

Connecting Local Manufacturers with Sustainable Builders

By Angela Kliever
Dir. of Marketing, ACS International, Inc.

Recently it was made clear, by an international builder of commercial structures, that there seems to be a disconnect between local manufacturers of cast polymer and solid surface products and the architects and builders in this country—especially when it comes to finding products to meet LEED® building requirements. In order to assist local manufacturers, the following article is intended to offer ideas to help close the gap between the architects/construction managers and you, the local manufacturer.

LEED® Snap-shot

Everyone has likely heard of LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) by now, but many may not understand the complexity of the regulations when a project is trying for LEED certification. It would take a much longer article to explain LEED in detail, but here's an extremely condensed version that may help clear the muddy waters.

If a construction company is designing/building a school that is to be LEED certified, they have several levels to strive for. These levels include: Certified (40–49 points needed), Silver (50–59 points needed), Gold (60–79 points needed) and Platinum (80–110 points). Points are tallied in by meeting guidelines in a variety of areas however water consumption reduction, energy savings, and transportation are areas of most importance with in-door air quality, material use, and waste management below these. Applying this knowledge to cast polymer and solid surface could result in sales for local manufacturers.

Manufacturing Considerations

Let's say that a builder in southern California is working on a hotel that is going for Gold Certification. This builder is waiting on shower pans that are very late and holding up the bathrooms for the entire hotel. Time is money so the manager is asking his cast polymer supplier in Arizona what the issue is. When the manufacturer states that there is an issue getting the shower pans from China, everything comes to a screeching halt.

Part of the transportation designation stipulates that to get points, the building products need to be made and transported within 500 miles of the install site. The project would have been fine if the Arizona marble manufacturer was actually making the shower pans, but as a cost savings measure they were able to purchase Chinese made shower pans for less than they could make them locally.

This scenario is actually a true story with a happy ending. The shower pans were made in Arizona after all and they were delivered to the California site without too much delay. There are a variety of lessons to be learned from this

Why Are New Construction Projects Going Green?

Green Buildings **SAVE**

- 40% water use annually
- 30% energy and greenhouse gas emissions
- 50-75% of construction & demolition waste going to landfills
- \$58 billion of sick time from work annually
- \$180 billion in increased worker productivity

Source: U.S. Green Building Council

situation. Not only do shops need to know what it means to supply Green builders, it's also good to retain the ability to manufacture in house in order to supply locally made products.

Nearly Effortless Green

Suppliers and creative manufacturers are already running with Green products. There are numerous ways of meeting builders' standards for their LEED certification.

- One is simply manufacturing in the right place at the right time. As mentioned in the scenario above, the Chinese made material didn't qualify while the locally made product did. Refreshing, isn't it? This can be left to chance, or shops can target designers and builders to gain regional attention (see marketing to Green builders below).
- Get creative with back fill materials, try glass dust. If a shop is using spray granites for a variety of bathroom parts the surface might be made of synthetic material, but that doesn't mean the back fill has to be traditional calcium carbonate. To create a recycled product, try incorporating glass dust with the calcium. Glass dust is the scrap of glass recycling and is often extremely affordable (more so than calcium). The U.S. generates 13.6 million tons of glass waste per year (EPA, 2007) with 24% of that number going to recycling uses. Recycled glass is gaining in popularity, but the remnants of sifting are less desirable as they are brown in color when mixed in resin. Experiment and see what percentage of dust may be used in your back fill.
- Green resins: Many resin suppliers are exploring Green resins. Talk to your representative to find out alternatives that might work for your production needs.

Marketing to Green Builders

Local advertising is important for all fabricators, however to reach a broader target audience—national designers, architects, and builders—means going beyond marketing practices of the past. Here are few sites to help generate ideas for your company.

- Visit the McGraw Hill Construction "Sweets Network" web site at <http://products.construction.com> and explore the site. This is one of the top choices for architects to view and spec products for use in projects. On the home page (lower right corner) there is a link for "Building Product Manufacturers." Check it out and see if this fits your product offering.
- For those offering recycled content in their product lines, here are a couple options to consider:
 - McGraw Hill Construction "Green Source" <http://greensource.construction.com/>
 - California Waste Management site has a program to encourage the use of such products. Visit <http://www.ciwmb.ca.gov/RCP/CompanyManagement.asp>
- Group Marketing: Many fabricators belong to associations such as the ACMA and ICPA. Consider collaborating with other members of your organization to create a regional ad with other members in your area to target builders and designers. Talk to the association representatives about this option. Advertising is generally expensive and combining fiscal

strength can help stretch everyone's budget. This can be applied to sustainable builders as well as traditional.

About the Author

With nearly 15 years of business to business marketing experience, Angela Kliever currently holds the position of Director of Marketing with an industry supplier, ACS International. Ms. Kliever has worked with the cast polymer and solid surface industries for nearly five years and has a solid understanding of the products and services within the industry. In addition to marketing manufacturing supplies for the cast polymer industry, Ms. Kliever has retained membership with the Color Marketing Group and works closely in developing color standards and directions for the market.

Source List

California Integrated Waste Management Board. Website retrieval date: January 29, 2009.

Website: <http://www.ciwmb.ca.gov/>

EPA. Website retrieval date: February 1, 2009. Website:

<http://www.epa.gov/osw/conserves/materials/glass.htm>

U.S. Green Building Council. Website retrieval date: January 27, 2009. Website:

<http://www.usgbc.org/>