



Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency



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Renewables growing fast but obstacles remain



Meg Carey

New compliance laws, societal pressure to conserve, and energy efficiency initiatives are fueling growth in energy reporting and monitoring and renewable energy sources.

The desire to “do the right thing” by conserving energy and going green with renewable energy continues to strongly influence socially-conscious enterprises but, business being business, especially in a challenging economy, cost savings remains the compelling incentive.

According to a poll published in “Environmental Leader,” 88% of Fortune 1000 senior executives feel a moral responsibility to cut energy use, but 61% cited savings as their primary motivator and only 13%, environmental concerns.

Legislation requiring energy reporting and auditing, such as N.Y.C.’s Local Laws 84 and 87 with their goals of increasing conservation by reducing consumption, are also fueling interest in renewable energy sources, as are incentive programs such as the “Better Buildings Initiative,” a new effort by the Obama administration to make business more energy efficient, reduce energy bills and dependence on foreign oil and improve air quality.

One roadblock to reducing usage and converting to renewables is companies often don’t know where to start. In the Fortune 1000 survey, 7% cited lack of education.

To efficiently budget, plan, operate and conserve, you start with first-rate monitoring and reporting. MCEnergy’s multiple-patented software, E2Track (the Es stand for energy and environment), for example, captures and analyzes a vast amount of information, all centrally located, easily understood and actionable. It tracks energy usage, supply contract performance metrics, benchmarking based on property profiles, degree day data tracking and budget variances for electricity, steam, water, natural gas and fuel and satisfies compliance. The environmental component tracks a user’s carbon footprint and provides an audit trail for compliance.

As for the many benefits of using renewables such as wind or solar power, natural energy is unlimited in supply, has minimal impact on the environment, doesn’t emit greenhouse gases or deplete natural resources. But there are hurdles to overcome such as price point, location and market education to convert to green energy.

With an experienced energy consultant who knows how to navigate the complex energy markets, it can be done. Witness the Empire State Building becoming N.Y.C.’s largest commercial purchaser of green power. MCEnergy brokered the entire transaction that turned the 2.85 million s/f skyscraper into a user of 100% wind power energy.

Meg Carey is the president of MCEnergy, Inc., Valhalla, N.Y.

Atelier condo boasts highest solar array



Michael Hidary

Most people are used to seeing antennas or HVAC units atop the New York City skyline in midtown Manhattan. However, helicopter riders might be surprised to see 85 solar panels soaring 50 stories high when they ride past the Atelier on the Hudson.

The solar array was part of Atelier’s desire to reduce long term operating costs and build on its already stellar image as one of New York City’s premier luxury buildings.

“Since we’ve begun implementing our sustainability initiative, we’ve seen increased interest from prospective buyers and renters” said Atelier president Dan Neiditch.

In addition to the solar array, other energy improvements include delamping, lighting upgrades, occupancy sensors, supply procurement and demand response. The investment will pay for itself within two years, as Atelier obtained government and utility incentives to offset the costs.

This trend has become increasingly popular among commercial and residential buildings alike. Building managers realize that what was good enough for the past 100 years just will not cut it for the next hundred. Sustainable materials and proven energy efficiency technologies are readily available and affordable so it is just a matter of time until they can be found in all buildings nationwide. It is important to hire knowledgeable and experienced professionals that can make retrofits a seamless process for owners and tenants alike.

While some improvements such as demand response are free, others require upfront investments for the portion that incentives don’t cover. In the case where a building does not have the budget to implement some of these improvements, there are many financing options available to offset the upfront cost which can be paid back as the energy savings are realized.

With over 4.5 million commercial buildings across the US, building managers have their work cut out for them. That is an exciting prospect with unemployment still hovering around 9%. Green job creation is an important factor in rebuilding our economy while securing an energy future that doesn’t compromise our National Security.

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The Atelier