



Cornering the market

EckPack Service is a company that's built on innovation. It has developed an ingenious range of packaging solutions for the solar industry, built around a plastic corner that is unlike anything else available. But has it been successful? Definitely, says Technical Sales Manager, Marin Maras.

PES: Welcome to PES. Would you care to introduce yourself to our readers and explain a little more about how your company serves the PV industry?

Marin Maras: EckPack Service is the world market leader in premium solar module packaging. Our plastic corners are the synonym for safe and easy packaging. We offer different solutions for framed, frameless and other PV modules as well for thermal collectors.

All of them reduce time, material and labour and are re-usable. We have two modern injection equipment facilities in Germany for serving the European market and have started now in Canada in order to serve better the American market. Currently our combined capacity is around 7GW.

PES: The company was founded over a decade ago now, how did this come about and was the thinking behind it?

MM: EckPack Service was founded in January 2004 by Martin Flossmann, General Manager of SOLON Germany, in cooperation with leading experts on packaging and processing.

The primary goal was to develop a re-usable, environment and production friendly alternative to the previous conventional packaging materials. The purpose of the idea was to minimise packaging waste and reduce CO₂ through reusability and the recycling of 100 % packaging materials.

PES: And which of your products is most in demand right now?

MM: Currently the main product is Trio, which was developed in 2008. The corner was the first that was able to stack the modules horizontally and vertically. The product is patented in several countries and of course, re-usable.

PES: What would be a typical customer for you?

MM: Our typical customer is a module producer of any size. In the last period we also focused on distributors and installers as they had also asked for a re-usable module packaging solution because of the cardboard waste.

PES: Your handling & packaging solutions are considered to be some of

the best on the market. Could you outline some of the key features and benefits?

MM: Using our products, the weight of the panels is distributed through the corners so that even in horizontal mode, the first panel carries only its own weight. With 240g of corners it is possible to stack up to 50 modules or 1,000kg in transport (2,500kg in a warehouse). Reusing our corners, we reduce waste at construction sites and this in turn reduces CO2-emissions. Other features and benefits are:

1. Possible automation of packaging in production
2. Optimized warehousing for packaging materials and for modules
3. Simplified distribution of pallets
4. Easy processing for installation teams on building sites
5. Time and money savings

PES: And what are the key issues that your customers are currently trying to address with the help of EckPack products?

MM: The main issues that customers address with our products are breakage of the panels and micro cracks in order to ensure safe transport to their customers. Also, many of them are re-using our products and in this way, making savings on their ambient and packaging costs.

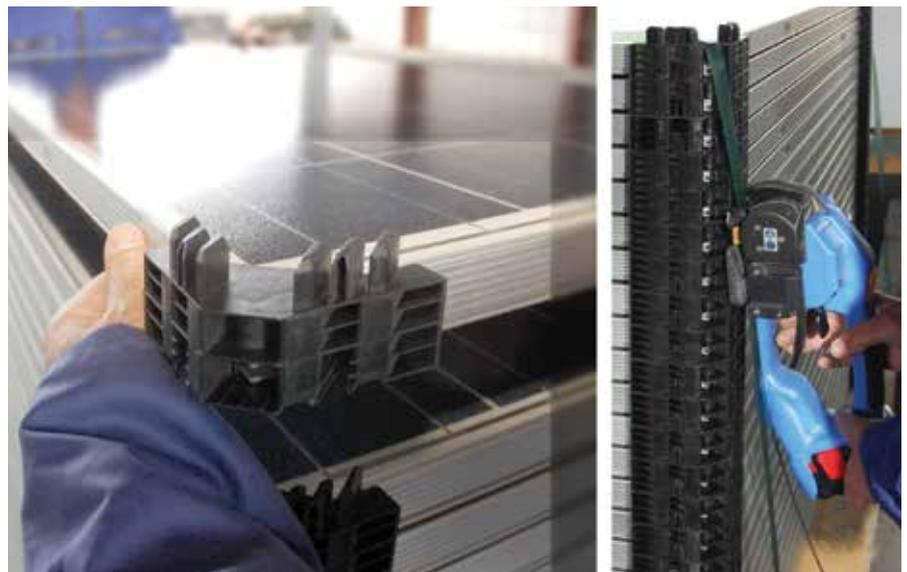
PES: Where in the world are you currently doing business? Where is growth going to come from tomorrow?

MM: Today our main markets are Europe and America, but we have plans for further expansion in Asia and Japan in the next year.

PES: Are you also able to offer customers what we might call 'on the spot' support too? To cater for their individual needs?

MM: We offer our customers a full solution and not just corners. This means that we make a model of the packaging system, and advise the customer on which product and service will fit best for them. In addition, we carry out special designs according customers' specific needs.

PES: Finally, are you looking forward to the next 24 months with a sense of trepidation or anticipation?



MM: Since the beginning there has been no trepidation, just anticipation. Even though the solar market is quite unstable, the year-by-year growth shows us that we are on the right path in the solar business. ■

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