The social media accounts serve to both educate the consumer about solar and solar-related activities in your region and highlight major milestones in the campaign for the media and supporter awareness. The accounts should be seen as expert guides in the transition to a clean energy future, keying consumers into the major events, opportunities and news in their area. These accounts will help drive key metrics in project goals, such as visits, engagement, and signups. In addition, these consumers will be key participants for pro-solar advocacy in the future, if the need arises to activate them.

**SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINES**

Use your common sense and remember that all posts on social media are public and should be appropriate for your mom, your kid or your first grade teacher to read. Please be professional in all your tweets and posts because remember -- your tweets and posts represent not just you, but your organization, the installers, and the solar industry as well. As such, all tweets and posts should be positive, supportive and appropriate for all audiences. In addition, avoid posting comments that that present a particular political agenda or candidate.

**TWITTER VS. FACEBOOK**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| TWITTER | FACEBOOK |
| * Interest-centered * Hubs form around subject-matter experts * Fast moving (breaking news, memes, hashtags) * Share our expertise * Track conversations * Find new audiences/influencers | * Profile-centered * Curated identity: show your affiliation for a subject * Personal: pictures, quizzes, open questions * Generalist audience |

# **TWITTER**

Nineteen percent (19%) of American online adults are on Twitter, and it is used to find like-minded issue-oriented people, information and news. It leans male, urban or suburban (not rural). The solar community is a mix of solar advocates (@rainarusso, [@CarlSiegrist](https://twitter.com/CarlSiegrist), [@MarkRuffalo](https://twitter.com/MarkRuffalo)) but dominated by brands ([@solarcity](https://twitter.com/solarcity), [@SolectriaRen](https://twitter.com/SolectriaRen)) and news outlets ([@SolarIndustry](https://twitter.com/SolarIndustry), [@SolarPowerWorld](https://twitter.com/SolarPowerWorld), [@REWorld](https://twitter.com/REWorld), [‏@pvmagazine](https://twitter.com/pvmagazine)). Twitter is not generally a source for local news, but a way for communities to connect by interest area.

**WHAT IS TWITTER?**

**Twitter is a tool that connects users through short, real-time updates.** Updates are 140 characters or less and can be written and read not only on the Twitter website, but also through cell phone text messaging, apps for smart phones, browser add-ons and other software.

Individuals, organizations and brands can express and share a lot in those 140 characters:

* **LINKS TO ITEMS ON THE INTERNET** like news articles or blogs posts. Seeing what content is shared, how it is shared and who shares it will help inform communications work through all media.
* **COMMENTING IN REAL TIME** about a big event – you can see in real-time how people respond to and share events and messaging.
* **SHARING UPDATES ABOUT CONFERENCE OR OTHER LIVE EVENT** – this creates a real-time ‘cloud’ of interaction online around real life interactions.
* **THOUGHTS OR LIFE UPDATES**, which may seem trivial (and often are), but can be a rich data source to discover how people talk about and feel about topics.

**WHY USE IT?**

* Because of **who is there**: Congress, the White House, state and local politicians, public policy influencers, companies, non-profits, think tanks, news media, journalists and bloggers, consumers, advocates, industry leaders, companies, etc.
* Because you can **share** the program’s expertise, data and stories directly with your audience and their networks. It's also good way to stay in touch with volunteers and build credibility on your beat.
* Because you can **measure** the impact of your communications both qualitatively and quantitatively.
* Because you can **listen** to conversations about your brand or issue to find new audiences and influencers that can inform future messaging strategies.

**TWEETING BASICS**

*Never forget who can see your tweets: Everyone who wants to.* They show up in the ‘newsfeeds’ of those that follow you. People that don’t follow you can see your tweets by searching your profile or the hashtags you use in your tweets.

* **Follow users**

Find like organizations, local journalists and your friends first and then browse who they follow to find people to follow. Additionally, if you read something interesting online or offline, check to see if the author is on Twitter and follow him or her.

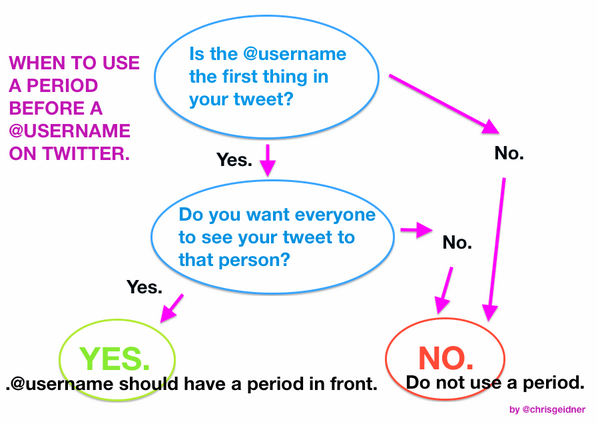
Choosing who to follow on Twitter determines whose tweets show up in your news feed. Get curious and read, click on links, see who is talking to whom, follow people you want to watch and unfollow users who end up not being useful. It’s also a way for people to see what you’re interested in, who are your partners, and it allows other people to discover you as a ‘follower’ of someone else.

Remember: Following a user is not an endorsement; you do not have to follow back anyone who follows you; and you can always unfollow people if they stop being useful to you.

* **Anatomy of a Tweet :** [Interesting or thought provoking statement] [link] [hashtag]

→For example: A new [#solar](https://app.sproutsocial.com/discovery/#%23solar) system is now installed every 2.5 mins in the US, via [@GTMResearch](https://app.sproutsocial.com/messages/profile/GTMResearch/) [@Stphn\_Lacey](https://app.sproutsocial.com/messages/profile/Stphn_Lacey/) <http://bit.ly/15z5rgN>

* *Hashtags*: These are words with a ‘#’ as the first character. They are used by people on Twitter to follow [specific conversations](https://twitter.com/search?q=%23GoldenGlobes&src=tyah). They are very useful if the topic of your tweet isn't immediately apparent. **The primary hashtags that you should use are #solar and #solarize**
* *RT, MT and " --* These abbreviations at the beginning of tweets are ways indicate that you are either retweeting, modifying, or quoting another person's tweet. The use of them has declined as Twitter (and other third-party services) have added retweet buttons that allow a user to easily and elegantly feature another user's tweet in their stream.
* *H/T and Via* -- These abbreviations are added at the end of a tweet to note or give a “hat-tip” to the source of a link, usually another Twitter user. It's nice to include these, but not completely necessary -- especially if space is a concern.
* *#FF* -- This refers to Follow Friday, but is often used (incorrectly) throughout the week by users to clue their followers into other good users to follow. (Here are some other common examples of [Twitter lingo](http://mashable.com/2013/07/19/twitter-lingo-guide/) (<http://mashable.com/2013/07/19/twitter-lingo-guide/>) not spelled out in this document.)
* *Direct messages* -- These can be used to communicate privately with users you follow who have followed you back. It can be a good way to reach out to a source for contact information, if you can't easily find it somewhere else online.



*From Chris Geidner/BuzzFeed: www.buzzfeed.com*

**GENERAL GUIDANCE FOR TWITTER**

**Twitter Do’s**

* Do keep your tweets as short as possible while still conveying your message
  + Do make your tweets positive, informative, and easy to read for anyone
* Do try to add a link to every tweet, it increases the likelihood of a retweet
  + Do try to add appropriate pictures when you can, everyone likes pictures
* Do add the correct hashtag (#solar, #renewables, etc.) based on the subject
  + Do add the @ handle of person/organizion you are promoting (e.g@ENERGY, @NYSERDA, etc.)
* Do put yourself in front of follows -- To get followers, [engage those in your field](https://twitter.com/eosnos/status/422769145956937728) and follow those who likely will follow you back. Twitter is parts broadcast, part interaction. Sharing headlines and links will only get you so far.
* Do Tweet things that do well: Breaking news, [charts](https://twitter.com/CorbinHiar/status/420258741913944064)/[graphics](https://twitter.com/RosePastore/status/421723828473974784) (these are like cheats to get tweets noticed, especially for those using Twitter clients that don’t just show the link to images), [numbers](https://twitter.com/CorbinHiar/status/422404105978798080)/[fun facts](https://twitter.com/CorbinHiar/status/422414281733574656), [funny stuff](https://twitter.com/CorbinHiar/status/509353671961100288)

**Twitter Don’ts**

* Don't use too many hashtags or abrevs, especially uncommonly used ones. There are few easier ways to lose followers fast.
* Don’t tweet potentially offensive/politically charged content
  + Don’t bash people/politicians/companies/organizations, it just makes you look bad
  + Don’t favor one person/politician/company over others, you will appear biased
* Don’t over-hashtag - no more than 2 is best (don’t do this: #solar #energy #green #clean)
  + Don’t add the @ handle of people who you don’t need to draw attention

# **2. FACEBOOK**

Facebook has a very different audience from Twitter. Seventy-one percent (71%) of online Americans use Facebook and it leans heavily female. People share content that help build up their social media identity, whereas on Twitter users share the latest news that moves a conversation forward. On Facebook people share content that makes themselves look better to their friends and family, no matter the newness or quality of the news. So, on Facebook, the content that does best is positive, visual, and personally appealing. Content on the Solarize Allegheny Facebook page should focus on consumer adoption tips, testimonials and milestone memes that people can share. Posts that do particularly well should be used to create ads to drive page likes.

**WHAT IS FACEBOOK?**

Facebook is a social networking website that makes it easy for people to connect and share with family and friends online. Facebook is the world's largest social network, with more than 1 billion users worldwide. The majority of people spend most of their Facebook time in their newsfeed, which are the

posts they see on their homepage. Facebook tries to show each person the things they’d be most interested in based on past posts you’ve clicked on, commented on, liked and shared.

**WHY USE FACEBOOK?**

* Because of **who is there**: everyone. The majority of people who go solar through the program will have active social media accounts.
* Because **peer to peer** marketing works for solar. People who know people with solar are far more likely to go solar themselves. By sharing their story on Facebook, it allows more of their friends to see they’ve gone solar
* Because you can **share** the program’s expertise, data and stories directly with your audience and their networks. It’s a good way to show funders that we have a huge audience.
* Because you can **measure** the impact of your communications both qualitatively and quantitatively.
* Because you can **listen** to conversations about your brand or issue to find new audiences and influencers that can inform future messaging strategies.

The quandary: only about 1% of fans ever return to your actual Facebook page after they’ve liked it, so any post from the Facebook Page has to compete with all of the other posts in the user’s news feed. The fans who don’t click on your posts ***stop seeing your posts***. That means your Facebook Page posts aren’t going to be seen by all your fans. ***In fact, Facebook said in February of 2012 that the average page was reaching just 12% of its fans.*** So, if you want our fans to see our posts, you need to get them to click on something in each post--either to like, comment or follow the link. Or, get the mother of all success--**GET THEM TO SHARE THE POST WITH THEIR FRIENDS.**

**Why people share posts on Facebook** (Via [NYTimes](http://nytmarketing.whsites.net/mediakit/pos/) Customer Insight Group: The Psychology of Sharing Study)

* 75% say sharing helps them better understand and “process” news they’re interested in
* 85% say the responses they get from posting and sharing on a social media site provide more thought
* 94% consider how helpful a link would be to another user before posting it
* 68% share as an advertisement for themselves, to give others a better sense of who they are
* 73% say it helps them find people with common interests.

**Shareability** is all about what the post does to people- it affects them in such a way that they want to share with others. Highly shareable posts do at least one of the following (according to [Marketo](http://oginenergy.com/sites/default/files/Contagious-Content.pdf)):

1. ADVISE: Tips, especially about problems that everyone encounters; for example, how to get a job or how to beat the flu
2. AMUSE: Funny pictures and quotes, as long as they’re not offensive to any group- sometimes the humor isn’t quite as strong or edgy- it has to appeal to a general audience
3. AMAZE: Amazing pictures or facts
4. UNITE: A post that acts as a flag to carry and a way to brag to others about your membership in a group that’s doing pretty darned good, thank you very much.
5. INSPIRE: Inspirational quotes
6. GIVE: Offers, discounts, deals or contests that everyone can benefit from, not just one sub-group of your friends
7. WARN: Warnings about dangers that could affect anyone

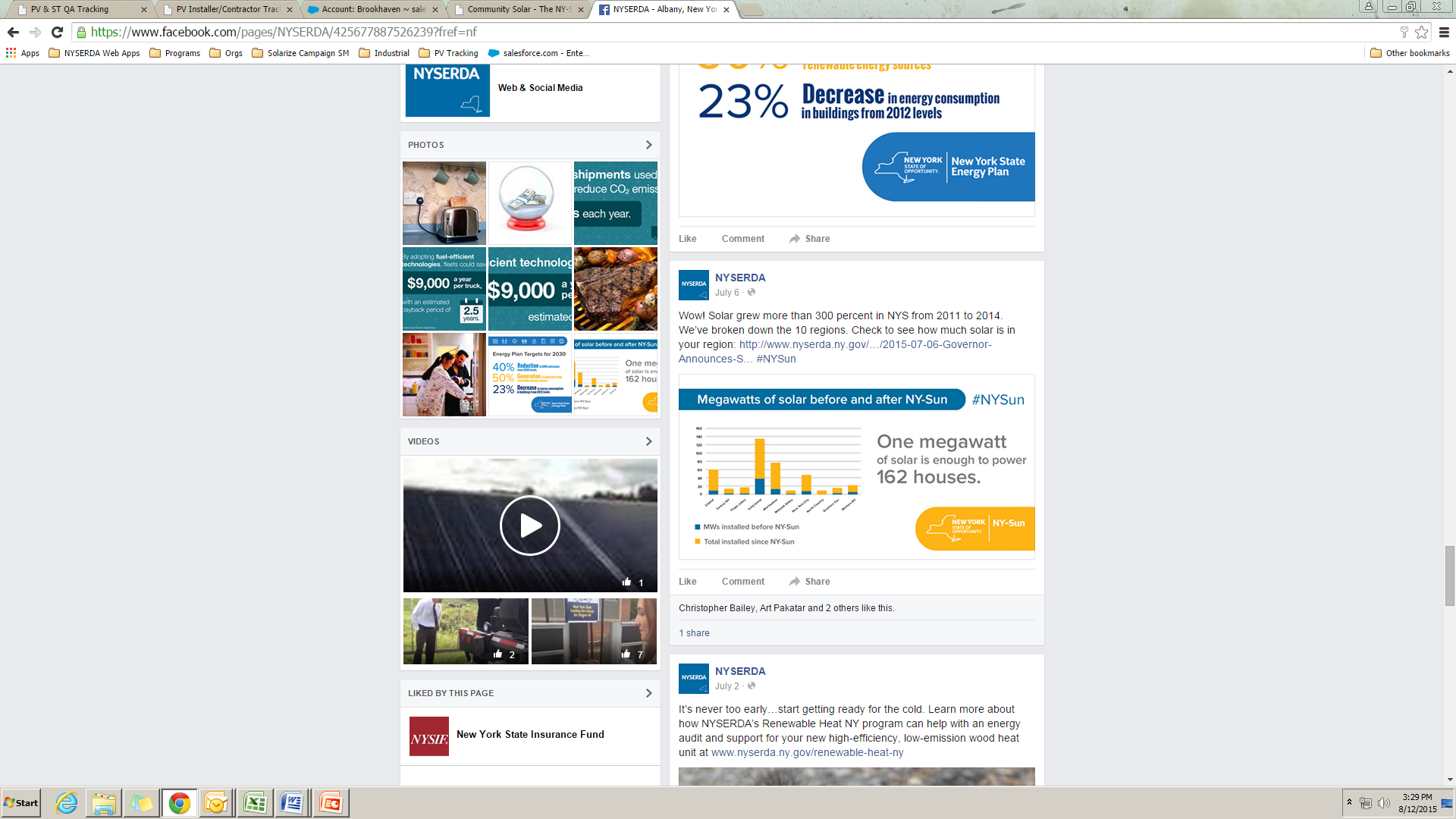
But, remember people “Like” posts eight times as often as they comment or share on them, so it’s just as important to get a lot of likes on a post!

**FACEBOOK POSTING BASICS**

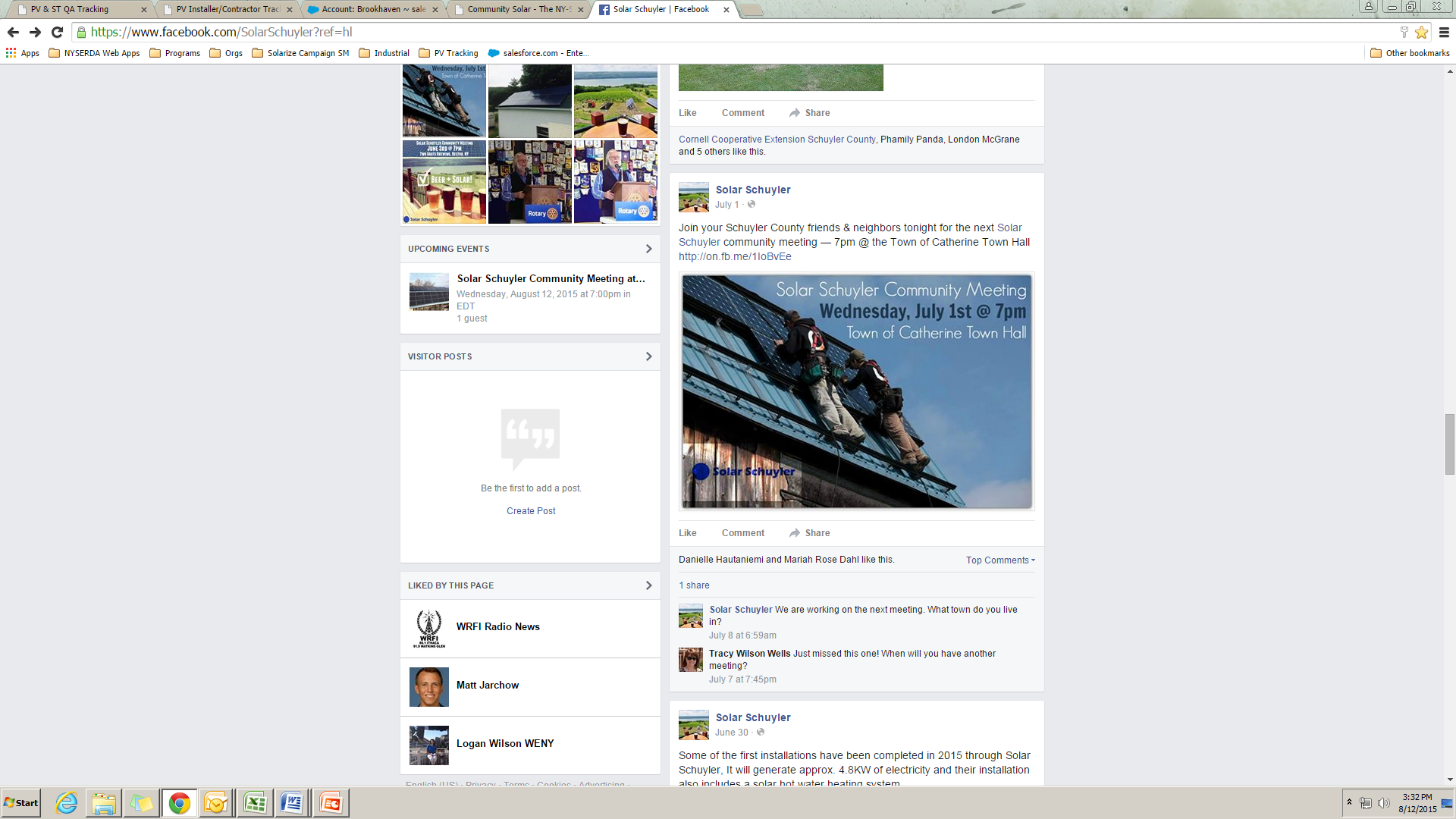
* **Find great content**! You want to find positive news stories about solar that also have a nice picture attached. Ways to find content:
* Google Alerts: https://www.google.com/alerts#
* Searching [Twitter for pictures using the #solar hashtag](https://twitter.com/search?v=stream&q=%23solar&src=typd&mode=photos)
* Use [Tagboard to search for the #solar hashtag](https://tagboard.com/solar/search) on Facebook
* Newsletters, blogs and other pages on Facebook
* **Anatomy of a Post**

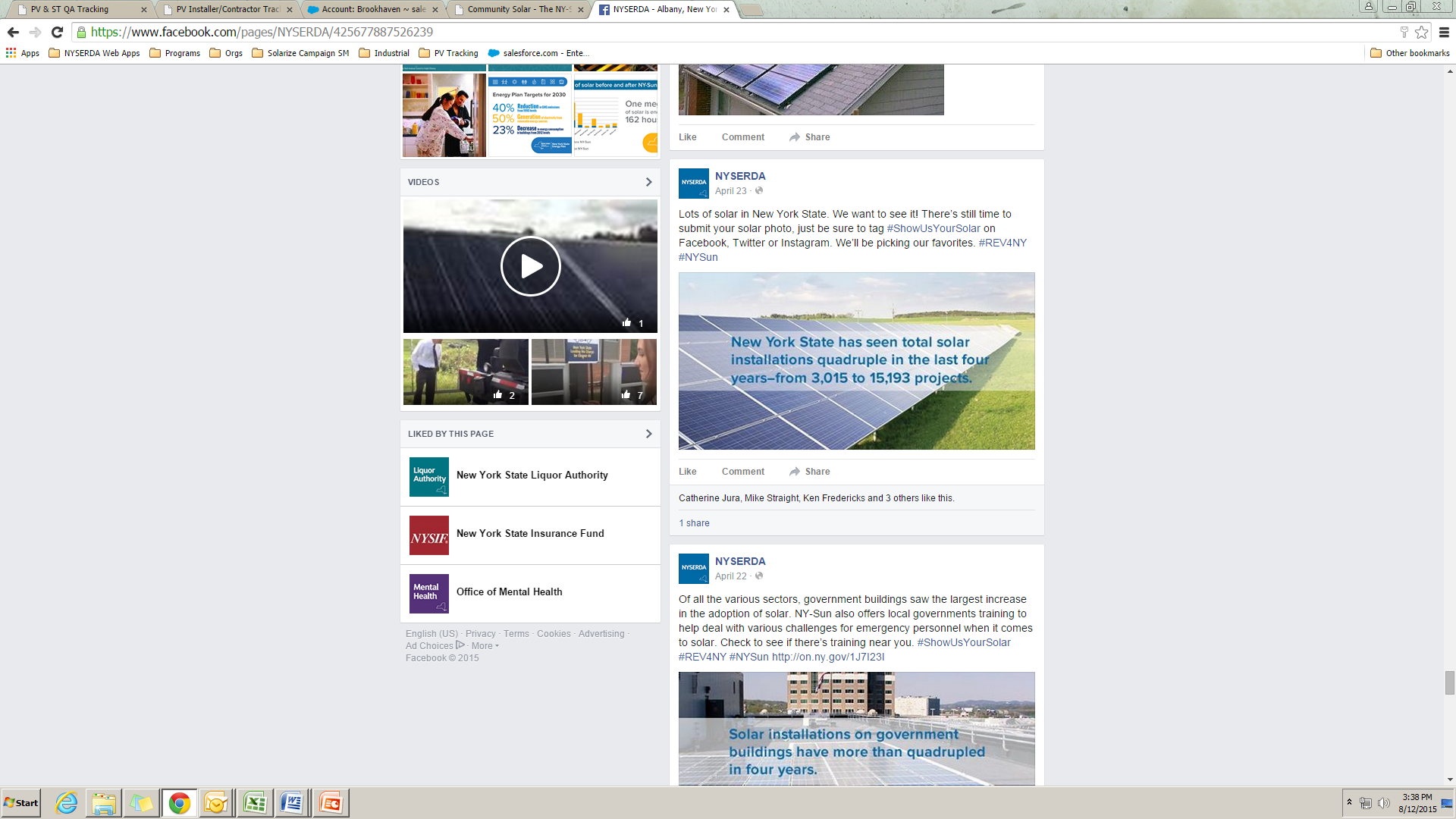
*For News article:* [2-3 sentence excerpt from an article] [#solar or #solarize hashtag] [Link]

Always attach a photo!

Example:

* **Photos from an event:**Create an album that describes what the event is and add a link for them to learn more. Then post captions on all the photos.



* **Milestone Post:** Work in an image editing program like Photoshop or Canva.com to add text directly to the picture. In the text of the post, explain the data and include a link where people can learn more.

**GUIDELINES FOR FACEBOOK  
  
ENGAGING WITH CONSUMERS:** Facebook is the best way to engage with and develop relationships with your volunteers and customers. The first thing you should do with a new volunteer or customer is invite them to like the Facebook page.

Take a few minutes every day to look over the most recent posts and see if there are any comments or questions that you should respond to or delete.

**Facebook Do’s**

* DO respond to a comment that asks for clarification or more details
* DO thank people for a positive comment
* DO respond to factual, relevant complaints, but try to take it offline
* Always be positive.
* Be honest – if you don’t have an answer, let them know.
* Include links to official sources if you are supporting a factual statement.
* Your tone reflects yourself and your organization and the campaign as a whole
* Thank them for speaking with you.

**Facebook Don’ts**

* DON’T respond if someone posts something with abusive language, threats or lies and DELETE the post
* DON’T feed the trolls

**TWITTER AND FACEBOOK TOOLS**

* [Buffer](http://bufferapp.com/) (<http://bufferapp.com>) – This app allows you to make a custom timetable for sharing updates, and then automatically seeds tweets throughout the day. Additional tools like a chrome extension and an app for your phone can be found here: <https://bufferapp.com/extras>
* Twitter [discover stream](https://twitter.com/i/discover) (https://twitter.com/i/discover) and search tools
* [Topsy](http://topsy.com/) (http:topsy.com) is a great way to seek quickly who is paying attention to a topic what they’re saying about it -- it's like Google for Twitter.

1. Copy the URL of a story you want to see move on Twitter and paste it into the Topsy search bar.
2. You will see a total number of users who shared that link on Twitter, including influential users (determined by an algorithm); words and hashtags used in tweets; and the bios and follower ratios of the users.
3. You can also search with keywords to see all links shared on Twitter that match -- this can show what website is the most influential on Twitter for sharing the same kind of news.

* Searching [Twitter for pictures using the #solar hashtag](https://twitter.com/search?v=stream&q=%23solar&src=typd&mode=photos)

**Using analytics to measure success of social media reach and demographics**

Facebook and Twitter both offer tools to analyze the results of your campaigns. You can also use a tool like Buffer or Sprout Social, which will collect all of the analytical data in one place so that you can track it.

Key metrics to track:

* Clicks, likes and comments: This will help you understand what content does well with your audience
* Time of day: Experiment with posting at different times in one day. Don’t feel shy about sharing the same thing twice. If people like it once, they’ll like it again!
* Followers, fans and reach: Notice when you get new followers. Is it when you send out an email? When another organization tweets about you? Build on your success!

**When to Pay to Boost Social Media Reach**

* Don’t waste your money on promoting one-time engagements. So, don’t “Boost” a single post, even if Facebook tells you to. Figure out what content your audience likes and use that content in ads that promote your page or clicks to your website.
* Once you have built an audience for your page, target your ads to the friends of fans of your page. This way, you can help grow your community through existing peer relationships--the strongest kind.

**Tips for Talking to the Media**

**Don't get drawn into an interview unwillingly:** Before starting an interview ask the reporter what the focus of the story is, who else is being interviewed, and the type of questions you are going to be asked. Then negotiate an interview time which gives you at least 30 minutes to prepare.

**Know who you are speaking to:** Note down the journalist's name, the newspaper/agency, and a contact telephone number.

**Respect journalists' deadlines:** Journalists work to deadlines, and they rely on having stories ready very quickly. It is very important to return their phone calls and keep to the deadline the journalist gives.

**Respect all media outlets:** It's best to treat all interviews with the same degree of respect and preparation, as you never know where the story might get picked up elsewhere. The small local papers may also be the best at reaching your audience.

**Preparation is key:**

 Identify a couple of key simple messages you want to get across.

 Rehearse the sentences and answers you want to give. Journalists look for snappy soundbites, so if you can prepare a couple of these in advance that will help in the interview.

 Make sure you have all the information at hand and won't be interrupted when the phone rings.

**Use everyday language:** Avoid jargon, specialist, or highbrow language. Don't say 'equilibrium', when 'balance' is just as effective. Don't use acronyms or abbreviations that the reader won't understand.

**Avoid 'off the record' comments:** Even if you know and trust the reporter, he/she is aiming to get the best story. Don't say anything you wouldn't want to see in print.

**Accept that you can't control what is written:** Once the interview is over, accept that it is out of your hands. Keep in mind that the reporter you have spoken to will not write the headline, the sub- editor of the publication will do this.

**Keep in touch with the reporter/publication after the story has gone out:** Let the reporter know the next time you have some newsworthy work. By becoming a reporter's contact, next time a story breaks relating to your area of expertise, you will be their first point of call.

**Tips for Writing Letters to the Editor**

Letters to the editor (LTEs) provide a powerful tool to educate the public and influence decision makers. Letters are printed on the editorial page, which is one of the most read pages in any newspaper. Even if your letter is not published, it helps to educate the editors and can influence what types of stories get covered. An LTE is a wonderful and free way to share information about the Solarize campaign to whole communities, especially helpful when new solar owners write the letters to tell why they went solar.

Here are some tips to help you write an effective letter and get it printed.

1. **Respond to an article in the paper.** Your letter will have a greater chance of being printed if it is in response to an editorial, op-ed, or front page story that has run in the paper. Begin your letter

by citing the original story by name, date, and author. Responding about a story on energy is a great way to also include the fact that you have recently installed solar on your home or business

and then to mention why you made that decision.

2. **Consider your neighborhood paper**. It’s great to get a letter printed in the large regional papers

– and a bit of a challenge. Don’t forget your neighborhood papers. They’re almost always looking for fresh material.

3. **Follow the paper’s directions**. Information on how and to whom to submit a letter to the editor is usually found on the letters page in the paper. This often includes guidelines on what the paper looks for in LTEs. Follow these guidelines. If you can’t find the information you need, call the paper and ask how to submit a letter. Often you can submit letters by e-mail or on the paper’s website.

4. **Be concise. Be focused. Be brief**. Keep your letters to less than 200 words. Aim for 150. Get to the main point in the first two sentences. Stay positive if you can, and avoid sarcasm. Editors are more likely to publish a letter that has local relevance. Use facts and statistics as well as personal stories. Mention the names of elected officials and urge readers to let officials know their views.

5. **Be timely**. Respond to an article within three days of its publication.

6. **Write the letter in your own words**. Editors want letters to be original and from local readers.

Take the time to write the letter in your own words. Don’t submit your letter to more than one paper at the same time. If you submit it to one paper, give them a week to publish it. If they don’t, then you can submit it to another paper.

7. **Include your contact information**. Be sure to include your name, mailing address, and daytime phone number. The paper will contact you before printing your letter.

8. **Follow up with the paper**. You greatly increase the likelihood of your letter getting published by calling the letters editor, if you haven’t heard from the paper within 48 hours. Confirm that the editor has received your letter, and ask politely when they’re planning to print it. (This won’t

work with the big papers.)