

# A modern prescription for energy independence

With nearly four decades' experience at the cutting edge of the manufacturing sector, Victron Energy is an organisation with an impressive reputation for innovation and quality. We asked the company's Managing Director, Matthijs Vader to give us an essential overview.



**PES:** Welcome to PES. Would you like to tell us a little about the company and how you serve the solar/PV sector?

**Matthijs Vader:** Victron Energy was founded in 1975 by my father Reinout Vader. Over the last 39 years, Victron Energy has grown from a small, one-office, technology company to become an international enterprise with nearly 1,000 different products sold worldwide. The company is driven by a concentration on our core activities: Product Development, Marketing & Sales and Customer Support. Other activities are outsourced according to practicality and cost effectiveness.

Our extensive product range evolves around battery based storage. Victron Energy's innovative products play key roles in recreational and commercial boating,

overland transportation, land-based off-grid energy systems and in industrial settings.

Talking of off-grid, the presence of a functional electricity grid is not always as obvious as it would seem to be. An insufficient infrastructure is often the cause for an unreliable grid. Things become even more difficult when there is no grid at all. And yet you need a reliable electricity supply. A local and properly functioning system is the only answer at this point – Victron Energy offers you such an answer. We are proud to offer you our modern prescription for freedom and independence. Energy: anytime, anywhere.

Similarly, if the sun is your only available source of energy, the choice is simple. You will choose a solar system in order to meet your demand for energy. If there are more

sources available, these could support your solar system. Because the fact is, that the sun isn't always able to entirely cover your energy demand. A solar system is often supported by a generator set or a wind generator. These energy sources can make certain that the solar deficit is covered. Designing combinations such as these, which include several energy sources, is what Victron Energy does best.

**PES:** And how's business been this past couple of years? Is the company performing to expectations?

**MV:** Victron Energy is performing very well. The company has over 60 employees, and our average growth over the last five years is 20 to 30% per year. We are continually looking for Research and Development engineers as well as new sales managers.

**PES:** The company provides power solutions throughout the PV market. Which is your strongest market segment at present?

**MV:** Victron Energy started as a supplier for barges and since then, has designed and produced inverters (many of which are still in use). However, with these inverters as a starting point, the off-grid energy market is currently our fastest growing market.

**PES:** Where do your main challenges come from? How are you working to meet these challenges?

**MV:** Victron Energy is a company with a strong growth ambition. This means that our challenges are mainly related to hiring skilled personnel and making sure that we meet our promises; our customers need to be able to rely on us.

Key in our proposition is providing very fast service and repair, excellent product quality and having products available from stock. As our areas are expanding, it also means we have to expand for example the number of our third party warehouses to meet those demands.

**PES: What are the benefits offered by the new models in your BlueSolar charge controller (MPPT) range?**

**MV:** In expanding the range, Victron Energy has increased customer choice and further enhanced the ideal matching of solar charge controllers for any given system. Some of the key features which enable this are: automatic battery voltage recognition, intelligent battery management by load shedding, ultra-fast response times to solar irradiance variation and multi stage charging algorithms.

Whilst BlueSolar MPPTs (like other major manufacturers) allow solar modules to be placed in series as well as parallel to increase input power; Victron MPPTs are unique in having solar power limiting built in, which ensures the output power of a system will never exceed the maximum rating of the controller. This special feature of the Victron BlueSolar MPPT range allows customers to connect a surplus of nameplate solar power.

**PES: Similarly, we note that you've just launched EasySolar. Can you tell us a little about this?**

**MV:** EasySolar is an integrated, smart, total power solution. All that is needed to reap the full benefit of solar energy is EasySolar, some solar panels and batteries. EasySolar takes power solutions one stage further; by combining an Ultra-fast BlueSolar charge controller (MPPT), an inverter/charger and AC distribution all in one enclosure.

With an extensive reduction in wiring EasySolar provides ease of installation combined with a maximum return on investment. When using the 24V model, it is possible to use up to 1400 Watt of solar power and with 1600VA continuous inverter power, even peaks of 3000 Watt can be handled without any problems.

**PES: Can you tell us a little about a recent project that you've been involved with?**

**MV:** There are a number of exciting projects we are involved with. You can find many case studies and examples on our website, but to name a few:

- Solar powered mobile clinics in Ghana, which provide medical care at remote locations without a connection to the grid
- Mobile chargers for Leyte, The Philippines, where our mobile chargers and batteries are used to enable people on site to have access to electricity right after Typhoon Haiyan created thousands of victims and enormous damage. The solar energy is used by residents to power small electrical devices like mobile phones and chargeable lights. Residents of the Barangays can nowadays be reached again by their family



- Also the sun-trailer for a mining camp in the Andes in Chile is a remarkable project. At this remote site, situated 3,900 metres above sea level, a mining camp is located where over 30 miners and camp officials live permanently. As the staff work in three shifts, 24 hours a day, permanent electricity is mandatory for their well-being
- Finally, our power solution for a chicken egg incubator in Nigeria is also fascinating

**PES: The company is known for innovation, and yet innovation comes at a cost. How do you manage to keep your prices competitive for end users?**

**MV:** The secret of a good design lies in the fact that the design should be robust and innovative – as well as cost-effective. It is harder to develop products that function well, are innovative and cost effective, as it is to develop a product that only functions well and is innovative.

Being competitive is not just about offering good products and attractive prices, but also about being efficient in how we deliver our service – from how we process our orders to the way the product is delivered and everything that happens in between.

Efficient systems mean less time spent on routine tasks and more on building effective working relationships. As a result, we maintain a more productive, more cost-effective administration that in turn means better prices.

So, while we continue to invest in keeping our products at the cutting edge of the market, we also invest in improving the way we do business with our customers.

**PES: Where (geographically-speaking) are your strongest markets right now? Are you planning on expanding into new markets?**

**MV:** Our strongest markets are currently Africa and Southern Europe, though on average nearly all our markets show growth. We are always looking into new markets, but only if we can assure we can deliver the quality and service people associate with Victron Energy.

**PES: How difficult is it to recruit and retain the specialists you need to drive the company forward?**

**MV:** Recruiting specialists is not easy. To give you an example, our sales people have technical backgrounds. Our distributors have technical backgrounds. That foundation of knowledge and experience is our customers' assurance that we will be fully capable of helping them with any system or installation issue and provide first-line repair assistance.

However, as soon as they're part of the Victron organisation, people feel they are part of a team, almost a family. Our organisation is very flat, so everyone has his or her own responsibilities. Information is exchanged very transparently, communication lines are short and people are very willing to help each other. Therefore, employees are very involved and hardly leave.

**PES: Finally, what are your thoughts about the coming 12 months? Is 2015 looking as positive for you as 2014?**

**MV:** Worldwide, themes like renewable energy and sustainability are hot. Governments and interest groups are all on their own local level defining rules and regulations, making it hard to determine what energy source is most profitable. Many people are also still unaware of the possibilities they have when it comes to solar power and energy storage. For the coming months I expect discussions about energy storage and the possibilities of (preventing) energy feeding back to the grid to become more firm. For companies like Victron there is still a lot to do on educating people.

For Victron in particular, I expect 2015 to be at least as positive as 2014. The reason for that is that we are still recruiting Research and Development specialists and sales managers to keep pace with the market demands. We also have some major product introductions planned, so I can only conclude that 2015 will be at least as exciting as 2014.

Finally, in 2015 we will celebrate our 40th anniversary, an achievement that we will not remain unnoticed. ■

[www.victronenergy.com](http://www.victronenergy.com)



**victron energy**  
BLUE POWER

Energy. Anytime. Anywhere.



## **Victron Energy**

Inverters, chargers, inverter/chargers, solar charge controllers, battery monitors, batteries, solar panels and more.

W: [www.victronenergy.com](http://www.victronenergy.com)

E: [sales@victronenergy.com](mailto:sales@victronenergy.com)