

Startup Failure Post-Mortems

2015 Second Update (12/3/2015)

QBotix

Title: [RIP QBotix: Robotic Solar Tracking Fails to Reach the Market](#)

Product: [QBotix](#)

Each member of our now pared-down team knew exactly how much runway the company had remaining, the status of our strategic talks, and the acknowledged long odds we faced as a going concern. To their credit, they remained focused, productive and on-task until our final day — a remarkable expression of dedication to the mission and to each other. Sadly, and in spite of the achievements, we simply ran out of time and cash to finish the job.

QBotix

ENERGY & UTILITIES | Renewables / Solar

qbotix.com

Stage

Dead | Dead

Total Raised

\$24.47M

About QBotix

QBotix employs distributed robotics to significantly increase the economics and improve the capabilities of the solar industry. The SolBot R-225, a mobile robot for positioning solar panels and collecting data that is at the heart of RTS, builds upon the technical innovations of the SolBot R-200. The SolBot R-225 can manage 340 kilowatts of solar panels, a 13 percent improvement over the SolBot R-200. The SolBot R-225 is also smaller, lighter and requires fewer components than its predecessor, which increases reliability and allows the SolBot to operate in a wider variety of extreme environmental conditions. Additionally, the tracking rail for the SolBot R-225 consists of two preassembled pieces rather than multiple parts so it can be quickly snapped together on site.

QBotix Headquarter Location

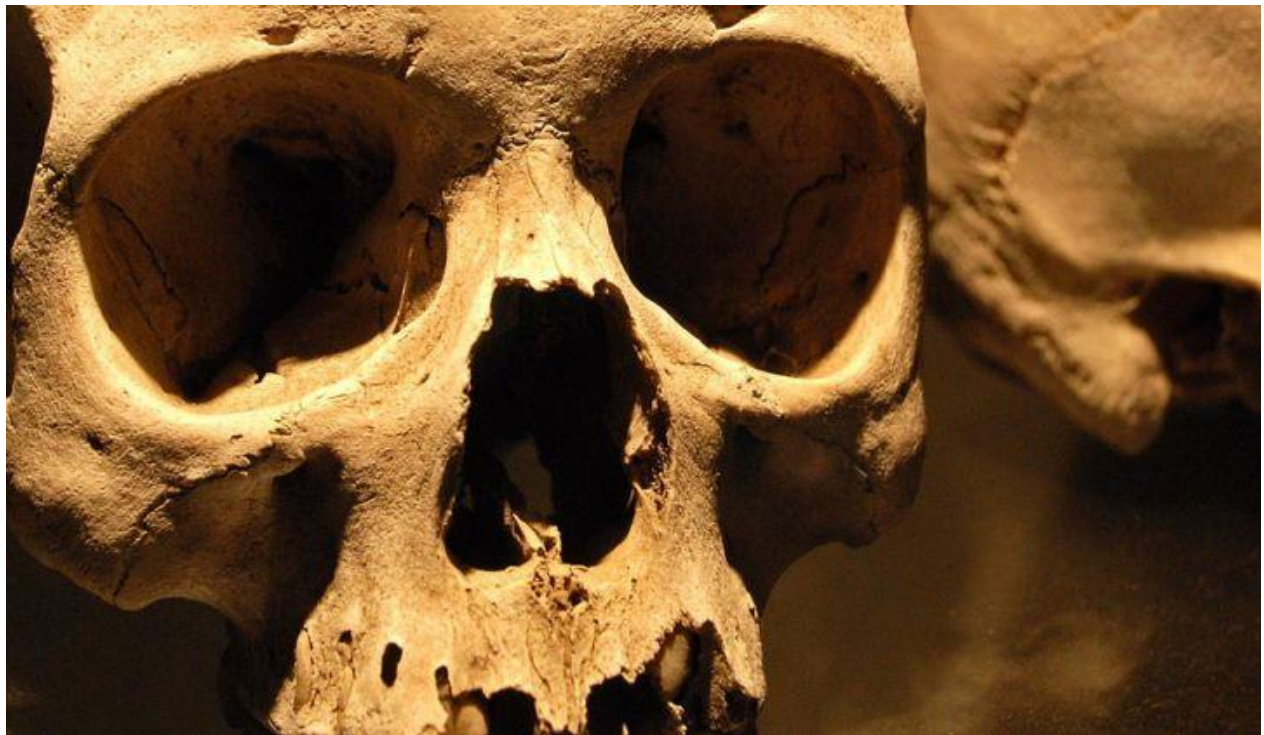
1080 O'Brien Drive
Menlo Park, California, 94025,
United States

RIP QBotix: Robotic Solar Tracking Fails to Reach the Market

These aren't the droids you're looking for.

ERIC WESOFF SEPTEMBER 21, 2015

LINK: [HTTPS://WWW.GREENTECHMEDIA.COM/ARTICLES/READ/QBOTIX-ROBOTIC-SOLAR-TRACKING-FAILS-TO-REACH-THE-MARKET](https://www.greentechmedia.com/articles/read/qbotix-robotic-solar-tracking-fails-to-reach-the-market)



RIP QBotix: Robotic Solar Tracking Fails to Reach the Market
Photo Credit: Gonzo Carles Creative Commons

According to several sources close to the company, solar tracker startup QBotix dismissed most of its staff and shuttered its operations last month. The company's website is offline, as is its phone service. CEO Mike Miskovsky confirmed that QBotix ceased operations as of August 2015.

QBotix had a novel solar-tracking solution that maximized output and could lower balance-of-system costs in ground-mounted PV installations. The startup invented a two-axis tracker system where the motors, instead of being installed two per tracker, were moved around by a rail-mounted robot that adjusted each tracker every 40 minutes, resulting in a reduction in the number of (failure-prone) motors.

But while QBotix was trying to gain traction, single-axis solar trackers were also evolving and driving down cost by reducing motors and lowering the labor requirements and costs of foundations. Earlier this month, Flextronics acquired tracker startup [NEXTracker](#) for up to \$330 million.

QBotix's engineering issues might be confronted and costs could be driven down, but new, risky technologies just don't get used by solar project developers -- the most conservative players in a conservative utility power market. Market acceptance and adoption did not happen anywhere fast enough to allow this startup to scale.

In order to get to market, QBotix recently attempted to pivot to a licensing and software sales model "and away from low-margin tracker structure design/manufacture."

Miskovsky notes, "Throughout this strategic 'pivot' process -- which included layoffs, several months of negotiations with potential licensees and/or acquirers of the company, and a continuously diminishing cash balance -- management maintained an open dialogue with the QBotix staff. Each member of our now pared-down team knew exactly how much runway the company had remaining, the status of our strategic talks, and the acknowledged long odds we faced as a going concern. To their credit, they remained focused, productive and on-task until our final day -- a remarkable expression of dedication to the mission and to each other. Sadly, and in spite of the achievements, we simply ran out of time and cash to finish the job."

In 2012, QBotix raised \$7.5 million from Firelake, NEA, DFJ JAIC, Siemens Ventures, and angel investors. In 2014, the company raised \$12 million led by E.ON and Iberdrola.

When the company was unveiled in 2012, we asked:

- How does QBotix get this new product deployed in commercial solar fields at scale with conservative engineering, procurement and construction firms as customers -- and even more conservative banks backing the solar projects?
- How does a tiny VC-funded firm back up its product in a fashion that quells the doubts of its staid channel partners?

QBotix never answered those questions.