



How companies can get the most benefits during the solar purchasing process - by Yaniv Kalish

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Installing solar panels offers numerous business benefits, including strong financial returns, immediate tax advantages and lasting environmental benefits. Many companies are aware of the benefits, but are not sure how or where to get started. As a commercial solar advisor, we get involved in all aspects of the transition to solar. We've seen just about every scenario and helped companies overcome truly unique challenges.

There are many steps involved when we work with a client. One of the first decisions to be made is whether the company will buy solar through a Power Purchase Agreement, or if the company will own the solar project. If a company chooses to buy their solar, we make sure that the company gets a fair price. In this article, we'll focus on what you need to know if you plan to own the solar project.

Getting Started: When you own your solar project yourself, all the rewards (and there's a lot of them) come right to you. In New Jersey, for example, owning solar can come with a three to four-year payback period. States like New York and Massachusetts aren't too far behind. However, there's quite a bit to figure out to maximize the benefits of solar. Before you get started with the installation, you'll need to nail down a few issues, including:

- Your building's energy profile.
- Your roof's suitability for the project.
- Your ability to take advantage of the tax credits that come with solar.

Selecting a contractor: Once you've cleared some initial red tape, the next step is to select a contractor to install your solar array. This may feel a bit daunting, as there are hundreds of solar companies in New York. Some larger national firms may not have local experience in your township or utility, while a local company may struggle handling the size of your project even though they're headquartered just down the road.

Choosing Solar Equipment: Solar companies typically come to you with their equipment of choice.

Issues such as warranty (and the strength of the company providing that warranty) are key when examining the equipment. There are also certain premium solar panels that are high power, but also more expensive. Depending on your specific situation, paying a premium may or may not be ideal.

Price of the System: It's very important to get multiple quotes as prices can vary dramatically for similar solar systems. Comparing quotes apples-to-apples is challenging but worth the effort; otherwise, you can end up paying as high as an 80% premium if you select the wrong vendor. At the same time, simply going with the cheapest option could mean you'll end up paying more down the road.

Negotiating the contract: The last step in the contract is negotiating and signing the contract with the solar installer. Some issues you'll want to pay close attention to include:

- Payment structure.
- Construction timeline.
- Performance guarantees and workmanship warranty.
- Who's responsible for utility upgrades or additional permitting fees.

Overall, using an advisor when purchasing a solar energy system can save companies both time and money. A good advisor will provide technical guidance every step of the way from site analysis to contract negotiations. They will bring you multiple pricing options, identify the ideal contractor and equipment, and ensure you're not over-paying for solar or going with a second-tier solution. All of this gives you peace of mind that you're making the right decision to go solar, and it ensures you're capturing all of benefits solar has to offer.

SolarKal is a solar advisory and brokerage firm, servicing real estate owners, businesses and corporations. Services include site evaluation, financial analysis, securing financing and contract negotiation. Through SolarKal's proprietary bidding process, clients can easily compare customized quotes from dozens of the solar providers and save more than 30% compared to market rates. Unlike other solar companies, SolarKal serves as the customer's advocate, connecting them to a vast array of solar installers and arriving at the most optimal service.

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