

Motivating Stakeholders to Support Energy Management Practices

Motivating stakeholders to support energy management practices is crucial in achieving set goals and efficient energy usage within organisations. The importance of keeping stakeholders engaged and informed about energy-efficient practices, setting clear goals, regular updates on progress, and offering incentives for participation is not lost on any energy management professional. This article offers perspectives from two energy management professionals on how they engage with stakeholders to promote the adoption of these practices for long-term success and positive impact.

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Energy management is crucial for organisations striving to minimise their environmental footprint, reduce costs and enhance their reputation. In my experience, by fostering a shared understanding of the benefits and opportunities associated with energy efficiency, organisations can garner widespread support and participation.

Picture the scene; you've worked on your energy management strategy for weeks, maybe even months. You've completed the initial research, the engagement with potential suppliers and contractors, gathered the costings, the facts, the data, assessed the timelines and, of course, reviewed the project proposals. You've negotiated hard, been ruthless, and your shortlist is ready. Now all you need to do is

present to the Board and convince them that your million-pound plans are the best plans, and the ones needed to guarantee future sustainability and take the business into its next phase of stratospheric growth.

Of course, this isn't always the case. Energy management plans and practices needn't cost a million pounds, and often they don't. But, whether it's the proverbial acorns or the oak trees, there is always a group of people who will need convincing – stakeholders.

Before implementing energy management practices, it's essential to understand the various stakeholders within the organisation and their motivations. Stakeholders perform roles at all levels throughout an organisation and they can be internal or external to your organisation. It can be a Boardroom full of C-suite executives whose support you need to spend millions on a huge new solar park project, it could be shop-floor staff whose support you need to make correct use of the new recycling bins you've bought, so that the

volumes of general waste decrease. It could even be the local planning department whose support you need to realise the benefits of erecting that new wind turbine on your land in the face of the NIMBY (Not In My Back Yard) crowd who just don't like the look of it. Whoever the stakeholders are, understanding the diversity of their interests, concerns and motivations so that their vision becomes aligned with yours, is critically important. Let's look at these stakeholders in a little more detail, together with a summary of their responsibilities and level of involvement in energy management practices:

1. Investors, Boards and C-suite

Arguably, they are ultimately responsible for determining whether energy plans and practices are given the green light to be signed-off and implemented. Historically, this is where energy plans meet their doom, but as more and more evidence is available to back up energy plans in terms of the clear ROI linked to any initial investment, these stakeholders are becoming wiser to the positive impacts energy investment can have.

2. Senior Management

Responsible for strategic decision-making and resource allocation. Convincing these stakeholders can be assured by having thorough business cases in place, with no stones left unturned and clear, evidence-based details on why your plan is the right plan to invest in. Consider yourself in front of a panel on Energy Dragons Den! You'll need to convince them all to invest in you and your strategies! Your plans can then be summarised by Senior Management and escalated to the Board.

3. Department Heads and Managers

More than likely, the people who are writing the energy strategy, plans and practices will sit in this group, unless they are senior managers. Nevertheless, assistance will be needed to implement energy policies, procedures and practices within the various other departments across an organisation. The full buy-in will be needed from these stakeholders

who, in turn, will be cascading the information to their teams. If energy plans are not accepted and received well at this level of stakeholders, you can guarantee that these same behaviours will be displayed at a subordinate level.

4. Employees

Frontline workers often have a direct impact on energy consumption through their actions, and it is often these stakeholders who increasingly demand improved energy

practices from their employers. As information becomes freely available, employees want to see investment in energy and witness the associated improvements across an organisation. The tangible effects of satisfying this stakeholder group is that talent stays longer, meaning less money is spent on recruitment, and improved talent is attracted to fill vacant roles, therefore increasing the performance of the organisation.

5. Customers and Clients

External stakeholder groups, such as customers and clients, can often drive change within an organisation – for reasons both good and bad.



I’ve experienced organisations that have had a client for over thirty years suddenly be told that unless they successfully implemented a formal EMS (it was ISO14001:2015 in this instance), all ties will be severed, and the client will look elsewhere for an alternative supplier. I have also experienced clients working with organisations to implement improvements to energy performance, as it will be mutually beneficial to both parties – not just ticks in boxes.

6. Suppliers and Partners

Stakeholders at this level can play a vital role in the supply chain and may even collaborate on energy-saving initiatives. As the regulatory landscape for reporting data, ESOS and SECR for example, matures; supply chain and other partners can assist in the provision of valuable data – scope 3 emissions. For example, so that this data can be added to energy plans to reinforce them, answer any questions that may be raised and, ideally, get them signed off at the first attempt. Going forward, initial data used to benchmark an organisation can be scrutinised, year-on-year, to evidence that improvements have been achieved.

7. Regulatory Bodies

Industry regulatory bodies set the standards and regulations related to energy usage and sustainability. These standards are usually unequivocal and can help drive energy plans and investments through at board-level. For example, if the energy performance of an organisation shows

that it will not meet regulatory requirements unless investments in infrastructure are implemented. Additionally, bodies such as local planning departments may play an active role in recommending elements of energy plans. Only recently, I have been involved in a planning application that included increases in the number of EV charge points at a location in East Cambridgeshire, whereby the local planning department recommended doubling the

existing number of EV charge points from 6 to 12 (they also recommended doubling the cycle racks from 20 to 40!). Whilst there is a legislative requirement to do so, satisfying stakeholders such as the local council/planning department may see energy plans that involve planning applications successfully expedited.

Once all of the various stakeholders potentially involved in energy plans are thoroughly understood, a robust approach that considers some, or all of the following points can help to get them onside and supportive of your plans.

Raise awareness through education:

Begin by educating stakeholders about the importance of energy management practices. Be careful not to lecture them but highlight the numerous and diverse benefits to the organisation, the environment and the societal benefits too. It's important to use verifiable data and case studies to illustrate any potential cost savings, reduced environmental impacts and improved corporate reputation associated with effective energy management.

Set clear targets and objectives:

Establishing specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound (SMART) energy management targets & objectives, and ensuring that they clearly align with the organisation's overall strategic objectives and priorities is critical. Specifically when looking to establish support from the

higher echelons of an organisation, including investors.

Offer training and resources:

Formal training courses and other resources, such as e-learning and workshops can help to equip employees with the knowledge and skills necessary to implement energy-saving practices, and perhaps more importantly understand why the practices have been implemented. Providing additional resources such as best practice toolkits, guidelines, industry benchmarking data to support stakeholders in adopting energy-efficient behaviours and technologies.



Provide incentives and recognition:

Implement incentive programs to reward individuals or departments that achieve energy savings or contribute innovative ideas for energy conservation. Incentives don't always need to be financial. The recognition and celebration of achievements of individuals or teams through certificates, awards or internal communications is often more impactful than money.

Empower employees through engagement:

Empowering employees, at all levels,

to take ownership of energy-saving initiatives within their respective areas of responsibility can be hugely productive in engaging them to offer their input, ideas, feedback and managing the improvements in energy efficiency. Encourage active participation and involvement from employees at all levels by soliciting their input, feedback, and ideas for improving energy efficiency.

Leadership by example:

Ensure visible, demonstrable leadership and commitment from senior management by integrating energy management into the organisation's strategic vision and goals. Lead by example by demonstrating energy-saving

behaviours and championing sustainability initiatives.

Collaborate and communicate:

Facilitate cross-functional collaboration and communication among departments, teams and stakeholders to

share knowledge, best practices and lessons learned. Establish regular channels for feedback and dialogue to address concerns, overcome challenges and drive continuous improvement in energy management.

Track progress and report results:

Implement a robust monitoring and reporting system to track energy consumption, savings and performance against targets. Share progress updates and results with stakeholders regularly to maintain transparency and accountability.

Tailor the messages to different

stakeholder groups:

This doesn't mean to fabricate any truths! It simply means that different elements of your energy plans and processes may mean different things to different people. The installation cost of a 30-meter wind turbine is irrelevant to someone who simply doesn't want to see it from their back window! Recognising that different stakeholder groups will have varying priorities and motivations will allow for messaging to be fine-tuned. This tailoring of communication and messages should resonate with the specific interests and concerns of each group.

Make continual improvements and adaptations:

Solicit feedback from stakeholders on the effectiveness of energy management practices and initiatives. Continuously evaluate and refine strategies based on lessons learned and changing organisational dynamics.

By implementing these strategies, organisations can effectively motivate stakeholders at all levels to support energy management plans and practices, and foster a culture of sustainability and efficiency.

Author's profile:

Kevin is a high performing and results-orientated H&S, ESG & Sustainability Management professional with a passion for the industry and a hands-on, pragmatic approach to problem solving to provide stakeholder-focused results. A skilled man-manager with an entrepreneurial attitude, always determined to succeed and be a driver of success in others.

Austin Langan AMEI, Energy Manager at VIVID



This year marks my fifth working in the social housing sector, four of those within energy management, and 2024 sees energy management and the greater sustainability piece, riding upon the crest of a wave.

Many councils in England have declared a climate emergency, the Government has set targets for the

action was being taken to reduce consumption and lower bills. With the Russia-Ukraine conflict driving prices even higher the need to reduce consumption became more evident and the need greater. However, the inflation we have endured has blown budget forecasts out of the water, leading businesses to seek savings across the board. This, coupled with the stabilisation of energy prices, means the case for investment becomes harder.

So, how do you motivate and engage with stakeholders?

Case study: Replacement of landlord meters

VIVID is a leading provider of social housing in the south of England with 35,000 homes. We currently have around 1,500 landlord electricity meters. As part of the Government's drive to smart metering, our electricity supplier is required to replace our older, analogue meters.

Initially, they were treating these supplies as they would a domestic setting, sending letters to "The Landlord meter", which led to multiple letters to our customers directly and a flurry of calls to our customer experience team worried whether these were genuine.

Contacting the supplier to halt this proved challenging, our priority was getting meters installed and minimise the disruption to our customers, and save them any confusion. Eventually, with the help of our account manager at our energy broker, we were able to get in touch with the commercial meter



housing and transport sectors to achieve net zero carbon, backed by grants, and social housing providers have responded positively to this.

So, with this, plus rising energy costs, greater scrutiny from customers and the obligations of the Energy Act looming large, it should be easy to sign off on any change you want to make, right? Post Covid demand saw rises in energy prices, while several energy suppliers, such as Bulb, went out of business. This in turn led to more scrutiny from stakeholders, both internal and external, about how we procure and use energy and what

team. Learning we had nearly 1,000 meters earmarked for replacement, and they were keen to commence with a programme to install en masse.

On the face of it, this was a win for us. It was completely free and would give us better monitoring of our homes' energy usage. However, the age and diversity of our housing stock, coupled with the detailed information required by the energy supplier prior to installations being booked, meant that time and resource from across the business would be needed to ensure things went smoothly and effectively.

There is never going to be a good time to add more work to your colleagues, but approaching year end was always going to be a challenge, but one of our company values is 'work as one team', something I am pleased to say embodies my colleagues across the business. To deliver this project required assistance from our customer service team, neighbourhoods team, estates team, independent living team, and finally, our energy and sustainability team.

Task 1 – Identify the stakeholders

We identified the key stakeholders in each team and spoke to them on an informal basis, to sound them out and understand any objections they may have or issues that this project make cause for them. Having a quick, 5 minute face to face chat over a coffee was incredibly effective and reduced the need for more formal online meetings.

Task 2 – Short term pain = long term gain

In these conversations, it was vital to listen - really listen - to the concerns raised by each team to understand the impact this project would have upon them. It was also vital to

demonstrate to them how it would benefit their teams personally in the long term, e.g., not having to send neighbourhood officers out to read meters each month, fewer complaints about higher bills based on estimates, etc.

Task 3 – Link back to the business' ambitions

By showing how this project would support the ambitions of the business, it strengthened the case for the project to go ahead. This project helped to improve the accuracy of billing, thereby eliminating the high estimated bills we were receiving, in turn reducing cost to customers, and therefore higher satisfaction levels and lower incoming customer calls.

Task 4 – Think big but start small

We were pleasantly surprised by the scale of ambition of our supplier's plan to replace hundreds of meters a week. However, committing to such large numbers came with risk, so we started with a small pilot of just 10, leading to another pilot of 50 installs in a week. By taking small, incremental steps, we were able to see what worked well and what didn't. We made subtle changes and used the feedback to make improvements to the next pilot.

Task 5 – Monitoring, listening, improving

As we now move out of the pilot phase and into larger scale delivery, it is important to keep checking in with each stakeholder to ensure things are still on track and note anything that has changed, e.g., is the estate operative who gives access to certain blocks on holiday? Is communication between the contractors and on-site staff still good? Have these activities resulted in more calls

into the customer service team? By continually checking in with all our stakeholders, we avoided small issues becoming larger ones and were able to make small 'course adjustments' rather than drastic changes. This project has been a great opportunity to communicate with our customers, informing them of what we were doing and highlighting how it would positively impact on them by improving our service charge accuracy.

Task 6 – Show your appreciation

Lastly, it's a simple and effortless thing to say thank you, but always important and appreciated. A little goes a long way. Passing on your thanks to everyone involved and making sure they understand how their involvement has positively impacted on the project and the wider ambitions of the business.

In summary :

1. Know your audience;
2. Make sure you understand the impact of your projects on your stakeholders;
3. Make sure they understand the benefits to them and the business as a whole;
4. Prove the concept with pilots;
5. Use regular communication with stakeholders to affect small course adjustments;
6. Show your appreciation for everyone's efforts.

Author's profile:

Austin has worked within housing over the course of 30 years, starting in the private new build and second-hand residential sale sector. Within his role at VIVID, the key focus is about improving how the business operates their heat networks, overseeing commercial energy procurement, consistently looking at ways to improve heat network efficiency to reduce CO₂ emissions and reduce customers' energy costs.