

## An Ecotrust Business Profile- Fairfax Lumber & Hardware

Do you want to grow your business? Attract new customers? Ensure your company stays ahead of your competitors? If you answered “YES” to any of these questions you should take the next five minutes to read this business profile and envision how you could make a success out of your company starting today!



In September 2005, Kent Goodyear of Ecotrust, a Portland, OR based organization, visited Fairfax Lumber to learn more about their Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) lumber and plywood program. It was at that time that Kent met Augie Venezia, President and CEO, and learned the in-depth details of Fairfax’s plans to become the leading green building material supplier in the Bay Area. Over the past year, Kent and Augie continued to work together in an effort to share the story of Fairfax’s success with other retail and contractor lumberyards in the Pacific Northwest.

### The background and initial spark

Since 1912 Fairfax Lumber & Hardware, in Fairfax, CA, has been providing Marin County with quality building materials and customer service. Today, Fairfax Lumber is 100% employee owned and has become Marin’s leading expert and provider of nature friendly products. Local builders and homeowners have a much higher awareness and interest in building material science, health risks, and green alternatives. This interest for nature friendly materials, along with changes in community building codes, has fueled new products in a broad range of categories. To that end Fairfax developed the **Fairfax Green** program to provide nature friendly products and information to their customers. **Fairfax Green** is the convergence of four goals – conservation of natural resources, increased energy efficiency, improved indoor air quality, and reduction of toxins in our environment.

Fairfax Lumber started this idea to transform its business based on employee and customer concerns about environmentally friendly ways of controlling weeds, insects, animals and fungal problems in and around the home and business. What they found was a wealth of products and information. This was not only a win for the garden department but it began a movement of inquiry throughout all the departments in the business.

Employee and customer product concerns, however, were not the only driving forces behind this movement. Augie Venezia of Fairfax Lumber & Hardware had also heard Brian Gitt of Build –It–Green (BIG), speak about green building opportunities to a group of local contractors. Augie decided then that Fairfax Lumber needed to be associated with a green business organization like BIG. Since then, Augie has become active in BIG’s suppliers council in an attempt to work with lumber mills, wholesalers and other retailers to iron out the issues of supply and demand in regards to green building materials.

## Let's look at everything...

In business everyone is looking to find the new opportunities that are going to be winners and that will set their company apart from their competitors. Fairfax Lumber observed that not only were individual customers requesting more nature friendly products but potential larger government and corporate customers would be interested too. So they began to look at their store in a much different way and they investigated the availability of products that conserve natural resources, increase energy efficiency, improve indoor air quality, and reduced toxins in our environment.

To meet their four goals Fairfax Lumber & Hardware is currently stocking the following products to address specific environmental and social concerns that are continually on the rise in the United States:

### Conserve natural resources

#### Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certified products

##### Lumber

2x4, 2x6, 2x8, 2x10, 2x12 (8' to 20') Kiln dried Doug-fir

##### Plywood

1/2" CDX Sheathing

5/8" CDX Sheathing

3/4" CDX Sheathing

3/4" T&G Sub-floor

Interior Mouldings- Full line with many profiles

Garden Furniture- chairs and tables

Pine Shelving and corbels

Roof Trusses

California native plants are now sold in the nursery. Native plants require less pesticides, fertilizer, and water and provide food for local animal life.

### Used railroad ties

### Increase energy efficiency

- **Dimmers and motion sensors** are available to combat the human habit of keeping lights on in un-occupied rooms.
- **Fluorescent light bulbs** that are more efficient and last longer than their incandescent counterparts are available all interior and exterior fixtures.
- **Insulated doors and windows**
- **Solatubes** for lighting
- **LED lighting**
- **Low voltage lighting**
- **Solar powered lighting**
- **Solar powered attic fans**
- **HVAC duct sealants**
- **Weatherstripping and insulation**

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CONTACT: KENT GOODYEAR TEL: 503.467.0752 [KENT@ECOTRUST.ORG](mailto:KENT@ECOTRUST.ORG)

## Improve indoor air quality

- Zero VOC interior paints that can be color match to thousands of colors. New paint chemistry, in this product, makes for excellent coverage, no odor and extremely durable.
- Air filters
- Formaldehyde free insulation
- Very low VOC exterior paint, caulking, adhesives, and clear sealers

## Reduced toxins in our natural and built environment

- Water based roof coatings for low pitch and flat roofs
- Ready-to-use and concentrated environmentally friendly garden products for common sense solutions to pest management in and around your home, business and community.
- Plant oil based household cleaning products are non-toxic and biodegradable cleaning products for a safe and cleaner environment.
- Photoelectric smoke detectors are offered as opposed to using radioactive sensors, whose internal parts will contaminate a landfill after its life.
- Water filters
- Organic fertilizers
- Organic vegetable starts and seeds

These products should not be viewed as individually solving one of the four environmental and social concerns because many of them offer overlapping solutions.

## Once the products were here then what?

As the green products have arrived, Fairfax Lumber has begun product knowledge training for their marketing and sales personnel. Since Fairfax is an employee owned company, the success or failure rests not just with management, but with everyone. Employees have been willing to learn and the use of this knowledge has translated into sales. Further, Fairfax believes that sales are a measure of success, successes are fun and rewarding, and their employees want to be winners!!

Fairfax Lumber also realized that in order to introduce and identify their green building program they should develop a brand or logo to show that something new and exciting is going on in the store. They have recently developed a new brand logo, department signs and banners, brochures, business cards and point of purchase signage to alert their customers to products that are renewable, biodegradable, use resources more efficiently, create less waste and pollution or are FSC certified. Mind you, this is all in addition to their traditional signage and materials. They have not eliminated anything. They have only added.

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As of October 2006, Fairfax Lumber will soon begin advertising the **Fairfax Green** program through local media. For now their advertising has been through the internet on public and green building association databases. The final part of their outreach campaign will be to build their website to incorporate this program.

### The true business facts

Fairfax Lumber and Hardware started this business transformation based on employee and customers concerns about some of the products they were selling. However, like many businesses Fairfax debated whether they should be proactive or reactive about new products. Their decision to be proactive has resulted in substantial economic prosperity. Within the first year of Fairfax's green product offerings they have:

- Raised sales by 24% on YTD 2006 sales
- Quadrupled their sales region
- Increased the number of individual customer transactions by an average of 70 to 100 per day

With a small investment in researching new product availability and educating their marketing and sales personnel Fairfax has easily made back their initial investment and is now looking to start their media and web outreach. Augie Venezia believes strongly that, "by providing sustainable and healthy choices and products in lumber, building materials, plumbing, electrical, paint, garden and nursery that we can help our customers build a more comfortable, healthful, durable and nature friendly home or business that costs less to maintain."

With McGraw Hill Construction's - 2006 Residential Green Building SmartMarket Report calling 2007 the 'tipping-point' year for residential green building and an ever increasing amount of news stories describing the continued damage to the environment and society from old business practices; it only makes sense to look to the future and embrace new products for your customers, the environment, our society and your company's bottom-line. The goal according to Kent Goodyear, of Ecotrust, is to, "Find a leadership company like Fairfax Lumber, and by demonstrating their increased business success in the emerging green building market others are likely to start similar programs." Fairfax Lumber & Hardware is business proof that by making small investments in the future you can reap the rewards today.

For more information contact Augie Venezia at Fairfax Lumber & Hardware in Fairfax, CA at 415-453-4410 or [Augie@fairfaxlumber.com](mailto:Augie@fairfaxlumber.com)

To learn about how Ecotrust can help your business become more connected with these opportunities contact Kent Goodyear at 503-497-0752 or [kent@ecotrust.org](mailto:kent@ecotrust.org).

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