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MAKING A DIFFERENCE, ONE AT A TIME

Megan Weadock

Starbucks' sustainability efforts set a global example

Roy Street Coffee & Tea – Seattle

Pioneered by Starbucks' partners, Roy Street Coffee & Tea gives customers new opportunities for discovery, a high level of interaction and a deep connection to the local community. It shares Starbucks' mission and values and offers Starbucks' whole bean coffee and Tazo® full-leaf tea, delivering the same high quality with the same heart.

This coffeehouse draws design inspiration from the surrounding performing arts culture and features locally sourced, reused and recycled materials that are one-of-a-kind. It was the second Starbucks storefront to open as part of the U.S. Green Building Council's LEED Volume Certification pilot program. In 2010, Starbucks built and renovated 10 pilot stores in six different bioregions around the world to help the company reach its goal of achieving LEED certification for all new company-owned stores worldwide.

When the first Starbucks opened in Seattle in 1971, the founders weren't simply focused on selling coffee. They also wanted to help make the world a better place. Forty years later, the company has grown to more than 15,000 stores in 50 countries. And, true to its founders' goal to change the world, Starbucks is constantly reinventing itself and revolutionizing the coffee industry. And in recent years, it has emerged as a leader in one field that keeps facility managers up at night: sustainability.

A New Perspective

Jim Hanna, director of environmental impact for Starbucks, said sustainability has long been a concern for the company. Starbucks has been a member of the U.S. Green Building Council for more than 10 years. But in the last few years, especially as "green" initiatives and technology become increasingly common and more aggressively demanded, Starbucks' efforts have increased exponentially.

Hanna explained that the company has always recognized the importance of staying locally relevant and continually connecting with their customers.

"Fifty million people walk through our doors every week," he said. "This is an exciting opportunity to demonstrate to customers how they can reduce their energy use and, in the end, have an impact on the world."

But equally important is the cost-savings that true sustainability could bring Starbucks.

"From a historical perspective, when we measured our carbon footprint, we realized 80 percent was controllable," he said. "And from a design and operations perspective, we had to look at the way we're building and operating stores to mitigate our footprint and impact."

In the LEED

Although Starbucks has long been affiliated with the U.S. Green Building Council, the company blazed a trail by finding its own way to achieve LEED certification.

In its commitment to green building, Starbucks, working in conjunction with the U.S. Green Building Council, has devised an inhouse LEED certification program to certify all facility managers. The certification is a requirement of the job and takes 80 to 100 hours to complete. In the end, all 100 facility managers will be LEED certified.

"Starbucks feels very strongly about this program, enough to commit the time and resources of so many people," said Bob Schreiber, a regional facility manager at Starbucks.

LEED certification was originally meant for large office buildings, Hanna said, which are costly, complicated and time-consuming to get certified. With 15,000 locations—and new stores opening nearly every day—a lengthy LEED certification process simply will not work for a company like Starbucks.

"To achieve LEED certification, we realized we had to really start by tackling the construction of stores," he said. "We needed to know, how can we and other retailers develop an operations standard for LEED certification?"

The answer was the Volume Build Standard. Rather than certifying individual stores, one at a time, Starbucks began creating individual "credits" for LEED certification. For example, the water filtration system for a particular region is approved by the U.S. Green Building Council, and then each store in the region receives that prototype.

In 2009, Starbucks began prototyping their new testing strategy in different bio-regions around the world because, as Hanna explained, stores in different regions have dramatically different needs and challenges. The LEED Volume Certification pilot project involved certifying 10 stores at a time in six different regions. Once the pilot stores' environmental strategies were audited and approved, they could be replicated elsewhere.

"The Volume Certification program gives companies the tools to integrate LEED into their standard practices," said Doug Gatlin, vice president of market development for the U.S. Green Building Council, in a press release. "Starbucks has significantly contributed to the development and refinement of this innovative program."

Hanna said the Volume Build Standard transformed the company's LEED certification process and will lead to unbelievable energy savings in the future.

"This exponentially grew our certification process," he said. "We're able to demonstrate that we can build certified stores across multiple climates. And all [the stores from the pilot program] are certified now, I'm happy to say."

At press time, Starbucks had 21 stores around the world that have either achieved, or are currently registered for, LEED. The company's global support center in Seattle and roasting plant in Sandy Run, S.C., have also earned LEED certification.

Now, every new Starbucks store, along with 10-year-old stores in line for major remodels, will meet LEED certification. And as a bonus, Starbucks has found, LEED-certified stores use an impressive 25 percent less water and energy.

Accounting for Every Drop

To further reduce their water consumption, Starbucks took a hard look at its back-of-house equipment. Hanna said they realized that relatively simple changes could save untold resources.

"It's a matter of balancing the need for high-quality water—both for the products we sell and for protecting our equipment—and to minimize water use," he said.

The company has upgraded to super-efficient spray nozzles and switched to quick-rinse machines for their frappuccino equipment.

They also retro-fit each store's dipper wells, swapping a costly continuous-flow system for a push-button well with timed spray. And the savings have been greater than you might expect.

"These changes save us 150 gallons of water per store, per day," Hanna said.

This year, Starbucks is continuing to minimize its water footprint by looking at implementing a new water filtration system in its stores.

Serving High Energy at Low Costs

Starbucks patrons can order a Doubleshot® energy drink for a jolt, but the facility team is constantly looking for new ways to lower the company's energy usage.

In 2008, Starbucks began reassessing how much of its energy use was a result of lighting. Once again, the company was ahead of the industry—and on the cutting edge of green innovation.

The initial idea was to substitute each incandescent and halogen bulb with LED lighting to conserve energy; unfortunately, no commercially available LED bulb met Starbucks' strict aesthetic and functional requirements. So, they set out to create one.

Starbucks teamed up with GE to make a highly efficient LED product that met their specific needs. The new LED bulb had to complement each store's design approach and, of course, fit the existing fixtures.

"LEDs are just as visually appealing now, but you use tremendously less energy," Hanna said. "We discovered the [GE] LED package had the same aesthetic appeal, but with quick cost-savings payback. In the end, we retrofit the entire portfolio. We eliminated all incandescent and fluorescent bulbs, in every store."

For their efforts, Starbucks has seen a 7 percent decrease in energy use in each store in the United States and Canada. And, surprisingly, Hanna said the stores are also enjoying a 2 percent decrease in HVAC costs because LEDs are significantly cooler than other, less efficient bulbs. Cooler lights mean less air conditioning, which saves even more.

"Our new green construction methodologies and lighting efforts have the rigor to help us achieve our environmental goals and the flexibility to support our scale," said Arthur Rubinfeld, president of Starbucks Global Development. "Through innovative leadership and collaboration, the U.S. Green Building Council and GE have made valuable contributions that are advancing our sustainability initiatives."

Now, the company is looking at ways to reduce the runtime of HVAC systems.

"In Florida, 220 stores invited Florida Power and Light to appraise, make recommendations and calculate the estimated cost savings of those recommendations," Schreiber said. "And when we go to the RFMA conventions, we will be looking for ways to reduce costs and help our green initiatives. This year, we're looking for exhaust fans that use less energy."

Every Cup Counts

Another aspect of Starbucks' sustainability efforts lies with its recycling programs. Obviously, the world's largest coffee retailer produces a staggering amount of waste, thanks in large part to their signature single-use cups.

That's why the company aims to ensure that 100 percent of its cups are reusable or recyclable by 2015, Hanna said.

"We know we can't solve this problem simply by purchasing cups that are labeled 'recyclable' or 'compostable,'" Hanna explained in a 2010 press release. "We have to ensure our customers actually have access to recycling services at their homes, at work and in our stores. We'll only be successful if the various businesses and organizations that touch this issue are aligned and equally motivated to take action."

Toward that end, Starbucks has strengthened its recycling initiatives in individual communities and started hosting annual events and competitions to encourage recycling innovation.

Last year, the company hosted its second-annual Cup Summit: a unique symposium that gathers municipalities, raw material suppliers, cup manufacturers, retail and beverage businesses, recyclers, academic experts and more in an effort to develop ways to make paper and plastic cups more readily recyclable.

Through the Cup Summit, Starbucks demonstrates that recycling and sustainability is not a simple solution. To truly make a difference, every stakeholder—from the retailers to the cup manufacturers—must be involved.

To do its part, the company is introducing front-of-store recycling in locations across Canada and the United States. Through a partnership with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the Society for Organized Learning, Starbucks also is exploring new, innovative ways to green its entire supply chain.

Perhaps most notably, Starbucks is reaching out to its customers about recycling, now more than ever. By encouraging customers to opt for reusable alternatives—such as their own coffee mugs or Starbucks' tumblers—the company hopes to reduce its overall environmental footprint, while also doing its part to shift global thinking about consumption and environmental responsibility.

According to the company, Starbucks served more than 26 million beverages in reusable cups in 2009 throughout its company stores in the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom. This simple shift in behavior kept nearly 1.2 million pounds of paper from ending up in landfills.

"We try to create a global sense of sustainability to our customers," Hanna said.

Hence the company's emphasis on solving recycling and waste issues for customers. Not only do these efforts help reduce people's environmental footprint, they also impact the world's perception of the coffee giant.

"Our materials and packaging are key to customers—both in the perception they create of Starbucks and their

footprint themselves," Hanna said.

It is efforts like these that differentiate Starbucks from the competition as a responsible, environmentally-aware corporation. And it is steps like this that can change the world, a little at a time.

Pilot Projects

In November 2010, Starbucks and International Paper teamed up with Mississippi River Pulp for an unprecedented six-week pilot project. For the first time, the company successfully recycled used Starbucks paper cups into new paper cups.

"This innovation represents an important milestone in our journey," Hanna said in a press release. "We still have a lot of work to do to reach our 2015 goal, but we're now in a much stronger position to build momentum across the recycling industry. Our next step is to test this concept in a major city, which we plan to do in collaboration with International Paper and Mississippi River in 2011."

"What's really exciting about the cup-to-cup concept is that it has the potential to benefit not only Starbucks, but the entire foodservice industry," said Greg Wanta, vice president of International Paper Foodservice, in a press release. "If we can continue to prove the value of used cup material generated by Starbucks and other retailers, we can help increase recycling rates in communities across the country."

In another recycling pilot project, Starbucks is currently collecting paper cups at 86 New York City stores to determine whether they can be recycled into bath tissue and paper towels.

In early 2011, Starbucks plans to launch another pilot in Chicago to recycle discarded paper cups into napkins.

Leaps and Bounds

Clearly, Starbucks' approach to sustainability is not just company policy; it is a full-on philosophy. But facility managers do not have to invest the same amount of time and money as Starbucks to start making a difference in their company's footprint.

"There are some very quick things you can do to reduce your energy level, right off the top," Hanna said. "The first step is to establish base-lines. I've seen a lot of my peers dive head-first into efficiency programs. But you really need to be able to measure and quantify improvements."

To get an accurate portrait of their water and electricity use, Starbucks officials began submetering their utilities at individual locations.

"The complexity of restaurant operations requires you to submeter to really understand what components are using what," he said. "This helped us to see all the resources that were used, and decide the best place to invest our limited resources."

Hanna and his colleagues were surprised to discover, for example, how much water each restaurant's toilets were wasting.

"That knowledge really helped us in the redesign efforts," he said. "In fact, we decided to go beyond code with them."

In the Family

As a facility manager, Hanna said, the second step toward sustainability is to look at the behavior of your employees. After all, true change comes from within, and a positive corporate culture goes a long way.

Hanna advises facility managers to set up programs and procedures for every aspect of the restaurant's operation, including instructions for turning the machines on in the morning and shutting them down at night. Make sure every employee has received and understood these instructions—in written form.

"Especially with the high turnover you experience in retail, a written procedure helps to maintain efficiency," he said. "A lot of this may have seemed common-sense, but these types of procedures really help with efficiency gains."

And by emphasizing to your employees that sustainability is an important, company-wide policy, you have the power to change the entire atmosphere of your restaurant.

"The thing I enjoy most about working for Starbucks is the culture," Schreiber said. "It is a culture where people are treated with respect, and at every opportunity, Starbucks talks about being a responsible citizen of the world; plus, we have a fun time. I recently spent 14 hours in a van with 10 people from the operations and store development departments, driving around in Miami traffic looking at stores to remodel. After 14 hours, we were

still feeling good about each other and even went to dinner together because we still enjoyed each other's company."

Setting a Global Standard

Starbucks' sustainability efforts are an inspiration to consumers, facility managers and restaurateurs around the world. As environmental responsibility and green technology become increasingly important in the food service industry, now is the time for facility managers to take action too.

"Starbucks has always been a very environmentally friendly company that cares about contributing to their communities," Schreiber said. "A lot of our customers believe in this too, as well as the people who work for Starbucks. We want to do what's right for the environment, for the world and for the people in the world."

From that single Seattle coffeehouse in 1971 to the global phenomenon that it is today, Starbucks truly has changed the world. And as the company works toward a sustainable future, the world will no doubt pay attention.

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