

compelling communications

The Best of the Green Communicators What Makes Them Great? Can You Ever Catch Up?

BY JOAN CAPELIN, FSMPS, HON. AIA

This is the third of my *Marketer* columns on green marketing, where I alert designers, builders, and their marketing people to the danger of commoditizing sustainable services. Some do this by citing the number of LEED-accredited people on their staff as if that equates to effectiveness. They should instead, I argue, encourage and support thoughtful, passionate green leaders with a sense of the urgency of their mission.

Knowing that no one watches for new information and insights about this industry more closely than design magazine editors, I sent a few this question: What design professional has done a phenomenal job of communicating the benefit of a green approach—and of convincing others to adopt sustainability?

Formidable **Susan Szenasy**, who has successfully and way ahead of anyone else used *Metropolis* as her bully pulpit for sustainability, answered me instantly: “Frankly, none of them. Either they’re too heavy handed or don’t know how to talk about it, aside from the obvious few.”

Szenasy’s “obvious few” list starts with architect William McDonough, whom *Time* long ago dubbed “Hero for the Planet.” He has been deified so much, there’s no need to give you more, except to direct you to the eloquent www.mcdonough.com. The site opens with this quote: “I believe we can accomplish great and profitable things within a new conceptual framework—one that values our legacy, honors diversity, and feeds ecosystems and societies...”

Jerry Yudelson, P.E. (a former *Marketer* Contributing Editor), is a cinch to include as the third communicator. He is working on his 13th book, *The World’s Greenest Buildings: Promise vs. Performance in Sustainable Design*, due out September 2012. His Web site, GreenBuildConsult.com makes the point that “we have proven the business case for green buildings,” and Jerry has.

I’m guessing that Jerry has had the same questions as the rest of us. For instance, he wondered, “How do you market green services? So he wrote *Marketing Green Building Services: Strategies for Success*. Is Europe so far ahead? Can you “green” retail development? Where is urban water in this discussion? And so he set out to learn about this topic—or perhaps he queried or was approached by organizations that needed to get in the green game—and then wrote yet another book.

It’s worth visiting the site for the number of ways this one peripatetic, determined engineer has promoted green design and construction and established himself as the expert consultant in the field. The articles are a primer by themselves and links to deeper resources.