

A 2001 Eco-Efficiency Centre Success Story

Imagerite is a fast-growing regional company that's in the business of recycling and remanufacturing imaging cartridges for laser printers, photocopiers and fax machines. With acquisitions of companies in New Brunswick, Newfoundland and PEI over the past 2 years, Imagerite now employs over 30 Atlantic Canadians. The Imagerite plant in Burnside is now processing thousands of imaging cartridges a month collected from across the Atlantic region. But, with such a significant increase in business come increased amounts of wastes and increased costs to manage that waste. And, despite a comprehensive in-house recycling program that includes 10 different materials (from paper to metals), Imagerite thought it could do better, in both cutting their costs and reducing the effect of their operations on the environment.

Packaging is a big component of Imagerite's solid waste stream. And, the company has already implemented a number of "best management practices". Staff consistently reuses cardboard boxes and inserts for shipping the remanufactured product. They successfully convinced some of their suppliers to take back polystyrene packaging "peanuts" that are sent to the plant. Some of the remaining packaging "peanuts" and "bubble wrap" are re-used for packing out-going cartridges. Pallet wrap and plastic toner bottles (thousands per month) now stay out of the garbage and go to other local recycling companies. Any waste wood from broken shipping pallets is picked up and recycled by a local company. All remaining corrugated cardboard is sent for recycling.

One packaging problem remained - plastic "foam" wrap that Imagerite purchased to keep cartridges from being damaged in transport. The company reused the wrap as much as possible when it came back from customers. But if it was damaged or dirty, it ended up in Imagerite's garbage can. In most cases, it ended up in their customers' garbage cans. It was also expensive to purchase, costing Imagerite tens of thousands of dollars/year.

A solution for Imagerite came with their purchase of a company in New Brunswick that had a paper-packaging compactor. Designed to crumple and compact paper for packaging, the machine was shipped to the Burnside Imagerite plant and integrated into their operations. Imagerite has been able to switch to an economical, recycled paper product instead of using the foam wrap. This change in operation is resulting in cost savings of \$15-20,000/year in new packaging material alone. There is also decreased material going into the Imagerite waste stream, which should ultimately be reflected in overall lower waste management charges. There's a public relations benefit as Imagerite customers appreciate the change in material, as most are able to better manage the paper material they receive. And, the company's image as an environmentally responsible company is boosted by "going the extra mile" to avoid creating waste.

What is the result? Imagerite ends up with both better financial and environmental performance - another win-win in Burnside.

For further information contact:

Dave Osborne or Brian Carmichael
Imagerite
30 Troop Avenue
Burnside Industrial Park
Dartmouth NS B3B 1Z1
Ph. (902) 468-6174



Eco-Efficiency Centre
Ph. (902) 461-6704
Fx. (902) 461-6703
eecentre@dal.ca
www.dal.ca/eco-burnside

