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## U.S. SOLAR BUSINESSES POISED FOR STRONG GROWTH, ACCORDING TO NEW POLL FROM DROEGE & COMP. AND GIBBS & SOELL

### Key Messages:

- 2009 U.S. Solar Industry Monitor finds that professionals within the solar industry value chain predict strong growth for their U.S. businesses in 2010 and 2011.
- Respondents indicate that more favorable legislation and heightened marketing will be keys to the expansion of their businesses.
- Droege & Comp. is an international management consulting firm that evaluates growth strategies, acquisitions, and operational improvements.
- Gibbs & Soell is the 11<sup>th</sup> largest independent public relations agency in the United States (*O'Dwyer's 2009 PR Agency Report*) and offers expertise in advanced manufacturing and energy communications.

**Anaheim, Calif., October 26, 2009** – U.S. solar executives expect to see significant growth for their businesses in 2010 and 2011, according to results from the 2009 U.S. Solar Industry Monitor. The 2009 U.S. Solar Industry Monitor is an opinion poll conducted by **Droege & Comp.**, an international management consultancy offering an energy/utilities competency, and **Gibbs & Soell**, an independent global public relations firm with communications expertise in **advanced manufacturing and energy**.

Nearly 100 professionals representing key areas of the solar business value chain participated in the poll. Highlights of the findings include:

- The majority of participants forecasted growth for their U.S. businesses in 2010 (92.6 percent) and 2011 (95.1 percent). Many expected to register a growth rate of more than 25 percent in 2010 (37.3 percent) and 2011 (55.0 percent).
- The majority (64.9 percent) indicated the recession has not had a crushing impact on the U.S. solar industry, which has dealt with economic challenges in a positive manner.
- Respondents identified the main obstacles to growth as the lack of financing (81.8 percent), little support from utilities (62.9 percent), lack of customer knowledge (61.3 percent), and insufficient level of incentives (59.1 percent).
- Awareness and differentiation are important in the nascent solar industry. To create demand in the coming year, 82.9 percent report that sales and marketing communications will be stepped up.

“The U.S. solar industry is positioning itself for a sales upswing in 2010 that could pave the way for aggressive expansion in the years beyond,” said Sebastian Goeres, a renewable energy specialist with Droege & Comp. “Competition is fierce, and players compete mainly via cost. We see the need for leading companies to improve their operational costs and to put more emphasis on their strategic plans.”

In anticipation of strong demand and harsh competition in 2010 and 2011, 60.2 percent of respondents said they will boost their U.S. supply. Approximately half of those polled will increase their assembly/production, while 38.6 percent will go about expanding market share via transactions, such as joint ventures, mergers or acquisitions.

Increased communication was also cited as a strategic priority, and references were made to a wide array of traditional, digital and social media techniques and platforms.

“Solar businesses regard their sales and marketing efforts as critical to revving up the U.S. growth engine,” stated Brian Hall, managing supervisor – advanced manufacturing and energy practice, Gibbs & Soell. “However, respondents said they favor more indirect methods to gain visibility, including search engine optimization that unlocks value from existing content, as well as media coverage earned from outreach to professional journalists and industry bloggers. A next step is to strategically integrate digital media tools such as corporate blogs and social networking into the mix, which can help companies establish clear voices and engage in more interactive conversations with their audiences.”

More than 25,000 solar industry professionals will participate this week in **Solar Power International 2009**, the largest business-to-business solar trade event in North America.

“This is clearly a pivotal time for solar companies to gather together at Solar Power International,” said Julia Hamm, executive director of **Solar Electric Power Association**, a non-profit resource for information about solar technologies, policies and programs which is co-presenting this year’s Solar Power International event. “Record participation in this year’s show and the overwhelmingly positive outlook indicated by the 2009 U.S. Solar Industry Monitor illustrate the industry’s strong appetite for ideas and partners that can help stimulate immediate growth.”

Solar Power International 2009 will take place from October 27 to October 29, 2009 in Anaheim, Calif. To obtain a summary of findings from the 2009 U.S. Solar Industry Monitor, please visit [www.gibbs-soell.com/USSIM2009.pdf](http://www.gibbs-soell.com/USSIM2009.pdf).

#### **About Droege & Comp. International Management Consultants**

Droege International Group and its subsidiaries, which include Droege & Comp. International Management Consultants, have been active in the international market for 20 years. Droege & Comp. embodies restructuring and growth expertise. Droege & Comp. is a specialist with many years of experience in exploiting mission-critical value-enhancing levers such as revenue optimization, cost reduction, cash and financing, organization and management and

integration/PMI offering our clients a first-class return on consulting. For more information, please visit [www.droege-international.com](http://www.droege-international.com).

**About Gibbs & Soell, Inc.**

Founded in 1971, Gibbs & Soell is the 11th largest independent public relations agency in the United States (*O'Dwyer's 2009 PR Agency Report*). Headquartered in New York, Gibbs & Soell has full-service offices in Chicago, Raleigh, N.C. and Zurich, Switzerland, and a global footprint that extends to more than 30 countries through its affiliate network that includes the Public Relations Organisation International (PROI). For more information, please visit [www.gibbs-soell.com](http://www.gibbs-soell.com).

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