

San Francisco Step Up and Power Down Campaign

Campaign Summary and Objectives

From 2015 to the end of 2016, the San Francisco Department of the Environment (SFE) led the City in the largest energy-focused behavior change initiative in its history called Step Up and Power Down (SUPD), as a partner with Pacific Gas & Electric (PG&E). The goal of this initiative was to help businesses identify and implement energy-saving behaviors in their daily operations.

To add a further element of excitement, Step Up and Power Down was set up in the form of a collaborative competition between San Francisco and San Jose. San Francisco's goal was to enroll 600 small and medium businesses (SMBs) and save 20 million kWh of energy; San Jose's goal was to enroll 400 businesses and save 25 million kWh. If San Francisco and San Jose reached their goals, both cities would receive \$1.25M from PG&E.

Within a geographic area determined by PG&E, SFE staff visited over 1500 businesses in person, enrolling over 650 businesses in the initiative. SFE then worked with the enrolled businesses to help them adopt energy-saving behaviors suited to their needs and business operations.

As of December 2016 there were 698 participants and 23M kWh saved – the equivalent of reducing 3,000 cars off the road or powering approximately 1,700 homes for one year.

Audience

SUPD had over 650 SMB pledged participants encompassing business corridors in neighborhoods including Castro, Hayes Valley, Mission, Downtown, Western Addition, Civic Center, Chinatown and SOMA. These businesses covered a wide range of sectors, but for energy-saving considerations, were grouped into the categories of restaurant/café, retail, and general. These businesses reflect the diverse nature of San Francisco's business community and communicate in a variety of languages, including Cantonese, Mandarin, Russian, and Spanish. More than 1 in 4 participating businesses preferred a language other than English.

Outreach Strategies

Selecting Energy-Saving Behavioral Opportunities

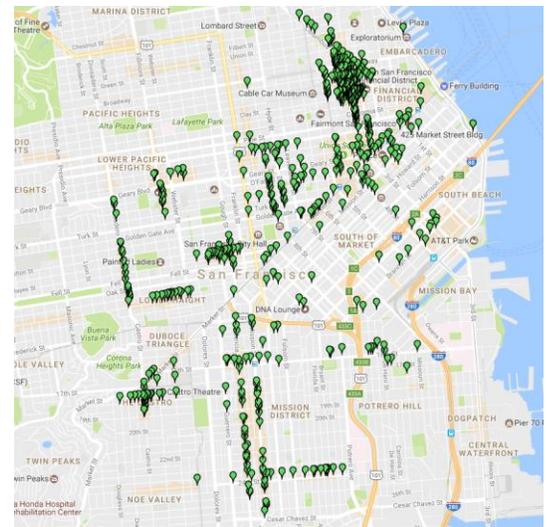
Owing to the diverse nature of San Francisco small businesses, there was wide array of unique energy-saving opportunities identified. SFE worked with each business to tailor energy-saving behavior recommendations to suits their needs and business operations, based on a sector-specific lists of actions. The recommendations on each business's energy-saving action plan ranged from simple actions like shutting down equipment overnight to more complex maintenance checklists for refrigeration equipment. Staff then supported the implementation of these energy-saving behaviors in each of the enrolled businesses, talking with staff and providing signage and other resources.

After one month, each business received a follow up to determine whether the actions were still being practiced or whether additional support was required. In addition to engaging contacts in energy-saving behaviors, business managers or owners were informed about further department resources where opportunities existed. This primarily entailed connecting businesses to programs such as SF Energy Watch and the SF Green Business certification. All communication was conducted in the language preferred by the business at the time of pledge-signing.

Rollout

Participating SMBs were mapped and assigned to one of twelve outreach waves, staggered over two week intervals; walk sheets were created to optimize route planning.

Pilot testing revealed that the central strategy of engagement for SMBs needed to be in-person visits, leveraging the impact of one-on-one conversations on behavior change.



Enrolled Small and Medium Businesses

Messaging

Determining effective messaging was critical to encouraging SMBs to participate and adopt energy-saving actions. A suite of messages was developed which effectively encouraged businesses to complete action plans and implement energy-saving actions.

Collective Action

A principal message was that of collective action – informing businesses that, with over 600 small businesses participating, their individual actions added up to make a significant impact in energy-savings city-wide. This leveraged social norming in the small business community. This messaging was further refined to inform businesses what energy-saving actions peers in their sector were accomplishing, to influence the adoption of more specific actions. For example, a cafe would be informed that other participating cafes had begun turning off their espresso machines overnight.

Acknowledging the Business Community's Effort

For contacts who were disinterested in filling out an action plan because they felt they were already maximizing their energy-saving potential, informing them that understanding the actions they practice helped the city quantify the impact of the small business community overcame this barrier.

Recognizing Existing Successes

Identifying and acknowledging existing successes in a business, for example having LED lighting or keeping lights off during the day, led to more willingness to discuss additional energy-saving actions that could be adopted.

Monetary Savings

While energy-saving generally reduces costs for a business, it was found early on that emphasizing monetary savings as a reason to participate had little influence on participation. Frequent changes in energy pricing, as well as variable energy demands, cause energy bills to fluctuate in ways such that the impacts of behavior change on the total bill is not always readily identifiable.

Results

In the pledge collection phase, 1500 SMBs received in-person visits, with over 650 pledges signed. Because the pledge collection results exceeded the initial campaign goals, goals were ramped up with the addition of a re-engagement phase.

In the re-engagement phase, 626 SMBs received in-person visits, with 505 primary contacts reached. 97% of the primary contacts reached (489 total) completed an action plan by selecting energy-saving actions; 464 implemented at least one action.

In addition to behavior change, 99 leads for SF Energy Watch were generated, leading to 63 audits. To date, over 50 SMBs completed one or more energy-efficiency upgrade projects, with more projects pending.

Conclusion

By providing consistent support and strengthening relationships and trust within the small business community, our department exceeded the energy saving goal of 20M kWh, drove 10% of participants to also move forward with energy-saving retrofits through the SF Energy Watch and PG&E energy rebate programs and secured the gift of \$1.25M.

Participating businesses benefited not just from energy- and cost-savings, but from getting connected to rebate and incentive programs, receiving recognition, extending the life of equipment, and understanding that they are part of an impactful community.

Step Up and Power Down showed that while the energy saved from individual actions may not seem significant, they do add up to substantial energy savings when looked at collectively. Beyond the value of reducing energy waste and expanding participation in SFE's SF Energy Watch program, the relationships developed improved department visibility and offer future opportunities to connect the business community with additional programs and services.