



Project owners benefit from contractors "going green" on building construction projects

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For the contracting community there are tons of benefits to "going green" on building construction projects. Exploiting contracting opportunities in sustainability, energy management and "green building concepts" is quickly becoming the wave of the future...today and right now.

The growing world and construction industry focus, on reducing waste, energy sustainability and building in a more environmentally friendly manner has caused contractors to learn a new set of rules. Understanding the rules of sustainable design and construction practices or "green building construction" can propel your firm to a new industry position and increased profits, while improving the overall community.

More owners of large public and private construction programs realize the benefits of being recognized as environmentally conscious in their approach to building or renovating structures. This creates more new "downstream" opportunities for construction firms, in lieu of only design and engineering professionals. While formal "green building concepts" are relatively new (United States Green Building Council was established in 1993, www.usgbc.org), early programs focused only on architects and engineers. Recently, the "green" wave has become tidal in nature, allowing contract opportunities by professionals such as construction managers, specialty contractors and trade subcontractors, who understand the value of marketing sustainability and "green building" expertise.

What is "going green" on building construction projects?

The term "going green" on building projects suggests efforts are in place to focus on sustainability and environmental consciousness during the traditional building process. This would include a focus around the main categories identified in the USGBC- LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) building rating systems. The LEED rating system allows owners and project teams to identify and score credits for achieving requirements and prerequisites during the design and construction process. The system identifies efforts in creating sustainable sites, water efficiency, materials and resources, energy and atmosphere, indoor air quality and innovation and design. "Going green" applies to different building types such as new construction, existing buildings, commercial interiors, core and shell, schools, retail, healthcare and homes. Projects can also achieve varying levels of certification based on the level of design credits achieved (platinum, gold, silver and certified).

Why owners want you to "go green" on their projects

This environmental focus is more than recycling paper, waste and metals, but the real benefit is in providing a comprehensive approach to eliminating the environmental disturbance, waste and planned obsolescence of the traditional construction process. Utilizing renewable energy sources (solar and wind generated power), recycled materials (recycled concrete aggregate, fly ash,

composite tiles) or water saving devices (waterless urinals, composting toilets, low flow faucets) all contribute to a less harmful effect on our environment. Furthermore, planning and management during the construction process allows owners to conserve natural resources, decrease reliance on fossil fuels, reduce building utility costs and even eliminate worker productivity loss associated with the effects of sick building syndrome. In addition to this, owners, developers and agencies with large construction programs are afforded an opportunity to potentially reduce operating costs and lead their peers in environmentally conscious building practices. This goes a long way in creating a culture where being a socially responsible builder can translate to healthier communities, improved public image, increased profits and a better preserved Mother Earth.

How construction managers, contractors and specialty vendors can assist

While green building systems focus mainly on design elements, generally one third of the total credits required for certification occur during the construction phase. Although designers drive the beginning of the process, a critical handoff takes place once contractors are actually on site based on the requirement to achieve the "construction credits" on the rating scale.

Achieving green "construction credits" involves an extensive documentation process and usually depends on detailed knowledge of the building processes and an ability to coordinate and manage contractors during construction. Being well versed in these field related operations allows an advantage to the construction manager, contractor or specialty vendor that has developed this expertise and can easily relate to the design team and owners, working to preserve the original environmental intent of the project. Prime contractors, agencies and owners that invest in individuals and firms that have developed this capacity truly L.E.E.D. by example and promote benefits that we recognize for generations to come.

NobleStrategy, LLC is focused on delivering program and project management solutions to public and private sector commercial construction clients. The firm has developed a niche in coordinating various byproducts created from large capital construction infrastructure programs such as emerging business mentoring, workforce development and knowledge management applications on existing processes. The firm also is a leading construction management firm in sustainable design and construction practices and employs LEED accredited professionals.

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