



Commercial Division: Frequently Asked Questions

SUNPOWER®

by Green Convergence

Why should my business go solar?

There are two primary ways that going solar can make your business more profitable:

1. Reinvesting capital where it will do the most good.
2. Gaining the goodwill of your customer base.

By increasing your bottom line with energy savings, you can invest in other strategic areas of your business, increasing your sales and/or profitability. Also, multiple studies indicate that consumers conscientiously choose forward-thinking companies that demonstrate environmental sustainability and corporate social responsibility. You'll gain a competitive advantage over companies that don't follow a triple bottom-line framework, which measures net income, social responsibility, and environmental sustainability, or implement a green strategy.



Is my roof good for solar?

More than likely, yes, your roof is good for solar. The goal is to synchronize the service life of the roof with the solar. Make sure to conduct a pre-inspection of your roof before any solar decisions are finalized. Any damage found must be addressed before putting solar on the roof. The minimum life expectancy of solar panels is 25 years, so your roof should have a similar useful life.

Additionally, choosing a solar company with a deep understanding of roofing will reduce the risk of leaks from the solar installation. For this reason, it is important to choose a solar contractor that is knowledgeable with roofing systems and capable of working with a roofing contractor to make sure that the roof integrity is maintained. If possible, the best option is to have your roofing contractor and your solar contractor be the same company so that you have one point of contact for any questions regarding your roof.



Should I have a budget and financing method?

Knowing your budget upfront can help the provider streamline the conversation and significantly narrow the list of best possible options on how to afford solar. Knowing whether you're looking to buy, lease or enter into a power purchase agreement (PPA) will help your potential solar provider design a solution that maximizes all available incentive programs you may or may not have calculated into your decision. It can also help ensure the financing choice you pursue is aligned with your overall project goals.

Do I need to provide electric bills?

To make the best decision on Solar, often the system size and amount of savings is the most critical element. For this reason, your last 12 months' energy bills are extremely helpful. Electric Usage information is necessary to provide accurate system designs and energy savings calculations which will enable you to decide if Solar is the best investment for your company. You can share your energy bill information by sending copies (digital or printouts), or, in some instances, you can use a new and potentially time-saving tool called UtilityAPI.

There are advantages to using UtilityAPI to send your utility information. First, your information is kept safe and secure. Second, UtilityAPI will give us access to your 15-minute interval data, showing your energy consumption at 15-minute intervals. This data will show day-to-day and cyclical electricity needs for any existing facilities, including peak periods of energy use. It can also help determine if a commercial battery storage system might be able to save you more than just solar alone.

In summary, the more information we have, the more precise feedback we can give you. We work with you to give you the relevant information you need to make an informed decision.

Do I have to own my building?

This question not only helps identify the specific parties who will be involved in the planning and approval phases of your commercial solar installation, but can also determine what incentives are available, as well as which financing option works best. Owning the property generally provides a wider range of opportunities, but commercial solar installations on leased property can also benefit both the landlord and tenant (by increasing property value and lowering electricity costs, respectively).





Where will the system be located?

In the not-so-distant past, you may have been asked to supply site photos or drawings. Today, it's usually sufficient to send your solar provider candidate an address or the GPS coordinates for the proposed project site. With detailed satellite images a mouse-click away, a lot of valuable information can be obtained simply by entering a specific site address. This can reveal how much space is available, possible physical obstructions that may block optimum sunlight exposure and other geographical considerations. You can also provide feedback about where you want the solar array to go.

What policies and incentives are available for my organization if we decide to go solar?

The biggest incentive currently available is the federal commercial renewable energy Investment Tax Credit (ITC), which might influence your decision to go solar sooner rather than later. It constitutes a significant tax credit of 30% of the value of projects completed through the end of 2019, but that credit begins to decrease year by year after that: 26% in 2020, 22% in 2021, and just 10% thereafter.

In addition to the federal ITC, there may be a variety of other state and local policies and incentives that reward businesses for going solar. For example, some utility providers like LADWP offer rebates for solar. Likewise, solar projects are eligible for 100% bonus depreciation in 2018 and beyond. This means that the entire capital investment may be expensed in the first year on the federal side. It takes 5 years to depreciate the system on the state side. Please consult with your tax representative to understand how solar can help reduce your tax bill.

Is there anything unique about my situation?

For example, do you have any specific time requirements for completing the solar installation? Perhaps you need to tap funds now because they may not be available in next year's budget, or because a new solar system is planned to be part of a current or future construction project. What may seem unique to you might not be out of the ordinary for an experienced solar company.



Why should I go solar now?

There are a few reasons why going solar sooner than later makes a lot of sense:

- Favorable policies and incentives for installing commercial solar panel systems that are available today might not be in the future.
- Current technology is quite advanced already thanks to continual innovation over the last few decades. As a result, it's unlikely that we'll see the same rapid rate of increase in the efficiency of solar.
- In many cases, even if better policies or incentives are rolled out, or slight technology improvements increase power production, the money you'd save in the near term by going solar could easily outweigh the benefits you might gain from waiting.

Cool Roofs, Solar, and Batteries – which option works for you?
Learn about Green Convergence's commercial solar and roofing solutions.

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