

Small business owner shares savings achieved with sustainability tool

MOST SMALL BUSINESS OWNERS view sustainable business practices as a nice-to-have operations tactic rather than a must-have business strategy. Just as many, wonder where to start. Jennifer Hansen, CEO of Anderson Seal Inc., found her sustainability starting point with the assessment tool designed by Partnerships for Sustainability (PFS) specifically to identify bottom line savings for small businesses.

"After a month of implementing your sustainability initiatives you will start to see cost savings," says Hansen, who owns a 50-employee distributorship in New Berlin. "Within three weeks we identified and implemented 11 action strategies with the most immediate ROI for us out of the 180 items in the assessment tool."

With her two plant managers, Hansen broke up the strategies into manageable pieces involving energy efficiency and materials recycling. Hansen says she views sustainability as more than a passing fad. In fact, she says it's a necessity for the foreseeable future.

Quad/Graphics director of environmental policy agrees with her.

"Government regulations are coming that will change how all businesses operate," says Quad/Graphics' Joe Muehlbach, whose company is a founding member of the PFS advisory team. "Those businesses unprepared to respond by operating in a more efficient and environmentally sensitive manner will struggle to exist going forward."

"When customers look at suppliers, they look at the whole package," Hansen says. "If we are equal to another competitor, I believe our ability to showcase our sustainable business practices gives us a leg up. And it definitely helps in recruitment and retention of talent."

"It's hard to know where to start," Hansen adds, "but the PFS sustainability assessment tool gets you started and shows you the savings through various recommendations. Our energy audit, for example, produced two pages of actions and expected savings."

Focus on Energy, Wisconsin's statewide energy efficiency initiative, views PFS as an innovative way to help thousands of smaller businesses, like Anderson Seal, across southeast Wisconsin.

"Our involvement in PFS provides Focus on Energy another conduit to smaller business that seek technical expertise, evaluation of energy use and financial support to offset costs of implementing energy-saving projects," says Ken Williams, director of business programs.

Lori Rolfson, We Energies' area manager, sees value in PFS for small businesses that seek a clear connection to resources and practical solutions to sustainable business operations.

"Anderson Seal's experience with the sustainability assessment tool illustrates perfectly how PFS helps small businesses cut through all the green information out there to find the appropriate resources and to navigate the process of achieving more efficient and sustainable operations," Rolfson says.

"The core focus of PFS rests solely on the fact that businesses can only be sustainable, if profitable," says Bill Mitchell, Waukesha County Economic Development Corporation executive director.

"For leaders of small- to medium-sized businesses that want to move beyond the theory of sustainability," Mitchell says, "PFS is focused solely on providing actionable, practical sustainability tools through business-to-business mentoring."

Small Business Owner Note: Jennifer Hansen will discuss more of her experiences with the sustainability assessment tool at "The Sustainable Case for Business," September 10 at the Pfister Hotel. Visit partnershipsforsustainability.org to register.



EVENT INFO:

Online registration at
www.partnershipsforsustainability.org

Questions? Call 262-695-7903 or
Email lpatzer@wctc.edu



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