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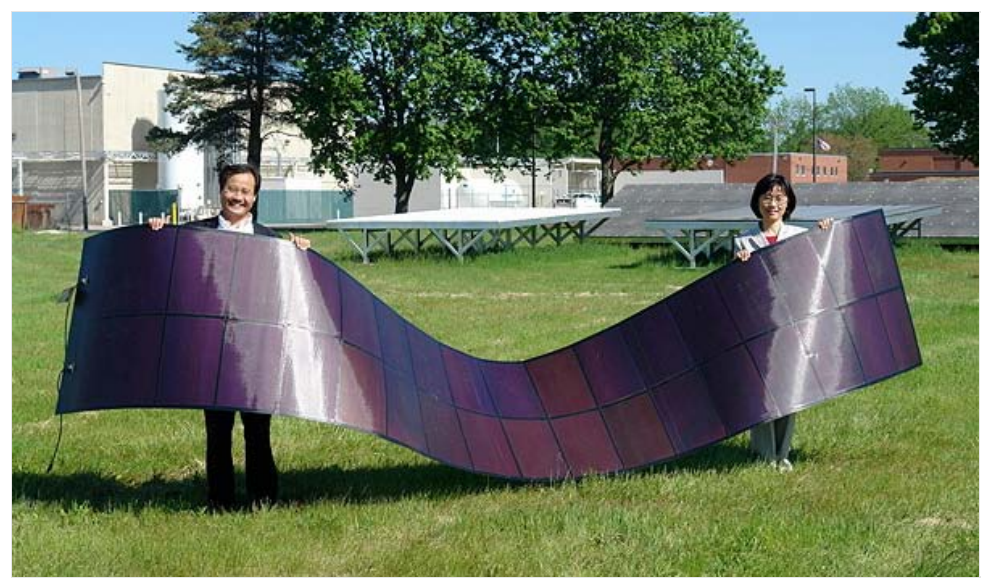
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By Michael Arndt (posted on Jan. 26, 2010)

## A More Flexible Way to Harvest the Sun

Xunlight

Xunming Deng and Liwei Xu

Xunming Deng and Liwei Xu left Nanchang, China, 25 years ago to begin graduate studies at the University of Chicago—Deng in physics and Xu, his wife, in chemistry. Though both had 10 years of English instruction and were outstanding students—each was awarded an all-expenses scholarship—neither had ever set foot in the U.S. before. What they've accomplished since receiving their PhDs may be more exceptional: They've established a green-energy company in Toledo, Ohio, in the middle of America's struggling automotive manufacturing belt. Moreover, their solar-panel startup, Xunlight, is making products different from most others on the market. Conventional solar panels are rigid and relatively heavy. Xunlight's are flexible and lightweight, which means they should be easier to install and could work in more settings. Deng, 46, and Xu, 45, founded their company in 2002, when both were professors at the University of Toledo. They licensed their technology, which they had helped develop, from the university. Xu then put her grant-writing skills to use to get money. She got \$100,000 from the Small Business Innovation Research program in 2003, which allowed the couple to outfit an office and hire a couple of students. Since then, Xunlight has received \$29.6 million more in government grants and loans and \$42.5 million from venture capital funds in the U.S. and Europe. CEO Deng has invested much of that to equip a factory that can coat thin sheets of stainless steel with sunlight-capturing silicon film. The plant now has the annual capacity to make panels capable of generating 25 megawatts of electricity, enough for 25,000 homes. Xunlight, which is up to 110 employees, has sold gear for a few test sites, including a billboard in New York's Times Square. Pending a seal of approval from Underwriters Laboratories, it could enter the commercial market by early April.

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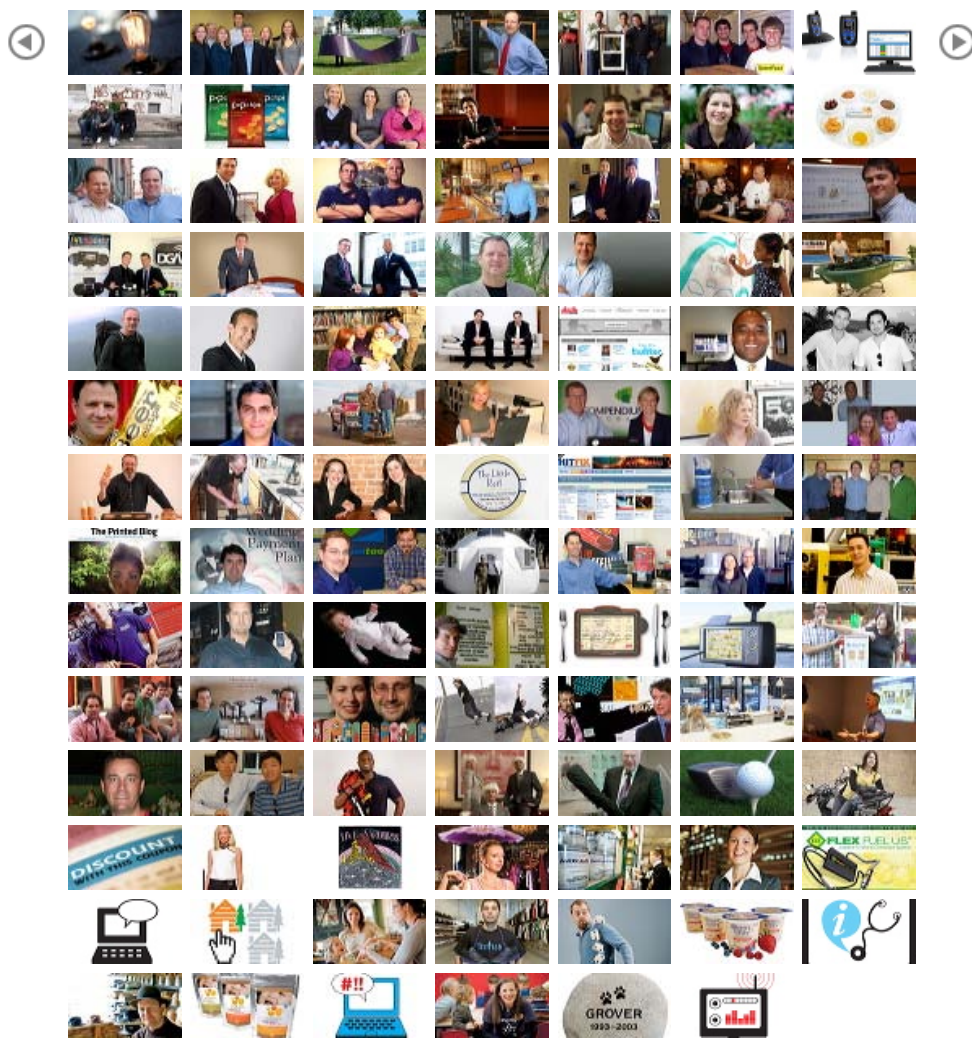
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