

Students give their university a lesson in how to save energy



When academic staff left their offices for a few minutes, they left the lights on to show that they were still in the faculty. The new doorknob hangers now show that they are in the building even if the lights are off.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Research by students on the most appropriate messages, materials and dissemination routes.
- Design of a wide range of tailored materials on the key energy saving themes.
- Roll-out and promotion of the campaign across the campus.
- Over 400 pre-campaign and post-campaign questionnaires completed by students and staff before and after the campaign.



SUMMARY

With support from the Asturian Foundation for Energy (FAEN) the Economics Faculty of the University of Oviedo ran a Student Power energy awareness campaign involving teachers and students on the Campus del Cristo. A questionnaire at the start of the campaign helped evaluate the level of energy knowledge in the university, and this data was used to shape the campaign and promotional materials. It was also used as a baseline to assess the achievements of the campaign on its completion.

About Student Power / Donate Your Energy

Student Power is an innovative scheme designed to facilitate students to provide practical support to organisations running energy awareness campaigns, including energy saving campaigns within their own universities or colleges. The aim is for students to work with their own university, local businesses or organisations on energy awareness campaigns.

Background

FAEN approached the Engineering, Psychology and Economics Faculties of the University of Oviedo with the offer to develop the Student Power approach to raising energy awareness on campus. The Economics Faculty agreed to adopt the programme and to involve teachers and students on the Campus del Cristo. The campaign started in February 2009 and ran through to the end of the year.

The situation

With an annual Faculty energy cost of € 133 648 and water

bill of € 61 034, the Faculty saw the opportunities presented by FAEN's Student Power proposal to reduce energy and water usage and related costs. By involving the actual students at the university an awareness campaign would be much more likely to succeed.

Don't assume ... assess

Aided by a marketing lecturer, the student team kicked off by carrying out a survey to assess energy use habits, knowledge of energy saving practices and the wider issues of energy use and the environment. Over 350 students and over 30 staff completed the questionnaire. A similar survey was carried out at the end of the campaign to evaluate

the campaign's success.

A thorough analysis of the results allowed the economics students (with support from FAEN) to develop a campaign strategy, promotional materials and fine-tune the dissemination routes to best suit the target.

Actions taken

The student marketeers developed a campaign focused on cutting energy waste in the use of equipment and lighting.

The undergrads discovered some home truths about energy behaviour. When academic staff popped out of their offices, they left the lights on to show that they were still in the faculty. So the student team came up with the ingenious idea of door-knob hangers (as in hotels) so that the lecturers could show that they were in the building even though their office lights were off.



Other key activities and dissemination methods developed by the student team included:

- short presentations to groups of students on saving;
- posters with key messages on energy and water saving;
- a mobile Information Point staffed by students which toured strategic locations in the university buildings;
- handing out of fliers, stickers, bookmarks, rulers and folders with advice sheets;



Another idea on the drawing board is energy saving messages on canteen serviettes.

Results

A quantitative and qualitative analysis of the success of the campaign was carried out in December 2009. Initial feedback from teachers and staff was very positive. The students succeeded in raising the profile of energy and water use through the clever and colourful graphical material that they developed.



Doorknob hanger



Water saving poster

The enthusiasm of the students in getting the message across through presentations and less formal discussions with their colleagues was a great motivator for changing energy wasteful habits. Most of the students showed interest and a future intention to improve their habits.

Although the overall energy and water savings were modest – electricity consumption dropped by 1% while water fell by 2% – in relation to the previous year, the campaign was successful in raising awareness levels.



Promotional ruler

Lessons learned

The Oviedo campaign managers realised that they had to keep developing fresh material to maintain the interest of the students and this led to some of the more innovative approaches such as the bookmarks, rulers and doorknob hangers. Feedback also showed that campaigns should be fairly short and sharp in order to maximise impact. With a longer campaign it is more difficult to maintain the interest of students.

The full portfolio of material developed can be viewed at www.energychange.eu

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