



Michaels Engineering LEED® Brief

LEED® COMMISSIONING

SUGGESTIONS...

Do you have certain LEED® topics you'd like to know more about? Send an email with your suggestion to the author listed below and your topic might become a future LEED® Brief!

DID YOU KNOW...

...The low-price-wins market has resulted in buildings with envelope problems, indoor environmental problems, costly change orders, and poorly-performing, energy-hogging systems.

...Commissioning (Cx), a prerequisite for a LEED® certified building, is THE means for building owners to buy a new building for which they KNOW they are getting what they are paying for.

MEET THE AUTHOR



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→ PERCEPTION

The perception of some building owners is that designing, buying, and constructing a building is like buying a Honda Accord. When shopping for the Accord, you can get competitive bids from multiple dealers for exactly the same car. The sole difference is price. Design and construction teams are many times selected in the same way - price.

→ REALITY

Unless you're in the franchising business, nobody else has a building like yours with the same design team, same contractors, built on a similar site in a similar climate. Since price is a major factor in deciding whom to hire for design and construction, there is tremendous pressure to select the low bid, especially if you answer to voters, shareholders, and taxpayers.

This low-price-wins market has resulted in buildings with envelope problems, indoor environmental problems, costly change orders, and poorly-performing, energy-hogging systems. Why? Rewind back to the Accord. The Accord is built by the thousands. Agencies like the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, and the Environmental Protection Agency test the living daylights out of cars sold to the public. Moreover, the Accord is vetted in the brutal court of public opinion. Compared to a building, this results in a perfect product.

You may be thinking "Shouldn't my architectural and design firm be taking care of this?" Back in the day when buildings were simpler and built by "master builders", they may have. But the complexity of current buildings combined with the low-price-wins marketplace does not allow for this. The market has driven these assurances out of the process. Owners don't get what they don't pay for.

SOLUTION: Commissioning!

→ WHAT IS COMMISSIONING?

Commissioning (Cx), a prerequisite for a LEED® certified building, is THE means for building owners to buy a new building for which they KNOW they are getting what they are paying for. Not headaches. Not now. Not 5 years from now. Commissioning smoothes the design and construction processes and results in a high performance building that provides excellent indoor environmental quality at optimum energy performance.

→ HOW DOES IT WORK?

The owner hires a Cx agent. The Cx agent's sole job is to ensure the owner gets what he or she wants from the building and that it functions according to plan. The Cx agent is knowledgeable in design, plan development and documentation, construction, and performance testing.

The Cx agent, along with the design team and owner, documents the owner's project requirements, especially performance requirements. This document forms the basis for the entire process from conceptual design through post-occupancy performance testing. The Cx agent is independent of the design team and contractors providing an objective evaluation of design document development, construction practices, and performance testing.

Stay tuned for a future brief to expand on the Cx process, benefits, and "costs".