

Equity Office Properties

BOC a Given for Their Building Managers

As the country's largest office building owner and manager, Equity Office Properties (EOP) specializes in delivering high-quality facilities management service, while being a low-cost manager. The company has a focused, hands-on approach with its holdings and has more than 700 properties nationwide in 32 major metropolitan areas. Building management is never farmed out; EOP takes pride in running its own properties. With about 124 million square feet of office space to handle, most of it Class A, efficient procedures matter.

The BOC training program was suggested to people in the San Jose, California location by the company's utility provider, Pacific Gas and Electric Company. Being specialists in building management, attendees obviously knew something about the topic going into the training. But attend they did and thirteen employees attained their Level I certification. So what did they get out of it and why have they decided to continue training many of their maintenance engineers with the BOC program?

In speaking with Randy Walters, Manager of Portfolio Engineering II, several reasons emerge. While some of the material in Level I was "old news" to a few of the more experienced engineers, they found it to be a great refresher course that encouraged them to think about procedures a little differently or "outside the box" of their ingrained practices. For those less experienced engineers, most of information was new and extremely informative.

One of the reminders highlighted in the courses was to check the availability rebates offered by local utilities. Shortly after the BOC training series completed, a replacement motor was needed at one of their Palo Alto locations and the first thing Chief Engineer (and BOC I graduate) Bill Hopper did was to check for utility rebates. Sure enough, Palo Alto Power was offering a rebate on premium efficiency motors. Standard practice now, even without the rebates, is to use premium efficiency motors whenever a replacement is needed. Over time, the savings are easily realized.

So often, maintenance consists of just continuing the procedures that have always been in place – logical or not. A building's energy control systems can be the best around, but they lose all effectiveness if they are not used. In general, people tend to stick to the proven way of doing things and "legacy" procedures are not questioned.



10 Almaden Boulevard, San Jose, California, an EOP property.

It takes time to learn a system's details and capacities and very often there is no time to spare. The BOC training stresses looking at the building system in its entirety and determining how it was intended to function efficiently.

This is especially true if you are a company whose business is building acquisition and management. "You have to talk to the tenants, talk to the building engineers to learn what has been happening and what needs troubleshooting," says Walters. "Very often with a new acquisition, we have to start from scratch - determine the sequence of operations, examine the building plans - to figure out how the building is supposed to operate, as opposed to how it has been operated."

This is the essence of what BOC training entails, Level I offering extensive overviews of all a facility's systems - ground-level to roof, and Level II presenting more detailed troubleshooting procedures.

"All of our folks have learned a great deal and have nothing but good comments about their BOC experience. We have actually undertaken several cost-savings projects that our chief engineers decided to do because of this class, or because the class reminded them and prompted them to act on rebate projects," continues Walters.

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"I can speak for our region and we plan to have all our Level I graduates participate in the upcoming Level II series in San Jose." While the San Jose division is the first EOP district office to participate in the BOC certificate program, Walters would like to see EOP offices nationwide adopt the training for eligible employees and plans on encouraging the other regions to get involved.

As the utility provider for EOP and a strong proponent of the BOC program, Pacific Gas & Electric is pleased that the training has been a hit with their customer. Mark Brammfit, Senior Program Manager for Customer Energy Efficiency, says that "PG&E's customers are most satisfied with us when they feel they have some control over their energy usage. The BOC program gives facility managers the skills to do just that, and we're pleased that EOP sends so many of their top staff through the program."

For both new and seasoned building maintenance professionals, BOC training continues to prove its value.