Every Penny Counts: Tracking Building Performance to Save Money and Resources

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In today's economy, every penny counts. And as building owners and facility managers know all too well, every penny adds up. When the lights in your 30-story office building are left on an extra hour each day, or the brutal summer heat requires an extra blast of air conditioning, your energy consumption escalates and so does your utility bill. That's precisely why building owners and facility managers are starting to "listen" to their buildings to ensure optimal operations.

Inspired by these attentive facility managers, the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) launched its Building Performance Partnership (BPP) in 2009. The organization-wide initiative positions the optimization of building performance as a fundamental goal of the green building movement. BPP engages both owners and facility managers of LEED-certified commercial buildings through data collection, analysis and action. Participants receive annual performance reports, report cards and real-time data interfaces to aid in their building performance goals.

At the end of 2010, 132 LEED-certified facilities, mainly office buildings, had joined BPP. These facilities range in size from 2,000 to 2 million square feet. In 2011, the program grew to include nearly 350 partners, triple 2010's figures. The types of organizations and facilities have grown to include retailers, offices and other building types. These participants are demonstrating their commitment to energy efficiency monitoring and are leading among their peers by sharing their experiences and contributing to the market need for building performance education.

The first year participants represented high-performing buildings from every region of the country. Those buildings eligible for an Energy Star score had an overall average score of 87. Consistent with a high average Energy Star score, BPP participants had demonstrated Source Energy Use Intensity that is on average 41 percent lower than the national averages reported in EPA's Energy Star Portfolio Manager.

Each year will bring new enhancements to the program and offer increased connectivity to other USGBC programs. This year, all participants that share data through BPP will receive their performance report through an online interface, which will contain an analysis of their current performance, from the most recent 12 months of utility data provided, side-by-side with their benchmarks from LEED certification.

To support the increased interest in building performance, USGBC is implementing automation solutions for data collection and transfer, including establishing an automatic data input and output relationship with EPA's Energy Star Portfolio Manager, and will begin work to automate additional benchmarking solutions.

The goal is for the annual performance reports to act as a helpful reminder to facility managers that their building's performance matters and benefits the bottom line. Armed with comprehensive green building performance data, BPP will enable standardization of reporting metrics and analytics and establish new performance benchmarks, ultimately transforming the way the world views building operations and maintenance.

For more information about BPP, visit usgbc.org/bpp.

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