Microinverters Defeat DC Optimizers in Bidding for Commercial Project

“Why try to make a string system like a microinverter system? Why not just use microinverters?”

—Jason Hayes
Lead Engineer
Advanced Improvements

Advanced Improvements doesn’t get overly technical when describing the difference between microinverters and string systems with DC optimizers. The team sticks to a simple message: at the end of the day, optimizers have all the vulnerability of string inverter systems.

Microinverters - the Real Deal
Advanced Improvements may have been at a slight disadvantage from the start. A national solar installer was sitting down with Far West Meats to talk about a rooftop project at its Southern California meatpacking plant when Advanced was invited to bid.

Jason Hayes, the lead engineer at Advanced Improvements, says he specified up front all the equipment that the system would use, including Enphase M215 microinverters with integrated grounding, at a price of $2.60 per Watt. He says the competition started at a higher price, then countered with an offer to build a string inverter system using SolarEdge DC optimizers as a low-cost alternative to microinverters.
Enphase Commercial Solar // Success Story // Far West Meats

Enphase Microinverters helped Advanced Improvements maximize available roof space at the Far West Meats facility in Highland, California.

Instead of changing the bid, Hayes had his sales manager explain that string systems with DC optimizers add complexity to the system without removing the biggest problem in string inverter systems—the string inverter itself—which dramatically reduces system performance anytime it goes offline and must be replaced at least once during the system lifetime. After the competition countered one last time with a price below $2.60, the customer selected Advanced Improvements and immediately handed over a deposit.

“I feel that customers are catching on to the misconception that you can just buy SolarEdge optimizers and you’re getting all the benefits of a microinverter system,” Hayes says. “Why try to make a string system like a microinverter system? Why not just use microinverters?”

Minimize Utility Demand Charges
Advanced Improvements sized the system to control utility demand charges, leaving Far West Meats with the option to choose time-of-use rates available to comparable mid-sized businesses. The system makes sure that Far West Meats will not exceed 500 kilowatts of demand, subjecting the company to tariffs that apply to the region’s largest energy users.

Advanced Improvements estimates that the system will produce 261,936 kilowatt-hours per year, offsetting Far West Meats’ average annual usage by 14 percent.

To learn more about the benefits of the Enphase System, visit enphase.com/commercial.

INSTALLATION SUMMARY
Client  Far West Meats
Location  Highland, California
Installer  Advanced Improvements
System Size  162kW
Microinverters  Enphase M215
Modules  Canadian Solar 260W

Ease of Installation
When competing for projects against string systems with DC optimizers, Hayes tells customers right off the bat that the Enphase M215 offers a 25-year warranty. “An optimizer does not extend the life or the warranty of your inverter,” he says.

He also likes to point out that the first Enphase Systems he installed were in a rural area with no internet access, and even when systems were unable to connect to monitoring, he preferred Enphase because it provides a clean installation with accessories that make the process quick and easy.

“We are taken aback when our competition says its complex. We find it’s completely the opposite,” he says.

About Enphase Energy
The Enphase System revolutionizes solar power generation with industry-leading technology innovation. Enphase’s proven microinverter technology maximizes production of each module, which works together with advanced communications hardware and an intelligent software platform to deliver a reliable, high-performance solar array.