Webwatch

António A. Martins · Teresa M. Mata

Published online: 23 August 2011
© Springer-Verlag 2011

Clean Edge

<http://www.cleannedge.com>

Clean Edge (CE) is a North American Company founded in 2000 and currently based in San Francisco and in Portland. This company is specialized in the clean tech sector, claiming to be the first world's research and advisory company in this area. CE main goal is to help companies, investors, policy makers, and other organizations to understand and create value, profit or competitive advantages from clean technologies and/or new production methodologies.

As a for profit organization, CE develops its activities with a wide variety of customers, including many large industrial and international or local institutions, such as Oxfam, Sharp, Climate Solutions, Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO), among others. The activities include, but are not limited to strategic consulting, market research, organization of events and conferences, training, and tracking the evolution and behavior of the markets directly linked with the clean tech sector, especially trends and future opportunities. Some examples of products offered by CE include some indices, for example the U.S. Clean Energy Leadership Index that looks at the US clean energy sector and tries to provide customers with reliable data about the market, what are their competitors, opportunities, and other relevant information. Other products

include market reports about specific clean tech sectors, and the organization of an annual conference in the area.

The website presents and supports CE activities. There, it is possible to access the section “about us,” where people can find a full description of CE activities, team members, contacts, and news and other reports concerning CE activities. Also, from the main menu it is possible to access other sections, divided according to the main CE areas of activity. In the “leadership index” a description of this product and how it can be subscribed is given. The “Stock Indices” area presents the evolution of the stock value of a selection of US companies, operating mainly in the renewable energy sector and considered to be representative. In the “reports” section one can find reports about several subjects related to the clean tech sector, many of them freely available to download. The “jobs” section is quite interesting to people interested in landing a job in the US in the clean tech sector. There one can find many different job offerings, and can even propose ourselves, after registration. The annual event organized by CE, i.e., the Clean-Tech Investor Summit, has its own website (<http://www.cleantechsummit.com>) where people can find information on how to engage in the conference, and can obtain power point and video presentations of the communications and discussion panels held.

The site is simple and easy to navigate and the information is easy to find, even though there is no global search facility available. CE has a periodic newsletter that can be freely subscribed in the website and that gives people the opportunity to stay in touch with CE activities and developments in the Clean Tech sector. Although the site is focused in the US market, the reports and other information available may be relevant to people from other places where markets operate in similar ways, such as Europe, or interested in investing in the US.

A. A. Martins (✉) · T. M. Mata
Faculdade de Engenharia da Universidade do Porto (FEUP),
Rua Dr. Roberto Frias S/N 4200 465, Porto, Portugal
e-mail: amartins@fe.up.pt

World Energy Council

<http://www.worldenergy.org/>

The World Energy Council (WEC) is an international organization established in 1923 and based in London, UK. Its main goal is to gather experts on energy from around the world to discuss current and future energy issues. Nowadays, it has more than 3,000 members from almost 100 countries, including most of the largest energy producers and consumers, among governments, industry, expert, and research institutions that work in this area. The main goals of this organization are perfectly described by its mission statement: “To promote the sustainable supply and use of energy for the greatest benefit of all people”.

The WEC activities cover all forms of energy production, technologies for energy supply and demand, and final consumption. The main types of energy, either renewable or non-renewable, including for example coal, oil, nuclear, hydro, wind, solar, among others, are considered. From a practical point of view, the WEC activities are governed by the executive assembly and a Board of Trustees that have the executive power in the organization. WEC has also three committees focused on specific areas of activity. The WEC Programme committee is responsible for the technical and regional programmes and for the organization of conferences. The Studies committee is responsible for the studies performed by the organization members and issues of statements and positions in several issues. Finally, there is the “Communications & Outreach” program responsible for increasing the visibility and outreach of WEC’s activities.

According to the WEC goals, the purpose of website is to present to support its activities. Thus, there it is possible to find an entire section “about WEC”, devoted to describe what is WEC, what it does, what are its mission, vision, and goals, how it is organized, how its committees and governing bodies are elected and perform their activities, financial reports, among other information. In other site area, the “Work Programme” presents the main activity sectors of WEC, with a description of the global and regional agendas, knowledge networks that deal with specific problems and the strategic ideas of WEC for the future. The Publications and Events sections are also important parts of the site. In the first it is possible to find all the publications, policy statements and other materials that resulted from WEC activities, some of them in various languages. For example, the flagship publication “Surveys of Energy Resources” and a yearly account of resources in the world are available here. In the second, information is given of the various events organized or sponsored by WEC, in particular the World Energy Congress, with information on how to participate. A News section presents the relevant news and positions of WEC. A Member’s area

is also available, where other materials can be found, which is directly accessible from the main page. To access the area restricted to members, a registration is needed that has to be validated by the national or regional WEC coordinator.

The website goes to great lengths in the categorization of information and materials available on it. This generates a tree like site, where it may be difficult to find the information one wants, although a search facility accessible in each page can be helpful in that regard. A menu and a path pointer available in each webpage are also helpful for navigating the site. No newsletter or RSS feed seems to be available at the site, at least for the non member visitors, what limit the reach of materials available on it. Yet, the variety of subjects studied by WEC and its relevance in a large number of activities sectors make it a very relevant site.

BREEAM

<http://www.breeam.org/index.jsp>

The BRE Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM) is a voluntary rating system for buildings that is being developed, implemented, and used mainly in the UK by the Building Research Establishment (BRE, <http://www.bre.co.uk/>). The main goals of BREEAM are the promotion of good construction techniques and usage practices of the building environment, minimizing its environmental impact and maximizing its sustainability performance. The first version of BREEAM emerged in 1990, initially developed for non-domestic new buildings in UK. During the years, the rating system was adjusted to new regulations and legislation, and was extended to other types of buildings. The current version dates from August 2008.

BREEAM is one of the existing rating and evaluation systems available to assess sustainability and the environmental performance of new or existing buildings. Currently the main competitor of BREEAM is LEED, the Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design rating system, developed by the Green Building Certification Institute (GBCI, <http://www.gbci.org>) and the US Green Building Council (USGBC, <http://www.usgbc.org>). Both rating systems have the same goals, but there is an effort to internationalize BREEAM and to harmonize it with other European Certification and evaluation schemes, in an effort to develop a European common scheme. Also, BREEAM is the oldest rating scheme developed, with more than 200,000 buildings already certified, and can be used to assess many different types of buildings. It is being adapted to specific regional settings and it is an open scheme in the sense that the standards can be freely accessed and used directly in

the design and construction phase, ensuring that the most effective results are obtained. Other rating schemes, especially LEED, are not free and represent a cost to the designer and constructor.

BREEAM website thus serves not only to present the rating methodology but also to make it available to constructors, architects, designers, and other people with interests in the area. From the main page, it is possible to access an “about BREEAM” section, where the rating scheme is presented and described in detail. Also, it is explained what are the advantages of using it, who should use it and how. A FAQs section can further assist people trying to understand BREEAM and if it is the right answer to their needs. The various regional and national variants of BREEAM can be found in the “schemes” section of the site, which points to the partner’s relevant websites. The guides themselves and some interesting tools can be found in the “resources” section that coupled with the case studies available in other area of the site can give a good view on how BREEAM is used. Although a free registration is needed to obtain a copy, in the process it is possible to subscribe to the BREEAM newsletter, to keep updated with new developments, in addition to the information placed in the “news” section. To help people understanding the rating schemes, its requirements, and the details in their implementation, the “Training and Events” lists courses and other meetings that address specific aspects of BREEAM.

The website has a good graphical presentation, even though there are variations between pages and some texts can be very lengthy. Navigation is remarkably easy but a search facility would be valuable to people looking for specific pieces of information. The information available in the site is of significance to many people, in particular those directly connected with the construction industry.

International Finance Corporation sustainability: World Bank

<http://www.ifc.org/sustainability>

The International Finance Corporation (IFC), which front website is www.ifc.org, is the member of the World Group Bank responsible for providing the private sector with sustainable investments in developing countries. It was founded in 1956 and its headquarters are located in Washington DC, US. Currently it includes 182 states as members that contribute with funds to the IFC activities. Its primary mission is to improve the quality of life of people living in developing countries, goal shared by all the World Bank institutions. More specific tasks include providing funds to sector specific projects and companies, assistance to private

businesses and governments in developing nations, counsel, and technical help to companies and governments.

Nowadays, there is an increased awareness of the questions surrounding sustainability in a global scale, and IFC has faced criticisms from relevant stakeholders that consider that some of the projects supported by IFC were and are inadequate from a sustainability point of view. The IFC acknowledged those concerns as valid and relevant to its range of activities, and started to take them into account. Thus, IFC now considers the social and environmental aspects on its evaluation, development and implementation of the projects in which it participates. Besides that, IFC gives also advice and support to businesses and governments on sustainability issues in three main areas: risk assessment and management, assisting customers identify, manage and minimize the impacts of their activities and products; advisory services in a variety of subjects; and standards definition and settings to help achieving sustainable development.

The website was designed to present and promote the IFC activities. Two of the main sections of the site are devoted to “Risk Assessment” and “Advisory Services”, the two main areas of expertise of IFC concerning sustainability and how it can help its customers. In each section there is a list of topics relevant to the IFC activities. For instance, in the “Risk Management” area the list of topics includes the sustainability framework and the social and environmental standards, which the IFC supported projects must abide to, financial and training resources, among others. Each topic links to pages where specific information can be found, including a description of activities, contacts, and other relevant information. For example, IFC has online training courses in several themes, making them attractive to people in developing countries with limited funds to travel. In the publications section, it is possible to encounter many publications in a wide variety of themes, such as cleaner production, water footprint, practical case studies, among others, most of them freely available.

IFC goes to great lengths to give a full account of its activities and to reach as many stakeholders as possible, being the website a key part of that strategy. Although sustainability is one of the areas in which IFC develops its activities, it is considered strategic and IFC has incorporated sustainability criteria on its project assessment, development, and implementation. Thus, a lot of relevant information can be found in the site that will serve the needs of many specialists and practitioners working in the area.

Final words

We will return on the next issue with a fresh selection of sites. If you know of sites that are worthy of being

presented, send us all relevant information to the following E-mail address: amartins@fe.up.pt. Any suggestions will be considered with great attention for possible publication.

In that case, the contributors names will be acknowledge in this column. Surf well.