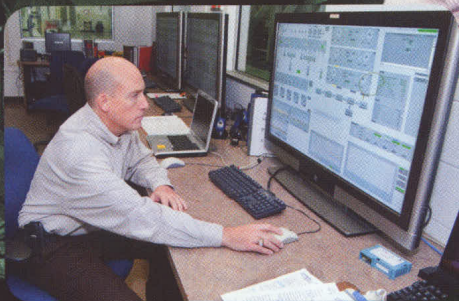


Working on Sunshine



A control room enables precise monitoring of production machinery operations.



This \$50 million machine produces United Solar Ovonic solar laminates. Incorporating a huge array of equipment, it's over 50 meters in length.

Ken Fenton holds a finished piece of flexible solar laminate.

Ken Fenton cut his teeth in Michigan's auto industry. Now he's working to make his home state a leader in sustainable solar energy.



"I wanted to get involved with a young, growing industry," Ken Fenton said, "so I left the auto industry two years ago to accept a position at United Solar Ovonics in Auburn Hills, Michigan."

"I felt that an alternative energy company would provide a better career path long term. In truth, it got better much sooner than I expected."

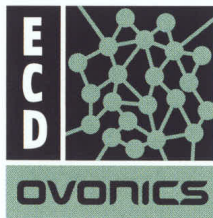
Ken came to United Solar as Director of Materials management and Logistics. Now, a short 24 months later, he's been named plant manager of the company's Auburn Hills facility.

Before joining United Solar, Ken was a materials manager for American Axle & Manufacturing, now known as AAM. AAM, which has plants and offices around the world, is based in Hamtramck, Michigan, and specializes in powertrain parts, including gears and axles.

"I enjoyed working for AAM," Ken told us. "It's a well-managed company, and I learned how to be an effective leader."

Ken said that he first started thinking about making the move to a sustainable energy enterprise when United Solar hired a friend he had worked with at AAM.

"I was intrigued by the opportunity to get into a growth field, so I started to monitor the industry. I kept an eye on what was happening here. When a position opened up, I decided to look into it."



Ken knew that sustainable energy was a growing field, but he said that becoming involved in a green enterprise wasn't top of mind for him when he first signed on at United Solar. But after becoming an integral part of the organization, he began to take pride in the fact that he's helping to produce an "earth-friendly product."

United Solar's most popular product is a solar laminate that's produced in long sheets with electrical connectors incorporated at one end. Because the laminate is flexible, durable and lightweight, it can be used as a source of solar power in a variety of applications, including roofing. Other products include photovoltaic cells in small arrays for various applications, and interesting new solar panels that integrate and blend nicely into a homeowner's roof. CertainTeed, a supplier of roofing and other building products, will soon market the panels.

UNI-SOLAR®

In his first position with United Solar, Ken performed a variety of production- and shipping-related functions. He was responsible for making sure that raw materials were on hand in the right quantities for efficient production. He also managed both the incoming and outgoing pipelines.

"While I had to learn all the particulars of United Solar's business, the skills I had developed working in the auto industry served me well here," Ken said.

Ken's experience suggests that Michigan's expanding green economy will provide many opportunities for those who once worked in the auto industry and other manufacturing businesses that have declined in recent years. In just two short years with United Solar, Ken has advanced to a position with greater responsibility than that of his previous job. He now sees his career change as a very positive experience.

"I'm excited about my new role as plant manager," he said. "I'll be more deeply involved in the company's business, and that's a stimulating challenge. I'll be responsible for meeting production targets, safety objectives and financial requirements." "I'll have to make sure that engineering and production are in lock step and aiming for the same target.

I'll be more into the whole operation, rather than focused only on supply chain." Aside from his 13


years in the auto industry, Ken's preparation for his role in sustainable energy management includes an undergraduate degree in marketing from the University of Detroit and a Master of Science, Management degree from Walsh College. Born and raised in Clarkston, Michigan, he now resides there with his wife Sheila and their two children.

Ken told us that his involvement in the sustainable energy industry has made him much more conscious of energy use around the house.

"I've replaced every incandescent light bulb in my home with an energy-saving equivalent," Ken said. "I've added insulation and done some caulking. I've become a part of the team."



On Earth Day, his daughter's kindergarten teacher asked the class to bring in something for show and tell that was earth friendly.

"She brought in some United Solar Ovonics brochures and samples of solar laminate material," Ken said. "It made me proud that she was able to say her dad worked in sustainable energy." 

READER INVITATION:

If you have recently accepted a green-collar job, we'd like to hear from you. Simply send us an e-mail at EnergySmartsMI@dteenergy.com, subject line: Green Jobs and include a brief description of what you do, and how and when we can contact you.