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We network to get the 'green' message out

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We have been providing interior and exterior installation and maintenance services in the Boston area since 1989. Recently, we installed plants on two green roofs in the city and look to increase our involvement with green roofs. Our best marketing tool for this service is networking. We participate with several groups, including the Nexus Round Table. Nexus is a resource center in downtown Boston dedicated to educating the public about the benefits of sustainable design and green building innovation. We spend most of our time, however, talking with building engineers and architects, helping them understand our piece of the puzzle. Boston hasn't come as far as Chicago and other large cities with respect to green roofs, but we're making progress.

On the interior side we enthusiastically support Green Plants for Green Buildings, just as we supported Plants at Work. Getting clients to move beyond the altruistic benefits of plants and seriously address their health benefits remains a challenge. I am certified to train architects, but I've found that it takes a fairly sophisticated individual to truly understand and act on the green message we're conveying.

With that said, getting the "benefits of green" message across to customers is definitely the direction we all need to go, and we've made some progress. We're convincing some of our clients to change their ways (e.g., one of our law firm customers no longer uses brass plant containers, but instead uses recycled clay). Recycled glass is an interesting mulch, and we are gradually converting other clients to use environmentally friendly containers. It's all part of the same picture, understanding the benefits of the services we provide and becoming more environmentally aware overall. I think, too, that our suppliers need to be more helpful, to come up with designs and materials that fit into the green picture.

As an industry, we need to find more ways to educate our customers and the general public about the many benefits that our services offer. Yes, plants look good and lend plenty of aesthetic appeal to a building, but their true benefits go well beyond aesthetics.

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