Using ISO 50001 certification to drive energy efficiency, boost competitiveness, reduce costs and avoid waste

“With the probability of ever-rising energy bills, it makes sense for a business to eliminate waste by getting a grip on its energy usage. ISO 50001 is instrumental in improving business performance by managing energy more efficiently and so reducing our carbon impact”.

Tony Waters, Managing Director, Solo Cup Europe

Customer objectives
• Reduced energy consumption, with less wastage
• Lower energy costs
• Reduced carbon taxation (Climate Change Levy)
• Good business practice
• Sustainability
• Competitive advantage

Customer benefits
• Improved energy efficiency
• Direct cost savings – lower energy bills
• Ongoing rebate of the Climate Change Levy
• Better business control
• Industry leadership/differentiation
• Sustainability

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ISO 50001 Energy Management

**Customer background**
Solo Cup Europe manufactures high quality, single-use food and drinks containers. Based in Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire, the company is a small-to-medium sized enterprise (SME), but is part of the Dart Corporation, one of the world’s largest manufacturers of single use food packaging products.

With a strong reputation in its core markets, which are food service companies and manufacturers of retail packaged salads and dessert products, Solo Cup Europe is known for having premium quality products, excellent service and rapid response times. Solo Cup Europe offers fast delivery of innovative products, including paper, foam and plastic cups, lids, food containers and cutlery. It also provides bespoke solutions, such as customised decoration and product design services.

**Why certification?**
In April 2012, Solo Cup Europe decided to build on its certification to ISO 14001 Environmental Management, and work towards ISO 50001. The key factors behind this decision were the reduction in the organisation’s carbon footprint and the commercial need to reduce its energy costs. Dr Chris Cooper, Operations Analyst & Projects Manager, Solo Cup Europe, explains, “In the current economic climate everyone is cutting their cloth, whilst also needing to reduce the carbon impact of their operations”, he says. “With energy prices increasing every year, cost was a major driver.”

Dr Cooper continues, “Experts are predicting that energy bills could rise by a further 80% by 2020, so it’s a ‘no-brainer’ to cut out waste. But to do it we needed to get a handle on our energy use. That’s where ISO 50001 has been absolutely instrumental.”

ISO 50001, a new international standard launched in 2011, focuses exclusively on energy and goes further than ISO 14001 by requiring an ongoing, sustained improvement in energy efficiency and greenhouse gas emissions. Dr Cooper also believes certification to the standard is simply the right thing to do from an environmental perspective: “Having things out of control shows poor business practice.”

**Benefits**
As a result of implementing ISO 50001, Solo Cup Europe has achieved improved energy cost management, without adversely affecting its quality or service levels. In particular, the company has cut energy waste, saving money and becoming a leader in its industry, gaining an advantage over less well-managed competitors.

“It’s difficult to come up with definitive numbers because there are so many variables in our production process that affect energy consumption in our business,” says Dr Cooper. “But we’ve put measures in place that we are 100% certain are saving energy, and we’ve been recertified by the Carbon Trust for the next two years – so it is satisfied our absolute carbon footprint is going down, despite our sales growth.”

Another positive outcome has been greater employee knowledge of how much energy is being used, how expensive it is and how important it is to use it efficiently. Energy teams have been set up around the organization and energy champions established in order to drive the ISO 50001 ethos.

**Implementation**
Solo Cup Europe found implementing the standard easier than it had expected, taking only about seven months. Dr Cooper estimates that the company already had about 70% of the system requirements in place, “and we have very good people in our production areas, where we consume most of our energy.”

He explains that ISO 50001 provided a framework for the company to establish its current energy use clearly, measuring consumption in detail and addressing wasteful practices. “You must find out exactly where energy is used in your business – without that you’ll never improve,” he says.

The standard then offered a systematic approach to putting operating controls in place, but implementation was not confined to technical measures. A large part of sound energy management involves ‘the human factor’, which means ensuring employees throughout the organization are aware of their role. “The key factors in implementing the standard were getting buy-in from executives and managers, and making the time myself to lead the effort,” he says.

The company’s commitment to the project meant that it was prepared to take employees from every department out of the business for training “A lot of people were doing the right things anyway, but the training gave them greater insight and information,” says Dr Cooper. “Executive support was vital, enabling the financial backing to pay for training and other costs of implementation, such as audit fees.”

**BSI’s role**
Before beginning its ISO 50001 journey, Solo Cup Europe undertook research to find the most appropriate adviser. “BSI had the credibility and the professionalism to inspire confidence,” says Dr Cooper. “We had no doubt that BSI would deliver on the training and third party auditing required to implement ISO 50001.”

He continues, “I needed a steer on some of the practical measures we could take. I attended a couple of two-day training courses run by BSI and these explained the issues extremely well. Implementation was not the Everest-sized task it seemed at the start. Much value was added by BSI, especially through the training, but also in its pre-audit assessment before our Stage 1 audit in September 2012.”

With ISO 50001 in place, Dr Cooper is not satisfied yet. “Whilst certification was great to achieve, we still need to work hard on improving our energy efficiency. We’re now looking at projects on LED lighting and smart metering, and we’re finding out more ways to improve energy efficiency all the time – ISO 50001 certification was just the start.”