

Green Saving

{ BY LISA HORN, CAS }

With these 10 eco-tips, you can help keep the planet green and your bottom line black.

THERE ARE SO MANY WAYS to make your office environment more eco-friendly—buying recycled paper, printing double-sided pages, turning computers and lights off at night, changing to compact fluorescent light bulbs and using filtered rather than bottled water. And these just scratch the surface.

With all the operational changes needed to reduce our ecological footprint, it's easy to feel overwhelmed at times. But if each of the 20,000 plus practitioners in our industry implements small changes in our business operations, collectively we can make a positive impact on the environment.

Being green is easier than you think. Here's proof. *Promotional Consultant* asked eco-experts as well as suppliers and distributors for their favorite lesser-known green business tips. The result is 10 quick tips that require little investment, improve the planet and, in many cases, boost your bottom line.



Tip 1: Buy Smart

A chief complaint about green products is that they cost more than traditional ones. While the purchase price may be higher for eco-friendly products, the overall cost is much lower when taking environmental impact into consideration.

But you can spend fewer green-backs when purchasing green. Cassie Walker, founder of The Sustainable Office and author of *The Green Office Handbook*, suggests a two-pronged approach.

“First, join a co-op, such as RecycledProducts.org, for bulk-rate purchases on paper with recycled content and other eco-friendly office supplies,” she says. “Second, patronize businesses and vendors that have a solid environmental policy, such as those on Co-Op America’s Green Pages.”

And remember, purchase price comes back to the law of supply and demand. The more people who switch from traditional supplies to green products, the more demand, economies of scale in manufacturing and competition will eventually result in lower prices.

Tip 2: Eliminate Kitchen Disposables



Many office kitchens and cafeterias are stocked with paper plates, plastic utensils and disposable cups. But Adam Schlachter, an independent sales consultant and 14-year recycling industry

veteran, says to replace those paper cups with ceramic mugs.

“Companies can purchase branded mugs or employees can bring their excess mugs (we all have them!) and donate them for staff use,” he says.

Carol Constantino, president of The Noteworthy Company (UPIC: NWORKY), did just that, and the company saves \$4,200 annually as a result.



“Using products with fewer toxins is better for the environment and for public health. Facility managers are considering green cleaning programs and implementing environmentally preferable purchasing programs to procure these products.” —WENDY MCTYRE



Tip 3: Get A Greener Clean

Keeping your office clean is necessary, but most traditional cleaning supplies are toxic. “Using products with fewer toxins is better for the environment and for public health,” says Wendy McTyre, vice president of commercial interiors sustainability for Integrated Green Building Solutions. “Facility managers are considering green cleaning programs and implementing environmentally preferable purchasing programs to procure these products.”

To see how you can reduce pollution by changing your cleaning regimen, McTyre recommends checking out the EPA’s Green Cleaning Pollution Prevention Calculator at www.ofee.gov/janitor/buildinginfo.asp.

Tip 4: Fax Paperless

Fax machines are one of the most energy-intensive pieces of equipment in a typical office, according to Energy Star, a joint program of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Energy, because they are constantly drawing power around the clock in order to be available to send or receive a fax at any time. But there is an easy solution to this fax problem: internet-based fax services or computer-based software that turn traditional faxes into e-mails.

Steve Adams, vice president of marketing for internet fax service provider MyFax, says there are many benefits of using technology tools to eliminate traditional fax machines:

- “Getting rid of the current fax machine, or avoiding purchasing one at all, reduces energy usage and eliminates future problems with disposal of outdated office equipment.
- It significantly reduces paper consumption, as users only print the pages they choose rather than each page of every fax.
- It eliminates the cost of garbled pages or misfeeds that

use paper without providing any needed information.

- It also eliminates the need for a second phone line, saving those energy and material costs as well.”

In December 2007, supplier SnugZ/USA (UPIC: SNUGZUSA) implemented a paperless inbound fax system, which saved at least 70,000 sheets of paper in the first year. But eliminating paper, toner and electricity waste weren’t the only benefits; operations were streamlined and the staff became more efficient than before.

“One of the most significant changes is that everyone, including customer service, can look up a purchase order,” says Dawn Wogerman, SnugZ systems development manager. “Before, we seemed to be spending a lot of time trying to find hard copies of orders to verify or change something. Another improvement is in the order entry department. Now we can see exactly who has placed orders, how long orders have been here and, most important, we can see exactly how many orders need inputting, which allows us to make a push to get things in.”

Tip 5: Vend Smarter

Vending machines are handy when you need a 3 pm caffeine fix. Unfortunately, they consume a lot more energy than they provide. But there is a way to have your snack and eat it, too, according to Glenn Bachman, president of Raven Business Group, LLC (a sustainability consultancy) and author of the *Green Business Guide: A One Stop Resource for Businesses of All Shapes and Sizes to Implement Eco-Friendly Policies, Programs, and Practices*.



“Ask vendors to install energy-efficient vending machines (which may incorporate low-energy lighting systems, motion sensor lighting controls and variable temperature settings) instead of typical machines that use 2,763-3,165 kwh/year,” he says. “If you need an after-market alternative, check out VendingMiser®, which uses a customized infrared sensor that limits the energy supplied to the machine when the surrounding area is unoccupied.”

Tip 6: Incorporate Telecommuting

For the past two years, Kate Lister and her Undress4Success.com partner have interviewed Fortune 500 executives, virtual employers, freelance and traditional job board executives, venture capitalists who support the remote work model and home-based workers in a wide variety of professions. The findings have resulted in the book *Undress For Success—The Naked Truth About Making Money at Home* as well as a proprietary Telework Savings Calculator that calculates companies’ potential telework savings.



“If the 50 million Americans who hold telework-compatible jobs worked from home just half of the time, greenhouse gases would be reduced by 84 million tons—the equivalent of taking 20 million cars off the road for a year,” Lister

says. “Additionally, road wear and tear would be reduced by almost 180 billion miles a year—saving more than \$3 billion in environmentally toxic highway maintenance. More than 1.6 million homes could be powered by the savings in office electricity. The reduced gas consumption would cut oil imports by 453 million barrels—or approximately 60 percent of our middle east oil imports. This would save our nation more than \$19 billion a year—a figure that was three times higher last year.”

Fortunately for our industry, the nature of a promotional consultant’s work lends itself to telecommuting, at least for a portion of the workweek. Tina Montgomery, MAS, president/CEO of distributor L.W. Barrett Co. Inc. (UPIC: BARRETT) says her company has implemented flexible work days, which allows staff to work four 10-hour days during one week and five eight-hour days the

Recommended Reading

Books are a great way to learn more about the green movement, and they also make great promotional products for your clients as well as your own self promotion. The Book Company (UPIC: BOOKCO) has a nice selection of titles, including:

Greening Your Office

By Jon Cliff and Amanda Cuthbert

This quick-read A-Z guide features information on recycling and reusing materials, making better supply purchases and reducing environmental impacts. Additionally, it includes data on why greening your office is important and how to get employees involved in the process.

True Green @ Work: 100 Ways You Can Make The Environment Your Business

By Kim McKay and Jenny Bonnin with Tim Wallace

This practical reference guide presents easy-to-implement eco-strategies divided into 10 digestible segments: desk, office, building, culture, stakeholders, carbon neutral, closing the loop, ecolabeling, marketing and green business. Plus, an extensive list of website resources at the end connects you to even more relevant information.

following week. “Annually, this cuts about a month of commuting to the office for each staff person,” she says. “Plus, this allows us to stay open longer.”

Tip 7: Make Education Fun

While the environment is a serious issue, learning about it doesn’t have to be. There are fun and entertaining ways to educate employees about being more eco-conscious. Take TBG Partners, a landscape architecture and planning firm with offices in Austin, Dallas/Fort Worth, Houston and San Antonio, Texas. It holds quarterly environmental movie nights—complete with popcorn—for staff to watch educational films followed by a lively discussion of what was learned.

“The PBS e2 design series was really general and barely delved into the complexity of our problems and therefore spurred discussion,” says TBG Partners associate Amy Starling, LEED AP. “Also, the film ‘Nova: Solar Energy—Saved by the Sun’ inspired our staff to research the facts about solar energy, its advantages and

“For each day an employee takes alternative transportation—bus, train, carpool, cycling or walking—to the office, enter him or her into a drawing for a gift certificate.”

—VALERIE REDDEMANN

Green Spotlight: **Geiger**

Geiger (UPIC: geiger) is one of the industry giants, with more than 500 employee associates at its Lewiston, Maine, headquarters and 450 independent promotional consultants in 15 sales offices around the country. With this many people involved, greening Geiger has been no small undertaking.

“We feel that it is our responsibility as a company and as individuals to take an active role in adapting to become more eco-friendly and energy efficient,” says Ray Bergeron

Geiger facilities/engineering manager. “The race is on to save our planet, and we feel this is a race that can be won; but we all need to work together through education and adopting more earth-friendly practices.”

Geiger has already achieved significant reductions in its energy consumption by:

- Automating boilers and pumps
- Replacing more than 1,300 light fixtures and using motion detectors
- Installing a variable speed air compressor and reclaiming the exhaust heat
- Automating four HVAC systems

“These changes will result in reducing electricity usage by 840,000 kilowatt hours and 14,000 gallons of fuel annually, with an estimated savings of \$150,000 each year while also keeping 816 tons of greenhouse gases out of the air,” Bergeron says. “This is the equivalent of taking 136 cars off the road.”

Geiger also has an extensive recycling program in place, with plans to expand it even further. Last year, 230 tons of high-grade paper and 100 tons of cardboard were recycled. “This saved 7,220 trees and kept another 1,055 tons of greenhouse gases out of the air,” says Bergeron.

The company also invested \$120,000 to remove 87,000 square feet of roof drain water out of the city’s sewer system and 48,000 square feet of roof drain water out of Hart Brook, an endangered inner-city waterway. “We have re-piped the entire roof surface water drain system out to a new RipRap, Plunge Pool and Level Lip Spreader out on the lower elevation end of our property designed to slow, cool, settle, filter and disperse our roof rainwater,” Bergeron says. “The project went live in the first thunderstorm in late June 2008. Overall, it is our goal at Geiger to be green in all aspects.” —L.H.



disadvantages. The special was really unbiased and gave everybody great information.”

Want other eco-titles to spur discussion? Check out these films:

- “An Inconvenient Truth:” This Oscar-winning film examines global warming stats and what we can do to effect change.
- “Who Killed the Electric Car:” Martin Sheen narrates this documentary, which shows how the unique vehicle came into being and why General Motors ended up reclaiming its once-prized creation.
- “Manufactured Landscapes:” Based on Edward Burtynsky’s 2003 book of the same name, “Manufactured Landscapes:” Details the ways industrialization has transformed the environment—and not for the better.
- “Trashed:” Americans generate half a billion tons of trash each year, causing significant implications to our biosphere. “Trashed” examines the waste stream and questions how society defines trash.
- “The 11th Hour:” Narrated and produced by Leonardo DiCaprio, “The 11th Hour” provides an overview of the causes of global warming and explores potential solutions, ideal for those new to the green movement.

Tip 8: Reward Green Behavior

As promotional products professionals, we know the power of incentives. Put them to work to stimulate green behavior around your office—from championing an eco-task force to coordinating recycling pickups.

To encourage staff to take alternative transportation to work, Valerie Reddemann, founder/president of Greenfeet.com and a 12-year-old retailer of eco-friendly and sustainable goods, suggests having a monthly drawing. “For each day an employee takes alternative transportation—bus, train, carpool, cycling or walking—to the office, enter him or her into a drawing for a gift certificate,” she says. “In addition to saving fuel, this helps create happier, healthier employees.”

To keep it earth friendly, use gift certificates to eco-retailers. Additionally, you could have a selection of green merchandise from which the lucky winner gets to choose each month. (Of course, it could be decorated with your logo.) And make sure to give this recognition publically, such as at a monthly staff meeting, to further emphasize the importance within your business.



Tip 9: Create A Culture Of Sustainability

Myths are rampant about what it means to be green, so it is essential to equip employees with the necessary tools to understand what sustainability truly is and how they can contribute professionally and personally.

“It is essential to dispel the myths that it costs more to take steps toward sustainability,” says Paul J. Hoffman, owner and CEO of Hoffman LLC, a Wisconsin-based planning, architecture and construction management firm



Green Spotlight: TBK Promotions, Inc.

Oak Forest, Illinois-based distributor

TBK Promotions, Inc. (UPIC: tbkpromo) is representative of the typical small distributor: family owned, four employees and less than \$1 million in annual sales. But the way TBK employees think about being green is far from ordinary.

The company has updated its order processing practices to utilize software/hardware to the fullest. By using a fax server, faxes can be sent electronically without printing. And inbound faxes are routed directly to a network location where they can be reviewed to determine if printing is necessary. These changes have reduced paper consumption by more than 10,000 sheets per month. “While the cost savings of \$45 a month is small, the thought of 10,000 more pieces of paper getting burned for no reason drove me crazy,” says Kevin Flynn, CAS, director of sales.

Wasting fuel is also a concern for the TBK staff. Not only do they try to select the supplier with the closest facility to the client’s delivery point, they also combine local deliveries with sales calls in the same area to reduce fuel consumption.

In September, the lease expires on the company’s office space, so it has selected a virtual office environment moving forward. The company’s four employees will work from home via VPN with direct inbound dial telephones and unified messaging. (Voicemails are e-mailed as .wav files.)

While there are numerous reasons for the change, energy cost savings play a significant role:

- Eliminating 2,200 staff commuting miles per month resulting in annually saving 1,440 gallons of gas.
- The current 1,800-square-foot office space costs an average of \$200 per month to light and heat, which should be reduced to less than 50 percent of the current consumption after the virtual move.
- The primary home office space will be outfitted with nine recessed LED light fixtures, which last an estimated 20 years and burn 12 watts of power each. (The current office burns 12, 40-watt florescent bulbs.) Including all virtual offices, the company will burn an estimated 33 percent less energy to light its work areas, and it will send an estimated 120 fewer light bulbs to a landfill (based on the 20-year life cycle of the LED lighting).

“Our local electric supplier is running a campaign that says, ‘Going Green Saves You Green,’ and we are in agreement, especially after looking at our consumption reductions,” says Flynn. “By going virtual and green, we will save \$30,000 in overhead in the next 12 months. Looking at the cost analysis of the virtual move, we realized just how wasteful our office space is and how a virtual office will not only reduce our footprint and consumption but also bring some efficiencies to our workflow where we are lagging due to dependence on traditional office practices.” —L.H.

Involving employees not only in implementing green behaviors but also in generating ways to improve green operations is essential for success.

that has advocated sustainable design since the 1990s. “Help your team gain a holistic knowledge of sustainability by educating them via conferences, staff meetings, magazine articles and links to blogs. This goes a long way to creating a culture of sustainability within your business.”

Tip 10: Involve Employees And Evaluate Performance

Involving employees not only in implementing green behaviors but also in generating ways to improve green operations is essential for success. “Ask staff to brainstorm changes to enhance the organization’s environmental performance,” says Raven Business Group’s Bachman. “People are much more likely to accept changes when they have come up with ideas themselves.”

He also recommends charting your company’s energy consumption, water use, recycled material quantities and generated waste. “Track your ecological footprint,



and display your progress in a visible location,” he says. “This reinforces the adage: ‘The things that get measured are the things that get done.’ Celebrate when you meet your resource reduction milestones. And most of all, tell your story.” **PC**

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