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By Amy Stodghill

Filed on Jun 21, 2007 at 9:04 AM PST

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The hospitality industry is booming, but still has a long way to go in being green. I spoke with Jeff Lazar, owner of JLF, a leading supplier for custom seating in the hospitality industry, about his new collection of environmentally friendly seating, Lone Meadow and the challenges of being one of the few sustainable designers in this field.



Jeff Lazar, Lone Meadow

Green Options: Why did you begin Lone Meadow?

Jeff Lazar: We have a primarily domestic manufacturing base in Southern California and in North Carolina. I had been thinking for a few years about what that means and how to take advantage of that opportunity, and what can be done better in moving forward. We wanted to tie in our manufacturing goals, which was to produce the highest quality product available and align it with my personal sensibilities - what it means to manufacture in a clean, and sustainable kind of environment.

Looking at that opportunity to improve ourselves would ultimately send a message to our industry that we have to do a whole lot better in terms of what we do for our consumers, which are the hotel guests and hotel properties. The hospitality furniture manufacturing industry - and the hospitality industry in general in the United States - is light years behind the other markets for thinking productively about sustainable living standards.

GO: Do you feel that is changing or is there still resistance within the industry that is keeping it from moving towards more sustainable ways?

JL: There's certainly awareness of the movement. Because of all of the media and publicity around the issue, and more consumer interest and awareness of creating more sustainable environments, there is some progress. However, I would caution that the industry is still very, very far behind. For example, we have now gone to a major trade show for the third year in a row since I first introduced Lone Meadow in 2005, and we're the only seating manufacturer in the industry that is not only talking about sustainable hospitality seating, but actually acting on it. That absolutely boggles my mind. We're the only one in a trade show with thousands of vendors. So there is some movement, but I just think it is very slow to come.

GO: Why is that? Is it a perception that green is too expensive?

JL: Certainly the cost components are there. More importantly I think the ethical motivation on the part of manufacturers and buyers is slow to come. What I mean by that is if the research is done, if time is taken by each of the parties to really scope this out, they will find that the costs are just pretty much apples to apples. And in our case we've been able to prove they're virtually apples to apples so that you take that cost component out of the

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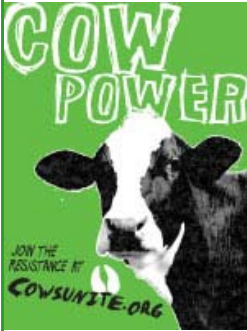
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