

Staff Energy Behaviour Change Campaign – Devon County Council

Introduction

Devon County Council (DCC) launched a behaviour change programme in its corporate buildings with the aim of reducing the impact of staff activity on the environment. The campaign had four themes – energy, transport, waste and wildlife. This case study focusses on the energy theme. The campaign is called ‘Do It for Devon@Work’ (DIFDW) and is still active at a reduced scale. There were three reasons for the initiation of the campaign:

- DCC’s energy costs are rising, principally through unit cost price rises rather than increased consumption.
- Reporting on staff training is a ‘good practice’ requirement of the Carbon Reduction Commitment Energy Efficiency Scheme.
- DCC’s [Environmental Policy](#) states that the organisation will “Encourage environmental best practice among employees, Members and school communities”

A business case, based on the anticipated benefit of a 5 – 10% reduction in energy consumption based on Carbon Trust evidence, was approved by DCC’s Carbon Management Board.

Implementation

A campaign logo was developed by DCC’s Communications Team (Figure 1).

The campaign has its own intranet pages that summarise DCC’s commitment to environmental improvement and provide energy saving tips for staff and facilities managers.



Figure 1 - Campaign Logo

In addition to the intranet, a monthly news article was published in DCC’s weekly staff newsletter. This was used to provide an update on the campaign’s progress and to raise awareness of key messages and myths associated with a particular energy saving topic – heating, lighting, computer use etc.

The campaign did not produce its own posters or stickers, instead DFIDW made use of the free posters and stickers available from the Carbon Trust. The posters were displayed in prominent positions within corporate buildings. The stickers were used to differentiate between appliances that could be switched off at any time, and those that should only be switched off at the end of the day.



Figure 2 - Energy Rowing Machine

A network of Environmental Promoters (EPs) was established to champion the campaign within their own work areas. EPs are volunteer members of DCC staff who have an interest in the environment and have volunteered to inspire and motivate their immediate colleagues to be more environmentally friendly at work and at home. When the campaign was at its peak there were 26 EPs covering 16 different buildings.

The EPs received training from internal experts and external organisations on energy and carbon saving principles, but also on communication and influencing skills. A range of resources are available on the Intranet

for the EPs to use, which includes the posters, stickers, a 'Walk round energy checklist' and details of how to borrow energy monitors that can be used to identify the electricity consumption of appliances in their offices.

Activities of the EPs include reading meters, putting up awareness raising posters or sending emails to colleagues. Some EPs regularly contribute energy issues to their individual team bulletins and team meetings.

One-off events and competitions were run to coincide with established awareness events, such as World Environment Day and EU Sustainable Energy Week.

One of these, Operation Energy Zapp, was an intensive one month campaign in the autumn, when heating and lighting are beginning to be used more following the summer. It covered nine teams of staff occupying eight DCC buildings. Zapp had two main objectives; to learn the most effective means for motivating staff and reducing electricity consumption. The approach identified the baseline electricity consumption for each building and then monitored consumption during the month long period of intense communication activity. This included the use of interactive exhibits hired in for lunchtime sessions, such as the energy rowing machine (Figure 2) and energy bike, which demonstrated to staff how much extra energy is required to operate various appliances.

Other initiatives included a competition to design an energy saving slogan that would appear on promotional drinks coasters and stress buster light bulbs (Figure 3). These items were used as prizes and incentives in subsequent initiatives, such as encouraging staff to suggest energy improvements for their workspaces, attend lunchtime exhibitions and to complete online Home Energy Checks from the Energy Saving Trust.



Figure 3 – Promotional drinks coasters and light bulbs displaying a slogan chosen through a staff competition.

To ensure engagement across the organisation all staff were required to have a DFIDW target in their personal appraisal. Examples included 'remember to use the recycling bins', 'switch my computer off at lunchtime', 'cycle to work two days a week' etc.

Resources

The Board assigned 0.4 full time equivalent staff time and £10,000 of the carbon management budget to the campaign to support internal communications activity and purchase resources. This represented approximately 0.5% of the energy spend. The Carbon Trust recommends that 1 – 2% of the total energy spend should be used for an effective campaign.

Tools used

How to conduct a walk round energy survey
Energy bike
Posters and stickers
Energy champions
Socket power meters

Findings

The effectiveness of the campaign was evaluated through energy consumption and formal feedback from staff. Although no clear reduction in electricity consumption was observed, DIFDW has generated valuable learning which will help in the planning of future awareness work, and an extensive list of energy saving suggestions. Learning has included:

- The campaign was received most positively where the ratio of EPs to staff was low.
- The most effective tools were appliance stickers and after-hours checks of equipment left on.
- Incentives and rewards are popular with staff, however rewards don't need to be tangible – praise from managers can be equally effective.
- Managers need to lead by example. Campaign messages from managers are more powerful than those distributed by the project team.
- Despite a number of successful projects, it has proved difficult to sustain the level of commitment required from EPs to ensure a high level of awareness across DCC.

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