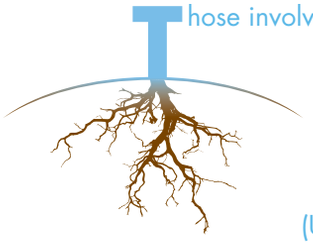
LEED,® don't follow

LEED offers roofing contractors long-term opportunities

by Jim Hoff, DBA



Those involved in building design and construction generally acknowledge the U.S. Green Building Council's (USGBC's) Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design (LEED) Green Building Rating System™ has become a prominent benchmark for achieving sustainable construction. And because roof systems can play an important role in achieving building sustainability, roof system design and selection for new and existing buildings are critical for meeting requirements to obtain LEED certification.

However, the last thing you need is another summary of how to earn LEED points. Many articles about LEED's Green Building Rating System have been published, and, unfortunately, they generally provide little useful guidance for roofing contractors seeking long-term business opportunities.

The real opportunity LEED offers is a chance to become a valuable member of a LEED team during all phases of a building project and, in turn, leverage this value to become the preferred contractor to install and service the building's roof system.

So how can you gain the expertise and credibility to become a valuable—and profitable—partner in the LEED building process?

Form green partnerships

There are various strategies you can use to become a valuable, recognized participant in the green building movement. One way is through partnerships.

Effective partnering to achieve building sustainability is at the core of the LEED program. Designing sustainable buildings involves much more than mere preparation of construction documents; it requires a long-term collaborative process involving everyone associated with the project. And, as in all collaborative processes, success tends to gravitate toward the most active and involved participants.

Potential partnerships with other construction trades can be useful because almost all LEED credits require different construction specialties.

For example, LEED points are available for managing stormwater runoff and reducing potable water requirements, but these points only can be earned through the cooperation of many trades. Precipitation on a roof system is a critical factor in reducing stormwater flow and enhancing landscape irrigation, and partnering with local landscape contractors to develop joint strategies for stormwater management and sustainable water use would be useful.

Similarly, you can partner with electrical contractors to reduce lighting requirements by installing rooftop skylights and light tubes or partner with HVAC contractors to improve energy efficiency through installation of cool roof membranes and increased roof insulation.

In addition to partnering with other construction trades, you should consider developing a long-term business partnership with a LEED-Accredited Professional (LEED-AP) who can represent you during design and construction processes. Offering the services of a LEED-AP designer or consultant may allow you to gain influence in the early stages of a green building project and also can help position your

company as a valuable resource for green building information.

As an alternative to looking outside your company for a LEED-AP partner, consider seeking certification for yourself or someone in your company. You don't have to be a registered architect or engineer to take the required exam. Becoming a LEED-AP not only will help you understand all the intricacies of the LEED rating system, but it also will provide credibility when you discuss green building concepts with your customers.

To help those interested in obtaining LEED-AP certification, USGBC has established the Green Building Certification Institute to provide LEED training and administer the LEED-AP exam. The cost is minimal, and the training materials and sample exams provided are informative.

Green design tools

One of the easiest and most informative ways to gain expertise in green building design is to start using the various green building design tools available online—many for free. These tools include calculators to evaluate roof insulation, reflectivity, life-cycle cost and daylighting, to name a few. The following tools can be especially useful as a first step toward developing cost-effective sustainable roofing strategies:

- NRCA's **EnergyWise Roof Calculator Online**, which was developed by NRCA and the Polyisocyanurate Insulation Manufacturers Association, is a Web-based application that allows users to construct virtual roof assemblies to evaluate thermal efficiency and estimate energy costs via comparison with other roof assemblies. Additionally, the calculator can help users estimate the potential savings a building owner can realize by installing additional insulation beyond specified building code minimum levels.
- The U.S. Department of Energy's **Cool Roof Calculator** was developed by Oak Ridge National Laboratory, Oak Ridge, Tenn., to help building designers estimate the effects of roof reflectivity for buildings with low-slope roof systems. Using this Web-based tool, you quickly can compare the energy cost differences of reflective and nonreflective roof systems in more than 200 cities.
- **The GreenSave Calculator**, sponsored by Green Roofs for Healthy Cities, lets you compare roofing alternatives during a specific time period to determine which has the lowest life-cycle cost. Using this tool, you can determine whether higher initial costs are justified by reducing future operating, maintenance and repair costs or by producing other benefits, such as energy savings.
- **SkyCalc™** is an Excel spreadsheet application that helps building designers determine the best skylight design to achieve maximum lighting and HVAC energy savings. The application, which is sponsored by Energy Design Resources, a California-based nonprofit consortium, calculates skylights' lighting and energy effects and produces helpful graphs showing annual energy use patterns.

Beyond LEED

Although LEED is the most recognized green building rating system, it isn't the only system available.

One of the best known alternatives is the Green Globes™ system, which is sponsored by the Green Building Initiative.™ The Green Globes system features a point system similar to LEED's but places more emphasis on material durability and ongoing building maintenance, which may be helpful in establishing long-term roof maintenance agreements. And, most important, the Green Globes system can help your customers save money. LEED certification of a building can cost a building owner $50,000 or more, but it can cost as little as $3,000, including third-party verification, using the Green Globes system.

By learning about alternative rating systems such as the Green Globes system, you can offer valuable options to your customers. Additionally, knowledge of these alternatives can help you gain expertise and professional credibility in the green building community.

The go-to company

By forming effective green building business partnerships, using the green building design resources and tools available, and being knowledgeable about various rating systems, you can position your company as the "go-to" green roofing expert. And, in the process, you help build a better community and environment for future generations.

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For links to the EnergyWise Roof Calculator Online, Cool Roof Calculator, GreenSave Calculator and SkyCalc, as well as more information about the LEED-AP accreditation process, log on to www.professionalroofing.net.