

## Business needs to be keen on green

By: *Amanda Horswill*

Employees are voting with their feet when it comes to the environment, writes Amanda Horswill

Companies with green credentials have become attractive to job seekers  
WORM farms may seem an extreme addition to an office tea room. But they soon may become commonplace, as employers bow to employee demands for a more eco-friendly workplace.

A distinctly green tinge has coloured the job market, with recruiters reporting that candidates are demanding to know an organisation's environmental credentials before agreeing to take a job.  
Companies are loudly trumpeting their green "cred" in a bid to attract the eye of potential employees in a tight job market that has left many vacancies unfilled.

Alison Sherry, from recruitment firm Hamilton James and Bruce, says candidates understand that corporate activity often will have a demonstrable impact on the environment and want to know how they are addressing this.  
"Therefore, the trend to monitor the environmental track record of organisations has become a key aspect in their search for attractive organisations to work for," Sherry says.  
"Organisations with green credentials and sustainability charters as part of their everyday business operations have become attractive to candidates and is a critical selling point to attract and retain staff."  
She says the green push is not just because a job candidate wants to save the world. It also is good business sense to take a job with a company likely to adapt to changes in public perception.  
"Candidates also understand that businesses that adopt strong positions on environmental issues and encourage cultures of environmentally responsible behaviours and encourage improvement in managing their environmental footprint generally better address their risks and create more business opportunities."

That green push is catching on fast and influencing even the big-money business decisions.  
Recruiter The Brooklyn Group's Julius Freeman says employers suddenly are clambering to find out about environmentally friendly offices. He says the demand is so great that his company is providing an advocacy role, explaining a new rating system called GreenStar to those effected companies in the construction industry.  
"Without a doubt, having a GreenStar building demonstrates a commitment by the company to enhance the work environment and the general wellbeing of its employees," Freeman says.  
"Environmentally sustainable designed buildings tend to have a range of people-friendly benefits, as it generally takes a more holistic approach to the design and development process.  
"It pays particular attention to the working conditions, such as lighting, airflow and emissions produced by the materials used."

Town planning company PMM does have a worm farm in its tea room. PMM's managing director Mike Mason says that is just one sign of the company's "social and cultural ethos" attracting people to work there.  
The building is highly energy and resource efficient, with water recycling plants and natural lighting.  
PMM also encourages its staff to embrace environmentally friendly values in their work.  
"The work environment and what a business stands for is really important," Mason says.  
"It gives staff the ability to be proud of what they do and that's very important to them. We have retention levels of professional staff way below market 'churn rates'," he says.  
"It gives them a mandate to promote what they do every day; to stand on a soapbox and beat their chest with some level of credibility."

Architectural design firm Woods Bagot attracted interior design academic Mike Molloy back to the company because of its green ethos. All of its designers have done a GreenStar accreditation course and each office across Australia has a sustainability team. The company is "carbon neutral" which means it is reducing and offsetting 100 per cent of its carbon emissions.  
"Almost anybody in this office could walk out and get a job the same day but it's nice to feel that I belong to a group that is on the leading edge rather than the trailing end (in being environmentally friendly)," Molloy says.  
He says Woods Bagot's environmental position was one of the reasons he was attracted to work there.  
"There is this global studio philosophy which puts energy into research," he says.

The company has a policy that environmentally sustainable design should be part of everyday living and that a workplace should be an enjoyable place to be. Molloy took that ethos and passed it on to Brisbane City Council

workers at Brisbane Square. He helped design the interior of that five-star GreenStar building, incorporating rainwater tanks, natural lighting, clever spatial design and extensive bicycle storage.

Brisbane City Council change manager Kaye Hollt says the building is one reason staff have chosen to work for the council.

``Anecdotally, I have heard talk about how lovely Brisbane Square is; that they love coming to work; that it's a joy," Hollt says.

``Working in a green building provides another motivation for people to consider working for council."

She says the BCC has, in turn, passed on the green message to other companies.

``Brisbane Square will soon be followed by a move to Green Square (another five-star rated building at Fortitude Valley)," Hollt says.

``We have shown developers and builders that they can do this.

``They can achieve buildings like this in a relatively cost-effective way and still provide a level of comfort in a high-grade building," she says.

#### Facts

The Brooklyn Group's Julius Freeman's pick of environmentally sustainable design buildings:

- \* The Hall Chadwick Centre, 120 Edward St, Brisbane;
- \* GreenSquare, St Paul's Terrace, Fortitude Valley;
- \* Gallery of Modern Art, Stanley Place, South Bank.
- \* Brisbane City Council's Brisbane Square offices:
  - \* Fitout out by Woods Bagot
  - \* Designed to maximise use of natural light
  - \* Has a cooling system that runs on river water
  - \* Collects and stores rainwater
  - \* Recycles water

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Caption: IT'S easy being green . . . Matt Abercromby and Stephanie Skyring, above, in the entertainment area outside the PMM boardroom in Fortitude Valley and, below, interior design academic Mike Molloy. Picture: Kevin Bull; On page E09: INSIDE the Brisbane City Council offices at Brisbane Square, left, and, below, and, above, the Gallery of Modern Art building. Main Picture: Jon Linkins; Graph showing Facts; On page E01: Green and happy - Workers demand eco-offices

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Table

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Section: CAREERONE

CML-20070818-1-E08-4015019V41