On Leadership: An Ode to Maverick, Goose and You

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Even 25 years later, who can forget Maverick and Goose's memorable exchange? "I feel the need...the need for speed."

While the green building movement continues to move forward at an incredibly rapid pace, that's not why I bring up this seemingly non-sequitur reference to Top Gun. The quote, oddly, reminds me of something deep and soulful to the green building movement – the need to lead.

Just think about our movement's standard bearers – Rick Fedrizzi, David Gottfried, Gail Vittori, Rob Watson, Bill Browning, the late (and very missed) Ray Anderson, and the list goes on. This mantra – the need to lead – is clearly a core and universal driver that excites us, impels us, influences us, sustains us and inspires us.

At any given moment, we could take a snapshot of any given layer of the movement and see how the need to lead is propelling us all forward. For example:

- I think of the $1.4 trillion net opportunity of green building, an economic driver that would drive enormous energy savings and job creation (See Mathias Bell's recent blog).
- I think of Project Haiti, bringing green building to those who need it most (See Marisa Long's recent blog on the inspirational project).
- I think of a university set to build 5 LEED Platinum buildings.
- I think of McGraw Hill's forecast that green homes will increase five-fold from $17 billion in 2011 to between $87 and $114 billion by 2016.
- I think of the 1.5 million square feet of real estate that is certified to LEED each day, the equivalent of three Empire State Buildings a week.
- I think of the revival of the innovative financing vehicle of Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) Bonds, which could provide "unlimited funds for energy efficiency." (See Green Technology's interview with the head of Ygrene Energy Fund, which is advancing a $100 million investment in building retrofits).
- I think of the new Green Ribbon Schools Program, a program advanced by Secretary Arne Duncan and the U.S. Department of Education that will recognize schools that save energy, reduce costs, feature environmentally sustainable learning spaces, protect health, foster wellness, and offer environmental education.
- I think of all the opportunities the Obama Administration can take right now to advance Better Buildings through Executive Action.

The progress and the work that is happening each and every day (i.e., the leadership that you all are showing) makes me want to put on a pair of aviator sunglasses, do my best Tom Cruise imitation and say, "I feel the need..."

Well by now, like Goose, you know the rest of the bit. You live it. And you do it everyday.

Postscript: Yes, this entire blog also serves as a monitory note on the dangers of watching the Sunday Matinee with green building on the mind.

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