

New Age Sun Rising on Solar Industry and their Leaders

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Before you decide on going to a party, tradeshow, conference, etc. you want to know if the event is going to be one that you want to be at. Well recently in San Diego there was a summit for the Distributed Solar Energy companies. It included many of the best and the brightest new and old (by solar standards) power people in the solar industry. This solar driven conference was both exciting and educational.

Participants had the opportunity to meet, learn and educate their peers, competition and potential partners. To have a conference where the participants feel that their time and energy is worth attending it takes a mix of the right people and information. The knowledge and experience of the panels has to be up to date and advantageous to the participants. Then you need an interested audience that listens carefully and asks great questions. The panel of experts and topics presented need to be engaging so this high powered group of intellectuals stay stimulated and active during the summit. Plus, there needs to be time for everyone to mingle, meet and partner with new potential partners, peers, associates and customers.

The participants should include people that have a desire to move their industry forward in a beneficial way for their customers. Discussing new ideas and information to assist the growth of their industry and offering exciting benefits to their customers. What I found by attending Distributed Solar Summit 2010 is each of the necessary ingredients were there and actively bringing in a new age for solar.

Opportunities for Industry Stakeholders

The event provided excellent opportunities for industry stakeholders to connect build relationships and discuss deals. The summit was built around North America but mainly the United States outlook, analysis and solar finance and investment. Topics included The Leading Distributed Solar Markets, Emerging Distributed Solar Markets and Distributed Solar Finance and Investment.

I give a lot of credit to the team at [Infocast](#), who hosted the exciting Summit and for assembling an industry wide group of participants joining together to advance solar. Also, for assembling experts with knowledge and experience to present information everyone attending could discuss and learn from. The event coordinator Lorelei Leslie ensured that participants were introduced when necessary, that the food, sound system and location were attended to ensuring everyone felt comfortable and important. Most importantly the information was up to date, presented in a panel discussion where four or five panelist would make comments and explanations on their views of the topics and a moderator that kept the discussion moving along with a clear message.

Governments Policies are unclear but solar companies move forward

What the participants and panelists learned was that in spite of the Federal and State government's unclear policies, they are finding new ways to light our cities and states with solar. Just when a state seems to be understanding the value of solar the policies brought in by the new leadership changes the direction. This changing is faster than it takes to make the decision to put together an installation of 3 to 5 mega watts in some cases. Yet the industry players are finding which states are working to bring solar energy to their state and getting projects completed before the states drop any rebate or funding programs they developed.

New ideas of how to fill the roof tops of buildings are being created and a unrelenting focus of getting the projects done. Even when the company that owns the building doesn't personally want to invest in solar but wants the savings the new distributed solar market finds investors to take on the financial responsibilities. What we as a country do not know is when we are going to get out of this weak economy, so the new solar power players are getting funding from investors that see the value and enjoy the consistent 6% to 12% return on their money. This return can be for up to 25 years depending on how the deal is structured.

What intrigues many of the investors is the 30% federal tax credit. If you are a company or investor that has a large tax appetite because your profits are high and your tax payment is large there isn't a better way to benefit your company or the investor while reducing the need of fossil fuel energy. With the tax credit and the solid 6% to 12% return on investment investors are deciding there is not a better more solid investment available with little to no risk.

Some companies I feel compelled to highlight are as follows:

[Distributed Sun, LLC:](#)

Distributed Sun, LLC (D-SUN) and their CEO [Chase Weir](#) stated that "D-SUN develops high-value solar project assets financed by low-risk investments from its Solar Energy Investment Companies (SEICs), which are privately funded and independently managed by D-SUN. In a marketplace where risk-capital and policy-maker interests are increasingly aligned, D-SUN offers a unique, high-value opportunity for its investors".

"Renewable energy, distributed generation, and credit/incentive markets are highly complex and rapidly evolving presenting a combination of barriers to traditional market participants as well as newer entrants and non-established parties. D-SUN has achieved a competitive market position by leveraging superior finance and regulatory knowledge combined with deep relationships and business model innovations".

Many solar companies finance systems through the traditional banking sector, and as a result face a time-consuming and uncertain approval process in a credit-constrained environment. Using its managed SEICs, D-SUN is able to deploy capital independently and decisively. As one of the first investment vehicles of its kind, sunONE (D-SUN's first SEIC) is a breakthrough for commercial solar project finance.

Each SEIC is comprised of a number of individually-wrapped project entities that own and operate separate commercial solar arrays, which feed revenue back to the SEIC. Through reliable revenue streams from long-term contracts for solar power sales and renewable energy credit trades, D-SUN's SEICs offer consistent returns-on-equity, and significantly outperform industry return norms of 8-12%.

[Kohler Company:](#)

Kohler Company and Mark Siira the Director of Applied Technology said that Kohler a multi-million dollar family owned company has been donating large amounts of money for new technology based schools to help build the emerging renewable energy market. Additionally, they have funded a solar project for a technology school to educate students on the value of solar to themselves and the community. Mark said Kohler is presently looking into the solar space to see how they can bring their years of manufacturing experience to solar.

[AMSOLAR:](#)

[AMSOLAR's](#) Marika Landau-Wells said [AMSOLAR's](#) Power Purchase Agreements (PPA) represent a compelling way for their partners to enjoy the benefits of clean, renewable, reliable and cost-effective solar energy without the high up-front cost. Their partners secure solar power at a predictable cost for a period of 15 to 25 years. Their team of solar industry veterans, finance experts, experienced electrical contractors and educators understand the unique opportunities educational institutions have when it comes to solar energy.

They create and implement innovative solar energy solutions for their partners. Plus their offerings are expertly crafted for campuses and communities. [AMSOLAR's](#) success is driven by experience and expertise based on 3,000 solar projects engineered, 2,000 electricians, world-class solar panels, and a relentless focus on execution.

[Perpetual Energy Systems:](#)

Perpetual Energy Systems, SVP of Business Development [Michael Streams Jr.](#) said, "Developing customized, large-scale solar energy installations for a greener, more environmentally sustainable future is our purpose in the solar market". Perpetual Energy Systems, LLC is a comprehensive renewable energy company specializing in the finance and development of solar powered energy systems for commercial, industrial, institutional and municipal enterprises. Through the company's financing strategies and system ownership, Perpetual bears the entire economic risk of every solar project from construction to completion and operation, without requiring any capital outlay from their host clients.

Perpetual provides clients with clean, sustainable energy at rates which result in immediate savings and or future hedges against ever-increasing public utility rates. With a system life cycle of 25 years, Perpetual has a vested interest in the design and

construction of each project it engages in. They closely collaborate with designers, engineers and integrators to create successful distributed solar energy systems for their investors and the energy end user. Perpetual is committed to creating green jobs, reducing reliance on the existing energy grid and circumventing foreign oil dependency by facilitating greater energy sustainability.

Global Energy Investors:

Also, I interviewed Global Energy Investors (GEI) Managing Director and CEO, [David Richardson](#) who said that renewable energy will play a key role in meeting U.S. energy needs and will accelerate the United State's growth as a global energy leader. Electrical energy demand is increasing throughout the US. The achievement of energy independence will allow American's to move away from reliance on foreign imports, increasingly scarce resources, and expensive extraction processes with one-time-only resource production. The development and operation of clean power projects will create jobs and produce environmental benefits in local communities and throughout the world.

David believes that investing in our energy future can be done intelligently. By adhering to a disciplined investment program using proven energy sources, technologies, manufacturers, and developers, and seek to provide consistent returns without the risks inherent in other private equity and clean tech investments. The investments in operating assets will benefit from active oversight by the GEI team. They seek projects managed by experienced developers and then provide the support and resources to maximize their capabilities.

Continually monitoring their portfolio projects, to ensure the projects developers/integrators are exceeding or meeting their goals. They also provide operational, financial, and managerial guidance as needed through formal and informal working relationships. Additionally, client reporting is merely the first step in their Investor Relations Program. Always encouraging the LPs to remain actively engaged throughout the investment process.

In Summary

To summarize the [Infocast's](#) Distributed Solar Summit, I would say if you have never been before you owe it to yourself and your company to attend. The dialogue of these professionals stated above and many others bring new light and energy to the solar industry. Over the next month I will be highlighting and writing articles on these companies and many more that were involved with the summit such as the following: Kyocera, SanRex Corporation, DRI Energy, Yingli Solar, Nautilus Solar, Marathon Capital, Handy and Harman Tube Company, AtlaTerra Research Network, PV Powered, Siliken USA, Solaire Generation, Lockton Insurance Brokers, Competitive Energy Insights, DAI Management Consultants and many, more.