



Case Study Updates: Maturity, Maintenance and Marketing

After much thoughtful planning and expense, the green museum or green exhibit opens. Then what? Some of the green museums featured on the initial launch of the greenexhibits.org Web site weigh in with the many ways they have chosen to drill deeper into green, sideline practices that cost too much or just don't work and get visitors to notice the sometimes subtle shades of green all around them.



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GO GREEN AND GET REAL

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It snowed last week. One of the early March snow storms that doesn't amount to much, just a dusting on the ground and sidewalks... a bit icy. The kind of snow that always makes me feel guilty walking into the Children's Museum of Pittsburgh. Last year we used environmentally friendly salt to melt the snow. It cost five times more than rock salt and we went over budget by \$3,000. We switched back to regular salt and now we're watching our pachysandra die along the sidewalk. But the parking lot and sidewalks are clear, visitors are safe from falls and we're in budget. As much as we like to be "green" in every aspect of the museum's operation, we're not. We try to make good decisions, do the best we can and try not to feel guilty when our practices aren't 100% environmentally correct.

The Children's Museum of Pittsburgh's expansion, which opened in November 2004, allowed us to make sweeping "green" changes in our building's construction. The museum was recently awarded silver LEED certification. Early on, we made the commitment to environmentally friendly materials and practices which in the end cost about 3-4% over normal construction costs. We used wheat board, low flow toilets, low VOC paint, recycled or natural fiber carpet, renewable energy and perhaps the greatest coup of all, two historic buildings to achieve the rating. We even put a shower and bike racks on site for our (two) employees who commute by bike. In many ways, that's the easy part of the story. Pittsburgh was already known as having the second largest number of LEED certified buildings in the country so philanthropists knew what we were talking about during our capital campaign (see www.pittsburghkids.org for more information).

We had been flirting with the idea of "greening" the museum before our expansion as the result of our assistant marketing director Suzanne McCaffrey's commitment to green practices. Suzanne started simply by finding people to recycle our office paper, printer cartridges, bottles and cans. She headed a staff committee which made it a point to assess where we could make simple changes that would make a difference and then told us about those changes—repeatedly. We brought our old ceramic mugs in from home so everyone could have a cup of coffee without styrofoam. We took the cans and bottles home for the recycling truck since the city did not pick up from office buildings. We formed a partnership with Construction Junction, a nonprofit in Pittsburgh that recycles building materials. (They played an important role when construction on our new facility began.) And we all started to pay attention. Being "green" became an extension of our mission. More importantly, it became part of our culture.

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Operating an 80,000-square-foot facility using "green" practices is challenging and rewarding. Our cleaning crew uses environmentally friendly cleaning products. We made it part of their contract with us. Our facilities manager needed the most convincing. We suspect that he orders a few products that do not fit the "green" criteria, but at least we have him thinking about it. We've cut the waste in the café with the introduction of plastic baskets lined with paper for sandwiches and wraps. We still use the clear plastic containers for salads and take-out orders (guilt!) and continue to look for other options. Big, ugly industrial sized recycling containers dot the café and group lunch room. They're hard to miss. In a unique collaboration, the Pennsylvania Resource Council did an audit of our kitchen food waste. They found that we could support an eight-by-twelve-foot earth worm farm in our Backyard exhibit. They're building it and we're installing it with educational information about starting your own worm farm using the organic waste from your kitchen.

We are also turning our attention to conservation. We use compact and regular fluorescent lights where practical and in unique ways. The lighting in the hallways is made up of fluorescent lights placed vertically on the wall. Lights in the bathrooms and hallways have sensors that detect movement. Track lighting is still used in exhibit areas. And in a very practical nod to conservation, we turn the lights off on sunny days when it's not needed.

In the beginning of the year, we instituted a carpooling policy to encourage conservation. Four parking spaces in the back of the building are designated for employees who drive to work together. This is a perk since employee parking is in an off-site garage. We're finding that many are signing up for the program although we have not had every parking space filled to date.

We're experimenting with a roof garden outside of the director's window in our attempt to conserve more energy. Last spring, fifteen three-foot-square plant-filled blocks were placed on a section of flat roof to not only provide beauty to the office but to focus on possibly more conservation of heating and cooling by the reduction of heat islands.

Finally, education plays an important role in our "greening." Working with the Green Building Alliance, Conservation Consultants Inc. and the Pennsylvania Resource Council, we began to offer for-credit classes for teachers and administrators about the impact of green practices. A class titled "Green Building as a Teaching Tool" is in our curriculum with "Puppetry in the Classroom" and "Printmaking 101"... an indication of how much it has become part of our culture.

Throughout the museum you will find signs, recycled pamphlets and café tent cards which talk about the Children's Museum of Pittsburgh's commitment to the environmental practices. Our Web site is also rich in information, especially now about our LEED rating.

This year we will be installing an exhibit in the café demonstrating the output of our solar panels and energy consumption. We also plan on more signs throughout the museum pointing out our many environmental features. We do not plan to do an exhibit about a "healthy environment" but we want to point out to visitors that we are one.

There are times that I think that we haven't done enough. It seems like many small gestures. But then I remember that many small gestures add up. And I don't feel quite so guilty about the salt. 