



Eco-management Positions Sofitel on Top of the World

“Certification to ISO 14001 provided immediate benefits to the hotel, not only in terms of our energy resource consumption reduction, but also in a business and staff engagement sense.”
Darren Sankaradas, Quality and Risk Manager, Sofitel on Collins

Sofitel objectives:

- To position themselves as the market leader in the luxury hotel market
- To do something positive for the environment
- A strategy for ongoing change towards lower energy consumption
- Focus on the three things they could change – waste, energy and water
- Staff engagement

Sofitel solutions:

- All rooms now have motion sensors for lighting
- Water-saving shower heads were fitted in all rooms
- Operational focus on fixing any leaks quickly
- New process around ensuring all suppliers would work in partnership to conform to new standard procurement guidelines – including pallet recycling
- Staff education and training, leading to long-term behavioural and cultural change

Sofitel benefits:

- Ability to show proof of sustainability credentials in proposals and marketing documents
- Cost savings due to reduced water and energy consumption
- After certification, electricity consumption was down 14% compared to previous year
- Gas usage reduced by 10% in the same period
- Water usage dropped by a notable 47% compared to the year before certification
- Ability to effectively target Government and large contracts
- 100% staff engagement

Why certification?

Sofitel Melbourne on Collins is a very progressive business. In 2010, the Accor Group made it mandatory for all Sofitel properties worldwide to meet HACCP Food Safety certification. This was no issue for Sofitel Melbourne, as they have held HACCP certification since 2005. Sofitel Melbourne has recently added the internationally recognised ISO 22000 Safety Management System certification. Accor's IBIS chain will also be required to meet ISO 14001 globally over the next few years - but again, Sofitel Melbourne is leading the way.

The hotel, located at the prestigious 'Paris end' of Collins St, has 363 luxurious rooms and suites with panoramic views across the Melbourne CBD and Port Phillip Bay. No35, its restaurant, was awarded 'Restaurant of the Year' by the Australian Hotels Association for two consecutive years in 2010 and 2011. As part of Europe's leading hotel group Accor, Sofitel's contemporary and stylish hotels and resorts can be found in over 40 countries.

Sofitel Melbourne on Collins has won many awards, but it is particularly proud of its latest title. It is the first luxury hotel in Australia to receive ISO 14001 accreditation for Environmental Management Systems.

"We wanted to do something positive for the environment, and position ourselves as a leader in the luxury hotel market," explains Darren Sankaradas, Quality and Risk Manager at Sofitel Melbourne. This vision was a joint effort of General Manager Clive Scott, and Rens Breur the Hotel Manager. The key to their success was staff training, ensuring a whole business approach.

Implementation

Achieving ISO 14001 was a two year process for Darren and his committee. "First, we had training at BSI, and then we formed a staff committee. We understood that Environmental Management Systems (EMS) are not a one-off - it's an ongoing process of

change and we needed to involve hotel staff at all levels and in all areas of the hotel."

Sofitel shares its CBD high-rise building with other tenants, so this posed a key challenge in terms of what they could measure and control. Energy and water is metered for the building as a whole.

"We had to focus on the three things we could control - waste, energy and water," says Darren. Sofitel's Chief Engineer, Anton Van Den Brink developed spreadsheets to monitor the hotel's usage, so they had transparent reporting and could meet sustainable targets.

The staff committee established a range of new processes to better manage those three core areas. To save energy, all rooms now have motion sensors for lighting as part of their new energy management system. Water-saving showerheads were fitted, and there is now an operational focus on fixing any leaks quickly.

To manage waste and recycling, Darren needed to ensure their suppliers would work in partnership with them, and conform to new standard procurement guidelines.

"For example, all pallets now have to be recycled or branded, so we can make sure they are returned rather than disposed of," he explains. "No cling-wrapping, and all packaging is recycled."

Education and training was vital in implementing these process changes. "Many of our staff have been with us for 25 years, so understanding the need to recycle absolutely everything means changing long-term behaviour. Instead of throwing away leftover food from a function it is now sent to a recovery facility, it now gets transformed into fertilizers."

Sustainability Victoria also supported the hotel with posters and speaker sessions for staff. "Managing waste requires a significant cultural change," says Darren. "But now,

everyone understands how fragile the environment is."

Benefits

This focus on internal training certainly paid off during the audit. "The audit process included a random sample, asking individual staff about the processes to check their understanding," says Darren. "We were aiming for a 100% staff engagement. We actually achieved 100%. Every single staff member went through EMS training. We wanted it at all times to be a focus at every level of the hotel."

Darren says it was straightforward working with the BSI team on this new standard, as they already knew what to expect. And the hotel is now seeing the rewards of their efforts.

"We received certification to ISO 14001 in May 2011, and has provided immediate benefits. Not only on our energy and resource consumption, but also in a business and staff engagement sense. We can show proof of our sustainability in contract proposals, marketing documents and to customers.

This allows the hotel to target Government and major businesses for events and accommodation. "Their contracts always ask about food safety and environmental factors, so it's information that we can provide with confidence."

The future

Darren believes they will definitely save money in the long-term, with reductions in water, energy and materials. "We continue to see these improvements and definitely believe we will see costs go down further as the ISO 14001 continuous improvement framework and staff engagement continue to deliver".

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