

Net Zero

Lakeside Logistics worked hard to achieve a carbon-neutral footprint... and they're not done yet.

BY ALLAN JANSEN

THE AWARDS AND ATTENTION are nice, but green initiatives are their own reward, says Susan Moore, director of sustainability for Lakeside Logistics in Oakville, Ont.

The 23-year-old company has been feted by local and national media for achieving a carbon-neutral footprint in 2007, and for making sustainability a corporate priority ever since through its 'Vision Green' program.

It was honoured by its municipal government for environmental leadership and won distinctions from the Supply Chain & Logistics Association of Canada.

Most recently Lakeside Logistics became the inaugural winner of the CATIE Award for the Greening of the Supply Chain, presented by the Canadian Association of Importers and Exporters.

But the real value of the company's emphasis on sustainability is that it's the right thing to do, for its employees, its customers, and its own bottom line.

"For sure, we're only on the very tip of the iceberg," says Susan. "There's so much more to this that's still coming, but I'm glad we're early adopters."

The Vision Green program was the brainchild of Jeff Moore, managing director of Lakeside Logistics.

Susan's first goal was to pick the 'low-hanging fruit' in the orchard of environmental responsibility. Plastic water bottles were removed from the office. She sourced recycled paper that would work in the company's printers. They converted to green electricity (through Bullfrog power). They

programmed their computers to power down more frequently.

They even bought a Prius for their carrier relations manager.

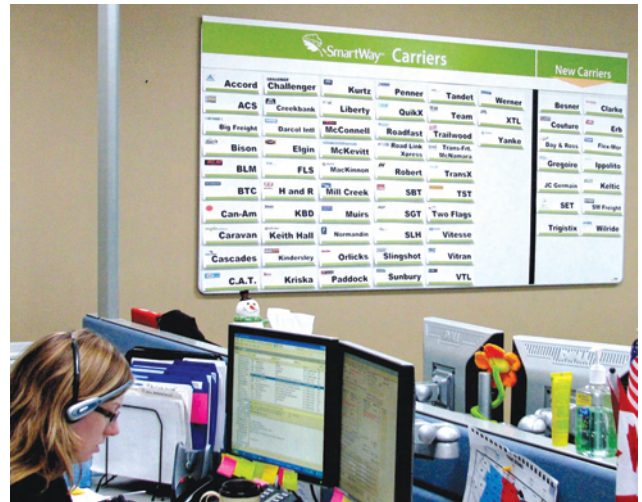
At the end of the first year, Lakeside Logistic had cut its carbon footprint in half – from 320 tonnes down to 160 tonnes. The next year they decreased it by another 10 per cent to about 144 tonnes.

Each year, they offset the remaining carbon footprint that they cannot yet eliminate by paying for the reforestation of enough trees to suck up the carbon they emitted.

"Two years ago we would tell people what we were doing and they would say, 'That's nice. Have fun with that.' They thought it was all marketing," Susan says.

But in fact, the achievement has given Lakeside Logistics moral license to ask for similar efforts from the carriers it uses – a database of about 3,000 trucking companies. Lakeside Logistics began asking their suppliers about environmental policies like anti-idling campaigns, long-combination vehicles, speed limiters, low rolling-resistance tires, and driver training programs. Most importantly, they routinely promote the U.S. EPA's SmartWay program which certifies environmentally responsible fleets.

SmartWay carriers are preferred over non-SmartWay carriers where everything else is equal. SmartWay carriers are featured on the Lakeside Logistics web site. And SmartWay carriers are immediately identified to logistics coordinators



Carriers that are members of the U.S. EPA's SmartWay program get a place of prominence in Lakeside Logistic's dispatch room.

through their proprietary transportation management system, and prominently displayed on a 10-foot video screen in the middle of their operations department.

"That's constant visibility with our logistics coordinators," says Susan.

The long-term goal is to use 100 per cent SmartWay carriers. Already the percentage of miles hauled by SmartWay drivers is at 40% and growing.

"When we embarked on this path, we didn't know what the ROI was going to be, but we knew intuitively that it was a good program," says Susan. By the middle of 2009, a number of customers had gone on record as saying Lakeside's Vision Green program was the "tipping point" in earning the business.

The next step for Lakeside Logistics is to continue to promote environmental responsibility in all of its business dealings and get involved in SmartWay 2.0 – a major upgrade of SmartWay program.

"That will completely transform the way they do things, offering a whole new set of data that can be measured," she says. "Look, this is the way the world is going. Business is endorsing it and government is insisting on it. Sustainability is not going away." ■