

Challenges:

Freefoam's approach to sustainability is anchored in the principles of the circular economy, carbon reduction, and continuous improvement. As a manufacturer that oversees the processing, production and distribution lifecycle stages of products, the company highly values the concepts of retaining value and eliminating waste. Consequently, Freefoam has embedded the use of the waste hierarchy at the heart of its business activities and decisions, with particular emphasis on the pillars of reducing, reusing, and recycling.

Freefoam perceives sustainability challenges not as hurdles, but as opportunities for learning and innovating solutions. As staunch advocates of continuous improvement, they address these challenges using the DMAIC methodology, which stands for Define, Measure, Analyse, Improve, and Control. This systematic process is key to ensuring lasting sustainability improvements.

Capacity building and education for Freefoam employees are indispensable for the realisation of the company's sustainability objectives. Freefoam employs internal communications and education to demystify sustainability and circularity for all members of their staff. In addition to this, the resources provided by the Supply Chain Sustainability School function as an auxiliary tool to enrich learning.

Impact:

Boosting water efficiency: Directly engaging with the resources from the Supply Chain Sustainability School has enabled Freefoam to pinpoint an inconsistency between the efficiency of their domestic water consumption and their production-related water usage. At their production facilities, Freefoam practices water reuse through the use of filtered chillers and tanks with regular Cleaning-In-Place (CIP) procedures and the implementation of a rainwater harvesting system. In contrast, a water efficiency audit revealed that 55% of Freefoam's domestic taps were operating inefficiently, that is, with flow rates exceeding 9 litres per minute, and some taps running at rates up to 20 litres per minute. The company was able to consider countermeasures recommended by the School, such as the installation of tap aerators and the adjustment of valve pressures to improve efficiency.

Maximising resource utility: The resources offered by the Supply Chain Sustainability School cover a wide array of topics. Freefoam employees typically concentrate on select subject areas as advised by their personalised learning plan. They also participate in live webinars and the School's Lunch 'n' Learn sessions, which fit comfortably around their busy work schedules. These live meeting platforms spotlight shared priorities and encourage the use of a common language when discussing sustainability in the built environment.

Fact box



Company

Freefoam Building Products LTD

No of employees

300+

HQ

Cork, Ireland

Website

<https://freefoam.com/professional/sustainability-archive>

Main contact

Valerie Zishiri,
valerie.zishiri@freefoam.com

Services

Manufacturer and supplier of PVC building products, including fascia and soffit.

About

Freefoam is the leading manufacturer of a wide range of innovative uPVC fascia and soffit products. It also produces gutter systems, external cladding, and interior panelling systems for the building industry in Ireland, the UK and Mainland Europe.

Charting sustainability progress: The School's assessment tool has aided Freefoam in charting a course for sustainability learning and action. The tool approaches sustainability in a holistic manner, enabling the company and its individual employees to benchmark themselves against current sustainability knowledge and identify areas for improvement.

Revolutionising E-learning experience: The School delivers modules through various mediums such as online and PDF documents, video and audio lessons, and interactive content. Each of these mediums caters to different learning styles and is readily accessible to Freefoam employees on the move, leading to effective assimilation.

Value gained:

Credibility: Membership of the Supply Chain Sustainability School provides significant value to Freefoam. It is a recognised and credible platform for education on sustainability in the built environment. This enables Freefoam to learn from and interact with sustainability experts and representatives from both industry and academia.

Collaboration: Collaboration serves as a vital facilitator of sustainability. The School congregates key stakeholders from various sectors and facilitates networking. In Freefoam's experience, this has led to beneficial feedback and perspective from end users and stakeholders within the value chain.

Future proofing:

Freefoam is on an exciting journey, building towards a sustainable future, with sustainability education and training serving as a fundamental pillar of this endeavour. They plan to persist in utilising and promoting the Supply Chain Sustainability School's resources, while also contributing to conversations around shared sustainability challenges by imparting some of their best practices.