



Communicating the Customer Benefits of Information Standards

How Standards Reduce Cost and Eliminate Risk in Solar Installations

When you look at the most ubiquitous technologies around us today, the success of each is most often tied directly to standardization. From networking, to video formats, to cellular communications – standards are critical for widespread adoption on a global scale.

In spite of this obvious truth, most solar deployments still utilize proprietary information formats, communication protocols, and monitoring and control technologies.

The SunSpec Alliance, the leading industry coalition developing standards for renewable energy system components and management systems, has issued a new paper outlining the benefits of standards for solar installations and providing guidance regarding how to communicate these benefits to customers or interested third parties. To read the full report, please visit www.sunspec.org to download a free copy.

Highlights

Lower Costs From Top To Bottom

SunSpec’s hybrid approach to standards development—deriving de facto standards from the PV industry while collaborating with traditional standards-making organizations to establish formal international standards—creates a network effect that reduces costs and encourages adoption as more systems are deployed in the field.

Who Benefits from the Cost Reduction of Solar Standards?		
Party	Benefit of Standards	Resulting Cost Reduction
Manufacturers	Rather than developing every new component from the ground up, manufacturers can innovate on top of standardized form factors and communications protocols.	Building from standard form factors, etc. results in faster time to market and greater economies of scale for new products.
Solar Operators	Standards enable solar operators to easily provide access to solar data to all customers without the need for expensive, time-consuming customizations for each third party. In addition, components can be swapped out at any time without the fear of having to rip and replace an entire system.	There are significant cost reductions in terms of the initial cost of equipment, the time to deploy new technology, the time required to train staff, and the elimination of rip-and-replace costs when new components or management systems need to be deployed.
Renewable Energy Consumers	Customers receive more visibility into the performance of solar installations without being charged for significant customizations and ongoing management costs.	Because the solar operator no longer needs to engage in costly customizations for each customer, customers do not have to pay significant markups for these services.
Utilities	Adoption of reference designs will result in increasing plant uptime and total energy output by enabling better oversight.	The backward and forward compatibility of components will reduce lifetime costs.

Lower Risk

By incorporating de facto industry standards—instead of starting from scratch—SunSpec information standards reduce risk by ensuring maximum interoperability. SunSpec information standards also help reduce performance and efficiency risks by enabling performance metrics that invite apples-to-apples comparisons.

Increased Flexibility and Scalability

The Information standards ensure that the equipment and solutions you buy are going to work together, and that they are going to operate according to objective, well-understood specifications. Accordingly, mixed-vendor plant installations—combining best-of-breed components—can be constructed, and ROI calculations can be made based on objective criteria—and not simply upon manufacturer claims.

HIGHLIGHTS

Topics covered in this paper:

How solar standards can help save \$0.35 per watt.

The solar standards value chain, and who benefits from these standards.

How solar standards help reduce the risk of solar installations.

Enabling flexibility and increasing adoption via solar standards.

Tips on how to communicate the benefits of solar standards to customers and interested third parties.

Details of how the SunSpec Alliance is establishing solar standards, and the methods they are using to do so.

FULL REPORT

To learn more about the topics above and to learn why 50+ of the leading solar organizations have joined forces via the SunSpec Alliance to drive solar standards, please visit: www.sunspec.org.

