

Build an Eco-Friendly Operation from the Ground Up

HOW ONE INFLUENTIAL COMPANY IS TURNING ITS OPERATION INTO A WELL-OILED GREEN MACHINE

By Camella Lobo

As the definition of a green company evolves, the superficial bubble seems to be bursting on the so-called “green dream.” One hybrid in a fleet of 30 vehicles is a stretch if your company claims to be green. The rules are changing, and fortunately, there is more that operators are doing to prove they truly support sustainability.

A green company simply starts from the ground up. There are many simple and cost-saving ways to turn your facility — not just your vehicles — into a real solution for the environment and your pocketbook.

A TIME TO GROW GREEN

“Everything you put into this project will be given back to you and fairly quickly. The energy cost savings alone are enough,” says Mark Munoz, chief operating officer at BostonCoach (Boston). After years of rapid growth, the company expanded to a larger facility about a year ago, just as the green movement began to take hold of the luxury transportation industry.

“There were multiple items that came together at the same time,” says Munoz, so the choice to build a larger, more eco-friendly facility from start to finish was a natural one. “We wanted to do something tangible that had a true impact on the environment,” Munoz adds.

The process began with a simple request — to use an architectural firm that specialized in green building. Once BostonCoach found the right firm, the project to go completely green was taken to new heights. “This process was so organized from start to finish,” Munoz says. The number of steps involved were detailed and time consuming but the payoff is huge, Munoz says. The BostonCoach facility is up and running and already experiencing the many benefits of a green facility, he says.

ENLISTING THE EXPERTS

BostonCoach contracted with an architectural firm professionally accredited as a green builder through the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) — a non-profit organization that promotes sustainability in building design through education and the development of programs such as the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED). The LEED program is a training, education, and certification process that architects complete in order to become accredited green builders.

“The program was developed in order to create a clear consensus on what a green building really is,” says Ashley Katz, a representative from USGBC. She believes that green buildings are the wave of the future for businesses — and homes — worldwide. She points to the alarming amount of impact that buildings have had on the environment and the number of legislative incentives that are on the books requiring conservation.

The USGBC also highlights some statistics on its website. In the United States alone, buildings account for:

- **65%** of electricity consumption,
- **6%** of energy use,
- **30%** of greenhouse gas emissions,
- **30%** of raw materials use,
- **30%** of waste output (136 million tons annually), and
- **12%** of potable water consumption.

Source: www.usgbc.com

“A green building is a profit for everyone — business and home owners, the environment, for health and productivity, and a healthy bottom line,” Katz says. “Green buildings reduce CO2 emissions and the huge impact of buildings on the environment.”

GREEN RESULTS YOU CAN SEE AND FEEL

Munoz’s efforts to create a natural environment for BostonCoach from the “inside out” came to



Going Green and Then Some...

“IF YOU SAY you’re a green company, then you should have something to show for it,” says Mark Munoz, chief operating officer for BostonCoach.

Here are some ways BostonCoach is reducing its impact, in addition to its state-of-the-art green facility:

- **USES** recycled paper made with post-consumer waste
- **ENCOURAGES** the use of electronic, instead of paper, marketing collateral
- **REDUCED** the number of printers at its corporate office to discourage printing and thereby cut paper usage and curb energy use
- **BUYS** Energy-star rated equipment, which uses about half of the power of normal equipment
- **OFFERS** the Toyota Prius, Toyota Camry Hybrid, and Lexus RX Hybrid in select markets, which facilitate ridesharing; and transportation management programs with shuttles operating less frequently to reduce fuel consumption and emissions
- **SUBSIDIZES** the cost of public transit for associates nationwide
- **IN BOSTON**, provides commuters with complimentary shuttle service to and from stations to encourage the use of public transit
- **OFFERS** Boston-based associates a variety of alternative commuting options via the company’s membership with the non-profit Seaport Transportation Management Association

“One of our goals is to make it easy to use public transportation so we provide shuttle service for our associates,” Munoz says. “It just becomes a bit of an issue during the winter when it’s really cold outside.” ▶

fruition through working closely with the LEED accredited architectural firm. “We had a desire to be as environmentally friendly as possible,” he says, “so working with the USGBC and LEED professionals made that a reality.”

Everything from the floors, to the water fixtures and windows in the company’s new 23,652-square-foot office space in Boston’s Seaport District, supports and promotes the green initiatives of BostonCoach and the USGBC. “We want to make sure that whatever we say we’re doing in terms of sustainability is what we’ve actually done,” Munoz says. “You can see it; you can touch it.”

Sustainability from the Ground Up: The floors at BostonCoach’s new headquarters are covered with carpeting that contains 40% recycled materials. The lumber of the floors built from wood is certified by the Forest Stewardship Council, meaning it’s been from a sustainably-managed forest. For more information visit www.fscus.com.

Synthetic Walls Are Real Green: The 1,069 sheets of wallboard in the new office were made from synthetic gypsum, avoiding the need to mine more than 32 tons of sedimentary rock — that’s more than five times the marble in Michelangelo’s David, the company says. The wood studs behind the wallboard also are milled from Forest Stewardship Council-certified trees.

Recycled and Recyclable Ceiling: The Optima ACT ceiling tiles that architects installed are manufactured from 40% recycled content and are 100% recyclable. The manufacturer, Armstrong, will reclaim the ceiling material when its useful life is over. The ceiling also reflects more illumination than a conventional one, reducing the power required for lighting and the cooling that regular lighting needs.

More Daylight Means Less CO2: The architectural and interior design of the Boston office makes the most of daylight, reducing lighting power consumption by up to 40% near the periphery. The lighting system adjusts automatically to the amount of natural light entering the workplace. The brighter the day, the less energy used. This saves 12,300 kilowatt hours per year and avoids emission of 15,000 pounds of the greenhouse gas carbon dioxide each year, BostonCoach says.



(left to right) ■ Subfloor of BostonCoach’s green facility built using lumber and is certified by the Forest Stewardship Council. FSC certification ensures the wood has been harvested from a sustainably managed forest. ■ BostonCoach installed carpeting that contains 40% recycled materials.

Water Conservation Made Easy: The new restrooms use water-conservation fixtures such as sinks with aerator faucets that flow at one-fifth the conventional rate, for an estimated annual savings of 126,000 gallons. “Over 20 months, that would fill up the four-story Giant Ocean Tank at Boston’s New England Aquarium,” the company says.

Healthy Living, Happy Employees: Much of the furniture purchased for the office is built from low-emitting materials, which give off fewer toxins such as urea formaldehyde. That means a healthier environment for our employees.

“Our associates just love being here,” Munoz says. “They love the aesthetic.”

BostonCoach also has conserved resources by reconditioning and redeploying 200 desks, chairs, and other pieces of wood furniture from elsewhere within the company.

Saving Energy Saves Money, Too: BostonCoach installed 90 new PC monitors that are Energy Star-rated, which means they use about half of the power consumed by conventional hardware, and just two watts or less when they’re in sleep mode. The company says these energy-efficient peripherals even reduce the cooling load by 15% or more.

BostonCoach also buys Renewable Energy Certificates (RECs), which supports the production of renewable energy.

EMPLOYEES BY DESIGN

Munoz says that the only way the program would be complete is through the company’s employees. BostonCoach provides its associates with the option of subsidized public transportation under what they call the G.I.V.E. (Green Initiatives of Value to the Environment) program. The program also

consists of an inter-disciplinary task force of associates nationwide that investigates, tests, and recommends new sustainability initiatives to introduce into the company’s operations.

Among the G.I.V.E. activities are a pilot program in Atlanta and San Francisco testing the energy-saving benefits of filling tires with nitrogen instead of oxygen, and the installation at BostonCoach’s Newark, N.J., branch of an HPT8 lighting system with high-performance light output, maintained light output, and color that will reduce energy use and cost by an estimated 50%, according to the company.

Part of the USGBC and LEED accreditation process requires its certified building members to allow the public to tour its facility once the project is completed. Twelve BostonCoach associates have volunteered as tour guides to provide a guided experience for other business owners and colleges in the area through its state-of-the-art green facility.

“The tours give us the opportunity to set an example among our peers and encourage them to think about building a green facility for their own businesses,” Munoz says.

BostonCoach chauffeurs also go through extensive training that promotes the company’s green vision, including fuel-saving methods of acceleration and braking. Like most transportation companies, BostonCoach has a no-idling policy as well. “Our chauffeurs even want to be involved and share ideas,” Munoz says. He adds that the years of industry experience among the company’s 859 chauffeurs makes their vast knowledge relevant and important to the success of the new operation. “And they’re excited to be a part of that,” he says.