

Market Of Choice

A Business Energy Conservation Assessment



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Abstract:

Market of Choice has established itself as a full service deli, grocery, and catering service specializing in natural and health conscious products with seven locations serving a select Oregon market. In recent years they have made progress in attaining a higher level of efficiency through energy management practices. Currently, they use solar photovoltaic production of electricity for a portion of their needs, employ a heat reclamation system as an assist to their water heater, use energy efficient appliances, timers and motion sensors on lights to prevent unnecessary waste, and compost the produce that is not sold at its peak of freshness. They could improve their energy practices by subscribing to renewable energy resources from EWEB and offering employee incentives for using alternative forms of transportation to get to work.



Introduction:

Market of Choice is a locally owned grocery market that offers a wide variety of locally grown healthy and organic foods. The business began nearly thirty years ago in Roseburg, Oregon, as Price Choppers, a box warehouse with very low prices and a low level of customer service as well. In recent years, not only has the name changed, but the entire persona of the business has had a complete makeover. Today, Market of Choice is a thriving business with over two hundred employees serving a select Oregon market offering several choices in every item they carry and providing exemplary customer service. The company has taken many steps toward greater energy efficiency and makes environmentally conscious decisions regarding their everyday practice. They also play an active role in the community, with frequent donations to Food for Lane County, participation in the eScript program which helps provide funding for local schools, sponsoring of local events, and a monthly budget set aside for donating to local non-profit organizations.

Through a formal interview with the manager and independent research, information was gathered regarding the company and a number of products they use and sell. Overall, their actions go above and beyond what the conventional supermarket does, but as in any situation, there is always room for improvement. At present, the 42,000 square foot building has only been open for two months and some of their systems are still being installed, thus numerical data that would have been very helpful in this project is not available at this time. Nevertheless, the visible evidence of their progress is quite clear.

Results & Analysis:

Market of Choice currently employs a variety of energy saving strategies, including:



- **Daylighting**, which is used near the front of the store in the form of large windows, and skylights that are located throughout the store. With help from the sun, there is less reliance on electrical lighting during the day.
- **Lighting timers/motion sensors:** All of the lights are set on timers that will shut them off when the building is not in hours of operation. There are also motion sensors installed for the lights in the restrooms and conference rooms as these spaces are used infrequently.
- **Energy efficient appliances** are used whenever possible. For example, the heat systems used on the non-fog windows of the refrigerator cases are on timers so that they run a minimal amount of time.

- **Water heating** for the store is assisted by a heat reclamation system that reuses the heat by-product of the generators for the refrigeration systems. This saves energy as the water heaters do not have to work as much.
- There is a large **solar photovoltaic** array positioned on top of the building to generate electricity. The goal for this system is to produce enough energy to power the lighting needs of the building, however, the meter has not been fully installed yet.
- Market of Choice prides themselves on their large selection of **locally grown, organic** produce and products. Buying locally saves energy in the form of fossil fuels used for transportation. Buying organic saves energy in the form of fossil fuels that are used in conventional farming methods to make synthetic pesticides and fertilizers, but not used for organic farming methods.



- **Composting** is another way that Market of Choice saves energy and gives back to the community. Seven years ago, they were given a grant to buy two large composting bins that are used to compost all of the old produce. The compost is then given to community gardens to fertilize plants versus spending money and energy to have it all transported to the dump where it would be wasted.
- **Environmentally friendly cleaning products** are used as often as possible because they are less toxic to the environment and they take less energy to produce.
- **Encouraging customers to reuse bags and offering biodegradable plastics.** Offering a 5 cent per bag credit is one way to save energy and natural resources. During the grand opening of this location, the store gave away reusable bags to customers to encourage them to practice conservation, and the reusable bags are available for purchase in the store currently for 99 cents. The life span of one polypropylene fiber bag is about 104 trips to the grocery store while their material consumption and CO2 equivalents are a small fraction compared to those of conventional plastic, recycled plastic, paper, or even canvas bags. In addition, the store uses high quality biodegradable plastics for their deli containers and plastic grocery bags. While conventional plastics do not biodegrade in a landfill, these products are made with cornstarches in such a way that they will actually degrade in the presence of oxygen, soil, and moisture yet retain their recyclable properties.

Future plans for Market of Choice:

- **A Meter for the Solar PV system** is in the process of being installed. This will allow them to gauge how much electricity is actually being produced by the system.
- Four commercial grade **heat circulation fans** are also being installed in the interior to keep the warm air from rising to the high ceiling and staying there, reducing the overall heating costs of the space.

Recommendations:

- Surprisingly, Market of Choice does not currently **subscribe to renewable energy resources** from EWEB. This would be a great way for them to show their true support for cleaner energy production and a better stewardship of our environment.
- At this location, there are no **employee incentives for using alternative modes of transportation** to work. Offering something as simple as a gift certificate for a given number of times an employee chooses alternative transportation, or obtaining a group discount on monthly bus passes could make a large cumulative impact.

Conclusion:

Market of Choice has become a leader among businesses in our community. By taking the initiative to find better ways to conserve energy and become a more sustainable business, they have also created a large base of loyal, caring customers who support these actions in their community. Investments in energy efficiency and sustainability are investments into our future, and it is fortunate that Market of Choice has the vision and ability to set the precedent for others to follow.

