
Building My Favorite Better World

by Barry Koren, AIA, PhD



A few days ago I was back in Madison, Wisconsin, in the spring of 1970.

In those days, when we washed the dishes, my roommates and I also washed plastic baggies and tin foil, to extend their use. We scribbled messages about peace on sidewalks and kiosks and walls. We went to “natural food” restaurants and stores. I met my wife-to-be in Madison about this time.

Memories of Madison in the 1970s came back to me when she and I went to the 2nd Annual Chicago Green Festival (www.greenfestivals.org) a few days ago in McCormick Place.

We waded through thick crowds to go from one event to another. High energy and a sense of purpose permeated the air. We were surrounded by local vendors selling wholesome food and items to make our environment healthy. By people wanting peace, energy efficiency, and sustainability. By people seeking simpler, less pressured lives. And by articulate, inspiring speakers who were urging the same. Afterward, I felt that I had spent the day re-

experiencing the old Madison culture and tasting that better world that I deeply want in my life.

Which brings me to right now. I see that festival as being part of an emerging, immense market for us A/E/C marketers.

Sustainability is already huge and even fashionable. Magazine covers at the grocery check-out are filled with Green this and sustainable that. Mayor Daley wants to make Chicago the Greenest city in the nation.

Large numbers of professionals and others from various points of view are advancing the Green movement. For example, Evangelical Christians, Jewish Rabbis, Hindu holy men, and Buddhist monks call out for stewardship of the earth for future generations. Sustainable facilities will soon be a national and commonsense necessity.

Green is an opportunity to revamp our nation's facilities from energy-guzzling behemoths that devour half our energy supplies to smart, fuel-efficient buildings that uplift our spirits.

This opportunity comes at a time when the now dominant marketing approach may be reaching a saturation point. How much longer can people take this incessant message to consume – buy, buy, buy. Pick me.

Whereas I habitually go out of my way to deflect the onslaught of these buy-me marketing messages, at the Green Festival I wanted to get information from as many vendors as I could. To find out how to have more health, sustainability, peace, inspiration, and spend fewer resources on

energy and dispensables. I haven't had this kind of experience at A/E/C trade shows.

How does this translate into our day-in, day-out marketing work? For me, an important part of the answer is to take up the 2030 Challenge (www.architecture2030.org). AIA National has endorsed the 2030 Challenge and sustainability in a big way. Thus it has taken a major step in putting architecture at the top of the list of the most important professions in the world.

And now our own SMPS Chicago Board has just taken the same significant step of endorsing fuel-efficient buildings and the 2030 Challenge. (SMPS National may soon follow suit.) I expect that you'll be seeing more about this as our Chicago Board plans the next steps in bringing 2030 to you, our members.

I say let's join A/E/C marketing to the sustainability movement. The marketplace is demanding it. We marketers are immensely more important than we ordinarily give ourselves credit for. Let's use our skills to help energize people and give them messages that are truly valuable – make buildings fuel efficient now. And by 2030, let's have all our buildings off of fossil fuels. In doing this, we'll cut costs, pollution, and energy dependency. And most importantly, we'll act against global warming.

My mother often said of me that I'm never satisfied. I always want more. So I might as well end by adding a few more tidbits to this better world I seek. I want a better world that is not only fuel efficient but also healthy, peaceful, loving, and sustainable. One where most people can sit around the kitchen

table with loved ones eating locally grown wholesome food. I pass the baton to you. What do you want?

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