

Case Study

Solar Electric Supply Turns Up the Power of Its Website with Help from Cloud Brigade

<https://www.solarelectricsupply.com/>



Summary

- Customer Since 2005
- Located in Scotts Valley, CA
- Industry: Industrial Supplies and Manufacturing
- Company Size: Midsize Enterprise
- Garrett Gettleman, President and CEO
- Founded in 1996, Nationwide business

Challenge

Expansive website needed to be migrated and then optimized for user experience and search.

Benefits

- Website now supports e-commerce
- Web search rankings remain high
- User experience is optimized
- IT systems are fully supported with quick response

About Solar Electric Supply

In business since 1996, today Solar Electric Supply is one of the nation's largest wholesale suppliers of solar panels, solar power systems and components. The company manufactures pole and pad mounted solar systems for remote outdoor applications and provides complete solar electric systems for Home, Business, Commercial, Government and Remote Industrial Applications.

Background

The small staff at Solar Electric Supply is focused on servicing the solar energy needs of customers across the spectrum. The website is a force multiplier, allowing the company to reach the largest possible audience throughout the country. Cloud Brigade optimizes the site for search and provides ongoing support and maintenance to keep performance at its best.

Business Challenges Solved

- **Skills and Staffing Gaps** – The small staff is focused on product sales and manufacturing. not IT matters
- **Inefficient Systems and Processes** – Web content needs to be pushed out to a content delivery network to ensure content loads quickly and page rankings stay high
- **Irresolvable Complexity** – SEO properties of web content must be carried over from an old website to a new one without loss of search rankings

Why Cloud Brigade

Solar Electric Supply President and CEO Garrett Gettleman has known Chris Miller, Founder and CEO of Cloud Brigade, since their high school days. When Gettleman needs anything related to IT, he turns to his old friend Miller. “He covers all the bases and has my back,” he says. “Typically, I wouldn’t do anything or make any move unless I was using Cloud Brigade because of the relationship I’ve had for many years.”

“Cloud Brigade has the ability to look at a very big and complex problem, quickly identify what’s required, and also identify things that might not be initially apparent but which also need to be responded to. And then they dig in and resolve the problem.”

*– Garrett Gettleman, President and CEO,
Solar Electric Supply*

The Importance of SEO for Driving Increased Revenue

Solar Electric Supply sells many thousands of products, components, and complete systems via its website. The online catalog gives the company a nationwide reach. Gettleman has always been savvy about the power of search engine optimization, or SEO, to draw more visitors to the website. This is the notion that the site can be optimized to increase its visibility for relevant searches. The better visibility that pages have in search results such as those shown by Google or Bing, the more the company is able to attract customers to the business.

Many companies don’t even realize the importance of SEO and thus don’t have it built into their websites. This is a lost opportunity to garner more eyeballs on the website and, more importantly, more interest in the business and sales in the shopping cart. Having high visibility and ranking in search results can have a significant material impact on a company’s revenue.

Optimizing SEO Was No Easy Task

When Solar Electric Supply needed a new website based on more advanced technology, the site was created in stages. “We had an expansive website with more than 1800 pages. The content is very rich,” says Gettleman. “Unfortunately, that site didn’t support a key technology that is important to our business. We decided to move to version 2.0 of a platform called Magento so we hired someone to do the data transfer.

He’s a script programmer and his sole task was to migrate the content from the old to the new platform.”

Once the data was migrated, Cloud Brigade was brought in to do the heavy lifting of the SEO process. With so many web pages and so much content, this was an enormous task because it involved remapping the URL page-naming structure from the old site to the new one without losing the carefully cultivated existing SEO rankings. It’s a pain-staking process, so Cloud Brigade developed internal tools that enabled a comparative audit between the old and the new websites. The tool is able to find where pages, content, or the URL changed that will result in a drop-off in SEO rankings. Thus, Cloud Brigade is able to address those issues to preserve a high degree of SEO placement.

“When the new website was handed over to us, we did an audit to determine the current state and what needed to be fixed in terms of SEO,” says Chris Miller of Cloud Brigade. “Initially there were more than 10,000 SEO-related errors that needed to be fixed on the site. For some of those things, there was a coding issue. We fixed a piece of code and that resolved the issues with a bunch of URLs. For many others, we had to go over them manually. We did everything we could to minimize any kind of negative search engine impact that would occur as a result of launching the new website.”

Customizing the Website for a Great User Experience

Cloud Brigade optimized the website in other ways as well. One was to set up the Amazon CloudFront content delivery network (CDN) in order to serve up content very quickly no matter where a user browsing the site is located. A CDN makes a copy of the assets of a website that are typically slow to load – for example, images and style sheets – and distributes those assets to cloud-based servers around the world. Thus, a person who is browsing the website from halfway around the world from where the website is hosted still gets a good experience in loading the content for viewing because there is less latency in presenting web pages.

Using a CDN to expedite content delivery is an important factor in SEO rankings. Google and other search engines incorporate how performant a website is into their search rankings by calculating a Core Web Vitals score. So, for instance, a website that has pages that are slow to load may rank lower in searches than websites with fast-loading pages. A CDN helps eliminate that problem so that search rankings aren’t negatively affected by page performance.

“Cloud Brigade hosts Solar Electric Supply’s website on Amazon Web Services (AWS), so we set up a CDN profile inside of AWS. We tell CloudFront where to find the origins of the files from the website, which are in a Magento content management system. We customized Magento to reference the CDN for all the links to the image files, JavaScript, and so on,” says Miller.

Cloud Brigade Provides Good Value

“There aren’t a lot of companies that have the skills and tenacity for problem-solving that Cloud Brigade has. They provide a lot of value in what they do,” says Gettleman. “I’ve worked with many other developers and IT support professionals over the years. Typically they just run the meter. It’s not that way with Cloud Brigade. They go out of their way to try to optimize whatever they do to bring you value. They don’t work on things that they know are a waste of time, and they really are efficient with their time.”

Gettleman stresses how his company benefits from Cloud Brigade’s ability to do so much under one umbrella. “In most cases, I would have to hire two or three different companies to get what Cloud Brigade provides us. We’d need one company to develop the website from the programming and Magento perspective, and another to tackle any specific programming or form needs that are outside the Magento scope. And then a third company would be needed to understand and optimize SEO because that is a real niche. Cloud Brigade does it all under one roof and that’s really unique today. It truly saves us quite a bit of time and money.

Technology

- **Software:** Magento, Joomla
- **Programming Language:** JavaScript, PHP
- **Cloud Infrastructure:** AWS, (EC2, CloudFront, RDS)

Services

- **Application Migration, Support and Maintenance-** Supported the migration of the website to a new e-commerce platform and re-established critical SEO links
- **Cloud Infrastructure Support** - Host the website and set up a content delivery network to ensure content loads quickly and page rankings stay high
- **Strategic IT Support-** Ongoing advisor on all matter pertaining to IT

Partners



“I highly recommend other companies look at Cloud Brigade for developing any new project or taking over their current IT needs or projects. Chris Miller’s team is very knowledgeable, responsive, and professional as well as competitively priced.”

*– Garrett Gettleman, President and CEO,
Solar Electric Supply*

