



Flooring supplier stays firm on carbon counting and profits

The cards looked stacked against InterfaceNZ Ltd's determination to remain true to its carboNZero^{Cert™} certification in 2010.

The recession was still biting. Nationwide building consents were down. And InterfaceNZ's InterfaceFLOR carpet tiles, Lonseal vinyl and melded flooring fabrics faced the usual challenges from imports from Chinese mills.

But the locally-owned company didn't fold its hand. Instead it put more money in the kitty. Its business grew as a result.

Steve Aschebrock, national sales and marketing manager for InterfaceNZ (INZ), says from May 2009 to December 2010 non-residential building consents declined in floorplate area nationwide by 19%.

"But our volumes increased by 24%," he says. "And since the start of our carboNZero certification base year in April 2007, while nationwide consents have dropped substantially, our volumes have increased by almost 90%."

Robb Donzè, managing director of INZ, puts the growth down to the fact that the company's customers are becoming more and more trusting that it is doing the right thing.

INZ has been carboNZero certified since 2008.

Donzè says INZ decided to certify because it is the right thing to do and aligns with its major US supplier's goal to have a "zero" carbon footprint by 2020. But he and Aschebrock quickly found "you can make a load of money out of it".

A major project in 2009/2010 proved it again. Using the carboNZero programme's robust and internationally recognised emission's measurement and management system INZ determined it needed to offset a total of 285 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalents. Greenhouse gas emissions are measured from a variety of things including freight, warehousing, distribution, offices and travel and even employees' use of public transport. In INZ's case about 89% of emissions were from air travel and freight.

At \$25 a tonne INZ was facing a mitigation cost of \$7000. But it recouped those costs several times over through "Port of Project".

The project focused on logistics. Instead of having imports delivered to Auckland, then reshipped, goods get delivered to the port closest to each project. While that sometimes means part container lots at marginally higher freight costs, it also means carbon costs are saved, as well as freight and storage costs. The project delivered savings of \$80,000 in 2010.

Aschebrock says INZ's brand has benefited strongly from the carboNZero certification. Tangible results can be seen in tendering; especially now many tender documents are probing for environmental credentials.

"No architect or corporate customer will say they chose our carpet tiles because of our green positioning," he says. "However, we know on the emotional level we connect with our customers."

INZ connects with its employees too. Staff morale has been boosted and the culture has attracted potential staff. The company has several recycle projects, contributes to native forest regeneration, and joins in Hauraki Gulf cleanup days. It has a fleet of Toyota Prius hybrid vehicles.

Donzè says the advantage of carboNZero certification has exceeded early expectations and the process has been invaluable in helping INZ toward its sustainability goals.