Continuing Education Q&A with Thornton Tomasetti

Published on **15 Apr 2013** Posted in **LEED**

LEED Platinum Five Crescent Drive in Philadelphia. Photo credit: Francis Dzikowski / Esto for Robert A.M. St

Thornton Tomasetti provides engineering design, investigation and analysis services to clients worldwide on projects of every size and level of complexity. Founded in 1956, today Thornton Tomasetti is a 700-person organization of engineers, architects and other professionals collaborating from offices across the world.

Thanks to Amy Seif Hattan and Rachel Michelin for participating in this Q&A.

1. Tell us about Thornton Tomasetti's approach to supporting professional development, especially as it relates to LEED.
Thornton Tomasetti values professional development, and to that end offers internal training on a variety of topics related to our professions via our "ThinkTank" portal and a weekly "Thornton Tomasetti University" presentation series. We provide time to licensed employees so they can attend seminars related to their professional development, and we pay for a certain amount of program fees.

We also support a LEED Education program to assist employees in maintaining or pursuing a LEED professional credential. The LEED Education program is housed within Corporate Sustainability and is part of our "Triple Bottom Line" approach to sustainability, which promotes the inclusion of economic, ecological, and social factors. We also value investing in social sustainability, which includes skills enhancement for our employees. The program involves regular organized gatherings of employees in our many offices to view USGBC webinars from our subscription, along with in-person presentations for continuing education credits. Thornton Tomasetti's LEED Fellows and USGBC Faculty also provide internal training on green building topics.

2. Why did your organization purchase the USGBC Webinar Subscription?
Almost one third of our company,190 Thornton Tomasetti employees to be exact, are LEED APs or Green Associates. With this critical mass of employees who were interested in maintaining their LEED credentials, it was common sense for Thornton Tomasetti to purchase the subscription. Also, many of our employees — a majority being structural engineers — are not engaged in sustainability consulting on a daily basis, and continuing education programs related to green buildings were not easily accessible. Both the webinar subscription and internal education sessions support the pursuit of continuing education and show that Thornton Tomasetti values professional development as it relates to green building and LEED. Since our initial purchase of the USGBC webinar subscription in July 2011, Thornton Tomasetti has acquired two green building consulting companies and now has a very active sustainability practice.

3. How has the webinar subscription benefited Thornton Tomasetti and its leadership in the green building industry?
The webinar subscription has made it easy for our employees to maintain their credentials. Furthermore, through the webinar subscription our employees are educated on green building topics and this knowledge is applied in the workplace. In addition, the education provided by the subscription helps internal collaboration efforts between our sustainability consultants, building skin architects, structural engineers and other Thornton Tomasetti A&E professionals.

4. How many employees within your organization access your webinar subscription? Are they LEED professionals?
While all of our employees have access to our webinar subscription, 190 employees have been invited to participate in the subscription because they have received a LEED credential. Some employees who access the webinars are LEED

professionals who work within Thornton Tomasetti's Sustainability Practice, but many are LEED accredited structural engineers or architects who may have limited daily contact with LEED projects.

5. What is the best thing about USGBC Webinar Subscription?
The USGBC Webinar Subscription provides a variety of informative and interesting presentations — and the best thing is getting to watch and learn from all of these great presentations. Of course, the obvious benefit is that the subscription is an easy route to credential maintenance.

6. Will you look to the subscription to support your organization in the future? Why?
Yes, we will look to the subscription to support our professional development efforts in the future. We also plan to start offering our own custom courses that are more specific to the disciplines of our employees. We have a loyal following of employees who regularly use the subscription to maintain their credentials — so, if it ain't broke, why fix it?

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