

Follow the Green Brick Road

An association promotes sustainability.

This past February, Charlie Ward logged on to the Brick Industry Association's (BIA) Web site to take the Sustainability/Green Building Design and Brick training course. As senior vice president and general

manager for Hanson Brick & Tile in Charlotte, N.C., Ward wanted to learn more about brick's place in the growing sustainable construction market.

When he completed the course a few hours later,

Ward was so impressed, he required everyone involved in commercial sales to take it, from customer service and sales people to plant managers.

"I was expecting a dry, technical presentation," Ward admits. "But it was a great overview of the topic geared toward sales and management. I may still not know the answers to the really technical questions, but now I know where to find them."

BIA members who take the course are considered Green Brick Specialists, qualified to deliver the association's accredited Brick Revisited presentation for continuing education credit in accordance with the American Institute of Architects. Hanson's sales people will show it to architects and designers during lunch-and-learn presentations.

"We wanted to provide this resource to our members as painlessly, efficiently, and as quickly as possible," says Stephen Sears, BIA's senior director of marketing and communications. "Making it available online saves time and expense, but the flexibility is the biggest selling point. If you do

your best thinking at 2 a.m., you can do it then."

Offering the course online at no cost to manufacturer and distributor members has been a major factor in its success. As of last month, 70% of members' eligible employees had completed the training since the program launched almost a year ago. The Web has allowed the BIA to spread its message about building green with brick and to fortify an army of advocates.

"The backbone of this course is framing brick's role in green building design and sustainability in its proper context, as well as setting the record straight on greenwashing," says Sears. "We must tell our own story about the green attributes of brick, and address any misinformation that might be out there."

The BIA will customize the course for groups concerned with addressing specific areas or products. The association also offers onsite course facilitation for members' employees.

Leading by example

Outside the virtual classroom, the BIA has developed standards, such as the ICC-NAHB 2008 National Green Building Standard. The association also works closely with the U.S. Green Building Council and the Green Building Initiative to make sure brick plays a role in upcoming LEED and Green Globes ratings.

While these programs develop, BIA members also have access to a powerful tool for authenticating their products' green attributes. Members can obtain third-party certification of their brick's use of renewable energy for manufacturing recycled material content and reduced resources in manufacturing through the National Brick Research Center. The Certification of



Whitacre Greer Co.

Whitacre Greer Co. won a BIA Environmental Stewardship award for its Waste & Energy Reduction program. The company has developed a new permeable paver made with clay tailings from its other pavers. Shown here is a boardwalk in Margate, N.J.

Environmental Claims gives customers proof that the materials they are using contribute to their projects' overall sustainability.

The BIA's Environmental Stewardship bi-annual awards honor brick producers who are leading the industry in environmental sensitivity. "Our companies are demonstrating that, just like all-natural brick itself, they're operating in a sustainable manner: safeguarding the health and well-being of our environment, their employees, and society at large," says Dick Jennison, president and CEO of BIA.

This year's winners were Acme Brick of Fort Worth, Texas; Glen-Gery Corp. of Wyomissing, Pa.; and Whitacre Greer Co. of Alliance, Ohio.

[WEB EXTRA] For more about the BIA, visit www.greenbrick.com or www.masonryconstruction.com.