

# Controversies Surrounding Green Building Commissioning

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The term 'commissioning' on its own has already brought about some controversy of sorts in the marketplace ever since it was thrust into the limelight with the emergence of the Green Building Index (GBI) rating tool in 2009. Traditionally, the term has often been associated with a test and balance that is carried out at the end of a project. With green building commissioning, this term is the systematic process of proactively verifying that building systems are designed, installed, thoroughly tested and capable of being operated and maintained to perform as intended and as the owner expects.

Most building owners may want to believe that the significant financial investment they are already making guarantees to receive a well-designed and functional building. They believe that performance tests are already being carried out by installation contractors, and hence are reluctant to invest in what they deem to be a repetitive scope of work from the Commissioning Specialist (CxS). What owners often fail to realize is that the responsibility for the installation and functionality of equipment is divided amongst many contractors and subcontractors. Each one is focused solely on their portion of the project and only conducts testing on the equipment for which they are directly responsible.

The CxS however spends the essential time to verify the testing of the equipment in an

integrated manner to assess total system operations and overall performances of the building's energy related system. There is a need to carry out random witness testing works and this is where another controversial point strikes. Many owners believe that the CxS should physically conduct the testing and commissioning (T&C) works to fulfill their role as an independent third party advocate of the owner. It should be clarified that at no point of time will the CxS or the Commissioning (Cx) Team physically carry out the actual T&C activities, as physical testing of equipment is never the intention of Cx under any Green Building Rating systems and thus is not within the scope of works of CxS. Moreover, any third party operation of equipment under the contractual obligation of installation contractor may invite dispute on contractual liability and warranty. Instead, the CxS and/or the Cx Team shall be present when the actual T&C activities are carried out to witness and verify the performance of installed equipment performs within a tolerable variance from its design intent.

In conclusion, if commissioning is looked at as an investment towards improved building performance (functionally, economically, and environmentally), rather than as just a way to get a contractor to produce an acceptable outcome, then the logic of continuing the commissioning process into the operating life of a project makes plenty of sense.



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