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## Green Scene

BY TOM TEDROW

# The Need for LEED

*It is up to architects and designers to help their clients determine the appropriate level of certification for them.*

'Green' and "sustainability" have become household words. These practices are great for the Earth, they improve one's quality of life and they can generate measurable business results. With this increased awareness, architects and designers have seen a growing number of clients requesting green services. The question we need to ask is to what level of green our clients can commit.

Although it is generally agreed upon that green building is an important practice, it is crucial that this new design trend is properly understood. There are a number of options a facility owner can select when designing and building an environmentally conscious facility.

As designers, we have all had clients with grand visions that are either financially or logistically unachievable. It is our duty to educate our clients on what the practice of sustainability really is. By doing so, we can help them determine the appropriate "green goals" for their project. My company, IBT Enterprises, uses the term "appropriate green" to describe a project that meets our clients green needs, even if it does not entail LEED certification.

It is not yet realistic for all new buildings to gain LEED certification, but we can still use green principles to create sustainable facilities. It is the role of the architect or designer to help a client determine the appropriate green level that is best suited for them.

### LEED YOUR CLIENT

Clients are increasingly interested in jumping on the green bandwagon. For example, in the banking industry, according to IBT's 2008 Market Pulse Survey: "A Different Shade of Green," 75 percent of financial institutions reported they would consider using green building materials and prac-

tices in their new building projects. Although there may be significant environmental enthusiasm, it's the architect's job to ensure that clients are appropriately prepared for the sustainable ride.

At IBT, our LEED-accredited staff provides recommendations for sustainable building, and green products and materials to use in construction. Having a LEED-accredited team does not mean every project we complete should be LEED certified, however. To determine if a project should be LEED certified, there are three initial factors to consider: the client's budget, timeframe and ongoing commitment to sustainability.

As is true with most things, the more advanced solution also is likely to be more expensive and time intensive. The initial costs for a LEED-certified building may be 10 to 15 percent higher than a building that only uses green practices, and the timeframe to deliver a LEED-certified building often is longer. For some clients, these two factors may stop a LEED-certified project before it starts.

It also is important to remember that even before a client decides they want to gain LEED certification, we must first ensure they have a commitment to sustainability. Sustainability means more than turning off lights and equipment when not in use or installing energy-efficient light bulbs. Clients must understand green building includes the development, adoption and implementation of sustainability plans and initiatives. Such programs demand



a commitment and can include recycling programs or sustainable solutions for maintenance, energy-usage, water consumption, transportation, landscaping, and health and safety.

Many clients don't realize LEED and green extend beyond completion of their building. To ensure a successful project – once the appropriate green level is determined – architects and designers should implement the following principles to establish a strong system for working with a client to deliver an appropriate green facility.

#### **PINPOINT WHAT THEY NEED**

Understanding the green components your clients want will assist you in delivering what they need. Taken as a whole, clients are looking for well-trained architects and designers who will appropriately and cost effectively provide an environmentally responsible solution. Clients' needs vary based on their goals and level of commitment. Architects and designers need to determine if clients are building green for economic reasons, for tax incentives, for the public relations aspect or for the benefits it provides.

Clients are coming to you – the expert – to offer your perspective, provide input and tell them what they can accomplish. As professionals, we have driven and experienced many nationwide trends and seen what works and what doesn't. Oftentimes, clients come to our offices seeking insight they can't get anywhere else.

#### **LAY A SOLID FOUNDATION**

The foundation for a successful design project demands takes place in the design development phase. In this phase, you must spend time with clients to crystallize what they want while developing a framework of the design. This phase also allows you the opportunity to offer your consultative and strategic direction, and raise any red flags prior to starting work.

The size of the organization and whether the facility is a new design concept also impact the degree of consultation that clients need or desire. Larger organizations may have taken part in green building projects before and may require less guidance, whereas smaller organizations may need extra handholding. The same can be said for whether the facility is an existing concept; development of a standard retail facility will likely take less up-front consultation than a new concept.

#### **HAND CLIENT THE KEY**

As is the case with most projects, people want buildings that are delivered faster, smarter and cheaper. Providers with a full-service value proposition often are able to deliver customers the turnkey solution that clients want in the timeline they need. Full-service providers are frequently more cost effective and a good turnkey company can eliminate stress, scheduling problems and excessive cost to the client.

Additionally, turnkey providers often offer vendor management services to oversee the various teams working on the project. For example, in the banking industry, we frequently manage vendors charged with vault or ATM installation.

#### **DELIVER SUCCESS TO CLIENT**

With the implementation of green building practices, the ultimate goal is for the architect and designer to meet their clients' needs.

It is true that green is the new black, and more and more construction and design projects are following green building principles. However, clients should not feel left out of the sustainability movement if they cannot earn LEED certification. Whether a client's budget is large or small, or if they are mildly or wholly committed to sustainability, appropriate green is within their reach, and it's our role as architects or designers to deliver it. ●



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