



Behavioural change in kitchens can be measured after all

Employees are the most valuable asset within a catering operation and after this utilities are the highest cost. So if you can invest in your staff in a way that will drive down your utility bills, you'll see results in more ways than one, writes Kate Gould of CaterOps.

Catering is not a precise science. In fact it is heavily influenced by the mindset and behaviour of staff. Between 30% and 40% of energy savings within a commercial catering environment today can be achieved by improving operator awareness and introducing robust systems of work that will reduce energy consumption.

If you think about it, nearly everyone's working day is driven by routine. What is the first thing a chef does in the morning? Switch on the lights, get changed, fire up the oven. Routines are driven by our subconscious – the internal checklist to get our day started.

So if you get a new oven installed that only requires a 20-minute start up time, does that mean your chef will switch on the lights, get changed and



prepare the vegetables before firing up the oven? It's very unlikely, unless they have been trained to do so!

It is crucial to know what you are spending before you can make savings, so first of all you need to understand what the consequences are of turning the oven on when you arrive at work, and turning it off when you close down the kitchen. Identify tangible evidence on which to make improvements.

Take a hospital that is providing two hot meals a day, 365 days a year, for 150 patients. How many managers could tell you what the energy cost would be over a 10-year period for one six-burner oven range that is turned on at 7am and turned off when the kitchen is shut

down at 7pm? The answer is not many but that doesn't mean there aren't tools available that can.

We have developed a tool called CaterOps, for instance, that has been designed to help managers improve the sustainability of their business by developing a holistic approach to energy management. Through that I can tell you that the cost for that hospital would be around £28,206 if the gas price is 2.56p per kWh. This equates to 2.58p of energy per meal produced.

In this case, including the start-up time, the oven is only actually required for a total of 4.5 hours per day. After a little staff training, the operating time could be reduced to 4.5 hours a day,

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resulting in a total projected energy cost over the 10-year period falling to £10,577 or 0.97p per meal produced and delivering an overall energy saving of 62%. Imagine if you could identify a 62% saving in your energy bills that, after staff training costs, could be converted to pure profit! The biggest challenge our industry faces is establishing how efficient the equipment is, how

much energy it is using and what the relative cost is to the business.

Once this has been achieved you can set tangible goals and engage your staff to make a quantifiable difference. After all, you can install the most energy efficient equipment, but if staff aren't educated on how to use the equipment properly the benefits won't be tangible.

The biggest barrier to achieving an energy efficient kitchen is how catering operators benchmark the performance of their facilities in terms of energy consumption to enable them to make savings. How much energy is the catering equipment consuming? Which appliances are consuming the most energy? Are employees operating the equipment efficiently?

Once these questions have been answered a planned approach to energy management can be implemented. Foodservice operators will be able to develop a strategic equipment replacement strategy that will give the best lifecycle costs and provide a realistic

return on investment. They can also introduce a behavioural change campaign that will improve understanding and deliver results, encouraging staff to maximise the efficiency of existing and new catering equipment.

As a management tool, CaterOps is designed not only to provide operators with a strategic catering equipment replacement programme to identify where energy savings can be made through the procurement of efficient equipment, it also projects how energy consumption and carbon footprint can be influenced by staff awareness and improved operational practices.

It all means that operators can harness the value of their staff and operate the most efficient catering equipment fleets without seeing running costs go through the roof. **FEJ**

Kate Gould is director of CaterOps, a cloud-based service to project energy use, energy cost and carbon footprint of commercial kitchens. www.caterops.co.uk




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