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## Focus on sustainability: FSC certification considered a competitive edge

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Building Material Specialties knew the building industry was moving toward environmentally sustainable projects. But the 30-year-old Hillsboro company didn't want to just keep up with the trend; it wanted to grab a lead position.

With an eye toward that goal, the company decided to pursue a dealer certification from the Forest Stewardship Council.

"FSC certification means that products can actually be tracked from the region where it is harvested to the mill to the supplier and to us as we deliver to the customer," said Josh Jorgensen, Building Material Specialties' general manager. "FSC-certified products earn points towards (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification, but it's more than that. People are more focused on the idea of sustainability. (When they buy FSC-certified products), they feel like they're contributing to environmentally responsible forestry practices - and they are."

The company spent a year researching the drawbacks and benefits of becoming officially recognized as a vendor that sells FSC-certified doors and other wood products. Once the company decided to take the plunge, it contacted FSC group certification program manager Paul Vanderford, who provided necessary on-site training.

"(The process to obtain certification) is easier than a lot of people think," Vanderford said. "There's a small licensing fee and a simple training process that's easy to understand. It helps the vendor understand what it all means and how to explain and offer it to the customer."

Jorgensen said the certification process also was made easier for Building Material Specialties thanks to a nonprofit called Sustainable Northwest. Through that group, the company was able to attach to a group certification and join a collaborative of other small, like-minded companies.

Jorgensen estimates that only about 5 percent of the projects for which it provides materials and products require FSC-certified doors. In the past, builders who weren't required to use certified wood products shied away from them because of the added cost - certified products can run 10 percent to 40 percent higher than comparable noncertified products.

But Jorgensen thinks the extra step to obtain certification in order to sell FSC-certified products will eventually pay off for Building Material Specialties.

"What I'm seeing so far is really more of an interest in doing the right thing more than meeting LEED or (other) green building standards," Jorgensen said. "We've only just initiated these products - mostly doors, frames, cabinets and select trim items so far ... This is really our first set of FSC products, but there's been enough call for it from customers for us to include it in the inventory."

"The market is going to drive the demand. Architects are going to be a part of that and so are contractors. We want to be on the front end of this. It'll help us cement our position in sustainability practices."



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