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New headquarters gives company a shot at LEED

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BostonCoach became a green company from floor to ceiling when it opened its new headquarters in the Seaport District.

In December, BostonCoach moved 160 staffers from its Everett facility onto a floor at the Seaport Center, a former South Boston warehouse.

After a year of renovation work on the space, they are awaiting an inspection to earn LEED certification.

Carpeting and ceiling tiles in the 23,652-square-foot building are composed of 40 percent recycled material, the plumbing is expected to cut the company's water consumption by 126,000 annually, and building materials include wall-board made of synthetic gypsum instead of mined sheetrock and lumber certified by the Forestry Stewardship Council.

"We decided we could do it from the inside out — telling associates about it, hiring vendors who are using recycled materials. We went beyond the building, and tried to attack this from a lot of different angles by not just doing one thing," said Mark Munoz, chief operating officer of the worldwide ground transport company.

The company wouldn't say how much the project cost, but said that adding green elements to the work didn't greatly affect the price.



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The company's efforts mirror a national move toward sustainable construction promoted by the U.S. Green Building Council.

The nonprofit council inspects projects to see if they qualify for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design certification, the gold standard of green construction. It estimates the U.S. market for green building materials and services was nearly \$12 billion last year.

Munoz said the lighting system alone will save an estimated 12,300-kilowatt hours a year — an expected 20 percent to 30 percent reduction in energy use — as it adjusts automatically to natural light streaming in from three sides of windows.

Munoz advises any firm planning green construction to plan on a companywide commitment of time and effort.

"The level of work can be intense at times — there are more meetings, you have to source different suppliers. The whole company has to be behind it. It's not onerous or difficult, but different as you go through it."

The Boston employees, part of the company's 1,205-person workforce nationwide, is "charged up" by the new space, said Munoz. "We asked for volunteers to give tours, and we got more than we needed."

Besides the energy-saving benefits, companies want to go green for other reasons, said LEED-accredited architect Lisa Killaby of ADD Inc. in Cambridge, the firm that designed BostonCoach's space.

"It's a good recruiting tool showing they support environmental sustainability," she said.