

Sustainability is not an “add-on” at CNSI



For CNSI, a Rockville-based health information technology company, environmental sustainability is central to its corporate culture and work ethic. Importantly, their Green Business Certification is not viewed as a distinct add-on to the company’s strategic objectives.

Rather, their environmental efforts are rooted in an integrated [corporate social responsibility](#) (CSR) framework which focuses on doing the right thing in all aspects of business. Hence, their environmental initiatives flow naturally from this over-arching framework.

iCare and The Five Pillars

To better define their objectives, CNSI created their iCare program in 2015, which consists of five pillars: People, Environment, Governance & Ethics, Philanthropy & Volunteerism, and Innovation. The company’s overarching CSR motto is, “Think Globally, Act Locally.”



The governance of iCare was structured to ensure that its objectives are woven throughout the fabric of CNSI’s business. Leaders from each business unit, which include Human Resources, Information Technology & Security, Ethics and Corporate Compliances, Facilities, and Marketing Communications, create annual CSR goals and tactical plans to achieve those goals. These goals and plans are then approved by the company’s board of directors and tracked throughout the year by the iCare Leadership Committee. To showcase the impact

of the programs efforts, the company provides an annual CSR report (the 2016 report can be found on their website and the 2017 report will be released shortly).

The CSR committee is housed in the marketing department and as Jennifer Bahrami, Vice President of Marketing Communications, says, “None of our CSR work would be possible without having 100% buy-in from our leadership. Our efforts touch each part of the business and collaboration is vitally important.”



Think Globally, Act Locally

To act on their mantra, “Think Globally, Act Locally”, CNSI’s CSR consultant Mary Fehlig, of the Fehlig Group, another Montgomery County Certified Green Business, encouraged CNSI to consider certification. As they gathered data, they quickly discovered that they were already doing many of the suggested actions as a matter of course. Missie Aulls, CNSI’s Facility Manager and the company’s lead on the certification process, was pleased to discover that, “We are actually implementing a lot of green practices. We just did it because that’s the way we thought it needed to be done, not because we were seeking a particular certification.”

They also found the checklist provided a tangible and detailed roadmap to help the company communicate ways in which employees can “live green”, both in and outside of the office. It also allowed the Green Committee to engage with more departments and expand their sustainability efforts.

The [Green Business Certification Program](#) also helped CNSI to determine areas in which they could improve, and better ways to measure progress. Their goals for 2018 include the following:

- Complete each phase of the [Continuous Improvement Plan](#), which involves monitoring defined metrics
- Expand awareness tactics for all employees including e-newsletter articles, in-house digital advertising, and in-person education events.
- Institute a Fair Trade Certified and low-impact purchasing policy at all project sites.
- Identify requirements and begin work on greening three office locations outside the county, utilizing the Green Business Certification framework.

Their main challenge was pulling all the information together from various departments. But now they possess real data on things like recycled and recyclable office supplies, coffee packets, etc., that provide tangible evidence they are making progress toward their goals and a positive impact on their local and global environment.

The certification has also helped them understand that their commitment to organizational stewardship comes alive when policies are put into practice.



Earth Day Becomes Earth Month

Since iCare began, Earth Day has been an important cornerstone to increase employee engagement and raise awareness of environmental issues. In the past, CNSI has distributed reusable mugs, bags, and garden seeds. They also make an annual contribution to the Arbor Day Foundation. Given that CNSI is an IT company, they place a great deal of emphasis on electronic recycling. Each year, they host an e-cycling event where employees can bring in used or broken electronics for proper recycling. To date, more than 2,500 pounds of electronic waste has been collected.

In 2018, Earth Day transformed into Earth Month. Throughout the month of April, the company hosted different sustainability activities. In addition to their annual e-cycling event, the company invited a representative from Waste Management who showed the process, goals, and tips for proper recycling.

The company also extended their seed giveaway by distributing more than 1,000 packets to all their US offices. Lastly, the CNSI office in Michigan teamed up with their local area food bank to weed, clean up, and plant fresh vegetables and fruit in their garden.

To highlight all these activities, the Marketing Communications department put out a e-newsletter at the beginning of the month, advertised events on the company's intranet, and displayed weekly ads on the TV screens located on each floor. These promotional and educational materials are then used throughout the year to serve as friendly reminders of how to be environmentally conscience.

Sustainability Embedded

What is readily apparent is that CNSI's sustainability efforts are not simply about checking the boxes. Their significant efforts are very much a part of their corporate culture and embedded in their long-term commitment to being a good corporate steward.

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