

RAISING THE GRADE ON ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Located in Edmonton, the University of Alberta is considered one of the world's top research institutions and a fertile ground for innovative and progressive thinking. With a student population of approximately 37,000 and 14,000 full and part-time employees it ranks among one of the larger universities in Canada.

THE NEED TO BE GREEN

The University has adopted a Sustainability Commitment and a set of Guiding Principles to illustrate the University's commitment to sustainability. In alignment with these values, the University has taken an integrated approach to sustainability that incorporates teaching and learning, research, outreach, and the operations that support them. They are committed to constant improvement which includes operations and practices aimed at sustainable supply chain management.

The overall sustainability vision of the University is what prompted the Supply Management Services (SMS) department to initiate a sustainability initiative. One of the initial steps taken in 2007 included interviews with many strategic suppliers to gather information about their environmental programs. The timing for such a review was fortuitous as Grand & Toy, one of the University's preferred suppliers for office supplies, was just rolling out its 7-pillar Sustainability platform.

The Grand & Toy's 7-pillar platform takes a holistic view of sustainability, looking not only at product but other important considerations such as an organization's overall environmental footprint, carbon emissions, and sustainable and ethical product sourcing.

It was exactly the kind of foundation the University was looking to build from, and it formed the basis for ongoing dialogue between the University and Grand & Toy.

"When I was assigned to the project of researching sustainability in supply chain management, I felt the most obvious place to start was with our preferred suppliers," says Lorraine Ulmer, Manager of Procurement Systems and Special Projects for the University. "So I started reviewing their green programs and looking at products that could be brought into this initiative."

LOOKING GOOD ON PAPER

As cut sheet paper comprised the lion's share of the University's spending on office supplies, that's where the discussion began.

"The University Finance & Supply Management Services Department took the lead by immediately switching to 100% recycled paper," recalls Jason Garner, Grand & Toy District Sales Manager. "This successful test was an important first step in achieving the University's ultimate goal of offering this choice to the rest of the campus, and converting the volume of paper used by most departments from virgin stock to recycled stock."

With the transition to recycled stock underway, Garner and his team arranged for a special presentation to be made to the members of ECOS (Environmental Coordination Office of Students). The presentation, made in partnership with a representative from BOISE Paper, provided the group with detailed information about BOISE's responsible paper manufacturing process and its reforestation activities.

The presentation left the student group confident in BOISE's product and the University's choice in Grand & Toy as a supply partner. Having such a positive endorsement demonstrated to all concerned groups that the University was sincere in its efforts to conduct business in an environmentally responsible way, Grand & Toy was a proactive partner who shared the University's green vision.

EXPANDING THE PROGRAM

With multiple campuses spread throughout the greater Edmonton area and delegated purchasing authority given to the departments, paper was just the first step in the University's sustainability program.

To kick off the next step, Garner and his team put together a "green list" of environmentally responsible products based on the University's actual usage.

"We looked at what they were buying on an annual basis and created a list of 200 green product alternatives," says Garner. "Then we published the list to a customized page on our online ordering site so that their staff had easy access to that information."

Changing buying habits can be a time consuming process, so simplifying the ordering process with a customized online ordering portal is an advantage that will help the University meet its objectives.

"What [products] the campuses use are not mandated," Ulmer explains, "but my expectation is that as the sustainability movement grows, participation will accelerate. Our role at this point is to offer them green alternatives to what they're already purchasing."



Annual savings achieved by the University's SMS Department after switching to 100% recycled paper stock*:

- 1800 fewer trees used
- 3 garbage trucks worth of solid waste eliminated
- 14 cars worth of yearly greenhouse gas emissions eliminated
- Enough energy saved to power 14 homes

*Environmental impact estimates made using the Environmental Defense Fund Paper Calculator.
<http://www.papercalculator.org>

PRODUCT DISPOSAL

Other green initiatives being managed by Grand & Toy for the University include a toner recycling program, where used toner cartridges are picked up during regular delivery calls to the University offices. It's another example of how Grand & Toy is helping the University's administration to adhere to the sustainability focus, thereby improving overall participation.

PRODUCT EDUCATION

Grand & Toy also took part in a sustainability trade show held in the University's Student Union building. The event gave Grand & Toy and key product suppliers the opportunity to meet their customers face to face, to discuss green product alternatives and ways to reduce the organization's impact on the environment.

LOOKING AHEAD

As an institution that is as large as many enterprise-level corporations, the University's sustainability program goals are ambitious, but reachable. While the program is still in its early stages, the University is already doing a good job of leading by example. It continues to collaborate with Grand & Toy to develop a practical sustainability framework that other schools can learn from and follow.

"Grand & Toy did impress us with their green program," says Ulmer. "We feel that they have a clear direction as far as the sustainability program is concerned, and I believe that they're demonstrating the direction through aggressive action with us. Many companies can say they have a green program, but if there's no activity that brings results, it doesn't do a lot of good. Grand & Toy has shown us that they are serious about sustainability."

For more information, speak with a Grand & Toy Account Manager.

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