

MOTIVATING PEOPLE TO SAVE ENERGY

By raising awareness and motivation energy savings of up to 15% are possible in many organisations at no cost. John Mulholland of NIFES gives some insights into different approaches.

In many organisations there is enormous potential to save energy through no cost measures by raising the awareness and motivation levels of staff who are end users of energy. Achievable savings can be in the order of 10%-15% of the annual energy bill.

It is vital to encourage end-users of energy to avoid waste and to take personal initiatives to save energy. But changing attitudes, behaviour and habits can be difficult. The following is an outline of some of the approaches which can be adopted.

Awareness

Awareness is about "whats":

- What is energy?
- What is the energy policy of the organisation?
- What different types of energy are used?
- What does energy cost?
- What is the potential for saving?
- How can energy be saved?

Raising awareness levels is relatively easy, because ignorance is often so widespread. Options include training seminars, booklets, videos, posters and general education. A good example of how it can work is documented in a Good Practice Case Study (No. 214) from the Energy Technology Support Unit (ETSU), featuring the Rover Group. In June 1991 the company initiated a cost-saving programme at its Longbridge site to save £1 million without any capital investment. One element in the programme was the publication of a six-page colour brochure called *The Energy Special*, which was issued to each of the 16,000 employees on the site. Within six months the £1 million saving - representing a 5% reduction in the site energy bill - had been achieved.

Motivation

Motivation is to do with the "whys":

- Why save energy?
- What is in it for me?
- Why should I bother when others don't?
- What difference does it make?

Before embarking on any programme it is vital to identify where in the awareness/motivation grid your staff are located. Are they motivated but unaware? Or demotivated but quite aware? Or perhaps both demotivated

and unaware? Wherever they are, everyone needs to be moved to the high awareness/high motivation quadrant if significant savings are to be achieved (See Figure 1).

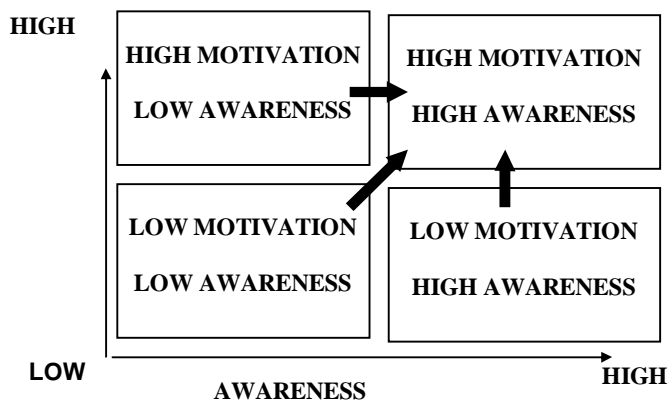


Figure 1. Awareness/Motivation Grid

Different people in an organisation will be at different parts of this grid. It is important to determine where people are in their levels of awareness and motivation before designing a programme. One method of determining where people are is to devise a simple questionnaire which focuses on knowledge (awareness) and attitude (motivation) levels. The questionnaire should be tailored to the specific organisation/section/department in which the staff are located.

It is relatively easy to move from high motivation/low awareness to high motivation/high awareness. The motivation is already there: it is simply the awareness that is missing. Again, a good example of this is to be found in another Good Practice Case Study (No. 71) from ETSU. The works manager of a small company in Chesterfield believed that there was scope for improved energy management in his operations. He was already motivated but simply lacked the necessary knowledge. He sent himself on a four-day course on electricity management. On returning to work he applied some of the knowledge gained and reduced his energy bill by 22%.

But there is another aspect of motivation. A consultant was conducting an energy attitude survey with process operators on a large industrial plant. One operator said he had several good energy-saving ideas but refused to divulge them. The reason? In the past, he had made a suggestion for improving product quality and significantly reduced energy consumption on a piece of process equipment. The idea was implemented and the company is saving tens of thousands of pounds. In fact, the idea was so good that the manufacturer has designed the idea into the equipment.

The operator received no word of thanks, no recognition and no reward. His manager took the credit. Trust, along with further potential for saving energy, was destroyed. This example illustrates that training is not always the solution. This demotivated person needs an apology from his manager if any movement is likely.

Organisation and Personal Values

Recent research into Europe's most successful organisations indicates that peak efficiency and productivity occur when the personal values of employees match organisation values.

Values describe what individuals believe in: they are held on to and are self-sustaining as they encourage staff to make the extra effort to better performance.

A close match between organisation values and employees' personal values stimulates better team work, results in less industrial strife and promotes high levels of productivity and efficiency. This is why the best run companies in the UK are usually also the most energy-efficient.

But how is this close match achieved? In the retail sector, the Body Shop one year made profits of £30 million in the depth of a recession. In addition to selling soaps, oils and body lotions, the company is also selling some high-profile values which originate from the organisation's founder. The staff are committed to the organisational values because the recruitment policy makes it difficult for potential employees to join unless they already personally hold them.

But when it comes to saving energy the problem for most organisations is that of retrofit. It is not possible to sack existing staff because they are not excited about energy efficiency. So what is the solution? At this stage it is worth asking two questions at senior management level:

1. "Why does the organisation want to save energy?"

Most senior managers would be surprised even to hear the question asked because to them the answer is so obvious: "Save energy to save money to cut costs to improve profits to provide investment to increase market share..." So the prime motivator to save energy for senior managers i.e. the organisational value is to cut costs.

The answer to the second question is often arresting:

2. "Are these the same reasons that would motivate the people in the organisation who are actually going to carry out energy saving measures?"

The answer is usually "no". The well-worn reasons usually do not motivate employees. In the public sector the attitude is usually: "It's only government money and look how it's wasted in other areas. If we were in a profit making situation it would be different". In the private sector many employees feel disenfranchised and a common attitude is: "Why should I save this company money when its profits are already so massive?"

The logic of "Save energy because it saves money for the organisation" usually only works in two specific situations:

- Private sector companies making little or no profit. Saving money by saving energy could make a real difference to profitability and safeguarding jobs, particularly if the company activities are energy-intensive.
- Private sector companies where all employees have a stake in the firm in the form of shares or profit-related bonuses. Waste energy means a lower personal income.

So the key to motivating employees usually lies in areas other than purely company cost saving. While cost saving is still the main motivation of the management, the smart organisation will identify and harness the likely personal values and interests of employees. These personal values are long-term self-motivating factors and therefore important.

So what are some key areas which are likely to appeal to the personal values of employees? Here is a sample:

Environmental Issues

The Department of Environment published a survey in early 1991 entitled *Attitudes to Energy Conservation*. One startling conclusion was: "Most householders are unaware that energy used in the home is a major cause of global warming". The report is interesting in that it reveals that the majority of the British public are unaware that home energy use directly impacts on the environment. This means that most people in your organisation have yet to make this connection in their minds.

To raise staff motivation and awareness in energy-saving programmes it is important to explain that energy management at home, at work and in their transport habits is the single largest contribution that they can make to be "green". And employees are often more likely to be motivated to save energy to help save the environment than to save their employer money.

Experience shows that information on the environmental impact of energy makes a deep impression on employees when communicated in an appropriate manner. The current media level of interest in environmental issues helps to reinforce the issue. Several companies report that women employees particularly respond to the environmental aspects of energy awareness courses. It is interesting to note that many hotels are now putting signs on the back of hotel doors saying: "Please help to conserve the earth's finite

energy resources by switching off all lights and equipment when you leave your room". The sign could have read: "Please help to improve the profits of this hotel by switching off...". But which is more motivating? Many people are surprised to see how many of the world's environmental problems are energy-related. It is a revelation to most that they can be part of the solution to environmental issues instead of just being part of the problem.

The Home

The principles of saving energy in the home are the same as saving energy at work. The details and scale differ but the same attitudes and principles apply. It is unusual for a person to be wasteful of energy at work and to be highly efficient in energy use at home. Otherwise, there would need to be a personality change in the company car park twice a day. In motivation programmes people find that this area captures their interest. Self-comfort and self-interest are key ingredients. And the "saving energy = saving money" equation works at a personal level. Appropriate input at this interest level can also dispel myths - e.g. many householders see double-glazing as a good energy saving investment and neglect low-cost, fast-payback measures - for example, insulating immersion tanks.

Recognition and Reward of Achievement

Many immediately think of reward in purely financial terms, but public recognition (for example an annual prize-giving ceremony by the chairman or a public figure at a top-class hotel followed by lunch) can have a positive impact on an individual or team who have made a significant contribution. In the UK management are singularly poor at recognising staff who have performed well. Immense goodwill and creativity are waiting to be unlocked. Many organisations run suggestion schemes, and energy-saving ideas should be positively encouraged, recognised and rewarded.

Though it was said earlier that motivating employees usually lies in areas other than cost saving for the company, it has to be acknowledged that in some situations financial incentives for teams or individuals can help. These schemes need to be set up with careful planning and definite boundaries.

Something for Others

The desire to help the needy in society is a well-known trait in the British character. This is demonstrated by the millions of people who donate significant amounts of time and energy to worthwhile voluntary causes outside working hours. Some organisations carefully monitor savings achieved by no-cost measures and donate a portion of the savings to a charity nominated by employees. People get motivated about saving something for others. One of the benefits of this approach is that a team effort is required to achieve significant savings. One individual working in isolation will not make it happen. It also avoids the problem of giving cash rewards to individuals, as this can be divisive.

It might seem obvious (though few organisations do it), but a simple way of finding out what would motivate staff to save energy is to ask them. It is easy to guess (often wrongly) or to assume that what would motivate you would motivate them. The questioning can be done informally, using "management by wandering about" methods and informal discussion. Or it can be done more formally by means of surveys and questionnaires.

Energy Efficiency as a Corporate Value

In most organisations there are key words which are meaningful to those working in the corporate culture - e.g. "safety", "quality", "customer care". People accept these values as the normal way of conducting business. One long-term aim should be to integrate "energy efficiency" into company culture and norms. Many organisations have adopted total quality management (TQM), but few have included energy efficiency in their programmes. By integrating energy efficiency into TQM, health and safety programmes, induction courses and environmental initiatives, energy efficiency becomes an in-built part of the company culture. This avoids the "bolt-on" or short-lived campaign approach to raising awareness and motivation.

Another reason for integrating energy efficiency into on-going programmes is that staff can grow weary of new initiatives and change programmes. Also, if there have been initiatives in the past which have been taken seriously for a few weeks and then forgotten, it is difficult to raise enthusiasm if energy efficiency is seen as another temporary emphasis.

Timing of Programmes

It is important to consider the timing of an energy awareness programme. If there are external factors which are likely to impact on the motivation of those taking part (for example, large-scale redundancies or plant closures) then it is obviously wise to postpone the programme. However, it has to be said that continuous rapid change is now almost the norm for many organisations and the likelihood of "steady state" or ideal conditions is rare. Therefore an optimum time needs to be identified and the programme launched.

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