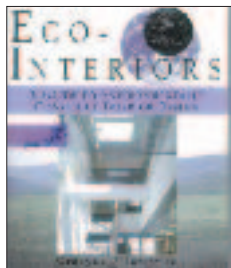


Designing “Green” Interiors

by Bill Brockway



Eco-Interiors by
Grazyna
Pilatowicz (John
Wiley and Sons,
1995; 800/225-
5945). Softcover,
7 1/2 x 9 1/4, 181
pages. \$24.95.

If you make any of your living from selling interior design services, you've probably already heard some of the questions and concerns addressed in this book — questions aimed at making a new house or remodel as “green” as possible. This new book from publisher John Wiley and Sons gives you a source for answering those questions, finding green products, and helping your customers make design decisions that will tread lightly on the environment.

Don't let this eco-slant scare you off, though — the book isn't preachy, and doesn't pretend that compact fluorescent bulbs will save the planet from doom. It just tries to offer some alternatives to old ways of doing things.

Author Grazyna Pilatowicz divides the book into four sections, though most of the important information for designer-builders is in the first two — Environmental Issues, and Interior Design Process. The third section, Case Studies, gives examples of the author's advice applied in the real world, and the fourth, Resources, lists sources for products, services, and more information. Design tips and “side notes” (paragraphs in the margin that contain interesting quotes and facts, such as how many toilets there are in New York City — an estimated 4 million) are sprinkled liberally throughout the text.

The first section — Environmental Issues — devotes 47 pages to outlining the problems for us, but with a slight twist. Instead of just spewing the oft-quoted fact about how one new house equals 2.5 tons of construction waste, the author offers her take on how a

designer's decisions can affect these numbers.

After touching on all of the larger issues, such as water conservation and saving forests, Pilatowicz goes on to detail the problem of indoor air quality (IAQ), and the design choices that can affect it. She identifies the sources of fungi, dust, humidity, bacteria, formaldehyde, tobacco smoke, and volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and explains how alternative materials can help reduce their concentrations. Electromagnetic fields, radon, asbestos, lead, ozone, and poor ventilation round out the list of nasties that the author confronts in detail.

The section on Interior Design Process starts out with a discussion of lighting and water conservation, then strikes the IAQ drum again, this time giving the reader clear, workable alternatives to the sources of pollutants that we often put in our homes.

At the very least, this book will give you the background you need to discuss green issues with clients; at most, it can help you design healthier interior spaces.



**The Employee
Problem Solver**
by Alexander
Hamilton
Institute (AHI,
1993; 800/879-
2441). Three-ring
binder, 9x10, 328
pages. \$70.

Manager's Aid

Picture this: Over a weekend, you hear on the radio that one of your best employees was busted for dealing drugs. You pride yourself on running a drug-free crew and don't want a known dealer on your payroll. You've made it clear that any involvement with drugs is grounds for termination, so first thing on Monday morning,

you fire that employee, without discussion. Was your response legal?

Not according to the courts. For one thing, an arrest is not a conviction, so there isn't yet any real evidence of guilt. You also didn't bother to listen to the employee's side of the story. Since the employee had a stellar work record, you jumped the gun, and the accused drug dealer could actually win a judgment against you.

This is just one example where what's right and what's wrong might go against your gut reaction. You could get into lots of legal trouble making rash decisions without full knowledge of the law.

From absenteeism and alcohol to sexual harassment and termination, the employee problems that you deal with every day are covered in this new book from the Alexander Hamilton Institute. This guide to solutions gives you solid examples on which to base your company policies.

The book is divided into 40 “modules,” each covering a specific topic area. Each module includes four to six situations written up in a conversational, easy-to-understand style. The text follows each scenario through discussions with higher-level management, a volley of lawsuits, and finally to a court decision. The goal here is to help you avoid a legal mess by solving the problem before it gets out of hand. If you do end up in court, each module includes relevant legal citations — so your lawyer has somewhere to start looking for precedents.

The right or wrong often comes down to how clearly a company's employee handbook spells out the rules. Each module includes a section called “Company Policy” that offers sample text for you to use in writing your own handbook, and also tells you what wording to avoid.

This is a handbook of legal advice, but it's written in a very readable style. The authors avoid confusing “legalese” and use first names (rather than job titles) in almost all examples. At \$70, this book might seem a little pricey, but when you think about going to a lawyer for detailed legal advice on 40 different topics, it begins to look like quite a bargain. ■

Bill Brockway is an assistant editor of the Journal of Light Construction.