



How a Small-Town Solar Company Improved Operations and Streamlined Projects

When Magic Sun was founded in 2010 to help friends and neighbors “go solar,” they had no way of knowing how far they’d go in a few short years. The tidal wave of change in solar between 2010 and 2016 challenged many companies to stay afloat.

Two opposing forces were at play in the residential space: demand was growing at an incredible pace while the costs of PV modules were plummeting.

Magic Sun not only found a way to keep up, but to grow 1,000% while maintaining their commitment to community and customer service.

Being resourceful and dedicated got them pretty far, but Magic Sun also had a few “tricks” up their sleeve to deal with the challenges of expanding operations and swelling payroll.

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An 8 kilowatt system used to take nearly two days to complete.

Now we’re done by 2:30 pm on the first day, and with a smaller crew.”

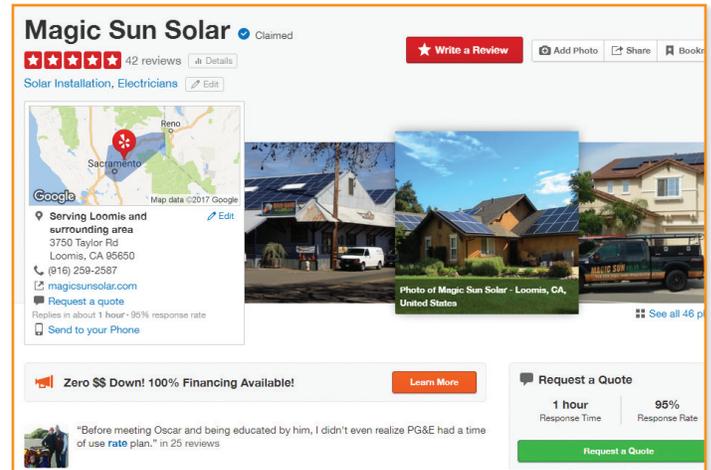
– Jim Bustos, Lead Installer

Have Customers Sell for You

Without spending a dime on advertising, Magic Sun grew tenfold. They didn't use clever "viral" video campaigns or door-to-door salesmen. They just focused on what matters: the customer experience.

If you consistently deliver a higher quality of service, your customers will notice. They'll even start selling for you. Word-of-mouth referrals serve as Magic Sun's primary source of new business. Boasting a 5-star rating on Yelp is not easy, but Magic Sun enjoys the top spot in their region.

As you grow, so do your customers' expectations for the best products and experience. Every decision you or your team makes, from the distributors you choose, to the new employees you hire, must reinforce your commitment to serving customers.



“Most people say that they choose us because of our reviews. It’s a lot of work to keep them that high but that’s the most important thing that keeps the phone ringing.”

– Brandon Hurlock, Owner

Create a No-Slip Schedule

Magic Sun took a strong stance early on, and even posted it on their website: “Guaranteed completion within 30 days.” Anyone who has proposed, sold, designed, permitted, procured, installed, inspected and interconnected a solar installation knows that 30 days goes by in the blink of an eye.

Bad weather or inexperienced staff is all it takes to wreck a week of scheduled jobs. That’s why Magic Sun chooses products and approaches that keep them well ahead of their 30-day deadline.

There is no single “silver bullet” to make this sort of speed possible. The key is to constantly be searching to streamline all stages of the process.

One of Magic Sun's favorite new discoveries in support of this, is the **IronRidge UFO**. Arriving fully assembled and lubricated, crews no longer have to task a team member to prep the mid and end clamps. According to Brandon Hurlock, “The UFO makes the difference between installing a panel with one hand or two hands, with one person or two.”



“Setting glass is 15-20% faster with the UFO. That turns into real dollars at the end of the year.”

– Brandon Hurlock, Owner

See Opportunities Everywhere

Hugging the Sierra foothills, Magic Sun serves commercial and residential customers in highly diverse jurisdictions. Project designs can range from simple to complex, and wind and snow loads from mild to extreme.

For years, this placed a heavy burden on Magic Sun's designers to keep pace with sales proposals. But they figured out how to leverage free tools to streamline things.

Magic Sun's team uses IronRidge's "Design Assistant" to complete project designs in minutes. And every design comes with a pre-stamped engineering letter, covering all the application types and snow loads Magic Sun encounters. Plus, the tool generates a bill of materials for each project array.

Magic Sun estimate saving 20-30 minutes per project. That might not sound like a lot, but multiplied by 250+ projects per year, it's more than 100 man-hours.



“Before we discovered Design Assistant, we had to draft the system, take it to an engineer, get a wet stamp on it, and take it back to the site. Now it’s all online.”

– Jim Bustos, Lead Installer

Know That Quality Pays for Itself

In crowded markets, many companies will compete on price. But focusing solely on material costs can make it possible lose track of what customers really want.

Customers rarely want something “cheap” installed on their home. If you aren't offering the best products, few customers will choose your proposal, increasing your cost-of-sale. In other words, using “cheap” materials can get expensive.

In addition, low quality products introduce hidden costs. Something as simple as product documentation can be the difference between smooth schedules or hours spent reworking a design. Or worse, days spent fixing an issue that the homeowner or AHJ caught.

When you're committed to delivering a great customer experience, and you rely on referrals to fill your pipeline, you can't risk return visits. Your best bet is to use products that offer real value. Magic Sun selected IronRidge because they knew it was proven and well-supported.

“With IronRidge, we know that we have a far superior product that is stronger and will last a lifetime.”

– Jim Bustos, Lead Installer

For more info on how your solar installation company can adopt some of the same best practices, contact success@ironridge.com.