

PRINTERWORKZ



Team at Printerworkz

Small re-manufacturer Adds green credentials to brand

Business sustainability

By nature, remanufacturing is quite a sustainable practice. PrinterWorkz (www.printerworkz.com.au) essentially re-uses products that would have otherwise have been thrown away to landfill. Every year 1.8 million toner cartridges are discarded in Australia alone, and they are helping to reduce that figure.

In 2008 the company wanted to strengthen its focus on sustainability for both its own personal goals and also push its sustainable brand even further into the market. After countless hours of research, they decided to try for Greenhouse Friendly Accreditation- a Federal

Government initiative. This meant they were to establish a lifecycle assessment of their remanufactured products. They analysed every aspect of their product, from the time they picked up an empty cartridge, all the way till it is disposed of when used.

From there they were able to establish how many carbon emissions they were emitting in producing their product. Once audited, they offset those emissions with carbon credits (also credited by the government) and were established as the first printer cartridge company in Australia to be carbon neutral.

The whole process cost in excess of \$50,000 but they were

awarded a grant for half that amount from the NSW government for manufacturing innovation.

Since then, they rebranded the company by adding their new 'green' credentials. For the staff at PrinterWorkz, it was definitely a positive move. They also discovered that this sort of thing was important to their customers, it's just that sometimes they need some guidance.

From a marketing perspective, they believe it has helped us differentiate from their competition.

Outcomes

Over the past 12-18 months, the focus of the organisation has been on sustainability, which has uncovered a lot about the business. They have discovered that they weren't running as effectively as they could be. They were a company at the peak of their performance, sales-wise, but felt it was often all too easy to become complacent and let spending skyrocket.

They moved into premises way too large for their operation because they could. Extra staff were hired for no well-considered reason. Eventually it got to a point where it became unsustainable.

Sustainability is more than just being green, we also need to focus on both the financial and social aspects of the business. It was a hard lesson to learn, but over-exposing ourselves to overheads can lead to a lot of disappointed people, if not your bank manager.

In the past 12 months PrinterWorkz has reduced its overheads by over 50% but still produce the same turnover. They moved to a smaller premise and cut out all the 'fat'. For example, they used to throw out everything, but in finding suitable recycling processes, they cut waste by 90% and were able to save around \$200 per day on bin collection fees. Though the organisation is now smaller, they work more efficiently and are profitable. This means a company that is able to sustain itself and grow, as well as more stable employment base.



"It's nice to be part of a company that makes a difference."

Narada Kudinar, General Manager

Lessons learned

Narada Kudinar has learned that thinking sustainably does have its challenges and sometimes you have to change what you are used to. Small things like switching off lights and turning off machines are ones you often forget, but thinking outside the square and becoming more efficient is sometimes the hardest.

The only thing they are a little unsure about was spending all that money to get their accreditation. It definitely helped with their customer retention rates, but they have found it difficult to pinpoint by how much. For them, it probably hasn't paid itself back yet, and they have had it for over a few years now. But they are still proud to have it!

They learned that starting simple is probably the easier way, whilst constantly working at it to improve the environment and the bottom line.

Future actions

The next 6-12 months in the business will be focused purely on growing and increasing sales. Other than their yearly audit, there are no grand plans for sustainable business practices, but they have vouched to remain smart with their money and to remain as efficient as possible.

Narada Kudinar feels that if they continue on the sustainability journey, their clients and customers will appreciate their point of difference and also see the benefit of purchasing their recycled toner products.

Business background

Established in 2000, Printer Workz is a printer cartridge and consumables supplier specialising in re-manufacturing. Ninety per cent of all of its products sold are used printer cartridges, rebuilt to new again.

Despite being a small business consisting of only 10 staff, Printer Workz is one of the largest re-manufacturers in Australia who sell directly to the public.