

Business Environmental Alliance 2007 Best Practices Award Winners

Alphabetical by nominating organization

Oliver's Market

Cotati Chamber of Commerce

Founded in 1988, Oliver's Market is a crossover supermarket that carries full-line of natural foods, gourmet foods, and conventional groceries. Motivated by monetary savings and social responsibility, Oliver's Market has made several modifications that save money and resources:

- Retrofitted energy-efficient lighting
- Modified freezer door to use less electricity
- Installed a new compressor system
- Company-wide use of computers to remove paper waste.

Overall, these changes have reduced energy consumption (and thus the energy bill) by 10%; paper consumption (and thus purchase) had been reduced by 25%.

PG&E, Energy Smart Grocer, and Dr. Robert Girling at Sonoma State University were several resources that were particularly helpful in making these changes and evaluating resource efficiency.

Redwood Credit Union

Hispanic Chamber of Commerce.

Redwood Credit Union (RCU) has been serving North Bay residents and small business owners since 1950. Today, the Credit Union offers an array of value-driven financial services to more than 130,000 residents and businesses. Recently RCU completed a remodel of the 40-year-old building located at 3033 Cleveland Ave. for the new Corporate Headquarters. The remodel centered on RCU's commitment to creating an environmentally friendly building, including pursuing a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED), or "green" certification. The remodeling project included:

- Recycling building materials from the interior demolition
- Using recycled materials throughout the building, including carpeting, linoleum, hardwood flooring, and lighting fixtures
- Water-efficient landscaping surrounding the building
- Automatic "stepped lighting" devices that sense available daylight levels and switch off when existing light is available
- Motion sensors that detect when a room is unoccupied
- Waterless urinals and dual-flush low-flow toilets

A sense of social responsibility and monetary savings drove these building guidelines. Implementing a recycling program and energy and water conservation projects were natural for the organization and in line with the company culture.

Many local resources were important for the success of this project. Namely the contractor for the project, Western Builders, worked with RCU to initiate a recycling program for materials taken out of the building, and recognized RCU's commitment to the goals of resource conservation.

Agilent Technologies, Inc.

North Bay Leadership Council

Agilent has been a major employer in Sonoma County since the 1970s, when it first arrived as part of the Hewlett-Packard Company. Committed to acting in an environmentally responsible manner in operations, products, and services, Agilent has implemented environmental best practices in the areas of energy management, building automation, water conservation, and recycling and solid waste management. Highlights of the best practices include:

- Installation of more than 100 variable frequency drives, heat recovery systems, efficient chillers, cooling towers, and controls in HVAC systems.
- Installation of a computerized system to monitor and control energy use.
- All lighting systems upgraded to more efficient systems, including T8 lights.
- Reduction in the amount of water used in industrial processes.
- More than 60% of industrial waste water is recycled for process use and landscaping.
- More than 87% diversion rate from landfill with solid waste management program.
- More than 3,000 metric tons of greenhouse gas reduction annually due to energy efficiencies.
- Considering implementation of a 1-megawatt photovoltaic system at Santa Rosa site.

In all, Agilent **saves more than \$1.5 million annually** due to these best practices.

Several local resources that have helped Agilent implement these changes include PG&E (which offered rebates of more than \$600,000 annually); the City of Santa Rosa for water permitting compliance, and Becoming Independent (working on sorting solid waste into commodities).

Beam Wine Estates

Pacific Gas & Electric

Beam Wine Estates consists of California and International wineries, with headquarters located in Healdsburg and the distribution center located in Windsor. They have worked with PG&E to try to reduce energy usage for environmental and budgetary concerns. With the long hours of the bottling season, it was not uncommon for the energy bill at the Shiloh Distribution Center to top \$9,000 per month. These long hours were generally during the summer months, so not only did the outdated technology increase the cost of doing business, but the metal halide fixtures also acted as miniature heat lamps, working against the purpose of keeping a cool storage environment for the wines. Working with PG&E, Beam Wine Estates made the following money- and quality-saving changes:

- Replaced 225 metal halide light fixtures with high bay fluorescent fixtures and sixty occupancy sensors, for an estimated savings of 300,000 kWh and a \$42,000 cost avoidance.
- This project will reduce CO₂ emissions by 164 tons and nitrogen oxide (NO_x) by 0.019 tons, which is the equivalent of taking 21 cars off the Northern California roads.
- The install was just completed, but in the month of December 2006, the energy usage per day usage was 987 kWh versus 1474 the previous December.
- With the help of a \$23,700 PG&E rebate, Beam Wine Estates anticipates this project to pay for itself within nine months.

Pacific Gas & Electric was very helpful in analyzing usage and cost savings aspect of Beam's switch to T-5 lighting, and the rebate program did much to encourage the switch. A vendor (Grainger) offered a class on lighting that was useful in terms of product availability and price points.

Heritage Salvage

Petaluma Area Chamber of Commerce

Started four years ago by Michael “Bug” Deakin to promote sustainable building practices and the art of “re-purposing,” Heritage Salvage sells reclaimed building materials and a variety of furniture built from wood products sourced from fallen trees or structures that are dismantled. The “best practices” of Heritage Salvage both save money and resources, and add value to their products:

- Sales car runs on straight used vegetable oil, and they will be converting the utility truck to run on bio-diesel, which does and will continue to offer significant savings on gasoline.
- The purpose of Heritage Salvage is to reduce its own and its clients’ consumption of new building materials – all sales contribute to a reduction in materials that likely would have been directed to the landfill.
- Heritage Salvage has been able to tap into a niche market of environmentally and historically-conscious consumers who seek out companies just like this.

Codding Enterprises

Rohnert Park Chamber of Commerce

Since 1849, the Codding family has been building and managing properties in Sonoma County. Always a central figure in the Sonoma County business community, Codding has, over the past few years, adopted a sustainable approach to all aspects of the business. A few of its specific “best practices” include:

- Detailed energy efficiency assessments of its Rohnert Park properties.
- Installation of a 1.14 megawatt solar array: the Sonoma Mountain Village site is now 100% solar powered.
- Ongoing staff education campaign.
- Working with the Climate Protection Campaign to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- Lighting retrofits of outdated incandescent fixtures
- Retrofits with waterless urinals and super-efficient dual-flush toilets

The solar array at Sonoma Mountain Village will produce enough power for 1,000 homes and **saves Codding \$23,000 every month**, while at the same time producing a 15% internal rate of return.

Several organizations that were helpful to Codding in implementing these best practices include the Climate Protection Campaign for assistance in planning greenhouse gas reduction, the City of Rohnert Park for supporting green building objectives, and the Sonoma Mountain Business Cluster.

Medtronic Vascular, Santa Rosa

Santa Rosa Chamber of Commerce

Medtronic’s Vascular division, which works mostly on research and development and pilot manufacturing, is headquartered in Santa Rosa and is home to more than 1350 employees. Striving to continually reduce its environmental impact and consumption of natural resources is in alignment with Medtronic’s environmental policy, results in significant cost savings, and is part of being a responsible corporate citizen. Its “best practices” include:

- Replaced isopropyl alcohol with water-based cleaning solutions and thus **reduced the costs of cleaning solutions by 87%** and eliminated over 4 tons of VOC emissions annually.

- Installed pulsed power water treatment systems on the two largest cooling towers, contributing to over **one-million gallons per year of reduced water usage** and related reductions in sewer bills, as well as complete elimination of hazardous biocide chemicals from those cooling towers
- Replace boilers with modern energy-efficient boilers, reducing natural gas usage by 25% in one year and **direct energy savings of approximately \$40,000 in the first year.**
- More than 50% of all waste generated at Medtronic is recycled.
- Medtronic subsidizes two Wi-Fi enabled commuter vanpools with 24 passengers coming each day from San Francisco. This program takes approximately **60,000 commuter miles** off the 101 corridor and **reduces vehicle related air emissions by over 3 tons per year.**

Energy Star and other rebates from PG&E were an important part of the boiler upgrades.

Elder Creek Landscapes

Sebastopol Area Chamber of Commerce

An ecologically-minded, full-service landscape company, Rick Taylor of Elder Creek Landscapes covers landscape design, installation, and maintenance, and is dedicated to:

- **Water wise gardening** and water catchments/storage practices that reduce watering needs.
- **Local purchasing** creates strong connections within the community, reduces driving times, and fuels the local economy.
- **Biodiesel blends** are used in the company vehicle and reduce emissions substantially.
- **Recycling programs** create awareness about materials and increase effective use of that material.
- **Mobile solar generator** helps reduce electrical needs from the grid.

Some of Elder Creek’s practices, which are more difficult to quantify, still have a long-term positive impact on its clients and the region. For example, water wise techniques save the client money and conserve limited water resources; this does not directly save the company money, but attracts clients who have environmental concerns and realize that these practices will help their bottom line. Rick Taylor’s environmental practices attract his clientele.

Taylor remarks, “Each step we have taken to do the right thing environmentally or socially has paid off in ways that we were not expecting. We have received free press, awards, increased morale within all sectors of the company, and continue to expand our client base because we push beyond ‘business as usual.’”

Several local resources that have helped Elder Creek establish itself as an environmentally-aware business include: Harmony Farm Supply, Sebastopol Hardware, The Rental Place, Roberta Ryan Coaching, Sonoma Compost, Exchange Bank, and Grab-n-Grow.

Christopherson Homes

Sonoma County Alliance

With a program based off the Santa Rosa Build It Green Program, Christopherson Homes takes great pride in being the region’s first production green builder. Fully committed to using ecologically sustainable construction practices and new materials, products, and technologies that reduce our impact on the environment, Christopherson Homes sees this as a “win-win” situation: it not only conserves scarce resources, it also saves homeowners money and provides a more healthy, durable living environment. In their building policies and their finished product, Christopherson Homes employs many “best practices”:

- Diverting 75-90% of construction waste from landfills
- Use of less solid-sawn lumber and more engineered and recycled wood products in building
- Improving energy efficiency in new homes: high efficiency lighting, upgraded insulation, insulating window glass, insulated hot water pipes, energy-efficient appliances, upgraded efficiency furnaces, solar energy systems in selected communities, and pre-plumbing for solar wiring in new communities.
- Improving air quality: paints and glues with no or low amounts of unhealthy volatile organic compounds (VOCs), formaldehyde-free insulation, and venting range hoods to the outside.
- Conserving water: dual-flush toilets in new communities, smart irrigation controllers, insulating hot water pipes to reduce waste, reduced turf levels and drought-tolerant landscaping, and low-water consumption fixtures and faucets for less usage and lower water bills.

These projects and construction policies add value to Christopherson Homes' products, and attract consumers that are interested in saving money and reducing consumption. "Green Building" is growing and the market for such products is sure to explode in the coming years.

Osmosis Day Spa and Sanctuary

Sonoma County Tourism Bureau

From its conception, the Osmosis Spa has practiced sustainability. Built in 1989 in Freestone, the founders of Osmosis began by removing 400 cubic yards of debris from the one-time derelict property and making extensive use of recycled wood. The spa has always been committed to sustainable practices in conjunction with the promotion of health, healing, and inner peace. The "Green Team" at Osmosis has worked hard to keep Osmosis profitable and environmentally focused, including implementing the following "best practices":

- Installed a water filtration system that treats all water entering the spa, allowing them to reduce almost entirely the need to import bottled water – this **saves the spa \$545 on water costs per month**, and significantly decreases the amount of solid waste.
- All landscaping is irrigated from the private well, using water-conservative drip irrigation.
- Provide all used bath material as mulch to the community instead of sending it to the landfill.
- In the process of developing a composting and vermiculture system that will digest some portion of the paper waste.
- Increased the R-value of the insulation in the attic to cut down on energy usage; installed compact florescent bulbs and timers to increase energy efficiency; installed heat pump to replace the less-efficient, gas-fired HVAC system – the bills for propane and electric are shifting significantly with these changes.

Osmosis is using its dedication to impacting consumer choice and public behavior to help other spas make these same changes. The organizations that have assisted them with these changes, including PG&E, the New College's Green Business MBA program, the Presidio School of Management, and the Green Business Assessment program, have helped motivate Osmosis to co-found the Green Spa Network.

Rodney Strong Vineyards

Sonoma County Vintners

Founded in 1959 by Rodney D. Strong as the 13th bonded winery in Sonoma County, Rodney Strong Vineyards is now privately owned by Tom Klein and the Klein Family. Dedicated to crafting world-class wines that capture the essence of Sonoma County, a central value of this winery is the aspiration to

conserve and protect the environment in all operations. The dedication to this issue has come to fruition through the following changes:

- Recycle all paper and cardboard products, plastics, and glass; purchased a bailer so they can bail their own cardboard and plastics; send all recycled glass to manufacturers that use it as mullet for new glass.
- Emphasize green practices in the selection of all vendors.
- Shifted to 80% clamp lifts and will attain 100% to reduce use of pallets.
- All wine shippers for the wine club are made from pulp rather than Styrofoam.
- Drip irrigation for all landscaping.
- Installed one of the largest solar-powered energy systems in the wine industry in 2004 (4,032 panels on top of the 100,000 square foot barrel warehouse).
- Switched from 400W HID lights to T5 HBF lights in early 2004.

The **solar panels save Rodney Strong \$145,000 per year** over the 25-year life of the system; the T5 lighting system saves **\$70,000 per year in electricity costs**. The other practices reinforce company values and are part of the overall drive for quality in the wines Rodney Strong Vineyards produces.

Some of the programs and companies that assisted Rodney Strong in implementing these best practices include, Powerlight Solar Electric, PG&E, Fish Friendly Farming, and the Sonoma Green Business Program.

Infineon Raceway

Sonoma County Waste Management Agency

Infineon Raceway is the only major motor sports facility in the country with a comprehensive recycling program. Since the raceway began its program in 2004, it has recycled more than 40 tons of materials (81,352 pounds), which is equivalent to 21 NASCAR NEXTEL Cup stock cars. Materials were collected at the raceway's major events in 2006, adding up to 36,179 pounds in one year:

- 17,443 pounds of glass (32,967 glass bottles)
- 14,201 pounds of plastic bottles (194,554 plastic bottles)
- 4,535 pounds of aluminum cans (132,876 cans)

In addition, Safety-Kleen Systems, Inc., which is headquartered in Texas, provides oil recycling and refining services to Infineon Raceway.

Vella Cheese Company of California, Inc.

Sonoma Valley Chamber of Commerce

In business in Sonoma County since 1931, Vella Cheese is a family-owned specialty cheese producer and retailer, and intends to remain a hands-on cheese factory. Demanding quality in all products and sales, Ignazio Vella works to infuse sustainability into the production and sales chain. Vella has worked hard to find its niche and filling it successfully, employing people on a steady basis, getting recognition for what you do well, and encouraging others to adopt practices that will help them do well too. Some of these "best practices" that Vella Cheese Co. would like to share include:

- Installed a 30 kilowatt solar electric system; with 234 solar panels mounted flat on the roof of the factory, the system is both highly efficient and visually unobtrusive.
- Retrofitted lighting for energy efficiency, purchasing a high-efficiency water-tube boiler (which saves both energy and water), water conservation practices, and recycling.

Using solar energy saves Vella Cheese **about \$1,200 per month** (and more in the summer). In addition, Vella Cheese saves several thousand dollars per year from water reuse and conservation programs, gas conservation, installation of energy-efficient lighting throughout the factory, and waste reduction. **Total savings from these environmental practices are approximately \$30,000 per year.** This does not include the immeasurable savings from the value added to the products by using a natural and sustainable production system.

The PUC and Sun First! Solar Energy Systems were both very helpful in implementing the solar energy project, with participation from PG&E as well.

Benziger Family Winery

Sonoma Valley Vintners and Growers Alliance

More than a quarter-century ago, Mike and Mary Benziger discovered the overgrown ranch that would become Benziger Family Winery. Nurturing the earth has been a way of life for the Benziger family, their employees, and their suppliers from the beginning. A leader in environmental conservation, Benziger Family Winery holds the Bay Area Green Business and the Sonoma County Green Business certifications, as well as Sunset magazine's Green Winery Award for 2006. The family's abiding commitment to the environment is evidenced by integrated practices in their vineyards and winery, including:

- Water recycling program with constructed wetlands
- Solar-powered pumps at the estate vineyard in Bodega
- Insulated fermentation tanks to conserve energy
- Solar parking lights
- Use of biodiesel in tractors
- Aggressive recycling program
- Continuing educational programs for staff, growers, and suppliers

All of these changes have had a significant impact on energy and fuel bills, and the water recycling program is helping to sustain the ranch's supply of water. In addition, the value added to the product is significant and the Biodynamic® winery label appeals to many environmentally-conscious consumers.

Many individuals and programs have assisted Benziger Family Winery in implementing these changes, including: View Craft, Biodynamics, PG&E, and the Climate Protection Campaign.