

ENERGY EFFICIENCY OPPORTUNITY IDENTIFICATION AS A TACTICAL STRIKE

In my last blog post, I described the fact that there are a number of energy professionals, each with their own credentials and each of whom brings a different skill to the table. For a business owner, the variety of these professions may be a bit daunting. What type of professional do I hire to address my energy concerns?

The answer to this question is: it depends. It depends on whether you need a tactical strike (which could be short- to medium-term) or are committed to including this role in the everyday business. In this post I would like to introduce the professionals who can best address the short term energy efficiency opportunity identification and medium term project management; namely an Energy Auditor or a Commissioning Agent. Next time, I'll discuss the position of the Energy Manager and Facilities Manager.

Energy Auditor and Commissioning Agent – Short to Medium Term Commitment

For owners who have a specific need to address – equipment issues, comfort issues, high costs, overall desire to increase efficiency – an energy audit is a good place to start. An audit will identify energy efficiency opportunities, address equipment concerns (to reduce maintenance as well as energy consumption) and develop a cost estimate to prioritize the suggestions. The person or firm you hire can be a specialist in a process (e.g. compressed air, wastewater treatment, plastic molding) if you are looking for assistance for a specific part of your business, or a building specialist that is well versed in the building envelope and HVAC systems.



A commissioning engineer inspects duct work.

Professionals who perform energy audits and project management are Energy Auditors and Commissioning Agents. These consultants can be tradespeople with a number of years' working experience or they can be degreed professionals and there are a number of different credentials that they can attain to prove their competency. The two most commonly accepted certifications are the Certified Energy Auditor (CEA), developed by the Association of Energy Engineers, and the Certified Commissioning Professional (CCP) developed by Building Commissioning Association.



Energy audit (Photo credit: zieak)

The Commissioning Agent is a type of Energy Auditor that has extra credentials due to their vocation. Commissioning is a process that seeks to improve how building equipment and systems function together. Depending on the age of the building, retrocommissioning can often resolve problems that occurred during design or construction, or address problems that have developed throughout the building's life. As they have worked with a large number of buildings during and after construction, the commissioning agent has a lot of experience with the actual operation and potential problems of building systems, and they know where to look to identify efficiency opportunities. In addition, if they have experience in a particular industrial process, they are typically more hands-on, "what's the problem with this system" kind of person and will get their hands dirty.

Field Experience Is Key

In my experience, no matter their credentials, the key is their level of actual in-the-field experience. The more field work they have under their belts and the more varied this experience is, the more they can bring to the table in your building. This is true for so many fields, but in this one it really does make all

the difference. If you are hiring someone to audit your compressed air system, they should have inspected, experimented and troubleshot these types of systems in the real world. They should also have kept up with changes in the industry by studying the latest technology as well as system analysis tools, but nothing beats the actual in-the-field experience that can only be gained from getting their hands dirty.



A commissioning agent inspects piping

Do you have comfort issues in your building? Are you looking for energy efficiency opportunities to save on energy costs? Could your HVAC system use a tune-up? Get in touch with us – our team of experienced commissioning professionals can help.

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