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Sustainability is on a Roll



Sustainability is on a roll and the competitive marketplace is a big driver. When we buy products or services, we are buying both the good and the bad associated with their entire life cycle. Stepping up and taking ownership of supply chain impacts, direct impacts and waste streams gives companies multiple paths for making positive sustainability improvements. There are a few key areas we will address here: greening the supply chain, sustainable green buildings, energy efficiency and renewable energy.

Greening the Supply Chain

The best thing about greening your supply chain is that it provides one of the lowest cost opportunities for improving a company's sustainability. Currently large retail companies have launched programs that gather supply chain data and these companies are rapidly moving to implement green requirements for providers in the supply chain. Green requirements may include recycling of byproducts, more efficient transportation, greener packaging, better product design and redesigning production systems to be more efficient.

The driver for implementing green requirements will emerge from IT innovations such as cloud

computing that offer ways of harnessing data in ways that were not previously accessible. As a result, supply chain accountability will organically evolve from the old mainframe based infrastructure to an integrated green machine. Once this gets rolling, greening of supply chains will become inevitable in the cloud-connected world. Each company and organization should be asking itself: “Are we ready?” and “Are we getting ready fast enough?”

Sustainable Green Buildings

As the green building market continues to grow, LEED® certification is becoming part of the expectation for Class A buildings. In the leasing market, more tenants are recognizing that the space they lease has direct impacts on their environmental footprint and health. Building tenants and occupants are starting to understand that LEED for New Construction certification shows a building was designed and built with green in mind. However, ongoing recertification under LEED for Existing Buildings Operations and Maintenance (LEED-EB: O&M) is needed to assure that green design and construction translates into green operations over the life of the building. LEED-EB: O&M addresses many important facets of green operations, such as energy and water efficiency, sustainable procurement, and waste reduction. Whether or not building owners attempt LEED certification, focusing on these four areas will ensure greener operations over the long term.

Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy

We have heard about the goal of zero net energy buildings. Since building use consumes 40% of the total fossil energy in the US and European Union, energy efficiency, renewable energy and innovative design are key components of our sustainability and achieving the goal of zero net energy. While programs like LEED and Energy Star push for more sustainable energy consumption, it is up to each individual to adapt their lifestyle to more efficient energy use and to demand renewable energy from the marketplace. In addition, the demand for minimizing greenhouse gas emissions through energy efficiency measures has led to over a 50 percent increase of renewable electricity generating capacity in 2009, and 24 states have enacted energy savings goals.

Despite the programs driving these changes, the principle strategy in achieving a sustainable building and realizing the goal of zero net energy remains the same. Energy conservation is the most critical component for both new and existing buildings in maximizing the investment in renewable energy and achieving a sustainable future.