Everybody wanted solar. Almost nobody bought it. So we stopped selling solar and started removing what stood in the way.

PosiGen, PBC · Solar & Home Services · VP Marketing, expanded to GM of Sales & Marketing, 2022–2025

A brand strategy is a promise. The hard part isn't writing it. It's finding out where your own company breaks it after the customer signs.

THE NUMBERS

66.5% vs. 3.2%

Homeowners without solar who wanted it, versus single family homes that actually had it. The gap we built the brand around.

6 to 1

Positioning directions on the table, cut to a single strategy: Solar Unboxed.

73%

Customers who said PosiGen gave them assurance of long term savings when they decided to buy.

75% to 56%

Customer satisfaction from the first sales conversation to post install. The gap that became our next brief.

01 The Situation

PosiGen had a mission worth believing in: make solar affordable for homeowners of all income levels. When I came in as the company's first growth marketing leader in April 2022, the question in front of me wasn't whether homeowners liked solar. They did. The question was why so few of them ever got it on the roof.

The numbers were brutal. Two out of three homeowners without solar said they wanted it. About three in a hundred single family homes had it. That's not an awareness problem. You can't advertise your way across a gap like that.

So before we spent real money telling people about PosiGen, I wanted to know one thing. What does a homeowner who already wants solar need to hear from us to finally say yes?

02 The Stakes

Most solar marketing at the time sold the same three things: the planet, the technology, and a savings number. Every one of those assumes the customer still needs convincing. Ours didn't.

Position PosiGen like everybody else and we'd be paying full price to educate people who were already sold, then losing them to the same confusion that stopped them the last time. For a company about to push into new states, that's the most expensive mistake you can make. You scale a message that doesn't convert, and you pay for it in every market at once.

03 What I Did

Hired a strategy partner and gave them a narrow brief.

We brought in The PARAGRAPH Project with one job: close the interest to action gap. Their read came back in a sentence I still use. "We don't need to educate people on the benefits of solar. We have to prove to them we are removing the obstacles that are standing in the way."

Put six directions on the table and made them fight.

Predictability. Accessibility. Selflessness. Abundance. Togetherness. Independence. Each one had a virtue and an enemy: unwanted surprises, exclusion, greed, sacrifice, isolation, utility companies. We asked our own people too. A survey of employees put PosiGen squarely in the Magician archetype, a brand that helps people understand a vision and then actually get there. Then we took the leading directions to homeowners in lower and middle income neighborhoods in Connecticut, New Jersey and Massachusetts.

Picked the enemy the customer actually felt.

We landed on Solar Unboxed. The enemy was exclusion, and the insight underneath it was simple: "We don't just save homeowners money. We also save them the time and effort of trying to figure things out on their own." The strategy fit on one line. PosiGen is the simplest way to save money and effort so you can finally tap into the full potential of solar power.

Break Free, the anti utility direction, was the loudest option in the room. It was also the one I chose not to take. We had to partner with utilities around the country to build our business, and it was the hardest direction to stand behind next to the public partners sending us customers.

Turned the strategy into rules people could use on Monday.

Four pillars: Savings, Strategies, Support, Simplicity. Reasons to believe any rep could say across a dining room table: no enormous upfront costs, no discriminating requirements, no changes in monthly charges, no hassle, maintenance or upkeep. A voice with guardrails: inviting, not elite. Candid, not formal. Neighborly, not corporate. Our role model was Southwest Airlines, a brand people trust because they know exactly what they'll pay. Then we launched the "Reasons" campaign in May 2023. You can see the work on PosiGen's YouTube channel.

Then we checked whether we were keeping the promise.

This is the step most brand projects skip. In November 2023 we went back to PARAGRAPH and had them grade us: community stakeholder interviews plus a customer survey mapped across the whole journey, from the first sales conversation to advocacy.

The front half held. 73% of customers said we gave them assurance of long-term savings. 70% said our contract terms were transparent. 61% called us trustworthy. For a brand built on simple and upfront, that's the promise landing where it was made.

The back half didn't. Satisfaction dropped from 75% at the first sales conversation to 56% after install. The #1 thing customers said they look for in a solar company was ongoing support after installation. 45% put it in their top three. Only 27% gave us credit for it. One customer said it better than any chart: "I never heard from them unless I called them for something."

We were promising simple and delivering silence. That's not a messaging problem, and I wasn't going to fix it with a campaign.

Took the brand into operations.

The research put hard numbers behind the work and told us where to push harder: proactive contact at install and permission to operate, a customer escalation committee, dedicated staff for escalated accounts, and a referral program built on customers who actually felt taken care of. Support was already one of our four pillars. Now it had owners.

04 The Result

PosiGen got one sentence that a homeowner, a sales rep and a public partner could all repeat. Fifteen months later, independent research showed that sentence landing at the moment of decision, with 73% assurance on savings and 70% on transparency.

The Reasons campaign did its own work. It increased organic traffic, helped bring down our cost of acquisition, and raised closing rates at the negotiation table. Just as important, it rallied a fast growing organization behind our mission and our business goals.

The research also showed exactly where we were breaking our word. That same agenda of support, communication and follow-through drove the rating recovery from 1.5 to 4.0+ across ten review platforms, and a referral program that grew from 5,000 to 25,000 advocates.

05 Why It Matters

Most renewable energy companies think they have an awareness problem. Usually they don't. Their customers already want what they sell. What's in the way is complexity, risk and fear of the fine print, and no ad budget fixes that. The brand's job is to remove the reason people are waiting.

The second lesson is the one I care about more. A positioning is a promise, and operations has to keep it. If your brand work ends at the tagline, you've built a very nice sign on the front of a house nobody's maintaining.

That's the first question I ask in On the Ones: what is the one constraint standing between interest and revenue? At PosiGen it wasn't awareness. It was obstacles. We named them, built the brand around removing them, then went back and measured whether we actually had.



John David Ross Jr.

Fractional CMO · **JDR** Growth Advisory

jr@jdrgrowthadvisory.com / jdrgrowthadvisory.com
linkedin.com/in/john-david-ross / johndrossjr.substack.com

BOOK A CALL