

## Facilitator — February/March 2015



### **SUSTAINABILITY is the FUTURE**

*Jeff Dover*

Now is the time to start 'greening' your facilities

One of the hottest topics in the restaurant industry is sustainability. Most facility management professionals are challenged to reduce their carbon footprint and the amount of trash their restaurants produce. In today's environment, companies are no longer forcing efforts toward this initiative, but are implementing them on their own merits and economics.

In today's (and tomorrow's) society, sustainability plays an enormous role in how restaurants are built and run. Already, several major chains and independents have embraced this initiative by hiring individuals whose only job function is investigating sustainability programs, implementing them and reporting on their progress.

If a company is new to this area, the items to consider, in this order, are:

- Benchmarking, which requires all utility and trash invoices
- Long-term planning, e.g., to reduce energy and trash by 10 percent
- Short-term actions (low-hanging fruit), which include any easily obtained, low-cost and quick payback items

Benchmarking is extremely important, as baselines need to be established for all energy, water and trash used by each restaurant. This data provides a starting point against which you can measure all future actions. We're proud to say that most companies represented in RFMA have already begun sustainability programs.

Sustainability areas include:

- Waste and recycling, including composting
- Energy management
- Water conservation
- Building materials

#### Waste, Recycling and Composting

Almost 75 percent of landfill materials consist of recyclables and compostable materials. The following protocols can be implemented to reduce trash:

- Work with food product suppliers to ensure they use only recyclable packaging materials and that packaging in general is minimized.
- Only use paper products from recycled materials.
- Use multi-purpose, rather than job-specific, cleaners.
- Have employees use washable mugs rather than throwaway paper or Styrofoam ones.
- Minimize excess use of trash bags by manually compacting and only emptying when full.
- Set up a rendering service for used fry oil. (With today's prices, most companies will pay you for the oil!)
- Set up service to take grease trap "sludge."
- Set up cardboard, glass and plastic recycling programs with a local collector.
- Set up a food donation program. (Check out Feeding America to find local food banks.)
- Compost food waste.
- Use biodegradable take-out containers.
- Ensure anything delivered to the restaurants is reusable, recyclable or compostable.

#### Energy Management

This area may be the easiest for the shortterm actions. The following items can save gas and electricity with

relatively minimal capital with quick paybacks realized in less than one year:

- Install programmable thermostats.
- Install LED lighting throughout the interior (cans, pendants, menu boards, BOH lights), exterior (parking lot poles, wall packs, signage), and exit lights.
- Replace all worn and/or damaged refrigeration gaskets.
- Install door sweeps on all exterior doors.
- Install strip curtains on the walk-in cooler and freezers.
- Ensure cooking equipment and exhaust fans are started and turned off in a timely manner.
- Use Energy Star-rated equipment.
- Ensure preventive maintenance is completed properly and in a timely way.
- Add shades and/or window tinting to reduce heat gain.

#### Water Conservation

- Install low-flow toilets and urinals in restrooms.
- Install low-flow aerators in all faucets.
- Install low-flow pre-rinse spray valves.
- Install strainers on sinks to keep food from going down the drain.
- Run only full racks through the dish machine.
- Water landscape early in the morning or later in evening— and only when needed.
- Install a rain sensor device on irrigation systems.
- Consider using low-flow or drip system irrigation.

#### Building Materials

- Use recyclable, or green, materials wherever possible.
- Use non-toxic paint.
- Use salvaged building materials if possible.
- Only specify low-maintenance plants for landscaping.
- Install water heaters as close as possible to points of use.

Sustainability is everyone's responsibility. Waste, energy, water and food sourcing are the main areas in which to investigate proper practices. It is extremely important to get buy-in at all levels to ensure the protocols are followed correctly. It may seem like an insurmountable task to put your arms around the entire sustainability initiative, but RFMA vendors can assist with any and all activities. They can survey your locations and design specific programs and processes that will successfully drive your sustainability efforts. I recommend contacting one of them to discuss your particular situation.

I'm always looking for feedback. Feel free to contact me at [jeff@rfmaonline.com](mailto:jeff@rfmaonline.com) or at (972) 805-0905, ext.-3.

Dover and out!

Jeff Dover's facilities career started in 1985. He has been employed by several major chains (Ponderosa, Steak & Ale, Bennigan's, TGI Friday's, Fuddruckers and recently Five Guys Burgers and Fries). His technical education enabled him to take the lead as Energy Manager, Facilities Manager and Director of Facilities at the various brands.