

HOW TO GET GREENER AND LEANER

MARTYN FISHER LOOKS AT THE WAYS YOUR BUSINESS CAN BENEFIT BY EVOLVING ITS GREEN ETHOS



“Put responsibility at the heart of your business, and don’t treat it as an add-on,” he says. “Every part of the operation and product life-cycle should contribute to your environmental and social strategy. Make positive changes wherever you can, and work with suppliers who have the same commitment as you.”

Quantify the opportunity

Then let everyone know what the benefits will be

JJ Food Service, which will soon have 11 branches nationwide, three of which will have solar panels installed, was recently short-listed for a

Footprint Award, which recognises sustainability and responsible business practices in the foodservice sector.

As JJ’s Terry Larkin notes: “We were awarded the runner-up position, which was a great result. JJ employees were fully engaged with what was going on and used the Footprint Award runner-up logo in their email signatures, so it has been a great way to show partners and customers that we are a responsible business.”

UKWA’s Mead says that the key to achieving a cross-employee badge of

honour like this is to “quantify the green opportunity and communicate it like mad to everyone”.

A recent survey by global consultancy Accenture found that 46% of 18-to-34-year-olds in the UK said they are likely to sign up for solar panels in the next five years, compared with just 14% of those aged over 55. With this changing attitude in mind, ensuring that everyone is singing from the same hymn sheet is fundamental to the success of evolving your business as a green operation.

And they don’t need to have ‘green’ or ‘environmental’ in their job title. The Kentish Match Company’s Moare points out: “When we won the Confex award, we were asked who our environmental coordinator was. But we don’t have one – we believe it’s everyone’s responsibility.”

Future-gazing, he adds: “We are now entering the stage of what we do next, and are trying to improve and implement what we’ve done in new areas. The only wastage we have is sheet wrap and we can’t find anyone who can solve that, but perhaps we will try to find a plastic solution, as well as more environmentally-friendly vans.

“Once you’re into the habit, it’s so much easier to keep pushing yourself and your colleagues to the next level.” ●

£300k
Amount JW Filshill has saved in fuel by implementing a green training programme for its drivers

VIEWPOINT



“Often the first green steps companies take are relatively straightforward. Once these easier wins have been achieved, wholesalers should look to more

innovative fleet solutions that can help achieve savings in the long-term. Other benefits can be achieved through working in a more collaborative manner with customers to find more innovative ways to work delivering mutual benefits.

“For wholesale businesses that haven’t undertaken any energy efficiency work or implemented projects recently, there are two main areas for focus: improving the efficiency of the lighting equipment, and improving the efficiency of heating equipment. If those businesses also have cold storage areas, then refrigeration upgrades can deliver huge savings.

“Preventing heat loss from docking bays by installing strip curtains, for example, is a simple action that can achieve significant savings. You can also save money on lighting by ensuring any windows or rooflights are regularly cleaned, which will maximise the use of natural daylight.

“Other tips include installing controls to automatically link lighting to time and daylight, as well as heating controls. You can also investigate the zoning of equipment, so that areas can be switched off when they’re not in use.

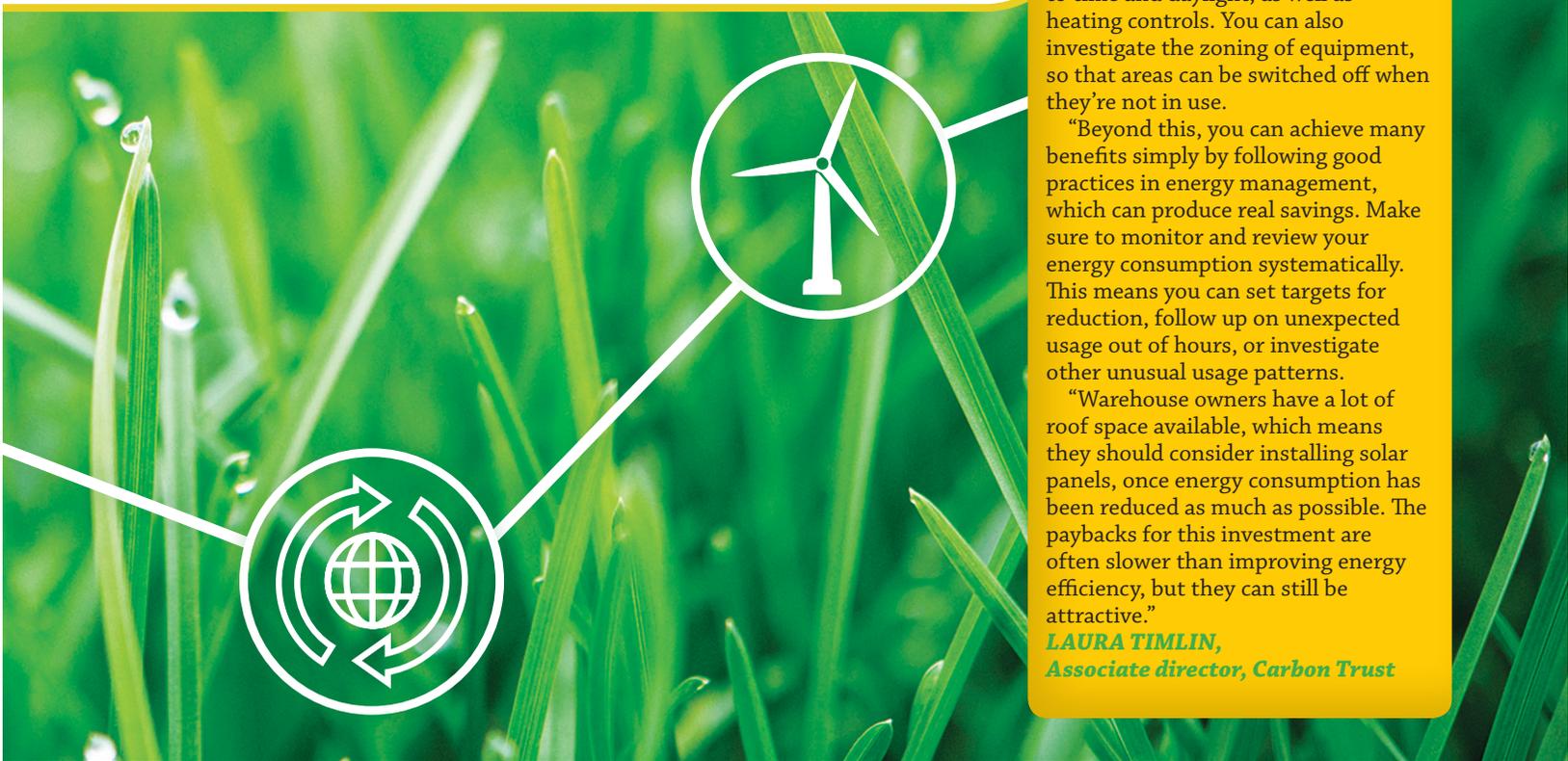
“Beyond this, you can achieve many benefits simply by following good practices in energy management, which can produce real savings. Make sure to monitor and review your energy consumption systematically. This means you can set targets for reduction, follow up on unexpected usage out of hours, or investigate other unusual usage patterns.

“Warehouse owners have a lot of roof space available, which means they should consider installing solar panels, once energy consumption has been reduced as much as possible. The paybacks for this investment are often slower than improving energy efficiency, but they can still be attractive.”

LAURA TIMLIN,
Associate director, Carbon Trust



To see a photo gallery illustrating some of the green moves made by wholesalers, visit: betterwholesaling.com/green-moves-gallery/



achieve more by working as a team, but there has to be a real commitment from wholesalers to make it happen, as there is so much innovation that can be shared.”

However, Mead cautions: “We all want to be greener than we already are, but unless it makes commercial sense, companies won’t push on with it. You’re only as good as your worst employee and so to keep evolving, you have to work hard to change behaviour throughout the organisation.”

Simon Hannah, MD of Today’s Group member JW Filshill, has adopted policies to ensure that the company is imbued with a green philosophy from top to bottom: “We do everything we can as far as the ‘big ticket’ items like gas and electricity go, but a lot of the technology in these areas doesn’t really change as much as you might think. So it’s often a case of remembering to switch off a light – the simple things add up.

“More recently, we’ve implemented a system whereby all PCs automatically shut down when

staff leave at the end of the day. On top of that, our vehicles cover 1.5m kilometres per annum using 380,000l of diesel, so we train staff as part of our Driver Certificate of Professional Competence programme to be more careful drivers. We’ve been doing this since 2006 and at that time we were getting 10.22 miles per gallon (3.6km/l) – now it’s 9mpg (3.2km/l). This has helped us save 220,000 tonnes of CO₂ and £300,000 in fuel. We also incentivise drivers, so we’ve paid 20% of that to them in bonuses.”

Being green doesn’t stop
Keep motivating staff, partners – and yourself

As well as incentivising employees, another method of progressing as a green business is to continually challenge your staff to stick to the principles, or risk the ignominy of losing the right to herald your wholesale operation as a leader in the green field.

The Carbon Trust is an independent organisation that works to help achieve a sustainable, low-carbon economy.

Its associate director, Laura Timlin, says: “One way to maintain continuous progress in getting greener in your operations is through achieving certification, which can help to bake in best practice, and helps to stretch companies to more ambitious targets.

“For example, logistics companies Wincanton and Kuehne + Nagel hold the Carbon Trust Standard, which requires recertification every two years to demonstrate that ongoing reductions have been made since the previous award.”

Wholesale giant Brakes is the type of business Lord Malloch-Brown wants to see more of. Its continued pursuit of excellence in the green field is underpinned by the strongly-held belief that it is making changes for the right reasons.

Ian Hunt, group engineering manager at Brakes, says: “We don’t see our investment in minimising our impact on the environment as a challenge. On the contrary, it presents opportunities from every perspective.

“People are increasingly environmentally and socially conscious, which can be a deciding factor in many decisions that they make – what to buy, who to buy it from, where to work and who to work with. So doing business the right way is not only a good thing to do, it makes complete business sense.”

Hunt also emphasises the importance of getting every member of staff involved, to ensure that green stays at the forefront of what Brakes does, and extols the virtues of extending the company’s green philosophy to who it works with.



TIMLIN'S TOP FIVE FLEET TIPS

- 1 **Improve procurement and shorten replacement-cycles for vehicles**
- 2 **Implement a strategy to reduce mileage**
- 3 **Implement a programme to train drivers and change their behaviours**
- 4 **Develop programmes to manage fuel better**
- 5 **Agree a vehicles fleet policy**



Although recent research from the Federation of Small Businesses found that 70% of small and medium-sized enterprises cited protecting the environment as a key motivation for investing in green technology, there are tangible financial benefits to going green, too.

Former UK government minister Lord Malloch-Brown, who is now chairman of the global Business and Sustainable Development Commission, recently noted that businesses still operating in the “kind of resource-depleting, let-rip economy which has been enormously successful over the past 40 years” would struggle to survive in a world where sustainability is key.

He added: “The world is changing rapidly. Some businesses [will] prosper, establish themselves and grow very quickly; other businesses are going to go kaput, because the world has changed more rapidly than them.”

A number of wholesalers will already have installed green technologies or found greener ways of operating over the past decade. But at a time of myriad cost pressures on British wholesalers, their suppliers and their customers, as well as uncertainty about the implications of the Brexit referendum, how can wholesalers build on these initial green investments and evolve their environmental ethos for the benefit of both the planet and their bottom line?

A number of wholesalers, especially

“Operating like this really helps financially – we wouldn’t be in the position we are now without these changes”

**Matthew Moare,
The Kentish Match Company**

those with smaller operations, will relate to the viewpoint of Matthew Moare, operations coordinator of delivered wholesaler The Kentish Match Company. He says the Confex member “spent six years ignoring green”, but after deciding to embrace the green ideal, the business hasn’t looked back and was recognised this year for its efforts by winning The Confex Green Wholesaler Award.

Moare says: “It does take time to continually go forward as a green business. You really need to drill down into what you’re doing. Now we’ve started thinking about it over the past few years, it’s just really focused the mind on it.

“We make sure we look at what changes we have made and evolve them. It’s the culmination of little things here and there that have added up. Operating like this really helps financially – we wouldn’t be in the position we are now without them.”

These changes include: taking cardboard



to a venue that recycles it, when on a run nearby, as well as taking customers’ cardboard to be recycled at the same site; recycling pallets; reusing waste paper as pallet labels; installing a timed heater in the warehouse; and washing vehicles simultaneously.

The business now produces just one sack of waste per week, but as Moare notes: “There’s only so much stuff you can cut before you can’t operate, so finding that balance is vital.”

70%
Percentage of SMEs that cite protecting the environment as a key reason for investing in green technology

No company is an island

Involve the rest of your supply chain to help reach the next level of green

For Andy Mead,

of the UK Warehousing Association (UKWA), the solution to evolving as a green operation is to ensure that your business isn’t

insular. He says: “Wholesalers must be prepared to work with all stakeholders – not just distributors, but the whole of the supply chain. We all know that we