

# Encouraging Employees to Think Like the Owners They Will Be

This solar energy superstar is building a movement—one solar panel, one home, one customer at a time.



CEO Jayson Waller

**P**owerhome Solar CEO Jayson Waller has a simple goal for the company he launched five years ago. He wants to take the company public in an IPO that will have a life-changing effect on its employees. He's got a plan to get there, and a long list of awards, including two recent top 100 appearances on the Inc. 5000 list and recognition by *Fast Company* as a 2020 Most Innovative Companies honoree.

The solar energy company has grown from 15 employees and \$3 million in sales in 2015 to 1,100 employees and \$250 to \$275 million in 2020 revenue. Growth actually accelerated during the pandemic, as Waller and other executives took pay cuts to help everyone keep their jobs. "Before the pandemic hit, our largest month of bookings revenue was \$21 million," Waller says. "In June, we did \$53 million."

## Holistic approach to lower utility bills

While solar drives the business, the company's holistic approach to energy efficiency maximizes homeowners'

savings on utility bills. Powerhome Solar also offers blown insulation, LED lights, attic tenting, and other energy-saving products and services, all provided by its own teams of electricians, contractors, and installers.

The company's motto is "BAM – Building a Movement." To be successful, it requires buy-in from employees organization-wide, along with the same level of passion for the business that Waller feels. "We

implore our team members to think like owners because one day they will be," he says. "We want them to protect the brand and make decisions as if they already owned the company, because our goal is an IPO and stock options that will change their lives."

Waller bootstrapped the launch of Powerhome Solar, investing proceeds from the sale of a successful home security business and his lake house. For the first 18 months, he and co-founder and COO Kevin Klink took no salaries. Leadership works hard to infect the entire workforce with passion for what they do. The company promotes from within, provides extensive training, and offers great perks and benefits. But there's no tolerance for dead wood.

## A passionate, motivated workforce drives growth

"We challenge our directors to conduct KPI-based employee reviews monthly and to eliminate the bottom 20 percent of performers," Waller says. "We want team members who exhibit positivity, integrity, and a commitment

to protecting our brand. Snitches don't get stitches here. They are empowered to speak up, be proactive, and always do the next right thing for our customers, our employees, and our brand."



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That approach has worked to create a passionate, motivated, and highly productive workforce that drives Powerhome Solar's growth. The company has a dozen sales and installation facilities in 10 states and is expanding into three more. It's shooting for half a billion in sales next year and expects to close on a deal for its own branded solar panels soon.

"There's no elevator to the top in business. It takes hard work and grinding," Waller says. "Leaders need to be honest and transparent with their employees and humble enough to recognize that they can't do it all themselves. When you do the right thing, one step at a time, good things happen."