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EDITORIAL

## Saving Green

**C**utting operating expenses is something every business looks to do. But most businesses believe that adopting planet-friendly practices will cost them more, not less money.

Connstep, a nonprofit that helps manufacturers become more competitive, is proving that assumption wrong.

West Hartford-based Har-Conn Chrome Company, an independently owned metal-finishing company, discovered it could save up to \$424,000 annually by following a number of Connstep's review recommendations based on the nonprofit's analysis of Har-Conn's manufacturing process.

So far, Har-Conn has cut its energy bills by 16 percent.

So what kind of magic did Connstep recommend? To start, the analysis recommended the company

improve its boiler fuel management. That alone yielded an annual savings of nearly \$36,000.

The review also pointed out another \$2,600 in savings by advising the company to recover compressor waste heat.

Har-Conn isn't the only company that has benefited from Connstep's review.

Metal Finishing Technologies,

a supplier of metal-plated products in Forestville, discovered potentially thousands of dollars in savings by

adopting 17 energy improvements, thanks to the nonprofit's review.

As a result, the manufacturer realized a number of cost savings, reducing its product rework by half and cutting 400 pounds of hazardous chemicals.

Connstep's analysis also pointed out that Metal Finishing Technologies could potentially reduce its annual water usage by 1.4 million gallons. Beyond the staggering environmental impact, the reduced water usage alone could substantially cut the company's operating expenses.

Saving money through environmental reviews has led to the creation of a work force dubbed "green collar." It's gotten the attention of Gov. M. Jodi Rell, who recently proposed a \$125,000 grant to create a Green Collar Jobs program to train college students in energy efficient building, construction and energy technology.

Judy Wlodarczyk, environmental management specialist for Connstep, maintains that "green is more than alternative energy or LEED-certified buildings. It is a way to optimize the raw materials you use, so you are reducing waste and reducing the money spent on those materials."

It's also a way to remain competitive.

Increasingly, major corporations are now demanding that their suppliers adopt specific, planet-friendly practices. It can mean the difference between getting a contract and losing a business opportunity.

Going green is becoming less of a choice for businesses that want to stay competitive by attracting-- and retaining-- customers and cutting operating costs. Now that the financial benefits have begun to mirror the environmental benefits, hopefully we'll begin to see businesses accepting the new green standard.

And that goes for the big and the small. As corporations want to tout their environmental policies, going green is trickling down to small businesses in the retail and manufacturing supply chain.

Cutting waste and energy reliance is not only fiscally smart; it is also the right thing to do. ■

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