

Energy campaigns - maintaining the momentum

Energy Awareness campaigns can easily get the reputation of being a "flash in the pan" or "flavour of the month". Does the dust have to settle? Is it possible to maintain the momentum?

John Mulholland of NIFES addresses the issues.

Three common questions asked about energy awareness campaigns:

- 1) How much should we invest?
- 2) How much will we save?
- 3) How long will it last?

The answers are not simple because a number of factors can influence the outcome e.g.

- What proportion of energy is controlled by people?
- What are the potential savings?
- What are the current performance levels?
- What levels of awareness/motivation exist already?
- How well planned is the campaign?
- What other issues might affect general motivation?
(e.g. redundancies)

For many organisations it is worthwhile investing up to 1% of the total annual utility bill in people solutions i.e. awareness, motivation, training and publicity. The likely savings range from 3% to 20% of the annual energy bill. A number of Good Practice Case Studies published by ETSU support these figures.

One example is the Rover Group in Birmingham which invested £7,500 and saved £1,000,000 in six months out of a total energy bill of £22 million. (Good Practice Case Study No. 214).

But will it last? How do you maintain momentum? Before addressing this issue it is worth asking the following question:

"Is a flash in the pan better than no flash at all?"

The answer has to be "yes". If an organisation invests 1% of its energy bill in a campaign and saves 5% within a year, it is worth doing even if all momentum and savings cease after 12 months. It is a very good return on investment. Some organisations run an 'Energy Week' every year because they see awareness as a continuous investment rather than a 'one off' project.

But what about the long haul? How do you maintain momentum, awareness and interest?

The answer lies within the culture and management practices of the organisation itself.

The key to momentum is to identify the functions of an organisation and integrate awareness into the system. Here are some practical examples:

Job Descriptions

Build energy awareness into job descriptions. For management posts energy management activities should be clearly specified if appropriate to the job.

This means new people coming into the organisation know that energy management is expected of them. They are being paid to do it, i.e. it is not a 'bolt-on' afterthought.

Performance Appraisals

Once energy management is built into job descriptions, performance must be monitored.

All operating staff at one large food processing plant work through 20 training modules covering every aspect of their work including hygiene, safety and quality. The energy manager worked closely with the Personnel

Department to ensure that one of the training modules covered energy efficiency. All the training modules are mandatory and a satisfactory test is required to pass each module. On-the-job performance is also observed and assessed. When the 20 modules have been successfully completed, the employee qualifies for a bonus. Each employee is reassessed annually. If performance falls, the bonus is removed. This is one of several examples in ETSU's Good Practice Guide No. 85 *Energy Management Training*.

Induction Training

A number of organisations are now building energy awareness into induction training. In one large factory a one hour session on energy and environmental issues is included as a standard part of a three day induction course. On the same site all staff have to attend a one day health and safety refresher course each year. A half hour module on energy awareness is included. The module is changed each year to maintain interest.

Building-in awareness at induction is particularly important in organisations which have traditionally high levels of staff turnover e.g. the retail sector. It should be remembered that one reason for reduced momentum after two years is that staff have actually changed.

Information Highways

In every organisation, there are information highways to be harnessed. For example, at Southmead Hospital in Bristol, energy messages are sent to 2,000 staff in the electronic mail system via the PC network.

However, it is a two-way system. If staff have a question or idea, they can type in a message with the guarantee that someone from the estates department will respond within 24 hours.

At a large plant in South Wales all staff are issued with a weekly newspaper published internally via a desktop publishing system. Every week the energy manager includes a simple energy message covering energy at work, at home, and in transport as well as the environmental impact of energy usage.

If company suggestions schemes have a good reputation, it is worth trying to harness them to encourage energy saving ideas.

An error often made is to raise staff awareness but then fail to give feedback on results.

In many government buildings in Belfast there are dedicated energy notice boards in the foyers. These feature graphs of energy consumption against target for the particular building. Also on display are free booklets on energy saving at home.

Environmental Awareness

Any organisation implementing an environmental management systems will be familiar with the need to raise staff awareness on environmental issues. The problem is: "Who will pay for the training?" A smart solution is to integrate energy awareness into the environmental training programme. Energy savings made by staff are likely to pay for the entire training initiative. It is in fact a complete circle (see Figure 1) because many employees, especially women, are usually more motivated to save energy for environmental reasons than to save money for their organisation.

Quality

For all the emphasis on quality in the UK in the last decade it appears that energy efficiency has been largely bypassed. Energy efficiency is seldom recognised as a legitimate target for improvement during the initial stages of a TQM (Total Quality Management) programme. Other items get higher priority.

Energy management should be integrated into the early stages of a TQM programme, e.g.:

- during the quality survey
- as part of employee training
- as a candidate for early improvement action

The TQM definition is particularly significant to energy efficiency as it includes 'least cost' and 'workforce involvement'.

In Iceland Frozen Foods, most of the energy used in stores is electricity for refrigeration and air conditioning. When there is a problem with equipment, the branch manager telephones one of the nominated contractors who sends out a maintenance fitter. These fitters, as part of their contract, have to attend a seminar run by the Energy Management Unit of Iceland, so that they fully understand the energy efficiency implications of work carried out on Iceland's equipment.

This is a good example of building energy efficiency into the supplier chain and this is detailed in ETSU's Good Practice Case Study No. 182.

People who design, specify and purchase equipment are often ignored when it comes to energy awareness training. For instance, who in your organisation is responsible for the purchase of PCs? Are they aware that the US

Figure 1: Energy savings made by staff as part of an environmental awareness programme can in fact pay for that programme.

Environmental Protection Agency established an Energy Star programme. This is a set of guidelines for energy efficient PCs, monitors and printers. Qualifying machines can sport the Energy Star logo.

By purchasing the most energy efficient business machines, less effort has to be taken to encourage users to switch them off.

Other activities

One reason energy management is not as effective as it could be is that the component activities are not co-ordinated. BRECSU in their Energy Management Matrix cite six key organisation aspects:

- Commitment at all levels
- Integration into management structure
- Awareness and motivation
- Management information
- Promotion of energy management
- Investment Practices

The key to success is to get these activities working in a co-ordinated fashion. Therefore it is not surprising that in most of the ETSU case studies on people solutions there are many other supporting factors which are essential to success. In the Rover Case study, for example, top-down commitment demonstrated by the manufacturing director played a vital role in the overall success of the campaign.

So, people solutions need the support of all normal energy management activities in order to succeed. People solutions do not thrive in isolation.

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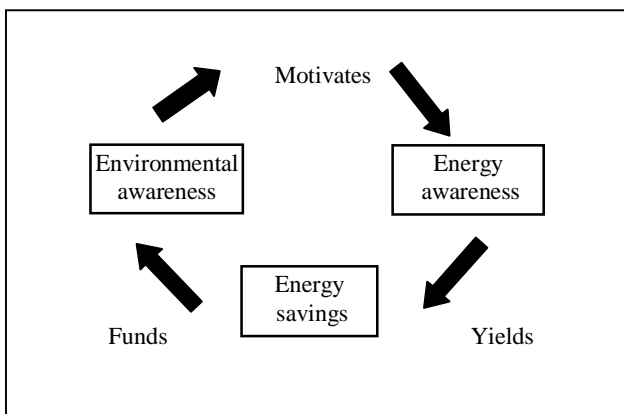


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