



Case in Point

Zoo Jewellery

Zoo Jewellery

Supporting local craftspeople and establishing a fair price for their work has always been part of 17 year-old Zoo Jewellery's company ethos. The UK retailer, headquartered in Chichester, sources many of its jewellery items from developing countries in the Far East and was founded in the early 90s by three college graduates – Rob Gibbons, Simon Abbott and Jim Ford – who shared a passion for design, exotic places and backpacking. But, as the company has grown over the years, its not just fair trade that has become an issue for the trio. Increasingly, escalating costs of energy at Zoo Jewellery's three outlets in Worthing, Salisbury and Winchester and the head office and online retail site in Chichester, have driven the founders to take stock of the company's environmental performance.

"Heating and lighting are our biggest costs and we were very conscious they were going up," explains Rob Gibbons.

Help from Business Link

Thanks to its existing relationship with Business Link, Zoo Jewellery was able to tap into BL's Sustainable Business support service, which

provided the company with a free sustainability review in January 2008.

The main issue raised by the audit was the energy loss through open shop doors and inefficient use of air conditioning units as well as the use of energy-sapping halogen lights for the jewellery display. "We had been running off very expensive blow heaters that were blasting out money and energy at the shop front. And although we'd already replaced these with more efficient air conditioning units that double up as heaters at back of shop, we weren't using them properly, we were advised," explains Rob Gibbons. "They also advised us on installing low energy bulbs that used less wattage without losing any brightness."

BL provided Zoo Jewellery with an electricity monitor for free so as to measure how much energy the shops were using and that led to the company investing in sensor-based lighting in the back office areas of its premises. It was successful in applying for a £500 grant Energy Efficiency Grant Scheme, funded by SEEDA, to cover some of the cost.

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Making savings

Rob Gibbons says the investment in new low energy lighting has already led to a 15 per cent saving on electricity, while overall the savings on energy have amounted to an impressive 20 per cent off the energy costs of this £930,000-turnover company.

“It’s about someone saying do you know you are doing this? And we would never have known about the Grant500 had it not been for Business Link,” comments Rob.

Meanwhile, thanks to the Business Link review, the company has taken action on establishing a sustainability policy and practices with its supply chain and staff and sharing this with its customers and encouraging them to do the same.

Sustainability

“We’ve switched over to biodegradable plastic bags, reduced our packaging and reduced the use of bags for our customers,” says Rob Gibbons.

“We know our customers increasingly want to know about sustainability of supply line, so we’ve included information about this in our catalogues and have started to bring this information into our stores.”

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Zoo Jewellery is also educating its staff about being more energy efficient and has incorporated its sustainability policy and practices in its employee handbook.

Rob Gibbons says that although Zoo Jewellery was already working towards cutting down on its costs and carbon emissions, the BL sustainability review has been invaluable in pointing out and suggesting ideas of how it could achieve its aims most effectively.

Business Link

“I’ve been very impressed with Business Link,” says Rob. “Often these kinds of things can be time consuming and not achieve much but the Business Link team have kept regularly in touch and advised on things we would never have known about otherwise. It really has been very good.”

Now Rob Gibbons can look forward to his next trip to the Far East to source fair trade jewellery, safe in the knowledge that his sustainability actions back home are helping his business’ bottom line – as well as the planet.

