



## Case Study: Marstel-Day LLC

### Helping to Define Sustainability Standards for the Service Provider Industry



Founded in 2002 in Fredericksburg, Virginia, Marstel-Day LLC is an environmental

management company focused on land conservation and restoration, climate adaptation, water resources, smart growth, sustainability, program management and analysis services.

Marstel-Day earned Platinum certification to NSF Protocol P391: *General Sustainability Assessment Criteria for Services and Service Providers* to demonstrate its commitment to sustainability. Marstel-Day also helped pilot test the protocol, and a staff member is serving on the NSF joint committee responsible for converting the protocol into a national standard.

#### The Challenge

Sustainability certification was a natural fit for environmental management company Marstel-Day, which has been committed to the environment since its founding over a decade ago. However, when Marstel-Day President and CEO Rebecca R. Rubin began researching certifications, she found most applied only to product manufacturers, not to service providers.

“There is a lot of confusion in the industry about which standard to certify to, and how to define and quantify sustainability,” Rubin says. “When we started looking for certification, none specifically targeted service providers. We wanted to certify to the strongest standard that covers the most requirements, and, if possible, help move the conversation on sustainability forward in the service industry, but we weren’t sure where to start.”

#### The Solution

To address the industry need for sustainability certification for service providers and to help mitigate confusion in the marketplace, NSF International convened a committee to define specific criteria for certification. While several protocols and standards define what constitutes a

sustainable product, NSF P391 is North America’s first protocol to define sustainable services.

When Marstel-Day learned through a U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) announcement to Schedule 899 contract holders that NSF was looking for industry input in developing the sustainability protocol, it found a solution both for certification and for ensuring the protocol fits the service industry.



Marstel-Day became the first company certified to NSF P391, earning Platinum certification. Similar to LEED, the protocol is based on a point-based system that allows certification at Conformant, Silver, Gold or Platinum levels.

Gail Dunn, Chief Sustainability Officer for Marstel-Day, says “The criteria for P391 are unique and very well thought through. We try to stay at the leading edge of sustainability, and certifying to the protocol was an opportunity to assess our organization against the industry.”

To gain certification, Marstel-Day submitted information about its operations to NSF Sustainability (a division of NSF International), who evaluated it against the sustainability performance criteria in NSF P391 in three key areas:

- Environmental impact – Energy use and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions
- Labor impact – Health and safety and employment practices
- Social responsibility impact – Community assessment

After verifying Marstel-Day's information, NSF performed an on-site audit to validate the procedures and processes to ensure they meet the performance criteria. Annual documentation audits and triennial on-site audits are required to maintain certification.

Marstel-Day also participated in certification pilot testing to make sure the process was understandable, achievable and relevant. The company went through the entire process of collecting and submitting documentation as required by the protocol, and discussed outstanding items and gaps with NSF.

Dunn says, "NSF was responsive and really listened to all inputs. We worked together to ensure that all criteria are applicable to the service industry, which are often quite different from product manufacturing criteria. We tried to make sure that all mandatory criteria apply to all service companies, regardless of type, and that certification is not negatively impacted by optional criteria that may not be applicable for every company within the service industry."

Jessica Slomka, NSF Standards Development Liaison, says "Marstel-Day's feedback and insight into the service and sustainability industries helped streamline the protocol. The pilot test also provided invaluable information for the committee that is now working to transition the protocol into a standard."

The Joint Committee on Sustainable Service Providers, following the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) standards development process, is using NSF P391 as the basis for developing the new national standard. Stakeholder input is sought from a balanced group representing service providers, suppliers, regulatory agencies, environmental organizations and end users, including Dunn and representatives from the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA).

Dunn says, "I wanted to help create a sustainability standard that is broad enough to gain national acceptance by ensuring that it will be applicable to the many different kinds of companies in the service sector. The standard will also be flexible enough to apply to organizations at all stages of sustainability. For example, a zero-waste company won't lose points because it can't achieve high improvement rates, and a company just starting in sustainability won't be disqualified because it hasn't yet achieved improvements over its baseline data."

At the same time, the standard will also contain criteria that are strict and robust enough for the certification to be meaningful. Dunn says, "We are very thoroughly defining the objectives and intent behind the criteria so auditors and certifying companies are speaking the same language and know what is being measured and how. We want to create a standard that has meaning today and into the future. It's important to make criteria as clear and measurable as possible and to create a thorough, inclusive and meaningful standard."

Once complete, the standard will replace the protocol. Companies certified to the protocol will be transferred to the standard in a seamless process, but may need to supply additional information to meet new criteria.

## The Results

"Certification to P391 adds credibility to measures we've always had in place, and provides a way to prove our commitment to the environment," Rubin says. "Certification fits the ethos of our firm as an environmental company and fits our social responsibility plan."

NSF P391 sustainable service provider certification also allows Marstel-Day to differentiate its services and pursue preferred vendor status with organizations seeking more sustainable operating solutions. This includes local, state and federal government agencies and others attempting to comply with U.S. Executive Order 13514, which helps ensure that 95 percent of government contracts include products and services with sustainable attributes (e.g. energy and water efficiency, recycled content). Many of these sustainable attributes are included in criteria for NSF P391.

"Certification certainly gives us an edge when submitting bids and proposals to organizations requiring compliance with E.O. 13514," Rubin says. "If, in the future, the GSA decides to require its vendors to be certified to a protocol or standard, certification to NSF P391 will put companies ahead of the curve rather than scrambling to meet compliance later."

Marstel-Day also chose NSF P391 because of the credibility and proven track record of NSF International as an independent third-party certifier. "Certification is most meaningful when it's issued by a credible and reputable company, known for credibility in standards development and application," Dunn says. "NSF meets that criteria, and had thorough and established processes in place to develop this new protocol."

Rubin agrees. "NSF P391 was by far the best developed approach for service providers. It's essentially the only certification that focuses on service providers. Certification to P391 spotlights the uniqueness of a company and provides an advantage to set it apart from other companies."

Marstel-Day also hopes to help lead the way for other companies to obtain sustainable certification. Rubin says, "We hope our involvement in certification and in helping to define the standard will set the stage for other businesses to follow suit."



For details about NSF P391 certification, contact Dennis Gillan at [sustainability@nsf.org](mailto:sustainability@nsf.org) or (734) 476-2543, or visit [nsf.org](http://nsf.org).