

## Solar 'System' Spins Off

*By Peter Key, Philadelphia Business Journal Staff Writer, August 10, 2007*

A spin-off from a Philadelphia industrial design firm is developing a solar roofing system it thinks could be widely accepted by homeowners.

**SRS'** system looks like, and is, as easy to install as a ceramic tile roof. Its cost is comparable to a high-end roof with a solar roofing system.

"It will be roof and it will be solar and it's in one product," said John Ondik, SRS' director of domestic sales and marketing.



John Ondik of SRS shows off a portion of his company's solar roofing system.

The system is the brainchild of Peter Bressler, founder and leader of Bresslergroup, a Philadelphia industrial design firm, which is providing space for SRS in its Center City headquarters.

Ondik and SRS CEO Martin Low are former executives of Aramark Corp., the mammoth Center City food-services firm that went private last year. David Wachob, SRS' sales and marketing director for Europe, was one of the original executives of WorldGate Inc., the Horsham company that initially developed an interactive system for cable television but now makes the Ojo video phone.

Low's Aramark connections have enabled SRS to raise about \$2 million from the wealthy individual investors known as angels and Ondik said the company is on the verge of closing on a \$3 million angel funding round.

That money, according to SRS' projections, will enable the company to get its ceramic system to market in early 2009. The company plans to bring a system that resembles a slate roof to market late that year.

Bressler got the idea for a solar roofing system that looked like a traditional roof in the late 1990s. While flying, he saw a roof with a solar panel and thought to himself that solar power systems for homes weren't going to be widely accepted until they blend in with the roofs they are part of.

Bresslergroup developed some of the technology necessary for those types of systems and Bressler had one of its employees, Abby Nessa, begin scouting the roofing industry to see if there was a market for them. By 2005, she had concluded that there was and Bressler made her the first full-time employee of SRS and brought on Low, first as a consultant, and then as CEO.

Low got the company its first funding and last June it installed its first roof on a test building in Valley Forge. The roof, which looks like a slate roof, not a ceramic roof, is able to power a computer and some lights in the building.

Since then, SRS has been rounding up investors and pressing ahead with work on the system that resembles a tile roof. It and one of its manufacturing partners are designing a tool to make the ceramic tiles for the roof.

SRS expects to complete that by fall and then install a ceramic-tile system for domestic and international code compliance and reliability testing.

The company is working with partners that include Norristown-based United States Roofing Corp., Mack Molding, LDI Inc. and United Solar Ovonic LLC. Ondik said the number and status of SRS' partners was a major factor in convincing him to join it.

SRS' systems look like normal roofs because the solar cells are embedded in the tiles via an injection molding process that forms the ceramic around the cells. The underlayment for the roof is a circuit card. Little blocks from the tiles plug into little blocks on it and two wires from it carry the electricity from the roof to the house.

One roofer to whom Ondik showed the system said it would only take about a half hour to train people to install it. Another said it would take less effort to install than a traditional ceramic roof because the tiles are lighter and don't break.

"This whole product was designed from the beginning to be roofer-friendly," Ondik said.

SRS projects the cost per watt of its systems to be from \$8 to \$8.25. That's in the low-middle portion of the cost range of solar panel systems, which goes from \$7 to \$12 per watt. Ondik said the installation costs for a system would be \$45,000 for a house on which a high-end ceramic tile roof could be installed for around \$35,000.

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