

# *Opportunities in Green Building*

By Kyle Kuns

Are your clients asking you questions about how your company is building green? If not, they probably will soon. How prepared are you to answer those questions? This article is about providing you with some general ideas about green building as a starting point for you to search out and develop specific market strategies tailored to your business.

Green building is about creating or altering buildings so that they somehow require fewer resources and/or are healthier environments than current conventional construction. Every point in the process from the extraction of raw materials to the eventual demolition of the building is now being paid attention to and yields an opportunity to become "greener." Thus, your company's green building opportunities exist anywhere along this vast spectrum where your company uses less resources and/or creates a healthier product.

The green building industry has evolved to the point where new materials and technologies are constantly being developed. Obviously, awareness about these materials and technologies gives you a competitive edge. Increasingly, the general public and professionals--like architects--will become more aware of some aspect of a new green technology and want to ask you specific questions regarding how your business implements the new technology, how much it costs, and how it really works in detail. For example, how much power could solar leaves generate to help power a building and what is their shade impact to the HVAC system? See [http://www.s-m-i-t.com/#grow\\_target](http://www.s-m-i-t.com/#grow_target) for a description of solar leaves.

Clearly, it is important to be able to separate genuine present day market opportunities from future possibilities to ascertain what you can present to your clients today versus what you may want to work towards being able to implement in the future. Understanding the U.S Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) rating system can help you do that (<http://www.usgbc.org/>). The LEED rating is used to determine which buildings are certified as green buildings and at what level they are considered green. Essentially LEED is a point system where those seeking green building certification earn points by using technologies and strategies embraced by the LEED system. If you want your company to be involved in green building, you will want to understand the points that are awarded for the trades your business is involved in. Understanding of the LEED system will give you focused knowledge about what relatively new present day market opportunities exist for your company. Also, this understanding gives you advanced warning about key areas of your industry that will eventually move from optional choices to mandatory code requirements. In addition, you may be able to study the point system and tease out niche underdeveloped opportunities that are not yet being exploited fully. For example, Historical Preservationists are arguing to get more LEED points awarded for renovation as opposed to demolition and new construction because renovation takes advantage of the embodied energy of existing buildings. In this example, if you see "conversion" opportunities that could be used on existing buildings that are not being exploited or awarded LEED points, you could become one of the market leaders in that area and expand your business.

Since green building technologies are largely optional within the building codes, more planning is typically required to make green technologies cost effective. It is helpful to be aware of as many connections and impacts between your trade and others as possible. For example, if you are a window installer, it is important for you to know how super windows impact the building as a whole. Super windows obviously cost more money than conventional windows. Are there enough windows on the project so that the difference between super windows and conventional windows impacts the HVAC system to the point where a smaller and less expensive HVAC system can be used? Also, would the reduction in energy costs for daily operation of the smaller HVAC system make a meaningful difference? Could using super windows also allow for more windows to be used (while still meeting Title 24 energy efficiency standards) so that day lighting can replace electrically powered lights during daytime hours and further reduce energy costs and help pay for the windows? Conversely, if you are an HVAC contractor, are you going to figure out how to use super windows to get more HVAC projects rather than simply watch the scale of your projects diminish? Imagine a scenario where there is a renovation project that does not yet have a HVAC system. Also imagine in this scenario that the client is trying to determine whether or not to install a HVAC system and you notice the client is replacing numerous windows largely for aesthetic upgrading. However, the client is using conventional windows. You suggest using super windows as a way to be able to pay for a smaller than anticipated HVAC system making the HVAC system cost effective etc.

The vastness of the green building opportunity can at times feel overwhelming. Since we are still in the "early adopter" phase of green building, you don't need to try and implement every idea or aspect of green building all at once. If you want to participate, you just need to get started.

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