FORWARD CASE STUDY:
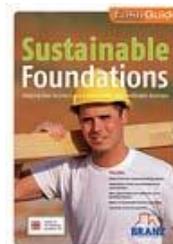# BUILDING RESEARCH ASSOC. OF NEW ZEALAND (BRANZ)

Building Industry Sustainability Knowledge for BRANZ

Worldwide, building construction has a significant footprint. From materials and manpower, to energy and land use-- the environmental effects for even the well-executed project can be enormous. Helping the building industry change age-old operational habits and be greener in operation is an ongoing push for BRANZ. We were enlisted on two occasions to create simple toolkits and guides explaining environmental management and sustainability, and to provide building companies clear direction for action.
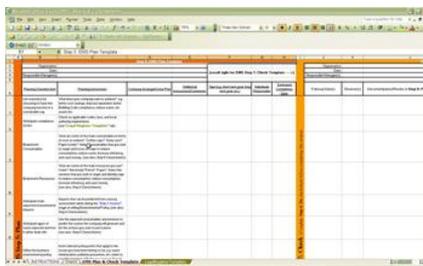
Situation

As part of their role as an independent research, testing, consulting, and information company, BRANZ is responsible for educating the building industry on a number of issues—including sustainability. Entrenched industry beliefs and operational habits make this ongoing education process no easy task.

Challenge

BRANZ needed to create a quick, easy, helpful guide for the building industry on sustainable business best practices and environmental management to get companies, especially SMEs up to speed. With a limited budget, a multi-format (print, electronic, and web-based) resource needed creation to boil down complex environmental management terminology into layman's terms, something even small businesses could understand and implement. Concrete steps for action needed establishment with industry in mind.

Solution

Research was undertaken on how to define environmental management systems and sustainable best practice for the building industry. Industry groups, case study companies, and building sites of various scales were visited to get an accurate picture of the on-the-ground operations. Industry members were consulted on content for the toolkits at all stages, and to ensure the resulting resource would be valued and understood.

The first result was Sustainable Foundations, a practical toolkit giving business owners the basics on lowering environmental impacts and increasing profitability. The second outcome was an update to the LEVEL sustainable building website (a site geared towards green building in a broader context) with a module discussing environmental management.

Evaluation

Completing the projects to brief, ahead of schedule, below budget, with industry buy-in, and to a high level of execution were all major victories.

Of course, merely completing the project will not change behaviour overnight. Three critical factors remain key to a long-term industry shift:
1) ongoing marketing and promotion of the toolkits,
2) industry training and support to encourage permanent operational change,
3) and periodic updating of the materials to ensure they fit building industry context.

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