

# Recognizing sustainability

## How GOJO has made sustainability a business imperative

**G**OJO Industries Inc. was one of five Summit of Sustainability Award 2013 (SOSA) winners, an award that recognizes companies for their sustainability efforts. The awards acknowledge organizations that are helping to fulfill the SOSA mission of introducing green best practices to Summit County's business community, showing the value of the triple bottom line: People-Planet-Prosperity through Recognition-Education-Engagement-Networking.

*Smart Business* spoke with Nicole Koharik, Global Sustainability Marketing Director at GOJO, about what the company has done in the category of sustainability.

### What is key to moving an organization toward sustainability?

Imbedding sustainability into the culture for long-term results is critical.

At GOJO we used an approach we call SWOW (Sustainable Ways of Working). And because of that approach, sustainability is not only inherent in our business strategy, but it's also integrated into our key processes.

For example, during annual business planning every unit thinks about sustainability and how it fits into their plan and priorities. It's also included in our new product development process, and in our employee education and communications programming.

### How can companies begin establishing a sustainability-minded culture?

Benchmarking is a great first step because it serves as the input for setting goals, which is ultimately how you measure your success and communicate your results. It also helps educate employees about your impacts and understand where you're starting from so that they can also engage in identifying

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solutions to drive that improvement. The result has been employees who embrace sustainability and see how they can contribute to the organization's goals.

### How did GOJO develop a deeper culture of sustainable operations?

One important step was establishing a shared vocabulary. For example, when we started talking about sustainability internally, we noticed that our team members were using the terms green and sustainability interchangeably, and were thinking primarily about the environment. Properly defining those terms helped employees understand that sustainability really means that we're committed to social, environmental and economic considerations.

We also adopted an overarching guiding principal that we call sustainable value. This helped making sure employees understood that the work that we were taking on was ultimately about creating social, environmental and economic value both for our business and for our stakeholders.

### What metrics best reflect your progress towards your stated sustainability goals?

In our sustainability report we have a scorecard, which we established in 2010, that includes 2015 goals to reduce our water use, solid waste generation and greenhouse gas emissions.

On the social metrics, we generated a 25 percent improvement in hand hygiene delivered in equivalent uses relative to the 2010 per-use rate.

In environmental metrics, we reported a 40 percent reduction in greenhouse gas emission since 2010, a 29 percent reduction in water use over the same time period and a 13 percent reduction in the generation of solid waste.

On the economic side, we achieved a 52 percent increase in our sales from sustainability certified products.

### What is the greatest benefit the sustainability plan has brought to GOJO?

Through our efforts we've experienced a strengthening of our competitive advantage in the marketplace — winning new business and enhancing our brands by driving innovation. And we're also making significant progress on the long-term goal of becoming a sustainable organization.

### How did winning the SOSA help your business?

Winning the SOSA led to an increased engagement opportunity with many new stakeholders. We formed new relationships with organizations that have won previously and it helped validate our leadership position, which is really helpful and a great sign to our customers in the marketplace. ●