



Putting a Mask on Musty Smell, Doesn't Make it Right

Last month I wrote about the history of green building and how specialized the building industry had become regarding the components and systems used in building. Having been in the industry one way or another for 30 thirty years, it wasn't until I began this journey of mine into the world of "green" did I finally come to grips with the fact that some of the problems builders (including myself) have encountered over the years were self induced.



Just last week I was called to look at an office building built over 25 years ago. The problem was moisture in the building. They have been treating that clammy, damp feeling by "conditioning" the air. The landlord made a ritual of changing ceiling tiles because they would sag (moisture) and look awful. There was always a musty smell and on some occasions actual water droplets on the ceiling. Window condensation was a daily occurrenceThis idea of "specialized" components and systems just jumped out in this project...HVAC systems installed with the technology at the time of new construction and those systems were changed out over time with newer technology without regard to existing system, electrical changes, plumbing additions and today's office equipment all play into the mix. This building was becoming a sick building and the owner didn't get it. He actually thought I was crazy...but that's for another story.

I shared a laundry list of things to do to get this building back in balance. An air conditioning company told him he only needed to update the unit. The A/C route certainly was the easiest thing to do, but in actuality more costly and frankly will not solve the problem. I haven't heard from the owner since he used that band aid, but have heard from the tenant Everyone's into sweaters now, and the musty aroma has diminished except after a long weekend. The window moisture is due to the "outside conditions" hmmm. You can put a mask on "Musty" but you can't make it clean.

Support Local Business Update

Here's a great little spot that survived Old 41 Construction in Bonita. "Vacarillas". Could use a little local help before season. Check out the website-

www.vacarillas.com

Evolution of "Green" Building.



Pre 20th century– structures were designed and built by builder-architects who really "got it". They envisioned the big picture from design through construction and lifetime operations. They incorporated enduring passive designs and simple mechanical systems to heat, cool and light. Somewhere around the 1930s things changed and new technology forced more changes. The builder-architect went away and a new generation of specialized "professionals" entered the picture with a vision of only one aspect, such as lighting or air conditioning, and ignored climate issues and their effect on the buildings and occupants. Everyone saw the individual picture and lost that integrated, whole system thinking.

In the early 70's a small group of forward thinking architects, environmentalists and ecologists began to question the advisability of building that way. By the end of the 70's, fueled by an energy crisis, the movement of Green (though not called that) began to root.

NEXT MONTH: Sustainable Building and moving to Green

(Material source: Green building .com)

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