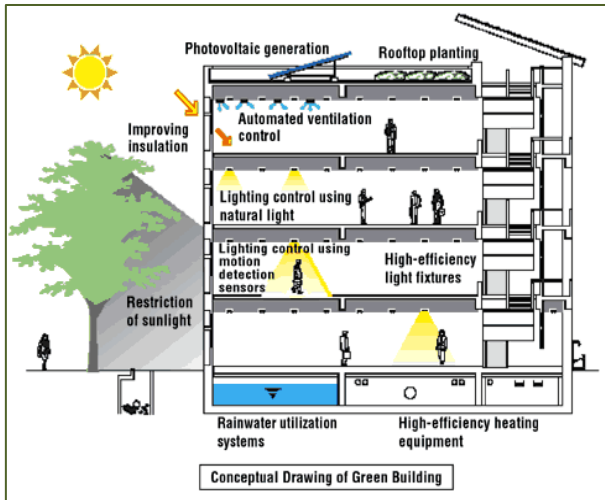




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It Aint Easy Being Green



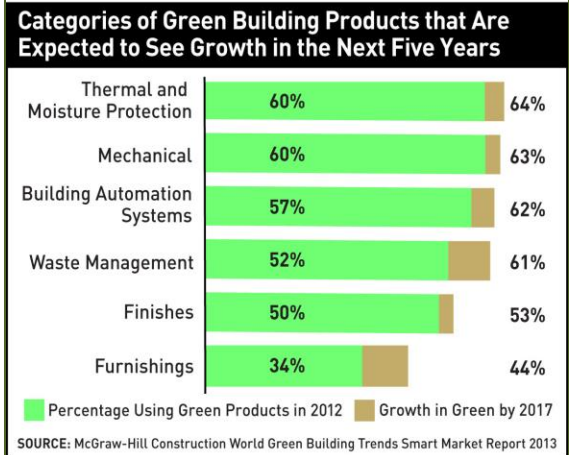
Some of the most overused and misunderstood buzz phrases in today's lexicon are; "Going Green", "Sustainability" and "Reducing Your Carbon Footprint". What do these phrases mean? Well surely they must be more than topics trending on twitter or clever ice breakers at one's next dinner party. The truth is you can ask ten different people what it means to "Go Green" and except for Kermit the Frog, you are going to get ten different answers. The reason is that Going Green simply means different things to different people.

To some, Going Green means living a sustainable life style which could include; recycling, growing a

vegetable garden, taking public transportation or biking to work, buying recycled goods made of materials produced locally and a host of other things. This shade of green is all about treading lightly on the earth and "Doing What You Can Do". It's about making a series of relatively small life style changes which, when taken together by groups of like minded individuals, can help the planet.

To some companies, Going Green can mean "Making Green". There continues to be a growing market for green goods and services. Products made from a high percentage of recycled materials and which can be recycled again at the end of their useful life are very popular. It has been proven that some consumers are willing to pay a little more for environmentally friendly products. There are many responsible companies who have realized they can have both a strong social conscience and a strong bottom line.

To federal, state and local governments, sustainability is a public duty. Over the last decade, the federal government has enacted laws focused on reducing the impact from and the use of fossil fuels. At the state and local levels, part of the focus has been on reducing stress on landfills and public water supplies. Cutting across state lines, nationally standardized energy construction codes are mandating better insulated buildings with higher efficiency lighting and mechanical (HVAC) systems. One "literally green" government initiative was enacted in New York City by former Mayor Michael Bloomberg who planted over one million trees during his three terms as mayor.



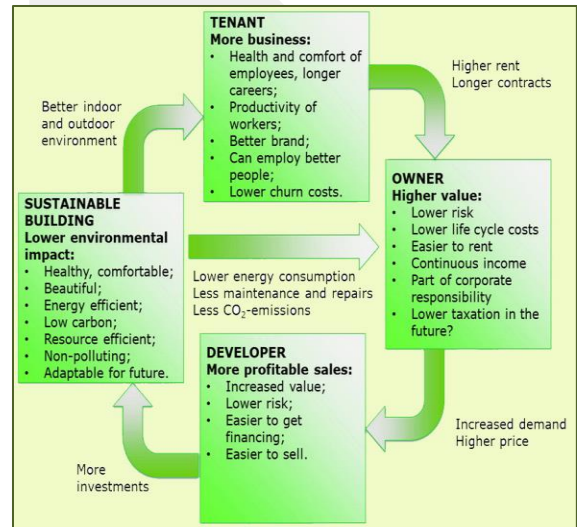


To those in real estate, construction and facilities management, green often means trying to achieve a Leadership in Environmental and Energy Design (LEED) certification for one's building. The LEED program is administered by the US Green Building Council and has several levels of certification attained via a point system. The more points achieved by a project in the areas of sustainable sites, materials, energy/atmosphere and other categories, the higher the LEED rating.

Typical LEED Project Process

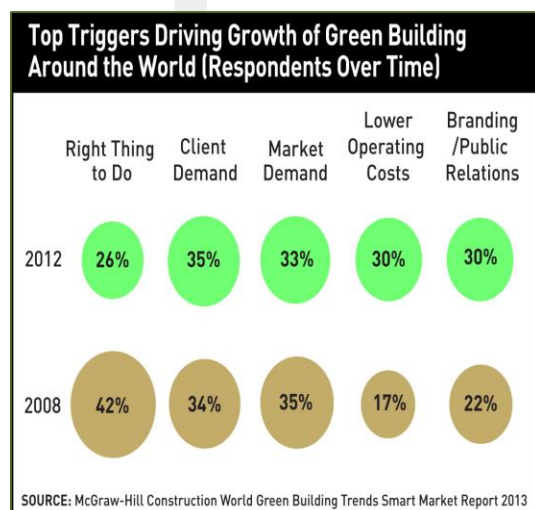
A LEED project must have the committed involvement of the Owner, Architect, Engineer, General Contractor and Subcontractors from the very beginning in order to successfully achieve certification:

- The **Owner's** choice of a site, (does it reuse existing infrastructure?)
- The **Architect's** positioning of the building and their design of the exterior envelope
- The **Engineer's** specification of efficient lighting and HVAC systems
- The **Contractor's** use of low-fuel consumption construction vehicles and equipment, job site recycling and job site air quality



These are only a few of a mind-boggling array of variables that are juggled, documented and certified to gain points and “prove” LEED compliance.

Achieving a LEED certification for a building project is not easy and does involve higher initial construction costs. The resulting lower operating costs will provide a Return On Investment (ROI). The ROI time frame depends on project size and complexity. The first generation of LEED buildings are approaching 15 years in-service so there will soon be a wealth of cost-benefit data available to help estimate life cycle costs and ROI.



The LEED process is applicable to both new construction projects and significant alterations of existing facilities. But what about everyone else? How can a facility or organization that is not undertaking significant renovations or building a new building begin to apply green principles to everyday operations in a way that will have a lasting impact? The answer is, one step at a time... Do what is readily achievable.

This is similar to the approach Mayor Bloomberg took in New York City. When the New York City Building Code changed in July of 2008, the Mayor did not legislate mandatory LEED compliance. Instead, he chose to implement green building requirements that could be put in place relatively easily and which would have an immediate impact.



Some of the Mayor's green initiatives mandated developers to set aside bicycle rack space in new apartment buildings and required the construction of landscaped bio-filters at the perimeter of parking lots to treat storm water and reduce overall flow volume to treatment plants.

What Can You Do Now to Go Green?

So how do you apply this approach to your facility when you are not undertaking a major project? Forget about LEED points and go green for green's sake.

You are always cleaning, painting and caulking, so make sure you are using solvents, paints and caulks that are low in volatile organic compounds (VOC's) which will improve indoor air quality.

Instruct your purchasing department to buy recycled paper and other materials with pre-industrial and post-consumer recycled content. Buy from vendors within a 500 mile radius of your facility to reduce the environmental transportation burden (fuel and emissions). If the vendor's source materials (metals, minerals, etc.) are also extracted and manufactured within 500 miles of your facility, that's even better.

When you do remodel, stay away from petroleum based products like plastics while favoring rapidly renewable and highly recyclable materials like ceramic tile & linoleum. When buying wood trim and furnishings, look for product lines that use Forest Stewardship Council certified lumber from rapid growth forests.

If you and your Architect are planning some building alterations, make sure the design is flexible and allows for growth. This way your build-out will last longer and as such expend fewer resources over time.

"Green" is a mindset and by taking a lot of small steps, you are building a culture within your organization that is in itself sustainable. Those future LEED certified building projects will be a natural outgrowth of that culture.

