that best fit the needs of the different personas, as well as segmented email lists that divide out contacts by persona enabling us to direct specific content to the audience segment to whom it is most relevant.

Another way to subdivide or categorize our audience is through their motivations: what are the pain points that a solar kit might solve?

## Motivations and pain points

All customers are motivated to seek solar solutions for specific reasons. Another way to target them is to create content that specifically addresses these pain points.

As it turns out, even though we can effectively divide our audience into personas, many of the pain points are shared between the different personas, allowing us to reach multiple segments through content that focuses on specific motivations rather than uses and applications:

<b>Practical motivations</b>	<b>OG Gary</b>	<b>O Oscar</b>	<b>P Pam</b>	<b>H Harry</b>
Quiet	✓	✓	✓	✓
Expandability	✓			✓
Saves money	✓			✓
Doesn't cost a lot to get		✓		
Doesn't cost a lot to use		✓		
Can be moved around		✓		
Can't be moved	✓			✓
Is reliable	✓	✓	✓	✓
Is simple to use		✓		
Is easy to set up/install		✓		
<b>Emotional motivations</b>	<b>OG Gary</b>	<b>O Oscar</b>	<b>P Pam</b>	<b>Soph. Sam</b>
Provides freedom	✓	✓	✓	
Offers protection	✓		✓	
Environmentally friendly	✓			✓
Is discreet			✓	
Prepares for weather catastrophe			✓	
Prepares for minor emergency	✓		✓	✓
Prepares for the apocalypse			✓	

The benefit of approaching content development from this perspective is that even for the practical motivations there is a more powerful emotional connection that can be made over approaching it from a usage standpoint. Why they want it is always going to resonate stronger than what they want it for.

## Influencers and affiliates

There is another content audience to consider: influencers. Influencers can be powerful allies in the content war. They have large built-in audiences you can reach instantly with one push and they have built-in credibility you can share. Their linkbacks can also help greatly with SEO.

It is unlikely that we will ever create content just for influencers, but we will definitely keep in mind the potential for content we can approach influencers with for a reciprocal sharing arrangement: they share our content and we share theirs.

We may also sponsor content made by influencers (affiliates) and use that as we would use our own, as part of our overall content plan to be cross-promoted within other content.

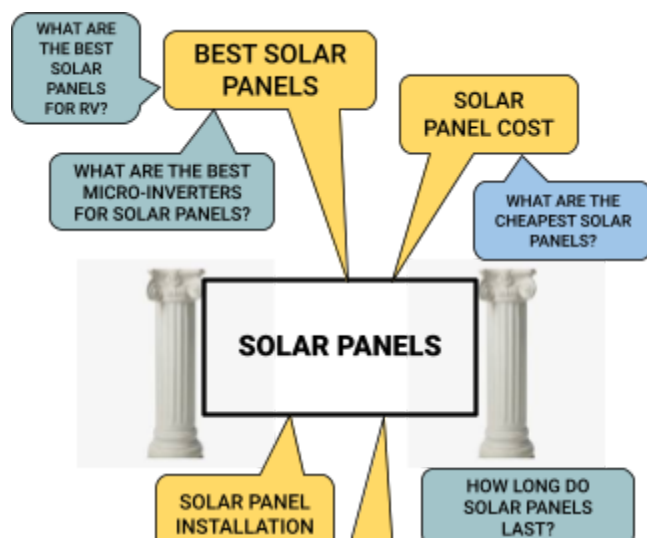
Influencers are also valuable for gaining social media traction, growing our audience, and building brand recognition. We will get a lot more reach and attention by sharing influencer content through our social media than by sharing our own.

A smart rule is that for every 6 social media posts half of them share influencer/affiliate content, 2 share our content, and 1 is all about the company (promoting our people, activities, values, achievements, etc.)

## How do we reach our audience?

Content appears across different channels and the ones we choose for our content depend on what we hope to get from it and who we want to reach with it.

The big push we need to make early (and soon, because it's a long game) is drawing inbound traffic. The way we'll do this is with an omni-channel approach that spreads our content across multiple channels in a way that links them all together. No matter what entry point someone has into our content—blog, ad, video, whatever—our strategy is to create a path for them through connected content that achieves our goals.



## Content pillar campaigns

We will break our content efforts down into campaigns. Each campaign will last a period of time and the majority of content released in this period will relate to the campaign's topic or theme, the pillar.

One way to visualize it is as a web of search terms and keywords starting from the basic pillar term and expanding out along threads of long-tail terms that get progressively more and more specific.

## Pillar content

At the centre of every campaign will sit the pillar content, a big piece of content such as a long-form guide that covers all aspects of the subject.

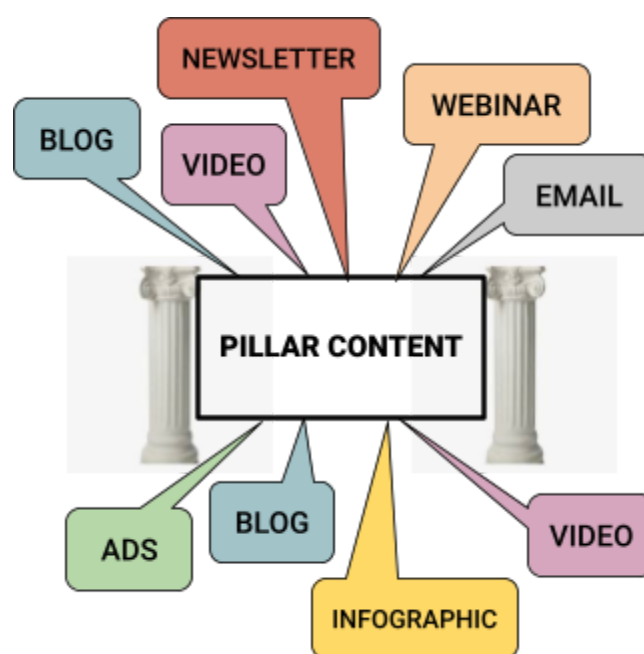
It will link out to all the interconnected web of ancillary content such as blogs and videos that each focus on one element of what's covered by the pillar. These other content pieces will also link into the pillar.

The pillar will contain CTAs to:

- Subscribe to email list
- Take the quiz
- Get a quote
- Learn more in other pillar content

We need to do more research to discover exactly where and our target audience can be reached.

- How do they do their research?
- Do they watch videos?
- Do they read blogs?
- Are they active on social media or forums?
- Do they read emails?



The goal is to create as many touch-points across as many targeted channels as possible to draw visitors in, then lead them towards the pillar no matter where they come from or what they were looking for.

Inbound channels will be particularly important because organic search is going to be instrumental in our success. Having our content easy to find via search is crucial for driving traffic.

## Blogs

Our target is to publish 1 non-pillar campaign blog article per week, approximately 1500 words in length, and approximately 15-20 blog articles relating to each pillar campaign (2 writers going 2-3 every week) that are half the size (750 words) and more focused on a very particular topic.

Blogs will follow these guidelines:

- Subjects will be focused to one idea per blog
- Subjects will be informed by keywords
- 1 blog per week:
  - Most unrelated to pillar campaigns and about other topics such as general thought leadership, product review, announcements, event coverage, etc.
  - Some adding to existing pillar content
- Maximize SEO
  - Short URL with Keyword in it
  - Title Tag with Keyword in it
  - Heading Sections with Keyword in it (H2, H3, H4)
  - Headings should be categorized by H tags
  - Meta description with keyword that describes how the blog is going to solve problem, answer question, etc...
  - If the article is 1500 words, it should contain the keyword at least 15 times and no more than 30 in the post including alt text, headers, paragraphs, etc.
  - Any images in the blog should have a proper title and is alt texted (some images should include the keyword in alt text and title)
  - Added images should be shrunk before uploading using <https://squoosh.app/> (webp format should also be looked into)
  - Links to related articles (that link back)
  - Yoast SEO is an excellent shopify app that reads your content and tells you where to improve on SEO in the article (recommended)
  - Avoid pop-ups on pages (Google penalizes)
  - Contain snippet-bait subsections (i.e. What is a solar kit?)
  - Index at top with anchor links to subheadings
  - Optimized headlines
- Single clear CTA at the bottom
- Interstitial banner ads promoting key content:
  - Tools (i.e. Take the quiz)
  - Related blogs, guides, or videos (You might like, To learn more about)

To assist in on-site search, blogs will be tagged with one or more of the following categories:

- Buyer's Guides
- Camping
- Emergency Preparedness
- Solar FAQ
- Installation Guides
- Planning
- Power Inverters
- Product Reviews
- Sizing

- Solar Batteries
- Solar Generators
- Solar Kits
- Solar Panels
- Tools & Calculator

[Deep dive into using blogs in content marketing.](#)

## Newsletters

We have not yet decided on the frequency of newsletters, but maybe 2 per week. We want to make sure that our emails have the maximum positive impact.

We will find a balance to maximize our reach while ensuring content matches personas. This may mean mixing and matching segments, or creating new sub-segments relating to specific motivations and pain points.

Similarly, we will experiment with the format of newsletters to see what results in the most clickthroughs. Factors to test include:

- Headline length
- Headline style
- Use of emojis in headline
- Use of graphics
- Use of animations
- Length of email
- CTA style: text or button
- Polls

[Deep dive into newsletters](#)

## Infographics

Pictures really do say a thousand words, and some subjects lend themselves well to infographics. They are also very sharable. For example, an infographic all about the US Federal Solar Tax Credit could get a lot of traction, and could be used in a number of ways in a number of places.

[Deep dive into infographics](#)

## Print media

To help establish our place as thought leaders and expand brand awareness, we will build relationships with offline publications and try to get original content published.

## Video

We must make video a priority for content development.

- Explainer: short, animated videos that provide information about various topics
- Testimonial: using actual customer testimonials in videos
- Product reviews
- Product comparison
- How To's

Videos will not only be published on YouTube and optimized to attract inbound traffic, but will also be used in several other ways:

- Embedded within other content, such as blogs and guides
- Included liberally throughout the website on various pages (i.e. home page welcome video, landing pages, product pages)

Sometimes a full video does not make sense, but motion would still be desirable, such as in an email. In these cases we will use animated gifs that link out to full videos.

We will produce one hosted video by Max every week, as well as various videos as part of pillar campaigns.

## Webinars

Eventually, we will include webinars and live events as part of our content. We will invite subject matter experts and well-known influencers to join a panel to discuss a certain topic that relates to the pillar campaign.

The recording of the webinar will be posted and used in various ways in other content, such as using clips in blogs.

## Guides

You can call it a white paper or something else, but these are essentially long-form written content pieces that go deep into the thought leadership on a subject. They'll be at least 3,000 words, but probably much longer, with lots of images, graphs, animations, and videos to chop up the monotony of words.

These will be the pillars supporting other campaign content.

They will be freely accessible to view online as a micro-site (great for SEO) or, if you want to download as a pdf, provide a bit of information such as email address, reason for interest, and other persona-defining details.

Within the guides, there will be many links to things like:

- Our quiz and quote tools
- Newsletter signup
- Ancillary campaign content such as blogs and videos
- Other internal content such as web pages, blogs, or elements of other campaigns
- External content such as influencer content, official sites, or good sources of information

[Deep dive into White Papers](#)

## Ads

Some ads (1/week?) will promote specific content to a targeted audience.

- Make sure ad content aligns with brand
- Promote content pillar campaigns
- Promote other important content

[Ads](#)

## Social Media

- Beef up social media presence, especially Facebook
- Make sure every post offers value to audience
- Shareable original content
- Share influencer content
- Online forums:
  - Monitor and participate
  - Create and lead conversations
  - Our own reddit? (probably not)

[Deep dive into content conversations.](#)

## Web Content

- Current website: review blogs and pare down
  - Identify top performing blogs and update and optimize
- New website: opportunity to tweak message with completely new content
  - Make thought leadership content easier to find
- Quiz and quote tool revamps
- Online course revamp



## When do we use our content channels?

There are two kinds of content:

1. Part of a pillar campaign
2. Not part of a pillar campaign

Pillar campaign content will all be launched at the same time, allowing us to see in real-time the impact of the content on our ranking for the core pillar term. The amount of time between pillar campaigns will depend upon the amount of content required, with a target of 1 per month.

Other content will be released on a regular frequency that depends on the channel.

Content type	Frequency	Notes
Guides		Almost always pillar content
Blogs	1/week	
Hosted video	1/week	Depending upon Max's time
Other videos	1/month	Explainers
Newsletters	2 or 3/week?	
Website	As needed	Not including microsite for each pillar campaign
Print media		Use this channel as opportunities arise
Ads	1/week	This is only ads for content, there will be many other ads
Social media		Analyze current methods first
Webinars		1 per pillar campaign

-OR-

## Calendar

We will manage both the planning of content and release dates using calendars.

The content release calendar is important but hard to maintain, so we will keep it as simple as possible with only essential details to manage. We will use a designated Google Calendar to schedule content release. Each entry will link to the working doc in the description.

For content planning we will use a separate spreadsheet to:

- Track ideas
- Plan campaigns and timing
- Manage writers
- Manage workflow
- Keep ahead of schedule

## How do we measure our success?

A number of KPIs have been assigned to measure overall marketing success in different areas. All of these KPIs are significant, but some of them may be applied directly to content to assess success across our content goals.

KPIs are tracked weekly, and we will generate a monthly report on content success in these specific areas:

### Increase inbound traffic

- Total site sessions
- Unique site visitors
- YouTube views

### Grow subscribers

- Email list size
- Email list growth
- YouTube subscriptions

### Become recognized as thought leaders

- Keyword rankings
- Time on site
- Bounce rate
- Number of social views
- Number of social followers
- Social follower growth
- Social engagement (likes and comments)
- Pillar content downloads

### Boost word-of-mouth

- Backlinks
- Social media virality (tags, mentions, and shares)
- Site content shares

## Guide towards conversion

- Quote submissions
- Quiz submissions
- Orders
- Conversion rate
- Orders from email campaigns
- Pages per session

## Encourage repeat customers

- Repeat customer rate
- Site visits by existing customers

## Pillar campaign success

In addition to these KPI's measuring overall success, we will also hone in on the success of pillar campaign content by tracking certain metrics of all individual pieces of content related to each campaign:

- Page views of these specific pages
- Bounce rate on these specific pages
- Pages per session that begin with one of these specific pages
  - <https://contentmarketinginstitute.com/measurement/>
  - [https://contentmarketinginstitute.com/measuring-success/?\\_gl=1\\*tbsbg9\\*\\_ga\\*MTg2NjkwNTg5LjE2NzU3MTA1NDM.\\*\\_ga\\_NBYJQ8Q13E\\*MTY3NTc3NTk0My4zLjEuMTY3NTc4MDYwMi4wLjAuMA..&\\_ga=2.194088109.1625613211.1675710546-186690589.1675710543](https://contentmarketinginstitute.com/measuring-success/?_gl=1*tbsbg9*_ga*MTg2NjkwNTg5LjE2NzU3MTA1NDM.*_ga_NBYJQ8Q13E*MTY3NTc3NTk0My4zLjEuMTY3NTc4MDYwMi4wLjAuMA..&_ga=2.194088109.1625613211.1675710546-186690589.1675710543)
  - <https://contentmarketinginstitute.com/articles/how-measure-content-marketing-essential-guide/>

## How do we say it?

This section is a content style guide covering how we at Shop Solar Kits (SSK) communicate with words. When people say “it’s not what you say but how you say it,” this is how we say it.

### The SSK Voice

The SSK voice is honest, visionary, helpful, and caring—this is a direct reflection of our brand personality: genuine, innovative, useful, and involved. Our words should foster an emotional connection between customers and the SSK brand. We seek to make life—and the world around us—better.

We are direct and confident, bold yet not boastful. Above all, we are humble and honest. We do not engage in denigrating others to inflate ourselves. We don't need to compare ourselves to the competition, that's their job. We will, however, help customers make wise choices by pointing out where other options are unequivocally not in their best interest.

We speak conversationally. Our written word should sound like the spoken word. We have a strong voice that understands customer needs, leads changes, and commands trust. We represent evolution.

Simplify everything to its core concept.

Our first point of contact with the audience should focus on real-world value rather than technical features. Technology is important, but those details should be made available for those who desire to seek it out, not overwhelming people at first glance. It is more important to tell the audience what we can do for them, not how we do it.

We express a passion for technology but an understanding that innovation is nothing without customer benefit. Tangible benefits > gadgetry.

## Picky Details

- Use bulleted lists liberally
- End each bullet point without punctuation
- Keep points concise
- Use active voice (passive voice should not be used)
- Employ verbs that engage the audience
- Avoid repetition
- Repetition is okay if used strategically
- Mostly, repetition is bad
- Paragraphs should be kept short
- One sentence paragraphs are okay, sometimes
- Vary sentence lengths, because it lends more punch to shorter sentences when surrounded by longer ones
- Keep sentences to one thought, avoid too many commas, and if you don't know how to use colons and semicolons avoid them...ellipses are also to be used sparingly—if you need to separate thoughts, use em dashes—but don't use too many dashes, because it gets confusing
- (Parentheses are rarely appropriate: if a thought is important enough to state, state it boldly in its own sentence or phrase)
- If you really need to separate a clause out—like this—sandwich it between em dashes
- In comma-separated lists, put the most important element first, try to have 3 elements, and use the Oxford comma before a coordinating conjunction in the final element

- Use numerals like 3 rather than spelling out three, even for numbers under 10
- Use “since” properly, because a lot of people don’t
- Always. Be. Consistent.
- Always [cite sources](#)
- Spelling matters
- Use hierarchy
  - Like this in lists
  - Also in headers
- Use headers liberally
- Don’t Overuse Capitals
  - Only capitalize the first word in headers and titles, unless the word should properly be capitalized such as a formal name
  - Avoid capitalizing words that don’t need it, such as internet and email
- Alliteration can be awesome
- Exclamation points are so overused!!
- Rhetorical questions are fine, right?
  - They are when you use them sparingly, to good emotional effect, and answer them
- Actively search out adverbs and ask yourself honestly if you absolutely need them
- **Bold** and *italics* may be used for emphasis, though sparingly
- Use “double” quotation marks when you must quote something
- Colloquialisms are totally okay, but, like, don’t piss anyone off
- Swearing is not fucking okay
- It’s good to use contractions
- Be funny, but not at anyone’s expense
- Don’t use negative statements
- More is not always better; know when to stop