

FOCUS ON BEING NZ'S FIRST CARBON NEUTRAL CLEANING COMPANY



Joss Jenner-Leuthart

When Wellington-based commercial cleaning company Focus was invited to join the New Zealand Business Council for Sustainable Development, it found it was trailblazing.

"We were surprised to find we were the only cleaning company on the Council at the time, although one other has joined since," said managing director Joss Jenner-Leuthart.

He founded the company in 2006 and rapidly recognised a growing demand for commercial cleaning services with an emphasis on sustainable working methods and operating as a responsible company.

Personal commitment to sustainable principles, coupled with the fact it made sound business sense, led the team to the decision to rebrand and concentrate entirely on that market.

Jenner-Leuthart and his team carried out extensive research and he still regularly takes part in sustainability workshops to keep abreast of the latest developments.

While the green cleaning movement has generated much interest worldwide, he felt strongly that there was a need to look at a bigger picture.

"Green cleaning really refers to using environmentally friendly cleaning products," Jenner-Leuthart explained.

"But a truly sustainable approach to commercial cleaning means taking a holistic approach. Using natural products is important - but it's only one element of a far bigger picture.

"In a couple of years I don't think we'll be hearing the term 'green cleaning' very much. There is a growing realisation that it goes far beyond the cleaning itself and even beyond recycling.

"One of our key points of difference is that we operate as a responsible New Zealand company in every way, including environmental, social and economic sustainability."

Today Focus, a member of BSCNZ, employs a mid-size team of professional staff and provides high quality sustainable solutions to clients ranging from small businesses to blue chip organisations such as the Treasury and Jeff Gray BMW.

It uses 100 percent biodegradable environmentally friendly natural cleaning products that are Green Seal certified and purchased in high concentration to reduce unnecessary packaging. All washroom consumables used are also environmentally responsible.

The company's comprehensive waste management, disposal and recycling programme can include the likes of an audit and assessment of site waste as well as

consultation and advice on reducing gross landfill waste.

"New clients often say they want to change to more sustainable office practices but just don't know where to begin," noted Jenner-Leuthart. "But we find they have taken quite a few steps already - and that's why they have come to us."

Jenner-Leuthart emphasised that high quality staff training and environmentally sound equipment, such as the use of microfibre to ensure technologically advanced water-based cleaning solutions, is vital in delivering a sustainable service.

"It is really important to us that our staff understand our approach and philosophy to cleaning.

"Knowing how to use the technology and modern techniques available are an essential ingredient in a sustainable cleaning programme so we are committed to ongoing research into new techniques and regular staff training.

"For us it also simply makes sense that if we treat our staff really well then they will do a great job for clients, stay working for us longer and earn a fair and reasonable wage. We pay them around 25 per cent more than the average industry rate. None of our staff work more than a 45 hour week and we have a staff bonus system so they can also feel ownership of the company.

"We don't discount prices to get business - we don't need to. We are also pursuing a steady growth policy. We won't take on a contract unless we can sustain it with sufficient trained staff and policies in place."

Focus has incorporated wide ranging sustainability, energy saving and paper reduction practices in its own premises and is working towards certification as New Zealand's first Carbon Neutral cleaning company.

Company vehicles are chosen for fuel efficiency. Jenner-Leuthart can be seen zipping round the capital on the company's white Vespa.

Focus is also committed to giving back to community groups, charities and organisations through discounted services or donations.

But Jenner-Leuthart believes there is still a long way to go - and that any business introducing sustainability initiatives needs to commit long term to continual development as better ways and new techniques are developed.

"Sustainability is a buzz word at the moment," he surmised. "But we need to encourage a widespread, long term ongoing commitment - that is vital to keeping New Zealand ticking over."



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