

Michael Chandler: Helping Steer the Green Bandwagon

Why he was the right person to win the Builder Advocate of the Year award at NAHB's National Green Building Conference



By [Richard Defendorf](#) | June 2, 2010



Michael Chandler

It wasn't lost on those who read his blog posts on GBA and www.FineHomebuilding.com that Michael Chandler was an exceptionally good choice for the Builder Advocate of the Year award that he received last month at the National Association of Home Builders' [National Green Building Conference](#), in Raleigh, North Carolina.

Michael's instructive, always constructive, and eloquent commentaries make us feel smarter after we read them. More important, they deliver on a crucial component of green-building advocacy: an evenhanded, practical analysis of how green building ideals can be reckoned with location, code, available materials, financial resources, competitive issues, and the political landscape.

In his 30 years in the green building business – including his role, since 1987, as president of [Chandler Design-Build Inc.](#), in Mebane, North Carolina –

Michael has acquired a knack for sorting through the complexities and challenges of a profession that is tough enough even without the economic afflictions of the day. But in a conversation this week, he noted that the current confluence of environmental and economic concerns plays especially well to his taste for preaching the green-building gospel, often to small and medium-size homebuilders for whom making ends meet trumps environmental stewardship.

Shaping a message, understanding needs

“It’s really critical to get out there and talk to the builders ... where there’s no building code to speak of,” he says, noting, “I frequently talk to a lot of people who don’t believe humans have anything to do global warming.” So he presents his case for green building in economic terms, to help his listeners understand that there’s “a competitive market advantage to building a high-performance home, and to their ability to adapt” to shifts in consumer expectations and the availability of natural resources.

“I think we builders who give a damn need to talk to the builders who are just getting by, and explain that if they don’t get on the bandwagon, they’re going to get left behind,” he says.

Accordingly, he considers his ongoing work with the NAHB National Green Building Program, both as an instructor for NAHB Certified Green Practitioner classes and with the NAHB-ICC/ANSI standards task group, to be critical to furthering green practices among the organization’s 250,000-plus members, many of them medium-size builders.

“If we can’t move NAHB in a good direction,” he says, “then we’ve lost the war.”

At the heart of his drive to advocacy, he adds, is a personal preference for machines, buildings, and building systems that work extraordinarily well. “I love high-performance stuff,” he says. “It’s all about getting rid of mediocrity in my life.”