



COLGATE-PALMOLIVE HEADQUARTERS

corporate charette

To achieve cost-effective solutions with wide corporate appeal, [Conant Architects](#) keeps itself people oriented and includes everyone—even clients—in the design process

by Meghan Boyer

For many large companies, the decision to implement green solutions often centers on a single aspect: costs versus savings. This means that encouraging corporations and nonprofit organizations to implement sustainable-design aspects in their workplaces requires creativity, dedication to the cause, and affordable ideas. The challenge is to overcome the misperception that LEED projects must be expensive, says Peter Conant, managing principal of [Conant Architects](#).

This is a firm that is known for its ability to deliver sustainable solutions to corporate and nonprofit clients utilizing budget-conscious means. “We look for products and solutions that are cost effective,” Conant says. “We all need to buckle down and develop green solutions that are efficient and effective long term.”

ABOVE: Lobby views of the new, [Conant Architects](#)-designed Colgate-Palmolive headquarters. Nearly 500,000 square feet of furniture was refurbished.

In its 10 years in business, the company has designed LEED executive offices for many corporations that are also household names, including Citigroup, Colgate-Palmolive, and J. Crew. “We bring green initiatives to corporate America. That’s what we aim to do,” says Conant, who explains that the breakdown of the firm’s work is two-thirds corporations, one-third nonprofits. “The not-for-profit projects all are different from each other. There’s quite a variety there.” Case in point, the company recently completed housing for multiply impaired blind individuals.

The corporate solutions require a variety of methods, including adding sustainable materials, reusing furniture and supplies, and choosing energy-efficient systems. The mix of methods and the firm’s relationships with consultants, associations, and resource providers help it develop innovative solutions for clients that meet green goals but also keep costs low.

For the Colgate-Palmolive headquarters, the firm implemented a furniture program designed to focus on providing refurbished pieces for the office space rather than new ones. The goal was achieved, and now the furniture has a new life instead of ending up in a landfill. Colgate-Palmolive, with nearly 500,000 square feet of old furniture, worked with [Davies Remanufacturing](#) to get remanufactured product, Conant says. “As a floor of old furniture becomes available, it is sent to [Davies](#) and becomes part of an inventory of product that is remanufactured,” he explains.

“We bring green initiatives to corporate America. That’s what we aim to do.”

—Peter Conant, Managing Principal

The firm has roughly 10–12 active clients at any one time, and roughly 80 percent of clients are repeat customers. Conant and six other architects at the firm are LEED accredited and actively share concepts and ideas on each other’s projects. The firm likewise works collaboratively with its clients, using multiple resources and contacts to create the most-effective solutions. “We’re very people oriented,” Conant says. “We work collaboratively in the studios. Bottom up and top down, we charette together to brainstorm concepts and ideas.”

Ensuring staff members are informed and engaged in the architecture and green industries is important to [Conant Architects](#), which pays for both employees’ LEED accreditation exams as well as exams through other programs. The firm also pays for professional organization memberships. “That kind of commitment at a firm level to our professional development is really key,” Conant says.

Conant recently used a combination of mechanical upgrades and sustainable materials for two floors of [Citigroup](#)’s offices, which are targeting LEED Silver certification. The firm reused materials and sourced them

from within a 500-mile radius of the site. Also critical in achieving certification was the use of 92-percent-efficient Energy Star equipment, low-flow water fixtures, and sustainable materials like bamboo, cork flooring, Shaw C2C carpeting, and low-VOC paint. Conant diverted more than 82 percent of demolition materials and reached a 34-percent reduction in lighting-load levels.

The firm’s current success can be traced back to an early project, the reworking of a 1980s office building, which was retrofitted for a high-tech operation for T-Mobile. “We were awarded the project just over a year after we had started the firm,” Conant notes. A decade later, it is more equipped than ever for such complex projects—technologically, environmentally, and personally. [gb&d](#)

A MESSAGE FROM AFD CONTRACT FURNITURE INC.
AFD Contract Furniture Inc., a full-service furniture-management company, provides strategic planning, tactical implementation, professional expertise, and individualized attention to clients in the corporate, healthcare, and education fields on a national basis. As it has done for the past 30 years, AFD continues to reinvest in business innovations and technology. They are the office furniture industry’s leader for e-business solutions and online procurement tools. AFD has also been on the cutting edge of promoting environmentally responsible furniture solutions and recently had a significant number of its employees undergo LEED certification. For more information, visit the company’s website at [afd-inc.com](#).

The nation’s largest
Furniture Management
Company

AFD

offering

Environmentally Responsible
Cost Effective
Ergonomic
Furniture Solutions to Meet
Your Business Needs

810 Seventh Avenue, New York, NY 10019
New York • New Jersey • California • Puerto Rico

212.721.7100

[www.afd-inc.com](#)