



BY
JODI MCMAHON
MRA- The Management Association

Creating a Sustainable Future One Kilowatt Hour at a Time

Franklin Energy Services, located in scenic Port Washington, Wisconsin, has been in the business of energy efficiency since 1994. They help their utility clients meet energy savings goals as the third-party implementer of the clients' energy efficiency or renewable energy programs. These programs assist utilities' end-use customers and provide energy savings to both the customers and the utility. Clients include organizations such as We Energies in Wisconsin, Consumers Energy in Michigan, Xcel Energy in Colorado, and Alliant Energy in Iowa. Franklin Energy currently has offices in Wisconsin, Colorado, Michigan, and Minnesota.

MRA caught up with Jan Peiffer, Corporate Communications Manager, to learn more about Franklin Energy and the great work they are doing to improve energy efficiency.

What was Paul Schueller's vision for the company when he founded it in 1994?

Company founder, Paul Schueller, graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Madison with a degree in engineering and began his career with a Wisconsin utility. Energy efficiency programs, he realized, could achieve better outcomes when a third party advocated for the end-use customer. Customers, he learned, were open to input on improving their efficiency when they were exposed to unbiased technical resources that helped guide them through their unique energy efficiency project opportunities. These resources also connect the customer to financial assistance offered by their utility and the local network of trade allies or contractors.

The company's name honors Benjamin Franklin, whose beliefs are infused in the culture, as staff follow core values including environmental stewardship, integrity, and results-orientation.

Why does Franklin Energy have multiple offices in each state it serves?

One key to the firm's success is the ability to engage the marketplace and partner with area resources. They strategically place offices near the customers with whom they work. Most staff is in the field, working with customers to identify opportunities firsthand or training a group of contractors on program opportunities for their customers. Jobs are filled with a local workforce, which positively impacts the area's economy.

Franklin is hired by a utility to help its business or residential customers save energy. They do not sell or endorse a particular product, but rather advocate for energy efficiency technology as a whole. It is the role of the technical staff to review energy efficiency projects, to help calculate their potential energy savings and assist customers in prioritizing projects. The actual installations are performed by local contractors, further driving economic development. As a result, relationships are built with community groups, contractors, and local associations who work in concert with one another and not competitively.

What makes Franklin Energy Services so good at what they do?

Franklin has grown from 50 employees to more than 200 employees in less than five years. There has been tremendous industry growth in recent years driving the need for a competent workforce without the luxury of being able to tap in to a well trained and experienced workforce. To meet this challenge, Franklin Energy employs three main practices to successfully meet demand:

1. **Creating and maintaining a strong corporate culture.** The company created a corporate culture based on their traditions and core values. The values include: Results Orientation, Frugality, Ingenuity, Integrity, and Environmental Stewardship. These values are communicated throughout the organization

on an ongoing basis and an award is given each year for each value to the employee who has demonstrated that value.

2. **Hiring the right people.** The hiring process begins with candidates engaging in a culture index exercise that aids HR staff in identifying which people will fit a particular role. It helps identify if a candidate is better filling a role requiring attention to detail and accuracy or engaging with people and building relationships. It is referred to in business as "getting the right people on the bus." When people with industry experience are not readily available, it is important to find people with a good culture fit that can be trained, mentored, and eventually put in the right seat upon the proverbial bus.

3. **Ensuring people have the training and resources they need to be successful.** Franklin puts their high quality new hires on a "speed to experience" track. By doing so, staff has the training and resources necessary to quickly contribute to an energy efficiency program, in a consistent way. For example, we ask experienced staff to mentor employees new to the industry. Each employee is provided a plan in which goals are set and monitored the 30th, 60th, and 90th days of employment. During this period, most employees participate in Energy Efficiency I and II training, conducted internally with experienced engineers. These concentrated training days look at core energy efficiency technologies and practices, and teach everyone to use the same processes for calculating energy efficiencies.

The company has also partnered with MRA to provide both individualized training such as improving presentation skills, to customized, on-site Principles of Management sessions. Approximately 25 leaders within the organization completed this comprehensive series in 2009 and another group has just begun the series in 2010. MRA instructors worked with Franklin's management team to adapt the Principles of Management series to meet the particular leadership needs of the business.

What does it mean to all of us when kilowatt hours are saved?

There are three main benefits to a business or homeowner participating in an energy efficiency program. First, they reduce their energy costs. Many times, the cost of project implementation is offset by financial incentives offered by the utility. These can result in a payback in just two years and an improved bottom line. Businesses that improve their overall efficiency can be more competitive. Second, these programs help sustain local contractor businesses and stimulate local economies through job growth. Third, by reducing energy use, the need for utilities to build additional power plants is reduced. This reduction has favorable impacts to the environment and helps utilities lower their costs.

Benjamin Franklin would have approved. ■