

Aquanet SA: Key to successful participation is proper organisation of data collection



Leszek Krynski,
Aquanet SA, Poznan, Poland

Aquanet SA is the water and wastewater utility in Poznan, Poland. Their benchmark coordinator, Leszek Krynski, was awarded as one of the two benchmarking coordinators of the year. We asked him to share his experiences with the programme.

"There were three important reasons for us to join a benchmarking programme. We want to increase our operational and cost efficiency, improve the quality of our services and develop a philosophy of constant performance improvement within the company. We chose the EBC programme in particular because at that time there was no local Polish programme and we feel the EBC is the leading organisation in international benchmarking programmes.

Participation in the programme has allowed us to exchange best practices and experiences with companies from across Europe. We are currently considering which best practices we can implement in our own company. Furthermore the EBC programme allows us to provide our Board of Directors with regular information on possible improvement areas. Also the workshop provides good opportunities for personal development of the benchmark coordinators.

The key to successful participation in the programme is good organisation of the work. I provide my colleagues with clear manuals (in their own language) and forms to ease data collection. I also try to engage them and make them responsible for providing the data on time. Furthermore I created tools which allow me to compare the data with that of the previous years before I submit it. This helps us to minimize errors in the data."

Thames Water: True value is not in the data, but in the exchange of experiences



Richard Tidswell,
Thames Water, London, United Kingdom

Thames Water is the UK's largest water and sewerage company, supplying 8.8 million people and providing wastewater services to 14 million across a region covering 5,000 square miles covering London and the Thames Valley. In 2011 they participated in the EBC benchmarking exercise for the first time. We asked Richard Tidswell why Thames Water joined the programme and how they experienced participating.

"At Thames Water, we see performance improvement as a continuous process. We are interested in benchmarking to identify areas for improvement and to enable us to build on our current skills and capabilities. There are two important reasons for us to join the EBC programme. First of all OFWAT, the economic regulator for water and wastewater activities in England & Wales, is reducing the amount of performance data companies need to provide for their reports. As a result we have less data to compare ourselves with the other UK companies. Secondly the EBC provides us with the opportunity to learn from international as well as UK companies. After participating in the 2011 exercise, we have a broader understanding of the environment in which the other companies operate and of their characteristics. Although the companies differ, the challenges they face in for instance sustainability, water scarcity and asset management are the same. Before we joined the programme, we were a bit sceptical on how much the data could actually tell us. Now we realise that the true value is not so much in the data, but in the exchange of experiences on common challenges. Furthermore the programme not only showed us where we were underperforming, but also reassured us that we are doing well in certain areas.

The largest problem we faced during the programme was underestimating the time it took to collect the data. We felt that most variables were known to us, however in many cases there were small differences in the definitions, which needed to be analysed. Furthermore it took time to convince the business of the value in participating. It is important to realise that with this programme you really get what you put into it. If you spent more time gathering and verifying your data, you will get better comparisons in return. However you should also realise the limitations of the data; on its own it cannot tell you everything. You should use it to start conversations with the other participants as the real value is in exchanging experiences."