

Respondent 8

Who is QMS International's current energy supplier?

We are with Npower currently, but it varies year on year depending on who is offering the best deal.

Ok, and do you know anything about the process was undergone to find the current energy supplier? Why was this supplier chosen in particular?

Well yes, basically we have companies that will do a price comparison and bring us back the best deals. I look at all the information and decide which will work best for the company with the usage and length of contract.

Ok, so you don't search for the electricity companies themselves, you have another company who is contracted to do that?

Yes, it is a much easier way of doing it, one less thing to have to think about, and it also means that we will get the best deal around which will save money in the long run.

Ok, and would you say that if you weren't consuming so much energy and your energy usage wasn't as high, you would not use these companies but instead search yourself.

Yes, as most domestic consumers do, I do that for the electricity I use at home. There are very good price comparison websites online, which are free, but with the size of consumption here, we need a different sort of contract, which is harder to find online, and suppliers that supply in bulk. I think the businesses we use to find the best deals actually have business relationships with suppliers which means they can offer lower prices to their customers as a result of them recommending certain suppliers.

I see yes that makes sense. And so would you describe this as an easy process? Have you encountered any difficulties?

Difficulties, um, no I wouldn't say so. I mean its fairly easy dealing with the business who advises us, and then setting up the contract with the supplier is fairly simple too. The only time consuming part is having to then decide between the suppliers, which is what I do personally. But this is part of my job, and I'm paid to do so.

Yes, ok. How long has QMS International been with this energy supplier?

About 3 years I think, although we do review it more regularly than this, to ensure there are no better deals on the market. But our current supplier has stayed fairly competitive. I think there are very slightly better deals now, but for the ease of staying with the same supplier, we wont switch until the deal is significantly better.

Yes, and what value is placed on using a supplier that would supply renewable energy? Is the price more important than the type of energy?

Well as a company we are very involved with environmental standards, as we offer ISO accreditation to other businesses. That means we are very aware of the trend that is occurring in the business

world, towards becoming green and reducing consumption and everything else that comes along with this. So I suppose renewable electricity is important to a lot of our customers and there is certainly a movement towards this I would say. However, as a business we have to be very careful with costs, and particularly at this stage, we need to cut costs wherever possible. So higher prices renewable suppliers do not come up in the best deals that are identified by the external business. In future if we were doing particularly well, the business might sway towards paying slightly more for a renewable supply, but not at the moment.

Ok, so costs are a restriction.

Yes, yes they are.

If the price was the same would QMS International be more bothered about the type of energy that was being used?

Oh well then it would be different. We would definitely use a renewable supplier and ask the external business to make this a priority. Having the external business who specialises in this would be a benefit here, because they will know of the best renewable suppliers.

So what other factors are important when deciding on a supplier?

Um, I would say reliability is important, as being a business a shortage in power would create significant problems, more than it would for householders.

Ok, and do you know which tariffs QMS International are on and why?

Yes, a standard rate, as are many businesses that operate in the way that we do, with 9-5 hours and then no computers or appliances being used during the evening. We would not be able to benefit from the cheaper evening prices as the staff are at home, not in the offices.

Yes, that makes sense. And does local generation factor in the decision to choose a supplier?

No it doesn't, for the same reason I mentioned for the renewables. If a local generator happened to be offering cheapest prices then no question we would go for it, but I don't think that has ever happened. I wouldn't know what local suppliers there were anyway. It is not a important factor for QMS.

Does QMS International make a purposeful effort to reduce energy usage or energy bills?

If so, when did the company start to do this? Why?

Yes we have a smart meter installed, and do our best to keep the cost down by turning off appliances and do not have certain appliances on timers throughout the weekend. So the smart meter helps us to see where our largest areas of energy consumption are and provides motivation to reduce the amounts we use. Obviously, wasted energy, is wasted money, and so its my job to cut this as much as possible, and the smart meter does help with this.

Yes ok, and do you find this has changed the way certain activities are undertaken? How does it alter the order of practises in a typical day at QMS International's offices? Does this create any problems?

It doesn't really alter activities, its just something to remember, that should be done anyway. Its more like trying to reduce bad habits that employees have. But if it becomes 'part of the job' a requirement that they get 'paid' for, this is motivation to change the way they do things. Having signs around the offices really helped raise awareness of the situation too when we first enforced it. Usually staff rarely think about using energy, especially when they are not personally paying for it. But bringing it to the forefront of their consciousness, and linking it to pay, made it seem like they were rewarded for the behaviour, and that provided the motivation for them to save energy.

Ok, and on the subject of employees, I guess they don't have any say on what suppliers you use?

No, that is my job, I am paid to do that, they are paid to do something else. Again its linked to the reward and motivation idea, if they're not getting something from it, then they wont be bothered or do anything about it. Unless it is going to benefit them in some way. That's why in their own households there is more chance that employees would get involved with picking a supplier, because lower costs would benefit them personally, and powering appliances allows them to do things.

Yes, and do you think it might also have something to do with power. If employees don't feel entitled or that they don't hold enough power, do you think that stops them from trying to get involved with suppliers, even if they wanted to?

Yes, I suppose that would be a factor too. It is not their responsibility, and they don't feel they have the means in which to influence decisions, is that what you're saying?

Yes, yes exactly. They're not entitled to say anything. Ok, and on a slightly different note, to what extent would the company support community energy projects and trading?

Well I think through the services the company offers, we do help the community, so I don't think we have the surplus to invest extra into supporting the local community.

Yes, ok, and has QMS International ever considered producing their own energy?

No we haven't, the capital costs to buy solar panels are too high at present, so this wouldn't be an option. The payback period would be too long, and there is no incentive to do so anymore because of the reduction in Feed-in-Tariff. The suppliers aren't offering the incentives so there's no point.

Ok, and final question, do you know of any business or residents within the local community with solar panels? If it were possible, do you think QMS International would consider trading with them?

Well yes, if it was cheaper. It would give the business a good image and if prices are lower then great. But not if prices are higher. And also it would have to be fairly hassle free, because time is limited and changing from our easy system we have now would have to be justified. It would have to be as easy as it is now, or more so.