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By Jill Ayers - Environmental graphic design

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For those of us working on sustainable projects today, we understand gaining that LEED point related to signage and branding does not always help the project jump from Silver to Gold status. However, it is in a graphic designer's best interest to present as many creative, sustainable solutions to their clients as they possibly can. This understanding sends the message that they are aware of LEED principles and practices and that graphic design can be part of a smart, holistic program.

Whether the graphic solutions are for corporate, civic, healthcare, educational or cultural spaces, this green approach can be achieved with a few simple considerations. The first is to not "oversight" an environment, but be strategic about the location of wayfinding and branding. How can we move people around the space efficiently, tell stories in strategic locations and promote the company's brand in the most thoughtful and impactful locations.

The second step is to invest in quality materials and fabrication techniques that will stand the test of time, saving the client money and management in the future upkeep of the program. Thirdly, work with green materials wherever possible. Several companies have introduced green versions of their offerings and designers can learn to adapt green products used by their interior designer counterparts. In addition, newer digital printing techniques allow typography and imagery to be seamlessly integrated into wall systems, furniture, ceilings and floors, eliminating the need to use additional substrates.

Lastly, in cases where a competitive bid is not required, allowing the designer to bring a fabricator on board early will promote collaborative thinking that can lead to a seamless green design strategy from start to finish.

As we look ahead, having an open dialogue with your design partners will encourage the graphic design industry to continue developing green materials, products and fabrication processes. Employees may be happier and healthier when they are stimulated by good design that encourages them to explore their work environment while educating them in the process.

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