

Bringing operational efficiency to the table

Steelite uses efficient and transparent invoicing from Ørsted to make informed energy management decisions

Ceramic tableware manufacturing giant Steelite produce around 1.6 million pieces of crockery every month, export to more than 120 countries worldwide - including the USA, Canada, Australia, Holland, the Far East and Africa, and work with big name brands such as TGI Fridays, Hilton Hotels, Pizza Express and Canadian coffee chain Tim Hortons.

The challenge

All energy-intensive industries, such as ceramics, are vulnerable to massive unilateral increases in UK energy and carbon costs. As companies compete internationally they need a level playing field. As such, energy management and decarbonisation technologies are becoming a key issue across boardrooms. Steelite has long been at the forefront of energy management.

With an annual usage of some 2.6 million therms of gas supplying 13 kilns on one site in Stoke-on-Trent and 12 GWh of power, it's no surprise that understanding energy consumption and efficiency are top of their agenda.

The solution - Automated Meter Readings

Like all successful businesses, Steelite is careful to select suppliers who can support its goals. Davin Bates, Management Accountant at Steelite, said: "For gas, we have been with Ørsted for a number of years. Since entering the power market, they have made a concentrated effort to understand and assess our needs on the power side. Their ability to provide us with a flexible product offering small clip sizes with no fee is key - and not something we were offered by other suppliers."

The regulatory framework for energy management is in place in the UK. However some companies can find it difficult to make the cultural adjustments needed within their organisation as additional meter reading business standards are introduced. Yet companies like Steelite are shining examples of the benefits available when a company takes advantage of the data-based solutions aspect of energy management and begin to implement beneficial purchasing and demand strategies.

Automated Meter Reading technology (AMR) is a key part of this. AMR devices record data from your meter and send it to Steelite's online account where it can be reviewed online. This data can be used to make informed operational decisions leading to sound energy management.

Bates says, "AMR has been a great addition to our energy management strategy. We can review our usage, see what is firing and when and if there are any problems. It's helping us manage a number of our manufacturing processes and informing commercial decisions."

The impact of AMR devices on energy management is significant. By giving manufacturers a much deeper appreciation of the base load and volatility of their energy consumption, AMR allows them to work with their supplier in an informed way to select the most appropriate contract.

This provides customers with the flexibility in consumption they need to operate their business with minimal risk of penalties.

Efficient invoicing is also an important tool in energy and data management is one that is often overlooked as suppliers bill in the wrong months using reference prices and then reconcile values time and again. However, by partnering with a supplier that understands and accommodates their need for granularity and transparency, customers can use billing as a valuable tool.

Bates explains, "It's great getting such an open, transparent and detailed bill from an energy supplier. Our invoice from Ørsted shows us all the charges for each element in sections. This gives us the ability to assess what time of day our charges are being incurred and informs our demand management. I've never had to query anything on our bills and with so much mistrust in the energy market I'm glad it's not something I have to worry about."

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