

Choosing an Energy Consultant

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The most important element in developing a successful utility cost control program is the energy management consultant. Management's primary role is to locate an independent consultant that has a track record for results and will truly represent your company's best interests. In the utility cost control field, proven results and repeat clients are the best bench marks. In a business filled with product-oriented sales pitches, it is important to deal with a well-established firm without ties to a specific product or manufacturer. As a result, the vast majority of "factory reps" and single product-oriented contractors will not qualify for the consultant's role.

Results Speak Louder Than Words

A smart business should be able to quickly separate a company which talks about "estimated savings" from those which have proven results. The concentration on energy savings products has produced numerous bad investments and hard feelings. The classic product salesman could say "I have exactly what you need! — Now, what is it you need?" The energy management field has developed into a specialty due to the unique nature of the business. Unfortunately, it is not easy at first to find an energy consultant among the various firms promoting themselves as "energy experts." If you haven't noticed, nearly everyone is an energy expert these days. The following is a partial list of the kinds of organizations claiming some degree of expertise in the energy field:

Design Firms

Architects
Electrical Engineers
Mechanical Engineers

Contractors

Electrical
Mechanical
Plumbing

Others

Utility Companies
Supply Houses
Residential Energy Firms
Manufacturer's Rep

Independent Consultant

An independent consultant is not locked into one product or manufacturer. If he is, he can't be considered as independent. Also, he probably will not meet the definition of


a consultant. Surprisingly, numerous firms are locked in or at least strongly connected to one line of product. A detailed analysis of this fact often reveals that the person or firm's experience is limited to only manufacturer or product. Human nature leads them to stay with the only thing they know and feel comfortable with. The critical element of this condition is as a potential customer, you may not need what he is comfortable with. The establishment of the NEED comes first through the careful study of an independent consultant. The need is then approached through the application of cost control STRATEGIES with the help of products and controls selected to specifically meet your established need.

Free Advice is Expensive

Considering these factors, the "free energy audit" is not a bargain. The typical free energy audit is little more than a quick justification for you to buy the product they are selling. A quick "computer analysis" is often meaningless when reviewed by trained eyes. If you make an investment decision based on free advice, you are at risk; it could prove very expensive.

The difference between the men and the boys in the energy management field is RESULTS. Consistent energy savings performance produces a successful investment in energy management. This performance is closely coupled with the proper maintenance of employee comfort, productivity, and care of the mechanical systems. If you are interested in selecting a consultant, you should allow some time for the process. Proven results and discussions with their present clients should be the starting point. The size of the firm should not be a critical element. In this field, some orientation is good; an in-house engineering staff is better.

Is This a Real Bank?

The American Bankers Association has an advertisement addressing the issue of "real banks" that delivers a strong message. In the utility cost control field, a banker would be wise to consider, "is this a real energy consultant or someone pretending to be?" If you engage a real energy consultant, you could be amazed by your opportunities to reduce operating costs. However, you should not expect miracles and should exercise a conservative approach. When everything is right, the utility savings could amaze you. 

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