

U.S. Green Building Council

Leading green building coalition cuts LEED application submission time by 50% using Adobe® software to automate application processing

Saving valuable resources

For organizations concerned about increasing the value and efficiency of their buildings, the most sought-after award is Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED®) certification, granted by the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC). Previously, the cumbersome process of completing and submitting paperwork for LEED certification prevented many organizations from applying for this designation for their buildings. But now, using Adobe LiveCycle™ software, USGBC has streamlined the LEED application process, reducing the time needed to submit application forms by as much as 50% and making it easier for more organizations to seek certification.

USGBC is the nation's foremost coalition of corporations, universities, government agencies, and nonprofits working to promote environmentally responsible, profitable buildings that are healthy places to live and work. The organization has more than 5,700 members, and more than 3,000 building owners have earned or are pursuing LEED certification for their buildings. A sampling of industry leaders active in the LEED program includes Bank of America, Target, the World Bank, Walt Disney, and DuPont.

“Buildings account for 39% of the energy and water use in the United States,” says Tom Hicks, vice president of LEED at USGBC. “LEED certification is a vital way for organizations to improve the efficiency of their buildings and be recognized for their positive contributions to their communities and the environment.”

Coping with double-digit growth

As energy costs rise, businesses and government organizations are seeking to improve the efficiency and value of their buildings. The increased efficiencies addressed by LEED certification help lower operating costs and can boost a building's value. Many organizations are also motivated by doing what is good for the community and the environment.

To respond to the escalating demand for LEED certification—the number of organizations seeking certification is growing by double-digit percentages annually—USGBC set out to streamline application submission and processing.

Making the application processes more efficient

Traditionally, applying for LEED certification has been time-consuming and paper-intensive. For example, a manager seeking certification for a new or existing structure would have to complete a complex spreadsheet with up to 69 tabs and submit thousands of pages of supporting documentation for various building components, such as heating systems, landscaping, and interior finishes. After receiving an application, USGBC copied the materials to share across a review team made up of staff and third-party experts. The entire process—from the initial submittal of materials to achieving LEED certification—could take years.

Because of the perceived difficulty in achieving certification, many organizations did not apply. To address the problem and streamline its internal operations, USGBC adopted Adobe LiveCycle server software. “We wanted to simplify the application process and thus encourage even more organizations to seek certification. We also needed to improve our own processes for handling and reviewing submissions,” says Joseph Diianni, director of technology for USGBC.

U.S. GREEN BUILDING COUNCIL

www.usgbc.org



INDUSTRY

- Nonprofit
- Architecture, Engineering & Construction

CHALLENGES

- Reduce the time needed to submit and process LEED certification applications
- Increase the number of organizations seeking LEED certification
- Process more applications without hiring additional staff
- Reduce processing costs

SOLUTION

- Document Collaboration
- Document Control and Security
- Process Management

USGBC is using Adobe LiveCycle solutions to streamline the submittal and processing of applications for LEED certification.

RESULTS

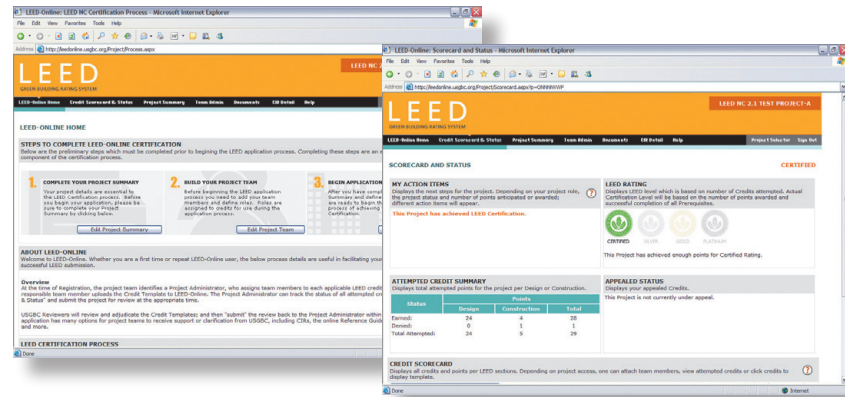
- Accelerated the process of submitting application forms by up to 50%
- Increased productivity without adding staff
- Replaced complex, 69-tab spreadsheet with streamlined, 2-page Adobe Portable Document Format (PDF) forms
- Reduced processing costs
- Linked SAP systems to forms to enhance data accuracy

A rapid implementation

Diianni and his team chose Adobe LiveCycle software to automate USGBC's forms processes because it provided a cross-platform solution that would allow applicants to access and complete forms using the ubiquitous, free Adobe Reader® software. Adobe LiveCycle software also integrated easily with the organization's SAP systems, streamlining the task of connecting form data to critical applications.

Diianni was impressed by the ease of using Adobe software. "We created more than 50 forms in Adobe PDF in less than three days, eventually rolling out hundreds of intelligent Adobe PDF forms and Adobe LiveCycle server software in less than six weeks. Given the ease of using Adobe software, we could assign form-design tasks to nontechnical team members to expedite deployment."

With Adobe LiveCycle server software, LEED certification that was once a time-consuming, paper intensive process has been accelerated by as much as 50%. Application forms in Adobe PDF contain built-in functions for calculating complex equations for heat loss, solar gain, and other relevant LEED measurements. Data is automatically captured in SAP as application forms are received helping to reduce costs and improve the accuracy of data while making it easier to track and report green building trends.



Simplified submissions

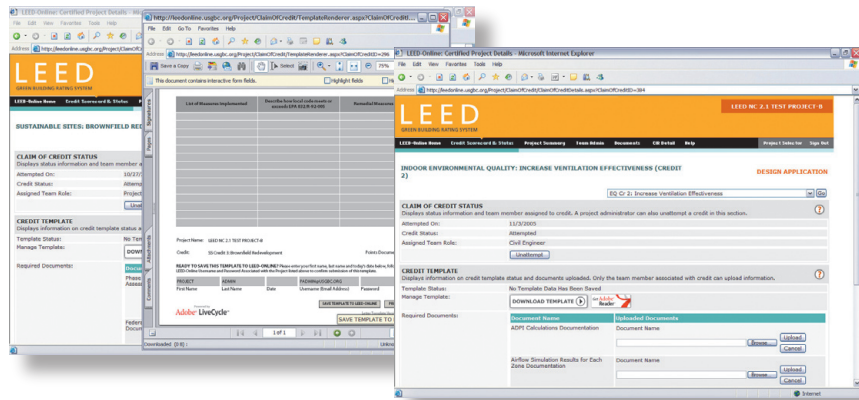
Ultimately, USGBC used Adobe LiveCycle software to create and deploy more than 400 two-page intelligent Adobe PDF forms that building-project teams can download from USGBC's website. Each form is associated with a specific building system for which a project can receive credits toward LEED certification. Project managers pursuing certification can complete the Adobe PDF forms offline and then e-mail the forms to co-workers for additional input.

After applicants have completed the Adobe PDF forms, they can attach supporting documentation—such as landscaping plans, details about construction materials and interior finishes, and other information—to the application as Adobe PDF files or in native file formats from programs such as AutoCAD®, Pro/E, and Microsoft Office. All the materials are uploaded to USGBC's online workspace, LEED Online.

Via LEED Online, project teams, USGBC staff, and third-party experts can conveniently review the application information. They can add their input to the application documents using Adobe Acrobat® commenting tools to highlight areas of interest or concern. After the application has been reviewed, all the associated forms and documentation are stored in LEED Online; design and construction managers can visit the online workspace at any time to see if their applications have been approved or if additional information and documentation need to be submitted.

"Our staff and outside experts can now review submissions faster than ever using electronic review and commenting tools in Adobe Acrobat software," says Chris Smith, chief operating officer at USGBC. "We estimate that the automated workflows supported by Adobe solutions will accelerate submitting LEED application forms by as much as 50%."

USGBC used Adobe LiveCycle software to create and deploy more than 400, intelligent Adobe PDF forms for LEED certification. As forms are completed, supporting documentation can be attached as additional Adobe PDF files or native program files and uploaded to USGBC's online workplace where approval status can be checked on at any time. Applications are reviewed using Adobe Acrobat commenting tools and all forms and documentation are stored in LEED Online.



“We estimate that the automated workflows supported by Adobe solutions will accelerate the process of submitting LEED application forms by as much as 50%.”

Chris Smith,
Chief operating officer,
U.S. Green Building Council

Increasing information accuracy

Because USGBC linked the submitted Adobe PDF forms with SAP, data is automatically captured in SAP as application forms are received, eliminating the need for USGBC staff to manually key application data into back-end systems. The enhanced process helps reduce costs and improve the accuracy of data, and it also makes it easier for USGBC to track and report green-building trends.

The automated processes supported by Adobe LiveCycle software are more convenient for both applicants and USGBC staff. Applicants can quickly complete intuitive Adobe PDF forms containing built-in functions for calculating complex equations for heat loss, solar gain, and other relevant LEED measurements. High-quality versions of the Adobe PDF forms can be printed if necessary. Once reviewed, final applications with all comments in Adobe PDF can be archived for future reference.

The new system also enhances information security, because username and password permissions are associated with each Adobe PDF form. Instead of sending an entire worksheet to every member of a project team, project managers can limit users' access to only the specific forms they need.

“With Adobe LiveCycle software, we can process more LEED applications without adding staff. The solution also gives us room to expand services by integrating more functionality around digital signatures and automated workflows,” says Dianni. “Best of all, we believe the new solution will encourage even more organizations to seek LEED certification.”

SYSTEMS AT A GLANCE

- Adobe LiveCycle Forms
- Adobe LiveCycle Reader Extensions
- Adobe LiveCycle Form Manager
- Adobe LiveCycle Designer
- Adobe Acrobat Professional 7.0

Better by Adobe.™

Adobe Systems Incorporated
345 Park Avenue, San Jose, CA 95110-2704 USA
www.adobe.com

Adobe, the Adobe logo, Acrobat, Adobe LiveCycle, Reader, and Better by Adobe are registered trademarks or trademarks of Adobe Systems Incorporated in the United States and/or other countries. AutoCAD is either a registered trademark or trademark of Autodesk, Inc., in the USA and/or other countries. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners.
© 2006 Adobe Systems Incorporated. All rights reserved.
Printed in the USA.
95006255 02/06 R

