

Solutions for Wood with Roland Baumeister

The green building industry and LEED

Market opportunities and requirements for wood product manufacturers



The environment has become the issue of most concern for Canadians. With ever-increasing environmental challenges and the public's strong desire to address them, few industries possess as promising a future as the Canadian environmental industry.

This encompasses companies that are involved in the production of environmental goods, the provision of environmental services and the undertaking of related construction activities. Among these, the green building sector is expanding rapidly, with many municipalities making green building standards mandatory.

As Vancouver is leading the way, I spoke to one of the city's green building key players, developer Heather Tremain from reSource Rethinking Building, about green building opportunities for wood product manufacturers.

RB: The Canada Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) rating system is becoming an environmental code for government building projects, and for many commercial buildings. What market opportunities are there for wood product manufacturers who want to bid on LEED projects?

HT: LEED has become a key green standard in the industry and has definitely created dynamism in the market. The number of green developers is increasing. Bigger traditional developers are coming on board. More and more municipalities and the Government of Canada are requiring the use of LEED for some or all of their new building assets. Consumers are becoming more aware and interested in a sustainable and healthy live and work environment. For product suppliers and manufacturers, this opens up a whole new market for "green" products. And wood, if harvested and processed properly, can be a great choice for a "green" product.

The pool of green suppliers is still quite small. Businesses that move early into providing LEED-compliant products will benefit from less competition. There does seem to be a willingness to pay a modest premium for green wood products.

RB: What are green developers and designers looking for in wood products?

HT: As a green developer or designer, I am looking for quality wood products. And quality in the green building context means some of the following: offering regionally manufactured wood products, formaldehyde-free products, regionally harvested or certified by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC).

We are looking for all sorts of wood products used in buildings including cabinetry, framing, siding, doors, flooring, ceilings, furniture, partition walls, workstations, decks, trim and decorative furnishings.

RB: LEED is a big driver in the development of green products. What do manufacturers need to understand and do to provide LEED-compliant products?

HT: LEED lays out quite clearly what is required to make your products compliant. Review the prerequisites and credits to see where your product could fit. Keep in mind that a product itself can't earn points nor be endorsed by LEED.

Training workshops offered by the Canada Green Building Council are another good source. I also recommend looking at other green building rating systems, such as the Built Green program by the Built Green Society of Canada.

RB: And finally, once a manufacturer is familiar with the product requirements, they might seek direct manufacturing advice to determine how to make manufacturing processes and product lines green. What can suppliers of LEED-compliant products do to successfully bid on green building projects?

HT: First, work the local network of build-

ers, as we are all looking for local or regional suppliers. Then, provide the product information that developers need to get their building projects LEED certified, such as where it was produced; its travel history; and proof that it is formaldehyde free.

If suppliers offer product sheets containing all of this data, the selection process will be much more efficient. As a wood manufacturer, I would also look at the biggest piece of the market – the residential market, which makes up 75 per cent of construction. Collaborating with some of the bigger retailers, like Home Depot, to expand their green product range is a good opportunity, too.

For more information on green building rating systems, check out the Canada Green Building Council website at www.cagbc.org and the Built Green Society of Canada website at www.builtgreencanada.ca. **WW**

Heather Tremain is the co-founder and CEO of reSource Rethinking Building, a Vancouver-based green building consulting and development company. Roland Baumeister is the manager of value-added manufacturing at Forintek Canada, a company with 25 years of experience providing technical support to the wood products industry in Canada. He can be reached at 604-222-5672 or roland@van.forintek.ca.

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