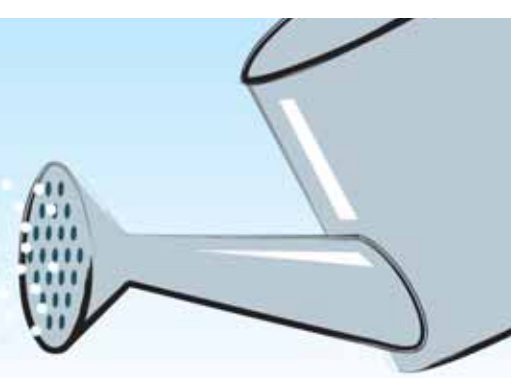


Greening practices, Growing profits



As the importance of protecting the environment becomes increasingly apparent, small and medium-sized businesses are asking whether it is possible to be both environmentally conscious and profitable. Two Canadian companies are showing that it is a reality with the help of standards.

Bryan Emmerson is the chief operating officer of PolyCello, a packaging manufacturer that employs over 300 people at its facility in Amherst, NS. He says he is surprised that more small and medium-sized businesses haven't picked up on the fact that being good to the environment is also good for business.

"When environmentalism first hit the stage in business, it was originally seen as an additional cost. But now many companies see that environmental processes and business processes aren't mutually exclusive; they can be synergistic," he says.

In 2000, PolyCello became certified to ISO 14001, an internationally-renowned environmental management standard.¹ ISO 14001 provides organizations with a management framework to help identify and minimize the negative impact of operations on the environment and address compliance with any relevant environmental laws or regulations.

Putting in place an environmental management system helped PolyCello identify the impact of its operations on the environment. As a result, it set a goal of reducing its levels of solid waste by 50 per cent.

With a 62 per cent reduction of solid waste to date, PolyCello has surpassed its objective by reusing a wide range of products used in processing its packaging (including batteries, empty propane tanks, knife blades and paper)



in its production cycle. This has resulted in significant savings, both from decreased fees for the processing of waste and less money spent on new materials for its products.

“If we have scrap that we can recycle instead of sending it off to a landfill, it just makes sense to do it,” says Emmerson.

To ensure that PolyCello’s environmental management practices are as effective as possible, two internal audits are performed annually in addition to the audit required for the upkeep of its certification to ISO 14001.

“The audits are a component of continuous improvement. If we did well last year, we’ll have to do better next year,” he says.

Emmerson concludes that when one considers the “big picture” in the manufacturing industry, environmental responsibility more than pays for itself.

Echoing Emmerson’s remarks a few provinces westward is Alan Alty, general manager of Laser Cartridge Services Inc.

Recycling materials has always been part of the Pickering, Ontario-based company’s operations, but standards have helped make this practice profitable says general manager Allan Alty. As a leader in the niche market of compatible toner cartridges, the company has built its business around taking empty printer cartridges from big-name manufacturers, including Lexmark and Canon, and reusing components of them. The new cartridges it makes are compatible with the original product and are less expensive.

Laser Cartridges has a quality management system certified to the world-renowned ISO 9001 standard and its products are certified to the Canadian national standard for remanufactured toner cartridges: CAN/CGSB-53.148-2004. While certification to the quality management system standard provides overall confidence in the company’s processes, product certification by an accredited third-party demonstrates that the remanufactured cartridges meets specific requirements for print quality, image density and page yield, and either meets or outperforms original cartridges. But the company’s involvement doesn’t stop at simply

meeting the standards. Laser Cartridges was part of the committee that developed CAN/CGSB-53.148-2004.

“I can’t see belonging to an industry and just sort of sitting on the sidelines and watching the industry go by, because that’s exactly what will happen; opportunities will go right by you,” says Alty.

The use of product and quality management systems standards have played an important role in increasing consumer confidence in the remanufactured cartridge because it allows Laser Cartridges to differentiate itself from companies who produce an inferior product.

“Once someone tries a compatible cartridge product, if it fails catastrophically in their printer, that bad taste is going to be in their mouth for years to come,” says Alty.

The company’s quality management system has also helped the company to better measure its success. He says

that the inputs like feedback, warranty claim analysis and performance analysis from in-house testing allow the company to measure outputs like production, bottom line and profitability.

“It’s easier to communicate the expectations of the organization when you have the measurements of the inputs and the outputs,” Alty adds. He says employees can measure their improvement against the benchmarks set by ISO 9001.

Whether it’s using standards to reduce the volume of waste sent to the landfill or to increase consumer confidence in a product made from recycled materials, companies like PolyCello and Laser Cartridges are

proving that standards can help small and medium-sized business green their practices while growing their profits. And that’s a bottom line that everyone can be happy with. ■

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¹ ISO 14001 and ISO 9001 are two examples of international standards that have been adopted or adapted as National Standards of Canada. The official name of the Canadian adoption of ISO 14001 is CAN/CSA-ISO 14001:04, however, the shorter, more recognized name ISO 14001 is widely used, and may be qualified with the year the standard was published or revised.

