

Doing ENERGY DIFFERENTLY

Australian electricity retailer and energy service company COzero started as a GreenPower provider in the new millennium and has grown to become a market leader in smart energy retailing.

Images by Scott Ehler

Good technology and an outstanding team of employees are what gives COzero its point of difference in the competitive market of electricity retailing. The company began in 2007 as an environmental commodity business and today serves business clients as an electricity B2B retailer. Its aim is to deliver the best energy solutions for its customers and then to complement that by providing them with industry-leading monitoring services.

Geoff Alexander has been involved with COzero since 2009, and was appointed to the role of managing director in November last year. Before joining the company, he co-founded a large aggregation business called Neco, an eco

hardware store that focused on the domestic market and was one of the largest independent creators of NGACs, the world's first tradeable carbon credits. Geoff has played a significant role in the development of COzero and is steering the company to even greater growth, driven by his passion for the industry and his positive outlook.

COzero uses powerful analytics and ongoing power-usage optimisation to improve the energy productivity of businesses. It also provides certificates for solar photovoltaic (PV) panels, wind farms, and hydro power stations.

Major clients who have benefited from working with COzero include McDonalds, IGA, and DHL.

COzero is an accredited GreenPower provider and electricity retailer and is

responsible for the advent of CreditPortal and MarketLink—both of which leverage the environmental savings in a business using modern technology.

CreditPortal is a go-to service for many businesses, electricians, and electrical or lighting companies that don't have a licence to create energy-efficiency certificates. It is a simple, self-service online tool that gives clients easy access to energy-efficiency schemes, allowing them to create certificates and meet regulatory requirements.

MarketLink is Australia's first online platform that allows customers to buy and sell environmental commodities in real time, offering complete transparency with clear and simple pricing. The interface can be tailored to suit the individual—the ›



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- Geoff Alexander

client can add products to a watch list to buy and sell, and choose to buy items at published prices or set a price limit.

Geoff has a strong vision for the future direction of the business. "We see ourselves as one of the leading innovators in the energy space," he says. "We believe we will take our customers on a journey, and that is really key to us. It's not just about having the cheapest energy on the block, but providing an effective service. Looking after our customers and really having a better understanding and knowledge about what they want is our aim."

"So I think, as we've evolved and changed as a business, that's been really important. Giving our customers what they need is

more important than what we think they might need. That takes some trial and error, and we've learned a lot over the past couple of years. Ultimately, my vision is for COzero to be the leading innovator in energy technology."

Since its establishment, the company has undergone significant expansion. "We've had a massive evolution," Geoff explains. "We have always stuck to our principles. We're always looking at different ways to lower emissions by optimising energy usage."

"The company originally started by selling GreenPower to clients such as the City of Sydney and other large corporate clients. Back then, in 2007, it was a very topical issue, so there was a real drive for sustainability among corporates. GreenPower was a key tool then, and COzero helped its clients meet those goals."

"We began aggregating renewable energy credits and became the

largest creator and trader of environmental commodities outside of the energy companies themselves. Then in 2013, we became an electricity retailer. So that's the path that's brought us here. The further evolution of the company is now to drive energy efficiency for our customers."

The COzero ecosystem consists of a few different elements. GridLink offers traditional grid energy but delivers it in a different way. Businesses are given a dedicated account manager; they don't have to pay additional fees and penalties for contract variance, and the program is flexible to suit individual requirements.

EnergyLink focuses on energy optimisation and uses proprietary technology to analyse how much a plant or piece of equipment costs to run, whether or not energy is being wasted, and what can be changed to save money. It is designed to drive the customer's energy spend further to make sure

they are getting the most out of every kilowatt used.

Finally, SolarLink provides businesses with up-to-date solar technology at no up-front cost. COzero then operates and maintains the system or tops it up from the grid when the sun isn't shining.

When these three components are linked up, there can be real-time benefits for the consumer. In one recent example, an office in Canberra achieved savings of more than \$22,000 across four critical areas over just one month. Furthermore, there was an additional \$28,000 in preventive savings. In total, there were energy savings of more than 25 per cent.

"We have good technology and we have good people behind it," Geoff says. "That's really important for us. Getting that talent in our staff flows through to our products and services."

"Energy services have suffered in the past from incumbent retailers who are not really providing fantastic service for their customers. Our advantage is that we care about the services we provide. In fact, that is a vital component of our business. So we have a team that is built around that and we focus heavily on it."

COzero prides itself on fostering a culture of innovation within its staff. Geoff says there is ample knowledge sharing among employees, and different segments of the business often have mentorship programs. "We disseminate knowledge through the company to make sure everyone has a deeper company and market understanding to help our customers."

Over the past 18 months, COzero's operations have become more and more customer-centric. While the motivation of many traditional retailers is not to save or reduce the consumer's energy consumption, COzero's goal is to actually drive those savings. "That is critical," Geoff states. "That's our point of



view and that's what we do. Our customers see and hear from us more often than others. I think we probably connect with them better than some of our competitors."

Relationships with suppliers are also important. COzero places a high value on its partnerships and alliances and works to ensure both parties always benefit.

"The energy industry is unusual because a competitor could also be a supplier. I think that is something unique about this industry, and it means that good relationships are the key to success. We like to get the most out of our suppliers, but at the same time it's a two-way street. We want to achieve a win for COzero as the customer and also a win for our supplier. We don't try and suck the life out of other businesses; we want to see our suppliers do well, because then they'll keep providing us with quality products and they will offer us a better provision of service."



antiquated. The way the market operates is sometimes inefficient. So we are a company of innovation that finds ways to overcome these issues. How we deal with the market is really important. We don't want to be the same as all the others; we want to solve the problems. So those are the challenges and roadblocks that we come across."

COzero is a retailer of the twenty-first century. It doesn't work within the residential arena, but rather focuses on its niche of B2B clients. "That's what we know about and that's what we're good at," Geoff concludes. •

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