

Consolidated Container Focuses Future on Energy Efficiency

FAMILY-OWNED BUSINESS ADDS MOTOR UPGRADES TO LIST OF ENERGY EFFICIENCY IMPROVEMENTS

Co-owners and brothers, Phillip and William Dworsky, purchased Consolidated Container Company, LLC in 2004, vowing to revive the century-old company with innovation and improvement. The Dworskys planned to bring positive change and “green” investments to the company, which was originally owned by their grandparents.

In addition to its fleet of five semis, two straight trucks and more than 500 trailers, the Dworskys and their 50-plus employees turned to the art of container recycling and reconditioning to ignite a profitable side of the business that other owners failed to keep going.

Consolidated Container distributes nearly half a million empty drums a year, but recycling has increasingly accounted for a substantial piece of the overall business. It recycles more than 2.4 million pounds of plastic containers and more than 2,000 tons of steel annually.

The “total approach” to the product’s life cycle, from initial purchase to ultimate end disposal, can often result in high energy costs due to the heavily used machinery in the 100,000 square-foot Minneapolis facilities.

According to William Dworsky, electric costs can often reach as high as \$21,000 per month depending on seasonal demand, with natural gas reaching as high as \$45,000 per month depending on the cost of natural gas.

“Our energy consumption really depends on our work schedule and the time of year,” Dworsky said. “During times of peak demand, our energy costs can be significant.”

Getting Started

When the Dworskys purchased the company back into family hands in 2004, one major pillar in their plan to bring positive change was through investments in “green.”

“We knew the future would be bright if we continued to focus on opportunities to reduce costs, increase market share, and expand our bottom line,” said Dworsky, “Green is a big part of that goal.”

To get started, one of the first major energy efficiency improvements was to implement a lighting upgrade through Xcel Energy’s Lighting Efficiency program. Taking advantage of premium rebates, the Dworskys upgraded more than 250 400-watt metal halide bulbs to the newer, more energy-efficient T8 fluorescent bulbs throughout their Minneapolis facility.

“We’ve made various energy efficiency upgrades over the past few years that have certainly helped,” Dworsky added. “We plan to build upon that as opportunities arise.”



BY THE NUMBERS

Result of the motor replacement

- 7,840 kWh in total energy savings
- \$2,130 in rebates from Xcel Energy

To target the best energy efficiency projects, Consolidated Container enlisted the support and guidance of a local consultant in addition to working with their Xcel Energy account manager.

Studies conducted for both natural gas and electric use identified several opportunities in which the business could save on utility costs.

“We typically have someone study the possibilities and look at our entire process for energy savings—from gas and electric use to processes such as compressed air,” Dworsky said. “Our visits from Xcel Energy were especially helpful in communicating the various options available for rebates and improvements.”

Motors Makeover

With a couple energy efficiency improvements already under their belt, the Dworskys turned their attention to the less obvious, but equally important high energy use culprits.

“We were told that some of our smaller to medium sized motors weren’t operating as efficiently as they could be,” Dworsky said. “We didn’t hesitate to take action and get them up to par.”

They replaced two motors: a 20 hp motor used to run a vacuum pump for removing water from the interior of plastic drums; and a 40 hp motor for a machine used to clean the exterior of steel drums with high-velocity steel shot blasting. Both motors were more than 10 years old.

The upgrade to NEMA Premium “Super E” motors took about 30 days and around \$7,500 to complete, but the Dworsky brothers haven’t looked back. Consolidated Container received more than \$2,130 in rebates through Xcel Energy’s Motor Efficiency.

“The rebates are a bonus but the real savings comes with each monthly energy statement,” Dworsky said. “We look at that each month and realize how the little things can really add up.”

Dworsky believes it’s critical for his company to be as efficient as possible in all aspects of business—from productivity to energy consumption.

“It’s a perpetual need to consistently review what energy savings opportunities are available as we continually make investments in newer technologies,” he said.

As Consolidated Container continues to build upon its strong months of growing revenues, which have increased substantially since 2004, they plan to stick with the plan that has brought them success.

“Had we not made the improvements we did over the last several years, we would not be where we are today,” he added. “Businesses should not underestimate the need for energy-smart equipment as they build their bottom line.”



OVERALL ENERGY EFFICIENCY IMPROVEMENTS

- 10% decrease in utility costs
- 10% increase in overall production
- Reduced carbon footprint

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