

## Keystone Distribution UK - case study

# ‘Sharing best practice is absolutely fundamental’

Innovation and sustainability underpin the strategy of Keystone Distribution UK, one of our first silver FORS members. Steve Witty, General Manager at Keystone’s Hemel Hempstead distribution centre, tells us more and explains how the company is benefiting from FORS benchmarking.

“Keystone Distribution is part of a global food manufacturing and logistics business. We’ve got three sites across the country and, although we might not be a household name, we are the distribution partner of McDonald’s in the UK,” says Steve Witty.

“As well as being very strong in terms of social and environmental responsibility, our objectives are to be productive and cost-effective. Our approach is based around making use of the latest logistics practices and processes, while also employing cutting-edge technology and investing in our staff.”

### Turning food into fuel

Keystone’s partnership with McDonald’s presented the company with an ideal opportunity to reduce its impact on the environment and minimise waste from restaurants. “The industry has changed and it’s no longer just a case of using reliable vehicles to get from A to B. All companies have to be aware of their long-term sustainability and innovation is particularly important at Keystone,” says Steve.



“Alternative fuels and biodiesel aren’t new concepts but, over the last three years, we’ve been working together to recycle McDonald’s used cooking oil and use it to fuel our vehicles.

“Initially, we started with a blend, but we’re now using 100 per cent biodiesel for our fleets at the Hemel Hempstead and Basingstoke distribution centres.

“The challenge we have now is in identifying other potential uses for the fuel, such as the possibility of powering whole sites with it. We’re also trialling other alternative fuels at our site near Manchester.”

### A culture of continuous improvement

While investment in technology is important, Steve is also keen to emphasise the value that the company places on its staff. “We’re well aware that we’re not going to make best use of the latest technology if we don’t have the right people in place.”

“Investing in our people is a priority for us,” he says. “Our business has developed considerably over the last few years, and we’re fortunate that a lot of the innovation is actually led by staff themselves.”

A number of channels are open for employees to suggest ideas on new ways of working. “As well as more traditional suggestion boxes and employee committees looking at a range of issues, we also have innovation champions within each distribution centre.

“And we have a company-wide initiative called ‘Keystar’, whereby staff can feed in ideas to help us improve.

“At the Hemel distribution centre, for example, we’ve recently had recycling and ‘switch it off’ campaigns, led by staff.

“We also run lifelong learning programmes to help staff develop and it’s great that people want to get involved and improve the way we operate. There’s no doubt the whole company benefits as a result.”

### Measuring performance through benchmarking

Steve feels the FORS benchmarking system has added real value. “We’re striving to be the best in class but we’re not saying that our own innovations mean we’ve got everything covered. As far as we’re concerned, sharing best practice, and understanding how new ways of working can apply to your operation, is absolutely fundamental.”

**“FORS benchmarking lets us see how we measure up against the industry. It’s really helpful to step back and ask ‘Who are the best performers in this area and how do we measure up against them?’”**

“We already captured a lot of data, but the FORS benchmarking system lets us see how we measure up against the industry, as well as opening up new avenues for us to share best practice and learn from others,” Steve continues.

“We run a range of programmes to improve our transport operation, but it’s really helpful to be able to step back and ask: ‘Who are the best performers in this area and how do we measure up against them?’”

“We hope the system will be developed in future to monitor other areas as well. Obviously it would be good from our perspective if we could better reflect the fact we’re running Euro V vehicles on biodiesel but, as it stands, it’s a really useful tool.”

Keystone’s willingness to share ideas was also further highlighted as they hosted a recent FORS seminar. “It was a great opportunity for us to explain more about the way we work and also learn from other members,” Steve says.

“Hopefully there will be plenty of other similar events in future because while we might be operating in different sectors, I’m sure we’re all facing similar challenges.”

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