

GOOD PRACTICES IN SME

Intensified employee training on energy efficiency



Designed by freepik

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Why engage employees in energy saving?

The engagement of employees in optimizing energy consumption in an organization can have multiple advantages. It could increase the company's income, increase their workplace engagement and strengthen the brand, all while increasing its competitiveness. The advantages include:

- Energy savings: a well designed and implemented behavioural change programme can create energy savings of about ok. 3-5%. Energy savings decrease energy costs and the emission of CO₂.
- Employee satisfaction: participation in employee programmes can make employees feel appreciated. Being aware that the organization cares for sustainable development could be a reason for satisfaction and workplace engagement.
- Company reputation: actions for sustainable development show that the organization cares for the environment. This can strengthen the brand and attract potential employees.

Source: cited from Start2Act „Zaangażowanie pracowników w oszczędzanie energii”

1. Research and development

Research and preparing an action plan are important before beginning a campaign engaging employees. The better researched, the more efficient the awareness campaign. If access to energy consumption data is available, we can use it to define areas of potential savings. A good method of gathering information is a site visit with the aim of identifying energy losses or conduction a questionnaire among employees. It is paramount that the goals stated are achievable. Best practice shows that small, realistic goals are the best starting point, which can be then reported back to the employees as positive information on energy savings, motivating them to further action. It is also worth remembering, that the influence of superiors on the employee actions. Finding out who has the biggest influence on employee behaviour and ensuring they set the example can be advantageous.

Source: KAPE based on Start2Act „Zaangażowanie pracowników w oszczędzanie energii”

2. Implementation

After defining methods of engaging employees and creating an action plan it is time for its realization and the implementation of the education and informational campaign. Time is an important factor – the right time of the year, and day must be chosen to include all activities taking place in the company. If the campaign involves turning off computers when leaving the office and encouraging emails are being sent out, it is best to do it in the afternoon and not in the morning. It should also be established whose behaviour affects the energy consumption and direct information at them. For example, there is no reason to direct employees to turn off the lights, if cleaning personnel comes in right afterwards. Adapting the campaign to the company's goals and employee motivations is also worth it. The most effective message is based on values, meaning establishing existing motivations and using them is very advantageous. According to the 2013 report “Świadomość energetyczna Polaków” (eng. “The energy awareness of Poles”) the biggest factors for saving energy in the workplace are: desire to lower electricity bills (50%), care for the environment (23%), fulfilling EU directions on energy consumption (12%). At this stage it is important to use appropriate channels to relay the right information. The available means are, among other:

- information emails
- stickers reminding about actions, e.g. turning off lights,
- informational posters reminding about good practices,
- courses and workshops
- competitions

Most of these actions have no costs or require minimal investments, however if we use courses and workshops conducted by outside experts some costs must be considered.

Actions which can encourage to, among others:

- turning off equipment not in use,
- not using stand-by mode of devices (e.g. computers, displays, printers, scanners, speakers),
- not printing unnecessary documents and emails,
- not placing warm dishes in the refrigerator, closing the doors,
- boiling only as much water as necessary in electric kettles,
- closing windows when AC is on, not setting low temperatures on the thermostat,
- turning off unnecessary lights, using natural light, not covering windows without reason,
- reading manuals and following manufacturer recommendations,

It is essential that employees with the appropriate skills in energy management maintain and develop them through trainings and courses. Awareness and engagement of the entire workforce in actions serving energy efficiency is an important element of a effective energy management system.

Source: KAPE based on: Start2Act „Zaangażowanie pracowników w oszczędzanie energii”; RWE Polska „Świadomość energetyczna Polaków”, 2013; „Ogólne metody poprawiania efektywności energetycznej w ramach najlepszych dostępnych technik(BAT)”, 2011

3. Monitoring

The implementation of any campaign should be monitored to define its strong and weak points. Its results should be analysed and the changes as a result of the campaign should be considered in light of the goals stated. If no effects are observed, a reason should be found, and a potential adjustment of the methods used. Employee opinions should be asked to ascertain their level of awareness after the end of the campaign. Passing on information to employees about the effects should not be forgotten. A continuation of a motivational campaign could be placing a box for good ideas for improvements connected to the activities of the company within the purview of sustainable development.

Source: KAPE based on: Start2Act „Zaangażowanie pracowników w oszczędzanie energii”