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Solar power and battery storage: Selling solar PV to the Danes

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Solar power and battery storage play an increasing role across Europe. PV Europe took a look behind the scenes at one of Germany’s solar pv wholesale suppliers, EWS, active in Denmark. We talked to CEO Kai Lippert who leads the track northward, ho!

Denmark experienced a peak in installed solar PV capacity a few years ago, because they had a net metering law in place for solar PV installations up to 6 kW power. At that time, the Danes added more than 400 megawatt solar capacity per year. Today, the policy framework is annoyingly unattractive. “The construction of new pv installations was at 150 megawatt in 2013, but fell back to 40 to 60 megawatt in 2014”, says Kai Lippert. “In 2015, we saw a slight increase in demand. The high consumer electricity price of 30 Eurocents per kilowatt hour is helping us.”

Selling solar pv modules in Denmark

Mr. Lippert explains, that EWS is focusing on selling a handfull of different brands in solar modules, inverters and battery storage systems, respectively. EWS offers modules from REC, LG, BenQ and Luxor Solar. Regarding to solar inverters, EWS has the following brands in store for Danish installers: SMA, Fronius, Kostal, Bosch PT, Zeyersolar and Sungrow (for projects more than 100 kW).

When mounting solar PV systems, EWS is focusing primarily on two brands: K2 and Altec, both located in Germany.

Solar PV battery storage in Denmark: A market in it’s infancy

„The storage market up north is enormous and is just taking off”, says Lippert. His company focuses on selling high-quality, reliable brands only, and offers battery storage solutions by the following manufacturers: Fronius, Kostal, Bosch PT, LG and SMA

Regarding the choice of solar battery manufacturers, Lippert explains: „They offer high quality and are successfully bringing new, innovative product to the market. The risk of bankrupcies is very small. Battery storage systems are wearing parts; that’s why we are counting on brands that we have worked with for decades. This is the only way to be successful with a three-stage distribution concept in the long run”.

A helping hand for Danish installers

EWS is an all-round service provider and cover all aspects from first contact to configuration of solar systems. Components are configured to fit the individual shape of the roof or building. Because of the extensive stock of EWS in Handewitt at the German-Danish border, the company is able to optimally configure variations of mounting systems, including all necessary small parts at short notice.

Inverters are layed out professionally and pre-configured to fit specific conditions on request, both regarding the module connection, data analysis and grid connection. “You won’t find one-size-fits-all-solutions with us”, say Lippert. In contrast, EWS provides a personal key account and provides installers with individualized support concerning all matters, from boosting sales and project engineering to after sales service Lippert ads: “Installers can count on us.”

Learning by doing: Helping newcomers to enter the Danish market

The concept of EWS in Denmark is similar to the one the company has been successfully applying to the German market, and of with training and development of installers are paramount. „Just as in Germany, we have trained hundreds of installers, totalling about 1,000. This was in 2012 and 2013, and we can still build on this. We have built up a strong contact network, and our market share in Denmark is around 10 to 15 percent”, Lippert confirms.

The training & professional development offerings of EWS cover a broad range: inverter certification trainings, optimization of pv battery storage systems, special seminars on policy changes or tax and legal issues.

Servitization in the solar economy

In 2016, Lippert wants to develop his offering towards a stronger and software-aided sales effort. „We want to offer our installers an added value, starting from lead generation and initiation of first contact to potential end customers. Installers are so busy with their core business that they have only little time to deal professionally with customer requests. They’re split between offering individualized solutions and package deals.”

EWS is taking the wholesale business model towards a much more service-oriented approach, and has developed an online tool that installers can even use as white label solution.

A quote-generating software for solar PV installers

“We are developing a planning- and communication tool which allows installers to respond to 90 per cent of customer requests with only a fraction of the time”, says Lippert. “This takes a significant burden off the installer and increases his success rate.”

The tool supports installers in all steps. „The result is an individualized quote to be used at a sales meeting on site. The installer finds all current framework conditions and all product data and prices in the system, enabling the creation of a robust cost estimate. Furthermore, our tool sets up detailed documentation of all project relevant data, including a yield and returns calculation, which should impact decision making on the customer side positively. The key is: The customer gets an immediate response”, says Lippert.

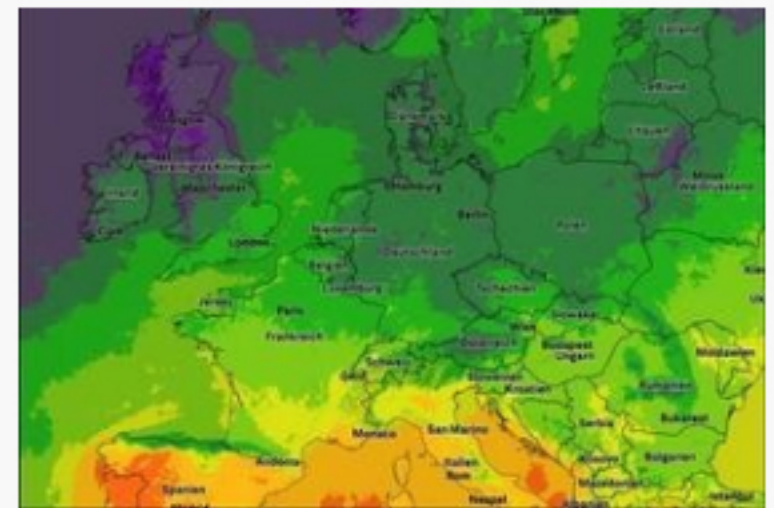
The interface also acts as a CRM system and keeps track of contact data and can be integrated in the installer’s web presence. It is available as a white label CRM system free of charge. A demo version is available at www.pv.de ^{en} . (Heiko Schwarzburger, KH)



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Kai Lippert is CEO of EWS in Handewitt at the German-Danish border. He is 52 years old and for 30 years in solar business.

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