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The sins of Building Professionals Greenwashing

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It's uplifting to read reports about the increased demand for green building despite the severely reduced demand for building overall. However, the increased competition in the green building space has forced building professionals to claim expertise in green building and market themselves as such, whether or not they can really deliver on this claim.

As I've written, our 2010 industry survey and other experiences have revealed a significant gap between aggressive marketing and institutional capability. Terrachoice illustrated this last week for products in their excellent presentation on "The Sins of Greenwashing" - now we're offering our own version of this framework focused on building professionals.

The Sins of Building Professional Greenwashing:

1. Sin of Fibbing: Stretching the truth, making irrelevant claims.
2. Sin of Over-Reliance on LEED: This happens when building professionals think delivering LEED projects is equivalent with delivering sustainable projects.
3. Sin of Misusing LEED: This happens when projects do design to LEED requirements instead of using it as a measurement tool.
4. Sin of "Certifiable": This includes claims such as, "This is a green building because we designed it using the LEED checklist"?
5. Sin of the Leadership Void: This happens when there is a lack of follow-through on promises from leadership.
6. Sin of the One-hit Wonder: This happens when teams claim that a project is green because they held one kick-off meeting that was a green/LEED charrette but did not incorporate integrative design into their project management.
7. Sin of the Status Quo: This happens when teams continue to repeat the traditional linear approach to design but expect a different outcome.
8. Sin of First Cost: This happens when the team fails to look at the life cycle cost impacts of the building or products.
9. Sin of Attitude: This happens when the team says "That can't be done", "We've tried that and it doesn't work", or "It's too risky."
10. Sin of False Representation: This happens when individuals claim that they are "on board" and committed but in reality don't make any efforts to support sustainability goals.

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