



# TODAY'S ENERGY SOLUTIONS

*The economic downturn inspired two California-based businessmen to launch an energy-brokerage firm*

*Today's Energy Solutions utilizes Solyndra rooftop panels to provide energy to some of its clients.*

BY ANNIE FISCHER

IN 2009, WHEN PRESIDENT OBAMA ISSUED A CALL for America's business leaders and entrepreneurs to find creative ways to get the country's economy back on track, Jeff Bertsch and Jim Gilbeau took note.

Both men had lost their jobs due to the economic downturn and real-estate implosion. (Bertsch, a former financial planner, had worked as a general contractor for the custom-home market; Gilbeau was owner and publisher of *Today's Real Estate* magazine, an industry publication in California's Central Valley.) They duo considered the country's dependence on foreign oil to be the main reason the United States was in trouble, and they wanted to help create new manufacturing companies for US exports, as well as jobs—both for fellow citizens and for themselves. Their logical conclusion? Kick-start the economy by creating energy independence.

To that end, Bertsch and Gilbeau spent nearly a year developing a new business model for the way solar energy is sold in America; on January 1, 2010, they founded Linden, California-based Today's Energy Solutions. The company acts as a commercial-, industrial-, and residential-energy broker, providing turnkey energy solutions and services, professional on-site assessments, custom installations, and ongoing systems monitoring for photovoltaic solar systems. The difference, Bertsch and Gilbeau say, comes in the firm's ability to represent clients to the entire solar industry sector—without representing any one product, manufacturer, or system.

"It enables us to design custom solar systems that best suit our customers' needs for their specific energy situations,"

Bertsch explains. "Not being a dealer for any one company allows us to sell all companies' products, and we eliminate any conflict of interest."

The first step for a new client is a full energy audit. Today's Energy Solutions analyzes each type of energy being drawn off the grid, how much, and when—finding the total power consumption. The company retrofits with new, energy-efficient materials to lower those costs as much as possible up front before moving into the design stage of a custom solar-energy system.

For that phase, Bertsch and Gilbeau have assembled what they call a "dream team" of like-minded contractors and suppliers, gleaned from a year of researching and personally interviewing American solar companies. Those firms include:

- TMW and Associates—a LEED- and BD+C-certified general-contracting firm;
- Allied Building Products—an independent distributor that serves as the main material and product supplier;
- Pearl Electric and Envision—two of the leading commercial electrical contractors in Central California;
- Solyndra—a photovoltaic manufacturer for commercial and industrial flattop roofs.

Solyndra received a loan guarantee in 2009 from the US Department of Energy for \$535 million to build a second manufacturing facility. The company estimates that complex will help generate up to 15 gW of clean electricity, while employing 3,000 people in construction of the facility and an additional 1,000 in operation—

## AT A GLANCE

LOCATION:  
LINDEN, CA  
FOUNDED:  
2009  
AREA OF SPECIALTY:  
PHOTOVOLTAIC  
SOLAR SYSTEMS  
ESTIMATED FIRST-  
YEAR SALES:  
\$20 MILLION



*Pearl Electric, Inc. and Envision Automation & Electric believe that the wide-spread installation of large-scale industrial/commercial rooftop solar power generation systems will go a long way toward creating energy independence for America. We have partnered with Today's Energy Solutions, as their preferred electrical contractors, so that we can be a part of building this new, national, renewable energy generation infrastructure.*

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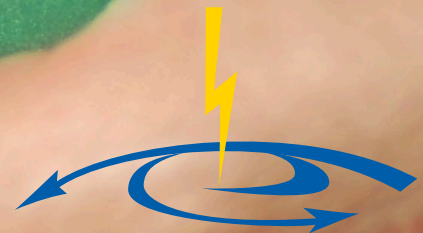
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exactly the type of results of which Bertsch and Gilbeau want to see more.

In the first six months of 2010, Today's Energy Solutions secured projects ranging from 450,000 kW to 1.3 megawatts, including residential systems, non-profit municipality audits, and one \$6 million project that includes the installation of nearly 7,000 solar panels; overall, they estimate first-year sales at \$20 million. Additionally, while there is one other exciting opportunity about which Bertsch and Gilbeau remain tight-lipped, they will say this: it could be the biggest commercial solar project ever completed.


The founders are confident that their business model is the best possible solution for the design and development of solar systems. They point to their exhaustive research efforts regarding current and upcoming changes in legislation—at both federal and state levels—in keeping their customers up-to-date with important developments. They stay on top of new products and manufacturers, personally vetting any new technologies before passing them along to clients. The structure of the business, too, allows flexibility in pricing that other solar providers may not have. Customers see every

expense, line item by line item, including how much Today's Energy Solutions profits—an issue of protocol on which the company's founders won't budge. In fact, they want to answer the President's call for action with their own call for improved business practices.

"We always encourage our clients to ask around and see where they could possibly get a better deal than with us," Bertsch says. "To be honest, the more companies they talk to, the better we look." *EIQ*


A MESSAGE FROM PEARL ELECTRIC, INC. AND ENVISION AUTOMATION & ELECTRIC  
*Pearl Electric, Inc. and Envision Automation & Electric understand the critical need for America to find alternative sources of renewable energy. As electrical contractors, Pearl Electric and Envision have partnered with Today's Energy Solutions because of its commitment to provide its customers with the most technologically advanced and efficient solar-power-generation systems on the market.*

*The recent development of innovative solar technology has provided means for the installation of large-scale, solar-energy systems on the commercial/industrial rooftops of America and the world, which would fulfill a majority of energy needs. Pearl Electric and Envision are totally committed to playing a leading role in this important new field. As specialists in the installation of complex industrial motor controls and energy-efficient systems, Pearl Electric and Envision's level of electrical expertise, quality of electrical work, and dedication to customer satisfaction are second to none.*




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