

Responding to the Marketplace

The column entitled *A moving target... or... a rolling stone gathers no moss* addressed some of the problems created by the frequently occurring changes in the LEED Green Building Rating System. A few weeks ago, at a USGBC workshop, we had the opportunity to discuss these problems with USGBC staff. It was a lively discussion.

We stated our concerns that these changes are beginning to alienate some of the early LEED adopters and that the individuals that have advocated LEED are having second thoughts about continuing to pursue certification. The knee-jerk response from staff was that there were other potential clients that would take the place of those that chose to drop out. We reminded the staff that if you create a negative situation that this negative is usually passed on to at least 7 other individuals... but... if you do something right, this usually only gets passed on to one individual. We need to be doing the right things if we want LEED to continue.

After some more discussion, it was revealed that the changes were “a response to the needs of the marketplace.” The question that was left in our minds was, “Which marketplace?”

So, it appears that USGBC does get feedback regarding LEED and is responding to that feedback. What this means is that whoever is the most vocal, may be the one that has the most opportunity to impact the direction of LEED. If you don't like the direction, then you need to say something. Hopefully our discussion with the staff regarding the frequency of change was noted.

It is a lot easier to simply choose to abandon LEED than it is to try and change LEED. But is this really the best thing to do for our industry, for our neighbors and for our planet? LEED is making an impact. For the first time, we have a tool that can truly transform the marketplace and allow the industry to change from mediocre, energy consuming “boxes” to architecture that addresses environmental and energy concerns.

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Take something simple... like daylighting. A phone call just came into the office regarding the requirements for the LEED credit for daylighting in a retail space. Did we REALLY want windows on the backside of the retail space? Wouldn't that create a security issue of thieves looking into the back of house? Maybe. (We suggested adding security bars.) But... consider a storage room that doesn't have to rely upon fluorescent fixtures to provide light for the workers in that space. Isn't that an improvement over the dark and dreary spaces typically found at the back of most stores? Consider the energy savings. Consider the improvement in the work space for the employees. Consider the fact that LEED actually caused a discussion regarding this matter. This is just one example of how LEED is transforming our industry.

The primary issues regarding most building projects is how much will it cost and how soon can it be completed. Not, how good will it be. Cost and schedule typically override quality and performance. LEED is attempting to overcome these issues by rewarding those buildings (and building owners) that decide that responding to environmental and energy concerns are worthwhile. The fact that the program is continually growing is testament that the marketplace wants this type of program.

What we, as the "marketplace" needs to do is to identify what we want from a green building rating system... and then provide the input into the existing prevailing rating systems. So... what do YOU want?

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