

Case Study

Sustainability Initiative Turns “Rags to Riches” Skolnik Industries, Chicago, Illinois



Project Summary | In January 2011, Skolnik Industries—a business to business manufacturer of carbon steel drums and stainless steel drums—hired Delta Institute to document the company’s sustainability efforts and develop a comprehensive Sustainability Plan to guide future efforts. Located at 4900 S. Kilbourn Avenue on Chicago’s Southwest side, Skolnik had been committed to sustainable business practices, but until contacting Delta had largely taken a project-based approach to these efforts. By bringing Delta in to help develop a Sustainability Plan, Skolnik sought to integrate environmentally conscious approaches to all facets of its operations. In doing so, Skolnik hoped to realize long-term cost savings and develop a work culture committed to good corporate citizenship and environmental sustainability. To assist Skolnik in achieving these goals, Delta employed a three-pronged approach defined by a wide-ranging sustainability analysis, the setting of Sustainability Goals for the company, and the creation of an Action Plan to allow Skolnik to progress toward its established goals.

Sustainability Analysis | Through site walkthroughs, data and document collection, and a series of conversations with Skolnik’s key management personnel and staff, Delta was able to document Skolnik’s current sustainable practices. Additionally, Delta employed a process mapping exercise by which Delta staffers identified material inputs and wastes generated at each step of Skolnik’s manufacturing process.

Delta was able to identify four opportunity areas for the expansion of ongoing sustainability initiatives and the creation of additional initiatives: Waste Reduction, Material Conservation, Energy and Water Use, and Office and Employee Practices (including community engagement). Furthermore, Delta helped the company articulate a vision for a more sustainable manufacturing process, resulting in the creation of Skolnik’s seven Sustainability Goals, and an Action Plan to achieve them.

**Sustainability Analysis &
Action Plan | July 2011**



Steps to Success

1) After being hired by Skolnik in January 2011, Delta conducted a Site walkthrough and spoke with staff and key management personnel to develop ideals on which to base a sustainability plan.

2) Delta then collected and reviewed information on Skolnik's ongoing sustainability practices to identify areas for the creation of expanded initiatives. Input was obtained from each major department in the organization to form the framework for the future initiatives.

3) Sustainability Goals, objectives and targets were then developed in four areas: Waste Reduction, Material Conservation, Energy and Water Use, and Office and Employee Practices

4) With the sustainability goals in mind, a comprehensive Action Plan was developed to help Skolnik set measurable objectives and chart its progress, complete with a feedback loop to refine goals and objectives as the plan progresses.



Sustainability Goals | Skolnik's Sustainability Goals were developed with an eye towards lowering manufacturing costs, improving energy and water efficiency, reducing waste, conserving process inputs, improving the health of the environment, and engaging stakeholders. From these ideals, the following goals were established:

1. Reduce waste
2. Conserve process material inputs
3. Reduce electricity, natural gas, and water use
4. Promote sustainable office practices
5. Engage employees in sustainability initiatives
6. Promote sustainability of human resources
7. Conduct sustainability review

Action Plan | The final product to come out of the Sustainability Analysis was the 2011-2014 Sustainability Action Plan. The Plan works by expanding upon Skolnik's current sustainable practices and by putting forth possibilities for new approaches to sustainability within each of the four opportunity areas identified during Delta's Sustainability Analysis. Each initiative includes a baseline, a quantifiable objective, a strategy to achieve said objective, and a time-driven implementation field to foster continuous improvement in the opportunity area. This method allows Skolnik to take a comprehensive approach to its sustainability efforts and easily track where it stands in relation to its eventual goals.



Results to Date | In March 2011, Skolnik management reviewed a draft of the Action Plan, and determined that the majority of Delta's proposed initiatives were either possible to be undertaken, or were already under way. While the Action Plan allows for a gradual implementation of sustainability strategies, cost-savings have already been achieved in certain areas. For example, Delta's efforts helped Skolnik turn "rags to riches" by recycling and reusing process rags, saving the company thousands of dollars per year. By collaborating with Delta Institute in pursuit of a greater commitment

to environmentally sustainable practices, Skolnik expects to enjoy significant cost-savings, improved employee health, reduced energy use in its plant and office space, and more efficient use of manufacturing materials by 2014. These achievements will cement its role in the manufacturing community as a leader in both environmental stewardship and good corporate citizenship.

More Information | For more information about sustainability and green business development services, please visit www.delta-institute.org, or contact Abigail Corso at acorso@delta-institute.org or 312-554-0900 x25.