

Green Listings and Certifications

The growing emphasis on green buildings and green design has naturally extended to an increased interest in green AV systems. The Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) rating system by the U.S. Green Building Council has particularly spurred the AV community to become more involved in green systems. As a result, AV manufacturers are turning to various listings and certifications to differentiate their brand and to showcase their environmentally-friendly products to the green building industry.

Cambridge Sound Management, LLC, in Cambridge, Massachusetts, chose the GreenSpec listing by BuildingGreen, LLC as a way to associate their products with green AV and LEED projects. According to BuildingGreen, the online GreenSpec directory lists product descriptions for over 2,000 environmentally preferable products that have been independently researched and documented. "Attaining the listing is a strategic issue. It is a differentiator for our product and is of increasing interest for our customers," says Jack Heine, president and founder of the company. "GreenSpec was the most visible of the listings; and in my view, definitely worth the one year, time-consuming and exacting process it took to complete."

According to Heine, the pursuit of the GreenSpec listing did not impose any new costs to the business. "It was built into the cost of business since one of our current engineers was tasked with completing the process," he says. "Total equaled about one man month or about \$10,000 in labor based on an engineer's salary."

The GreenSpec listing applied to all of Cambridge Sound Management's products since they are sold as a system. According to the company, their Qt Quiet Technology™ systems require an average of 8 W of power for over 30,000 square feet of coverage, or twenty times less power than other sound masking systems, due to sophisticated design. Saving energy is one green aspect, but Heine points out that sound masking also enhances the open feel of an office due to less construction and shorter cubicle walls. "Sound masking is an extraordinary tool in providing building comfort and usability," he adds.

The addition of sound masking systems can often lead to lower overall costs for a building project. "For example, architects will over-specify acoustic tiles. The cost of a fiberglass ceiling tile is approximately \$5.00 per a square foot, whereas a similar looking mineral fiber tile might cost half as much. For a 50,000 to 60,000 square foot building, sound masking costs \$1.00 per a square foot and provides significantly more benefit in speech privacy," he explains. "Therefore you can install a sound masking system, downgrade the acoustical tile, get better privacy and save money to boot."

For AV projection screen and window shade manufacturer Draper, Inc. in Spiceland, Indiana, the pursuit of GREENGUARD® certification by the GREENGUARD Environmental Institute (GEI) began four years ago. "We were hearing a lot about green buildings via our window shade business," says Draper's Contract Market Manager Chris Broome, CSI, LEED AP. "After some research, we learned that GREENGUARD is very recognizable by architects and builders."

Draper currently holds GREENGUARD certification on all three product types, in addition to GreenSpec listing for their window shade products. "GREENGUARD is an independent measurable standard. You must send materials to the lab and there are strict standards for off-gassing. You're also subjected to quarterly testing," says Broome. "GREENGUARD uses independent testing but you have access to the data, which is very helpful for sales and marketing."