
Energy Primer

Energy is critical to the operation of any organization, particularly in the agricultural sector. For many agricultural based organizations, energy is also a major cost center. With energy prices on the rise, optimizing energy use and conservation efforts is a critical component to protecting eroding margins and strengthening the ability to compete and win in today's economy.

In addition to the economic costs, energy also imposes environmental and societal costs by depleting resources and contributing to problems such as climate change. The province of Alberta in particular has a high impact on environmental costs relative to other Canadian provinces due to the source of energy generation in the province.

As the understanding of the economic, environmental and social impacts around energy use increases, major retailers and consumer facing organizations are demanding energy reductions from their supply chains. Many of the retailers and larger organizations already require suppliers to report and improve their energy performance year over year.

The Challenge

Continually improving energy performance can be challenging due to the complexity of the issues surrounding energy use. While individual organizations cannot control energy prices, government policies or the global economy, with the right approach, they can improve the way they manage energy in the here and now.

A Solution

Realizing the greatest energy savings requires the collaborative efforts of multiple stakeholders. Deploying an energy management team will help maximize the success of an organizations energy management program. The energy team is responsible for planning, implementing, benchmarking, monitoring, and evaluating the organizational energy management program. The team's duties also include delivering training, communicating results, and providing recognition.

The Benefits

- ✓ Sustained identification of energy reduction opportunities
- ✓ Multiple stakeholder and departmental engagement
- ✓ More effective deployment of the energy management program
- ✓ Leveraging the balanced skill set of team members
- ✓ Increased accountability and ownership of energy performance

Setting Up an Effective Energy Management Team

Step 1: Secure Senior Level Support

The first step in setting up a successful energy team is securing senior management support. The most effective approach is to effectively communicate the enhanced benefits that a team will realize vs an individual effort. This includes elevated cost savings, energy security, exceeding customer expectations and a strengthened reputation.

Step 2: Secure Team Members

As with any organizational team, the number of people on an energy team depends on the size of the organization. Smaller organizations may start with a minimum of 3 members and go up from there. Beyond the team size, securing the right mix of players for the team is critical to maximizing success. Consider a representative from each operational area that significantly affects energy use, such as production, facilities, logistics and office. In addition to a representative from operational areas, consider a representative from finance to calculate and communicate financial savings as well as a representative from senior management to help secure required resources.

Step 3: Develop Team Charter

With support from senior management secured and team members in place, the next step is to set the focus and structure for the team through the development of a team charter. A team without a charter is like a ship without a rudder. Used properly, a charter will guide decisions, keep the team focused and drive out confusion. There are four simple steps any organization can take to set up an effective team charter:

(a) *Determine Focus:* Develop a vision that will focus and guide the team over time. Some teams may have a concentrated vision such as reducing energy consumption from a particular line while other teams may have a higher level vision such as reducing energy consumption throughout the organization.

(b) *Define Objectives:* With a vision in place, define the objectives that will drive the team closer to achieving its vision. An effective way for teams to determine objectives is by brainstorming current challenges to achieving the vision. With an understanding of the challenges, determine steps required to overcome the challenges. These steps become the objectives for the team and drive initiatives.

(c) *Assign Roles & Responsibilities:* Like any effective team, members require clearly defined roles and responsibilities. Some common roles include a secretary to document and administer team meetings, a technical expert to provide engineering support, a treasurer to calculate and quantify costs, savings, ROI etc., and a team leader to ensure the team stays focused and on track to achieving the vision.

(d) *Schedule Meeting Dates & Locations:* Pre-scheduling team meetings for the quarter or year will help secure attendance at team meetings. Try choosing the same day, time and location for all meetings.

**Document the charter using the Energy Team Charter template and re-visit this charter at the end of every meeting to ensure the team stays focused. The charter is a living document and may need to be adjusted as the team progresses.*

Step 4: Take Action: Based on the defined objectives, determine the specific action items required to complete the objectives. For each objective, assign a champion and due date, review status of each action item at team meetings and develop solutions to any problems associated with the action items. Communicate progress to senior leaders and celebrate successes along the way to help ensure the sustainability and long term success of the team.