

# WESTERN ROOFING<sup>®</sup> INSULATION AND SIDING

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# Cover Story



## Technology Powering Solar Sales

### *Aerial Measurement Reports Helping Companies Boost Sales & Expand*

by Karen Edwards, marketing director, EagleView Technologies

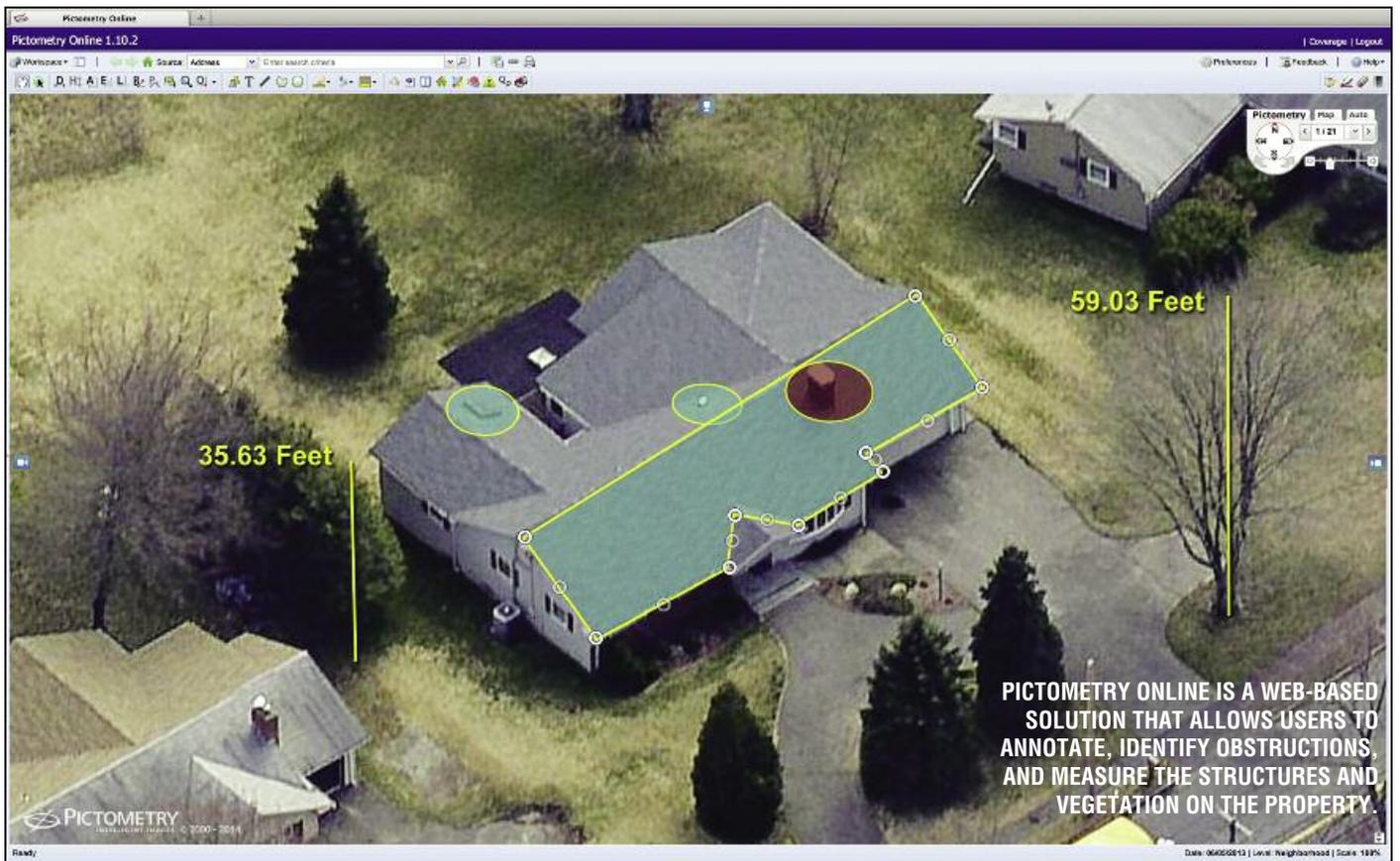


The U.S. solar industry is growing like wildfire; two-thirds of all solar PV capacity worldwide was installed in the last two and a half years alone. Thanks to declining product costs, the rooftop solar market is on a strong upward trend and is creating job openings across the nation. This perfect storm of economics is creating a tremendous growth opportunity for busi-

nesses that are positioned to take advantage. One of the main reasons for this growth is the dramatic drop in the price of solar equipment, also known as hard costs. With the massive influx of new manufacturers and resulting oversupply, contractors are seeing prices continue to decrease. At the same time, contractors continue to reduce their own soft costs, such as customer acquisition and

overall operating costs, resulting in ongoing record sales and installations throughout the United States.

Circular Energy, a solar design and installation firm in Texas, recognized the urgency of this opportunity and was determined to find a creative way to grow quickly while maintaining their reputation as a premium brand. Their excellent online reviews, the quality of products they



use and their high standards for customer service have positioned Circular as the company of choice for homeowners seeking solar solutions. As of late 2013, the Austin Business Journal ranked Circular Energy the third fastest-growing company in Central Texas from 2010 to 2012. How did they do it?

One key factor contributing to this success was Circular Energy's decision to embrace one of the latest technologies available in the construction industry: aerial roof measurement reports from EagleView® Technologies. EagleView invented the concept of 3D aerial roof measurements. With the explosion of the rooftop solar market, solar design and installation companies like Circular Energy are recognizing the value of the EagleView suite of solutions, which includes the Pictometry® Online tool and EagleView Premium Roof Measurement Reports. These tools are helping solar and roofing contractors alike grow their business through marketing, sales, and production.

"There was, and still is, a need to scale quickly and reduce costs, while maintaining high standards for quality design, installation, and customer

experience. When we examined our business model to see where we could improve in these areas, the pre-sale assessment process was a big bulls-eye," explained Lionel Johnnes, marketing director at Circular Energy. "That was why we started using EagleView reports."

Like most solar companies, and the majority of roofing contractors, Circular Energy relied on manual roof measurements to develop solar design proposals. This is an extremely costly process when you consider gas and travel expenses, not to mention the time it requires. "It was a very inefficient use of our time and an even bigger waste of time for our customers, who would have to schedule time off of work while we visited their homes," said Johnnes. "In the beginning, we conducted both manual and EagleView roof measurements simultaneously, to compare accuracies, and found that EagleView's high level of accuracy made for an obvious decision."

Circular Energy understood the limitations that manual, onsite roof assessments presented for the scalability of their business and began using EagleView roof measurement reports to respond to all solar

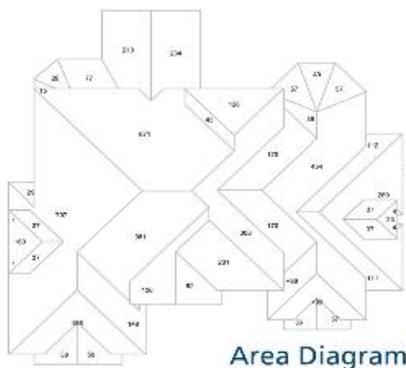
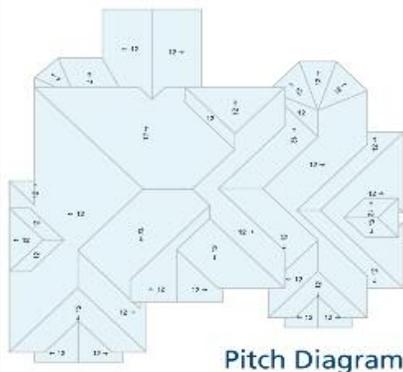
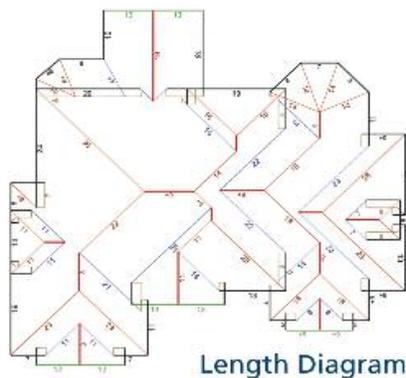
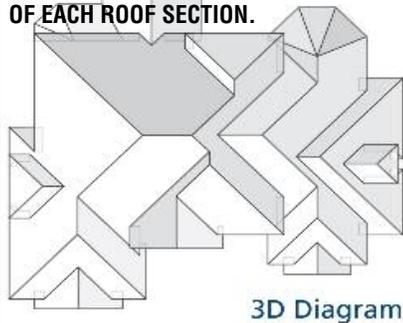
inquiries. EagleView reports are derived from the highest-resolution Pictometry aerial imagery and provide the exact line lengths, including ridges, valleys, rakes, eaves, hips, parapet walls, and more. The reports also include the pitch and square footage of each roof section. Patented technology and a five-step quality control process ensure the accuracy in this data. Explains Johnnes, "We still visit the home prior to installation, but not for the sake of developing a proposal. This allows homeowners to call in and quickly get an accurate custom design and estimate, while lowering our costs and avoiding dangerous ballpark numbers."

Circular Energy offers homeowners several options for how to review their proposals: by phone, via screen-share, or in person. About 85% of homeowners opt to screen-share, using WebEx or join.me, so they can watch the consultant scroll through the proposal. Only a few ask to go over the proposal in person and those folks are usually averse to newer technologies.

EagleView Technologies was conceived on the premise of automating

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**EAGLEVIEW PREMIUM REPORTS PROVIDE DETAILED MEASUREMENTS OF EACH ROOF SECTION.**



local rebate programs. “Too many solar companies chase these local rebates, resulting in rash business decisions to open an office in a state halfway across the country,” continued Johnnes. “The use of EagleView’s service offerings permits a more cautious, gradual expansion and allows companies of all sorts to diversify their services across multiple markets, whether or not rebates exist.”

Just as solar is expanding, so are EagleView’s product offerings. Thanks to the 2013 merger with Pictometry International, EagleView now offers access to Pictometry Online for those companies seeking a do-it-yourself tool. Pictometry Online provides web-based access to EagleView’s library of over 250 million images and enables users to quickly locate, display, and analyze imagery. Solar companies use this tool to easily self-measure important property attributes and quickly identify shading and roof obstructions for solar analysis before ordering a full EagleView report, property owner report, and CAD files.

Sales representatives, estimators, and engineers alike can then obtain full roof measurements including azimuth, pitch, penetrations, and total square footage of the south-facing side of the roof in .pdf formats along with a customized report cover providing a professional presentation for the homeowner. In this way, companies can position themselves as tech savvy while improving estimate accuracy. Finally, but of great importance to solar estimators and engineers, EagleView supplies .dxf and .xml files that integrate into CAD systems; integrating imagery and measurement functionality throughout the entire sales and installation process.

With the projected growth of the rooftop solar market, it is a great opportunity for contractors to utilize technological advancements to create new market opportunities. By incorporating technology into their workflows, contractors can facilitate their growth and success not only in the traditional roofing market, but in the expanding solar segment.

## Technology Powering Solar Sales

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traditionally manual tasks and continues to expand its offerings. Rishi Daga, EagleView’s executive vice president of commercial sales, explains, “We provide user-friendly, web-based tools that take the place of manual tasks such as roof measuring and initial site visits. EagleView’s technology allows companies to develop smarter, more efficient business practices in the areas of marketing, sales, and production. Customers regularly share with us the beneficial impact these tools have made on the success of their business.” These process improvements have enabled Circular Energy to cut costs, strengthen their customer service, and improve design quality. The company will also be able to continue their expansion efforts in a scalable manner, thanks to increased efficiency and centralized services.

Best of all, using EagleView reports has allowed Circular Energy to take a leading position in the Texas market and expand into San Antonio, Dallas, and Houston over the past

three years. Customer acquisition efforts can account for up to 10% of overall residential solar costs, according to GTM Research. By implementing more effective sales and marketing methods, all types of rooftop service companies can improve cus-

*Solar companies use this tool to easily self-measure important property attributes and quickly identify shading and roof obstructions for solar analysis*

tomer acquisition performance and reduce overall costs. EagleView reports are the perfect tool to help these companies better market to potential customers and close a higher percentage of sales.

Another huge contributing factor to solar growth in specific areas is due to the existence of local incentives. The 30% Federal tax credit applies to projects anywhere in the U.S., but a few states offer additional incentives and many utilities offer