

Colorado Solar Systems Provider Pioneers Ethics-Driven Business Model

 By [Andrew Burger](#) | August 14th, 2009



The stunningly rapid growth of digital communications networks and media convergence has made message-spinning and media saturation relatively easy, and cost-effective. It's also made it relatively easy to mislead, even deceive, outsiders, the public, even employees and yourself. It's good to see thought leaders and practitioners in business, politics and civil society push for greater transparency and accountability, along with independent, unbiased access, feedback and widespread public dissemination of information.

“**Going green**” has fast become a linchpin for public relations and advertising campaigns. That's led to a lot of what's come to be known as “greenwash.” While there's certainly a lot of it out there, it appears certain that there really are a growing number of businesses—large and small—that are honestly and sincerely committed to ethically-driven business strategies and models based on the triple bottom line.

Boulder, Colorado-based [Namasté Solar](#) looks like a case in point. Founded in 2004, its ranks are chock full of impressively experienced people with a diversity of backgrounds who are apparently intent on building a company that does good in terms of people, planet and profit. Evidence to date indicates that Namasté's ethically-driven business model is working, and working very well. The company was one of 14 in Colorado to earn a spot on the [latest Inc. 500 list](#) of the fastest growing companies in the US. Revenue has risen 2,243% between 2005 and 2008 to reach \$14.5 million.

Solar Powered Triple Bottom Line Business

A belief in the benefits of solar power as a clean, renewable energy source drives Namasté's business. That and ethics—as it relates to business, society and the environment—imbues the organization with something of a sense of working for the greater good, for a higher purpose. This is evident in the company's organizational structure.

Namasté is employee-owned and democratically run, according to [this August 7 profile](#) by Axiom News' Camille Jensen. When it comes to strategy its overarching rationale is to employ what executives call a “holistic profit measurement approach.” Focused on the long- as opposed to short-term, organizational thinking is likewise focused on factoring community and environmental impacts, organizational morale and long-term sustainability into its decision making processes.

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Employees are given the autonomy to make decisions on an individual basis while also being able to tap into a peer review process when they feel they need some help. All major decisions are made by majority vote during “Big Picture” meetings

“We were all really passionate about solar energy, which is what we do, but we were also really passionate but doing business differently,” Blake Jones, one of three co-founders, is quoted as saying. “We wanted to create a model that would work in the capitalistic system — work within our current culture and societal norms — but that it could be done in a different way and still be profitable.”

Helping spur employees in this regard, all Namasté’s employees, from their first day on the payroll, are eligible to buy stock in the company via a restricted stock option plan. This stands in stark contrast to the quarterly, semi- and annual granting of cheap stock options that has become the “brass ring”—and so contentious— in the big corporate world.

“We want to share all aspects of ownership, a true experience of ownership, not just the rewards, the profits and the good stuff. We also want to share the risks and the responsibility and we think that is only possible when people are putting money on the line.”