Green Gown Awards 2013

Highly commended case study

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Durham University
Facilities and Services
Catering for Cultural Change "why bother"?

Durham University

Profile

- HEI
- 15322 students (includes full and part time students)
- Over 3000 staff
- University catering serves over 500,000 meals per month

Category supported by

sodexo Making every day a better day

Section 1 About the project

Summary

Two projects to improve the department's environmental performance both focusing on behavioral change. Projects were:

- changing the default setting of equipment to off
- changing menus at eleven of our colleges to a more energy efficient type of offer

Project partners

University Catering, Greenspace, students, Estates and Buildings

Section 2 The results

The problem

We identified three problems:

- Equipment was switched on when not needed
- The menus on offer required large amounts of energy to cook, hold and serve.
- Previous projects/ initiatives proved difficult to manage and had varied levels of team member engagement

The approach

We had a triple-line approach to our problems:

- To establish and mark a base-line of equipment to be switched on at the start of the day
- To change the menus to a 'batch' production type and to change the hot dessert to a healthier offer: cutting holding times and production of traditionally steamed items.
- To engage with team members to agree the process for switching on any extra equipment and changing the default on all other equipment to off.

To facilitate the third point on engagement and to improve the feeling of 'ownership' amongst staff, all team members where consulted and a competition was launched to identify the best way to improve our environmental performance. This identified 'Green Watch' (a system of allocating individual responsibility for environmental management across the whole department on a certain day).

Estates and buildings where asked to analyse energy data and provide feedback on savings which would support the effort made in each location.

Our goals

To support the University's Carbon Management Plan in reducing carbon emissions

Obstacles and solutions

Team members thought they needed to have equipment on 'just in-case' (e.g. water boiler on overnight 'just in- case' of early teas, coffees).	Identified the number of times this service was actually needed and agreed for our internal clients to be made aware of a slight delay (clients agreed when environmental savings were highlighted).
Team member could not see why they should follow the new procedures if others didn't.	Implemented 'Green Watch' to share the responsibility evenly amongst staff with one team member allocated daily. This increased participation and created a sense of ownership amongst staff.
There was no information on the warm up times of equipment.	Contacted each supplier to attain specific warm up times for each piece of equipment.
The mentality of the team was not focused on 'batch cooking'.	• Provided customer flow rates and extra resource until chefs where comfortable with the new procedures. • Informed customers of the new procedures and the (infrequent) chance of delay which resulted in customers happily accepting the situation when demands outstrip production. • Good communications ensured such projects were no longer seen as 'hassle' or additional work but as part of the daily routine • The staff competition and the resulting 'Green Watch' project allowed staff to take ownership and start to embed practices in day to day operations.
How do we measure success and feed this into the University's overall carbon management plan and targets?	We set benchmarking measures within each location, which where externally validated and measured by our Estates and Buildings department.

Performance and results

- Behavioral changes have resulted in saving of 483544 electric kWhs and 654237 gas kWhs per year.
- Financial Benefits: Electricity £55,607 and Gas £22,895

These are conservative figures due to a restricted method of metering. These projects have also increased the morale of the teams and ensured good environmental practices are now embedded into daily work. Each successive week begs new creative thinking where team members are now proactively looking for further ways to improve processes.

Section 3 The future

Lessons learned

Centrally led projects which met with resistance from some team members who thought “why bother?” resulted in limited engagement and ownership. The solutions outlined above enabled the transfer of ownership of new procedures to team members by involving and training them and inviting ideas from the ‘shop-floor’ through a series of competitions. One team member’s suggestion was ‘Green Watch’, which ensures compliance of project 1 by nominating a team member to be on ‘Green Watch’ each day. ‘Green Watch’ also identifies other potential savings and/or utility misuse. Team members are ‘self-policing’ and a ‘green culture’ is starting to emerge.

The empowering and engaging of team members by involving them in the process and encouraging competition, feedback and suggestions was the key factor in the success of both projects. Peer pressure also helps as team members do not want to let their colleagues down with non-compliance. Team members are now happy to be audited, as they want to prove they are “doing their bit”. Environmental support has been added to the Annual Staff Review process further embedding it into ‘normal’ practices.

Batch cooking has resulted in enhanced production standards: Mr Ricky Cohen, Deputy Director of University Catering, commented “Batch cooking ensures students receive choice and quality throughout the service period whilst minimising food waste.”

Sharing your project

We have successfully championed the projects internally, together with making the documentation /project template available to other Institutions via networking channels. Internal departments have replicated parts of project 1. For example; coffee machines in meeting rooms are now in dormant mode as default with sensors that switch them on when the room is occupied. New hibernation techniques were easily implemented as data gathered from the project were used to make users aware of the environmental savings. By communicating these savings both senior management and guests are now tolerant of waiting times for the machines to warm up.

The use of colour coded labels on catering equipment underpinned the University’s Greenspace ‘Beat the Baseload’ (BTB) campaign. The BTB campaign involves every department and college being given small colour coded stickers to use on all electrical items. Stickers were coloured ‘Red – Please don’t switch me off’, ‘Amber – ask before switching me off’ and ‘Green – yes, please switch me off’. Security and housekeeping staff use these stickers as a guide to see what equipment they can switch off when they are the first people in and last people out of a building. These stickers have also been used in student bedrooms where students are issued with a set of stickers at the start of term (red stickers are not automatically issued as students have to prove a case for having equipment which never needs to be switched off). This scheme has been rolled out across the entire University and is expanding all of the time with BTB duplicate books now being used for staff to leave messages where ‘carbon-saving potential’ has been noted.

A new environmental category has been created in the Team Member Recognition Awards; part of which highlighted the work done in these projects. This category will remain in the awards to capture future best practice going forward.

What has it meant to your institution to be a Green Gown Award finalist?

Tara Duncan, Sustainability Manager, said: “Being highly commended for this project is testament to the hard work of our teams and individuals and to the University’s commitment to its Environmental Sustainability Policy. It demonstrates that we are addressing environmental sustainability in all areas of our work and are engaging the University community with our actions. It also shows how we are sharing best-practice within our institution.

Further information

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