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Retail Display Leader United Displaycraft Doubles Down on Solar

Two Chicago-based businesses join together to demonstrate that ‘going green’ and ‘making green’ go hand in hand.

DES PLAINES, IL (October 10, 2014) — United Displaycraft, a worldwide leader in merchandising displays and retail solutions, announced on Thursday the completion of a solar array installation that will effectively double the company’s energy production and provide nearly 40 percent of the annual electricity requirement of its headquarters manufacturing facility in Des Plaines, Illinois.

“At 1,400 panels, this will be the largest solar array installation of its kind in the state of Illinois,” according to Rich Carrigan, president of United Displaycraft. “Being green and sustaining a profitable business are one in the same. Our first installation of rooftop solar panels in 2010 was easy and maintenance-free, and provided such a quick return on investment that we decided to ‘double down’ and expand our capacity. Our first investment in solar paid for itself in just over 3 years, and this time we expect that return to drop even further to less than 2 years.”

New solar addition to produce 40% more energy at 20% less cost than original 2010 installation

In partnership with Chicago-based Solar Service, Inc., United Displaycraft this month added an additional 214 kW photovoltaic array to a 152 kW array previously installed in 2010. The new system generates 40% more energy at a cost 20% less than the original installation, and uses 780 SolarWorld 275-Watt and 9 SMA TriPower inverters. When added to the company’s existing 650 Sharp 235-Watt modules and 2 Satcon



Powergate Plus 75 kW inverters, the resulting 367 kW array will generate almost 40% of United Displaycraft’s total estimated electricity needs – enough to power almost 50 average size homes in Illinois.

Carrigan says that the success of its ongoing solar investment supports the philosophy that practicing environmental sustainability and building a successful business should go hand-in-hand. The company even shares the energy savings from its solar program in real-time online at http://live.deckmonitoring.com/?id=united_displaycraft.

“This is not just a ‘tree-hugger’ thing,” notes Carrigan. “There are a lot of warehouse roofs in the United States that could be put to much more productive use, reducing our impact on the environment and our reliance on foreign oil. It was important to us that almost all – 98.6%, to be precise – of the solar panels in our system were produced domestically. An ever increasing number of businesses, including large manufacturing facilities like ours, are discovering the practical benefits of implementing solar. We simply saw an increased investment in solar as a way to maximize the potential of our property and do business in a more efficient way for our customers.”

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The PV array is connected to United Displaycraft's main electrical distribution system where it first provides energy to local electrical loads in the facility. When excess solar electricity is available, it is fed back into the utility grid, providing green energy to nearby homes. Each year, the rooftop array provides the local environment with an estimated reduction of almost 300 tons of carbon dioxide — roughly the equivalent of planting more than 7,000 trees annually — while eliminating an estimated 1,700 tons of nitric oxide and 4,300 tons of acid-rain forming sulfates from the atmosphere.

United Displaycraft establishes environmental model for thousands of American businesses with warehouse roofs

The solar roof installation is one of several eco-friendly initiatives implemented at the merchandising display manufacturer. In recent years, United Displaycraft has put in place such cost-saving green practices as light motion sensors, steel recycling, waterless urinals, and non-phosphate soap that doesn't need to be heated, thereby helping reduce their consumption of electricity by 24% and natural gas usage by 36%. Even more impressive is that these reductions occurred during a period where the company grew operations by 35%.

"Over the last few years, costs for alternative energy have come down considerably," adds Carrigan. "Photovoltaic panels are more efficient than they used to be, bringing the cost per watt way down. Now, solar, wind, and biomass can be cheaper than the grid over the long-term, especially when federal and state incentives are considered. The increase in cost efficiency, along with the reduced risk of exposure to rising fossil-fuel prices, has really tipped the scales for widespread business adoption of solar energy. It is profitable for us, beneficial for our customers, and great for our planet. It will become a standard way of doing business in the future and we just want to stay ahead of that curve."

"Energy is an organizational priority," said Tim Richardson, United Displaycraft's vice president



Solar energy by numbers at United Displaycraft:

- **1,400 solar panels** generate up to 40% of the company's energy needs
- **\$200,000** in annual energy savings
- Reduction of **300 tons** of CO2 annually
- Equivalent to planting **7,000 trees** every year

of sales. "The project goes beyond the kilowatts produced. It reflects our ongoing commitment to our environment, to our customers and to energy efficiency. This investment will provide reliable access to clean electricity for a significant portion of our daily operations and production projects going forward."

"The folks at United Displaycraft truly care about clean energy and the environment," explained Joe Gordon, director of sales for Solar Service, Inc. "They have a passion for what they do, and at the same time, they're always trying to be as energy efficient as possible. This project is a perfect example of how any size company can leverage renewable energy investments to save money, lower risk, and build a more cost-efficient, reliable and responsible business for their customers and community."

"I applaud the incredible effort and teamwork to bring this initiative to life and serve as a model for other large scale renewable energy opportunities," added Gordon.

About United Displaycraft, Inc.

Based in Des Plaines, Illinois, United Displaycraft is dedicated to the design and manufacture of permanent point of purchase displays, greeting card display racks, store fixtures, and custom in-store merchandising solutions. For more than 60 years, United Displaycraft has been combining creativity and high-tech equipment to produce successful marketing solutions for the nation's leading brands and retailers.

