The Facility Manager's guide to sustainability

Perspectives series
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Huddle up

Much like a basketball team, achieving corporate sustainability initiatives involves a number of moving pieces coming together in perfect harmony toward one end goal.

The Facility Manager is the point guard of his or her team – the one charged with leading the push for day-to-day operations that reduce the business' impact on the climate.

This urgency could come from shareholders or C-suite executives, it could be part of a larger plan to be compliant on a particular regulation or standard or an effort to define a green brand and entice more customers to buy the company's product. Many organisations are trying to capitalise on on the 55 percent of global consumers willing to pay more for products from an environmentally conscious business model.

Wherever the mandate originates, one thing has become increasingly obvious – it's not always clear where you should start your efforts.

Setting The Xs and Os

Here's a scenario you're probably all too familiar with – you get looped into an email chain about becoming a more sustainable organisation.

After a flurry of meetings identifying who's spearheading the project (you), as well as KPIs to measure success the following goals are put on the table:

- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 7% in the first year
- Scale down energy consumption by 10% through day-to-day operations
- Accomplish targets within the allocated budget

Where do you begin?
Any great team will use its zone defense to get a feeling for what's to come – it allows you to take stock of everything that's happening in the building without missing a beat, and it's the Facility Manager's best friend.

"It would be a good look for the company, and we will be helping reduce waste," the Chief Executive Officer said.

"Operating costs would likely be reduced," the Chief Financial Officer replied.

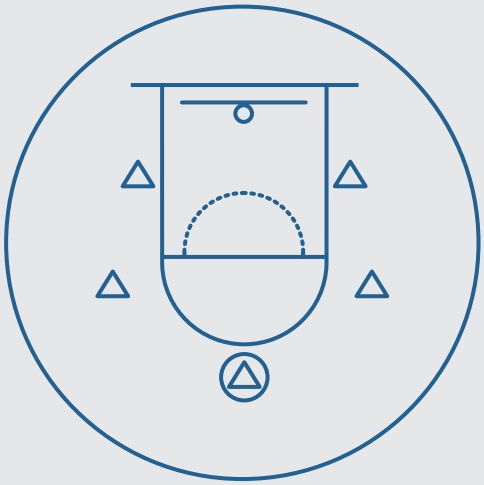
"Let's agree on where we should focus and make it happen," is the resounding answer.

Creating a zone defense

Before you try to roll out anything new,
you first need to know what you're working with.

According to Ernst and Young, corporate sustainability initiatives live and die by internal reporting tools. Therefore, successful sustainability programs require the tools and technology that support and measure defined goals.

Device-level insight through wireless sensor technology provides facility managers with a baseline of energy consumption, machine operating efficiency and other key metrics to define, measure, track and report sustainability initiatives.



Having this type of granular visibility into operations let's you identify where the greatest room for improvement lies, and where you can generate the strongest ROI.

The crossover

A full-blown retrofit would seem like the most simple solution, but budget is a key factor – it dictates the strategy you can take.

This is why energy sensors are so important. You can use wireless sensor technology to identify trends in machine efficiency that aren't visible to the naked eye, building management systems or even traditional submeters.

An Ecova energy survey found that a little over half of all facility managers make spotting low or no-cost efficiency improvements their No. 1 priority – that's no surprise.

But you can't understand which changes will have the most impact in relation to your corporate sustainability initiative without metrics monitoring the before and after. This lets you to make the case to the C-suite executives that some legacy assets can stay in place.

Learning the pick and roll

Great organisations pivot their strategy based off of the opponent's defense in real time, and with device-level energy management data, so too can your organisation.

Benchmarking data gathered by wireless sensor technology allows facility managers to:

- Remain constantly aware of how tweaks affect the end goal
- Create insights to provide progress reports for the executive team
- Develop new insights based on routine reports
- Prove return on investment based off budget

The insights provided by consistent device-level monitoring can create ancillary advantages aside from sustainability.

Reactive maintenance scheduling is a popular tactic, but it's also the most costly and can derail your green-friendly metrics, through excess energy usage. Granular data provides facility managers the ability to understand patterns associated with energy consumption and deploy proactive maintenance before the machine breaks.

What's the next step?

Now your playbook is installed and the facility is humming along soundly – but what's the next step?

Developing a consistent reporting schedule is crucial in judging the company's progress and achieving corporate sustainability.

Not only can its information give year-over-year data on certain metrics that identify progress in reducing environmental impact, but it can justify restructuring the budget to allow for future renovations.

Once you're familiar with the data you'll be receiving from wireless sensor technology you'll have a better understanding of how to highlight your projects' successes.

Some key metrics to track are:

Energy consumption

ROI from renewables

Waste levels (air carcinogens, hazardous and non-hazardous waste, etc)

Energy conservation

Savings from renovations/ keeping legacy assets

Review the film

Facility Managers are often tasked with developing and executing corporate sustainability initiatives without much direction as to how to go about it.

Energy sensors are the building blocks of a solid foundation for sustainability. It allows the company to identify baseline performance levels, understand which changes will have the greatest impact in relation to end goals and monitor performance after implementing those renovations.

Progress can only be judged when you have a benchmark to compare the present to the past. Device-level monitoring provides the statistical analysis Facility Managers need to show results to decision-makers that are often detached from the process.

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