

# insight

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SPRING



## Sustainable solutions in the design world

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# It's good to be good



**Otto Marples, Managing Director at fst The Group, on positioning sustainability in the business, both internally and externally.**

**S**ustainability. It's one of those terms up there with social media and recession-proofing. First it was a mystery, then it was trendy, but now it's an everyday part of the design process. Having a business attitude that addressed sustainability used to be an ethical and moral issue, but it's moved so far forward in the past five years that it has become a part of our everyday consciousness, and designers must give it consideration in every brief. For ideas people, far from sustainability being a bonus that you add to your client's requirements, it's now an expectation that all design should take the sustainable nature of the solution into account.

But jumping on the eco bandwagon doesn't just make you feel warm and fuzzy, it can make you and your client more profitable, generating more business and finding cost savings both internally and externally. Shaun Jones, Realisation Director at Blue Marlin, predicted last year that "the recession will hijack the green argument, turning it from a moral argument to an economic one".

The Design Museum's latest exhibition 'Sustainable Futures' is a showcase of a range of design projects that explore the most important issues associated with sustainability, raising the profile of sustainable design and encouraging visitors to look at their own consumption habits. It's being sponsored by Puma. Sustainable design is officially cool.

So, the whole of the design industry is aware of the need to embrace sustainability, but what approach are members taking to address the issue, both on behalf of clients and within their own businesses? We asked five members to give us their different takes on the subject.

A deep change is taking place as a result of what is happening to our planet. In 2007, this led fst to set up its very own sustainability journey with its specialist division, B.sustainable.

We were able to start this venture as Lend Lease approached us to produce their annual sustainability report; we have now completed the third instalment of the update. The latest edition took a fresh approach and rather than the traditional printed route, we produced a series of podcasts to save on printing.

At this point several opportunities became apparent. First of all, we had a chance to genuinely contribute to reducing the human impact on the environment. We created our own sustainability update through which we set ourselves objectives and targets. This allowed us to measure our impact on the environment – and we have reduced this each year saving the planet and money.

Secondly, through a string of internal and external activities, we could raise awareness among our employees and the public. Wiser use of electricity, water and materials have all contributed to lowering our carbon footprint, as has promoting the use of public transport, bicycles and car sharing to get to work.

Finally, it simply presented fst with an extra business opportunity in so far as we could offer expert advice on how companies can lower their impact on the environment.

Overall, these three factors have deeply engrained sustainability into our minds and remain at the heart of our plans for the future.