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The all round benefits of energy efficiency

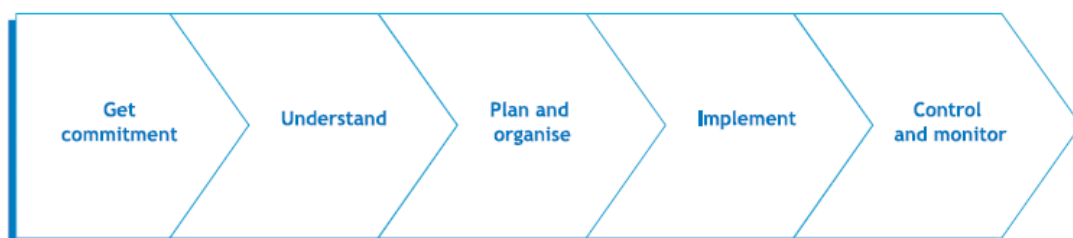
Energy and environmental management are issues that are already on the agenda for many leading Channel Island, UK and global businesses.

These are issues that affect all organisations - large and small. There are a number of good reasons why you should think very seriously about 'greening' your organisation, but for most companies, particularly in the current climate, the financial benefits will be a key motivator.

Over the past 20 years, studies of energy efficiency campaigns have found that the majority of companies can save up to 25% on their fuel bills simply by 'managing' their energy use, and investing in cost-effective energy efficiency measures. Every pound saved is a pound on the bottom line.

Management programmes only succeed in delivering performance improvements when there is a clear sense of direction, and when the programmes provide strategic overviews of the actual process of achieving improvement.

The five step approach to energy and environmental management will be familiar to anyone who has implemented change management or quality management schemes in their business. This approach will keep the management process on track and help to avoid the many barriers that hinder progress.



An illustration of the five step process as detailed above

Of course, reducing energy usage has a positive effect on the environment, because using less fuel means lower carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions. We must not forget however that there are many other ways that your organisation can reduce its' environmental impact and save money. Using less water, cutting down on paper usage, reviewing transport policy and the implementation of effective waste management strategies are all good examples.

World-wide, governments are becoming aware of the need to conserve natural resources and protect the environment. There are many stringent national and international laws that regulate emissions of certain substances, and the EU Integrated Pollution Prevention and Control (IPPC) regulations already require operators of some regulated processes to demonstrate that energy is managed effectively. International targets have now been agreed for CO₂ emissions, and for other environmentally harmful practices. The Channel Islands are fortunate in some respects that their energy related CO₂ emissions are extremely low, compared to mainland UK; however the islands must still be active in reacting to globally diminishing fossil fuel supplies, rising prices and climate change.

The Channel Islands are currently heavily dependant on imported energy this increases our vulnerability to price shocks and physical failures in supply. In addition, if we want to retain our reputation as a responsible international global player and a good place in which to live, work and do business, we must continue to perform well in terms of carbon emissions and this will mean reducing our dependence on fossil fuels which comprises around two thirds of our current energy use.

Our main policy objective has to be to reduce energy use by becoming more efficient and reducing wastage. This can be achieved by setting reduction targets across the domestic, governmental and industrial sectors to maintain energy demand of previous levels. Another consideration is the increasing viability of small and large scale renewable energy schemes such as wind, photovoltaic and tidal power. The Channel Islands are well situated to take advantage of these 'free' energy resources.

In addition public awareness of environmental issues has risen tremendously, and there is strong evidence that companies who take 'corporate social responsibility' seriously have a distinct advantage in their market place. Corporate social responsibility, or CSR, is an ethos that pervades all aspects of a company's business - from use of materials and resources, through recycling and control of emissions, to travel and workforce demographics.

Energy and environmental management are an integral part of this ethos. At the same time, pressure for CSR is also growing from the supply chain. For example, some companies will only use suppliers who operate an 'environmental management system' (EMS) or who are working towards introducing one.

Although one of the key benefits of energy and environmental management is clearly financial, we should not overlook the 'below-the-line' organisational benefits that may also result. A company that pays attention to managing one resource will quickly learn that such techniques can manage other resources.

So, efficient use of energy and careful management of environmental impacts can ultimately result in a more efficient business all round.