



Corporate Knights

WOODY'S WHEATIES

Why Hollywood actor Woody Harrelson wants to turn straw waste into paper, and how this issue of CK is helping him p54



GLOBAL BODY COUNT p20

The rich blame the poor for overpopulation. The poor blame the rich for overconsumption. Both have a point. So how do we move forward?

PIGGYBACKING PIPELINES p30

When it comes to green power, there's the wrong way and the right-of-way. Could pipeline assets be the key to tapping into stranded renewables?



Green Procurement

Not Just About Products



Intent on becoming a paperless enterprise, the president of OCM Manufacturing in Ottawa had to change how his company interacts internally and with suppliers.

By George Henning

Over the past decade, my company, OCM Manufacturing, has embarked on a journey to become greener. Our goal has been to look across our entire electronics manufacturing organization and introduce as many energy and sustainable practices as possible.

Originally, it was OCM's pursuit of an ISO 9000 quality rating in 2000 that inspired our quest to become greener. It revealed to us the sheer volume of paper associated with achieving and maintaining ISO status. Along with the "ISO 9000-certified" achievement came literally volumes of paper documents. When a single data error required that those thousands of pages be reprinted, it was the straw that broke the camel's back. As a company, we vowed to change.

We were told it couldn't be done. Not a single person involved in our ISO effort had ever seen the requisite document trail in electronic form. But we did make it happen. Looking around the company and seeing so much paper and paper waste everywhere, we set out as a team to eliminate it.

Internally, with one IT person supervising the effort, we upgraded OCM's computer software, put projection systems in meeting rooms, added several high-quality document scanners for employee use, and increased storage capacity on our computer servers to handle the extra load. The meeting room projection systems are all linked to our main server for access to any electronic files needed for a particular meeting. Those employees whose roles require

them to deal with a lot of documentation – such as our purchasers – have two computer monitors on their desks to facilitate comparison of digital documents. We also moved to direct deposit of employee salary cheques.

These internal initiatives at OCM were complemented by external ones. We told our suppliers that we would no longer accept paper-based invoices. We also insisted that they be prepared to accept electronic transfer of funds for payment of goods and services. Our accounting firm was asked to submit financial statements and year-end reports in electronic form only. When paper mail arrives at the office we make electronic copies of the original and recycle the hard copy. We are determined to completely rid our premises of physical filing cabinets.

An estimated 90 per cent of OCM's operation is paperless today, 12 years after our first foray into this transition. That includes all of our administration, marketing, purchasing, and most aspects of our manufacturing operations. We've been successful in part because we have engaged our employees in the pursuit of being green. For example, an employee spearheaded our shop-floor recycling initiative. We now separate all of our waste for recycling. This includes the packaging in which various components and sub-components are bundled and shipped to us.

There was reluctance at first on many fronts – change is never easy and altering one's work habits always involves frustration and diligence. Our leadership team

continues to wave the paperless flag in day-to-day operations and remind employees that paper is not necessary to any task. Today, nearly all of OCM's suppliers interact with us virtually via the Internet, e-mail and other applications. Most of those metal filing cabinets are gone. It's much faster for anyone in the company to search for and find the documents they need (provided they have the security permissions to access them). We have been able to grow our operations without increasing administrative staff.

The biggest obstacle to the goal of becoming paperless is human resistance. It seems that the urge "to make a paper copy" is deeply ingrained in all of us.

Externally, we continue to encounter barriers – and even penalties – for being paperless. We're charged more for electronic salary cheques than it would cost for paper cheques, and fees for electronic transactions at the bank can be higher.

Old habits also die hard. It takes vigilance to ensure that traditional ways of doing things don't creep back into the operation. But the payoff is real. OCM is a small business, but going green has certainly increased our productivity and efficiency, and saved us money. We estimate we've saved the equivalent of three full-time jobs, equating to about \$150,000 a year.

The bottom line: With a team commitment, any business can introduce initiatives that can make a real environmental difference, improve earnings, and impart a feeling of pride for all concerned. 