

How to Achieve Success in Green Building



What is Green Building?

Simply put, green building is effectively integrating and implementing best practices in design and construction that result in buildings that are high quality, conserve energy and water, offer good indoor air quality, are durable and low maintenance, fit well into the community, and have fewer negative effects on the environment.

Why Should I be Interested in Green Building?

First, because it is a rapidly growing aspect of the modern building industry that is capturing the attention of increasing numbers of homeowners and commercial property owners alike. Second, because the City of Petaluma is developing a voluntary green building program which offers a platform for builders to partner with the City in promoting local green buildings and building professionals. The City is accelerating the development of a local marketplace by conducting training for building professionals, education and outreach to consumers, promotion of green builders and product/service suppliers, and certification of green buildings. A partnership with a trusted program will offer professionals significant headway in creating demand among buyers for green buildings.

How Do I Start Building Green and Achieve Success with It?

Step 1: Assess where you stand today.

Do a preliminary analysis of how green you are right now. Use one of the [Build It Green™ Guidelines](#) and checklists (New Home, Home Remodel, or Multi-Family) and score your recent projects to see where you stand.

Step 2: Learn more about the opportunities that green building may provide for your business. Develop an in-house “green team” and/or hire a consultant to do a deeper analysis of where you stand on the green scale (and in relationship to your competitors). Thoroughly investigate all areas of your business to see how green building can be integrated into the design, purchasing, construction, maintenance, and marketing of your company. Have your green team members read books and web sites, attend trainings, and get professionally certified (There are several good educational and training resources right here in Sonoma County.) Make a plan about where you would like to see your business go, and the steps to get there.

Step 3: Engage your staff, colleagues and business partners.

Training and involvement is critical. Involve all of your staff, subcontractors, and partners in green building and demonstrate how your company’s adoption of green building practices may affect their job duties and expectations. Once people become aware of green building and its benefits and opportunities, they are often quite enthusiastic about “going green.”

Step 4: Stay current as the green building field matures.

Join local and/or national green building organizations such as [Build It Green™](#) and the [United States Green Building Council](#) to keep abreast of new technologies, practices, materials, and applications of green building, as it evolves.

Tips for Successful Green Building Marketing

Marketing green buildings is just like marketing any other product or concept; you have to do it consistently, frequently, and professionally. Green building can be a vague concept for many people. Your challenge is to make it tangible, and to deliver the right messages to prospective customers and clients in ways that they can quickly grasp. While green building may not be the only factor that sells your buildings, services, or products (you still need excellent service, value and so forth...), it can often be what sets you apart from your competitors, and helps to make the sale.

Do your research and planning

- Find out how green building benefits your customers value (i.e. comfort, aesthetics, dollar savings, technology, health/productivity, low maintenance, environmental protection, community, etc.). Do this by noting the questions they ask and the benefits in which they express greatest interest.
- Develop marketing distinctions (your position) that focus on what your customer's value.
- Make a long-term investment in training your staff on how to sell green building.

Get the customer's attention

- Go where your customers are: Participate in trade shows, events, educational presentations, etc.
- Advertise or promote your business on local radio, television, newspapers, magazines, newsletters, billboards, yard signs, and web sites.
- Use public relations to tout your successes (i.e. articles in newspapers, newsletters, awards programs, networking, etc.)

Communicate the issues in tangible, interactive ways

- Spend time educating your clients and give them the resources and information to make a good decision.
- Clearly, specifically and honestly explain the direct benefits to the customer of your services' green building features, such as higher product quality, good indoor air quality, lower utility and maintenance costs, environmental protection, etc. Emphasize *benefits* (what good things happen) over *features* (technical aspects).
- Keep it simple-sell *better building*, not green building.
- Frame the issues so one can understand, internalize, and visualize them.
- Create an array of demonstration opportunities (displays, samples, tours, etc.). Let customers, touch, see, and smell green building in action.
- Use local program information: guidelines, checklists, web site, seminars, case studies, fact sheets, brochures, etc. available at www.PetalumaBuildItGreen.org.
- Get your buildings or projects Green Points Rated through Petaluma Build It Green, so customers have a credible and objective yardstick for choosing your company.
- Keep learning more about green building (through conferences, seminars, books) and be sure to continually update your services and offerings to stay abreast of the field.

