The Challenge
With a strong commitment to corporate responsibility, GAF has always been a strong promoter in their industry when it comes to sustainability. This leading North American roofing manufacturer is proud to support sustainability in all areas of its business— from energy efficiency and materials maximization, to recycling and the installation process. GAF undertakes efforts company-wide to reduce their environmental footprint.

In 2010, under the leadership of Martin Grohman, Executive Director, Sustainability, GAF began an initiative to minimize waste at all levels. This initiative included programs encouraging installers and consumers to recycle used shingles, reducing waste in office environments, and maximizing landfill diversion efforts in production plants.

To document this process, Grohman set out to develop his own waste reduction standard and conducted thorough internal audits to self-certify the company. While this was a rigorous, measured initiative, it lacked the objectivity and credibility of third party validation.

The Process
Grohman learned about UL’s Landfill Waste Diversion claim validation program, also known as “Zero Waste” validation.

UL’s Landfill Waste Diversion criteria include a variety of methods that companies may use to minimize the amount of waste they send to landfills, from reuse to recycling and composting, to energy creation through waste incineration. To earn a claim validation mark, companies must undergo an extensive, two-part, UL-led audit, which includes document evaluation and onsite visits, as well as audits on an annual basis.

GAF had earned multiple UL designations from a fire and safety perspective. Grohman knew that UL was a dependable name in third party validation and certifications and liked the idea of using a trusted resource to verify the company’s waste reduction efforts.

“Because the standard was relatively new at the time, we did not know exactly what the process would look like or how long it would take. To keep the project moving, UL and GAF scheduled a weekly conference call to review progress, next steps, and discuss any roadblocks,” recalled Grohman.
The Results

The audit process was revealing and beneficial in a number of ways. For example, in reviewing the documentation required to earn validation, GAF discovered that one service provider was inadvertently double-billing them and they were able to address the issue immediately.

By taking a closer look at the sources of waste, GAF found that a lot of waste was being generated by materials coming from suppliers. They were able to identify things like excessive packaging and unnecessary shrink wrap, and work with suppliers to eliminate the use of those materials on GAF orders – a process that not only reduced waste for GAF, but also for their suppliers.

As UL and GAF worked together to examine waste streams, the operations team focused on each material making up a significant portion of the waste stream and looked to eliminate the cause of waste at the source - even better than recycling. During the course of the project, GAF’s landfill diversion rate jumped by almost 8% and continues to increase to this day.

“The landfill diversion and zero waste to landfill manufacturing efforts continue to be areas of focus for GAF. Thanks to the rigor of the UL audit and validation process, GAF has taken a much ‘deeper dive’ to understand waste streams and identify areas for improvement than we would have otherwise,” said Grohman.

UL’s Landfill Diversion Claim Validation lets GAF send a clear and compelling message of GAF’s sustainability accomplishments in this area. The validation provided a framework for implementing a thorough, organized documentation system to measure year-over-year progress. To top it all off, landfill diversion lets the company save money and resources by eliminating and streamlining every possible kind of waste.

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“— Martin Grohman, Executive Director, Sustainability, GAF