



EMAS CASE STUDY

LA PAGE ORIGINAL





CONTEXT

Small companies are huge in businesses

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) represent 99.8 % of all businesses in the EU. They are defined as companies with fewer than 250 employees, an annual turnover of less than € 50 million or a balance sheet of less than € 43 million euro. In 2014, 93 % of these were micro-enterprises, i.e. had less than 10 employees. They therefore collectively have a significant impact on the environment, but sometimes lack the resources, knowledge and support to address their impacts.

In 2017, 77 % of EMAS-registered organisations are SMEs, and 15 % are micro-enterprises, representing 2,799 and 536 companies respectively. Evidence from literature shows that when an environmental management system is implemented, SMEs reduce not only their environmental impact, but also reap other benefits such as costs savings and additional sales.

The example of La PAGE Original, one of the smallest EMAS-registered companies and the winner of the 2015 EMAS Awards, illustrates the accessibility and potential EMAS offers to small companies.

LA PAGE ORIGINAL

Designing with sustainability in mind

The origin of this small company dates back to 1991, when five colleagues, after finishing their art studies, decided to join together to work on a common project. After spending a couple of years together, working on various activities in parallel, brother and sister Josep and Sonia decided to devote themselves entirely to graphic design. La Page Original became the main focus of their work.

This micro-enterprise is located in Badalona, a town near Barcelona, and specialises in graphic and visual communication, editing design, communication campaigns and graphic advertising. It is currently one of the smallest EMAS-registered organisations in the EU, with only two employees and a yearly turnover of approximately 150,000 €. La Page Original's customers are from both the private and public sectors. Their projects are related to different markets such as fashion, pharmaceuticals, culture and publishing.

this case study looks at:



EMAS in the company



Tools used



Direct impacts



External impacts



Communication



Recommendations



EMAS IN THE COMPANY

A design studio that develops logos, corporate image products and graphical style standards might not seem to have a significant environmental impact when only office activities are considered. The design phase, however, can be relevant to the environmental impact of the final product (i.e. books, magazines, packaging, exhibitions, booklets etc.).

A public tender for a design service asking participating companies to have an environmental management system (EMS) in place aroused the curiosity of La Page Original. The two partners learnt of the existence of EMAS and ISO 14001 organisations in the printing sector through the tender and thereafter began to look at EMS in detail.

They decided it was time to reinvent themselves and be pioneers in an arena also aligned with their personal interests to move their business forward.

With the support of a consulting firm, they developed their EMS in accordance with both ISO 14001 and EMAS. After learning about the differences between the two schemes, they chose to pursue EMAS as it was more ambitious and insisted on transparency and communication. Keen to avoid "greenwashing," they believed EMAS was the tool to guarantee true environmental commitment. Another argument in favour of EMAS registration was that they could apply for an audit exemption as a small organisation (see Art. 7 of the EMAS Regulation). An EMAS certificate valid for four years (instead of three) gives SMEs the opportunity to benefit from audits every two years instead of annually. This specific advantage for small organisations allows them to reduce expenses related to the verification process.

At the beginning, however, everything was not entirely easy. The members of the La Page Original team were not experts in environmental issues and it was hard to understand how an EMS operates.

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From the start, a third member of the company had been taking care of the routine EMS tasks and contributed to the evolution of the EMS to fit the organisation's structure. Due to the economic situation, they left the company in April 2016 and the small design studio was struggling to maintain its EMS. This situation forced the company to reorganise. Sonia would take care of all social aspects related to their business, while Josep would take care of environmental issues.

La Page Original participated in an EMAS project funded by the EMAS Club and the Municipality of Barcelona. The project aimed to develop a toolkit for SMEs to implement EMAS. La Page Original was trained with other organisations to adapt EMAS to their needs.

When looking for similar training options, other SMEs may want to group together to reduce the costs of a coach and share experiences and good practices.

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“Our challenge was to rediscover simplicity in the environmental management system. Complexity blocks and paralyses neurons. It is the effect of over-saturating data, mostly useless, redundant and sometimes contradictory. Simplicity is not only a functional and economic need but an exercise in mental hygiene, which makes things clear, reactivates creative ideas and gives the system sensitivity. For us, EMAS has injected in our company the consciousness of itself as a whole and not a mosaic of parts. This has definitively and irreversibly overcome the idea of the EMS as an instrument; and we have learnt that we not only have to use the EMS, we have to live it.”



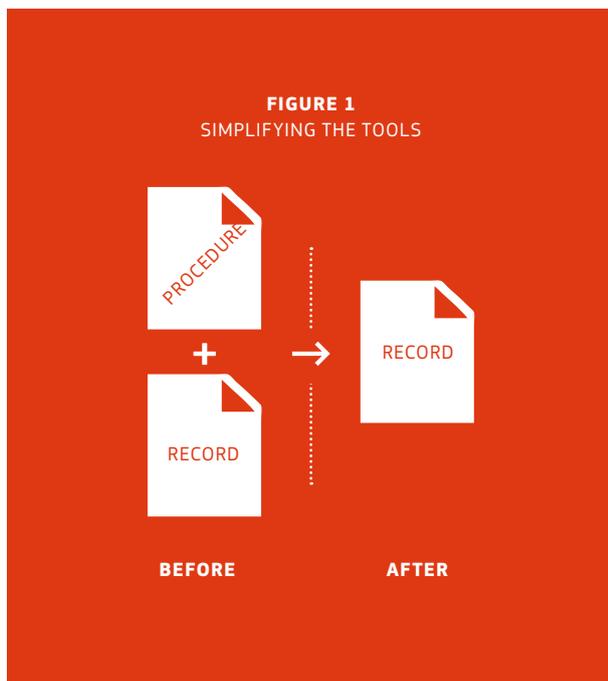
TOOLS USED BY LA PAGE

The training enabled Josep to simplify the company's EMS and the terminology now used within their system. The main lesson learnt is that being directly involved in defining the EMS helps in understanding the philosophy behind it and increases the ability of the company to modify and adapt the different EMS tools, promoting the company's autonomy.

Josep finds it very useful to have one spreadsheet with all the environmental data (energy, water and other consumption) and an EMS introductory document that briefly helps them to locate all the tools and to understand the interactions among the different EMS elements. It is a sort of EMS manual, but strictly reduced to a few pages that offer links to all the EMS tools.

Moreover, in his training, Josep learnt to generate "combined" management tools, avoiding the creation of systematic procedures and records as in classical management systems. Certain tools include a record template that explains how it works.

[SEE THE EMS MANUAL](#)



For example, Josep uses this type of simplified spreadsheet tool to track La Page Original's environmental aspects and impacts. The first tab contains a description of how to use the tool and indicates who is responsible for performing each task (the procedure).

[SEE SPREADSHEET \(TAB 1\)](#)

The second tab features a list of potential environmental aspects and associated impacts. The user simply defines which of these aspects apply to his or her activities, products or services.

[SEE SPREADSHEET \(TAB 2\)](#)

There is an extra sheet for the assessment of each environmental aspect under normal and abnormal conditions. For example, main criteria for the assessment include: volumes (e.g. water consumption), frequency (e.g. printing of paper), hazardousness or impact on the environment, improvement capacity, compliance with legal and other requirements and the point of view of interested parties. All criteria are assessed with a score and after attributing and justifying it, the user is able to obtain a final score that determines if it is significant or not. A score diagram also indicates which criteria have the most influence on the final assessment of the aspect.

[SEE EVALUATION OF ASPECTS](#)

Environmental aspects related to emergency situations are then assessed with two criteria (probability and severity) and then finally, all results are compiled and visualised.

[SEE SIGNIFICANCE ASSESSMENT](#)



DIRECT IMPACTS

La Page Original implemented different actions to reduce energy, water and paper consumption and decrease waste production. These were mainly good practices and did not require technology investment or extraordinary expenses. The obtained reductions are not surprisingly large when compared with medium and large companies, but they improved the company's capacity to control consumption, and thus expenses, and to recognise if something goes wrong.

From 2013 to 2016, La Page Original was able to reduce its energy consumption from 1.71 MWh/person to 1.28 MWh/person, and also to detect a problem with an air conditioning system that abnormally increased consumption in 2015. Once good practices are implemented in such a small organisation, environmental aspects related to office activities are very easy to manage. So, after an initial improvement, the challenge was to find space for improvement in environmental aspects related to procurement activities (goods and services) and to the design process.

Regarding procurement, La Page Original has reduced its CO₂ emissions to zero by changing energy suppliers and participating in the first 100 % renewable energy cooperative founded in Spain.

Regarding the design process, La Page Original analysed and studied their working processes, and finally created a methodology for assessing the projects' outputs from an environmental point of view. This is the most interesting achievements from La Page Original's point of view. Beyond the environmental improvements related to typical office activities, they can now offer their customers a better and more complete service: an extra added value in the project, through which they can extend their influence to other phases of the process.

La Page Original's has reduced to zero the CO₂ emissions from energy consumption.

FIGURE 2
EVOLUTION OF THE ELECTRICITY CONSUMPTION OF LA PAGE ORIGINAL

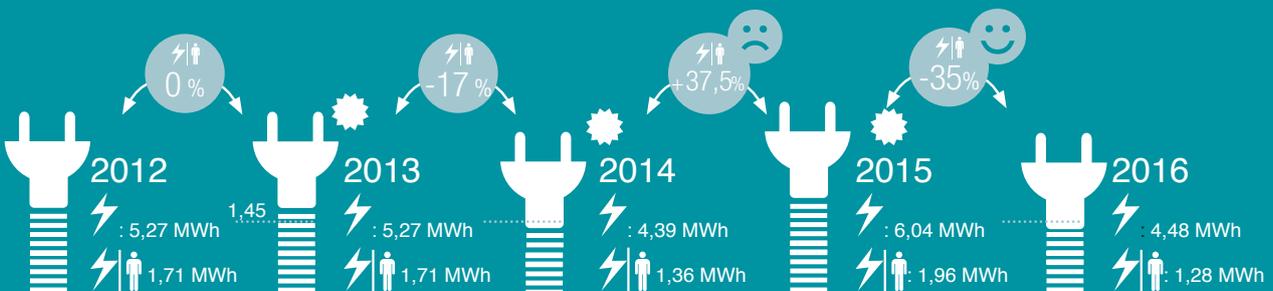
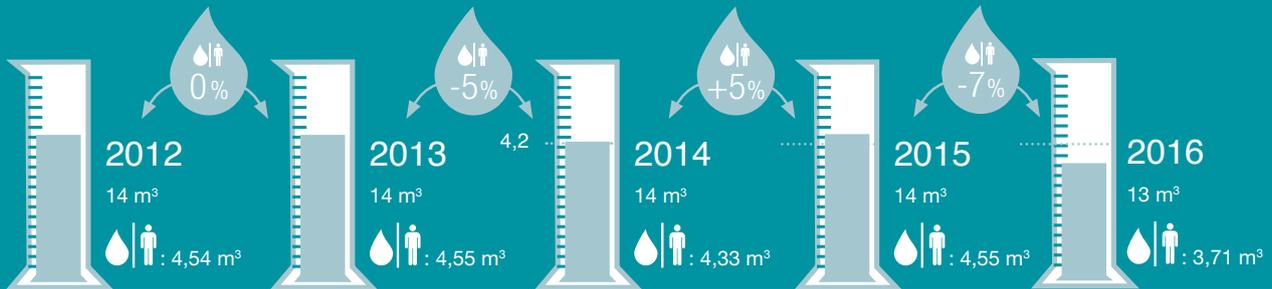


FIGURE 3
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT OF PROJECTS



FIGURE 4
EVOLUTION OF THE WATER CONSUMPTION OF LA PAGE ORIGINAL



EXTERNAL IMPACTS

Each design project produced using material supports (printed products, exhibitions etc. — basically all products except web pages and digital products) is developed following five criteria that consider the life cycle of the final output:

Once it has been accepted by the customer and finally executed, Josep and Sonia assess the final output according to the criteria and obtain a score card that indicates the extent to which the project has covered the criteria. Yearly data for all projects is provided in the environmental statement of La Page Original.

- 1 **Ending service life:**
Provides information on the output's end of service life. Balance is achieved using options to recycle and reuse the chosen materials.
- 2 **Usability and user experience:**
Indicates the level of efficiency achieved by the project (achievements of goals vs. resources used).
- 3 **Profile of suppliers:**
Assesses the environmental profiles of suppliers involved in the production process.
- 4 **Eco-design strategies:**
Rates decisions and criteria that help produce projects with less impact, including material choices, non-waste generating formats, use of inks and other finishes.
- 5 **Agents of change:**
Refers to examples of La Page Original's initiatives in order to encourage more sustainability awareness among clients and users.

SEE THE SCORE CARD

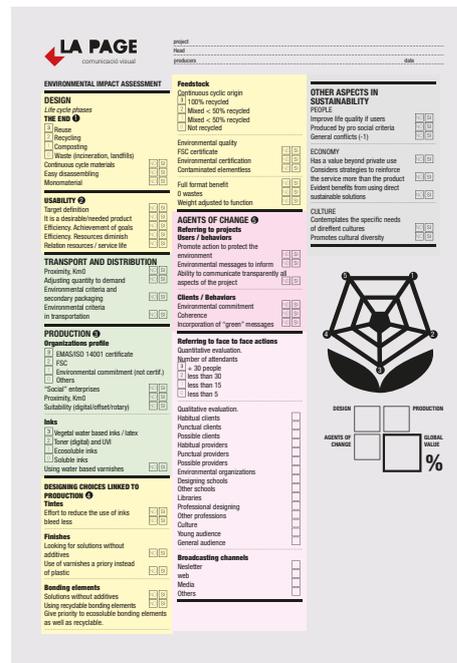


FIGURE 5
LA PAGE ORIGINAL'S SCORE CARD



COMMUNICATION

What is the environmental statement of a communication and design studio like? Absolutely gorgeous, of course! Concise, supported by visuals and a clean iconography, it integrates eco-design criteria and gives a picture of the organisation's environmental results and future actions. It's always sent as annexed information to all tenderers. Nevertheless, the company has doubts about how much it is considered when assessing a potential candidate in a communication and design project.



The environmental statement of La Page Original is accessible here: www.lapageoriginal.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Declaracion-medioambiental-LA-PAGE-ORIGINAL-firmado.pdf

CHALLENGES

La Page Original is concerned that their capacity for environmental improvement will stagnate if the demand for projects/products with environmental value does not grow. The customer doesn't always see the need to make communication elements more environmentally friendly, making La Page Original's work, in part, an intense task of providing information, and increasing awareness and education among its customers.

Another challenging task is to involve other actors in the value chain, particularly printers and other companies that convert La Page Original's designs into a "materialised" final product. It is not easy to find suppliers or partners committed to the environment, ready to innovate and also able to offer a fair balance between economic costs and environmental added value. Obtaining a good product (quality and environmentally friendly) within the price range expected by the customer requires all interested parties in the value chain to be involved.

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Public administrations still have to take into account environmental criteria in their procurement selection processes. There's enormous room for improvement. In the private sector as well, an environmentally aware graphic designer is considered a "freak", the market still has to learn what a designer is and that he/she can also be and should be environmentally aware.



RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE COMPANY TO OTHER VERY SMALL COMPANIES

- EMAS is a differentiation strategy; it means you are taking responsibility as a professional for your environmental impacts, even if this is just an office. Not only designers, but also architects and other professionals could adopt EMAS to reduce their impacts — both those related to their office activities and those related to their professional activities with “ripple effects” that imply a greater impact.

- When you’re a small organisation and there are not too many environmentally aware organisations in your sector, it’s a challenge, but frontrunners are those able to set trends in the market. Once the market begins to demand environmentally friendly providers, you’ll already be prepared to cover the demand.

- The more EMAS companies there are in the market, the more recognition they will receive from it. EMAS-registered organisations must make the effort to explain to stakeholders what EMAS means in their day-to-day activities.

- We suggest implementing EMAS within training and capacity-building programmes so that you are able to customise the system and tools and to be sure that the process will also allow you to learn more about your own organisation, processes and potential improvements. We have, for example benefitted from a local project carried out and funded by Club EMAS and the municipality of Barcelona. Other coaching programmes might be available in your region.

- Small organisations usually do not have problems related to leadership as there’s no duality between top management and environmental management, which may often be the case in large and hierarchical organisations. It is an advantage you can benefit from.

- The communications department of EMAS-registered organisations does not always apply environmental criteria in their communications projects, or do not systematically seek the support of providers able to include environmental criteria. It would be very positive if EMAS-registered organisations dedicated some time to assessing and rethinking their communication projects to guarantee consistency with environmental policy and enhance their communications impact.

- Understand that by using EMAS, your business can make a positive impact on society.

IMPRINT

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 Louise Lecerf and Alexandra Skinner (EMAS Helpdesk – adelphi)
 and Sébastien Paquot (European Commission)
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TAKE IT A STEP FURTHER

Please consult the SME Corner of the EMAS website
 to discover additional information and useful tools:
www.ec.europa.eu/environment/emas/join_emas/what_if_i_am_an_sme_en.htm

CONTACT

Additional information is available on the EMAS website www.emas.eu
 or through the EMAS helpdesk at emashelpdesk@adelphi.de