



Teknion: Seated at the Helm of Healthier Indoor Environments

The year was 2002. The sustainable building and design movement was just beginning to gain momentum, and product manufacturers found themselves facing a whole new set of challenges and opportunities. Teknion—a leading designer and manufacturer of high-end office system and related furniture products—was one of the first to react, quickly recognizing the importance of creating healthier, more sustainable indoor environments for its customers.

The Challenge

As a company known for its clean, contemporary design and functionality, Teknion had the desire to both ensure and demonstrate to the marketplace that its products had low chemical emissions while maintaining those products' trademark aesthetic and utility. "We were being asked by a client about sustainability. We couldn't answer the question and realized we needed to make a shift in product and culture," says Tracy Backus, national manager of sustainable programs at Teknion. But without the scientific expertise or experience with indoor air quality issues, the company knew it couldn't go at it alone.

What Teknion needed was a credible, knowledgeable, third-party certifier to help guide the company. And since helping create healthier indoor environments was among Teknion's most important sustainability goals, the decision to pursue UL GREENGUARD Certification was an easy one. It was also a decision that positioned the company as a vanguard of sustainable office product development, design, and manufacture.

The Results

After several months of rigorous scientific testing, chemical emission data analysis, and implementation of changes to manufacturing process, Teknion's entire product line achieved GREENGUARD Certification in 2003. It was a major accomplishment—and one that yielded tremendous returns for the company.

"Promoting the environmental sensitivity of our product is a fundamental factor for our business, and GREENGUARD Certification is a major part of this," Backus says. "GREENGUARD Certifications are a tangible way to prove the performance of the end products."

In fact, a few years later, the company opted to pursue GREENGUARD Gold Certification, achieving it for 50-percent of the company's products. This is a testament to Teknion's continued commitment to creating the healthiest, lowest-emitting products possible.





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“Our work with GREENGUARD over the last several years has provided us with many opportunities to understand and change our methods of design and manufacture, which has helped to reduce environmental impacts and become a better company,” says Scott Deugo, senior vice president of design, marketing, and sustainable development at Teknion.

Besides allowing Teknion to demonstrate its marketplace leadership, GREENGUARD Certification instantly differentiated the company by clearly communicating its products’ environmental sensitivity and positive impact on healthier indoor spaces. Today the certification is also an important factor in qualifying to participate in high-dollar bid proposals, even for projects not seeking a green building certification. In fact, the requests for proposals (RFPs) for the 2009 redesign of the CNN headquarters in Atlanta, Ga.; the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation in Seattle, Wash.; and the El Paso Energy facility in Houston, Texas—three multi-million dollar project bids that Teknion won—required GREENGUARD Certified low-emitting office systems and furniture. After all, fewer chemical emissions mean healthier indoor air—and that means healthier customers and end-users.

Moreover, changes to the products’ chemical composition, supply chain, and curing processes, which were necessary to achieve certification, helped create healthier work environments for the factory workers who physically fabricate and assemble the products.

The Future

Teknion is determined to uphold its commitment to sustainability by pursuing GREENGUARD Certification for even more of its products.

“Teknion has been a long time supporter of GREENGUARD Certification. We continue working to understand, advance, and validate an effective, independent indoor environmental air quality standard,” Deugo says. “I look forward to continuing to build our partnership into the future.”

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