

# ENVIRONMENTALISM IS A FRAME OF MIND

**The environment today is where quality was ten years ago. But with a crucial difference, suggests consultant Hornagold & Hills. Environmental management is driven by assessing risks to reveal new opportunities for increasing efficiency – not simply by defining processes. It promises a new dimension in client services. Environmental concerns are also motivating a new generation of young engineers and professionals. Essentially, it is a cultural issue and Fast-Track-14, says Hornagold & Hills, brings all the elements together.**

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Studies have shown that compliance to ISO 14001 can cut the cost of waste, energy and resource use by some 41%. Tighter legal obligations and the push for ever greater competitive efficiency are cornering many organisations in a pincer movement giving them little choice but to face their environmental footprint. They need to find the benefits of confronting cost and risk.

Action-based environmental management systems (EMSs) are becoming the key for companies searching for value, not certificates.

Hornagold & Hills, formed in 1987 as an independent private partnership, has expanded to become a leading independent management

consultancy with over 170 professionals. Its focus is strategic management consultancy, programme management and project management. During the last financial year, turnover was more than £14m (US\$23.5m).

The key to environmental management, says Hornagold & Hills' Paul Woolford, is gathering data, setting objectives that relate to business risks, auditing and acting on the findings.

“We gained this insight during our six-months on the ISYS International's Fast-Track-14 programme,” he explains. “It convinced us that quantifying and isolating environmental risks reveals new opportunities and creates the confidence to exploit them.”

The concept is raising eyebrows at the Holborn office of the construction-sector consultant that operates across the UK, Europe and the Middle East. Change is in the air.

Hornagold & Hills is not reticent in making its views known on headline issues. It recently spearheaded a call for Government to find an “outstanding” leader for the Thames Gateway initiative. The response was a hunt for a CEO able to create “sharp, strategic drive.”

The company also has a forte for organisational change, where improvements are not always physically obvious but do positively influence the way in which people work.

“Understanding the true nature of environmental management suddenly turns what might at first appear to be a marketing necessity into a potentially powerful business tool for all parties,” adds Woolford. “Risk is also opportunity!”

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Paul Woolford (left) of Hornagold & Hills and Gary Holland of ISYS International

# HORNAGOLD & HILLS

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Partner for the Environment, David Bird is convinced of its value; “It seems a natural extension of our active change management philosophy, potentially adding a new dimension to our service relationship and creating a power to influence sustainability issues across the supply chain which we take very seriously.”

The turning point, that Hornagold & Hills now wants to weave into its core strategy, says Woolford, was joining Cheshire-based ISYS International’s Fast-Track-14 programme with its innovative approach to developing Environmental Management Systems (EMS) that comply with the international environmental standard ISO 14001 in just six-months.

“FT-14 was right for us. It made us appreciate that good environmental management is a cultural issue. It is a way of thinking that individual staff members can pick up and run with, limited only by their imagination. It’s a creative act, not a check-list.”

“Environmental management is different to quality management. It has more proactive content and is less driven by a process. Quality is often seen as a bolt-on optional extra. In contrast, FT-14 showed us that we must make our environmental system vibrant, and demonstrate to other companies that it can actually make life easier.”

“There is great enthusiasm amongst our talented younger staff who recognise that sustainability will be a cornerstone to their careers. Serious new developments need new business leaders to step forward and environmental responsibility is no different. FT-14 made us realise that environmental considerations should be intrinsic to our business. Our first priority now is to have our systems really up to speed, the second for our people to be working in them.”



Paul Woolford (left) of Hornagold & Hills and Gary Holland of ISYS International

The company’s environmental challenge is made greater by its principal outputs being thoughts and paper. However, Hornagold & Hills works closely with its clients - for much of the time within their own offices - and is increasingly being asked about ISO 14001 and EMSs. Many see it as important to weave environmental credentials into their brand. The next 12 months will see big changes.

FT-14 was pivotal, says Woolford in defining strategic issues rather than simply producing an environmental management manual. ISYS International’s unique electronic ISO Toolkit implementation guide marked a clear path and prevented costly diversions.

Monthly peer-group review workshops in London - the supplementary component of the FT-14 programme - were so important that Hornagold & Hills’ Partner responsible for environment, David Bird, took part in them personally.

Being held accountable each month was motivating and excruciating in equal measure, according to Woolford. “Other organisations may claim to have created environmental management systems without support but are they just recycling their scrap paper, or have they taken the EMS to the core of their business?”

“FT-14 was flexible enough that a management consultancy like Hornagold & Hills can be on the same programme as mainstream construction companies. We learned a lot from each other.”

“We estimate that FT-14 took at least 12 months off the time it would otherwise have taken us to reach this point. However the development is continuous, and you probably won’t recognise our manual in another six-months and it will be totally different from anyone else’s. A lot of thought has been provoked; this is the start of an important journey.”

“An example is the format of our relationship with clients because we don’t do design and wouldn’t expect, say, to recommend materials based upon environmental criteria.”

“Our thinking is to set a clear environmental vision first, followed by KPIs that are honest and environmentally-driven and not constrained by a narrow business focus. Benchmarks and procedures will then follow.

"As an SME, we don't own our own buildings. This will force us to look at harder wins to raise our internal efficiencies. The benefit will be experience to pass directly on to others. We started on paper-use issues as a pilot. Even here we have the complication of working in client offices so our own paper use is based upon highly variable numbers of people. Setting a paper reduction target is more difficult but we will develop a new way to monitor figures. Consultants need a different solution to manufacturers!"

"Fast-Track-14 showed us that our largest carbon impact is probably travel. We currently fly to Scotland when we should go by train, but have to learn to balance this with the huge financial importance of staff time.

"Public transport is fine in London, whereas working in Leeds and Liverpool, staff often have little choice but to use the car. Changing their impact seriously has to involve their mode of travel and that has a cost."

"In a company like ours, with a family atmosphere, there is enough genuine "buy-in" to make a difference. We encourage home-working and supply laptops and BlackBerries to facilitate this. We don't actually have enough desk-space if all our employees turned up at once."

FT-14's low participation cost was also a factor in Hornagold & Hills' choice of route towards environmental competency and ISO 14001. "Our policy is value for money. With FT-14, we got more than we initially bargained for and would definitely go with the programme again. Low-cost add-ons, such as a regularly-updated online environmental legislation guide, very much met our fit-for-purpose criteria. We would be keen to join future yearly or bi-yearly FT-14 expert workshops to meet and compare ourselves with kindred companies."

"Change often comes from an internal wish for continuous improvement. Alternatively, it can be driven by external influences, such as legislation, increasing competition or changing economic conditions. The consultant's role is to make your life easier by predicting impending change and helping clients to react to it," adds Woolford. "Above all, environmental management should be seen as an opportunity for any organisation."

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