

Green Building Blocks

User research analysis

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Research Objectives

This **qualitative research** was conducted with the intent of revealing insights about user goals and attitudes regarding the site itself and proposed new product features.

The objectives of the research:

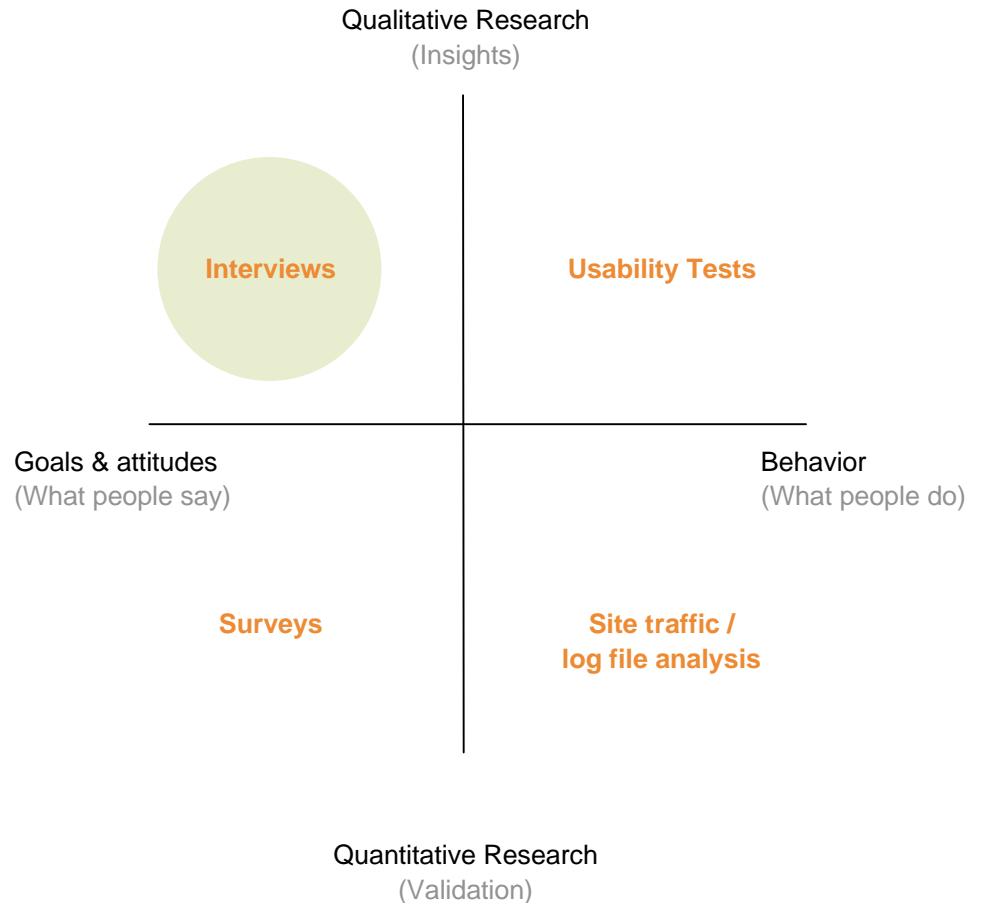
- Understand **perceived value of GBB.com** to both people who list and people who search
- Identify **opportunities to increase value** for both people who list and people who search
- Understand what additional information would help **drive people to create new listings** and drive returning visits.
- Understand if / how proposed **sponsorship model affects credibility.**

Research Landscape

A number of research methods are available for understanding user goals, attitudes & behaviors.

This particular research effort can best be characterized as a **qualitative effort**. Its intent was to reveal insights about user goals and attitudes regarding the site itself and proposed new product features.

We expect to validate these insights using quantitative techniques in future research efforts.



Research Method

1-on-1 telephone interviews with 9 participants* during the week of 12/26/07

Conversations lasted on average 1 hour 20 minutes.

Participants were recruited from three groups:

Group A

Leads from USGBC trade show who do not currently have Listings (3 people)

Group B

People who have illustrated Listings - either published or in draft form (2 people)

Group C

Introductory Listers who did not open their email from us, and therefore don't know that they have a Listing (4 people)

*2 were not in our target market, thus their feedback was minimally useful.

Research Hypotheses

While the overriding intent of this research effort was to uncover insights, the following hypotheses were key assumptions in our line of questioning:

- Listings are valuable (worth paying for) if they **give Lister exposure** to both professional and consumer audiences.
- Listings are valuable (worth paying for) if they **generate business leads**
- Professionals have **business concerns that are specific to sustainable building**

Valued resources - and possible partnerships?

These resources were frequently cited as reliable, credible, authoritative voices, and may be worth examining for partnership opportunities.

GreenSpec Directory (Alex Wilson, editor)
<http://www.buildinggreen.com/menus/>

“GreenSpec® Directory - the leading national directory of green building products. Products are selected by editors of Environmental Building News (EBN) based on criteria developed over the past 15 years. Manufacturers do not pay to be listed in GreenSpec, and neither GreenSpec nor any other BuildingGreen publication carries advertising; both are supported exclusively by users of the information.”

Sweets Network product directory
<http://www.construction.com/ProductCenter/default.asp>

Published by McGraw Hill Construction. Conventional product spec directory.

Rocky Mountain Institute
www.rmi.org

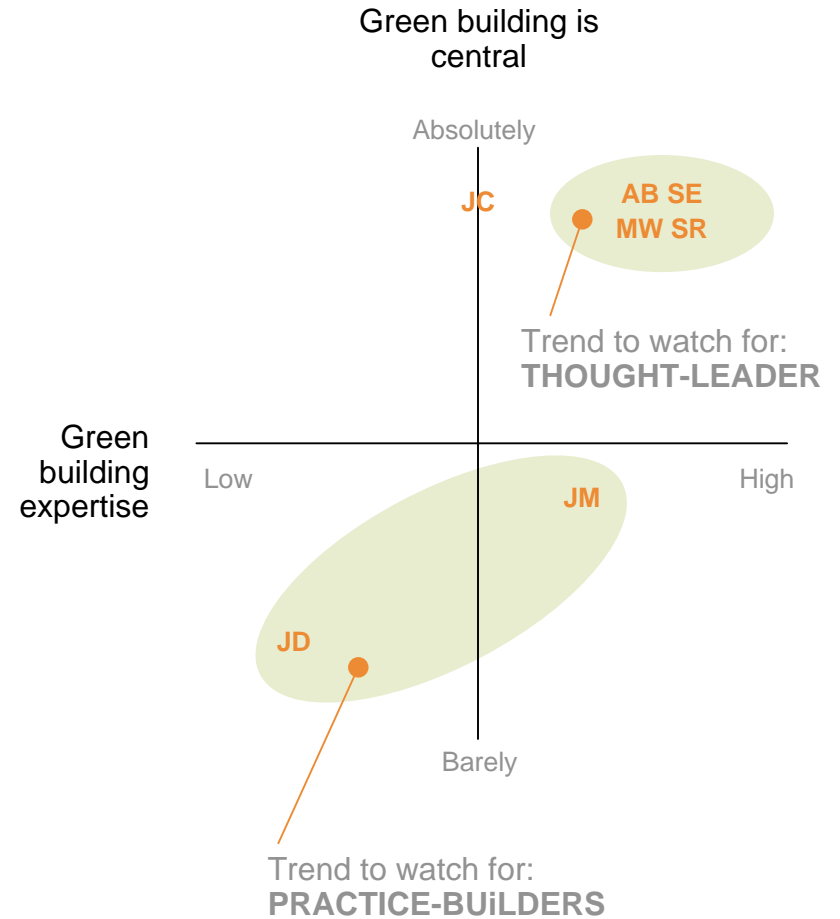
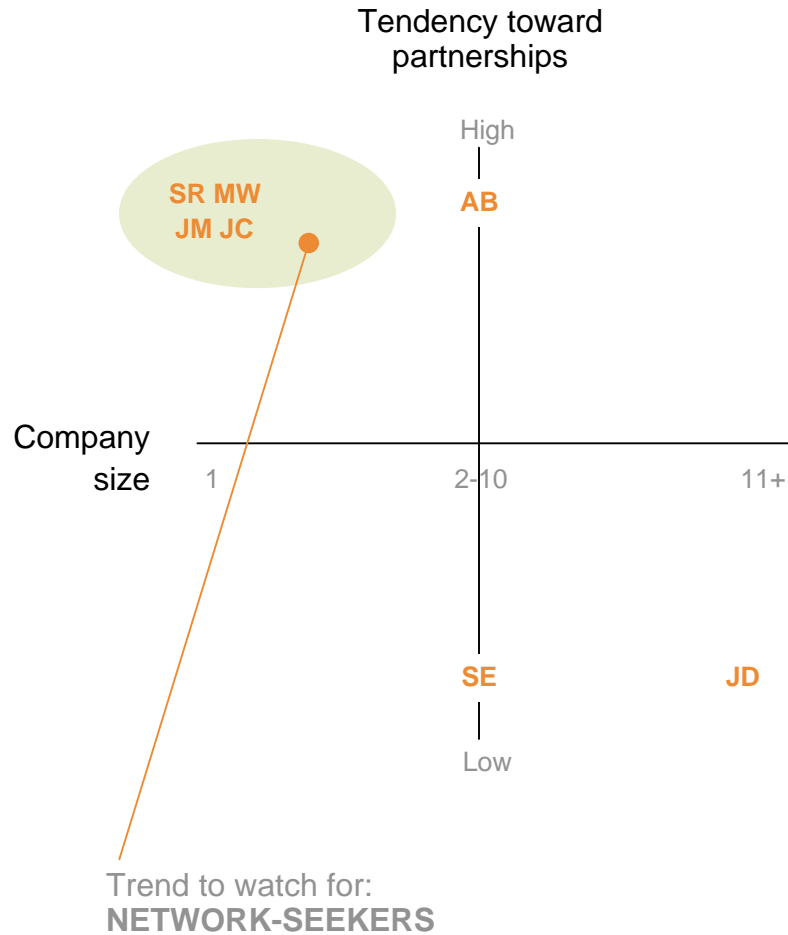
“Our staff shows businesses, communities, individuals, and governments how to create more wealth and employment, protect and enhance natural and human capital, increase profit and competitive advantage, and enjoy many other benefits—largely by doing what they do far more efficiently.”

Audience characteristics

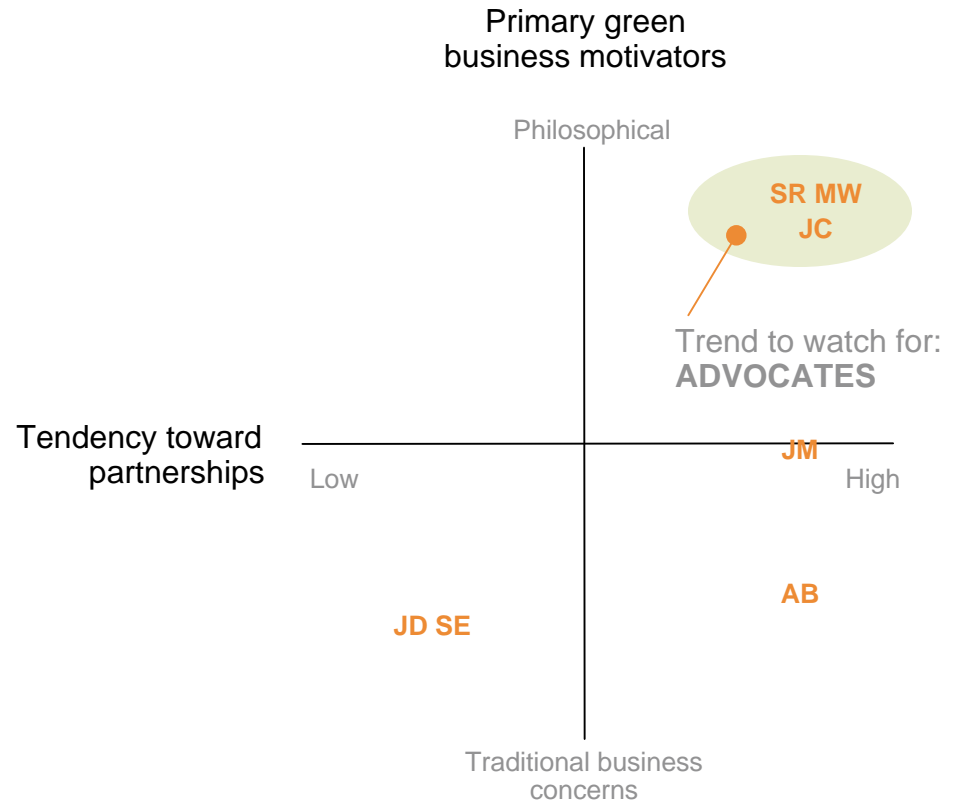
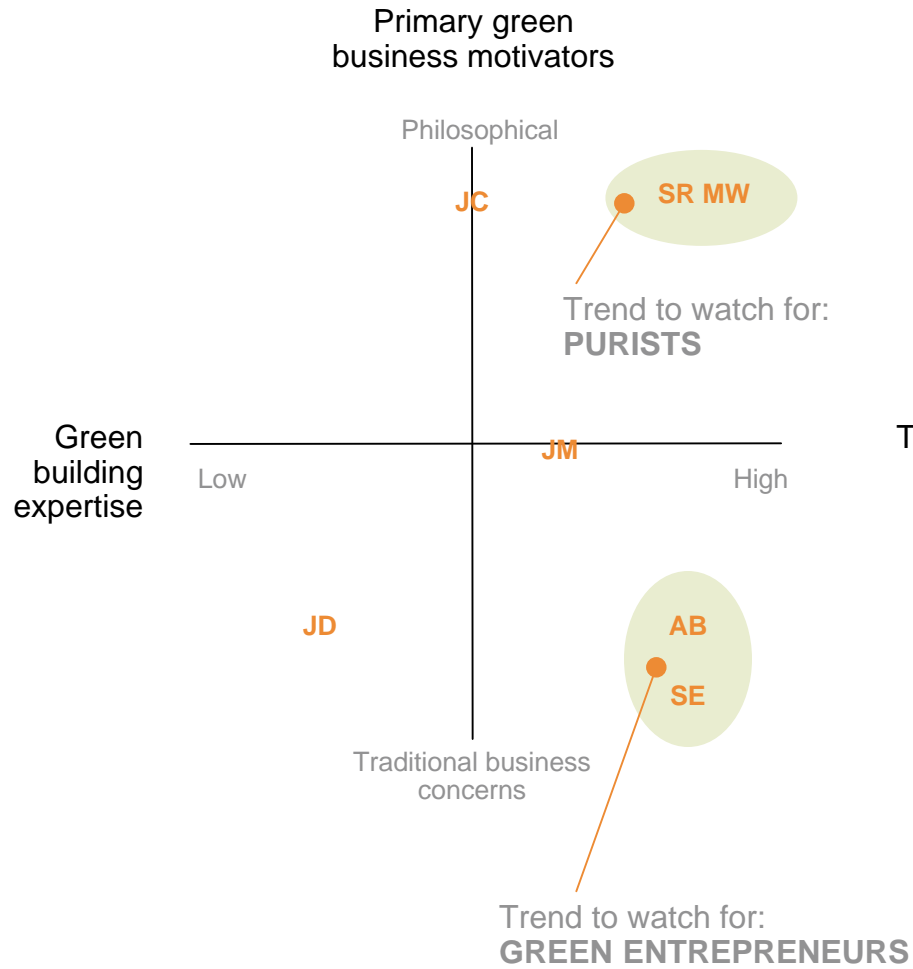
These characteristics were identified because they appeared as major themes in the interviews. When considered in conjunction with one another, these characteristics can begin to indicate users' attitudes, goals, and behaviors on the site.

Characteristic	Scale
Company size	Sole proprietor 2-10 10 +
Depth of expertise in green building	Low Medium High
Tendency to seek or share business w/ green building partners	Low Medium High
Extent to which green building is central to business	Barely Getting There Absolutely
Phase of building process	Define Design Build Maintain
Primary motivator as a green-business owner/employee	Philosophical concerns Traditional business concerns

Analysis



Analysis



Summary of trends

These should not be considered conclusive. They are initial characterizations, and will evolve as we gather more data. These will be developed and distilled as we learn more, and will most likely result in 2-3 personas.

Network-Seekers / Advocates

Actively seek to associate themselves with other like-minded professionals in order to find business opportunities. Demonstrate a personal commitment to and passion for the sustainability movement, and seek opportunities to strengthen the professional community. Tend to be small companies or sole-proprietors.

Practice-Builders

May or may not have tremendous green building experience, but want to take their businesses in this direction. May be one person in a larger firm looking to establish this expertise for the company, or may be an individual who has newly decided to take her business in this direction. Actively seeks information to shore up knowledge of methods and to bolster business case.

Thought-Leaders

Long history of practice in the industry, with deep expertise. Green building is central to their business, not a new direction, and they have proven methods for selling green building methods. They are active in the professional community, teaching, writing, speaking on their subject of expertise.

Green Entrepreneur

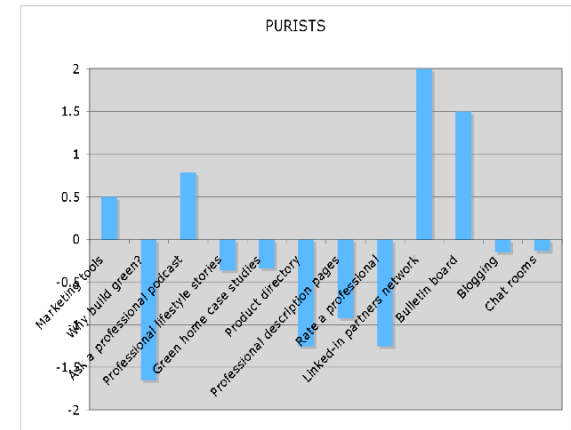
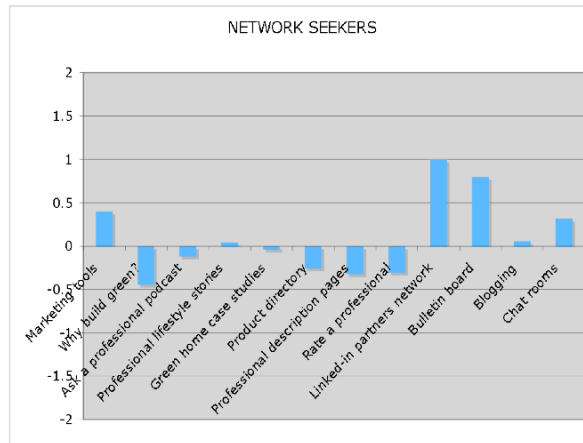
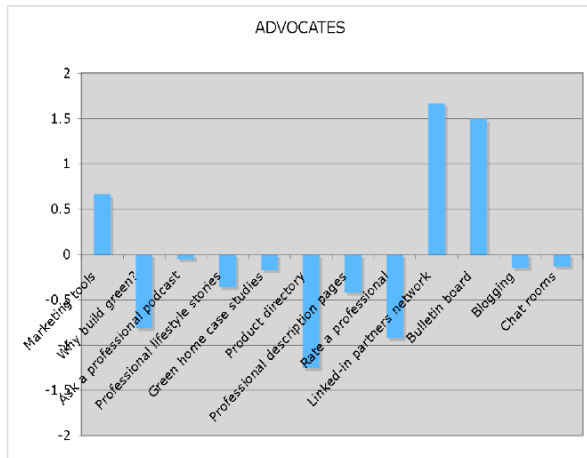
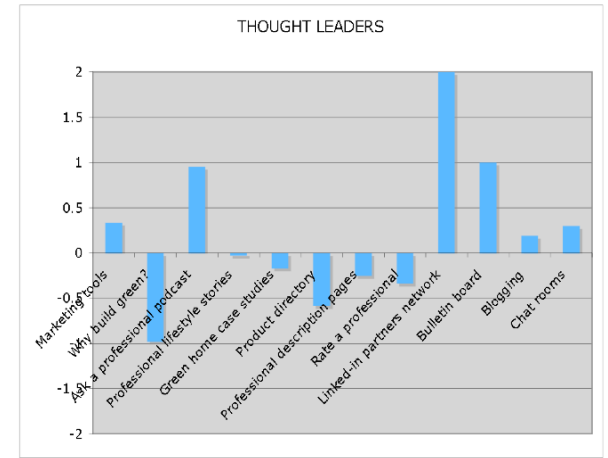
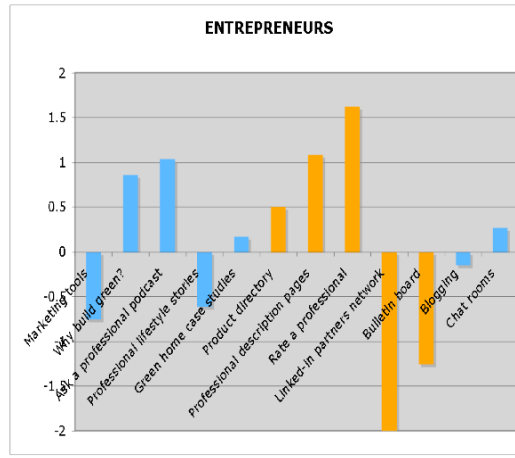
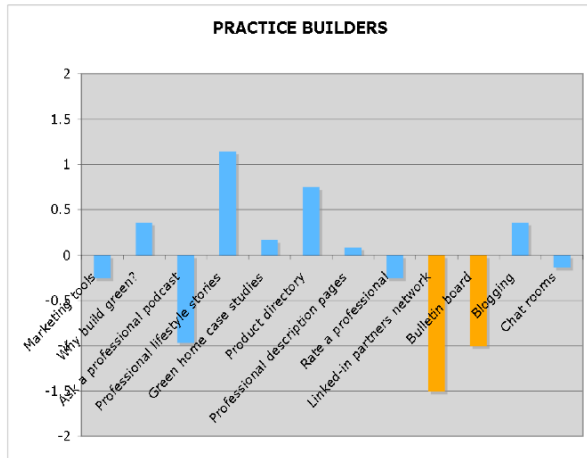
These professionals are motivated by traditional business drivers: growth, innovation, staying ahead of competition. While committed to their practice of sustainable building, their primary motivator is business growth, which they approach with all the rigor and strategy of old-school business. "Proprietary" is a more familiar concept to this pro than "open source." They don't feel strong urges to evangelize, educate, etc.

Purists

Deep sustainable building expertise and experience; primary green business concern is education - both of the consumer and building teams. Feel a responsibility to dispel incorrect notions about "green building."

Hypothesis: Relevant market segments include the following

- ✓ Green Entrepreneurs
- ✓ Practice Builders
- * Thought Leaders



Hypothesis: Key customer benefits (potential and actual) of GBB are

- ✓ **Visibility**
- ✓ **Knowledge**
- ? **Partnerships/Networking**
- ? **Commerce/Trade**

	Visibility/Credibility	Knowledge	Partnership	Commerce/trade
Green Entrepreneur	Wants to attract qualified leads Reduce cost of acquiring leads Maintain a competitive edge	Wants to solve on-the-job problems with real world information		
Practice Builder		Wants to expand overall knowledge of green building practices etc. Sell firm on value of practice Sell consumers/partners on value of green building		
Thought Leader	Wants to enhance professional reputation	Wants to educate other professional on green building subjects.	Wants to enhance professional reputation	
Network Seeker		Gain knowledge about new products.	Want to build reliable stable of partners to reduce time spent searching and educating Exchange information about products with other professionals	

Hypotheses re: Our pricing structure (& business model)

1. Professionals are extremely price sensitive regarding the cost of marketing/awareness building

and

2. GBB Listings face tough competition by word of mouth on a regional level as a marketing/ awareness device.

therefore

3. Any dramatic increase in the rate of illustrated listings will require all of the following

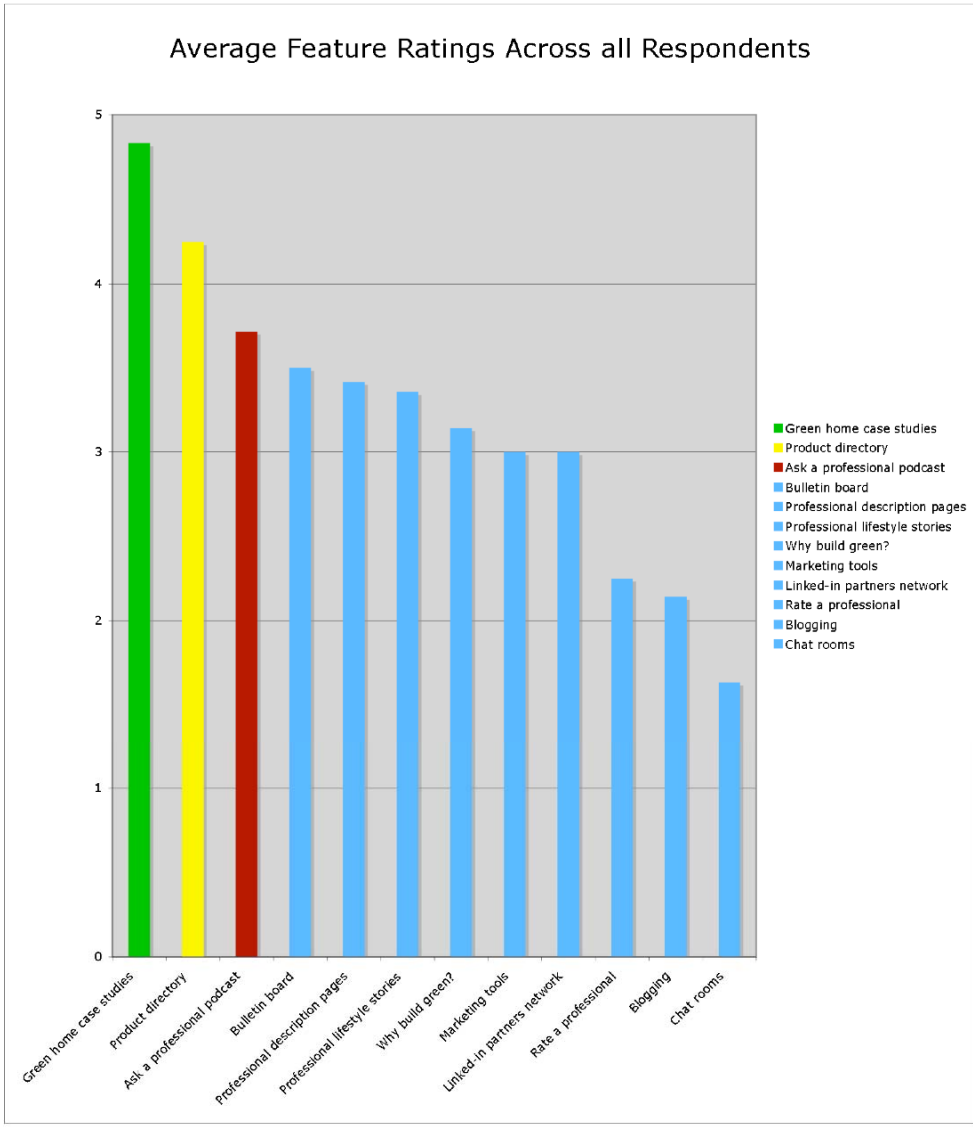
- Consumer exposure to the directory
- **Demonstrable** consumer traffic
- Reduction or elimination of listing fees

Other Hypotheses

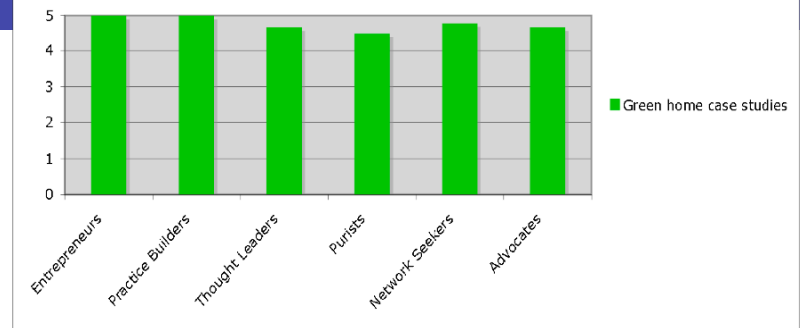
- **Thought Leaders are a viable and willing source of content for the site.**
 - Content written by actual professionals is more credible and will make the site more attractive than content written by writers
- **Social Networking is not a viable concept in its pure form for green building partnership needs.**
- **Time-based media (audio, video) have limited appeal for time crunched green professionals**
- **Greatest number of firms active in green building have fewer than 10 people**
 - Is this true?
 - Why?
 - What would this mean for GBB?

What Next for GBB 2.0?

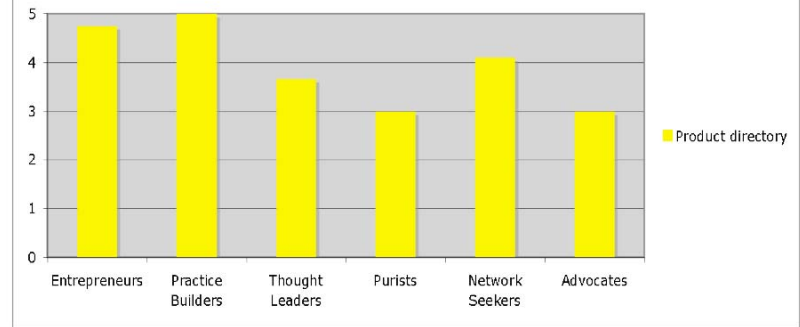
Average Feature Ratings Across all Respondents



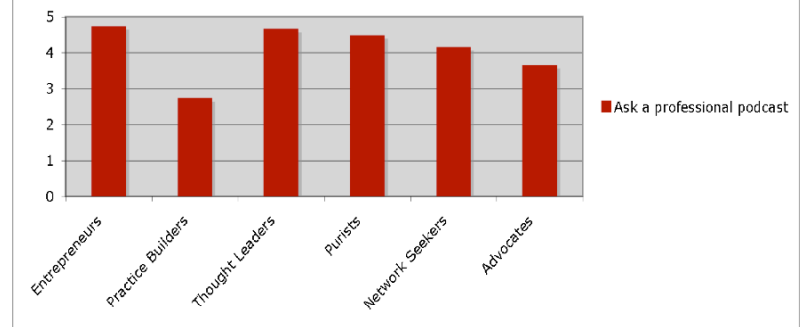
Green home case studies



Product directory



Ask a professional podcast



Product Ideas -- Benefits, Risks, and Uncertainties

	Green Home Case Studies	Product Directory	“Ask a professional” podcast
Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highly valued across all identified professional segments (can act without additional segmentation) • Potentially feasible given current time/resource availability • Potential source of credibility/authority • Potential sponsorship opportunity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highly valued by two key segments: Entrepreneurs, Practice Builders • Huge opportunity for sponsorship/advertising • Potentially massive traffic draw 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listening as opposed to reading has authenticity benefits
Risks/ Uncertainties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current supporting data is still very thin • Actual business benefit (increase traffic, return visits) is neither quantified nor well understood • Sponsorship of case studies could impact credibility • Completion in a two week time frame (GBB 2.0) is extremely challenging • Starting this without a pipeline of other studies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impossible to achieve for 2.0. • Challenge long term to achieve is enormous (barring partnerships) • Sponsorship may detract from credibility • Current supporting data is still very thin 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current supporting data is still very thin • Strong indications that format might not fit needs of key market segments • Customer comfort level with new medium is not assured • Dependent on other technologies (iPod, mp3 player, audio player)

Next Steps

- **Develop parallel survey and interview program**
 - Objective
 - Validate the market segments
 - Validate the high value product features/benefits (by segment)
 - Validate the pricing structure (& business model)
 - Uncover ideas for new business models
 - Survey and Interviews will cover the same subjects & data points
 - Interviews will provide depth, detail and answer “why?” questions
 - Survey will back up Interviews with high volume of quantitative data
- **Start planning for release of Green Home Case studies**
 - (Discover) Audit of other case study models
 - (Define) Formalize business requirements
 - (Design)
 - Assemble a lo-fi prototype (actual content)
 - Test
 - Refine & Reassess
 - Develop
 - Deploy

Data

	Company size			Green expertise			Tendency to seek partners			Green building is central			Phase of design process				Primary concern		
	1	2-10	11+	Low	Med	High	Low	Med	High	barely	Somewhat	Absolutely	Define	Design	Build	Maintain	Phil	mixed	Trad. Bus.
Julie Montgomery	x				x				x		x		x	x				x	
Amy Bauman		x				x			x			x		x	x				x
Maggie Wood	x					x			x			x	x	x			x		
Jason Dufilho			x	x			x					x	x						x
Susan Reed	x					x			x			x	x	x	x	x	x		
Steve Eddy		x				x	x								x	x			x
Julie Colt	x				x				x			x		x	x		x		

IUE tables

These tables are designed provide a structured framework for generating product concepts. The content within them should be considered draft content, subject to discussion and debate.

Network-seeker / Advocate	Intention on site	Supporting feature	Business objective met	Supporting quotations
Goals	Find qualified partners	Refine regional search for professionals (e.g. supporting pros who are not close to a metro area).	Generate sponsor revenue	"I never stop looking for partners. I would like the Beam to provide a list of qualified firms in hot markets."
Build a reliable stable of partners, to reduce amount of time spent searching / educating				"I'm always looking for people who do really good work outside of the tri-state areas. Every once in a while I have to make a cold call. I woul
Seek networking opportunities		Social networking	Ensure repeat visits Generate sponsor revenue	"This is a good concept to have an internal networking capability in this green building world. People feel alone." "These are the types of teams & networks you have in real life. It would make sense for someone to be able to see who you're working with."
Share resources / barter services				
THIS PERSON IS PRIMARILY SEEKING CONNECTIONS WITH PEOPLE		"Just added" new listing announcements	Ensure repeat visits	"I would come back to see who else is there and to find people to work with in other parts of the country."
	Create Listing to attract qualified partners	Listing creation tool	Generate Listing revenue	
	Find materials	Classifieds	Generate sponsor revenue	"This would be great, especially if it was regional. I always buy too much stuff, so I'm always looking to unload extra." "I've been doing a LOT of searching for products over the last 6 months. I'd like to find used building materials"
	Barter goods, services	Product Directory Classifieds	Ensure repeat visits Generate sponsor revenue	

Practice-builder	Intention on site	Supporting feature	Business objective met	Supporting quotations
Goals	Learn how others have solved problems	Professional-oriented green home case studies: trial & error on building projects	Generate sponsor revenue Ensure repeat visits	"I don't care about who - I care about how" "I want to know what brand they used and whether it's available locally." "I want my project to be profiled." "I'm looking for project in my region. A case from the NE isn't relevant if I'm in th SW" "I want the
Educate self on green building methods & products				
Sell firm on value of adding this to practice				
Sell prospective clients on including aspects of green building in project	Increase product knowledge Obtain info to make green-building case to clients	"Ask a professional" podcasts Product directory Aggregated collection of established guidelines (BuildGreen, LEEDs, etc.)	Generate sponsor revenue Ensure repeat visits Ensure repeat visits	I try to educate/encourage interested clients. Having a point-by-point system helps to illustrate the larger picture items. Having a well-established checklist really helps.
Articulate ROI to persuade both firm and clients	Increase knowledge of industry players & skills	Definitions of professionals and their specializations Explanation of certifications	Generate sponsor revenue Ensure repeat visits Generate sponsor revenue Ensure repeat visits	We do energy auditing, but I questioned whether I had the right to call myself that. I clicked on the certifications page to see if I had the right to my claim. I want to be seen as credible by people in industry
THIS PERSON IS PRIMARILY SEEKING INFORMATION				

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These tables are designed provide a structured framework for generating product concepts. The content within them should be considered draft content, subject to discussion and debate.

Entrepreneur	Intention on site	Supporting feature	Business objective met	Supporting quotations
Goals	Create a Listing to attract consumer leads	Listing creation tool	Generate Listing revenue	
Grow business		Optimization for commercial search engines	Generate Listing revenue	"My decision to list depends a lot on what kind of google visibility I'll get."
Increase number of leads generated		GBB advertising effort	Generate Listing revenue	"I would wonder about how the site would be promoted. Would there be print advertising - this would have a significant impact on a purchase decision"
Reduce cost of acquiring leads				"Your value would go up a lot if I saw you advertised on Fox, CNN, etc."
Maintain competitive edge				"how much advertising do you do"
THIS PERSON IS PRIMARILY SEEKING CUSTOMERS	Educate homeowner	Consumer-oriented green home case studies Why build green?	Ensure repeat visits Generate sponsor revenue	"This is exactly what my customers want to see. If they want it, then I want it"
	Verify activity on Listing	Traffic reports	Ensure repeat visits	"Maybe I'll send prospective clients here, so I don't have to give an hour of my time on this." I'd like monthly basic statistics as to kind of people clicking on my page. To know why do people look at my profile."

Thought-leader	Intention on site	Supporting feature	Business objective met	Supporting quotations
Goals	Educate homeowner	Professional description pages Consumer-oriented green home case studies	Generate sponsor revenue Ensure repeat visits	"I think this would be great for clients"
Education of professional community		Product directory	Generate sponsor revenue	
Education of project teams	Educate project teams	Regional building guidelines	Ensure repeat visits	
Education of homeowner		Regional certifications	Ensure repeat visits	
Continue expanding base of expertise		Professional-oriented green home case studies: Working with contractors	Generate sponsor revenue Ensure repeat visits	
THIS PERSON IS PRIMARILY SEEKING ???	Promote sustainability movement	Partnership deals with thought-leaders	Build reputation as credible source	"I don't market through a site generally. There'd have to be some super-bang up deal to market through this. For example: Write content for us and we'll pay you in a one-year subscription for free"