

"Parting Shot" is a monthly opinion column written on a rotating basis by guest authors. The opinions expressed are not necessarily those of FE&S.

# Green is Good Business



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**L**ike other small businesses in the foodservice industry the leadership at Curtis Restaurant Supply tries to look at all options that will increase the productivity and profitability of the company. As part of our ongoing efforts, we discovered that going green can be good business.

Going green had not been a planned effort but we made steady, incremental progress in recent years. For example, we started by installing double-pane windows to help reduce energy consumption. We also changed waste haulers to work with a company that recycles or resells most of the trash our company generates. The

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hauler even sorts the waste, saving us a time-consuming step. Our company also has a strong office recycling program for paper, plastic and cans. Additionally, we bail most of the cardboard from product deliveries for recycling. While recycling benefits the environment it also benefits the bottom line by reducing the trash we put in our dumpsters, thus keeping our waste hauling costs down.

Our latest green effort was purchasing three delivery box trucks that run on compressed natural gas (CNG). Oklahoma is one state that really promotes the use of CNG vehicles. The fact that our home state is a large producer of natural gas has been an advantage for us throughout this process. The state of Oklahoma promotes the use of CNG by offering tax credits, and our local gas company offered rebates, too.

While CNG-capable cars continue to become more popular, commercial or larger truck CNG-capable vehicles are still somewhat rare. That's due, in part, to the fact that it costs 20 percent to 25 percent more to make the delivery truck CNG capable. But the fuel savings is significant. In fact, by moving to CNG from diesel we are paying 50 percent to 60 percent less for fuel. As a result, we believe the investment in CNG-capable vehicles will pay for itself in about two years.

To help make things more efficient, we constructed a CNG fueling station at the dealership. Our trucks refuel when they complete their deliveries for the day and are ready to roll the next day. Even better is the fact that we were able to connect our refueling station to the natural gas service line that heats our building, which helps keep costs down. The net result is that we have taken another step to reduce the pollution we create and are helping in our own small way to reduce our country's reliance on foreign energy sources.

Of course, not every idea turns out to be a winner. For example, we explored switching to a wind-generated power system, but found that the payback did not make sense.

Still, taking these extra efforts has a variety of benefits beyond the scope of each project. Our employees like the fact that we do this, and they want to share it with friends and business associates. In addition, having some experience in this area will hopefully encourage our customers to consider some energy-efficiency options when they purchase equipment.