

# Worst Practices Guide

for Energy and Environmental Management

One of the most memorable conversations I had last summer at the ASHE 41st Annual Conference and Technical Exhibition was with a colleague from the United Kingdom. The conference you may remember was held in conjunction with the 18th Congress of the International Federation of Hospital Engineering (IPHE) to bring healthcare engineers together from around the globe to share their insights and best practices. We talked about energy practices in particular – the good, the bad, and the ugly – that seem to pervade hospitals (at least temporarily) on both sides of the Atlantic. That reminded my colleague of a popular guide that was published by his government, one that identified “where management techniques are inhibiting good practice.” So in the spirit of international cooperation and learning, I have obtained permission to reprint part of the guide and have taken the liberty to edit sections to adhere to space constraints.

Written by John Pooley for The Government Office for the South West of England, this guide is found in *Resource Efficiency & Corporate Responsibility - Managing Change!*. A word of warning: applying the guidance in this document may lead to world-class worst practice!

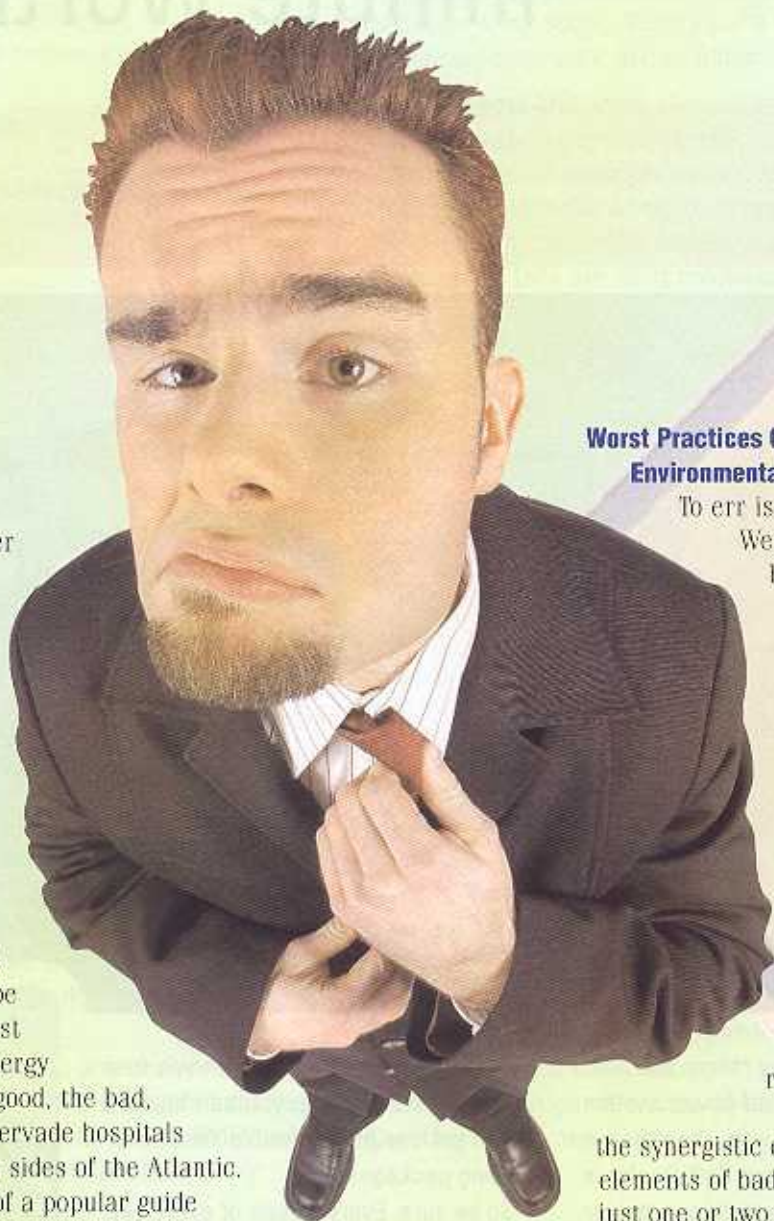
## Worst Practices Guide in Energy and Environmental Management

To err is human.

We all make mistakes but the most successful companies learn from them. This ‘worst practice’ guide is intended to help you learn from the mistakes that others have made, so that you can identify and avoid them. Alternatively, you could follow all the guidance and really mess up!

Worst practice is the synergistic combination of many elements of bad practice. Having just one or two elements of bad practice doesn't lead to worst practice status. What you need to have is a range of bad practices that can ‘support’ and ‘multiply’ each other.

For example, sometimes doing nothing is worse than doing the wrong thing! It can be argued that often the reason for doing nothing is a failure to identify the risks and opportunities facing the organization. A good measure of ignorance is always helpful if you are seeking to attain worst practice status, but to be really bad you need to work at it! Many organizations can recover from the odd element of bad practice. To



<sup>1</sup> For a full-length version, visit [www.oursouthwest.com/SasBus/mngchange.html](http://www.oursouthwest.com/SasBus/mngchange.html)

achieve legendary worst practice status you need to exceed expectation in a number of areas!

The key areas are explored in the following nine sections.

### **1. Policy**

A policy statement is a basic requirement of any environmental management system. We could choose not to have a formal policy, but why do this when having the wrong policy implemented in the wrong way can make great leaps towards worst practice?

Don't spend too much time developing a policy; copy one from another similar company. Just because a policy is published doesn't mean it is any good. By copying a policy from another organization, you can use terminology that is 'alien' to your organization, recycle the mistakes of others, or set unrealisable objectives.

Ensure that nobody 'owns' the policy. For a policy to work it needs to be 'owned' by as many people as possible. This can be achieved by processes such as consultation, brainstorming, review and awareness raising. But we can avoid all of this by simply issuing the policy document.

Drafting a good short policy statement requires effort and understanding. The longer the statement, usually the less effective it is. So to save time and promote bad practice, don't worry about the length of the policy - and don't forget, the longer it is the more chance of building in errors and traps!

### **2. Resources**

The key to environmental management is people. Although some technology may be involved, it is people that make environmental management work. So give environmental responsibility to overloaded, lower level, employees. This approach has many benefits: The overloaded person may not identify the best options. A reactive, rather than a proactive, approach will be maintained. Senior management may overrule any actions taken. Low-level employees may be unable to influence senior management. Give a clear message to all employees that environmental issues are not a high priority for the organization.

Alternatively, give environmental responsibility to a senior management environmental skeptic. This gives the external appearance that the company has taken a high level commitment. However, by using all their management and political skills, the skeptic will ensure that as little as possible changes. One technique they can use is to delegate work to overloaded, lower level, employees!

### **3. Measuring and Monitoring**

It is often said that you cannot manage what you cannot measure. Measurement and monitoring is such an

important issue in environmental management that really bad practice will require appropriate effort in this area.

So measure as little as possible. Measuring takes time and effort, so start by trying not to measure anything. If this is a problem, measure the simplest things possible and extrapolate all performance on that (failing a credible reading, simply make up figures to suit!). Or take the opposite approach - monitor everything that moves. To excel at bad practice, it is far better to measure and monitor absolutely everything. Not only will this take time and money, it will ensure that you do not have any time to take any effective action. This approach can give you two bad practice conditions - data overload and analysis paralysis.

Rely on estimated readings. The only conclusion you can draw from an estimated reading is that the meter has not been read. For bad practice use these readings and don't mark them as such - you don't want anyone questioning you!

Having spent time and money on collecting data - don't spend time analysing or understanding it. In this way you can use as much raw data as possible in reports to other people. If these people can't understand the data, they won't be able to make any contributions. With any luck, you will also manage to alienate them and make them believe that the whole thing is too complicated!

### **4. Integration**

Avoid making links between environmental and energy management with other business issues. It really helps bad practice if the organization can view environmental activity as avoiding regulation and additional costs. Be very careful about letting anyone know that effective environmental management reduces costs and that addressing environmental issues can lead to marketing opportunities.

It's better to isolate environmental activity so that it can be ignored. Activities that are fully integrated are difficult for an organization to ignore or discard. A particularly effective bad practice is to both isolate environmental activity and make it the responsibility of a single person who is close to retirement. Then when they retire no one knows what is going on! Alternatively, a restructuring can make the environmental person redundant!

### **5. Minimize**

Bad practice environmental management is driven by only external requirements - not internal aspirations. So the approach to be taken here is to identify the barest minimum that needs to be done. For example, if you can satisfy a customer by simply giving them a copy of a policy statement - do just that - but no more.

## 6. Planning

Environmental management is like any other management technique. It needs structure and planning. So avoid planning if possible. "We haven't got a plan, so nothing can go wrong!" Spike Milligan. Effective planning means identifying all the relevant issues and working out how to address them. This is clearly an increase in workload – so do the minimum. Another bad practice advantage of not having a plan is that you avoid checking on progress.

Use as short a timescale as possible. The use of short timescales is useful bad practice. The short time scale de-motivates people so they don't bother doing anything. Or set a target that is too ambitious so that most people do nothing. Setting a short time scale avoids looking at long term issues – it will certainly help avoid sustainability and all that goes with that!

## 7. Investment

Avoid spending any money. Environmental management and improvement do not come for free. So don't spend. This will not only appear to save you money, it may also stop people coming up with suggestions for improvements.

Avoid even thinking about life cycle costing. Life cycle costing makes financial sense only if you are prepared to look beyond the short term. So avoid any long-term views. This will enable you to buy lowest first cost plant and enjoy high running costs and/or poor environmental performance for the life of the asset. It is also possible that the asset will have a shorter life, allowing an early repeat of bad practice.

Forget that good environmental management improves profits and reduces risks. If you can just view the negative side of environmental issues you can really enhance your bad practice by discounting any positive projects that effective environmental management may identify. Be sure to complain about all the 'compliance' costs and ensure you do nothing to account for the ongoing financial benefits. If you are really excelling at bad practice this won't be a problem – because there won't be any benefits!

## 8. Workforce Issues

For effective environmental management and improvement to take place you need to involve as many people in the workforce as possible. So to achieve bad practice you need to minimize the effect and contribution of the workforce. Arguably, you need to get them to do the wrong things!

There are many ways of doing this. Limit the information that you give out. This is particularly powerful. If people don't know what is going on, they can't become involved. If you don't tell them the result of what they are doing, they won't have any idea if they are doing right or wrong.

Suggestion schemes normally form part of energy and environmental management programs. Ask for suggestions – then ignore them. To stop suggestions coming in, just don't process those that you get. Alternatively, tell them the suggestion has been rejected but not why. An old favorite is to take as long as possible in processing suggestions – this keeps your workload down and de-motivates at the same time.

Promise, but don't deliver. Get the workforce involved. Promise a reward for suggestions. Then make sure you don't give any rewards. Say you will give them feedback – then don't. All of these techniques can be very effective in de-motivating the workforce. One company said they would pay 50% of the first year savings for any implemented suggestions. They never thought that some one would come up with a suggestion that saved £100,000/year! Their response: a payment of £5,000 – excellent bad practice!

## 9. Excuses

Finally, to maintain bad practice and keep your job it will help to have a range of excuses that you can use. You will have to do some work in developing your excuses bank – but here are some initial deposits:

We haven't got the time to do it that way. We have always done it that way. The procedures don't allow that to happen. It's such a good idea, why aren't we already doing it? We don't want to be at the bleeding edge of technology. Now is not the right time. We will look at that in next year's budget. It's too risky. If it's that good, why isn't everybody doing it? There are too many sources of advice – so we won't use any of them. It is not yet an industry standard, so we will wait. It is currently the subject of a strategic review. Nobody has asked for it, so why should we do it? I won't be around when that happens.

We hope you found this worst practices guide amusing and useful. The British government could have just as easily published a document of bad practices without the irony of putting them into a fake "how-to-guide" but what fun is that? Cheers to the Brits for their humour and to all our continued best practices. **ASHE**

*Clark Reed is the National Healthcare Manager for ENERGY STAR at the U.S. EPA. ENERGY STAR offers hospitals best practices that help increase energy and environmental performance. To join, visit [www.energystar.gov](http://www.energystar.gov) or contact the author at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency - MC 6202L, 1200 Pennsylvania Ave NW, Washington, D.C. 20460. Email: [reed.clark@epa.gov](mailto:reed.clark@epa.gov) Phone: 202-343-9146*