

***Isn't "green" just the latest "flavor-of-the-month" touted by governments and architects to book fees and pander to public sentiments?***

*Answer:* No

Green means money, even if you're not out to save the planet. Major retailers and manufacturers who embraced "green" a decade or more ago know that energy efficiency, water reduction, waste reduction and other sustainable features have significant positive effects on the bottom line and contribute to revenue growth at a reasonable (if not remarkable) rate of return on investment.

***Are there real life examples you can point to?***

*Answer:* Yes

In the retail sector alone...

- Wal-Mart - one of the first to invest in developing a green model for their stores. Its new HES (High Performance) model store cuts energy costs by 45%;
- Target - added rooftop solar panels to 18 California and 3 Hawaii stores to generate about 20% of the annual electricity needs for those buildings;
- Kohl's - the first specialty department store to receive the USGBC's LEED-Silver Certification on its new store prototype;
- Others - Patagonia, REI, Nike, Timberland, Starbucks, McDonald's, etc.

***But if we're not Wal-Mart or Patagonia, does it impact us?***

*Answer:* Yes

Lending institutions have begun to recognize that financing buildings that do not incorporate sustainable or green principles is less desirable. A research paper from November 2007 by Rosenberg Real Estate Equity Funds on "The Greening of U.S. Investment Real Estate - Market Fundamentals, Prospects and Opportunities" states that "Green building is fundamentally altering real estate market dynamics - the nature of product demanded by tenants, constructed by developers, required by governments and favored by capital providers. The upshot will be a redefinition of what constitutes Class A properties and even institutional-quality real estate."

***If I build or own buildings, can I make money at going "green"?***

*Answer:* Yes

Benefits to the bottom line can be achieved through direct, indirect and even perceived benefits of sustainable design.

- **Direct** - savings from energy and water conservation measures are directly quantifiable in monthly utility bills;
- **Indirect** - the availability of daylight in consumer/user spaces to increase spending, lower absenteeism, and improve productivity.
- **Perceived** - don't underestimate the real market (and marketing) power in sustainable design. Dubbed the 'golden halo' effect, success is often attributable to positive publicity garnered from efforts and facilities that support the community and the environment.

***Being "green" comes at a premium, right?***

Answer: No

Granted, a lack of previous experience and misinformation about green design can become a significant hurdle. Construction or design professionals who have limited or no experience in green construction will often say that it costs more. This statement may not be entirely untrue if the skill set and resources do not exist to do the project correctly. Without thorough planning and research to understand what the best products and services are and where to find them, it is very possible to end up with trades and suppliers that are charging premiums for simply building a good quality building that just happens to perform a little better than the norm. Thus, the perception that green construction costs 10, even 15% more than traditional construction is no longer valid.

While the learning curve is not over, we are well beyond the mid-point and most basic level technologies are readily available and they look and perform no differently than old ones with one notable exception: they are more efficient and use materials that are either not harmful or less harmful than previous systems.

***Can you tell me what it means to be "green"?***

Answer: Yes

A "green building" is one that:

- 1) increases the efficiency with which buildings and their sites use energy, water, and materials; and
- 2) reduces building impacts on human health and the environment through better siting, design, construction, operation, maintenance, and waste removal through the complete building life cycle.

Note: embodied in this definition are the ideas that efficient resource use, particularly of energy, is a fundamental priority, but also that green buildings must satisfy broader environmental considerations that take into account a building's impact on its surroundings and those who use the building.

***Do I have to certify my building?***

Answer: No

Certification is not required to be a green or high performance building. However, it does provide the public with a demonstrable way of identifying the building as eco-friendly and a method for local building officials to validate green buildings in the absence of a green building code. The certification can also be very valuable as a recruiting and marketing tool.

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