

Manufacturing Energy Productivity Pilot: Promising Results

IUE-CWA, a labor union with 45,000 members at over 300 manufacturing plants across the United States, and Environmental Defense Fund (EDF) have formed an innovative partnership. The focus of the collaboration is to train IUE-CWA members in identification of energy efficiency opportunities that improve the competitiveness of manufacturing facilities, save companies money, hedge against higher energy prices, and improve environmental performance.



Cobasys manufacturing plant Springboro, Ohio.

In this initial pilot, IUE-CWA members learned to use energy efficiency “Treasure Hunts” at a manufacturing plant. Treasure Hunts are a tool that utilizes cross-functional teams composed of site employees and external experts to investigate a facility’s energy and natural resource consumption. Then the teams identify, quantify, and recommend projects to maximize efficiency and minimize waste.

IUE-CWA and EDF conducted a pilot Treasure Hunt at the Cobasys advanced battery manufacturing plant in Springboro, Ohio. Teams composed of members from IUE-CWA (including members from other facilities), EDF, and Cobasys managers searched the plant for energy-saving opportunities, including examining process equipment, lighting, compressed air, and HVAC systems.

The results: **the Treasure Hunt identified \$67,000 in savings (18.5 percent of current energy costs) and 674 metric tons of carbon (19 percent of carbon emissions).**

These results are all the more impressive because the Cobasys plant is a new facility built in 2003, with state-of-the-art technology. Yet even at this ultra-modern facility where many energy-saving projects had already been implemented, the Treasure Hunt teams were still able to identify significant cost-effective, energy efficiency opportunities.

“Cobasys recognizes that improving environmental performance can save money and can meet business case justification requirements, thus making us more competitive. The Treasure Hunt showed us that we can leverage the knowledge and skills of our IUE-CWA workers to uncover additional cost-cutting opportunities, and these activities directly align to our factory ISO-14001 continuous improvement projects.”

-Matt Jonas, V.P., Manufacturing, Cobasys

With the successful completion of the pilot, IUE-CWA and EDF will begin the “Beta” phase of this project to conduct Treasure Hunts at five additional manufacturing facilities. The goal is to replicate the effort and develop train-the-trainer materials. Upon completion, IUE-CWA will have developed its own internal capability to conduct energy efficiency Treasure Hunts. Ultimately, we hope the project will launch a wider initiative among the entire labor movement.

“Energy-efficiency Treasure Hunts will give IUE-CWA workers new skills to make their companies more productive and competitive. That’s good for our members’ job security and good for their company’s bottom line.”

-Jim Clark, President, IUE-CWA