

Contractors are your sales team – educate and empower them with the skills to sell home energy upgrades

Many home performance programs have confronted the challenge of how to reach out to more customers and to improve conversion rates of customer interest into completed upgrades. Realizing that the contractor is a primary face-to-face link between customers and the program, some Better Buildings Neighborhood Program partners took steps to empower contractors to market program services through co-marketing and sales training. A comprehensive [evaluation](#) [1] of over 140 programs across the United States found that successful programs have contractors who are skilled at helping customers understand the benefits of home energy improvements. Because contractors are often the main point of contact with participants, contractors must be trained to persuade homeowners to move forward with potentially costly projects.

Some programs were able to empower contractors by co-marketing and co-branding with them to reach new homeowners. Co-marketing can help both contractors and programs; a cooperative advertising model allows programs to share the costs to develop and distribute marketing materials. Co-marketing helps programs leverage contractor resources to increase their market presence, and extends contractors' ability to market themselves even if they have limited resources.

[In Their Own Words: Empower Contractors by Building Sales and Business Skills](#) [2]



Source: [In Their Own Words: Empower Contractors by Building Sales and Business Skills](#) [2], U.S. Department of Energy, 2012.

Programs have found that offering sales training to home performance professionals can significantly boost sales and improve customer experience and conversion rates. During sales training, technicians can learn about the program's upgrade process, how to sell it using non-technical communications with customers, and other techniques for transforming assessments into upgrades. Programs saw benefits from offering free or reduced-cost sales training as a partnership benefit for contractors. Taking the resources to offer this training to contractor staff helped programs ensure that technicians understood and could promote program benefits, rebates, and other incentives available to customers. For many programs, contractor sales training resulted in more effective sales approaches, increased rates of conversion from assessment to upgrade, and increased revenues for contractor businesses.

- [Efficiency Maine](#) [3] boosted conversion rates with [sales training](#) [4], which helped contractors communicate with customers more effectively. Through monthly webinars and professional development courses, the program has helped contractors improve their skills in targeted communication and selling program options, thereby increasing home energy upgrade conversions. After conducting a two-day sales training course for contractors, coinciding with additional homeowner incentives and a filing deadline, Efficiency Maine's average monthly rate of energy upgrade conversions increased from 10% before the training to 60% a few months afterward.

- [Energy Upgrade California in Los Angeles County](#) [5] provided marketing materials and sales training to contractors. Having learned that contractors often do not have the time or experience to create marketing tools, the program developed an online resource center with customizable marketing kits for contractors. Frequent networking events for contractors also provided training on specific aspects of marketing. Because contractors had limited budgets, Energy Upgrade California established an online, on-demand print center that contractors can use to print and deliver program marketing materials. The marketing materials raised the visibility of home performance professionals, helped homeowners find qualified contractors, and ensured a consistent message about the program.
- Connecticut's [Neighbor to Neighbor Energy Challenge](#) [6] found that contractors frequently have limited marketing capabilities to sell upgrades. The program hired energy advisers to help contractors move customers through the process from assessment to upgrade. Analysis showed that contractors valued the energy advisers and other program staff who provided small business support and development assistance. This support and assistance included sales training, sales process development, data management, and data analyses. These analyses included a scorecard and online dashboard showing how leads had progressed through the pipeline, contractors' rates for assessment completion and their upgrade rate, and contractors' marketing activity. Contractors benefited from the marketing tools to support home energy upgrades. The program also found value in requiring participating contractors to agree to a whole home performance orientation and well-defined sales process, as conditions to their participation in the program. The Neighbor to Neighbor Energy Challenge found that their upgrade rates improved after implementing these tools and tactics.

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Source URL: <https://rpsc.energy.gov/tips-for-success/contractors-are-your-sales-team-%E2%80%93-educate-and-empower-them-skills-sell-home-energy>

Links

- [1] <http://energy.gov/eere/better-buildings-neighborhood-program/accomplishments#reports>
- [2] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=017t0lr6NV0&feature=youtu.be>
- [3] <http://energy.gov/eere/better-buildings-neighborhood-program/maine>
- [4] http://www1.eere.energy.gov/buildings/betterbuildings/neighborhoods/pdfs/maine_workforce_case_study.pdf
- [5] <http://energy.gov/eere/better-buildings-neighborhood-program/los-angeles-county-california>
- [6] <http://energy.gov/eere/better-buildings-neighborhood-program/connecticut>