

BUSINESSES LEARN GOING GREEN IS GOOD FOR BOTTOM LINE

(From: Rivier Today, Fall 2010)

“We have to ask ourselves, are we doing the right thing? Does this align with our corporate values? What are the costs? ROI?”

— Lisa LaFave, Vice President, Global Customer Solutions for UPS



Kedar Gupta, left, and Frank Siega, right, listen as Terry Large discusses PSNH's investments in renewable energy. (PHOTOS BY JODIE ANDRUSKEVICH)

In May, the Rivier College President's Circle presented “Good for Business, Good for the Environment,” a session showcasing how environmentally friendly business practices can have a positive impact on the planet and a company's bottom line. Frank Siega, then CEO of Two C Pack; Terry Large, Director of Business Planning & Customer Support for Public Service of New Hampshire; Dr. Kedar Gupta, CEO of ARC Energy; and Lisa LaFave, Vice President, Global Customer Solutions for UPS shared their successful green business practices.

Comprised of distinguished business and community leaders, the Rivier College President's Circle opens dialogue and promotes the exchange of ideas and approaches for dealing with issues impacting the businesses, organizations, and citizens of New Hampshire and Massachusetts.

Siega told the audience that one of Two C Pack's first steps was hiring a chief sustainability officer. When the company moved from Massachusetts to New Hampshire, they constructed a new facility—one of the largest geothermal installations in the country. To offset the energy the company uses, Two C Pack purchases wind power credits; to eliminate landfill use, the company sends waste to a waste management plant to be converted into electricity. The company buys paper from sustainably managed forests and has worked to reduce the waste stream in packaging.

“When you're looking at sustainability, you can't just sugarcoat the surface,” Siega said.

Large stated that sustainability often creates a tug-of-war battle between policy and cost. “As the state’s largest utility (PSNH), we find ourselves in the position where we have to help pull the rope,” he said. The Renewable Portfolio Standard, passed in 2007, calls for 25 percent of the state’s energy to come from renewable sources by 2025. PSNH has already reached 18 percent—the company has invested in wood power, the Lempster Wind Farm, and the Energy Park Solar Array.



Lisa LaFave says while people joke about UPS’s no left turn policy, the financial and environmental savings are serious business.

“The economics don’t currently support renewable energy sources,” Large said. “Market prices have gone down, which makes it difficult for new players to enter the market.” PSNH has chosen to focus on efficiency programs, developing large-scale renewable, partnering with renewable developers, and making environmental and efficiency upgrades at existing facilities.

Gupta’s ARC Energy said that his passion is determining how to create new technologies and new jobs in this part of the world. While LED lights save 80 to 90 percent of energy compared to incandescent lights while lasting longer and eliminating mercury, LED bulbs are currently expensive. His company is developing technologies that will reduce the cost of LED bulbs.

LaFave said sustainability is part of a broader discussion at UPS about social responsibility, environmental sustainability and economic prosperity. UPS’s business strategies and sustainability plan are interconnected, emphasizing operating efficiently, leading by example, acting responsibly and delivering environmentally friendly services.

“We have to ask ourselves, are we doing the right thing? Does this align with our corporate values? What are the costs? ROI?” LaFave said. UPS has developed comprehensive strategies to optimize delivery routes, eliminating an estimated 100 million miles in the last four years. The company also introduced an alternative fuel fleet, paperless invoicing, and eco-responsible packaging. Thanks to these efforts, Fortune 500 voted UPS the world’s most socially responsible company.

When members of the audience asked how companies can start being more responsible, LaFave cited numerous resource groups and businesses focused on sustainability easily found through a Google search. Large suggested engaging customers and employees in dialog about their priorities to determine the best starting points.

Rivier College, too, has taken some environmentally friendly actions in recent years. For many years, the College has recycled paper, light bulbs, batteries, electronics and small appliances. This past year, Rivier’s Campus Green Committee launched campus-wide recycling of plastic and aluminum as well. Recent campus improvements have incorporated energy-saving measures, such as energy efficient lighting for the College’s newly turfed athletic field and water-saving fixtures in residence hall sinks and showers. The College is also teaching students the importance of green values, incorporating sustainability and corporate social responsibility into the business curriculum for undergraduate and M.B.A. students and launching a graduate course in Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Stewardship. ■