

The challenge of change

James Brittain believes people are often the quickest, most cost-effective way of delivering compliance and energy performance improvement

More organisations are appreciating that behaviour change is fundamental to delivering sustainable energy savings and performance improvement at scale. However, many still struggle with their change programmes and become disillusioned when energy savings don't result or because they quickly fall away over time.

ESOS energy audits and ISO 50001 are great opportunities to boost behaviour change and deliver compliance at the same time. One way to do this is to involve and do it through your people; this not only means implementation of projects is more friction-free but also ensures there's more chance your improvements will be locked-in long-term.

It doesn't have to be complicated. The focus here is on engaging and energising the behaviours and mind-sets of the key energy users involved. And getting this right often really helps set up behaviour change right across the organisation.

Involving people can come with its challenges. Historically key challenges have been about limited headspace to do energy projects or a general denial that people can make a difference. While these are still important, I think, as an industry, we've made good head way here. More recently, it's often more about bridging disconnects between people and teams, overcoming perceived risks or the beliefs of why people justify they can't get involved.

I'm a chartered engineer and energy manager, with over 20 years' experience in the industry. When I first started, I was very much trained to focus on technology and more efficient equipment when looking to save energy.

While I was the energy manager at Heathrow Airport, ten years ago now, I really began to appreciate that it's all about people; it's about behaviour change and the secret is often to blend technical with people-based solutions delivered through good local networks of everyday champions.

During this time, we didn't initially have



Taking the risk: the skills and performance of people can make a huge impact on the outcome of a project

any dedicated capital budget for energy projects so we had the chance to try out lots of people solutions. We really surprised ourselves in what local people were able to achieve at low cost; the best areas were delivering 30+ per cent savings after four years.

Last year, we worked with a global leader in logistics to deliver ISO 50001 across sites within three European countries. Working in partnership through people, we did it in record time taking less than six months from conception to certification.

The certification auditor commented: "It has been a pleasant surprise to audit a company who is not doing it because it is needed but also because they are into the subject".

People will get involved if they want to do it for themselves.

Energy champions involved

More training programmes are coming on stream to enable everyday energy champions to get involved and get credit for the good work that they do. Programmes that help develop and inspire confidence



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and mind-sets as well as drawing out the skills and performance of the people involved. The usual principles of behaviour change apply: it needs to be desirable, focused, easy and continual, but most importantly it needs to be owned by the people involved.

• On 27 September in Leeds, ESTA's Independent Energy Consultants' group (IECg) is holding an event for energy managers and sector professionals, updating and discussing: ESOS Phase 2, the updated ISO 50001 Standard, the impacts of Brexit and other pressing topics.

This will be a great opportunity to debate the latest opportunities and fresh approaches in the light of changing times for demand side energy management.

ESTA's IECg members are independent energy consultants (many were previously energy managers) and include some of the industry's most experienced specialists providing a rich source for independent advice. ■

• www.estaenergy.org.uk/events