

Retailers get additional revenue stream with alternative power solutions

Despite the effect that ever-increasing load shedding and interrupted power supply has on local business and consumers, it is creating an entirely new market opportunity for local retailers. The demand for viable, cost-effective, reliable and environmentally friendly is providing retailers around the country with an additional revenue stream in their bid to satisfy customer demands.



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"It is going to take a lot more than sustainable energy shows and exhibitions or the annual Earth Hour to solve South Africa's energy crisis," says Paul Hubers, founder and director, Sungrid Group, developer, manufacturer and distributor of portable (solar) power and lighting products. Despite almost daily announcements by either Eskom or government addressing consumers' concerns, the country's load shedding days are far from over.

With over 20 years' international retail experience, Hubers believes that the use of portable (solar) power and lights will go a long way to eradicate our country's current energy crisis and will enable local retailers to meet consumer needs whilst increasing revenue.

"Answering market demand should be the first priority within any retail business. In light of interrupted power supply being almost a daily occurrence, local retailers have a new revenue stream just waiting to be explored."

Sungrid Group, the first local company focusing on retail driven portable (solar) power and lighting solutions, supplies Makro, Outdoor Warehouse, Trappers, Build it, Game, takealot.co.za and sustainable.co.za amongst its growing retail client base, with a number of more specialised retailers expected shortly. With its range of portable (solar) plug-and-play products it is offering South African retailers, and through them the local consumer, access to viable, cost-effective, sustainable and environmentally friendly alternatives not previously available.

Easy installations

Solar power is cumbersome to install and often requires costly consultants. This has made it far from readily available or a practical solution for most. "Portable (solar) power brings with it the ability to harness the sun's energy and most importantly, the capability of making it easily accessible to all.

"Solar appeared to focus only on much larger technical installations and solar geysers. There seemed to be a definite lack of easy 'plug and play' portable solar products available to the retail industry."

Spotting a gap in the local market, Hubers and his partners designed and manufactured a range of portable (solar) power and lighting products. In addition, they also produced easy to understand retail packaging and effective point of sale material for local retailers. As part of its offering to South African retailers, the company rolls out extensive and detailed training programmes to ensure retail staff are best equipped to explain the value of this offering to its customer base.

In-store marketing

"We work closely with our retail partners, offering a full range of portable (solar) power and lighting products, with both on- and off-grid capability, able to meet any portable power requirement across both the domestic and outdoor environment."

In addition, it also assists retailers on how best to communicate these products within their own store brochures. "It doesn't make sense to advertise one portable power or lighting product amongst a range of other electrical products if your customers do not understand what it is, or how it works. The company advises its retail base to display a full range of products in order to show the consumer that, irrespective of its power or lighting need, a suitable product is available.

"The energy landscape and how we consume electricity, has changed. Add to that the increasing inability of Eskom to meet local requirements, and it is easy to conclude that the time is ripe for a new market to emerge. We believe that portable (solar) power and lighting is the answer and are dedicated to working with retailers to help local consumers realise the enormous potential it holds," concludes Hubers.

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