

GRI REPORTING CASE STUDY

Chow:Hill Architects – total design company

Chow:Hill has been undertaking sustainability reporting using the GRI framework for three years. Owner-director Maurice Kiely says they began thinking about it about six years ago when clients started to act more sustainably, by looking at their own business sustainability credentials.

“It shows the company in a better light...we wanted to show we were doing something and for me personally it’s about being part of a business that does care.”

Tangible changes to the business included looking at paper use, recycling, fuel and electricity use and consumables – right down to using waste paper bags made out of corn starch.

Fuel use was a big one. As Chow:Hill provides professional services, they tend to travel to where their clients are. They are making a conscious effort to cut back and are trying to do more video conferencing.

Their consumption per person and their overall footprint has reduced.

On the people side of things, labour indicators around training and workplace diversity (male to female ratio and nationalities) have improved. Maurice says they now have better engagement with staff.

They are highly involved in the community, donating cash to community groups, sponsoring people and giving prizes to students. They introduced community days, allowing staff to have a day off to help a community group of their choice. “Our social investment is strong.”

And not forgetting the bottom line when you are in business, Chow:Hill has a number of economic indicators, showing return on investment. It has come through the last three years in a strong financial position, using financial indicators to chart performance against targets.

“At the end of the day it’s got to be good for the business and contribute to the bottom line.”

They chose GRI reporting because it was already in practice, they could tailor it to suit their business and it had international recognition. “It’s a reputable system and when it becomes more mainstream in New Zealand we will be already doing it. It made sense.”

For more information about Chow:Hill’s sustainability commitment or to read their report visit:

<http://www.chowhill.co.nz/index.php/sustainability>