



What's Efficiency Got To Do With It?

“Tell me, JJ, what’s this capital request all about?”

“Boss, this is for a heat exchanger that will use our cooling tower water for meeting our air conditioning needs when it’s cold outside. I figure it will save 5% of the power we now use for operating our chiller. The project should come in at around \$10,000 and have a payback of less than a year.”

“Saves energy does it? We can use this project to get greenie points towards obtaining Polar Bear level on our Politically Correct Building certification.”

“Maybe, but getting that certification takes a lot of paperwork and costs about \$50,000.”

“Include a bicycle rack in this project, which gets points also. And does this thing use electricity?”

“A little bit, for controls and automatic valves.”

“Good, include a solar panel to power it and put it over the entrance to the building so it can be seen. It’ll make a great picture.”

“Sir, the temperatures that make this equipment effective occur mostly at night and the entrance to the building faces north. Further a solar panel will run about \$200,000. This will ruin the payback.”

“Don’t get all technical on me. And we don’t use money for payback anymore. Just figure the equivalent trees planted and the amount of Greenland glaciers saved.”

“But, Boss...”

“You’ll also need to form a committee with representation from many departments. We want our people to feel good about the company’s sustainability efforts. Oh, and be sure and include Henderson over in shipping and receiving. We found out he’s 1/8th Chippewa.”

“What...”

“I know, I know he doesn’t look Chippewa to me either; but diversity is an important company goal.”

Six months later

“Boss, about the heat exchanger project...”

“It’s going great, JJ. We’ve had two news articles in the national press, an internal survey shows our employees are proud to work here, and we are up for a Gore Corporate Responsibility Award. Further, we have a great picture of the solar panel with the company logo in the foreground that we will use on the cover of our annual report.”

“I just came from the chiller room, and there’s no heat exchanger there.”

“Oh, that thing-a-ma-bob for the basement. We bought carbon offsets instead, got much better press. Besides, we’ve spent 450 thou so far on this project; we had to make some budget cuts somewhere.”