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Page 3 Special Report

CORPORATE EXPRESS AUSTRALIA

Eco policy well rewarded

WHILE many organisations pay only lip service to improving their green credentials, one Australian company has made environmental protection part of its corporate DNA. For more than 10 years, business supply specialist Corporate Express Australia has sought ways to streamline its operations and reduce its effect on the environment. As a result, late last year the company was named Sustainable Company of the Year 2008 in a competition that covers all ASX-listed companies.

Corporate Express social responsibility manager Jennifer Williams says the company monitors all aspects of its operation to find practical ways in which it can become greener.

Initiatives cover everything from offering products such as recycled paper to ensuring the supply chains that deliver orders to customers are working as efficiently as possible.

Williams says the company recently moved its headquarters into a four-star green-rated building in Sydney's Mascot. Open-plan offices allow more efficient airconditioning and lights, and meeting room audio-visual gear has sensors that turn it off when the room is empty. A product called Neoflex, constructed from a high percentage of recycled rubber, has been used in the floors.

A new distribution warehouse is also paying green dividends. The eight-hectare facility at Erskine Park in Sydney consolidated six buildings into one. The warehouse has been equipped with a range of environmental features such as rainwater harvesting and natural lighting.

The company has also made big changes in the way it prints documents. Working with printing partner Lexmark, it examined internal workflows and found ways to reduce the volume of printed pages produced in the office. "We took simple steps like making duplex printing a standard on all printers," says Williams. "We also replaced personal desk printers with shared devices, reducing the total number in use."

The number of printers throughout the company was reduced by 67 per cent. By replacing large numbers of small devices with fewer, larger ones, the amount of consumables was significantly reduced. Black-and-white printing was also made the default option on printers, further reducing associated costs. The printing initiative has allowed the company to slash paper consumption by about 68 per cent in its 50 locations around Australia.

Williams says such initiatives will be expanded upon by the employee GreenXpress Committee, which meets regularly to discuss new ideas and ways in which the company's environmental footprint can be further reduced.

Examples of other initiatives include a move to ethical sourcing of products where each supplier is asked to adhere to a series of principles relating to the company's overall goals.

"For us the environment is a company mindset," says Williams. "We are always looking for ways to improve operations and make sure we are doing all that we can."

Ian Grayson