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Innovation in Sustainable Operations: Myers Container

By Adam Worcester
Contributing writer

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Kyle Stavig figured the question was worth asking.

As he toured one of [his firm's three Portland plants](#), the new CEO of Myers Container LLC noticed it was discharging 30,000 gallons of water each day. What would it take to stop the outflow?

He expected the answer to be \$10 million and 100 days. When he heard it would take only \$10,000 and 30 days, approving the move was a no-brainer.

"Part of being a leader is you don't know the answer, but you ask the question," Stavig said.

Myers, which manufactures and recycles steel drums and industrial plastic containers, now filters and reuses water at the plant before hauling it to a waste-treatment facility.

It's one of many ways the north Portland company promotes sustainability and part of the reason Myers Container deserves recognition for its sustainable operations.

Unlike competitors, Myers has adopted a full-lifecycle approach to its products. It makes, collects, cleans and recycles its containers, which are used by various industries to house "some really nasty stuff," Stavig said.

To clean used containers, Myers has developed a proprietary process that generates 50 percent less greenhouse gases and consumes 50 percent less energy. To improve sustainability, Myers replaced solvent paints used on drums with more environmentally friendly water-based paint.

Last year Myers recycled its sixth millionth pound of industrial plastic. Since he took charge in 2007, Stavig estimated the firm has diverted more than 80 million pounds of steel, plastic and other waste materials from landfills.

The company was in the first cohort of 12 firms to participate in a pilot Energy Improvement Program sponsored by the Energy Trust of Oregon, which has reduced Myers' annual energy use by about 8 percent.

Today Myers sets quarterly facility goals, and incentivizes managers to meet targets for reduced greenhouse gas emissions.

"I really have to commend them. They were one of the first companies to step up to the plate," said **Martin Lott**, a senior associate with the Strategic Energy Group, which administered the EIP for Energy Trust.

Myers strives to be green in other ways as well. When it was time to refurbish its three Portland facilities, Myers used paint scraped from plastic buckets it recycles for Metro Paint — an organization [that collects household paint in the Portland area](#).

"Myers Container is a good example of a company that delivers on the promise of sustainability," said **Kim Crossman**, industry and agriculture sector lead for [Energy Trust of Oregon](#). "Their service allows their customers to be more sustainable, and their interest in energy efficiency shows their commitment to operate in a sustainable manner."

Though proud of the strides, Stavig is not ready to rest on his laurels. He recently purchased three facilities in North Carolina, where the concept of sustainability is "emerging," he said. And he wants to experiment with solar power and other renewable energy alternatives to reduce electricity use at the Portland plants.

"Sustainability is a journey. The most important thing is that leadership needs to stake out true north and say, 'This is where we're going,'" Stavig said.

Myers Container is well on its way.



Myers Container CEO Kyle Stavig is proud of his company's sustainability strides but not resting.

portland@bizjournals.com | 503.274.8733

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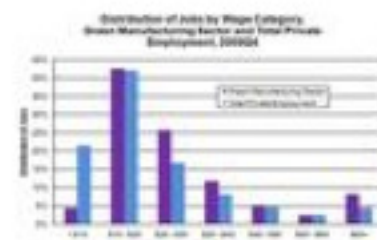
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