

Green is good (for business)

Brian Steatham, managing director of sub-contractor Rodmatic, explains how his company is going green, profitably, by carefully and systematically analysing its various activities

At Rodmatic, with a little attention to environmental issues, we have added £11,800 to our bottom line this year and contributed a saving of some 77 tonnes of CO₂. We have also enjoyed other spin-offs from the formation of an energy saving team, such as improved health and safety and, in particular, improved communications with our workforce.

There is so much hype today over green issues and in particular carbon emissions. The problem for any business – especially small to medium size companies – is that management has to seek a return for any investment and be very aware that people do not commit valuable time chasing rainbows and lose sight of the first objective of a business.

Rodmatic has two sub-contract machining divisions: One, Rodmatic Hytek, is set up using the latest manufacturing technology for complex single operation production, while Rodmatic Multico is a volume production shop with 37 multi-spindle autos that run around the clock.

The management team is very aware of environmental issues but, like most companies, time is at a premium. So we called in the Carbon Trust (www.carbontrust.co.uk) to carry out a full environmental survey of our 18,000 ft² premises, and the results proved to be highly beneficial and thought provoking. For instance, while we have always been aware that we should switch-off office equipment out



of hours, the survey revealed that a more rigorous regime would only save 0.7 tonne CO₂ and around £100 in a year. That would not even pay for timer switches! We more effectively saved £200 and 1.7 tonnes of CO₂ a year by installing float switches in oil storage tanks to control the pumps!

But the Carbon Trust survey came into its own in the replacement of our air compressor, achieving a massive £4,900 saving in the first year and reducing our CO₂ footprint by 32.6 tonnes. Not only did we get an interest-free loan through the Trust, but the compressor will also pay for itself in two years, is quieter and only runs on demand.

We now have very clean dry air that

reduces maintenance, saving a further £1,400 a year, and we have ducted the exhaust to provide a warm air curtain over the doors of the loading bay.

Other initial areas, such as improving heating efficiency, will save £1,200 and 7 tonnes of CO₂; and replacing motors when we have service problems instead of rewinding will save us £1,300 a year and give us a payback in 1.6 years while creating CO₂ savings of 9.2 tonnes a year. Rather than opt for energy saving light fittings, modern metallic reflectors have been installed that have transformed the lighting in the factory, saving the purchase of additional lights. These benefits are just from Phase 1 of our activity and have been achieved from a two-day Carbon Trust study.

As we are moving through Phase 2, we are collating and analysing electrical data to determine patterns of usage with a potential saving of £2,600 in a year for an investment of £2,000. Following the advice given, we have now set an attainable target to reduce our carbon footprint by a further 20 per cent.

Any future improvements and investments will be evaluated on merit, including the CO₂ footprint, as well as other benefits to the business, and we are seriously looking towards local suppliers when practical. For the longer term, once we have completed Phase 2, we plan to re-evaluate results, the effects on the business and reset targets for our energy saving team. □

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