

BlueWorks Business

The Collins Companies



Until 1997, the sustainability efforts of The Collins Companies had focused on stewardship of its forests. The company let the forests grow without the use of fertilizers and they used selective harvesting techniques.

The Collins Companies' then-CEO Jim Quinn realized, that by embracing sustainability at all levels of operations, the firm could differentiate itself from its key competitors.

But where would they start? The company needed guiding principles and a framework that would inform all levels of decision-making and help set priorities. The Natural Step was just that—a process that would work well in both a manufacturing and an office setting.

The Collins Companies was the first forest products company in the United States to adopt The Natural Step. Now each project they undertake is weighed against the short- and long-term economic impacts and the Natural Step's four system conditions.

In the Portland office this means reducing paper usage through efforts like using a paperless fax system, replacing paper towels with cloth roll towels and removing themselves from unwanted mailing lists. Reducing junk mail alone saved an estimated 19,758 pages in just 3 months. It also means sourcing environmentally responsible cleaning products and using green building practices in remodeling.

In the field it means developing win-win sustainable partnerships with suppliers. A great example: A paint supplier to the Klamath Falls operation helped supply a more concentrated product, thus reducing the number of trucks needed to transport the product to the mill. Water that would otherwise be discharged into the wetlands is used to dilute the concentrated product on-site in Klamath Falls.

The Collins Companies also uses at minimum 30 percent recycled-content paper, with most of their brochures and collateral on 100 percent recycled-content paper. But as a company committed to the sustainable harvest of wood, they also seek papers that have been certified as such by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), are processed chlorine-free and free of clay and other additives that negatively affect the recyclability of the product. The recent Collins History books, for example are printed on New Leaf paper which is FSC-certified.

The company educates all employees about the Natural Step and keeps employees motivated to move toward sustainability with "lunch and learn" programs and continued emphasis from company owners about their desire to operate the company as sustainably as possible.

The benefits of the Natural Step program have included some savings from reduced consumption, but the greater benefit has been increased employee morale from green office space and employee empowerment.



BlueWorks Business at a Glance

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"Do the Right Thing" is The Collins Companies' corporate vision statement and a mantra infused into all levels of operation. The key points they refer to when implementing this vision statement include:

- Passion for Improvement – This embodies the Natural Step principles of becoming more efficient on an on-going basis
- Powerful Teams – Empowering our employees to be the best they can be, as a team
- Premier Customer Service
- Sustain All Resources – Our real natural resource is our top soil, not our trees. Managing for top soil health includes all aspects involved with sustainable forest management principles. Our other key resource is our people. Continuous education helps to keep our human resources at their best
- Profit is Vital – If we do not survive, we can not be here to be a positive change agent