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### Energy Industry Taking a Shine to Social Media

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Posted by [Neal Leavitt](#) on October 25th, 2012 at 4:12 pm



From companies in the renewable energy world to mainstream utilities, the push is on to utilize social media to build brand awareness, brand relationships, augment customer service, even create leads directly or through referrals. Companies are also using social media to help others go green and fight bad PR.

Most of the nation's major electric utilities are active on Facebook and Twitter and are using social media to heighten the need for energy conservation. As reported in the *New York Times*, "while it seems counterintuitive for utilities to discourage use of their product, it makes financial sense as they face government mandates to encourage more energy conservation and deal with the rising cost and difficulty of building power plants and distribution systems."

Duke Energy, for instance, the nation's largest utility, promoted web videos last summer starring a fictitious girl named Shannon who appears with her family to advise viewers on how to save energy.

[Mashable](#) reported last June that Rockville, MD-based [Clean Currents](#), which offers businesses/residents clean energy at prices equal to or below their utility company's rates, has built a sizable social media following via a series of innovative campaigns.

One example, Green Passport DC, ran last April and May. According to [Mashable](#), the program gave instant rewards for checking in at 45 businesses using Clean Currents.

"Once you checked in by scanning a QR code or visiting a URL, a Facebook app would reward you with a \$2.50 cash credit, give you the option to share your check-in with your Facebook friends and display nearby businesses participating in the program."

At last year's Intersolar NA, one of the largest solar energy conferences, a popular draw was Centrosolaro, a video game from [Centrosolar](#) that lets users navigate levels to install solar panels on rooftops. The game's goal was to put together CentroPack, a turnkey solar system.

[RenewableEnergyWorld.com](#) reported that the friendly, but intense competition among attendees at the booth helped launch Centrosolar's social media initiative. Not only could visitors play the game to win cash at the conference, they could also take a photo with the on-site character and post on Facebook.

"We're trying to get our branding out there," said Kelly Clonan, Centrosolar's senior marketing manager. "Not just for installers, but for outside media and internal employees. We're starting to get traction; people are starting to network on LinkedIn."

The ubiquitous iPhone has also proven widely popular for energy-related apps. [Unirac](#), an Albuquerque, NM-based provider of solar mounting structures for residential, commercial and utility solar power systems, has two

interesting apps – a QR-Code Reader that helps reduce paper waste from brochures and unwieldy installation manuals, and a U-clinometer for installers that verifies a roof’s angle and pitch.

Lastly, is your energy company not happy with some recent editorial coverage? Letters to the editor? Op/ed pieces? Sooooo 20th Century.

As reported by Andrew Phelps for the *Nieman Journalism Lab*, last year Chesapeake Energy was piqued about a *New York Times* story on the natural gas industry. The story included quotes from company emails that suggested Chesapeake executives overstated productivity and profitability.

Chesapeake, noted Phelps, bought Promoted Tweets (per Twitter, ‘Tweets purchased by advertisers who want to reach a wider group of users or to spark engagement from their existing followers’) on search terms like #naturalgas and the *Times*’ primary account @nytimes. Searches for either term yielded a top tweet featuring a link with a rebuttal from Chesapeake CEO Aubrey McClendon.

As with so many other industries, social media has become a game changer for energy-related businesses. Phelps summed it succinctly:


“Back in the day, a corporation stung by a newspaper story might try to buy a full-page ad in the paper. But that route was controlled by the very organization they were battling. Targeting PR ad dollars toward social media is another sign it isn’t just stories that can spread virally. It is also the conversations around those stories, pro or con.”

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1.  [Connie Villegas](#) says:  
[November 8, 2012 at 4:18 AM](#)

Through the use of social media, people becomes aware as to what is happening to their environment especially when it comes to energy crisis. There is no energy crisis instead there is an increasing demand of energy for the next 20 years and with solar plants, turbines and wind plants continuously operating, the demand will go higher. What we need to do is find alternatives in minimizing energy consumption by building walkable communités and bicycle lanes to help save our environment. I found this realization when I read a line from this book, " Green Illusions: The Dirty Secrets of Clean Energy and the Future of

Environmentalism"

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