



Do you have building efficiency envy? Discover your building's hidden treasure by Bud Hammer and Bonnie Hagen

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Do you have building efficiency envy?

Efficiency can be defined as the ratio of useful work performed in a process to the total energy expended.

In this day and age, we are all trying to increase efficiency in our everyday busy lives for the single purpose of accomplishing more in less allowable time. Translated to a building, can we squeeze the same if not more out, from less input? If so, we have increased our efficiency! The world is moving at a fast pace and technology is advancing at a faster pace than any of us can keep up with. The good news is that this presents fantastic opportunities for all of us to improve our building efficiency.

Whether you own/operate a commercial building or rent an apartment, you can enjoy the potential of increased energy efficiency, thanks to awareness and technology. Solar electricity generation, LED lighting, natural gas for heat and hot water, building management control systems that wake buildings up and put them to sleep based on occupancy are a few examples of how to improve building efficiency. There's juicy fruit hanging all around us. Simply stated, the most efficient light is the one that's not turned on.

Thanks to technology and the Internet of things, energy is now something that can be easily measured. Similar to a car whose dashboard provides key performance indicators (KPI's) to its driver (gas mileage, tire pressure, how many miles to the next destination, etc.), a building can also provide feedback in a dashboard format to let you know how it's performing in real time. The adage that you can't manage something you can't measure is true and that has dramatically changed in building technology.

In our area, electricity is expensive compared to other parts of the country and thanks to a growing population that wants their spaces air conditioned, the electricity supply dwindles during those hot, endless summer days. Blackouts and aged infrastructure have forced us to pay attention to the reality of the situation and technology and awareness education have allowed us to find solutions.

Put your money where your mouth is...

Known as a true challenge to check the integrity of a concept, the local utility through a directive from the Public Service Commission has been offering the marketplace subsidies and incentives to improve building energy efficiency performance. So much, in fact that investing in making a building more efficient has turned into a profit center for many building owners that can take advantage of the incentives and technology. The building that becomes less expensive to operate, while being upgraded to modern day convenience improves to the point that the property becomes more desirable to potential tenants and many are willing to spend more per s/f to inhabit. In business, it's generally accepted that you have to spend money to make money. If an entity is willing to help offset your investment, isn't it worthwhile to at least consider the options particularly if the result is great benefit to your bottom line and can also help the asset preservation and appreciation? Another indirect benefit of improving building efficiency is increasing the competitive advantage over non-efficient buildings.

Where/How do you begin?

HVAC systems and building lighting combined consume most of the energy in a building. Speak to

your local utility rep, HVAC or electrical service provider, and/or lighting/energy consultant to have them help assess the opportunities in your existing building. Many of us have been educated and trained to work together to help achieve the best return for the investment. We can help measure the efficiency performance in an existing facility and identify improvements with investment cost and return on investment. Coupled with “low cost” financing, we are trained to help repurpose operating budgets to help pay for the improvements without a negative change to cashflow. In some cases, we can demonstrate how the investment becomes positive cashflow! You may be sitting on a goldmine of opportunity and we are all ready to help you dig up that gold.

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