

by Ron Truman

"Championing" is a management buzzword that describes a method of getting something difficult done. Some desirable trends aren't self-starting and have to be pushed along by an individual in the organization -- a champion -- who is keenly interested in the issue and able to influence people at all levels of the organization.

In many municipalities, championing has been the way energy conservation and energy efficiency improvements have been implemented. Municipalities fortunate enough to have employees who have been championing energy management are often more energy-efficient in their operations than municipalities that don't.

In recent years, Network has featured the accomplishments of many municipal employees who function as energy champions. These are people who pay attention to energy as they do their jobs. They may work in recreation facilities, water treatment plants, works departments or other municipal departments. But their sphere of influence goes beyond their departments. The example they set in energy management and the promotion of conservation has an influence on other departments and on energy use throughout the whole municipality.

Naturals

There is a relationship between an energy champion and a sports champion. In both energy and sports, people who stand out are often

"naturals" -- individuals with strong aptitudes and interests. Baseball naturals throw and catch as if it's second nature; football naturals kick and run. Energy naturals? They don't like waste. They seem to have a natural aversion to using more of something than you need or throwing something out before it's come to the end of its usefulness.

People who have been featured in Network in the past have different ways of expressing their natural aptitude for conservation. One head of a hotel engineering department said, "I can't stand waste. I'm the same way at home. I look after all the details." A municipal employee said, "It bugs me to see lights burning where they're not needed. I'll put timers on the switches so that the lights get turned off automatically."

If you want to see an energy champion at work, a good place to go is the newly formed municipality of Bradford West Gwillimbury. That's where you'll find Don Harrison, the town's Superintendent of Buildings. As Network editor, I visited Harrison recently, and it wasn't long before I recognized that he, too, is a natural.

In discussing one building, he said, "It was running up energy bills of about \$14,000 a year -- way too much! I went back to the plans and estimates when I started to change the consumption patterns. I was able to reduce the bills to about \$12,000 -- then I found out that the designers expected the building to have energy bills of \$24,000 a year!"

Another clue to Harrison's basic energy

Championing Energy



Don Harrison stops briefly in front of a sign that will soon be replaced to reflect the amalgamation of Bradford and West Gwillimbury.

attitude is the vehicle he uses. Along with the town's police vehicles, it's propane-powered. Propane-powered vehicles tend to have a longer engine life than gasoline-powered ones and Harrison is taking full advantage of it.

Visualizers, Goal-setters, Record-keepers

Energy champions, again like those who excel in sports, have a good sense of where they are going and the progress they are making towards those goals. Don Harrison took out a file in which he keeps records of energy consumption on standard accounting paper.

"This is baseline data on energy consumption for about a dozen buildings in town. When my job was expanded from managing the recreation facilities to building superintendent, one of the first things I did was start gathering this data," he said.

"I can use it to set goals. Once I get to know the buildings and how they operate, I can determine whether I can cut energy consumption by 20 or 30 per cent by low-cost or no-cost measures or whether the best policy is to make an investment in new equipment. But I need a goal to aim towards, and records that indicate my progress."

Harrison also has an extensive collection of literature on energy



The new library in Bradford West Gwillimbury is bright and cheery -- and improving its energy efficiency.

Energy Management

management. His interest was sparked in the late 1970s by seminars on energy management in arenas. He's been collecting information ever since and using it to help determine realistic goals for energy management programs.

Energy champions in other municipalities operate the same way. Recording consumption data usually becomes the basis for identifying individual opportunities, visualizing overall goals, and ensuring that results are realized.

A Focus on People

People who function well championing energy management in municipalities keep records of energy consumed and costs saved; but the focus is usually on people and comfort rather than money. The most satisfying results are those in which both energy consumption and energy costs go down while human comfort and enjoyment increase.

In Bradford West Gwillimbury, for example, the sports fields' retrofitting with high-efficiency lighting has made more playing fields available in the evening at a lower cost. Harrison has also turned down the temperature on all water heaters and replaced old, inefficient tanks with new ones. This has reduced costs while at the same time increasing the supply of hot water. In some buildings, improved maintenance of heating and cooling equipment has led to increased comfort and reduced costs.

Teamwork also plays an important role in effective energy management. An energy champion requires the support



The outdoor swimming pool in Bradford West Gwillimbury has been retrofitted to reduce energy consumption and maintenance requirements.

and active cooperation of other employees. In Bradford West Gwillimbury's arena and sports fields, where the energy management systems have been operating for the longest time, building operators are familiar with the systems and keep them at peak efficiency.

Marketing

Getting co-workers to support energy management is one of the challenges for energy champions. Getting support from the central administration and the local council can be an even greater challenge.

A municipal energy champion can use several techniques to gain support for energy conservation and efficiency. On

the day of the Network visit, Don Harrison told me he uses three: getting money to talk, providing service, and encouraging information exchange.

Money is important. Harrison knows exactly what he's saving. In his arena, he calculates that he reduces his bill by up to \$14,000 a year. He points out that in 1975 it cost \$5,500 to heat the lobby and auditorium; in 1990, it cost \$4,850 -- \$650 less. He talks about a 63-per-cent return on investments in energy efficiency improvements and is quick to point out that electricity rates have increased 70 per cent since 1982, and that Ontario Hydro is talking about more increases in the next few years.

He takes advantage of incentives and keeps a steady flow of information about energy management available for anyone who will listen. Bradford West Gwillimbury council is well-informed on energy and that helps to account for the fact that the municipality that is one of the leaders in energy conservation and efficiency in Ontario.



A view of the Bradford West Gwillimbury library.

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