

OUTSIDE OF THE ORDINARY

NONTRADITIONAL
PROFESSIONALS
ARE EARNING
GREEN-BUILDING
DESIGNATIONS

BY JEFF STEPHENS

PERHAPS ONE SIGN THAT THE GREEN-BUILDING PROFESSION IS COMING OF AGE IS THE NUMBER OF PROFESSIONAL DESIGNATIONS FOUND ON ITS BUSINESS CARDS. THEY INCLUDE, AMONG OTHERS, AIA, IIDA, ASID, P.E., CCPR, CCT, CFM AND LEED AP. (SEE "ALPHABET SOUP," PAGE 82.)

PROFESSIONAL DESIGNATIONS CAN HELP DEMONSTRATE FLUENCY IN A PARTICULAR DISCIPLINE USED BY TRADITIONAL GREEN-BUILDING PROFESSIONALS LIKE ARCHITECTS AND ENGINEERS. BUT HOW DO LEED ACCREDITATION AND OTHER GREEN DESIGNATIONS HELP THOSE PROFESSIONS ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF GREEN BUILDING, SUCH AS GRAPHIC DESIGN, REAL ESTATE AND MARKETING? WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR THESE PROFESSIONS, AND WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR THE INDUSTRY?

A LITTLE ABOUT LEED AP

Probably the most recognized designation in the green-building industry is LEED AP, which stands for LEED Accredited Professional. In 2001, the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) launched the LEED AP program to recognize individuals' understandings of green-building practices and principles and the LEED rating program. Today there are more than 23,000 LEED APs with roughly 400 test sessions administered each month. The pass rate is approximately 68 percent, according to Ann Bowles, accreditation manager for USGBC. The council's exam is based on the LEED-NC 2.1 rating system.

USGBC is updating the exam to capture the changes from LEED-NC version 2.1 to LEED-NC version 2.2. It also is developing exams to support LEED for Commercial Interiors (LEED-CI) and LEED for Existing Buildings (LEED-EB), which were released in late 2004.

While the LEED AP program is open to all individuals with no prerequisites for experience or education, the council encourages tenure in green building, construction industry experience, and familiarity with LEED documentation and credit rulings, among others. These elements may be most challenging for those whose day-to-day work requirements do not involve LEED submittals. But that hasn't stopped out-of-the-ordinary professionals from becoming accredited.

LEED FOR "OTHERS"

According to USGBC statistics collected since September 2004, approximately 81 percent of LEED APs are architects (46 percent), engineers (23 percent) or project managers (12 percent). (See the figure, page 82.) Understandably, these professionals are on the front line of LEED registrations and certifications. But in recent times, professionals designated as "Other" in the council's online searchable database have been rising.

One such example is Phoenix-based real-estate professional Denise van den Bossche. Accredited in July 2004, van den Bossche sees her LEED AP status as a "personal statement of my stewardship and level of responsibility and dedication. Nearby Scottsdale has one of the most progressive green-building programs, and builders are recognizing the opportunities that lie ahead." To her, the LEED AP designation is a symbol of her green philosophy and her willingness to educate her clients.

Candice Kollar is principal and creative director of Kollar Design Associates Inc., a marketing communications design firm based in

San Francisco. She earned the LEED AP title to "demonstrate to my clients that I understand the issues surrounding green building and the importance of clearly and effectively communicating its benefits. We do that through clear strategic problem solving, strong writing and engaging design." Her clients have included Fortune 500 corporations, conference organizers and companies in the green-building industry.

Kollar's approach to taking the LEED AP test was somewhat unique. In summer 2004, she embarked on a green-building road trip, visiting certified green buildings and talking with architects and project managers. This experience complemented her local LEED AP study group, which she formed with James Kalin, chief executive officer of Virtually Green, San Francisco, a multimedia company that develops virtual tours of green buildings that can be viewed on the Internet. Their study group, which met regularly, included other motivated green-building professionals that were using the LEED designation to advance their careers.

Entering the green-building field from the nonprofit world, Allison Kim decided to pursue her accreditation to better understand the green-building profession and show prospective employers she was qualified. Her commitment paid off when she was hired as a green-building consultant by KEMA, Oakland, Calif., an energy-consulting firm. Her hiring was contingent on passing the exam.

All employees in KEMA's green-building practice are required to maintain accreditation to the latest exam, according to Group Manager Wes Sullens. "On-the-job experience would have helped make passing the exam easier, but the stakes were too high not to do a great job," Kim says. Now a year later, she finds accreditation even more valuable, applying it to projects each day.

A recurring theme among nontraditional LEED APs is how the designation shows commitment to prospective clients and employers. Gina Blus comes to the green-building field from high-tech marketing and business planning. Blus, who runs her own consulting practice, took the

Professional designations can help demonstrate fluency in a particular discipline used by traditional green-building professionals like architects and engineers.

Alphabet Soup

exam to show she had a baseline of green-building expertise. "It's a tangible way to demonstrate knowledge and credibility to prospective clients. It imparted knowledge that helped me identify important elements when facilitating workshops and strategic planning sessions," Blus notes.

With the advent of new technology, credibility also can be found in the substance of one's blog posts as shown by Jacqui Hossfeld, who runs the Web journal *EnviroPundit: Green Building Blog*. Hossfeld, an architectural engineer by training, currently is using her blog to establish her credentials in the green-building world. "I plan on achieving my LEED AP in the coming year to complement my online experiences. Right now, a green-building blog is the most effective tool," Hossfeld says.

OTHER GREEN DESIGNATIONS

There are other accreditation and certification programs applicable to nontraditional green-building professionals.

The Association of Energy and Environmental Real Estate Professionals offers energy and environmental education for real-estate professionals through its EcoBroker program. The program addresses environmental topics, such as mold, radon, lead, IAQ and more, according to Chris Bartle, owner of Green Key Real Estate, San Francisco, and a certified EcoBroker. "The Eco-Broker designation helps me stand out in a crowded industry by demonstrating to potential clients that environmental topics are important to me and I've had additional training," says Bartle.

Certified EcoBrokers must hold a valid real-estate license and undergo the group's energy, environmental and marketing training program, which includes three online or in-person classes. EcoBroker's core curriculum is Association of Real Estate License Law Officials certified to ensure quality design and delivery of distance learning.

The Construction Specifications Institute (CSI) offers several certification programs to its 17,000 members and other building industry members. Pat Hooper, a Certified Construction Product Representative (CCPR) and principal of Emeryville, Calif.-based HooperWolfe, a sustainable product consulting firm, finds her accreditation an asset when helping manufacturers improve the environmental profile of their products. "Without professional specifiers and individuals knowledgeable about construction documents, requirements and substitutions, a LEED certified building or any green building can't happen. It's all about specifications," Hooper says.

The institute offers several certifications in different disciplines. Earning the Construction Document Technologist (CDT) certificate is a prerequisite for other certifications, including CCPR, Certified Construction Specifier (CCS) and Certified Construction Contract Administrator (CCCA). The technically oriented tests are administered by CSI several times per year.

MORE TO BE DONE

For nontraditional green-building professionals, LEED AP and other green designations may help level the playing field and allow entrance into what many consider to be an insular industry. While the total number of LEED APs is interesting, it isn't a true measure of sustainability, just the possibility of 23,000 more points on LEED tally sheets. Let's continue to develop innovative approaches to the built environment.

Jeff Stephens is principal of Oakland, Calif.-based Planet Relations, a public-relations consultancy for Earth-minded businesses. He can be reached at (510) 663-4462 or jeff@planetrelations.com.

AIA	American Institute of Architects
ASID	American Society of Interior Designers
FAIA	AIA, Jury of Fellows
IIDA	International Interior Design Association
FIIDA	IIDA, College of Fellows
P.E.	Professional Engineer
LEED AP	Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design Accredited Professional
CDT	Construction Documents Technologist
CFM	Certified Facility Manager
CSS	Certified Construction Specifier
CCCA	Certified Construction Contract Administrator
CCPA	Certified Construction Product Representative
CID	Certified Interior Designer (California)

FIGURE LEED APs BY PRACTICE AREA

This data has been collected since September 2004. "Other" category is self declared. "Misc. Aggregate" is a summation of practice areas below 1 percent and includes commissioning agents, owners, developers, manufacturers, educators and more. *Source: USGBC, 2006*

