

10 Ways to Make Your Office Greener

This year, make greening your office your New Years resolution. Most of us have swapped out light fixtures, recycled office paper, bottles and cans. Now it's easier than ever to take your office to a greener place. Try these simple, but meaningful ways. You may even be doing some of them but if not, now would be a great time to start.

1. Reduce Paper Consumption

Did you know the average U.S. office worker consumes 10,000 sheets of paper? Did you also know that recycled paper uses 30-40% less energy to produce? With office supply stores now stocking 100% recycled copier/laser paper, switching is a simple first step. And while you're at it, apply the same thinking to binders, folders, and labels.

2. Reduce Paper Waste

Here are 4 ideas to save paper usage: Sign up for electronic billing from your vendors; pay your bills and vendors online; utilize direct deposit features for your employees' paychecks; distribute employee handbooks and notices online. Together, these steps will reduce materials going to landfills and save you money throughout the year.

3. Start a Rideshare Program

Encourage your employees to carpool, use mass transit, bike, walk, whatever. Just get them off the streets. You can even offer internal contests and competitions to make it fun. Consider assigning someone to run your "Moving Green" campaign.

4. Be Smart with your Power

Using Smart Power Strips that eliminate "vampire power" (energy that appliances continue to consume when turned "off") can eliminate up to \$100/year. Each could pay for itself within 12 months, so if you own your space it's well worth it. If you lease, talk to your landlord about picking up the tab.

5. Print More Responsibly

As a business, there will surely always be things to print, even if you have eliminated large marketing costs such as direct mail and promotional or sales material. When you do print, choose 100% recycled, alternative energy-produced, paper stocks that are FSC certified. Be sure to request soy inks (if your printer isn't already doing so) and only print what you need.

6. Turn your Breakroom into a Greenroom

Breakrooms are great places to set a green example for your company. Everyone sees the effort, it boosts morale and allows people to get acquainted with new products. A few examples are starch-based or bamboo tableware to replace the paper plates, utensils and cups, recycled coffee filters and bio-degradable or recycled trash bags.

7. Replace Outdated Equipment

Looking to buy new computers, printers, refrigerators or conference room displays? If so, look for the Energy Star label to be sure your taking less power from the grid and be sure to properly recycle the old stuff, to keep them out

of landfills.

8. Turn Plastic into Water

Do you have a stack of cases of water bottles in your breakroom? If so, here are some alarming stats:

- Americans buy an estimated 29.8 billion plastic water bottles every year.
- Nearly eight out of every 10 bottles will end up in a landfill.
- It is estimated that the production of plastics accounts for 4 percent of the energy consumption in the U.S.
- Less than 1 percent of all plastics is recycled. Therefore, almost all plastics are incinerated or end up in a landfill.

Not to mention they are a petroleum product, so by eliminating plastic bottles from your office you're actually saving gas. So, at the very least, buy a water filter container in the breakroom refrigerator. Or take it to another level and install an office size water filtration system. How about providing your employees with a water bottle/filter combination to use at their desk?

9. Redesign your Space

72% of total U.S. energy consumption is used by buildings. Crazy. If remodeling or moving your office is on the agenda this year, you can make a big difference, faster. Be sure to include LED lighting, solar panels and recycled insulation in your design plans. Plus, consider recycled or eco-friendly flooring and surfaces, furniture made from recycled materials and produced with fair trade practices as well as low/no-VOC paint. And that's just for starters.

10. Empower your People

For the most impact, involve your entire staff. Create a green team with marching orders to reduce waste and energy for your company. There are many other ideas beyond these listed above, so let them dig in and find them. You'll be amazed at the innovative ideas your staff will come up with.

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