GREEN ADVOCATE:
Aaron Smith, Director of Sustainable Building Solutions

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Assa Abloy
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42,000 employees worldwide, about 8,000 in North America

Here, Going Green Is a Lock

Green mission: ‘It’s to embed sustainability; sustainable thinking in every aspect of what we do.’

Given his role as a driving force behind Assa Abloy’s sustainable building promotion and developments, strategizing programs and tools to work with technical, sales and marketing staff to help better educate customers and energy efficient solutions, Smith says his goals aren’t solely about promoting a product, but promoting the importance of energy efficiency to all stakeholders.

“You will get the organization to move forward,” says Smith, “and maybe it’s as simple as getting people to see that sustainability is good business.”

Smith, a trustee of the Wolf Ridge Environmental Learning Center and participant of the Underwriters Laboratories code development panels, has earned his recognition as a “green evangelist,” speaking and presenting at numerous events around the country that focus on green innovation, including the Connecticut Green Building Council Chapter at 360 State Street, the Sustainable New Haven breakfast, and the American Society for Interior Designers’ chapter at the University of New Haven. His knowledge of the “green world” has come not only from his career background, but from U.S. Green Business Council and a LEED AP BC+D credential.

“He knows all the issues,” says HLW Architects’ Director of Specification and Sustainability Susan Kaplan, who has known Smith as a long-time Assa Abloy customer, “Since he’s been on board I think [Assa Abloy] has taken a very big leap.”

Smith says he focuses on positioning his company at the forefront of its industry in terms of identifying and implementing sustainability initiatives.

Smith says he has one big advantage to stay ahead: social media. Notwithstanding the recent challenging economy, Smith sees promotion through the Web as one of his most useful business tools, next to “belly-to-belly” interaction. Aside from Smith’s success in engaging customers, which Kaplan attributes to Smith’s ability to make clear
the value of products, Smith says the key is always to be looking to the future.

“There’s a lot of ambiguity,” Smith says. “People don’t really know where to go with green, and if you can kind of point them and show them where it’s going. Then, it’s creating a road map for the next five years.”

The road map Smith has been following for the past five-plus years is an exciting and challenging one, Smith says, which is why his passion lies with green. He says that energy efficiency has “always made sense” to him, and the more he has learned, the more curious he has become. He explains that curiosity is a strategy to success, thus, he is pursuing an MBA in sustainability.

As Smith says being open to new ideas is a winning business strategy in his market, he may sustain his job for continuing years, despite the constantly changing green market.

“When I got here they didn’t even have a job description for me,” Smith recalls. “They said, ‘Must be able to deal with ambiguity.’”