

SELLING SUSTAINABILITY: STREAMLINE ENTERPRISES MAKES GOING GREEN EASY

Publication: Business Examiner

Issue: July 2008

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Longtime friend and former client Allen Unrau says Kevin Simoes is to the building industry in BC what people working on biofuels are to the US. Simoes is a principal at Streamline Design Ltd. and its offshoot Streamline Enterprises Ltd., and between the two companies, the young Abbotsford designer makes going green easy, economical and exquisite. Simoes started Streamline Design four years ago, specializing exclusively in log home, post and beam and timber frame design. The company has since gone global, working on projects in Canada, the US, Denmark, Switzerland, Russia and New Zealand.

Simoes says quite often his clients have a little piece of land tucked away and want to build their retirement dream home. Others are looking for a vacation retreat, while some want his designs as their principal residence. What they all have in common, says Simoes, is their desire for a more sustainable lifestyle. "Log homes are considered to be a renewable resource, environmentally friendly, so a lot of our clients come to us with lots of questions about going green or green building products." From client curiosity, Streamline Enterprises was born. "Originally we were thinking that we would spec some of these products for our clients to try and assist," explains Simoes. "And then we realized the potential and started a whole new company so that we could become a consolidated source for all their green building needs."

Simoes says his clients may need helping getting there, but they definitely know where they are going. "They come in to our offices with a list of questions and concerns. They want to consider their heating and cooling needs, how to reduce their energy bills. They want to improve the indoor air quality in their homes and improve their health." Simoes and his group of talented colleagues promise a home designed to minimize site impact, using materials that are good for one's home, one's health and the environment. The intent is to minimize the home's impact by placing it in socially and environmentally responsible ways so to minimize the long term environmental damage to the building site. This includes efficient utilization of materials, including the selection of environmentally preferable ones and waste reduction.

Products range from natural cotton fiber insulation, recycled glass and porcelain tiles to Broda stain, a high performance, easy to maintain product that is environmentally friendly. Nature's Carpet is another best-seller, created fifteen years ago for people with chemical sensitivities. Other flooring options include reclaimed and FSC certified hardwood, along with cork and bamboo. They are also certified installers and providers for ELT's living wall and living roof systems.

When it comes to cost, going green is not only becoming more affordable; it is also a great long-term investment. Simoes cites a recent report showing certified green homes are worth up to six percent more than other houses and stay on the market twenty four percent less time. Simoes says his clients are willing to go the extra money mile, knowing there is added value, and increased life cycle and health benefits in their eco friendly purchase.

While his clients are onboard the sustainability track, Simoes thinks Streamline Enterprises Ltd. is a little ahead of its time. "We are trying to target our existing clientele on the design side. They are up to speed and a lot of them are coming in to see our products and are really excited about incorporating them into their projects. But as far as the general public is concerned, although we are getting very positive feedback, some people aren't quite there yet." Very often buyer resistance has to do with price, but Simoes is a believer that 'if the difference is between wool and nylon and wool carpet, for example, and wool is only another forty cents a square foot and you go that route, you will see the health and environmental benefits.'

Suppliers and clients alike are convinced that Simoes has the right people and the right products to make a great case for sustainable living. Wendy Macdonald of CBR Products says there are not a lot of companies' like Streamline Design Ltd. and Streamline Enterprises Ltd. "It's one stop shopping,' says Macdonald, adding 'they are a bunch of smart cookies over there, you know. They are young guys so they have different ideas. They aren't stuck in the old way of doing things. They have really done their research on green products. Their clients trust them and have the confidence to go with their choices." After all, who wouldn't trust a guy who can build you a gorgeous log or timber frame home, using all green products, and finish it off with a living roof made of plants and flowers?