

# Selling in Today's Green Economy: A 3-Part Series

## Part 1: Understanding Today's Buyer and Getting Expo-Ready

As we all prepare for [Greenbuild International Conference and Expo 2019](#) we can't help but reflect on how our industry has changed. Sustainable building and development has evolved from what was once viewed as a fad to a global imperative, with an impact on health and wellness as well as the economic growth of communities, cities, our country, and ultimately our planet.

Engaging decision-makers of green building solutions involves cultivating relationships and trust. Buyers and influencers are thoughtful and educated and take a long-term view of the industry, choosing to work with suppliers who are transparent, well-informed, and collaborative.

## What's new for 2019 and what will buyers expect to see this year?

Through our research, we have identified the primary motivations for designing, creating, building, and operating within the sustainable built environment.

### These 11 highlights are:

1. Consider human health and well-being
2. Build a green economy
3. Enhance community and equity
4. Promote how they contribute to climate change reversal
5. Restore and protect water resources
6. Champion sustainable resource cycles
7. Protect habitats and ecosystems
8. Improve performance and energy efficiencies
9. Support new technology and innovation
10. Ensure resiliency
11. Make every building – especially homes – a green building

**Consider how your own product or service offering or technology fulfills one (or several) of these broader goals.**



This year, more than 10k professionals will be meeting in Atlanta to find ways to deliver on these imperatives. They include architecture, engineering, and design firms, contractors, builders, developers, facility managers and operators, government and utilities, manufacturers, consultants, associations, and nonprofits.

Among the professionals speaking this year is [Josh Jacobs](#), LEED AP+BD&C, Director of Environmental Codes & Standards, UL Environment & Sustainability. He stresses that, in recent years, more decision-makers are looking at both the human health impact and the financial impact of green building. “Sustainable buildings have higher rental rates, higher occupancy, and higher productivity, which has led REITs and other investors to get more interested in them.” In addition, he notes that “sustainable procurement allows for a more transparent supply chain.”

[Dennis Freeland](#), Senior Project Architect, Senior Associate, [Perkins & Will](#), points out that green design elements are now “embedded in building codes, which hold all designers and builders accountable.” That said, the number of product and planning options have increased exponentially, and savvy buyers are asking more complex and direct questions of their suppliers. The way in which decisions are being made has become more collaborative and interactive. Sellers, therefore, need to ready themselves to respond to questions thoroughly and transparently and to tailor their answers to multiple reviewers and decision-makers.

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## Therefore, as you prepare to attend the Expo and plan to reach today's buyer you must:

1. **Think beyond the features and description of your product or service offering** and be ready to articulate the benefits (using the 11-points above as your guide).
2. **As part of #1, focus on material transparency.** HPD (Health Product Declarations) and EPDs (Environmental Product Declarations) are now standard ways of talking about the impact of the components of your product or service. They include energy use and emissions and air, soil, water, and waste generation.
3. **Ensure that your selling team is highly-trained and well-versed** in all aspects of the green building industry and has a referral network for more complex questions.
4. **Make time to attend some of the 200+ conference sessions**, even if this entails bringing additional team members to the event. This year, 82 percent of the conference content will be new, never-presented-before insights and education, including summits on resilience and global health and wellness. Plus, you can earn up to 28 GBC and AIA continuing education credits. A broad and deep understanding of the industry and its thought-leaders will make you more valuable as a trusted partner.
5. **Understand the power of networks, influencers, and communities.** [Jennifer Taranto](#), Director of Sustainability at [Structure Tone](#), helped form a group of prior competitors. Collaboration is the new normal. Working with Steven Burke at Consigli and facilitated by Building Green, the Sustainable Construction Leaders learn from each other and drive change faster. The existence of peer networks like this means that suppliers need to be hyper-focused on the customer experience and product/service quality. Suppliers who excel will find that word-of-mouth and referral networks are more important than ever.
6. **Be prepared to work with multiple members of teams and various functions.** Although designing and building has long been a collaborative effort, green building takes that interactivity to the next level. All aspects of the supply chain and building process come into play. As you follow-up after the Expo, be patient. Develop a strategy for cultivating relationships, getting to know the organizations you're selling to, and matching your solutions to their individual needs.
7. **Get future-focused.** For example, Taranto believes that we'll see a much stricter focus on carbon emissions and that close to 50 percent of professionals surveyed will require embodied carbon accounting within the next two years. This is just one example of future trends that will have an impact on your product and service strategy.
8. **Show and tell.** Be prepared with case studies, testimonials, and endorsements. Decision-makers in the green building space want to know that their suppliers are thoroughly entrenched in the industry and have a track record of walking the talk. How green is your booth? What will your habits be throughout the event? Consider your contribution to the event not only in terms of your sales and learning efforts but how you can contribute during those days to the greening of a community and city. Our "[Guide to Green Meetings](#)" is a great starting point.





This year, [Home Depot](#), a key leader in the consumer-facing sustainability space, will showcase its commitment to sustainability through its Eco Options program. Their "[commitment tracker](#)" is a great model for how any business can set and act on green building objectives.

Buyers will be looking for solutions that not only solve immediate short-term challenges, but also those that fit into a longer-term and measurable plan.

“ Until all industries create and abide by a reporting formula that measures product attributes according to a common sustainability standard, we will continue to use our Eco Options program to help customers sort through “green” product claims.

– Home Depot ”



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### Interested in attending Greenbuild?

Greenbuild is the largest annual event for green building professionals worldwide to learn and source cutting edge solutions to improve resilience, sustainability, and quality of life in our buildings, cities, and communities. It's where inspiration ignites, relationships cultivate, knowledge transfers and the leaders developing the next generation of standards, policies, and partnerships gather to turn the promise of a higher living standard into a reality for all. Greenbuild is taking place November 19-22 in Atlanta, GA.