Building Systems Commissioning: The Highest Return On Protecting And Financing Your Green Investment

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Abstract
All too often newly completed buildings - especially green buildings with their unique design parameters - do not fully function as originally intended. Unchecked and unresolved, these issues can quickly detract from the euphoria of a new facility. As a LEED prerequisite and potential credit, building systems commissioning provides building owners with a process to sustain the euphoria long after occupancy.

What most owners do not yet know is that commissioning is more than just a form of insurance, it is a high return-on-investment green building strategy. By avoiding unnecessary ‘retro-fit’ capital costs and minimizing operating costs, commissioning is essentially a funding source for additional green and programmatic amenities. Of particular interest to green building advocates, commissioning provides one of the highest financial returns on investment of possible credit earning actions in the LEED rating system.

This presentation will document the return on investment for commissioning dollars. New information & documented performance on the operational and financial benefits of commissioning in green buildings will be presented. Examples from at least three sustainable design facilities in academic and research settings will be highlighted to support findings.

Additionally, a successful green building commissioning process will be presented - one that defines the role of the commissioning agent and focuses on performance based outcomes, rather than prescriptive paperwork and guidelines.

- Three primary learning objectives
It is our intent that attendees will leave this session with the following:

1. A thorough understanding of the building commissioning process and the role of the commissioning agent as it relates to green building.

2. An understanding that the economic value of commissioning can be quantified and that its high return on investment can fund other sustainable design initiatives.

3. An understanding of the lessons learned from commissioning in green environments based on selected case examples.

Keywords
Commissioning, Financing

Bio
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Joe, a professional engineer, provides technical support services to a wide base of ARAMARK Facility Services clients. With 12 years of strategic & technical experience, Joe has promoted the stewardship of natural resources and sustainable energy and building programs at Colleges, Universities, Museums, and Research Facilities.

Most recently, he has guided the design review and building commissioning programs for signature projects at Northwestern University, the University of Chicago, Tufts University, The George Washington University, The Washington National Cathedral Foundation, RPI, Baylor University, Hamilton College, and Middlebury College. He also supports the sustainable energy initiatives for the University of the Virgin Islands.

Joe is the author of an article recently published in the Business Officer Magazine entitled "It's not Easy Building Green". He looks forward to serving the U.S. Green Building Council as a core committee member in formulating the newest LEED green building standards for new construction and building commissioning.

Mr. Higgins holds a master's degree in Education from Oxford University and a B.S. in Engineering and a B.A. in Economics from Swarthmore College.