

Greening Your Business



A Guide for Creating a More Sustainable Organization



TABLE OF CONTENTS

This booklet provides guidance on how to create a Sustainability Coordinator position or Green Team and make your organization more sustainable. The information provided is applicable to most small or medium sized businesses and non-profit organizations.

Introduction	1
A New Role	2
Creating a Green Team	3
Purchasing	4
Waste Management	5
Energy	6
Water	7
Transportation	8
Meetings & Events	9
Toxins	10
Healthy Indoor Environments	11
Carbon Accounting	12
Corporate Responsibility	13
Incentives	14
Training Resources	15
Taking It Home	16



Green is Good Business

Saving Money and the Environment

The Benefits

Conventional wisdom is changing. It is no longer the case that doing the right thing for the environment always comes at a cost to the bottom line. Small businesses are finding many ways to save money and reduce their environmental impact. Because reducing wasted resources (energy, water, paper, and others) is a key element of operating a green business, many savings come naturally.

Case studies of green businesses provide the evidence. B-Lab, an organization that certifies green businesses, calculates that their members save a collective \$750,000 each year due to their environmental initiatives.

Additionally, a study by the Small Business Administration found that strategic investments by small businesses can result in significant utility savings without sacrificing service or comfort. So running a green business doesn't mean doing without—it's about optimizing operations to find out how much is enough.

Even small changes can add up to make a big difference—and the paybacks go far beyond the direct dollars and cents. Businesses who have gone green report improved customer and employee loyalty, and increased productivity. Many receive more media coverage, resulting in a better image in the community. These important benefits go a long way to making a green business an economically sustainable one, too.

Industry Transformation

The environmental field has grown and evolved significantly in the last 40 years. Today, businesses must not only meet regulations but the expectations of their customers in making their business practices environmentally responsible. Here are some of the changes we see:

- Across the technology sector, manufacturers have embraced e-waste recycling and product take-back programs.
- Transportation has changed, too. Many businesses are now subsidizing alternative commuting packages for employees, using vehicle-sharing programs instead of having a fleet, and providing flexible schedules for staff who want to carpool or telecommute.
- In the field of architecture, engineering and construction, the LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) rating system has created thousands of energy efficient and healthy buildings of every type of construction.
- Finance, marketing and business management have all been affected as businesses more carefully track the environmental and social impact as well as their bottom line.

As businesses continue to feel the impacts of stronger customer preferences and respond to new regulations and incentives, environmental savvy will be an increasingly valuable asset.

Greening Your Workforce

While some businesses will respond by hiring a specialized Sustainability Coordinator, some will require employees in existing roles to have new green knowledge and skills.

Employees in operations will need research skills to find out where their supplies come from, and be able to connect their firm with suppliers and waste haulers that can help them reduce their environmental impact. Employees in marketing or public relations roles will need to have a deep understanding of environmental issues in order to speak credibly about the organization's accomplishments and where additional improvements are planned.

Human resources staff will need to examine the work environment and know how to improve human health and gain productivity benefits for the business at the same time.

Because every aspect of a business impacts the environment in some way, green up-skilling may be appropriate in a wide variety of job titles.

Positions with Potential Green Responsibilities

Operations Manager
Human Resources Director
Marketing Coordinator
Project Manager
Business Development Manager



Sustainability Coordinator

Ensuring a Sustainable Business with Environmental Action

Although sustainability professionals may have many job titles, for the purposes of this booklet we focus on the title Sustainability Coordinator. A Sustainability Coordinator may have a background in business

or environmental management, marketing and communications, research and scientific analysis, facility or office management, or many other disciplines. In fact, their career pathway may wind through many of

these fields making the Sustainability Coordinator well prepared to execute a wide variety of job duties and lead the organization's efforts to go green. It may be a full-time position or part of an existing role.

Roles & Responsibilities

Sustainability Coordinators may conduct any of the following tasks as part of another position or in their full-time role. There is a great deal of variety in the division of duties and some organizations will even divide these duties among members of their green team.

Vision & Leadership

- Fosters a culture of sustainability across an organization
- Assesses or proposes sustainability initiatives, considering factors such as cost effectiveness, technical feasibility, and acceptance
- Writes and maintains policies related to sustainable operations including purchasing, solid waste management, cleaning, building operations, carbon reduction, and others as appropriate

Technical Expertise & Research

- Researches or reviews regulatory, technical, or market issues related to sustainability
- Provides expertise and advice in the reduction of the organization's resources and consumption
- Writes grant applications, rebate applications, or project proposals to secure funding for sustainability projects

Monitoring & Reporting

- Tracks sustainability indicators, such as energy usage, natural resource usage, waste generation, recycling, and carbon and ecological footprint; identifies or creates new indicators
- Monitors compliance with green policies and reports progress

Analysis & Evaluation

- Utilizes known programs to analyze and track sustainability indicators, or develops appropriate sustainability benchmarks and processes for measurement and verification
- Evaluates all purchasing practices and recommends appropriate sustainable products and services
- Maps supply chain and waste stream and develops programs for making them more sustainable

Marketing

- Promotes awareness and education regarding sustainability issues amongst employees
- Creates outreach materials such as brochures or web sites to communicate sustainability objectives and successes
- Serves as public face of organization's sustainability efforts, answers questions and speaks at public events

Coordination

- Develops and monitors contracts with vendors with regards to sustainability-related projects and activities
- Acts as liaison among company management, employees, and stakeholders
- Helps develop strong networks with other small businesses with shared values

Dept. of Labor Recognition

O*Net Online has identified both the leadership role of Chief Sustainability Officers and the coordinator role of Sustainability Specialists as *Green Jobs* with a *Bright Outlook*. <http://online.onetcenter.org>



Sustainability Requires Teamwork

Assembling and Motivating a Team

One of the key responsibilities of a Sustainability Coordinator is to assemble and mobilize a team to help improve the business' operating practices. Often, a clear

and compelling business case is needed to get all the right people on board. A successful green team can produce valuable results in the form of reduced operating costs, improved

image and employee pride, new marketing opportunities, and a way for the company to make meaningful contributions to their community.

Best Practices

- Mobilize support from upper management, including a commitment letter or other communication with a description of how the program will benefit the organization, community and environment.
- Collect baseline data. How much energy do you use? How much waste do you generate? How do employees get to work? This step is critical to showing future results!
- Use an environmental footprint calculator to help you get the big picture and identify your biggest areas of impact.
- Plan your efforts by taking a fresh look at your daily operations and do your research to find out what alternative products or methods might be.
- Engage on-the-ground staff who will likely have key insights on what isn't working and what can be changed for the better.
- Prioritize actions. You might choose to tackle one issue at a time, or take small steps in each area.
- Raise awareness with a kick-off event.
- Train staff on each new initiative, including demonstrations and clear signage.
- Recognize successes with employee rewards, individual or group. Successes can be measured through reduced utility bills, or hitting a participating target.
- The saying goes, "you can't manage what you don't measure." Measure your results on an ongoing basis to show employees, management and the community the true impact of your efforts.

The Green Dream Team

Internal Staff

Office Manager /
Purchasing
Facility Manager
Chief Operating Officer /
Management
Public Relations /
Marketing
Human Resources
Fleet Supervisor

External Partners

Utilities
Building Management
Company
Non-profit Organizations
Vendors: Janitorial,
Landscaping, and others

Learn More

**Department of Labor
Sustainability Planning Guide**
Assists with sustainability planning on an ongoing basis.

www.doleta.gov/business/PDF/SustainGuide.pdf

Network for Business Innovation and Sustainability (NBIS)
The NBIS Accelerator Track helps company Green Teams organize company-wide sustainability planning and action.

www.nbis.org/programs/accelerating-sustainability

Calculating an Environmental Footprint
Provides background on the elements of an environmental footprint for business and an online calculator for individuals.

www.footprintnetwork.org



Reduce, Reuse, Buy Green Making Procurement Practices Greener

A business's purchasing and waste management decisions are the primary way in which it affects our natural resources: wood, petroleum products, minerals, water, and others. By considering both your purchases and waste together you're likely to find synergies between saving the environment and saving money.

There is a lot of hype about green products, but there are two important elements to green purchasing that come first: reduce and reuse. Buying less and making better use of the things you do buy may be less flashy but is more impactful and less expensive than any green purchase.

When it comes time to buy, look at the long-term costs (monetary and qualitative) associated with the purchase. Although some green products come with a price premium, a holistic Environmentally Preferred Purchasing (EPP) strategy can have a net positive impact on a business's bottom line.

Criteria for Green Purchasing

- Local
- Rapidly Renewable
- Low- or Non-Toxic
- Low- or No VOC
- Post-Consumer Recycled Content
- Energy or Water Efficient
- Durable and/or Repairable
- Compostable or Recyclable

Product Certifications

- FSC Certified
- GreenSeal
- Energy Star
- EPEAT
- Water Sense
- Cradle to Cradle Carpet and Rug Institute

Best Practices

Reduce

- The greenest purchase you can make is one you eliminate. Look for ways to not buy things at all. For example, you might choose to stop buying air fresheners (which are frequently toxic, anyway).
- Buying in bulk is a form of reducing purchasing, too. Not only is it more economical, but it reduces packaging waste. Standardizing your supplies (for example, getting rid of the one fixture that requires a special kind of light bulb) can help you find even greater efficiencies.

Reuse

- Find the best use for your materials before throwing them away. For example, you might designate one office printer for printing draft documents on the blank side of used paper, or bind those pages into note pads staff can use during internal meetings.
- Look for refurbished office furniture or electronics, and donate your old materials when you no longer need them.
- Use refillable products like pens and soap dispensers, and stock your kitchenette with dishes and silverware to eliminate ongoing sources of trash.

Buy Green

- Organize information about things you buy into easy-to-understand categories. Common categories include office supplies, furniture, electronics, food, and ongoing consumables directly related to your line of work. Compare your purchases to sustainability criteria and look for alternatives.
- Test new products and collect feedback before institutionalizing their purchase.
- Look for suppliers with a commitment to sustainability.
- Ask your local government agencies about opportunities to buy supplies through their green procurement system.
- Formalize your changes with an EPP policy. Document your research for your existing purchases, and list your priority criteria for purchases of new products.

Learn More

EPA's Environmentally Preferable Purchasing

Resources to help you find specific products, sorted by type and industry, and other tools.

www.epa.gov/epp/index.htm

Sample EPP

The Natural Resources Defense Council provides a sample template and links to other businesses' policies.

www.nrdc.org/enterprise/greeningadvisor/gpp-purch_policy.asp

Sample Environmentally Preferably Purchasing Guidelines

Resources for developing your own EPP.

www.cityofseattle.net/environment/purchasing.htm



Recycle, Compost

Finding the Right Place for All Your Waste

Carefully managing your waste can be a great way to save your company money. We've already discussed reusing supplies and materials to delay their entry into the waste stream. Once materials do enter the waste stream, there are two green

alternatives to disposal of garbage: recycling and composting. Most parts of the country have offered recycling services for many years, but now composting is becoming a widely available option for businesses, too. Composting is the process of breaking

down biodegradable waste to make a product—compost—we can use in our landscapes. In the City of Seattle, composting waste costs businesses 32% less than garbage service.

Best Practices

- Conduct a waste stream audit for your business. What do you throw away? Where does it go? How can you improve your recycling and composting rates? Use the many free waste audit tools available, or contact your solid waste utility to see if they provide free audits.
- Create a waste management plan. Take the time to research where items specific to your business's waste stream can be taken. Your plan should also set targets for waste management, and a way to measure whether you are meeting your goals.
- Create clear signage to show what waste goes where. Signage with images is particularly helpful, especially when addressing non-native English speakers. Also, create consistent coloring in your waste bins. An increasingly common standard is blue for recycling, green for composting, and black or brown for trash.
- Make it easy for your staff to dispose of their waste properly. Hold a brown bag lunch to talk about any changes to your system—and carefully recycle and compost the meeting waste as a demonstration.
- Make a list of caterers and restaurants that support your waste management goals. Avoid those that provide too much individual wrapping of items, and seek out those that provide containers that can be easily recycled or composted. Ask if they compost their leftover food waste. Make this list available to your staff, and other small businesses in your area.
- Challenge your organization to recycle even the most stubborn products that can't be recycled through your municipal system. This can include e-waste, construction waste, or other things specific to your business. If it isn't economical for you to take individual trips, look to create partnerships with other small organizations.
- Talk to your tenants and vendors about your waste management goals and look for ways to work together.
- Get creative. Is there another organization that can use the waste you generate? For example, janitorial services might generate a lot of clean cardboard tubes. Is there a daycare or school that can use them for arts and crafts?

Tip

Call your local municipality to find out what recycling and composting services are currently offered, and what is on the horizon. If you have a persistent problem with a type of waste you'd like to recycle, but can't, ask them for alternatives.

Learn More

EPA's Business Guide for Reducing Solid Waste

Information on setting up your waste reduction program and conducting a waste audit.

www.epa.gov/wastes/nonhaz/municipal/pubs/bus-guid/index.htm

Recycling Program Directory

Directory of local and national programs for curbside pick-up and recycling of specialty items.

www.ourearth.org/recycling

Take It Back Network

Resource list offering convenient options for recycling products that should not be disposed of in the trash.

www.takeitbacknetwork.org



Efficiency, Conservation, and Renewables

Saving Big by Wasting Less

Energy Audits

A qualified energy auditor can demonstrate primary energy uses and make recommendations, prioritized by cost, for reducing energy use.

Operational Changes

Many organizations underestimate the benefit of operational changes they can make to reduce their energy use. Many buildings are heated too early in the season, are kept too warm in the heating season and cooled too much in the cooling season, all of which wastes energy and money.

Facility Upgrades

After making simple changes, upgrades may be necessary. Look for utility-sponsored incentives and grant programs. Some will work with you to create a custom rebate for your project.

Best Practices

- If your organization rents a space, ask about future plans for energy efficiency upgrades. If none are planned, you may be able to help find incentives or grants to support the improvement of your whole building.
- Review your energy bills. Look for unexplained changes month-to-month, or year-to-year, to identify waste.

Tip

Why is it so important to know how much energy your place of business uses? Monitoring your energy use, and how it changes over time, is the only way to accurately identify problems and prove savings.

Owner-occupied buildings can usually get the key information they need from their utility bills.

If you rent in a multi-tenant building, ask about a sub-meter for your space.

- Educate and engage employees in your energy-saving strategies. Create office closing procedures that make people responsible for turning off equipment in their space, and conduct random audits to monitor compliance.
- Look for ways to reduce phantom plug loads, which are things plugged into outlets that draw power even when the item is not in use.
- Research inexpensive energy saving devices. There are dozens from which to choose, including occupancy sensors, power strips, electricity meters that plug into outlets, vending machine energy savers and more. Choose those that make the most sense for your organization.
- Turn computers off when they are not in use. Screen savers rarely save energy, so turn off monitors during long meetings or other long periods of non-use. Coordinate with IT staff for days when back-ups or system upgrades are needed.
- Replace inefficient equipment with EnergyStar or EPEAT rated products.
- Encourage employees to wear clothing that is sensible for the time of year, and adjust your office temperature accordingly.
- Open windows in the summer instead of always turning on the AC. Keep windows and doors closed in the winter and simply turn down the heat if it is too warm.
- Renewable energy isn't cheap, so it works best after all efficiency and conservation measures have been implemented.

Learn More

Your Local Utility

Check with all of your utility providers for gas, water and electricity to see what kind of rebate programs they have available. These programs can change frequently, so ask about programs on the horizon, too.

Small Business Guide to Energy Efficiency

Highlights the major steps of conducting an energy efficiency project.

www.business.gov/manage/green-business/energy-efficiency/

Energy Star for Small Business

This EPA site provides clear guidance for different facility types, and has information about incentives.

www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?c=small_business.sb_index



Indoor and Outdoor Conservation

Saving Our Most Precious Resource

Less than 1% of all water on the earth is available as fresh drinking water but our water demands are increasing beyond what the earth can provide. Even wetter areas are experiencing

drought conditions. Fortunately, water efficiency is one of the easiest things a business can pursue. Efficient plumbing fixtures have come a long way in the last decade and products

like low-flow and dual-flush toilets now do the same great job with less water. Using water more wisely outdoors can make beautiful, efficient landscapes, too.

Best Practices

- Monitor your water bills for sustained highs that might be showing a hidden leak.
- Research alternative fixtures for your largest water uses. Restaurants, laundromats and other small businesses with high water use can have significant water savings (and energy, too, if the water is heated). These companies should look for resources specific to their needs.
- Teach your staff to use existing and new efficient fixtures appropriately, especially new technologies such as dual flush toilets, and how to turn off faucets tightly.
- Provide pitchers and glasses of water instead of bottled water. The amount of water used to manufacture and ship that plastic bottle is many times greater than the water it contains.
- Save water and prevent water pollution by sweeping up litter and dust on sidewalks instead of hosing it into storm drains.
- Adjust sprinklers so only landscaping is watered and not buildings, sidewalks, or streets.
- If you don't manage your own landscape or building, report broken pipes, open hydrants and errant sprinklers to the property owner or your water provider immediately.
- Look for alternate uses for your graywater from sinks and laundries. Can it be used on your site for irrigation? Check with your city codes—graywater reuse is being allowed more often.
- If you think you don't use much water, investigate the bigger water footprint of your organization. How much water do your suppliers use? How much water use happens when you sell a product? Although not in your direct control, your efforts to reduce water use across your footprint can have an even bigger impact than the amount of water used on your site.

Preventing Water Pollution

Don't forget to consider any possible water pollution impacts of your business. Are you, or your janitorial company, using non-toxic, green cleaning products? Does your business use any special chemicals and, if so, are they being disposed of properly? Laundromats, medical and dental offices, and other businesses that work with chemicals should take extra care to manage them so these chemicals do not enter our waterways. Are you washing vehicles in the street (where chemicals wash into waterways) instead of at a car wash that filters and recycles wash water? Are your vehicles leaking oil or other fluids?

Learn More

Water Sense

An EPA program on water efficiency, including tips on water conservation, design strategies and usage tracking tools.

www.epa.gov/watersense/spaces/ci.html

Saving Water Partnership

Local utilities have teamed up to offer this web site with excellent water-saving tips for businesses, including information about incentives.

www.savingwater.org/business.htm

Saving Puget Sound

Links to many resources to help you conserve water and reduce water pollution.

www.ecy.wa.gov/puget_sound/whatyoucando.html



Alternative Options

Making It Easy to Go Green — Literally

Single-car commuting is one of the primary ways we pollute our air and change our climate. Alternative transportation doesn't mean riding a solar-powered bike to work—it is any alternative to single-car commuting. Many people use the term

“transportation choices” to describe the desired goal. Most communities are laid out so that only a single driver can easily and efficiently get from point A to B. Transportation choices means making it easier for people to choose alternatives that are good

for their health, pocketbook, and the environment. Small businesses can promote transportation choices through a variety of ways, and they can enjoy the benefits of a healthier, happier workforce.

Best Practices

- Analyze the transportation patterns related to your business. Most businesses have suppliers, employees and customers making the most trips.
- Survey your employees to establish a baseline for the number of single-occupant vehicle (SOV) trips currently made, and total Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) so you can track your progress in reducing them.
- Work with your organizations' human resources department to identify incentives or reward programs you can implement to encourage employees to take alternative forms of transportation to work.
- Investigate telecommuting. Providing remote access to office computers and/or loaner laptops can make transitioning between work and home office a breeze.
- Biking to work has huge health benefits for riders and the environment. Employers can make cycling easier by providing a place to change and clean up, a safe place to store bikes, and by sponsoring challenges like Bike-To-Work Month.
- Support carpooling and vanpooling by creating a way for employees to connect with neighbors, or allowing flexibility in their schedules to make ride-sharing work. Collaborate with other nearby businesses to help more people find a match.
- Invite an expert to speak about transportation choices for your region. Ask that they cover safe cycling tips, using the mass transit system, and combining bus trips with other forms of transportation (using park and rides, and putting a bike on the bus).
- Subsidize bus and light rail passes, walk-on ferry fare, or other mass transit options as an employment benefit.
- Investigate car sharing services like ZipCar. Many small businesses use this service to get their staff to meetings instead of investing in a fleet. Extending car sharing memberships to employees can be a green employment benefit.
- Monitor your progress by surveying employees and/or suppliers and customers. Have your programs given them more transportation choices? How many VMT and SOV trips have you reduced?

Climate Change

Climate change is a regional change in temperature and weather patterns that has a significant effect on our socioeconomic activity.

Climate change is caused by greenhouse gases (GHG), of which the most common is carbon dioxide (CO₂).

Our sprawling transportation system is one of the biggest contributors of CO₂.

By encouraging sustainable transportation, organizations can help significantly reduce our contributions to climate change.

Learn More

Commuter Choice Primer

Handbook for identifying alternative commute strategies for a particular worksite.

ntl.bts.gov/lib/jpodocs/repts_pr/13669.html

Rideshare Online

Helps employees calculate the cost of commutes, find carpools and other commute options.

www.rideshareonline.com

Wheel Options

Provides resources for Employee Transportation Coordinators, and rideshare competitions with prizes.

www.wheeloptions.org



High-Tech and Low-Tech Strategies

Getting the Most Out of Your Meetings

Even for people who run green offices and green households every day, hosting a green meeting or big event can pose a special challenge. Fortunately, green meetings are very

much worth the effort. Businesses can run effective green meetings with less printing, less waste, and in less time. Especially for businesses that are promoting their green practices,

green meetings are a critical way to demonstrate commitment and inspire participation. It's also an opportunity to show off your creativity.

Best Practices

- Some meetings really don't need to be held in-person. Use simple conference call systems and webinar tools to save trips and time for everyone involved.
- If you need to meet in-person, choose a location that reduces the transportation requirements, such as a central location with lots of transportation choices. If that doesn't describe your facility, make it easy for attendees to carpool.
- Experienced venues will make hosting green meetings easier. Ask potential locations how they manage waste. Also ask about the green features of their building that might provide benefits to your group. For example, some green buildings provide lots of natural light and views that can make long meetings much more comfortable and productive.
- Save paper by making sure registration, event details, presentations and handouts are available online. Post this information on a dedicated page on the organization's web site, or use an online document-sharing service.
- If you do need to print, make sure you use a print shop that can meet your paper procurement standards. Add a note at the end of each document describing the green printing (recycled paper, non-toxic ink, etc.) to educate meeting attendees about your efforts.

Tip

Don't forget to educate your meeting attendees about your greening efforts.

Provide clear signage about where your meeting materials came from and where the waste will go.

Ask specifically for their participation and, if you like, award prizes.

- Exhibits and displays should be made of recycled-content materials, and/or those that can be recycled at the end of their lifespan. Avoid vinyl, and try to design durable signage that can be used again in the future.
- Buy healthy food choices, obtaining the highest possible percentage of local and organic ingredients. Serve condiments in bulk to save on individual wrappers.
- Provide water in pitchers rather than using bottled water, and make sure other beverages are also served in bulk or in easily-recycled containers.
- Durable eatingware is best, as it prevents waste. However compostable items are a great second-choice. Although they are now widely available, check with your waste hauler to make sure they accept the brand you plan to use.
- Invest in nametags that have reusable sleeves, and make it easy for attendees to return their nametags at the end of the event.

Learn More

EPA Guide to Green Meetings

Tips and resources for greening meetings of any scale.
www.epa.gov/oppt/greenmeetings/

National Recycling Coalition Policy

Sample policy with helpful green meeting actions.
www.nrc-recycle.org/Data/Sites/1/greenmtgpolicy.pdf



Reduce Toxins in the Workplace Protecting Human and Environmental Health

There are few more urgent or personal environmental issues than that of toxic chemicals. There are now many thousands of chemicals in our air, water, food and workplaces that have known negative health impacts. “Persistent”

chemicals are those that stay in our bodies for a long time and are the most important to avoid. Scientists have studied the chemical concentrations of Americans and found them to be hundreds of times higher than people

living in other countries. You can have a direct and long-term impact on the health of your employees, customers and community when you eliminate toxic chemicals from your business practices.

Best Practices

- Clean green. That means using effective, environmentally-friendly ingredients that do the job without harming human health.
- Electronic waste—including computers, fax machines, and cell phones—is full of potentially harmful chemicals and heavy metals. Use the resources listed under recycling or contact your waste hauler to find the best possible destination for them. Ask what the final destination of the products is—many are shipped out of the country and contaminate impoverished communities abroad.
- Printers have been shown to be one of the highest sources of toxins in the average office. If possible, locate printers away from people in a well-ventilated area. When replacing printers, do your homework to find one that has the features you need with the lowest possible emissions.
- Use Integrated Pest Management (IPM) techniques to maintain your landscaping and control indoor pests. IPM involves using chemicals as a last resort, relying first on preventative measures. IPM works best with careful monitoring to find problems before they are out of control and then controlling infestations in a localized, least-toxic manner instead of general spraying.
- Many kinds of office furniture can off-gas urea formaldehyde and other dangerous chemicals over long periods of time. Office furniture made from solid wood and metal is best. Avoid pressboard, upholstered furniture that is stuffed with foam rubber, and stain-resistant fabric treatments.
- Buy only unscented products and don't use scented air “fresheners”. Manufacturers are not required to list the chemicals they contain and many fragrances contain phthalates, which have been linked to reproductive problems in men and women.
- Examine any special chemicals used regularly in your industry—especially if you work in medicine, manufacturing, or cleaning/dry cleaning. There may be new, less-toxic options for you to explore.
- When buying energy efficient light bulbs, look for a balance between low mercury content and long lifespan. Manufacturers are now producing information about the “picograms of mercury per lumen hour”—the lower the better.

Avoid Products That Contain These Persistent Toxic Chemicals

<i>Chemical</i>	<i>Related Products</i>
PBDEs	furniture, electronics, carpet padding and backing
Dioxin	products containing PVC/vinyl, paper products
PFCs (Teflon)	non-stick cookware, food packaging, stain- and water-resistance treatments
Mercury	seafood, thermometers, thermostats, fluorescent light bulbs
Lead	lead paint, some products containing PVC/vinyl

Learn More

EPA's Guide to Green Cleaning

Describes environmental attributes to look for in products and provides other procurement guidance. www.epa.gov/epp/pubs/products/cleaning.htm

Chemicals of Concern

Provides more information on how we are exposed, health risks, and how we can protect ourselves from toxins. www.watoxics.org/chemicals-of-concern

Local Hazardous Waste Management

Provides resources on a variety of related topics including Integrated Pest Management, green purchasing, business hazardous waste, and more. www.lhwmp.org



Green Spaces Make Productive People

Turning Your Office Into a Place People Want to Be

When most people think of a healthy indoor environment, they think of the absence of toxins. But a green office has many other characteristics that are important for employee health

and comfort. A growing number of studies are showing the benefits of these strategies for employees and, consequently, employers. The benefits include reduced absenteeism,

improved ability to concentrate, increased creativity and higher worker satisfaction.

Best Practices

- In any office, the perfectly comfortable temperature is one of the most difficult targets to hit. If your workplace has warmer and cooler areas, try locating people in an area that meets their preference. Allow dress codes to vary by season to provide employees more control over their comfort.
- The amount of carbon dioxide (CO₂) in the air also has a direct impact on employee's comfort. Lack of ventilation creates increased levels of CO₂, which causes drowsiness. High concentrations can cause dizziness and headaches. If you suspect a problem, check to make sure that fans are working properly. Check all vents to make sure they are not being blocked—indoors or outdoors. If you can't pinpoint an obvious problem, it might be time to call in a professional.
- Another common source of irritants is dust and other particulates. You can help prevent particulates from entering the space by providing walk-off mats outside your office, and by making sure the filters in your ventilation system are regularly changed.
- Provide an acoustically comfortable work environment. This can sometimes be challenging. In open office layouts, create guidelines for staff on how to respect each other's work areas, and look for places where people can have impromptu meetings where they aren't disturbing others. Designate a multi-purpose room as a quiet space when people have tasks that require extra concentration.
- Protect employee health by learning more about ergonomics and provide workstations that are right-sized for your staff. Modifications to computers, desks and chairs, and other equipment can make a big difference.
- Daylight and views are important for a comfortable office because they reduce stress and eye strain, and help people feel more connected to the outside world. Re-orienting workspaces so that people have better access to daylight and views can be very beneficial, but make sure to provide window shades or anti-glare devices to allow people to make adjustments as needed.
- There is growing evidence that making the workplace more like the natural environment has concrete benefits. In addition to providing daylight and natural views, you can give people a connection to nature in the workplace by adding indoor plants, pictures of open landscapes, and decorating with natural materials.

Tip

In general, the more control you provide people in making a comfortable space, the more comfortable they will be. To the extent that you can provide operable windows for employees to get fresh air, thermostat controls so they can fine-tune the temperature of their space, and some freedom with their desk arrangements, the greener and more productive office space you will be providing.

Learn More

An Office Building Occupant's Guide to Indoor Air Quality

Information on the factors that contribute to healthy indoor air and what you can do to improve air quality in your office.

www.epa.gov/iaq/pubs/occupgd.html

OSHA Ergonomics

Advised by the National Advisory Committee on Ergonomics (NACE), OSHA created this website to provide businesses with ergonomic guidelines, research, and outreach and assistance.

www.osha.gov/SLTC/ergonomics/index.html



Future Mandates Getting Ahead of the Curve

Companies large and small, from corporate giants to neighborhood restaurants, are now reporting on their carbon reduction efforts.

By making an effort to understand carbon accounting now, organizations can be ahead of the competition. Companies that learn to calculate their

carbon footprint today will be better prepared to demonstrate compliance with future mandates and be poised to collect future incentives, too.

Best Practices

- Choose the scope of your carbon accounting. The simplest form involves calculating the amount of fossil fuel used to run your business, including the impacts of transportation (motor vehicles, planes, trains and other forms of shipping); fossil fuels used to heat and cool your operations; and the “source energy” or transmission losses of delivering that energy to your place of business.
- Identify the greenhouse gases (GHG) created when you do business. Common GHGs to quantify include Carbon Dioxide (CO₂), Methane (CH₄), Nitrous Oxide (N₂O), Hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), Perfluorocarbons (PFCs), and Sulfur Hexafluoride (SF₆). These can be converted to CO₂ equivalents for easier counting.
- Collect information for your baseline, and set up a tracking system that will make it easy to compare in the future. Research carbon accounting software options as they can help you decide both what you want to track and how to track it.
- Track the reductions in energy use from all of the sustainable strategies you’re pursuing. Note decreases in your electricity and gas bills, and calculate the pollution avoided by your reduction in employee commute trips.
- Consider buying renewable energy credits (REC). Buying RECs means purchasing green power from a renewable source. Even if that green power isn’t sold in your state, your purchase of RECs means it is generated somewhere. You can buy RECs with your electricity bill or directly to a certified REC provider. Either way, you are supporting the development of clean energy sources and your utility may acknowledge your support publicly. The cost of RECs fluctuates so be sure to shop around and, when prices are low, invest in a multi-year package.
- Consider buying carbon offsets. Carbon offsets represent the reduction of fossil fuel use in one area—through reductions via efficiency or actively capturing carbon from the air—to “offset” the use of fossil fuels used elsewhere. If you have to use natural gas to heat your business, you can buy carbon offsets to reduce natural gas use elsewhere. The carbon offset market is currently unregulated so do your research before purchasing.
- As a small business tackling the challenging task of carbon accounting, you will be showing real leadership. Work with your marketing staff to really tell your story. Research opportunities to collaborate with other small businesses or, if you are a non-profit organization, there may be free services available to you.

Tip

Stay on top of changes in the field of carbon accounting by reading various environmental business publications like the Sustainable Industries Journal and EnvironmentalLeader.com.

Learn More

The Climate Registry

Membership provides assistance with measuring carbon footprints. Their respected “General Reporting Protocol” is free.
www.theclimateregistry.org/downloads/GRP.pdf

OpenEco

Creating a free account provides access to a simplistic GHG calculation tool and a forum to share information with others.
www.openeco.org

EPA’s Green Power Partnership

Information on different certified green power products including RECs and offsets.
www.epa.gov/greenpower/buygp/index.htm



People, Planet, Profit

Integrating Your Values Into Your Business

Corporate responsibility includes all three elements of sustainability: the environmental impact, the human or community impacts and the

economic impacts—which includes the economic viability of your business. A truly sustainable business addresses all three. This is known as the

Triple Bottom Line. Documenting your triple bottom line through a corporate responsibility report is a great way to show sustainability progress.

Organizations That Certify Green Businesses

Green Business Bureau

A web-based, third-party, three-tiered certification program that focuses on “more bang for the buck” strategies and provides marketing support to tout a business’s new certification.

www.gbb.org

B-Corp

Certifies businesses through a number of assessments and a final legal agreement to incorporate the specified environmental practices and goals in a company’s corporate governing documents.

www.bcorporation.net

Institute for Green Business Certification

Helps certified companies leverage their environmental responsibility to develop an edge over their competitors. Offers different paths for small and large businesses.

www.gbcertified.com

Best Practices

- Examine your marketing materials to avoid “greenwashing.” Greenwashing is the practice of claiming or implying that a business or product is green when the statement isn’t true, or isn’t wholly true.
- Use metrics or standards to track your progress in a meaningful way. Metrics can be reductions in energy or water use, or adherence to a set of standards for sustainability best practices.
- Produce an annual Corporate Responsibility report. You can create a report that is simple or complex. Model it after the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) framework, or look at other local companies for inspiration.
- Become a certified green business. You can be certified by a national non-profit organization or certification may be available through your local municipality. Choose a program that you think is robust enough to be worth your time. If it’s too easy to certify, the certification won’t mean as much to your customers.
- If you manufacture or sell a product, conduct a Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) on your product. An LCA looks at all the environmental impacts of your product from material extraction, manufacturing, distribution, use and disposal. It’s a complicated process, but it gives the best overall picture.
- If you manufacture something green, get an eco-label for your product. Find a certifying body that certifies the type of product you make, or its major ingredients.

Learn More

Green Business Guide to Marketing

Guide to making credible green claims, product certification programs.

www.business.gov/manage/green-business/green-marketing

The Seven Sins of Greenwashing

How some green products and services may mislead the consumer.

www.sinsofgreenwashing.org

Corporate Responsibility Reporting

The Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) provides guidelines, templates, support, and examples.

www.globalreporting.org

B-Sustainable

A resource on sustainability goals, indicators, and actions.

www.b-sustainable.org

Life Cycle Assessment Calculator

Provides background information on LCA’s, the steps involved and the aim of conducting an LCA as well as a free calculator.

www.lcacalculator.com



Grants, Loans and Other Assistance

Reaping More Rewards For Your Green Deeds

Many sustainability measures make great business sense and can pay for themselves directly from utility savings or indirectly through increased employee retention or

marketing and brand benefits. At times it requires an initial investment. A savvy Sustainability Coordinator will conduct a cost-benefit analysis of any proposed changes to identify what

make the most business sense. The analysis should go beyond the first cost to include the savings and any available financial incentive programs for the project.

Best Practices

- Look for grants from your local utility or charitable foundations supporting sustainability.
- Ask your bank about better rates or loan terms to help you make energy efficiency or other sustainable upgrades.
- Look for rebates on appliances you buy. They may be available from the manufacturers, or stores who are having specials on energy-efficient equipment.
- Look for rebates on specific energy efficiency improvement projects. Many local utilities will fund a percentage of the total project cost if you can prove energy savings.
- Call some local non-profit organizations and government agencies to see if they offer free audits, trainings or other helpful resources.
- Expand your purchasing capacity to save money on existing expenses. Some cities have growing local and home business networks to help small organizations buy in bulk.
- Ask your utility about getting help to fund a Resource Conservation Manager (RCM) position. A dedicated RCM can help you find efficiencies and reduce the cost of all your utilities. RCM positions can be temporary or permanent but, either way, the savings can last for years.

Life Cycle Cost Analysis

When comparing the long term cost between various sustainability investments, make sure you investigate the Life Cycle Costs which include:

- Initial Purchase Costs
- Fuel and Operational Costs
- Maintenance and Repair Costs
- Replacement Costs
- Residual Values—Resale or Salvage Values or Disposal Costs
- Finance Charges—Loan Interest Payments
- Non-Monetary Benefits or Costs

LCCA is very useful for comparing the financial impacts of different upgrades, for example, energy efficiency improvements. However, as a financial tool it doesn't quantify the environmental or social benefit. To get a complete sustainability picture you'll need to look through all three lenses.

Learn More

DSIRE

Database of incentives available for renewables and energy efficiency. Select your state and find incentives from a variety of government agencies, utilities and other organizations.

www.dsireusa.org

Financing Energy Efficiency Projects

A federal government web site with many good links to different types of financing and incentive programs for energy efficiency projects.

www.business.gov/manage/green-business/energy-efficiency/get-started/financing.html

Environmental Grants, Loans and Incentives

Business.gov helps small businesses locate services from federal, state and local agencies.

www.business.gov/manage/green-business/grants-and-loans



Classes and Certificates

Keeping Current in an Evolving Field

The field of sustainability is growing and changing and the best Sustainability Coordinators will need ongoing training to stay on top of their game. While there are many

webinars available that can offer you convenience, you may also want to seek out in-person trainings to help form connections with others in similar roles. Everything from

half-day workshops to degree and certificate programs are now available nationwide. The following are just a sample of the kind of relevant trainings available.

Sample Trainings

STARs Peer Alliance for Leadership in Sustainability (PALS)

PALS is a network of professionals that are actively integrating sustainability into their work and organizations. Sustainable Seattle provides facilitators who are practiced in sustainability to coordinate these meetings, which are organized by industry. PALS participants meet two or three times a year for an informal meeting hosted by a member of PALS and facilitated by Sustainable Seattle.

www.sustainableseattle.org/Programs/emergingppi/STARs/PALS/

Sustainable Business Certificate Program

The Business Sustainable Practices program prepares professionals to compete in a business environment that increasingly requires an understanding of sustainability practices that are proven to increase the financial return, competitiveness and effectiveness of business and operations. It explores and provides strategies on how to weave this knowledge into business practices at all levels of the organization including manufacturing, retail, energy, building management, financial and other services as well as across profit and non-profit sectors.

www.bellevuecollege.edu/programs/degrees/proftech/bsust/

Certificate in Sustainable Business

The program consists of three courses offered as one 3-credit course per quarter. The courses examine the business case for sustainability. Sustainability is treated as a driver of strategy, innovation, and profit. Students develop strategies and present cases through the application of current conceptual frameworks, measurement systems, and reporting initiatives. Courses are taught at the graduate level and students should anticipate a commitment of 9–10 hours of course-related work per week during each quarter.

www.bgi.edu/academic-programs/certificate/sustainable-business.html

Degrees and Credentials

Sustainability professionals may have a wide variety of backgrounds, but the following are sustainability-focused degrees and credentials.

Degrees

AS Environmental Science or Environmental Studies
AA Global Studies, Policy and Conservation Concentration
AAS Environmental Technologies and Sustainable Practices
BA Environmental Policy and Planning
BS Environmental Sciences
MBA in Sustainable Business

Credentials

Certified Business Energy Professional
Certified Carbon Reduction Manager
Certified Energy Manager
Certified Green Broker
Certified Green Supply Chain Professional
Certified Renewable Energy Professional
Certified Sustainable Building Advisor
Certified Sustainable Development Professional
Certified Sustainability Professional
LEED Green Associate



Taking It Home

Engaging Employees to Spread the Benefits

As an organization begins to emphasize sustainability in their business practices, employees may ask how they can do more at home.

A Sustainability Coordinator should have information on-hand to help employees connect with resources that are relevant to their households.

By supporting interested employees, a business can multiply their impact and help others obtain the financial and health benefits of sustainable living.

Best Practices

- Develop a “go green” tip sheet of the best ways to be environmentally friendly at home and include local resources for recycling and alternative transportation. Be sure to include contact information for local agencies and utilities that run helpful green programs in your area.
- Survey employees to find out which sustainability topics interest them most. Use the information to schedule a brown bag lunch seminar on a popular topic such as organic gardening or bicycle maintenance.
- If many employees are interested in a particular initiative, help facilitate information sharing or tracking of their results.
- Provide sustainability-themed magazines for the breakroom. Look for publications that address a wide variety of sustainability issues to appeal to more people.
- Celebrate Earth Day at the office by giving employees something to help them green their home. For example, have a drawing for a green cleaning kit, biking gear, or a free home energy audit.
- Provide recognition to employees who are making strides in their efforts. For example, host a friendly competition to recognize those who have reduced their household energy or water use the most, or who has biked to work the most often.

Greening the Home Office

Employees who telecommute are reducing their transportation impacts to-and-from the office. They may also want to green their home office with these tips:

- Select a room that can provide plenty of fresh air and daylight to make working from home pleasant and productive.
- Avoid heating or cooling the entire home all day if it is not needed. Energy efficient space heaters and fans are more responsive and can save energy and money.
- Use daylight when available to save lighting energy. Then supplement with desk lamps instead of illuminating the whole room.
- Create a place to store single-sided papers for reuse or invest in a double-sided printer.
- Make sure a recycling bin is easily accessible from the desk.
- Invest in electronics that are energy efficient and low in toxic chemicals. Look for Energy Star and EPEAT certifications.

Learn More

EPA's Go Green Newsletter

Provides activities for our homes, communities, and offices.
www.epa.gov/newsroom/gogreen

US Dept. of Energy Tax Breaks

Summarizes the Consumer Energy Tax Incentives created by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.
www.energy.gov/taxbreaks.htm

Grist Magazine

Humorous news and commentary to help you connect environmental issues to daily life.
www.grist.org

Good Housekeeping Interactive Checklist

Select the actions you want to take and print a custom list
www.goodhousekeeping.com/home/green-living/go-green-tips

“Greening Your Business” is a project of the
Workforce Development Council of Seattle-King County
and its Green Workforce Leadership Council.
Content written by O’Brien & Company.

The project was funded by a grant from the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA). SBA’s funding should not be construed as an endorsement of any products, opinions, or services. All SBA-funded projects are extended to the public on a nondiscriminatory basis. Permission is granted to reproduce for personal and educational use only, free of charge. Commercial copying, hiring, or lending is prohibited.

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