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OPERATING A BETTER, GREENER ORGANIZATION

Introduction

Every day and all over the world, people are looking for ways to reduce their impact on the environment at work and at home...by reducing natural resource consumption, indoor and outdoor pollution, and waste generation. Buildings contribute almost 40% of U.S carbon dioxide emissions – so even small changes in the workplace quickly add up. This guide includes practical tips on implementing environmentally friendly practices in your organization and ideas for encouraging your employees to get involved and make a difference, every day and all over the world.

As green practices are introduced into your organization, remember the 3 R's: Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle.

Communicate and Engage

Like any other part of sustaining your company's unique culture, regular communication with everyone from top to bottom is critical to an ongoing and successful sustainability program. Consider these opportunities for communication and education:

- Organize a team of sustainability champions to help create measurable goals, build momentum, and monitor progress.
- Regularly discuss sustainable practices and issues at employee meetings, via payroll staffers, and in company newsletters and other communications. Consider frequent emails to educate employees on how they can help.
- Publicize, and as appropriate, celebrate successes, no matter how big or small.
- Include the sustainability program and objectives as part of new employee orientation, in job descriptions and in performance objectives.
- Encourage employees to submit suggestions, then implement the ideas that work best for your workplace.

Reducing Energy Consumption

Energy is used to light, heat and air-condition the typical workspace and for running equipment like PCs, copiers, and printers. Heating typically accounts for 38% of a building's energy use, with lighting accounting for at least 20%; office equipment will typically account for at least 20% of energy used.

Some easy, low- and no-cost ways to save energy and money in your office include:

Personal Computers, Printers and Copiers

- Power up the computer system only when you are ready to use it – a PC uses about three minutes of running time energy when starting up. It is far more cost-effective to turn it off when not in use.
- A monitor left on overnight wastes enough energy to laser-print 800 pages
- Switch off your PC system whenever you plan to be away from your desk for an extended period of time, including lunch. The PC will have a longer life and use up to 67% less energy when turned off overnight.
- Turn off your screen when you're not using it. Screens use 10% of the PC's total energy use, even when on stand-by.
- Consider a laptop instead of a desktop – it uses less energy and emits less heat (reducing cooling needs).
- Switch off printers and copiers at the end of the workday or when not in use for extended periods. Even in standby mode they are consuming energy and costing money.
- A copier left on overnight wastes enough energy to make 5,300 copies! For every extra hour the machine is switched off you will save 0.5 kg of carbon dioxide a week.

- Replacing your PC, printer or copier? Look for [EnergyStar rated equipment](#) and environmentally friendly features like double-sided printing.
- Use power strips to help you remember to turn off everything at once.

Lighting

- Take advantage of natural light whenever possible...design and construct space to utilize natural light, and then encourage the opening of window shades and removal of objects blocking light from entering workspaces.
- When natural light is not available, use energy-efficient bulbs – fluorescent lamps are currently the best option.
- Turn off perimeter light circuits near windows to take advantage of day-lighting.
- Use task lighting instead of full overhead light when possible.
- Utilize day-light harvesting, motion sensors, and timers to minimize lighting usage. Motion sensors are especially useful in low-activity areas like restrooms and conference rooms.
- In the absence of lighting controls, make sure everyone knows “last one out turns off the lights”, including cleaning staff. Turn off the lights every time you leave a room.
- Consider day-cleaning, eliminating the need for night-time lighting.
- Angle lights correctly. If the light comes from the right direction, less light is needed.
- Put holiday lighting and other decorative lighting displays on timers.
- Walk your space at night periodically to make sure lights and equipment are turned off.

Heating/cooling

- Adjust thermostats...each one degree change can save 3% in energy consumption, which also reduces greenhouse gas emissions and your operating costs. Consider setting thermostats between 68 and 72 degrees F for heating and between 75 and 77 degrees F for cooling.
- Check for furniture or other items blocking heating and cooling registers/grilles. If they are blocked, the system has to work longer to achieve the desired level of comfort.
- Avoid the use of space heaters...they are energy hogs!
- Draw the blinds in warmer weather to reduce the cooling load.
- Wear comfortable business attire and dress appropriately for the weather.

Refrigerators and freezers

- Do not leave doors open
- Defrost freezer compartments based on the manufacturer's recommendations in order to maintain peak performance.
- Ensure door seals are working. Damaged or missing door seals cause the refrigerator/freezer to work harder to maintain the desired temperature.

Reducing Water Consumption

Water is a precious resource and demand around the world is growing as populations increase.

- Install low-flow or dual-flush toilets, and low-flow or waterless urinals.
- Install low-flow faucets, or change out the aerators to reduce the flow. If possible, automate the faucets to run only when needed.
- Install low-flow showerheads.
- Try not to let the water run when washing the dishes, soaping your hands, brushing your teeth, or shaving.
- Notify the property manager of dripping faucets, running toilets, or water leaks.

Reducing Solid Waste

Paper consumption continues to rise. A typical office uses approximately 1,000 sheets of paper per month per person! Some practical ways to decrease unnecessary paper use:

- Email documents when possible.
- Use electronic signatures for simple approvals and email the signed document rather than printing, signing and scanning or faxing.
- Post documents to websites or shared computer drives.
- Keep snail mail lists up-to-date.
- Share periodical subscriptions.
- Contact senders of junk mail that you do not wish to receive to have your name removed from their mailing list.
- Use paper already printed on one side for notepaper.
- Use print preview to check the document on the screen before printing.
- Print or copy on both sides of the paper (if equipment allows).

- Keep one tray of paper in the printer stocked with single-sided waste paper – not all printing needs to be on a fresh sheet of paper.
- When setting up a meeting, tell invitees to bring their own handouts rather than printing copies for everyone. This eliminates double printing by the attendees and meeting organizer.

In the copy room

- Only make the copies you need...try to avoid making extras “just in case”.
- Use double-sided copying if available.
- If you have a large batch to photocopy, run a trial copy first.

Tone it down...use less ink

- The larger and darker the print, the more ink is being used
- Use smaller font sizes when possible – especially for drafts.
- Lighter copies use less toner, and that also means less cost and fewer toxins on the paper when it eventually gets recycled. When printing or copying, set the image quality to a tolerable “light” level.

In the break room

- Recycle as many types of materials as possible (glass, paper, plastic, aluminum, etc.) The more materials that are recycled, the less waste gets sent to the landfill.
- Label the garbage can “Landfill”...that’s where it will go!
- Stock the break room with durable, washable coffee mugs, plates and utensils for daily use and meetings.
- Bring your own mug to meetings. If you are hosting, encourage attendees to do the same.
- Use wooden stirrers instead of plastic.
- Pack your lunch in re-usable containers and lunch bags.
- Encourage the use of tap water and eliminate water coolers and bottled water.
- Encourage the use of reusable water bottles instead of single-use bottles.

Packaging

Reduce the amount of packaging used for the purchases you make by:

- Requesting that packaging be taken back to the supplier for re-use
- Requesting reduced packaging by volume or weight
- Asking for reusable or recyclable packaging or packaging made from recycled materials
- Buy in bulk – this will reduce packaging as well the number of trips to deliver the product.
- Re-use shipping boxes at work and at home.

Recycle! ...and Buy Recycled!

Prior to getting started, find out what material can be recycled in your area. What is actually recycled (not take to the landfill in a different truck)?

Reuse and recycle

- Recycle office paper, paper products and cardboard by supplying recycling boxes to make it easier for employees to participate. Place a bin for aluminum cans in the break room and near any vending machines that dispense canned drinks.
- Recycle toner cartridges from copiers, printers, and fax machines when they are empty.

General waste

- Consider donating furniture, office and kitchen equipment to charity or to companies that will resell it as refurbished.
- Most cell phone providers will accept used cellular phones for recycling.

Buy Recycled

- Consider what happens to the things in the recycling bin. In order for recycling to be successful, you need to buy products made from recycled materials. In addition, buying recycled or refurbished goods means less waste ends up in landfills and less energy will be expended to make new products from raw materials. Buying recycled no longer costs more than buying products made from virgin materials.

Reduce Emissions

Electricity generation is a major source of greenhouse gases...so reducing the use of electricity is an obvious way to reduce emissions. Other ways to reduce your carbon footprint:

Reduce transport of goods and services

- Buy in bulk...minimize packaging waste and reduce emissions by reducing the number of delivery trips.
- Buy local...reduce transportation requirements as well as support your local economy.
- Purchase goods thru your company's established purchasing channels. This helps minimize redundant trips by aggregating product on a delivery.

Lower commuter miles

- Commuting in a single-person vehicles is also a large contributor to greenhouse gas emissions.
- Encourage employees to take public transportation.
- If public transportation isn't available, connect employees and neighbors to set up carools. Make it easy by setting up a "ride board".
- Encourage riding bikes to work. Bikes are the most efficient form of transportation available in terms of energy required to distance traveled.

Travel smart

- Fly less. Use audio or video conferencing to replace some trips.
- Turn off the lights and a/c when leaving your hotel room.
- Take advantage of any "green" programs your hotel has (e.g. getting sheets and towels washed every other day).

Purchase Responsibly

Purchasing practices can have significant and far-reaching impacts, both socially and environmentally. Where we buy, what the products are made of, who made them and what will happen to them at the end of their use all need to be considered.

Key questions:

- Do we need this product (or service)?
- Can we meet the need another way?
- Is an appropriate product available somewhere else within the organization?
- Can we rent or share the product (instead of purchasing)?

- Is the quantity requested essential?
- Is the current specification correct for the purpose?
- Can the product serve a useful purpose after its initial use?

If you are putting a contract out to bid, ask what the bidder's environmental policy is and what they are doing to reduce their impact on the environment. This is perfectly legal, and doesn't mean you need to prescribe what is in the bidder's environmental policy.

To make purchasing at your office as environmentally responsible as possible, try the following actions. Also, when purchasing centrally or through national contracts, lobby purchasing personnel to take the same actions:

- Buy recycled whenever possible. Recycled no longer costs more than products made from virgin materials.
- Purchase environmentally friendly paper, pens, pencils, light bulbs (CFLs, LEDs), hygiene and cleaning products.
- Always buy recycled paper. Making it uses up to 90% less water and 50% less energy than making virgin paper.
- Buy recycled print and toner cartridges unless the equipment manufacturer recommends against them.

Environmental Footprint Resources

Try one of these to help understand your environmental impact and how your efforts to reduce it make a difference:

- To calculate your personal or company carbon footprint: [Carbon calculator](#)
- Another option for calculating your personal emissions: [Emissions calculator](#)
- To see the savings on Energy Star rated office equipment: [Energy Star Savings Calculator](#)
(Click on Office Products)
- For a list of Energy Star qualified office equipment: [Energy Star Qualified Equipment](#)
- To convert emissions into equivalents such as cars taken off the road or acres of forest preserved: [Emissions Reduction Calculator](#)

Make A Difference, Every Day!

YOU can make a difference, starting today, by taking the simple steps outlined here. Go further and share this guide with family, friends, neighbors and co-workers, spreading the word and brain-storming additional ideas. The little actions you and everyone else take today and tomorrow and the next day will add up to big results.