

SEEDA Sustainable Business Awards aim to encourage and promote a sustainable approach to business in the South East region through celebrating excellence, significant achievement and through the dissemination of best practice.

CASE STUDY

STEWART SIGNS, EASTLEIGH, HAMPSHIRE

Company Background

Stewart Signs is a well established sign manufacturing company, producing a wide range of signs and self-adhesive products using screen processes and digital printing and cutting techniques. The Company's clients are mainly 'blue chip' companies, with a range of product uses which includes vehicles, premises and cruise liners. Established in 1963, Stewart Signs occupies two adjacent sites in Eastleigh, with a combined area of 1700m². The Company is privately owned, employing 50 people, and has a current annual turnover of £3.7million

Stewart Signs achieved the ISO 14001 standard in 1998, and is now concentrating on continually improving its environmental performance through wide ranging measures, addressing waste, water, energy use, and packaging issues. The Company is now looking to extend its good practice to its suppliers, sub-contractors and customers.



ACTION HISTORY

Energy/Fuel Savings

Stewart Signs has reduced energy use through efficiency measures, including the following -

- Improving compressed air usage through replacing or removing old and inefficient plant, and putting in place a leak prevention system. The reduction in electricity use has bought a saving of £460 per year

Key Achievements

- Reduced energy use, achieving savings of over £1000 per year
- Reduced solvent use by 50%, saving £1500 per annum
- Achieved a 66% reduction in controlled waste to landfill
- Reduced water consumption by 68% over 3 years
- Worked with major client to maximise efficiency through product design and layout, saving £10,500 per year

- The company agreed a reduction in its power rating from 120kVA to 70 kVA and fitted a power factor correction unit at a cost of £340 which will payback in 6 months; the reduced charges produced savings of £640 per year

Solvent Management

A dedicated solvent distillation system has been installed to recycle ink-contaminated solvents for re-use. This has reduced the quantities purchased by 50% and the ongoing saving equates to £1500 per annum.

The Company has switched 10% of its printing from solvent-based inks to UV inks and is working towards a target of 50%. This has been made possible by the development of UV inks with a guaranteed life on external signs. Using these inks reduces solvent costs (including the cost of cleaning solvent-contaminated rags) and means that fewer solvents are released into the environment.



Waste

The high cost of raw materials makes waste minimisation a high priority. Waste has been continuously reduced through a range of highly successful measures and initiatives, which have enabled the Company to achieve a 66% reduction in controlled waste to landfill.

Examples of waste reduction

- Stewart Signs produces a large number of emblems for one of its main customers. One of the larger images produced an unavoidable offcut while another smaller image generated almost none. By examining the grain of the reflective material and discussing possibilities with the customer, Stewart Signs established a new layout for both images that utilised the off-cut, resulting in hardly any waste. The result has been a typical saving of £10,500 per year, at minimal implementation cost. In addition to the cost saving, raw materials consumption and waste generation have both been reduced and the Company's image with an important customer - which insists on good environmental management from its suppliers - has been enhanced
- Many waste items, such as lining paper, plastic cores from sheeting tubes, and off-cuts of materials are donated to the Southampton Scrap Store, a local charity which redistributes clean, non-hazardous materials to schools and playgroups as art and play materials. At no cost to the business, this reduces disposal charges and provides an excellent community benefit
- Where practicable, 'waste' packaging (mainly cardboard) from supplies into the Company is used in despatching products. To allay any possible customer concerns, Stewart Signs has produced its own stickers for reused packaging, stating why this policy has been adopted and inviting any comments or queries. Customer feedback has been very positive
- Many wastes which can not be re-used internally or by the Scrap Store (including artwork film and scrap metals) are recycled commercially. This has bought total cost savings of £800 per year

Water

Stewart Signs has reduced its water consumption by 68% over three years, through the following initiatives:

- WCs & urinals. All cisterns have been fitted with 'hippo bags' to reduce water consumption and all urinals have been fitted with flush controls, reducing their water use by 70%
- The bore sizes of the water inlets to both sites were found to be over capacity and have been reduced. This was made possible by the Company's water saving measures, which cut consumption on the sites from 14m³ to just 4m³ per week. This has led to an annual reduction in water use of 530m³ per year, achieving cost savings of £1150 per year
- All effluent produced by Stewart Signs is passed through a gravel filter prior to discharge, to reduce the amount of suspended solids and the Chemical Oxygen Demand (COD) of the effluent. The initial cost of the filter was relatively small, and the initial results suggest a substantial improvement within the first six months
- Water usage is closely monitored, and changes in the amount of water used are investigated so that any leaks are identified as early as possible

Staff Awareness

Staff receive formal training on environmental and waste minimisation issues, including guidance on best practice and information on all waste streams and their suitability for re-use and recycling.



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