

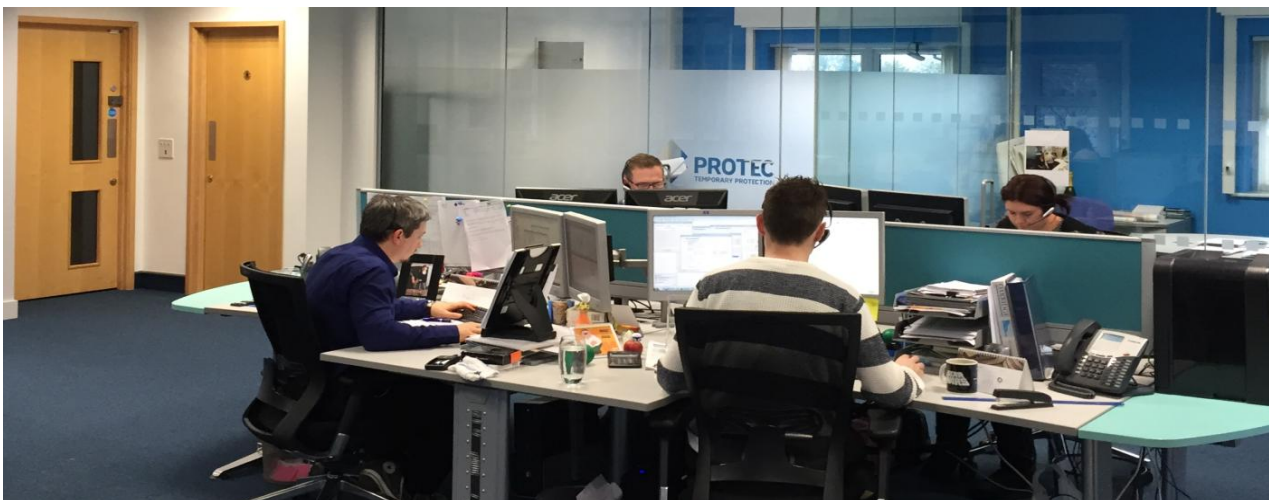
CASE STUDY: PROTEC INTERNATIONAL LTD

BACKGROUND

Protec International is a North Cheshire based specialist supplier of Temporary Protection materials to the construction industry whose typical clients include principal contractors and subcontractors to the commercial and house building sector.

As a relatively small business employing just 17 people, Protec International understandably has no dedicated sustainability manager. Jim Riley, Customer Services Advisor together with his colleague Edit, Key Account Manager for Supply Agreements, are the driving forces behind sustainability (supported at the highest level by their CEO), and have led Protec International's engagement in the Supply Chain Sustainability School since July 2012.

This case study revisits the initial case study on Protec International (published by the School in 2013) and highlights the progress they have made two years since their initial engagement.



INITIAL ENGAGEMENT

Originally invited to join the School by Willmott Dixon, Protec International attended the Supplier Day in July 2012 and were impressed by the evident senior level commitment from the main contractors, and indeed the potential business benefits for companies who embrace this agenda. The workshops in the afternoon helped raise Protec International's awareness of a wide range of issues not previously considered, as well as underlining gaps in knowledge and understanding on other sustainability impacts they thought had already been addressed.

Jim left the supplier day enthused about the commercial opportunities presented by the growing sustainability agenda, and full of ideas on how to maximise these opportunities within Protec International. Jim's experience at the event together with the use of the self-assessment and action planning tool, the School videos and the e-learning modules succeeded in securing commitment from the CEO to dedicate resource to the sustainability agenda, and it was decided to use the School and its resources as the main tool to help develop this opportunity.

SELF-ASSESSMENT & ACTION PLAN

Protec International found the self-assessment process simple and straightforward. Not 100% of the questions asked were relevant as their category of supply, 'materials supply' is very broad, however the resulting action plan was invaluable. Protec International used (and continue to use) this as a prioritisation tool to help understand where to best focus limited resource for maximum impact. Their next re-assessment will take place in January 2015.

As 'beginners' in 2012 in most of the sustainability issues covered by the School, their first action plan consisted primarily of recommendations to view the e-learning modules. Modules were worked through in small teams, involving relevant employees where applicable. For example the procurement teams, along with Jim and Edit worked through the e-learning module on sustainable procurement.

Protec International have since attended a number of School training workshops on issues such as sustainable procurement, responsible sourcing, selling sustainability, all of which have resulted in changes to the business.

IMPACT

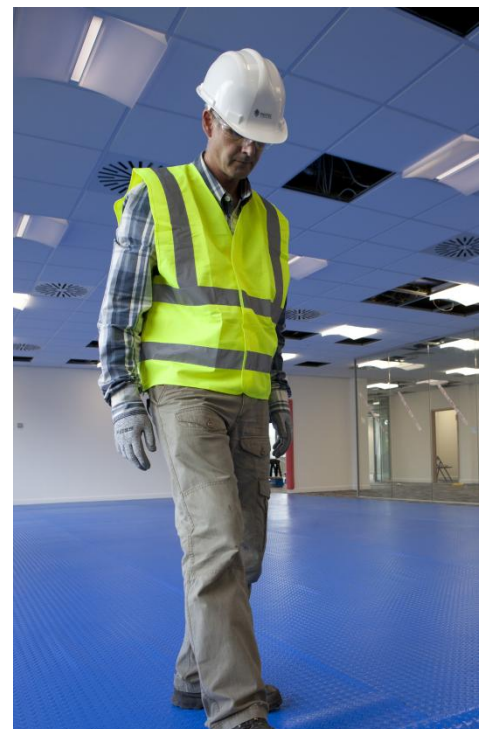
As this case study is a combination of progress reported in both June 2013 and later in November 2014, impact has been staggered to reflect progress over time.

In Jun 2013, as a direct result of joining the School Protec International had:

- ✓ **Secured senior level buy in on the sustainability agenda.** Their CEO believed that the sustainability agenda would become an increasingly important factor in the buying and selling of products, a belief which was reflected in the significant resource dedicated to addressing this issue.
- ✓ **Allocated roles and responsibilities for addressing the sustainability challenge** within the company, and had dedicated weekly slots to discuss progress and increase knowledge and competence.
- ✓ **Established quarterly sustainability workshops** attended by various employees throughout the company, with representation at board level.
- ✓ **Developed a new sustainability policy**, a series of targets and a corresponding timeframe.
- ✓ **Evaluated and revised their supply chain questionnaire** so as to incorporate sustainability standards.
- ✓ **Communicated their progress with the School to their supply chain.**
- ✓ **Future / ongoing plans to:**
 - Review their product range taking into account reusability, recyclability and end of life cycle.
 - Understand more about how their products are disposed of at the end of life on sites.
 - Dedicate more resource to communicating the sustainability credentials of their products to clients, particularly around their recyclability.

By December 2014, as a direct result of engaging in the School Protec International has:

- ✓ **Fully embedded sustainability into the core of the business.** According to Jim Riley, *'Sustainability is now within the fabric of what we do. Everyone throughout the company knows how important this is and what their role is in addressing this agenda. This is a direct result of the School as before signing up we didn't understand what sustainability meant or indeed what the implications were for our business'*.
- ✓ **Linked ISO14001 objectives to the School** with one of their stated objectives in ISO14001 being to work within the Supply Chain Sustainability School Framework.
- ✓ **Incorporated sustainability criteria into all employee objectives.**
- ✓ **Been recognised by key clients for their progress in sustainability.** They are proud to have been interviewed alongside Skanska by the Cabinet Office, and have spoken at several School partner Supplier Days to showcase their sustainability credentials.
- ✓ **Taken a proactive approach to educating external stakeholders / clients / employees about sustainability** via a range of articles on the website, blogs, Twitter and other forms of social media.
- ✓ **Been recognised as a 'Gold' member of the School** and has a target to maintain Gold membership throughout 2015.
- ✓ **Taken a holistic approach to sustainable procurement and is now working towards BS8903**, Principles and Framework for Procuring Sustainably, the World's first standard for sustainable procurement. This is a direct result of attending a School workshop on sustainable procurement.
- ✓ **Developed strong links with the local community** by supporting local charities.



"It is impossible to list all of the things that we have done differently as a result of engaging in the School as this would entail listing each and every action taken within the business that links to the sustainability agenda! The School has proved to be both an influential driver and an essential resource for Protec International, and we will continue to use the School as a key tool to help ensure continuous improvement in developing sustainability knowledge and competence"

Jim Riley, Customer Services Advisor

BENEFITS

Increased competitive advantage – Protec International’s engagement in the School has unveiled a range of business opportunities around the sustainability agenda. Protec International’s CEO believes that sustainability is increasingly influencing commercial decisions, and that their engagement in and progress through the School will help them maximise the potential of such opportunities.

New product innovation – as a direct result of attending the supplier days and workshops Protec International have identified new business opportunities around innovation and new product development.

Client recognition / retention of key customers – Many of Protec International’s customers consider them to be experts in sustainability and have invited them to speak or participate in external events with a view to showcasing best practice in sustainability. They attribute this to their engagement with the School and believe this recognition will ultimately result in more business opportunities.

Better understanding of customer requirements – Protec International continues to maximise the opportunities presented at supplier days and training workshops to build their relationships with the main contractors. This face to face contact together with the format of the School’s resources has helped them better understand their clients sustainability drivers, requirements and processes which they believe will result in more successful bids and retention of key clients.

Reduced reputational risk – the steps taken by Protec International to develop and improve their approach to addressing sustainable procurement will reduce the potential risk in their supply chain – particular around the social issues.

LESSONS LEARNED

Being a small business should not be a barrier to addressing the sustainability challenge - Within a small business limited man power is often used as a reason for ignoring the sustainability agenda. Protec International have learned how to make best use of a small, but highly passionate team, and have secured senior level buy-in so as to ensure targets, roles and responsibilities are in place to address this agenda.

Small businesses can innovate quickly, but only with senior level buy-in – Protec International have achieved a great deal in just two years. They have gone from being beginners in most of the 10 sustainability areas outlined by the School, to becoming experts in certain areas, and sharing their learning with both clients and other stakeholders.

Commitment to continuous improvement is key – according to Protec International sustainability is an area that is constantly evolving and ‘the end is never in sight’. Targets should be challenging, and there are always opportunities to improve processes, systems, behaviour etc.

Don’t assume your customers understand this agenda – Since embarking on this sustainability journey, Protec International have realised that their clients don’t necessarily understand the sustainability features and benefits of their products. For example putting a mobius loop on packaging doesn’t mean that the client will recognise this and automatically recycle it. As such Protec International commit time and resource to educating their customers about the sustainable properties of their products.

THE FUTURE

In order for the School to continue to be of benefit to Protec International it is important to:

- ✓ Continue to grow the number of School partners and for partners to continue to be honest and open in their engagement with the School.
- ✓ Attract new client partners to the School.
- ✓ Continue to grow the number of e-learning modules each year, and ensure that these remain challenging. For small companies with limited resources e-modules are a convenient low cost mechanism to develop knowledge and competence.
- ✓ Continue to develop high quality interview footage of influential speakers.
- ✓ Consider running forums for Gold members to help share best practice and challenges.
- ✓ Ensure the content of the School continues to evolve and is kept fresh and up to date, and that the number of resources at the advanced and intermediate levels continues to grow.