

The Register-Guard

<http://www.registerguard.com/>

BOB DOPPELT: Reducing energy use helps the Earth and the bottom line

(<http://www.registerguard.com/csp/cms/sites/web/opinion/24855908-47/energy-efficiency-business-company-firm.csp>)

BY BOB DOPPELT

For The Register-Guard

Posted to Web: **Thursday, Jun 10, 2010 05:31PM**

Appeared in print: **Thursday, Jun 10, 2010, page A7**

Lack of federal legislation should not stop companies from reducing their greenhouse gas emissions. That's because an effective energy and emissions reduction program sharpens a firm's focus, is good for the bottom line and provides other benefits. So says a new report by the Pew Center on Global Climate Change.

The study examined businesses that have made big cuts in energy use. Seven "habits" were distilled from the most successful programs: efficiency is a core element of the business strategy, leadership is fully committed, clear goals are established, data is continually collected, resources are invested, outcomes are demonstrated and the organization effectively communicates results.

It turns out that some of Lane County's leaders in energy efficiency employ most of the habits identified in the Pew study. And they have experienced multiple benefits.

Increased energy efficiency is a central part of the business strategy of Sage Living by Design, co-owner Ali Gartlan told me. The company manages or owns about 60 apartment units and a few houses, mostly in Eugene's Whitaker neighborhood.

"It's a good niche for us. We want to distinguish ourselves by providing fine, healthy living spaces close to downtown and bike paths."

A personal commitment to renters and sustainability also drives Gartlan's energy efficiency efforts. "We have always been interested in sustainability and were looking for something that would fulfill both of these needs."

The firm has insulated ceilings, installed high-efficiency windows, replaced poorly built doors and mounted programmable thermostats. Although it's difficult to gather data from renters, it appears these and other actions cut their tenants' energy costs by between 10 percent and 20 percent. Gartlan thinks this is one of the reasons for the company's low vacancy and turnover rates. People like living in its apartments. Stable occupancy is money in the bank.

Efficiency upgrades have also reduced maintenance costs. "We no longer have single-pane

windows that sweat and require repairs,” Gartlan says.

The firm communicates its efforts to current and prospective renters as well. As a result, Gartlan says, “Increasing energy efficiency has been a clear benefit to our company.”

Cutting energy use is also a core element of the business plan at Springfield Creamery. The company, known for its Nancy’s Yogurt, employs 55 people and generates roughly \$20 million in revenue.

Personal and business interests drive the firm’s efficiency efforts.

“As a family-owned business, doing things better, more efficiently, and leaving a smaller footprint is always our minds,” operations manager and co-owner Kit Kesey told me. “We use a lot of energy, including energy to produce heat and hot water, and are always looking for ways to cut costs.

“We are also in a segment of the market that cares about what’s in the product and how it is made.”

The company started by pursuing low hanging fruit — efficiency improvements such as installing motion detectors to shut off lights, ensuring that doors automatically close, and putting timers on fans.

In 2008 the firm installed a 63-kilowatt solar photovoltaic system to reduce its need for external energy. The system should pay for itself in five years. Customers and employees can now view the power it generates and greenhouse gases it saves in real time by clicking on the firm’s Web site.

The biggest savings, however, will come by making the company’s steam and hot water generation system more energy efficient. The Energy Trust of Oregon is helping with this project. “Everyone in the company is aware of our efforts and the benefits,” said Kesey. “I know for a fact that it’s made a big difference.”

Cost savings have been the primary driver of the energy efficiency work at the Seventh Day Adventist Church on Polk Street in Eugene. A member of the congregation launched the effort by closely examining the church’s utility bills. It revealed that “our electrical and utility costs were way out of line,” said Senior Pastor Greg Middlestetter. The Eugene Water and Electric Board then helped the church identify ways to cut energy use.

To get people behind the effort, “We made quite a big deal about what we were planning.” The church then replaced their old inefficient light fixtures, installed compact fluorescent light bulbs, and put in individual room thermostats that limit heating and cooling to spaces in use.

The church saves about \$2,000 a month through these and other improvements, according to the pastor. “The financial payback has been worth the time and energy. It put money in our pocket, which allows us to put more money into our ministry.”

In their own unique ways, these local leaders employ most of the Pew report’s seven habits. Every public and private organization would benefit by examining this approach.

Bob Doppelt is director of The Resource Innovation Group and the University of Oregon’s

Climate Leadership Initiative. The views expressed here are his own.

“As a family-owned business, doing things better, more efficiently, and leaving a smaller footprint is always our minds.”

KIT KESEY
SPRINGFIELD CREAMERY CO-OWNER

Copyright © 2010 — The Register-Guard, Eugene, Oregon, USA