



# Becoming carbon neutral

TWELVE MONTHS AGO THE TEAM AT CAR LEASING COMPANY ORIX NEW ZEALAND COLLECTIVELY DECIDED TO BECOME CARBON NEUTRAL.

**A**lthough Eve Hansen's usual job title at ORIX is 'Strategic Account Development', she found herself researching how the company would achieve their goal of carbon neutrality.

What Hansen discovered is that 'it is not as easy as just planting a few trees'. What happens if the tree dies? You have to offset the carbon the dying tree gives off as well. Everything counts, and it was going to be a complicated process.

So Hansen went to Landcare Research (LR), New Zealand's foremost environmental research organisation and the body that runs the carboNZero certification programme. CarboNZero encourages and supports organisations to minimise their impacts on climate change by providing tools to measure, manage and mitigate their carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions.

## Becoming certified takes 3 steps:

1. Measure your CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. LR will send you a spreadsheet so you can self-audit your emissions over a 12 month period. It lists everything that must be included, but be very specific and accurate or you will fail the independent audit process. Send the 'self audit' back, and LR will give you an accurate and detailed Carbon Inventory (right down to kilowatts per employee).
2. Manage (reduce) your CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. You then produce an Emission Reduction Plan which has buy-in from senior management. The plan must detail how the organisation is going to reduce their emissions. For example, using recycled paper, purchasing energy efficient equipment, or switching to carboNZero partners. Your 'self audit' is then reviewed by an independent auditor who calculates the final cost of the carbon credits needed to offset your emissions. You must pay for this audit and the cost will vary depending on the audit's complexity.
3. Mitigate (offset) your CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Carbon credits can then be purchased from LR to balance your emissions spreadsheet.

ORIX wanted to achieve certification as quickly as possible, so when they undertook their self-audit they did so retrospectively rather than 'in real time'. This was the harder way to do it as accurate information was difficult to find. For example, finding the actual amount of paper used, specific flight details for travel, or the exact amount of fuel purchased for company cars. The auditors required them to prove the information, so estimates were not acceptable. Completing the self-audit in real time is much easier as you can keep accurate records of information as you go.

## Tips ORIX would recommend:

1. Meeting with the auditors prior to the self-audit allows them to inform you of what information they need and the best way to present it. This will save you both time and money.
2. When self-auditing you must weigh the amount of rubbish you send to the landfill. The more that is recycled, the less there is to measure.
3. Get your accounts person to make a copy of relevant invoices. The data can then be entered into the self-audit spreadsheet each month and filed ready for the audit.

Achieving carboNZero Certification is an annual process requiring the completion of the three steps. Your organisation is also required to have a five year plan with specific goals to reduce emissions. It takes commitment from everyone in the organisation to attain certification and also to keep it.

Certification does not however automatically allow you to use the official carboNZero logo. You must pay an additional amount annually based on your organisation's turnover. It would have cost ORIX NZ \$125,000 +GST to use the logo for just one year, so they decided to design their own logo to show their commitment to the environment (shown above).

ORIX isn't just stopping there though. They will be offering a new product called the 'Enviro Lease', which will allow businesses to take out a lease on a vehicle which ORIX will then pay the carbon credits for on their behalf – allowing them to drive around in what will be a carbon zero vehicle.

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