



nerej

Leading a green economy revolution

April 21, 2010 - Green Buildings

Clean energy is now the common economic driver across the globe. Although few of us have felt the benefits of that, we need to be thinking about the role we want to play in shaping this new economy. Whether on the product side, as the new industrial revolution, or on the service side, meeting new needs and driving demand and requirements for products, the voice of design and construction professionals is critical.

The potential of the green economy to transform our market is similar to what we saw with the telecom industry from 1997-2007. An investment of \$850 billion in the US over ten years created 1.7 million jobs.

For an industry to grow, two things are critical: investment and demand. Even in a down economy, between the government stimulus spending and private investment, we are seeing record numbers in clean tech investment. Globally, investment in clean tech is measured in the hundreds of billions per country. In the US, the venture community, although spending less overall, still invested more than 12% on clean tech companies.

A recent report, "Clean Energy Trends 2010" attributes 831,139 jobs currently to the solar and wind industries, with 3,301,734 jobs projected by 2019. As green products increase in the market, so does confusion, greenwash, and a proliferation of labels and 3rd party certifications - all with the express intention to help figure everything out.

As a practitioner myself over the past 20 years, I have seen the growth of green claims at trade shows go from nonexistent to the cornucopia that is the GreenBuild. Design professionals and specifiers have played an important role by asking for green on their jobs and becoming more sophisticated in their demands.

This has all happened in a passive way, with a slow proliferation of messaging from individual design firms to their product reps and distributors. Design professionals, specifiers, facility managers and other purchasers represent billions of purchasing power. Design firms and property owners have the ability to influence the supply chain. How much greater and more effective will that power be when all companies joined together under a unified message? Now is the moment to go from a collection of individual voices, all interacting with the supply chain in different ways - to an organized and intentional community with strategic and direct lines of communication to decision makers in the product sector.

Barbara Batshalom, LEED AP, is the executive director of The Green Roundtable / NEXUS.

New England Real Estate Journal - 17 Accord Park Drive #207, Norwell MA 02061 - (781) 878-4540