

Case study – St George Corporate and Business Bank



The Dragon slays paper waste and banks the savings

If you have ever wondered what a year's worth of saving paper looks like, the sustainability-conscious staff of St George Corporate and Business Bank South can show you. After saving one ream of paper per day for 12 months, they stacked the empty boxes to convince colleagues that their paper-conscious efforts were generating real results.

Daniel Lockwood, an account executive at St George, admits that winning hearts and minds to any cause takes time. Defeating a 'what's the point?' attitude is all the more challenging when the people you want to persuade come from diverse cultural backgrounds, life stages and age groups. What Gen Y sees as vital can be ho-hum to your average Baby Boomer.

As the champions of a new environmental focus by the bank, Lockwood and his band of sustainability enthusiasts knew that success hinged on gaining wide acceptance and demonstrating tangible returns. However, while many employees had a passion for sustainability, they lacked the opportunity to focus their collective enthusiasm. The Sustainability Advantage Program offered the perfect opportunity to give staff this focus.

Using the Program as a guide, St George formed a Green Team, secured executive support for resources, developed ►

In brief

St George Corporate and Business Bank South wanted to build employee knowledge and skills about sustainability – an issue it describes as 'undeniably vital' for business. The bank formed a Green Team to advocate the benefits of a more sustainable approach to business. It took some time, but the results are clear:

- an 11 per cent reduction in power bills across the corporate and business bank's two sites at Parramatta and Wetherill Park
- savings in paper of one ream per day
- stronger relationships with like-minded businesses in the region
- a change of attitude among employees towards sustainability that has encouraged St George to replicate this success in other corporate and business banking regions.



- a new sustainability policy, and established four objectives – to get all staff more involved in sustainability; reduce the use of paper; cut the electricity bill; and reduce waste.

The bank created a regular email newsletter with resource-saving tips for staff and to promote campaigns such as Earth Hour and switching off business machines every Friday. It also monitored electricity use and tracked this against a long-term reduction target; relaunched a tool to reduce PC run-time; reorganised branch work practices to reduce the number of terminals in use to one; set hot water systems on seven-day timers; and removed fluorescent lighting from unoccupied work stations.

The other big focus was paper. The bank converted its business plans from multiple hard-copies to electronic copies; replaced paper-based tasks such as account balance requests with electronic means; set all printer defaults to double-sided; presented reports during meetings on a projector rather than hard-copy; replaced facsimile equipment with an email-based virtual fax; and cancelled printing reports each night that were found to be redundant.

For the Green Team, the most notable outcome has been a general change in attitude.

‘We have gone from people having little knowledge about sustainability and how it affects our business and their own job day to day, to looking at what else we can achieve,’ Lockwood says. ‘There was always interest and enthusiasm; just a lack of awareness.’

Like any modern workplace, St George has a diverse employee base and a wide range

of perspectives on complex issues such as sustainability. As the Green Team continued to spruik the benefits for the business, acceptance grew. With employee support, results soon followed.

Overall, St George cut power use by 11 per cent at its two corporate and business banking sites at Parramatta and Wetherill Park. Paper consumption was reduced by more than a ream per day.

The bank also joined a cluster of like-minded organisations to build ties with the local commercial community and extend its sustainability knowledge.

‘Sustainability in an office setting can be challenging once you move beyond double-sided printing and turning off the lights,’ says Lockwood. ‘We got many great tips by being part of the cluster, especially about staff engagement. You can have the best plan in the world, but if your colleagues aren’t on side you won’t succeed.’

‘We learn from each other in the cluster and share little milestones along our sustainability journey. We know more about the business potential, and it has made us realise that governments and businesses are taking this seriously. We share this commitment, so it’s important we get involved.’

Your next step

To find out how your business can join the Sustainability Advantage Program, contact the team:

Email sustainbus@environment.nsw.gov.au

Call 02 8837 6000

Visit environment.nsw.gov.au/sustainbus/sustainabilityadvantage.htm