

## Enviro-Mark...

### Managing your mark on the environment

**At a time when many organisations are trimming expenditure, it is surprising – at first – that many business managers are actually increasing their investment in environmental management.**

However, Enviro-Mark New Zealand business manager Charlie Bartlett, says the economic downturn has forced organisations to take a good look at their operations, and focus on what they could be doing to reduce waste and improve productivity. “A simple and effective environmental management system will save you money,” says Charlie. “It provides the discipline for reducing resource use and ensures more effective waste management.

“An Auckland company, Soar Printing, is recognising savings of \$150,000 a year – largely through reduced energy use – and has turned recycled waste into a valuable revenue stream. Those savings make a significant difference when times are tough.”

The Enviro-Mark programme is managed by the crown research institute, Landcare Research, and has been providing credible environmental certification for its members since 2001. The programme breaks down the implementation of an environmental management system, or EMS, into five steps. Through an on-site audit, members can then get certified at each of those steps and use that certification to demonstrate their environmental credentials. For international equivalence and credibility Enviro-Mark draws its requirements from the definitive global environmental standard; ISO 14001:2004.

“An EMS is a ‘way of doing things’ in your organisation that leads to a reduction in your environmental impacts,” explains Charlie. “For an EMS to be effective it has to be both simple and robust, and is based on the four components – plan, do, check and change.”

At a time when more deals are being clinched on price, and it is becoming increasingly difficult to stand out from competitors, a certified EMS can provide a real market advantage, says Charlie. “Many Enviro-Mark members are helping their customers operate and promote themselves as more sustainable. Just take the printing industry – you either have printing done by someone who can demonstrate they care or not. The customer gets the benefit from those efforts too.

“This interest or demand for improved environmental performance up and down the supply chain is creating new business networks and driving support for EMS. The certification also provides an edge when tendering, as most companies now have a requirement to include environmental, social, and health and safety considerations in their tenders.”

While EMS certification may provide an edge in some sectors, in other sectors it is necessary just to level the playing field. “In more mature industries, companies are becoming Enviro-Mark members largely to catch up,” says Charlie. “A focus on environmental performance is becoming a ‘ticket to operate’ that is essential for a company’s survival.



“Despite everything, there are people who genuinely want to do the right thing – and the recession hasn’t changed their values in this area. Environmental sustainability captures hearts and minds, and will continue to be a very topical issue.”

To counter-balance this, there is also growing cynicism about ‘greenwashing’ – the unjustified appropriation of environmental virtue by a company. “Greenwashing – while a somewhat new coinage – has been around for years,” says Charlie. “But it is only with the introduction of a credible and independent verification process that customers can safely rely on the ‘green’ claims of a company.

“With more information readily available at our fingertips, and a more inquisitive natured public in general, a robust, results-focused, systematic approach to implementation of an EMS lends significant credibility. One Enviro-Mark member recently told me his company is winning business because his competitors talk about their environmental performance but can’t back that up with independent verification of their green credentials.

**“In such a competitive marketplace, it’s not enough to say you are green, your business depends on your ability to prove it.”**

And it’s not just the environment that wins – staff too benefit from the process, says membership manager, Kristin Flanagan. “Our members are consistently surprised by the positive impact an EMS has on staff morale. Staff feel good about their organisation improving its environmental performance, and the further through the programme you go, the more motivating it gets as staff see changes and payback from what they implement.

“Across the board, we have seen a very high level of acceptance from staff when programmes have been implemented. In addition, because a credible EMS also provides systems for ensuring health and safety, as well as environmental legal compliance, employees are rewarded with a cleaner, safer work environment.

“It’s a positive story to be part of, and to tell clients, the community and other stakeholders,” says Kristin. “And positive stories will be particularly important for businesses heading into the future.”