

BUSINESS IS BOOMING AS INDUSTRY SEEKS ELECTRICITY AUDITS

While some business operators may have been dragging their knuckles along the pavement and bemoaning the economic crisis, 33-year-old Andy Logue's new energy-auditing business has been booming.

Three years ago he operated out of his bedroom. Now his company, Energy NZ, is based in smart premises on Auckland's North Shore. He employs 10 staff and he's just picked up his first contract in Australia for a major food manufacturing company, with another big job in the tourism industry looming.

So far, Energy NZ audits have identified energy cost savings of more than \$7 million, and almost 10,000 metric tonnes of carbon. In energy terms the company's auditing has identified 55 Gigawatt hours (GWh) of savings opportunities, enough energy to power more than 6,000 homes for a year.

"We've had a huge response to the range of services we offer and have completed projects for many of New Zealand's big manufacturers and high energy users," Logue said. "That's not bad for a boy who served his apprenticeship in Taumarunui in the early '90s.

"We may have been in a recession, but I've had confidence in taking on more staff. I can see opportunities and if I don't take them, someone else will do it."

Logue's business is based on more than youthful enthusiasm. It got a boost recently when he became the North Island's first accredited compressed air systems (CAS) auditor, adding another string to the company's bow.

"Producing compressed air uses significant amounts of energy and the audits we've completed to this stage have identified long-term electricity savings of up to 30 percent with payback periods of less than two years," he said.

The Electricity Commission has been the catalyst in bringing together industry interests to establish the CAS efficiency programme, which is based on building a pool of expertise in systems auditing. Research indicates savings of 230 Gigawatt hours a year are possible from improvements in the use of compressed air systems in New Zealand.

Logue has high praise for the Electricity Commission and sees a long-term future for his young company. He's bought more than \$250,000 of equipment, including a thermal imaging camera that gave him \$100 change out of \$50,000.

As with other Commission electricity efficiency initiatives, the CAS programme is designed so the Commission can step back eventually and leave the scheme embedded in industry. Waikato University, the Energy Management Association (EMANZ) and the Compressed Air Association of Australasia (CAAA) are key participants in developing and sustaining the CAS auditor accreditation scheme long term.

Logue said until Waikato University starting training staff there were no formal qualifications for developing and assessing compressed air systems, and that could be used widely across a range of trades.

"You trained as an electrician or plumber, but now you can get compressed air training from the university and the qualification is transferable to Australia," he said.

"EMANZ administers the auditor accreditation scheme, with responsibility for assessing applications against specific performance standards. The CAAA has bought into the scheme as a world-leading solution to the recognised shortage of compressed air systems expertise."

Collectively, that support locked in the end-to-end industry backing the scheme needed to be sustainable in the long-term, Mr Logue said.

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