

Affordable PAYG energy access

Key words: pay-as-you-go, affordable energy, modular, solar



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CEO of Solaris Offgrid | Main product: Solaris

Aim

To provide a scalable and affordable electrification solution for the 1.2 billion people currently living without energy access

EIT Community connection

EIT Climate-KIC and EIT InnoEnergy

The project

The idea

Solaris offers a pay-as-you-go (PAYG) model for affordable energy access. Combined with our innovations in customer service, hardware, software, and deployment efficiency, we have been able to build momentum and scale quickly. To date we have over 1,000 active systems.

Inspiration

More than 600 million people in Sub-Saharan Africa struggle to access modern energy services, and the current market for solar home systems is filled with poor products – temporary stop-gaps for kerosene users.

Unique selling points

We position ourselves against competitors on three dimensions: modularity, customer service, and price. The Solaris system is fully modular, allowing affordable upgrades. We also offer a fully integrated customer service experience, with every interaction handled by quality professionals. Finally, the Solaris system is built from the ground up, so we can offer our entry-level system at a lower price than competitors.

EIT Community support

EIT Climate-KIC and EIT InnoEnergy both provided assistance and funding in the early stages when risks were significantly higher and investment raising most difficult. Support during this gap period was essential

in moving from a good idea with prototypes to a real business. The EIT Community also provides a network and knowledge to grow businesses and tackle problems pragmatically.

Teamwork

I have seven years' experience in start-ups developing renewable and energy access solutions. I am CEO, supervising operations, setting objectives and handling finances. Thibault Lesueur worked for four years in the energy consulting industry and is Solaris Offgrid's COO/CMO, in charge of marketing and the day-to-day operations in Tanzania. Benjamin David has over 10 years' experience in developing robotics and energy metering hardware. As CTO, he is in charge of product development, electronic and software engineering, and impact analysis.

Venture development

We are in a post-pilot and post-revenue stage, getting ready to scale up.

The nominee

The beginning

I strongly believe that business is one of the most powerful tools the ordinary citizen has in order to make a tangible impact on society. I also feel exporting technology is the most sustainable solution to key issues in the developing world. From this understanding and with a focus on East Africa, where my parents were born and many of my family members

reside, I came to energy access as a sector of opportunity and impact.

Entrepreneurial flair

Having a logical and pragmatic mindset, as well as determination and energy.

Learning from experience

Get feedback from real customers as soon as possible and scientifically collect evidence on the problem that the product solved for them.

Best memory

Installing Solaris in 1,000 houses.

Ideal advisor

People who have managed large distributed work forces in developing nations, like Iqbal Quadir and Muhammad Yunus.



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