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Something Powerful for a Rainy Day

INTRODUCING THE ALL-WEATHER SOLAR PANEL

In the bright future imagined by scientists everywhere, sustainable energy will keep society moving forward without harming the environment — and without being sun dependent. Fortunately, we have advances in technology that bring us closer to that ideal world. The latest example of a huge technological innovation is the all-weather solar panel.

Why is this better than a typical solar panel? The keyword is “solar.” On a bright, sunny day, there’s no issue — but on overcast days with precipitation, the solar panel has almost nothing to draw power from because the sunlight is blocked.

A team of researchers at Ocean University of China and Yunnan Normal University decided to tackle this problem by designing a solar cell that generates electricity from both sunlight and rain.



How does this new gadget work? First, the panel uses dye-sensitized solar cells, which are thin film photovoltaic cells that resemble how plants use chlorophyll to extract energy from sunlight through photosynthesis. Light hits the dye in the cells, exciting the electrons and, thus, generating electricity.

This all-weather solar panel move us closer to a sustainable future by managing to generate electricity from rain! To accomplish this amazing feat, scientists turned to a fascinating material called graphene, a thin layer of pure carbon. In fact, that thin layer is only one atom thick. Graphene is very conductive, and when drops of rain hit the graphene-coated solar panel, the salt in the water is separated into ions. The difference in electric charge between the water and the graphene electrons generates electricity.

This doesn’t make the all-weather solar panel a perfect replacement for top solar panels on the market today since it performs better during rainy days. Plus, it has a conversion rate of only 6.5 percent for sunlight that hits it compared to about 22.5 percent for the best traditional panels. Still, this single little innovation could one day have a profound impact on creating sustainable energy systems.

WHAT MAKES THIS JULY SPECIAL?

A RARE OCCASION TO SPEND TIME WITH ALL MY DAUGHTERS

I have been looking forward to this July for some time now. This month I have all of my family coming to visit. My wife and I have three daughters, and our family is scattered all over the world. Our oldest daughter, Shelley, is a school teacher for the Department of Defense. She’s currently teaching third grade on a base in Seoul, South Korea. Dana, our middle daughter, works at a music management company in Austin, Texas. Monica is our youngest. She lives in Napa, California, with her husband and our two grandkids: Hank, who’s 6 and just graduated kindergarten, and River, who is 2 ½.

Spending time with family has always been very important to me. As a kid, I used to spend my summers with my Aunt Lily out in California. While spending time with my aunt, I would go to watch wrestling and roller derby on TV with my grandmother who lived in another house on the property. My Noni was a passionate Swiss-Italian woman, and I could only understand every fifth word she said to me. But that didn’t matter! It was the time together that I treasured! Today, Monica and her family live in the very house that used to belong to my grandmother before she passed. The cool thing is that when I go to visit my grandkids, it’s like old home week ... and the memories of Noni’s home and my childhood flood back.

We’re excited to have the whole family coming home for a visit. It’s only for a few weeks in July, so we plan on packing those days full of as much family time as possible. Luckily, Texas has lots to do! We plan to go to Central Texas to a water park in New Braunfels, expect to take a Texas-style African Safari at a wildlife ranch, and even explore some of the largest underground caverns in the world. We also have plans to lazily spend a few hours tubing on the Guadalupe River (assuming the water level isn’t too high).

“Spending time with family has always been very important to me.”

By the time we get done, we’ll be worn out and will have had our share of the heat and sun, but it’ll be more than worth it! It’s been at least two years since we’ve all been able to get together. Sometimes we get to have our middle and youngest — or the oldest and middle — daughter at the same time. But it’s not very frequent that we have all three daughters and our two grandkids visiting all at once.

Considering how mobile our girls were growing up, it’s not surprising they live their lives scattered so far from home. As our girls were growing up, vacation time was generally spent visiting family and friends back in Wisconsin, with camping trips sprinkled in as we explored Texas. This must have led to a love of travel as our girls certainly expanded on our ideas. Our oldest daughter Shelley waited until she started teaching to really explore the world, first moving to Denver, London, Germany, and now South Korea, all the while exploring the countries accessible from those locations. Our two youngest daughters started a little earlier, taking advantage of the International Camps offered by the YMCA and visiting Greece, Ireland, and Italy. They met other teenagers from all over Europe, and this really expanded their understanding of the differences, as well as similarities of people around the world.

Travel has always been a way of life for them. They learned that, by simply saving a few



hundred dollars and hopping on a plane, they could be somewhere else in the world in a matter of hours. Maybe we shouldn’t have let them be so mobile as kids. They might have settled nearby when they got older!

But in all seriousness, Kaye and I are proud of our girls. They have all gone after what they wanted in life and have accomplished amazing things. It’s hard having them far away, but we know they are all happy. And their time away from home makes the time we do get to spend together that much more enjoyable!

Train West

How Integrity Can Make or Break YOUR BUSINESS

When it comes to building a lasting and trusting relationship with a client, integrity should be your No. 1 priority. You establish integrity by honoring what you say you're going to do, but building integrity into your brand takes real effort. More important than what you're selling is how you're presenting it.

The word integrity is Latin for "integer," which means "whole." Your whole public persona, the professional face you show potential clients, should always be genuine. Doing the right thing in the public eye is one thing, but doing the right thing when nobody's watching is another. Committing to and upholding your values is integrity.



Do everything you can to make the client experience the absolute best. At the end of the day, you're not making any friends by simply being a "yes man."

When building integrity into your brand from the inside out, ask yourself, what are your values? Identify and create a list of your most important values and make them a high priority in all your business dealings. Your authenticity will become your reputation.

Making promises you can't keep gets you nowhere, so don't set unrealistic expectations for your clients. Do everything you can to make the client experience the absolute best. At the end of the day, you're not making any friends by simply being a "yes man." Keep your promises and be clear in what you can do. This reduces the likelihood that you'll disappoint someone.

Once you've developed a style of doing business that stays true to your values, it's time to focus on your clients. Treat them with care. Build them up by instilling them with confidence and pride. If you're helping them with something they're having trouble with, put a positive spin on it. For example, if you're selling dental appliances for people with sleep apnea, focus on how the product has a long-term positive impact — whether in a marriage, work, or everyday life. Get your client's attention by boosting their confidence, not by tearing them down.

Don't be afraid to be in the public eye or hide behind a fake internet persona. Make sure clients, and potential clients, have easy access to finding you online and by phone. If your business gets a bad review, stand up to the criticism instead of blocking the reviewer. People have a right to give you feedback. How you respond to that feedback will speak volumes to your integrity.

When you have a loyal client base, you'll know it because they'll spread the word to their friends and pay good money for your product. However, for the public at large to fall in love with your brand, you'll always need to keep integrity as your No. 1 priority.

Client Spotlight

Stephenie Wentz,

Property Manager Houston Market



I've been in the industry for about 10 years, working my way up from an administrator to manager. An important part of my job is to make sure the office buildings we maintain are comfortable for tenant use.

About five years ago, when I was still an assistant manager, we were having an indoor air quality issue in a high-rise office building. We tried to solve the problem ourselves, but were ultimately unable to identify the cause. Seeking help from a professional, I called Travis at Building Air Quality.

He came out, performed his inspection, and found the root of our problem very quickly. Throughout the process, all interactions with my company and our clients were great. He attentively listened to whatever concerns there were, took the time to explain his findings and how he'd come to that conclusion, and helped us resolve the situation quickly. The experience was so great, Travis became my go-to guy when dealing with indoor air quality.

I've only had to call Travis in to inspect a building a couple of times. Mostly, he's a great consultant who I can call when we think there might be an issue. We talk it through over the phone, and he makes suggestions of where to look and what to try. He's extremely knowledgeable about indoor air quality and is a great resource to have in this area.

On the few cases when we did need Travis to come inspect a building in person, he's never failed to amaze me. He's very good at what he does. Travis is methodical about his plan, follows through on what he says he'll do, and provides data that even a non-expert can understand. He's the first person I call if there's an indoor air quality issue because he's the most trustworthy. With Travis, you have someone who will be completely honest and tell you what the situation is, whether or not you want to hear it.

Honestly, I can't say enough good things about Travis and the work he does. You won't find anyone more knowledgeable or capable when it comes to indoor air quality. I recommend him as needed.

HARMLESS TREND OR HEALTH HAZARD?

HARD FACTS ABOUT E-CIGARETTES

In the United States, smoking is the biggest cause of preventable death. Every year, more than 480,000 people die from a smoking-related illness. Within the last decade, a new product has emerged, offering an alternative to smoking. This product, with the potential to decrease the rate of smoking-related deaths — or maybe create a new breed of health problem — is called e-cigarettes.

When using an e-cigarette, a cartridge of liquid is heated and the resulting vapor inhaled. Through the vapor, users get a hit of nicotine and other products used to create a desirable flavor. As they lack the dangerous chemical additives present in tobacco cigarettes, fans of vaping can be quite vocal when insisting e-cigarettes are less harmful than traditional smoking. And recent research may prove them right — to an extent.

Research from the Royal Society for Public Health in Great Britain concluded nicotine alone, while addictive, is no more harmful than the caffeine found in your morning cup of coffee. The dangers from smoking tobacco come from the toxic chemical additives like arsenic and benzene. These chemicals have been linked to cancer, heart disease, and stroke. The RSPH has gone on record encouraging smokers to switch to e-cigarettes.

In the U.S. the popularity of e-cigarettes has been on the rise over the last five years. The FDA reports that around 9 million adults in America get their nicotine fix through vaping. However, studies have also found more than 3 million middle school and high school students are using e-cigarettes. As of 2015, e-cigarettes were the most common tobacco product used by kids.

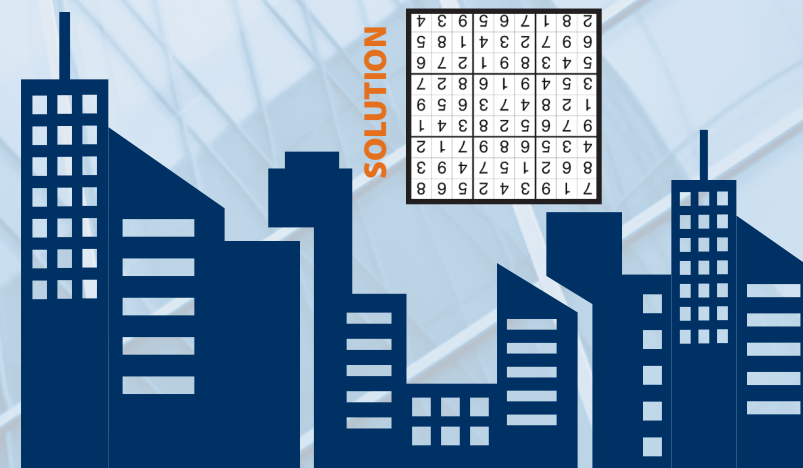
Commercial property managers have new and unique challenges related to the increased use of e-cigarettes. Although most major cities have smoking ordinances in place to address tobacco use in public spaces — including commercial buildings — many of those same ordinances do not include e-cigarettes. And therein lies the problem. Building managers are now having to modify their building use guidelines to prevent e-cigarette use inside the building. This is becoming an issue that is difficult to regulate.



We have been involved in several IAQ complaints regarding "tobacco-like odors" briefly occurring in occupied suites. Investigating a source has proven difficult, but we were successful in "catching the perp" in one instance.

Working a high stress job, the young executive would turn on his vapor device, draw one deep inhale, and then turn it off — every 20-30 minutes. When that happened, the odors were present for a very short period of time. And you can't be there quick enough to catch them, creating a difficult issue to manage!

Most health experts agree that, while e-cigarettes are far less harmful than traditional cigarettes, more research is necessary. The American Industrial Hygiene Association released a report in 2014 investigating the effect e-cigarettes can have on indoor air quality. While they are "safer" than traditional cigarettes, they still produce pollutants and airborne contaminants. The long-term effects of e-cigarettes on vapers and the individuals around them are still unknown.



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