

Shields Environmental – Awards for Excellence 2004

Sector: Electronics

Tools and techniques: Resource efficiency

Organisation: Shields Environmental

Shields Environmental is a medium sized company offering environmental solutions to the telecommunications industry. Headquartered in Essex, with offices in North America and Europe, the company employs 120 staff. Shields was the joint first company in the world to achieve a certificated environmental management system (now ISO 14001) in 1995 and has reported publicly through an EMAS registered environmental statement since 1996.

Processes: Shields Environmental provides innovative environmental solutions to the telecommunications industry focused in two key areas: re-use/recycling of mobile phones, re-use/recycling of telecommunications network equipment.

Fonebak is the latest solution developed by Shields Environmental in consultation with their clients. It is the world's first mobile phone recycling scheme to comply with all current and forthcoming environmental legislation (15 million phones are replaced in the UK each year). Using 2000 free collection points and freepost envelopes, phones are refurbished to provide affordable communication in developing countries where the cost of handsets is prohibitively expensive.

Having developed their high technology facilities on derelict land in an area of high unemployment in Essex they are now one of the largest technology employers in the area.

Impact:

- Increase in turnover of 254 per cent since the start of the Fonebak initiative
- One million phones re-used and 105 tonnes of phones/accessories securely recycled in first 12 months
- Eliminated over 684 tonnes of potential landfill since the start of the Fonebak initiative
- Recycling support programme to assist developing markets set up sound recycling programmes
- Bringing together of highly competitive mobile industry to create effective solution – no mobile phone mountain – that is proven and in place
- Free practical solution for consumers with incentives to recycle phones - either directly or to benefit a charity
- A measure of efficient environmental management by way of a materials balance sheet: measuring equipment reused, recycled, and all other safe treatment/disposal (the company now operates a voluntary zero landfill policy)
- Suppliers are audited at least annually to ensure that they not only comply with legislation, but meet expectations of best environmental practice
- In co-operation with Southwark Council, introduced 'fones 4 safety' providing free mobile phones to victims of violence enabling them to dial '999' at the touch of a single button, initiating immediate response from emergency services.
- Set up a programme titled 'community fonebak' enabling small charities to collect unwanted mobile handsets in exchange for money.
- 90 new staff recruited and trained

Environmental Impact Award for innovative environmental performance integrated into the company's sustainable development strategy, delivering proven business benefits

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