



Environmental management made EASIER

Analysis of the mind may be more akin to the science laboratory than the boardroom but a new project led by the University of Hertfordshire is aiming to use psychology to help make environmental change easier for small businesses.



The Environmental Assistance for SMEs in the Eastern Region (EASIER) project is a hassle free way for small businesses in the Eastern Region of the UK to save money on their energy and fuel bills, reduce their carbon footprint and improve their environmental credentials.

Project Director, Dr Mike Page, of the University of Hertfordshire, explained: "There is massive latent potential within business which is just not being

released and the EASIER project is looking at introducing ways a business can develop the capabilities of key members of staff."

"By changing mindsets, the project will help SMEs develop the behaviours and thinking necessary to produce economic benefits. We are anticipating that participating businesses will see a 10-20% reduction in their carbon emissions."

Over 50 businesses from a range of industries have been engaged on the EASIER project so far ranging from care homes to car show rooms, and sign writers to safari parks. Each business receives a free energy audit and report detailing simple measures that can be taken to reduce energy consumption, all of which will pay back within approximately 3 years.

Building on the renowned environmental and behavioural academic strengths of the University, the project aims to deliver focused and tailored 14-day business support which encompasses a holistic assessment of the SME's current environmental management systems, an action plan proposing practical measures to help reduce carbon emissions and advice to help establish sustainable growth.

This is followed by an assessment to measure success against the recommendations set out in the plan and will use the Carbon Trust's Carbon Footprint calculator to establish the level of emissions savings and financial savings. These will be checked by an independent auditor.

Case Study - The EASIER Project cuts lighting costs by 60% for Speakerbus

Speakerbus Ltd has recently been working with the team from the University of Hertfordshire to reduce their carbon emissions through improving energy efficiency at their headquarters in Hertfordshire. By signing up to the EASIER project, Speakerbus have had free access to advice from specialist energy consultants who have helped them identify ways that they can reduce their impact on the environment and save money too.

Speakerbus Ltd is a privately owned communications technology developer and manufacturer Established in 1984. They have built a solid reputation for supplying the world's leading financial organisations and government and defense sectors with global voice and video communication solutions.

With recent rises in electricity and fuel prices, and growing concerns over the impact of carbon dioxide emissions on the environment, Speakerbus decided to take advantage of the free service offered through the EASIER project to try to find ways of saving money as well as carbon.

A consultant from the University of Hertfordshire met with a representative from Speakerbus to discuss their operations and carry out an energy survey of their headquarters. The site survey identified that one of the biggest energy users in the building was the lighting system, accounting for almost 50% of the day time electricity demand of the site. Most of the lighting was provided by old style T8 fluorescent tubes (25 mm in diameter) which can now be replaced by highly efficient T5 fluorescent tubes (16 mm in diameter). Not only would these cut lighting bills by almost 60%, but T5s also have a longer working life meaning maintenance costs are lower, and they provide a higher quality light making the working environment more pleasant. Once the project is implemented, Speakerbus will also have reduced their overall carbon footprint by 25% making it an excellent environmental investment too.

The University of Hertfordshire were even able to put Speakerbus in touch with a reputable supplier, who provided a competitive quote for the supply and installation of the new lighting system. The payback period for the installation is just 16 months and the project also qualifies for a Carbon Trust Loan, eliminating the problem of having to find the money to pay for the project upfront.

At a total cost of £779,382, the project has benefited substantially from the £311,753 contribution from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and aims to assist a total of 80 businesses during its lifetime. Commenting on the impact of the project Mike said: "The ERDF funding has given us the opportunity to make a real difference within the region by putting theory into practice. More than ever, businesses should be looking at innovative ways of protecting their bottom line. By influencing the mindsets of those who manage and run businesses in the region, we believe that we can make a lasting difference."

Priority Axis 2

Funding:	Total Project Cost: £779,382 ERDF: £311,753		
Solution for Business Product:	Improving your Resource Efficiency		
Scope:	Regional	Project Duration:	April 2009–October 2012
More Information:	Dr Mike Page, University of Hertfordshire: m.2.page@herts.ac.uk or +44 (0)1707 286465		
ERDF Details:	<p>The European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) is a seven-year investment programme part financed by the European Union. Its objective is 'towards low carbon economic growth' in the East of England and €110.9 million has been allocated to our region.</p> <p>The fund aims to help small and medium size enterprises respond to the challenges of climate change and the huge commercial potential behind a low carbon economy.</p> <p>For more information visit w: http://www.communities.gov.uk/regeneration/regenerationfunding/europeanregionaldevelopment/eastengland/ or tel+44 0303 4446400</p>		

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