

JULY 2012

Menasha Packaging – Energy Intern Benefits

Menasha Packaging Company is a family owned business that specializes in producing high-end packaging and merchandising solutions. Menasha was founded in 1849 on a commitment to innovation. Today, Menasha retains this commitment by setting new standards for sustainable packaging.

Challenge

A company with a corporate commitment to innovation and efficiency, Menasha strives to reduce production costs, especially those arising from energy use. But, as sustainability manager Morgan Wiswall explained, it can be difficult to find the human resources necessary to identify and thoroughly review energy projects. The company had already successfully executed a number of energy projects and knew that additional energy savings opportunities were still available. To help ensure that they were taking advantage of economically viable opportunities for improved energy efficiency, Menasha hired Zach Larson as an energy intern for the summer of 2011.

Strategy

Menasha hired Zach to work at three Fox Valley manufacturing facilities. While Morgan had considered taking on energy interns before, it was not until he heard about the Focus on Energy program* that he was motivated to take action. The purpose of the program was to partner UW-Madison Mechanical Engineering students with businesses interested in energy efficiency. Students were trained by Focus on Energy then assigned to conduct energy efficiency projects at their host companies.

Once on location, Zach's first job was to conduct energy audits and identify potential energy savings opportunities. Once he completed an audit, Zach would recommend energy efficiency improvements initiatives that could be implemented at the facility. For each project, he would develop a proposal that outlined project details. Zach submitted his project proposals to Morgan and the plant's managerial team - including the plant's manager, purchasing manager, controller and maintenance manager. This team then had the task of choosing which initiatives to implement.

* Note: 50% of the costs of the intern were covered by Focus on Energy. In addition, Focus on Energy provided financial incentives to implement the energy efficiency projects that arose from the audits conducted. This program no longer exists.



Results

Approximately 25 potential projects emerged from the audits, including seven projects designated for Menasha's PrePrint facility in Neenah (there is a corresponding case study on the Preprint facility).

For each project, Zach calculated costs, benefits, plans for implementation, energy and cost savings, payback and return on investment (ROI). Three of the seven proposed PrePrint facility projects were implemented by mid-2012. These include: (1) a duct insulation project for the F&K press, (2) a heat recovery project for the facility's air compressor, and (3) a lighting improvement project for the south side of the building. Together these projects had an estimated payback of three years. Actual results were in line with estimates.

According to Morgan, the internship was beneficial because Zach was able to delve more deeply into energy projects than anyone on the Menasha team would have had time to do. Morgan further explained that Menasha is eager to make investments in such internships because they "provide the intern with a wonderful hands-on learning experience". Menasha hopes to employ additional energy interns in the future, and rehired Zach for the summer of 2012. Morgan states that even if Menasha would have borne the entire cost of the intern, the savings associated with the implemented projects would have justified his hiring. Morgan also notes that Menasha employees were enthusiastic about the projects.

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