

Supply and demand

As solar develops, customer behaviour and demands are changing, so we thought it was timely to catch up with Eternity's CEO, Matthias Wiget, to get his take on things. What factors are driving the market and what tools and solutions can help, particularly in terms of technology?

PES: Welcome back to PES Matthias. It's lovely to catch up with you for our first issue of 2022. Just as a background for new readers, could you give a brief introduction to Eternity and what you do?

Matthias Wiget: Thank you very much, we are very happy to have another interview with you this year. Eternity is a specialist in digital consulting and sales solutions for decentralised energy systems. We provide smart software solutions to clients and installers.

These automated solutions save time and address the customers' needs, providing a fast and cost effective service.

PES: The last couple of years have been memorable ones for lots of reasons of course, and for you all at Eternity too?

MW: The last few years have definitely been the most intensive years so far for us, in an exciting and positive sense. There was of course the beginning of the pandemic, which meant uncertainty and also a small slump for the industry.

However, this was only brief and we quickly noticed that digitisation was becoming more and more of a priority in the industry, precisely because of the pandemic.

Since then, it has been intense for us. We have doubled our customer base and we are now in 12 European countries. We have also been selling our products in the UK since 2020 and adhere to the requirements of MCS certification when designing our offers.

Our team has also doubled in one year, which meant we were able to reach our business

targets in 2021.

In the last two years, we have greatly optimised our software solutions and launched new products. Last year, the launch of our Eternity Configurator was one of the highlights for us.

This year, we have several new features planned, which include dedicated products tailored to the needs of manufacturers and suppliers. For them we simplify the information exchange and interaction with installers during the quotation process. Our more classic users, installers and energy utilities, won't be disappointed either, we also have a lot of exciting improvements for them.

PES: Looking ahead to 2022 then, generally for the solar energy sector, do you have any predictions of how things may progress?

MW: It's definitely going to be a very busy year. Demand is higher than supply. Especially in the UK, the rise in gas prices and the situation in Ukraine is a major reason for the rocketing demand. However, we should not forget that Russia is one of the most important producers of aluminium, a core part of PV mounting systems, and this could lead to a scarcity of resources for the solar sector.

PES: And how do your plans at Eturnity cater for this forecast?

MW: We can't of course influence the number of resources that are required for a solar energy system. But apart from the resource scarcity we also see a shortage in well-qualified people that can dimension, sell and build such systems.

Eturnity's solutions can have a big impact on addressing a shortage of people. By using the Eturnity Solar Calculator the end customer can work out their own needs. When the project then goes into the stage of an individual consultation with an estimate, the Eturnity expert provides a super fast and guided way to a customer-friendly quote. For installation companies and utilities that means they can have less experienced people doing the individual consultations, while the experienced team members can focus on the actual implementation of projects.

The game-changing effect of our software solution has also been recognized by Chris Laughton, a well-known person around PV in the UK. His 'The Solar Design Company' and Eturnity have entered a partnership for the UK market.

We are very excited about this partnership and look forward to boosting efficiency and customer-centricity in the solar sales process in the UK together.

PES: How are you seeing customer behaviour changing as solar develops?

MW: Well, it is now essential for companies in the industry to adapt their digital strategy. This is mainly because the behaviour of end customers is changing. They no longer want pure craftsmanship; they want a total package that includes professional customer service. To ensure this, installation companies and utilities must leave manual paperwork behind and begin to automate their processes.

As a result, there are ultimately fewer interfaces, lead management is centralized, information is not lost, and offers are sent to the end customer virtually with the click of a button. Those who still need up to two weeks to send an offer have lost the end customer.

This change in customer behaviour is essential for a fast energy transition and energy independence and it is why we launched Eturnity, to be able to provide an end-to-end digitization solution for any company size in the solar business.

PES: What is the next big thing in solar do you think, in the UK and further afield?

MW: There are many exciting developments going on, for example in the field of agricultural PV, which allows plants to grow and harvest solar energy at the same time. The solar system even actively helps to provide the optimal exposure time for the crops.

But solar technology is relatively advanced. For it to have an effect on our energy system, we now need to see the technology rolled out to a mass market. This requires efficient processes and a new level of customer friendliness, based on the customer journeys we are used to in our everyday lives.

At Eturnity, it is clear what our next major focus is: we want to achieve cost savings for the solar sector of 10% through software alone. We are working on this every day and we are getting closer by the day.

PES: What are the important factors that are driving the market, cost is obviously a big one and in terms of the technology itself ease of use must be key too?

MW: User-friendliness is now elementary. It's no longer only about providing the technical details in the first step, it's about comprehensible documents that have to deliver all of the important key figures, so that an end customer feels in good hands right from the start. Most customers are no longer purely concerned with price, it's about the quality of the advice and service as a whole.

Automation and intelligent software are the key to the desired customer service. It saves an enormous amount of time that can be used elsewhere. If you want to remain competitive, you have to act quickly.

Intelligent software, however, is not only important for the consulting and quotation



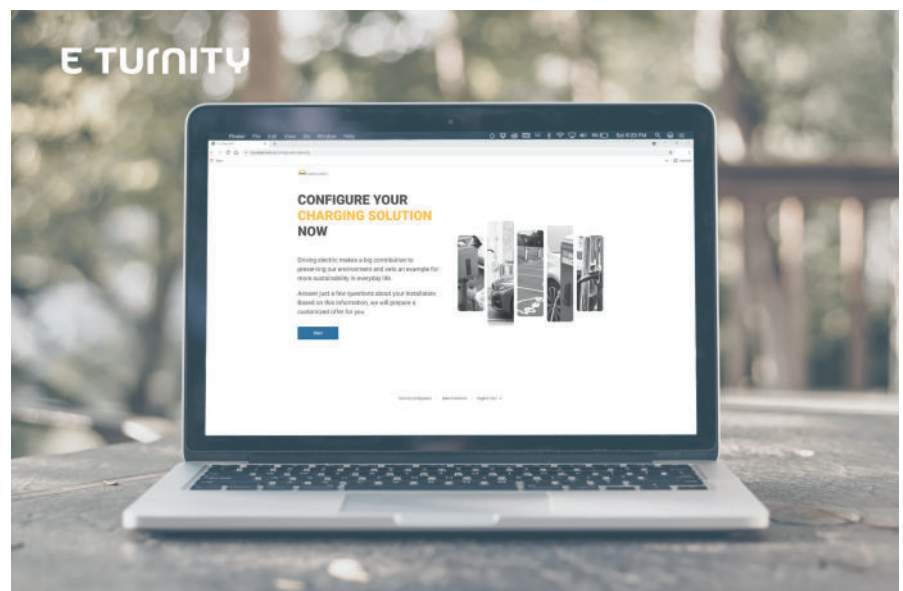
Matthias Wiget

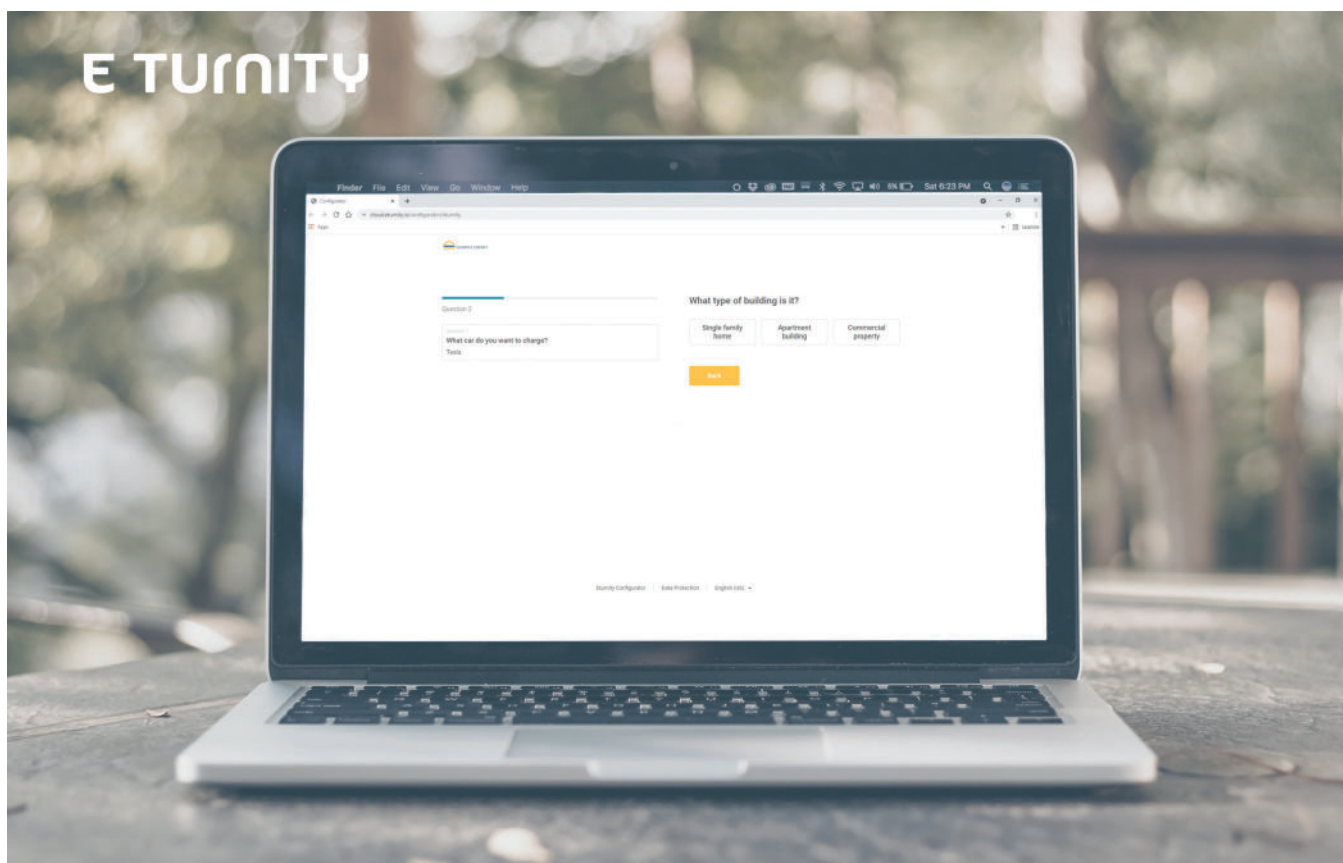
processes, it also takes care of the entire lead management and communication with other parties, such as manufacturers and suppliers, virtually at the click of a button. We have worked hard on this at Eturnity and will launch new supporting features in the first quarter of 2022.

PES: And when it comes to pricing a PV system and configuration, how are tools and solutions developing there?

MW: Here, too, software is becoming more and more intelligent and is taking off at a rapid rate. Material price inquiries can be made at the click of a button, with an offer automatically generated with just a few clicks more.

3D panel layouting solutions are also a big topic: they should be fast enough to be able to sell quickly, but at the same time accurate enough such that they can be reused after the process has been sold for the implementation stage. We are also working at Eturnity to make this possible this year.





PES: You recently launched a new configurator, didn't you? Can you tell us a bit more about how that works and its advantages?

MW: Yes, the launch of the Eturnity Configurator was one of our highlights last year and has already been in great demand. This is a highly flexible lead generation / CPQ (Configure, Price, Quote) software that can generate a complex bill of materials by just asking end-users a few simple questions.

That means the software makes it possible to sell e-mobility solutions or multi-tech solutions of integrated energy systems that include solar electricity, heat generation, e-mobility and energy management. That all happens in an efficient and customer-friendly way by means of a short questionnaire.

The tool is an important sales solution that complements our portfolio. And as the use of e-mobility is increasing more and more every year, energy companies can no longer avoid working with it.

PES: How does this encourage cross-selling, say from e-mobility through to PV systems?

MW: Sector coupling has always been an important topic for us from the very beginning and has influenced the development of all our products. There is no longer really a request for the one PV system; storage, renewable heat, and even e-mobility are often requested as well or at least end customers already think about combining it

when purchasing the solar system. We would limit our solutions too much if we did not enable sector coupling.

We are the only software company in this sector that enables such an extensive combination of multiple technologies. We are convinced that multi-technology renewable energy systems are the future and a very important pillar of the energy transition. A holistic view of buildings, across all technologies, is essential.

The practical thing is that the company can make an offer for a PV system and if the customer decides to buy an electric car a year later, the same project can be approached again and supplemented with the new e-mobility variant. This makes cross-selling a breeze.

PES: It sounds like this brings a lot of added value, particularly as the renewable energy industry as a whole develops?

MW: The possibility of combining different technologies also creates enormous up-selling potential. For the first time, solar installers can generate returning customers. An important step.

PES: Are there any other developments you think we should be looking out for in 2022 and beyond that, in general for the solar industry as the PV market grows further?

MW: Yes, we have three big topics that are important this year. One is 3D visualization

and automated lead management. But we also have something in the pipeline for the information and interaction process between manufacturers/suppliers and installers/utilities. This is something we are particularly looking forward to this year.

PES: And for Eturnity? How do you see the company evolving this year and in the future?

MW: Our ultimate goal is to make the energy transition more efficient, customer-friendly and cost-effective. To this end, we want to digitise more and more elaborate processes that are potential time wasters. This is especially true between different stakeholder groups, where there is usually a break in the process, e.g. wholesaler and installer.

It's our primary goal to offer a software for renewables that will allow any size of company to offer a very efficient and customer-friendly process when they sell, implement and operate renewable energy systems.

We take on the needs of our customers, integrate their requirements, and, at the same time, try to anticipate where the industry is going and find out, by talking to our customers, which requirements are becoming important. In addition to the new products already mentioned, it is also particularly important for us this year to expand our international customer base outside the DACH region.

www.eturnity.com