

# KEY SUSTAINABILITY ISSUES FOR BUSINESSES HIGHLIGHTED IN STUDY OF THREE SCA MEMBER FIRMS

BY GARY QUACKENBUSH

In 2008, the Sonoma County Water Agency (SCWA) funded a number of sustainability initiatives to educate businesses about climate change impacts and regulations. As part of this process, the Sonoma County Alliance received a \$25,000 grant from the SCWA to conduct two surveys among SCA member firms. Phase I involved a Sustainability Survey in the spring of 2008. Results of this first general membership survey were published last summer. This was followed by a more in-depth analysis of a small, medium and large business late last year. This article covers the findings and analysis of the three firms in Phase II of this study – what Shapiro, Galvin, Shapiro & Moran; InfoStor; and Exchange Bank are doing to reduce their impact on the environment and conserve limited resources.

The Environmental Committee, chaired by Iver Skavdal of Winzler & Kelly and Co-Chaired by Dani Sheehan-Meyer of B2B Media & Marketing, worked closely with the SCWA on these projects in cooperation with Susan Briski, a consultant to the Climate Protection Campaign and a principal of Sustainable Progress Consulting.

The rationale behind the surveys was to gather current information on how representative Sonoma County businesses in three categories are saving energy, water, paper and other resources as well as finding innovative ways to reduce travel (since almost 57% of Sonoma County's greenhouse gas emissions are due to transportation). Another objective was to see how these firms are transcending the level of basic process improvements to enhance their competitive advantage.

"The goal of becoming a 'green' business means a whole lot more than just being recognized as an environmental leader, it is a proven way to strengthen the bottom line by greatly enhancing operating efficiencies, improving employee morale and creating a healthy workplace. It also demonstrates and nurtures community goodwill and helps to develop an ongoing mechanism for solidifying your market position," according to Mr. Skavdal, president of Winzler & Kelly. "While much more

work needs to be done by all of us, what these three firms have already achieved and the steps they plan to take, can provide a model for other firms to follow."

#### SMALL BUSINESS:

##### Shapiro, Galvin, Shapiro & Moran

This 12-member law firm, located in downtown Santa Rosa, provides legal services to individuals, municipalities and business organizations. Partner Dan Galvin has championed and overseen internal actions designed to achieve efficiencies and other environmental improvements that are affordable.

The vast majority of lighting used by the firm is energy efficient. Twelve art spot lamps have been converted to CFLs with an estimated saving of \$150/month. They recently tuned and serviced their HVAC system, which has already reduced energy use. The law practice recycles all basic recyclables and has reduced printing requirements, while also employing recycled-content products and using low-VOC paint.

The staff has been encouraged to turn off PCs and other computer-related equipment when they leave the office. Janitorial services have switched to green cleaning supplies. The firm tracks and monitors energy trends graphically so it is easier to identify opportunities and progress as well as to share results at employee meetings and generate ideas for improvement.

Shapiro, Galvin, Shapiro & Moran is also considering the creation of a shared environmental policy in addition to the possibility of obtaining Green Business Certification through the Business Environmental Alliance.

The Green Business Program is a partner-

ship of government agencies and utilities that assists, recognizes and promotes local organizations that demonstrate a commitment to higher environmental performance. To be certified green, participants must be in compliance with all applicable environmental regulations and meet program standards for conserving resources, preventing pollution and minimizing waste.

Other programs that recognize environmentally responsible businesses include U.S. EPA Performance Track; LEED; ISO 14001; Business Environmental Alliance's Partners Program; Petaluma Build It Green; Santa Rosa Build It Green and the Sonoma Valley Green Business Program.

#### MEDIUM BUSINESS:

##### InfoStor

InfoStor provides off-site hard copy container information storage and retrieval along with scan-and-send-on-demand imaging services. The company owns a large, three-story warehouse storing 700,000 boxes of paper records in west Santa Rosa and has 23 employees. President Gary Lentz and Operations Manager Marie Mallory promote and support efficiency initiatives at the firm.

The company completed a lighting retrofit in July 2008 from high bay to T8 lights, which is expected to cut electricity usage by 50%, save \$10,300 and 79,000 kWh annually – with payback in 12 months. The cost of this retrofit, after incentives, was \$10,575. This change also reduces heat levels on the third floor during hot days. The warehouse uses only ceiling fans in the summer for cooling, not HVAC.

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## Environmental Committee Members

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InfoStor has also improved its storage density from 6.5 to 9 boxes/ft.<sup>2</sup> with narrow aisle mezzanine-style racking. Furthermore, the company reduced water use by approximately 60% from 2007 to 2008 with no capital investment. All paper waste – the bulk of all waste – is shredded and recycled. Retired wood pallets are refurbished and recycled by Sonoma Pacific.

The firm is investigating its increasing energy use trend and making efforts to reduce it by tracking and monitoring energy/water usage graphically to identify opportunities and assess progress. InfoStor has made it a policy to turn off monitors, printers and copiers when not in use and has reduced the number of trips and deliveries through careful route selection and an assessment of delivery times plus the more efficient use of electronic files.

They also plan to change landscape irrigation to a drip system and install a GPS controller. InfoStor is also working to reduce paper consumption and intends to use post-consumer recycled-content paper products.

In the future the company will explore the development of a shared environmental policy and have employees contribute cost-saving ideas along with a recognition program. Very little remains to be done before the firm can apply for Sonoma County Green Business Certification. The next steps to consider include determining greenhouse gas emissions and to set a reduction target. Another option on the table is to consider joining the U.S. EPA Climate Leaders program for additional guidance and recognition.

LARGE BUSINESS:

**Exchange Bank**

With 22 locations and approximately 400 employees, the 118-year old Exchange Bank is Sonoma County's oldest and largest bank. This financial institution obtained its Green Business Certification in March 2008 and has put in place a series of ongoing efforts to improve resource efficiencies and reduce costs. The bank strives to be a responsible member of the community by living up to four values, one of which is "always strive to do the right thing."

The bank reduced energy slightly between 2006-07 and a further reduction was seen in 2008 based on a lighting retrofit from T12 to T8 in 12 older buildings, along with some occupancy sensors, which is expected to result in annual savings of \$34,018 and 263,700kWh. Actual cost after incentives was \$61,067 with a 1.7 year estimated payback period.

A solar system was installed at the Dutton branch in October 2005 (a 26.1 kW system producing 66% of its electrical needs and saving \$9,000 annually with a six-year payback). These savings are estimated to offset some 550 tons of greenhouse gases (GHG), or the equivalent of GHGs from 137 cars over 25 years. Another solar system was installed at the College branch (36.9 kW system in September 2007 producing 98% of electricity needs and saving \$10,000 annually, with a 6.5-year payback.) This is estimated to offset 775 tons of GHGs from cars over 25 years.

Exchange Bank reduced water use by 10% from 2006-07 with further reductions expected. The bank installed low-flow toilets and aerators and a GPS irrigation and drip system at

drip lines at sites that still have the former systems.

Other opportunities for improvement include an employee education campaign admonishing them to turn off monitors and printers when not in use. The bank also intends to graphically track and monitor energy and water trends for all sites and overall (using an Excel tool), as well as focus cost and resource efficiency efforts on sites that use the most energy and water – while investigating increasing usage trends and spikes for reduction opportunities.

Exchange Bank is planning to adopt an environmentally preferred purchasing policy for computer equipment and office supplies (especially for paper products). Other initiatives include replacing grass around sites with drought-tolerant, multi-use landscaping to reduce water consumption and to reinforce the bank's identity as a responsible business.

Ways to reduce work-related transportation are also being considered, such as with Web and teleconferencing, telecommuting, four-day work weeks, carpooling, mass transit, biking, walking and fuel-efficient vehicles, and other options. The bank also plans to determine GHG emissions and set a reduction target as well as explore the possibility of joining the U.S. EPA Climate Leaders program.

Down the road, Exchange Bank intends to integrate sustainability further into its core strategy as well as offer more sustainable products and services. When these and other efficiency measures have been implemented, the bank also plans to consider using solar energy at more branches and sites.

"The Sonoma County Alliance encourages its members to dramatically reduce the environmental impact of how we live, travel and do business by cutting waste, preventing pollution and by investing in energy-saving techniques and water efficiency systems," said Mr. Skavdal. "California's climate change legislation, Assembly Bill 32, will touch every major aspect of society. Sonoma County and all nine of its cities have set an even higher goal to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 25% below 1990 levels by the year 2015, which will require bold action by business, government and individuals. The Alliance's Environmental Committee continues to monitor changing regulations and conducts an ongoing dialogue with state and local officials so we can be in a position to advise our members on what they can do to meet and exceed these requirements for the good of our community and the economy."



*Iver Skavdal*

some sites. The firm practices recycling and uses some recycled-content paper products, such as 100% recycled-content customer receipts.

Facilities management personnel at the bank have joined the International Facilities Management Association, an organization that encourages and educates members on efficient operations and management practices. Exchange Bank also offers "Go Green Checkless Checking" that includes a loan discount on hybrid cars.

The bank is working with PG&E toward an Energy Star building rating on all of its offices as well as working with PG&E to achieve a 40% reduction in its IT center energy use by deploying virtual servers and by reducing equipment and cooling systems.

Hot water heaters are being changed from 20-50 gallon capacities to six-gallon units at 80% of the branches. Green janitorial cleaning supplies are being introduced and irrigation systems are being converted from spray to