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Expert Q&As

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Q&A: Kieran Flanagan, Hollister Construction Services

Posted By Susan Piperato

Kieran D. Flanagan serves as President of the New Jersey Office for Hollister Construction Services, a full-service commercial real estate general contractor and construction manager with offices in Hasbrouck Heights, NJ; Conshohocken, PA; and New York City. Flanagan is certified in Green Building Design & Construction Practices. He completed the LEED Certified PNC Bank Building in Gillette, NJ, and is currently completing two other LEED projects in New Jersey and New York.

How important has it become to have a LEED AP as part of a project team? Is this more commonplace now than it was, say, two or three years ago? Does it put your firm ahead of others who may not have a LEED AP?

Having a LEED AP as part of a project team is becoming more and more important than it was just a few years ago. In fact, it's part of the criteria. In order to get certain LEED points, one person on the team needs to be certified. It used to be assumed it would be someone from the architecture firms, but now, it's often the Builder.

How has your firm benefited from having a LEED AP onboard?

There are a lot of benefits. The LEED training is very comprehensive, thorough and challenging. You need to know a lot of the terminology, theory and principles behind green building and you achieve that in LEED training. When you go into a LEED project you need to ensure the documentation is very tight and complete to achieve the points.

Another benefit is that you can know upfront how much you can budget for project administration costs. LEED projects take a bit more time on the project administration side. If you don't have a LEED AP, you would not know that and might get caught short. Without a LEED AP on staff, if you're taking on a green project, you have a steep learning curve.

Obviously, it was part of your mission to have a LEED AP on staff, but how has your LEED AP in turn further shaped your firm's mission?

At Hollister, our mission includes giving back and that includes the environment. A lot of our practice has become greener including things like making sure we go to a transfer station that sorts debris and recycles. When you go through the training and you know the methods behind it, you recognize things you can do and find the green products. There are more coming into the market each year.

Hollister has always been responsive to client needs. Having a LEED AP on staff means we can better meet those needs. I think we'll see more platinum and gold certification, particularly in the education and institutional segments.

How has having a LEED AP on staff impacted the rest of your firm?

It has built more awareness of green building practices and interest among other employees. A few have taken it upon themselves to become more educated are now enrolled in the green certification process. We are sponsoring them because we can see the advantage to having more people learn about green practices.

How does having a LEED AP affect your relations with your clients and other professionals involved in a given project?

Having a LEED AP is a widely recognized credential in construction nowadays. It used to be purely a credential in architecture, but has grown to be a pretty well known credential on the construction side of the industry as well. It enables you to speak intelligently about green methods and to troubleshoot problems that might arise in a construction project. You can develop not only a way of getting around those problems or solving them, but coming up with a solution that is cost-effective and will not impact the environment.