

The Importance of Sustainability for Building Material Manufacturers

Webinar Participants:

Webinar Host: Kip Rapp - CEO Concora

Guest Speaker: Denice Staaf - Principal Labeling Sustainability Inc

Guest Speaker: Paul Shahriari – Founder/Chief Innovation Officer Ecomedes

Guest Speaker: John Bennett – Founder/CEO Eco Safety Products

Kip Rapp:

All right. Thanks folks for joining. We're all going to wait a minute as the attendees build into the room. Appreciate everyone's patience as we get started in a minute or so, but we'll wait another minute. Great. I'd like to get started. My name's Kip Rapp at Concora. Was really excited about today and doing this webinar. I've been doing podcasts for many months now, and sustainability has been one of those topics that just comes up quite a bit for many, many reasons. It's certainly important with, as you see, with the global economy, with COVID, with health and welfare. We're very passionate about bringing these kinds of educational platforms and just talking to a lot of people, how we move sustainability forward, how we move construction and building materials forward and making it easier for architects, vendors, contractors is just sharing knowledge and making it available and bringing people together.

Kip Rapp:

And so for today's webinar, we're really proud to show that. We have a great panelist joining this call today. We'll introduce them in short order. Hopefully what you'll get out of this webinar today is know about sustainability and how it matters to building material companies. And what's important to architects, engineers, and contractors, and what's important to your website and the digital strategy. These are certainly common questions and some questions aren't as common.

Kip Rapp:

And what we want to do, we have John Bennett, who's also part of the panelist. He has a great coatings products. It's very sustainable. We want to show you how we've worked together with Ecomedes and Labeling Sustainability to provide very good sustainability experience. We hope that you stay on. If you have questions, just let us know. We're really happy to answer anything that might be on top of your mind and just keep it very conversational. With that, I'm going to stop share my screen here, and then we'll get right into the topic. Hopefully you can see everyone here. I'd like to start off with Denice. And Denice, if you would introduce yourself, what you do and your company does. Oh, you're on mute.

Denice Staaf:

See, I was such a good participant. My name is Denice Staff and my company is called Labeling Sustainability. And what I do, my background is design, working in architecture firms and being a product rep. My company does assist manufacturers in all of their transparency documentation. So we do HPDs any kind of supplier declaration of conformities, which you can use as a self-reporting in a lot of LEED credits. We do EPDs, type three environmental product declarations. We're also a program operator for type three product declarations. So anything that a manufacturer needs, A to Z. I also do straight building consulting for manufacturers, whether it's inputting a sustainability system end-to-end or waste reduction or things like that.

Kip Rapp:

Thanks, Denice. Yeah. So that's great. Thanks for the introduction. As a topic, it might be a softball, but I think I do get this quite a bit is like, what is sustainability and why is it important?

Denice Staaf:

Great question. A lot of people do have this question. The easiest way to think about sustainability is avoidance of depletion. Its eco targets. You're saving energy, you're saving water, and you're saving resources. You're leaving the planet in a state of homeostasis that it currently is. No CO2 emissions into the atmosphere, things like that.

Denice Staaf:

But what I'd like to introduce is the topic of sustainable development. And I'd like to see companies move more towards this, because this is ensuring that you're meeting the needs of the present without compromising the needs of the future. And so that's pretty much saying, leave it better than you found it. And with that, you are actually creating well.

Denice Staaf:

So sustainability isn't just about saving energy. It's about what you're putting out into your communities. It's about how you are giving back. And that's increasing your social license to operate in your market and in your place of businesses. It can be sustainability is here and then sustainable development is what we all should be striving towards. Not just saving, but improving.

Kip Rapp:

No, that's great. Yeah. I know when I talked to people, Denice, when I used to think about this few years ago, it's like, and sustainability is more than just global warming. It's more than carbon emissions. Its health and wellbeing. It's productivity, its happy employees. And so I appreciate your introduction to that and thanks for sharing. The next panelists is Paul Shahriari, I'm sorry for the name. You can introduce yourself, what you do and your company does.

Paul Shahriari:

Sure. Paul Shahriari with Ecomedes. I'm a founder and chief innovation officer here.

My background is I've spent last 22 years in real estate design and construction, primarily focused on sustainability in the built environment, helping both owners and project teams figure out what green things go into a building. And then also working as a faculty member with the USBC in the early days, on trying to train people up. So what we do now at Ecomedes is try to bring all that data together, make it easy for people to find all that information and analyze it and get the documentation, so they can spend more time on the important questions on how to make a building or a project better, as opposed to just going out there and trying to find the data, which is a very long scavenger hunt nowadays.

Kip Rapp:

Yeah. As Denice was explaining, what is sustainability and why it's important, just for you, why is it important for a lot of our guests that are here today, for building material folks?

Paul Shahriari:

Sure. I mean, the real estate design and construction industry has a significant impact on the economy, on resource consumption, on the planet and people. Since buildings are made up of so many different individual components that need to go together to perform the job that they're designed to do, increasingly building owners that have large assets or just a single building, they want to optimize the performance of those buildings.

Paul Shahriari:

And to do that, you actually have to take a look at the systems, the products, the interactions, and make sure that those solutions are better aligned with what they want, whether it's health and wellness in a building, making sure you're removing certain chemicals possibly out of that environment, making buildings more efficient, so they need less energy, both inside of them, but also upstream and at the power plant.

Paul Shahriari:

So those are all kinds of decisions that I think have focused on sustainability in the built environment, because we have an outsized, I think, impact outside of other industries that are out there. So it's just a very big, important thing. And real estate is the largest asset class in the world. So I think there's a lot of money tied up into it. So people want to make sure their investments are being well taken care of.

Kip Rapp:

Yeah. And I heard a quote and maybe Denice or Paul, you can let me know. It's like the actual construction of a building makes up 40% of the carbon emissions in the globe. Is that right?

Paul Shahriari:

Yeah, I think there's some more nuance to that. So I think it's both operational energy and the embodied energy that goes into making of things that go into the building. It's kind of a twofold thing. But yeah, that's a number I've heard too.

Kip Rapp:

Yeah. Yeah, it's quite amazing because I talked to a lot of folks, like John who we'll get to next, everyone has these very entrepreneurial, novel products, and us as a village and a team together can help promote the sustainability objectives by great technology, great ways to build things, transport things, and just making it known that you have a sustainable product. So I appreciate you sharing there. John Bennett, I would love to introduce you, and if you could just introduce yourself and what your company does.

John Bennett:

Yeah. Great. Hey, thanks, Kip. Thanks for coordinating this webinars as well. I know that's not an easy task to do. But anyway, yes, I'm John Bennett. I'm the founder and CEO of Eco Safety Products. I founded the company a little over 17 years ago. I jumped into this space of the paint and coatings industry, primarily out of my experience in the industrial chemicals industry, dealing with automotive and aerospace.

John Bennett:

I worked with a chemical company that had water-based safer biodegradable chemistry for that industrial consumer. It was revolutionary in that it saved on hazardous waste disposal. It could be recycled. And of course it was much healthier for the users exposed to, or normally exposed to solvents, high, toxic, high flammable solvents. And that was a great experience. And then it actually got me into the direction of, okay, where else can alternatives fit in, in this world? Why aren't there more solutions?

John Bennett:

Paints and coatings industry was so intriguing in my studies of finding a market that had a lot of problems. And so it rolled right into paint and coatings. And I realized that, oh my gosh, everybody who enters a building is exposed to chemicals. Any building that has a building product, is exposed to chemicals. I thought, oh, okay, there's a wide open problem area that I think I can address.

John Bennett:

So I got into bio-based chemistry. Yeah, I was predisposed to that. The bio-based chemicals and industrial coatings, but I didn't see it anywhere in consumer products, paints, and stains, finishes, on your sealers or cleaning products to paint strippers. And we make all of those now today, 17 years, to cover that breadth, from floor to ceiling to maintenance, and even pre-construction. Yeah, that's how we started, why I started. It was a choice between, are you just going to say your eco-friendly or you're building a model based on sustainability? I chose the latter.

Kip Rapp:

Well, that's awesome. I applaud what you do. I think entrepreneurs to be able to take their passion and do something that's great for the world as you have with your coatings products. John, as you've explained your background, I mean, why is sustainability important to you and your company?

John Bennett:

Yeah. When I started, to me, I already knew out of the gate that anyone could say they're eco-friendly and some were doing it because at that point, when I started water-based was just starting to become a trend. But I knew in the long term, everything's going to be eco-friendly. At some point in time, everything will be eco-friendly. So what's differentiating what you call greenwashing or eco-friendly or whatever? I knew it had to be much deeper. It's what's in the products. It's the actual ingredients.

John Bennett:

Yeah. I consider it a viewpoint on either is it eco-friendly or do you want to have an ethos surrounded about a life cycle of a product? So we get into the foundation, knowing the individual ingredients that go into it, have to perform as well or better than conventional solvents in order to have a marketable product that is going to be taken seriously.

John Bennett:

And then that ingredient has to have sustainable attributes, which my background image there is a soybean field. Soy is one of our primary solvents, which is a natural material. But we use components of corn, from cellulose, from sugars. I mean, we're getting into ocean components. They're coming from shellfish. The number of biomaterials is phenomenal and there's a replicant or a replacement. And talking with the Denice a while ago, I would use it from this day forward. I thought it was so fantastic. She says that we have to get to the point of being or having the mindset that we're not doing or achieving or finding a regrettable substitution. And that is really the truth of why we investigate every single ingredient. We have to make sure that it is not something that's going to bite us in the rear and actually cause issues. So we stay away from toxins of all sorts. We can comply to every green building spec globally with our products.

Kip Rapp:

Yeah. Thanks, John. Again, I'm really impressed by your products. I didn't know myself as owning a home and you're in a building, everything's coated, everything has paints and the off gassing. And it's hard, I talked to a lot of folks that have products, it's hard to find the, I would say the perfect triangle words, just adorable, just as the cost-effectiveness as the petrol-based chemicals as you had there and the supply chain availability. I really am impressed about what you have there. So thanks for sharing that.

Kip Rapp:

I do want to switch gears a little bit and go back to Denice. We talked a little about what is sustainability, John's passion, what does that mean to building material? And then moving on to, we have quite a few folks on the webinar from the, I call it the design community: architects, engineers, and contractors. Denice, why is this important? And what's important to AECs for sustainability and maybe regarding to, as you know, digital transformation, there's web experience? What are some examples that are important there too?

Denice Staaf:

Okay. At the first part, you might have to redirect me on the second part. So when we talk about why this is all important for an architect, for a designer, it seems so silly that we would find it important that we know what's in a material.

And when I can tell you that 80% of the manufacturers don't know what's in their materials, it's not because they don't want to know, they buy raw material, a chemical, a binder, let's say for instance, that they use in their product and they go back to the manufacturer and they say, "What's in it?" And the manufacturer says, "Here's our SDS." And they said, "No, no, no, what's in it?" And they said, "Oh, we can't tell you." "But you want me to buy it? And you want me to put it in my product? And you want me to do all of these things?"

Denice Staaf:

So it seems almost silly that we've put a focus on this, but the manufacturers that are putting the focus on doing the research and doing the hard work, like what John's doing, are going to be your higher tier manufacturers. And for an architect or designer, that means I'm dealing with someone not only who has the same values that I do, but I'm also dealing with someone that is going to give me a good product for my project. Because as an architect, as a designer, I don't want to use a product that fails and that is not as good in my project, because that's my name. I did that. Not only is it in my portfolio, but everyone's going to say XYZ architect did this.

Denice Staaf:

I feel like for a lot of architects and design firms, minimum requirements to get in the door, are maybe an HPD, because you've at least had to ask the questions to your suppliers. You've at least had to do some homework. Then that gives me a little bit more confidence in using you. So that confidence makes me feel a little better, even if this isn't a green project, even if it isn't a LEED or WELL project, that same level of confidence just blankets over that material. Now the second part of your question was?

Kip Rapp:

Yeah. I see you as a very good advocate for the design community. So if you're an architect, I mean, what do you really look for when you're researching a manufacturer to meet like a LEED or some other sustainability objective, what do you want to see on their website?

Denice Staaf:

Documentation. Real documentation. I don't want to see a bunch of fluff credits written by marketing, who tell me they can contribute to something that doesn't even make sense. That they remotely third level down may contribute. I want hard facts, real documents that you directly connect to. I've helped architects audit LEED projects. Meaning, I've had to go and either find the documentation or find if the documentation was even correct. I would say the number one thing that was my biggest pet peeve when I looked at someone's, what credits do we qualify for? Somebody in marketing wrote it, and it's got nine things on it.

Denice Staaf:

And in reality, they might have recycled content. There's not a whole lot of meat to it. For every single thing that you say, I want a downloadable document next to it, or some kind of explanation, because in reality of, oh, we contribute to optimize energy performance. I want to know how, in a real explanation, not fluff. So I would say that would be the number one thing for manufacturers. Somebody like, from what I understand, Ecomedes does, or Concora is doing is, here's what you do.

Here's my proof. Because I don't want to have to go to 90 pages. And then finally I give up on you and say, oh, who's your competitor. Maybe they have it.

Kip Rapp:

Yeah. No, that's great. I know that's very also consistent if you're an architect, contractor, whoever, you want to be able to quickly find it easily, obviously within a few clicks and it's credible type quality.

Denice Staaf:

Real.

Kip Rapp:

It's real. Yeah. Appreciate that, Denice. So Paul, as Denice was explaining the importance to AECs, and let's say we have building material manufacturers on the phone, what would be like an easy way to think about? Maybe you don't have a sustainability officer, maybe you really believe in sustainability, but you're just not sure where to start. What tips could you give to that listener that's on the webinar today?

Paul Shahriari:

Sure. That's something I used to do in my old recovering consulting days. A great question. I think the adventure always starts with asking yourself, what organizational drivers do we have behind green? John gave us a really good explanation of why he did it. He had some knowledge, he wanted to apply better knowledge. He strives to always make his products better. So you got to understand that. So there's a couple of questions I would just ask and discovery for the client would be, what's your company's mission?

Paul Shahriari:

Secondarily, what do your customers want from your brand? Your brand delivery and the brand promise of being a sustainable company, it cannot be done just by marketing. It shouldn't be done just by marketing. It should really be, what are your customers and your industry looking for from those leader, I call them lighthouse brands? What performance data do you have? So starting with that. You got to start where you're at. So give yourself a GPS location of where is your company at, in terms of data, performance, ASTM, ISO, whatever those are.

Paul Shahriari:

And then, how are you positioned in the market? Are you a laggard? Are you in the middle of the pack? Are you with all the people in the leading, the Peloton, if you're using like the tour de France reference? And then like, where do you want to go? Because I think a lot of companies come up, and now I think more and more being pressured to figure out, what is their stance? When you look at the big picture, ESGs and SDGs, that is a lot there. So you got to figure out, where do your customers want you to go? What can you do from paints and coatings? What can you do for furniture or flooring or drywall?

Paul Shahriari:

And it's been really fun to watch this industry. When I first started, it was just like we were just chasing recycled content data. And our databases in the early days had maybe 15 or 20 attributes. We now just for the sustainability side of the equation, we carry 2,500 active attributes that designers and decision makers are using across the wide spectrum of ingredients and buildings to define what sustainability means. There's a lot more to get there and transparency and being truthful with the answers and being truthful where you're at is part of the journey. So that's where I'd start kind of, where are you going? Why are your customers wanting you to get there? What kind of data do you have now to share with the marketplace?

Denice Staaf:

Can I add-?

Kip Rapp:

Yeah. Go ahead, Denice.

Denice Staaf:

I also would add for manufacturers that everything doesn't have to be super expensive. How many manufacturers do I talk to that said, "Listen, I don't have \$50,000 to drop on an EPD?" I think also considering in that, what's your entry level? What gets you, as I like to say, into the game, so to speak, and how can you build on that? So for instance, maybe an HPD is as much as you can do right now. Time-wise, documentation wise and budget wise, but then how do you build on that?

Denice Staaf:

And so I think a lot of midsize manufacturers are like, "I don't have the budget of my competitors that are king in the market and can do everything." So I would say, don't throw the baby out with the bath water with this, is find what you can do. And there's lots of things in sustainability that you can do that are very low hanging fruit. As John, we did a bunch of, oh, we just have to do it this way.

Kip Rapp:

Yeah. I really like your practical pres, because I do think either sustainability is like a Greek term for a lot of people that you're, I don't know. Oh, I heard it's expensive, so I give up. It's a little depressing because I talked to a lot of folks and it's like, if you can just educate how your products are sustainable, like you said, with the HPDs, that can have a tremendous impact on global sustainability initiative, because at least they know you have something and they can say, oh, I can use this now. And it doesn't have to be expensive as far as building the documentation. Thanks for sharing. Denice, I know you follow it up, but the next question is for you.

Denice Staaf:

Sorry.

Kip Rapp:

No problem. As Paul was talking through, kind of like starting sustainability initiatives and you were alluding to a practical economic way. I know people on the webinar, they talk about LEED and WELLS and Living Building Challenge. So what are some really practical, some important as a building material manufacturer and what's maybe popular today and important today? What are some of those rating systems that would be good?

Denice Staaf:

In the U.S. I have entire weeks where everybody wants to talk about WELL, and that's been a recent, and I think as people are coming back into the office, there's more of that draw to try to create that space. So let's first talk about the differences between LEED and WELL. LEED is going to be efficiency based building. It's going to be a good building that uses less resources, that uses less energy that uses less water that has better air quality.

Denice Staaf:

So it's going to be your sustainability building. You want to know exactly how much water it's going to use, how much energy it's going to use. But when you look at the WELL rating system, it's almost tied to sustainable development. So it's trying to create a project that is giving back. That not only does it have better air quality and it measures it on many more points of data, but that air quality is going to be consistent in the future because now there's more cleaning protocols and there's more things like that.

Denice Staaf:

Those are the big differences between the two, because that's one question I get a lot, LEED and WELL. I would say those are the two big dogs in the market right now. I am Fitwel, and I have yet to work on a Fitwel project, but Fitwel is kind of in the middle, I think, a little bit. And then there's green building for schools, which is the chips. Which is very, I would say, across between LEED and green building code. Those are going to be the basic ones that you look at.

Denice Staaf:

But what you can do is start with one. LEED is a good one to start with. It's been around for the longest. People are very familiar with the types of documentation that's required. And look and see how you qualify, what you can contribute. Please don't tell me that you get a point for your product, because no one product gets one point, that you contribute to, and then look how that crosses the other systems. We did some guides for John, and he's got a LEED guide, a WELL guide and a chips guide. And they do cross a lot between each other. So then you can say, "Oh, I don't just contribute to LEED, I actually contribute to WELL also."

Kip Rapp:

That's great, Denice. Paul, there's a question from the attendees that I'll put you on the spot. We'll see how this goes. The question is, what are some ways to break into the market? Let's say general contractors, builders, and architects who are, I hear this a lot, who are status quo, apprehensive about using products and materials that they haven't used before, but you may have a product that's differentiating from sustainability.

Paul Shahriari:

Yeah. It's understanding what those typical strategic elements are. What are the performance characteristics of the status quo? And if you have a better, preface it under better in terms of performance, and you'd have to go out there and say, look, my product can get you better attribution and rating systems. My product will last longer. My product will be devoid of possible downstream risks, because we've all had products that everyone loved and everyone used a lot, and then there's a massive liability with using products. I'm not going to say that the red list is the same thing asbestos, but we thought that was a really good product for a very long time, and now we don't obviously think that it's a good product.

Paul Shahriari:

So I think the focus on health and wellness and the focus on performance and energy and embodied carbon, I think a lot of industries are going to get disrupted, and sometimes industries get disrupted by the people that are in the industry, but a lot of times it's the smaller brands that come out and they're a little bit more nimble because you can do things, like John can do them. Maybe some of the bigger cutting somebody can't do because they have an existing line of business. So they might be pigeonholed into something that they can't do necessarily.

Paul Shahriari:

You have to come with the truth and you've got to make sure you're not greenwashing. Because I think big companies stake their reputations in AEC to build the right thing, to spec the right thing. They don't want to take a chance on someone that says, "I've only installed it in five square feet of space in the world." That's going to be a probability. You might have to start with some smaller general contractors if that's the case.

Kip Rapp:

Yeah. Yeah. And I do have a few more questions are pretty interesting here. Whoever wants to take on that? But thanks for that response, Paul. It's a pretty simple question, but I'm not sure what the right response is there, but in the construction industry, what are the items that can be sustainable products? My view is I know when I was talking to some people, they talk about the building, I hear wood, concrete and steel has a lot of opportunity for improving sustainability. Just like John's product though, his product contributes based on the coatings. But Paul or Denice is there a way to answer that? Can any product be sustainable based on how it's made, how it's sourced and how it's transported?

Denice Staaf:

Within reason. I mean, provided you're not making something super hazardous like asbestos. But the key is to do the best that you can, I would say, with the building materials. As my one professor in grad school said, if you got out of bed this morning, you have an impact. Everything has an impact. So to say there's a perfect building material that might be clay, you can grind up clay roofs and you can make them into baseball fields. I mean, you can do lots of things. I mean, that might be a perfect building material, but we don't want to make everything out of clay.

Denice Staaf:

And there are lots of uses for things that even sometimes aren't so sustainable. And people are trying all the time to make it more sustainable.

Unfortunately, we still have to have flame retardants in some applications because that is building code and there's a reason for it. So I would say above everything else, doing the best you can with what you have and how to improve that is better than saying, this is the perfect building material, because then when you get into wood, is it sustainably harvested? Where is it harvested? How is it getting to you? What kind of truck is it coming on? From a life cycle perspective, you realize really quickly everything has an impact.

John Bennett:

Actually, as a supplier of coatings and finishes for sustainable products, I see more of the reverse, where it's a sustainable material, but they're making it non-sustainable, because they're putting a solvent that is filled with isocyanates, things that are carcinogenic or things that smell for weeks on end. It's not conducive to a healthy environment.

John Bennett:

From that aspect, I see that more on the reverse side. And we are seeing that trend upward of making sure that these building product manufacturers are now almost forced to switch because of the the knowledge now of what they have on their building product is not so friendly. It doesn't comply with WELL, for example. So they come to companies like us who have a sustainable solution for a lot of those finishes.

Kip Rapp:

Great. No, thanks for bringing that point up, John. And the next question is for you too. I know you're going through this project of revamping your digital strategies. Walk us through a little bit of that, because if you're a manufacturer on the phone today, and as Denice and Paul explained some of the things that are important for sustainability, what are some things that are important from a marketing aspect? Because obviously you're trying to get specified purchase more. You're making investments in your website and everything else. Could you walk us through a little bit of that?

John Bennett:

Yeah, absolutely. Being a small company and especially a founder who wears many hats, you have to prioritize your time. Marketing for someone who is more on the technical side, always takes a back seat. After maybe a thousand times where a customer will say, oh my gosh, I wish I would have heard about you. You are the world's best kept secret. I think I told you that, Kip, that's why it came to you.

John Bennett:

Being a company that wants to go and dominate the global economy in some fashion with sustainable material, you do not want to be a secret. Digital media is very important. And so in searching, one way is the access to critical documents for these specifiers. You'll look at our website today, right now, we have zero, other than PDS, SDS, general information, the fluff that everyone hates.

John Bennett:

So now that's why we've pulled in Ecomedes, Concora, and Denice on the technical side, to compile the documents, that

way we are making this special best-in-class portal that brings all the documents in one place, easy to find, easy to access for anybody, whether it's green building or not. So the digital media side now, once our website gets launched, which we will update those that are interested. We will make announcements, big release probably next week sometime, knock on wood, because I can only stay awake so many hours this week. That's coming. Your portal, which you're going to get into, is also coming live on that site. We are so excited.

John Bennett:

Once we have those in place within this next week, the social media is critical to let people know this new way, or at least the way that all the architects and specifiers want this documentation so that they don't have to spend hours and hours and hours of frustration, pulling their hairs out of finding out, will this product meet my demands? And we'll walk them through the technical side of how to compare, how to test, how to evaluate the performance side. We'll walk you through that. But other than that, we want to get the documents in your hands.

Kip Rapp:

Yeah. That's great, John. I know there was another question, I think, Denice, you might have answered this. I have a perspective on this too is, I hear it all the time, you have contractors that maybe they care about sustainability, and then when it comes down to cost, they're like maybe not as much anymore, because it costs me more money. How do you get past that? I've talked to folks, and sometimes it's educating the contractor over the total cost of ownership that sustainability can be very competitive, or it could be a change in the supply chain, but there's other ways than just the face value of apples to apples on the class.

Kip Rapp:

I know in your coatings product that it actually has a higher percent of covered. So on a cost per gallon, it's actually very competitive. But Denice or Paul, is there any other kinds of tricks that you would have that if you have those contractors that are just thinking about the bottom liners, there's a way to overcome that objection?

Paul Shahriari:

I think it's the total cost of ownership. I think most asset managers now are starting to look at their buildings clearly. And I think we've seen this in the stock market right now that you cannot be a company, and hope to get investors like BlackRock and others, if you don't have a good story around that. So I think we're all probably reaping the lack of benefits from the lowest first cost decision-making that drove a lot of society for so long.

Paul Shahriari:

I'm not saying that everyone has 4X budgets. I think if you're going at somebody and saying, I'm going to build you a greenhouse for \$850 a square foot, you're going to have a hard time selling it. But I think in most performance-based green claims, it's not hard like it used to be, to get clients to go, I want performance. As long as you have metrics like coverage and longevity and R-value, they have to be non-made up, green washy ways to leverage total cost of ownership. So I think you have to have data, and data drives decision making more and more every single day.

Kip Rapp:

Yeah.

Denice Staaf:

I have a question on that. What happens if the contractor is not the best person to sell that to? So in that case, I would say, why is the architect or owner not picking and the contractor is picking? Because the contractor has to buy whatever is in their contract. So why is the contractor the best person to target? If for instance, I have John's product, I probably wouldn't target in the beginning, painting contractors, because my story is a story that the architect and the owner can grab on to.

Denice Staaf:

So my story about who I am and what differentiates me, you're right, doesn't matter to the contractor in a lot of cases. Now, maybe occupational exposure and things like that. I mean, you can sell it down the line, but the architect or the owner wants something to tell. So if I'm an architect and I'm building a \$50 million building, or I'm building a \$15 million building, there's a dramatic difference between the two.

Denice Staaf:

But I still, even if I'm only building that \$15 million building, and I've had to VE out a lot of things, I still want things to talk about. I still want to highlight things. As an owner, maybe I can't afford everything that I would like, but I still want to be able to say, you know what? All the paints and coatings and stains in this building have no VOCs, whatever, whatever. Maybe the story doesn't resonate with the contractor, but is that contractor the best person that should be making that decision, I guess, is my question?

Kip Rapp:

That's a great point. There's all these constituents in that buyer journey and that commercial building from the building owner. I do want to make sure we honor our time. We went through a lot of questions. One of the things I wanted to share to everyone is Denice mentioned content is king, make sure it's available, no flop. John's doing a great project now about ... Looking at his website.

Kip Rapp:

And I want to walk people through an example of this that brought together this team, the expertise of Denice and Paul's company with Ecomedes and John with the partnership with this coating's product and how we were able to work together to come up with a soon to be launched website. This is John's current website, as we talked about with the coatings, the sustainable coatings and all the great benefits he does. And Denice was talking about, you want to make sure that your sustainability stories up in center.

Kip Rapp:

And we also know that architects, engineers, and contractors, they specify more than just sustainability. We really thought about three things from a website perspective is that it needs to be easy to find, easy to use, really good content and really

good tools, because we know if you're an architect and you're under contract, you don't just have all day looking for these things and all day building these things.

Kip Rapp:

And so from John's website, and this applies to any building material manufacturer, is that what we've helped John with is providing a really good commercial portal, in partnership with Ecomedes, which I'll hand over to Paul in a minute, is that they have great call-outs to what might be important for sustainability. So I'll put that on hold. What also I want to talk about is easy to use, good content and good tools.

Kip Rapp:

And so in John's case, what we put together in pretty quick fashion is we took all this painting and coatings products. You can imagine you're an architect and you can quickly look at your content, the information, and any of the other documents that are important, sustainability, as we talked about, so I'll leave that to Paul. But it could be a safety data sheet. It could be 3D, it could be 2D, it could be a three-part spec, and being able to make that available so that when you're Google searching, you're an architect, then you can type these things in and be found, and then being able to give them at your fingertips along with really good tools to be able to reach out.

Kip Rapp:

So if they want to talk to someone, if they want to create a project, then we want to be able to automate that. So in this case, we added all these known interesting things that an architect, engineer or contractor wants to do from creating a project so that if you have future projects, and from these projects, you can create a submittal. So let's say you're a general contractor, and you want to bid John's coating projects to a building project, you can easily do that. You can automate the selection of the products, the selection of the important content that you want, and then putting in any additional information that's really important.

Kip Rapp:

And our goal is to make that quick and easy. And so we're able to then enable that architect, engineer, and contractor to get whatever they need very quickly, and to be able to make that available for your building project. That's just things that we're really excited to help John with. One of the things that we know is very important is that when you're giving that kind of journey and that digital storefront for your buying communities, then you're able to then understand who's visiting, so you can reach out, educate them, collaborate with them and have that really good closed loop relationship with your buyer community. I'll leave it there. John, I'll move it over to you to talk about how you're partnering with all of us with sustainability.

John Bennett:

Yeah, absolutely. The other end of it with Ecomedes that was the other missing link. We got Concora dealing with the mainstream consumer, the contractor, and then Ecomedes brings in and ties in our sustainability story with their features. I'm going to turn that over to Paul.

Kip Rapp:

Yeah. Yeah, I apologize. So Paul, I will let you share your screen instead.

John Bennett:

Did you like how I transitioned that for you? I was trying to cover you there.

Paul Shahriari:

That was brilliant. Ecomedes is a database, as Denise and everyone's talking about. We gather up data from all kinds of certifications and Eco-labels. We have the largest comprehensive database of all this real data non-marketing fluff. And we have some of the best certifiers in the world. And we also map all this data to USGBC LEED, WELL, ILFI and Green Globes.

Paul Shahriari:

What we do for Eco Safety is we have their entire catalog that Kip also has, and we focus mainly on the product data that you'd want to have when you're out looking for a product to make a recommendation. What's nice is his product data is not fluff. It's Buy American Act compliant, California 1350, CDPH, there's Health Product Declaration. You don't have to go on another scavenger hunt, you just click one button and you have immediate access from the HPDs collaborator directly to John's HPDs.

Paul Shahriari:

Other stuff about what's not in the product. So sometimes he tells you what's in it. Sometimes he tells you what it's free of, it's bio-based, it has a material ingredient disclosure, chemical avoidance, and he provides you all the right information if you need to talk to someone doing federal sales or a general contact, he lists his manufacturing locations. And what that does, it allows our platform to do something that a lot of other platforms struggle with is putting up apples to apples comparison. So here's four of his products with all that same data on the individual sheet aligned to very quickly glance, what's this product have, what's its VOC, what's his bio-based content. And again, all that information is available to you at your fingertips.

Paul Shahriari:

And that really allows what Kip talked about in the submittal format is we have a platform that allows you to put it all into a, I call it a project cart, procurement cart. Well, you actually can put in the quantity, the unit prices. John's one of the only manufacturers I know in green that actually has MSRP listed on his website, thank you. If I was doing contracting work, I'd absolutely be doing it, just because I would have a good estimate and a solid estimate. And some of those things are on sale, so just check that out.

Paul Shahriari:

But he can actually put them all into a shopping cart or a project cart, and in one click, evaluate it against federal guidelines, LEED, WELL and Living Building Challenge. As a former faculty member and consultant in this space, this used to take me hours, if not days to do. With one click, he's going to give you the total cost of that order, all the skews, and how it met the federal guidelines, the Living Building Challenge guidelines, WELL and LEED at a project level.

Paul Shahriari:

And we have all those cut sheets behind it, showing you all the individual ways that those products individually contributed or complied with. And if there's a dollar amount that has to be calculated, our system will do that. So it's all free to use. It doesn't cost you a dollar to use this platform. We're really excited to have Eco Safety as our first paints and coatings customer in the platform with full complement of data, all align. Thanks for that. And it was a quick demo. If you guys have any other questions, I'll be happy to answer in chat or via email. Thanks.

Kip Rapp:

Yeah. No, thanks, Paul. I do want to give some time to the panelists. I know some people had questions for specific panelists too, so what we'll do is give a quick shout out to everyone, myself being the MC and our product with Concora, we'd love to hear from you and show you how we're helping other manufacturers get specified more with our web solutions like we're doing for John there. So if you're interested in reaching out to us, we're going to send these slides out to the folks that joined and couldn't join, and then I'll hand it over to Denice real quick to talk about how you can reach out to her. Oh, you're on mute, Denice.

Denice Staaf:

Sorry. Okay. First I would say definitely contact Concora. They have a great way to get everything in there so that people can find it easily, which is always the key when you're looking. In closing, if you just have questions, please feel free to email me. You can go to the next slide. Kip. I don't have to read my slide. You can contact me if you just have questions. I definitely am always about just information. If that's all you need is some questions answered, please email me, I can answer them.

Denice Staaf:

We're always looking to assist manufacturers because I don't think greenwashing is a lot of times on purpose, actually 95% of the time, it's not. Greenwashing, in my opinion, from the companies that I worked with is, they don't know. They don't know where to get the answers. And so the person who goes out on the limb and makes a statement or makes a claim does so, and then they end up paying for it later. Information is always available if you are interested.

Kip Rapp:

Yeah. Denice has been very lovely to work with. Very conscientious expert on her craft doing sustainability and just economic, because I know a lot of manufacturers just think it's expensive and they don't know where to start. And it's hard to find trusted partners like Paul at Ecomedes, there's John, there's Denice. That's what we're here to do is to offer any kind of guidance and coaching or collaboration and just chatting. We love the network. Paul, I'll hand it over to you with Ecomedes.

Paul Shahriari:

You can go to the next slide too. So we're dedicated to making sustainable simple. We want to make it easier for buyers to find the right data project teams to locate and amalgamate the data, and then manufacturers to make it easy to put it out there.

Paul Shahriari:

There's a question in chat, how do we get our products on Ecomedes? If you have product data with one of those major certification bodies, I think we're up to like 39, 34, probably that, we pull in that data on a monthly basis from the data partnerships we have, since we serve the federal government, they're the largest buyer. We have a lot of data in our system just because that buyer wants to see it, so everyone pushes that data in the system. Happy to talk to you offline. Our whole goal is simplified, because we believe simplified sustainability with scale. Complexity is a constraint right now in the system. I'd love to talk to you guys, send me email, I'll be happy to engage.

Kip Rapp:

Thanks, Paul. And John, there was a question for you, by the way.

Denice Staaf:

Yeah, I was just going to say that, there's a question for you in the chat, John from Dubai.

Kip Rapp:

Yeah. It's how water-based sealers compared to solvent based sealers to help to achieve sustainability goals?

Denice Staaf:

Air quality.

John Bennett:

Real quickly, we kind of crossed the water-based solution with the oil-based solution. We're a hybrid. We actually take soybean oil derivatives and a few other bio-based components or additives and mix that into an emulsion with water. So it actually acts like a water-based, and there are characteristics like an oil-based, but it is not oily in the fact that it's not combustible, but yet we contain the bio-based content. Big difference. One is, like I said, the eco-friendly version, ours is the sustainable version where you've got bio renewable resource content.

Kip Rapp:

Great. Yeah. And thanks, John. I just feel, gosh, I mean, I didn't know John's product and this is absolutely the perfect storm of products where it's sustainable, just as effective, performs well, and I know, John, I'm really happy for you and what you're doing with your company and where you're going to be going in the future.

John Bennett:

Yeah. I want to thank everyone on this panel, the co-sponsors. It's a great journey. We're still not done yet, but we're there at the goal line. Those that are interested, I am more than happy to answer questions, bear with us. This will launch within the next week, and we will have follow-up training available, online training, et cetera, for those that really want to dive in and know how to access documents that pertain to our product.

John Bennett:

And if you're a company that is doing something similar and you have questions about the tips and how to avoid some of the pain that I went through, not with these guys, these guys have been great, but the affiliated digital marketing component and the website version, that's been a nightmare. These guys have been fantastic. But yeah, happy to help any way I can. Collaboration and transparency, that's what we're all about here.

Kip Rapp:

Yeah. Well, thanks, John. And thanks for the panelists. Again, feel free to reach out to us. It's the hardest thing, I know, the people on the phone to find just trusted advisors that know what they're doing, know what they're saying. I'm really happy to have met both everyone here from John to Paul to Denice. What we're going to do is we're going to send you out the webinar, the slides, the transcript. If you couldn't attend the call, that's fine. If you have any other questions, just reach out, feel free to email us. I'm really happy and hopefully get to hear, see everyone again in the future. Thanks for joining our webinar. Bye everyone.

Denice Staaf:

Bye everyone. Thank you, Kip.

Kip Rapp:

Okay. Thanks. See you all. Bye.

John Bennett:

Take care.