

The Benefits of a Robust Environmental Management System for your Business'

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What is Zero2050?

Thomas began by explaining that he works for Zero2050 which is a small, co-operative, not-for-profit company based in Exeter.

Topics for Today's Session:

1. What is an environmental management system (EMS)?
2. What are the drivers for the client?
3. What is involved, i.e. costs/benefits?

1. What is an EMS?

- It's a toolkit of measures used to identify environmental risks and manage them.
- An EMS will require as a minimum:
 - Prevention of pollution e.g. reduction in mileage; recycling processes, harvesting rainwater etc.
 - Legal compliance (with environment legislation).
 - Continual improvement.

These three core principles need to be demonstrated and even when objectives and targets are in place, companies still need to demonstrate that they are constantly improving.

Thomas explained that we begin by considering two issues:

- a) Environmental Aspects)** mutually interdependent
- b) Environmental Impacts)**


a) Environmental Aspects:

These include the activities of an organisation which can interact with the environment. It can include products and services as well as activities.

b) Environmental Impacts:

Impacts occur as a result of the interaction between the activities and the environment, e.g. fuel spills. The impact has an effect upon the environment which can be positive or negative, natural or anthropogenic (man-made).

In other words.....

Cause (Environmental Aspect) 
Effect (Environmental Impact)



An EMS includes a
Model for Continual Improvement:

(..this should ring some bells....?)

PLAN

Thomas explained that an organisation can begin to understand the environment aspects that need to be managed by:

- Identifying the significant activities undertaken which interact with the environment.
- Considering what environmental legislation is associated with those activities.

Do

- Agree who is responsible for what.
- Is there any training/awareness need for those undertaking a role?
- Documents need to have procedures in place that control them.
- In the case of an emergency, identify what could happen and how the organisation would respond.

CHECK

This means auditing. Is regular updating necessary to make sure that the organisation remains compliant? Your environmental policy will underpin the environmental management system.

REVIEW

Make sure current and relevant and if not, go back to the Plan stage.

What Other Environmental Standards are there?

Thomas reminded us that there are other Standards available besides ISO 14001, although this is probably the most well known.

- The **EMAS** (an EU Standard), is considered to be the 'premier' standard because of the added requirement to publicly publish your environmental performance.
- **BS8555** came about because of criticism that 14001 is designed for large companies only. BS8555 includes a modular or phased approach that SME's might favour.
- **ISO14001** has a large following particularly in Japan. China is also a fan with a take-up which represents about 50% of that in Japan. Spain has the next biggest uptake, with the UK in fifth position.

- Thomas told us that he and his colleagues have developed and trialled a new and simpler toolkit. A number of organisations have already taken part. The Toolkit is as 'light' on documentation as they could manage, i.e. the **Environmental Management Model** takes up 2 sides of A4. This newly developed Model has less emphasis on outsider input, and more on self monitoring.

2. What Are the Drivers for Taking Up an EMS?

Improving energy efficiency and performance can....

- Provide an opportunity for savings e.g. utilities.
- Be an opportunity to engage employees. Employees may be keen to apply the principles of energy savings available in the home, to the work environment.
- Enhance public image both to customers and the wider public. Water pollution incidents can be particularly unpleasant for organisations, such as oil spillages.
- Result from supply chain pressure. Thomas commented that the majority of companies that he deals with have made an approach because of pressures in the supply chain.
- Enhance the professionalism and proficiency of the company itself.

3. What are the Benefits?

The benefits interface with the 'Drivers'.

and what are the Costs?

- Depends on the size and complexity of the business. In the case of a large organisation, it might be preferable to have a 'bite sized chunks' approach or to roll out from one site to another.
- Certification fees need to be factored in as well as consultant fees.
- System operation time is widely variable.
- Don't forget to include internal staff time.

Member's Questions:

There were a number of questions which prompted the following key points:

- When asked about a **university environment** and the particular complexities it presents, Thomas admitted that he had never worked with a university. However, large organisations have been tackled, and an approach might be to make 'bite sized chunks' by say completing one university department at a time and rolling out to the rest.
- In terms of the **frequency of audits**, Thomas commented that frequency can be adjusted according to priorities and risks.
- Roger Caleb, National Grid, commented that as far as his organisation is concerned, environmental audits are not carried out separately, but are absorbed with audits of other areas such as health and safety and quality. Thomas supported and agreed with the logic of this approach.
- Where does the name **Zero2050** come from? Thomas advised us that it came from the 80% carbon emissions target set for 2050.