

How to green your business: Commercial (finance, IT, business)

Want to Go Green but not sure where to start? Here are some tips to reduce the environmental impacts of your office-based commercial business.

Energy

- Investigate purchasing all, or a percentage, of your energy from renewable sources or 'green tariffs'.
- Get renewal quotes from existing and alternative suppliers annually.
- Use natural light wherever possible. Keep windows clean and encourage staff to open the blinds rather than turn on the lights. Clean light fittings, especially plastic diffusers. Make sure lights can be switched off manually (particularly near windows) or install daylight sensors.

Heating and cooling

- When heating, reduce the temperature of a room by one degree; it is unlikely that anyone will notice and you could cut the heating bill by as much as 10%. Most staff are comfortable at 19°C. Similarly, set air conditioning not to come on below 24°C.
- Use timers and temperature control sensors to limit use to office hours.
- Make sure windows and doors are closed when heating or air-conditioning is on.
- Check that insulation (walls, roof and pipes) and draught-proofing is adequate to prevent heat loss.
- Service boilers regularly for optimum performance. A boiler can use up to 10% more energy if poorly maintained. Dirty heat exchangers, poor air:fuel mixing or faulty components increase running costs and the risk of breakdown.

Lighting

- Replace tungsten bulbs with energy-efficient, compact fluorescent lamps and slimline tubes. They typically make immediate savings of 50% and last up to ten times longer.

Waste

Reduce material use

- Avoid printing where possible. If printing is necessary, set default printer settings to duplex.
- Reuse paper for scrap before recycling.
- Reuse envelopes wherever possible, especially for internal mail.
- Cancel junk mail and unwanted publications.
- Avoid overproduction of marketing and publicity material by reviewing distribution lists and regularly updating databases.
- Use electronic communication where possible. Ensure that your staff are comfortable with new

Equipment

- Switch off your computer when you go to a meeting or on lunch break. The energy required to restart your computer is less than leaving it on for more than 15 minutes.
- Activate standby mode when machines such as photocopiers have not been used for more than 15 minutes. With standby mode initiated on a PC, running costs will be reduced to £15 a year from around £60 a year. Similarly, activating standby modes on fax machines after 15 minutes of idling will reduce energy consumption by up to 90% a year.
- Photocopy in batches. This will minimise the time the machine is operating in idle mode.
- Use a timer switch to reduce out-of-hours energy consumption. For example, controlling a vending machine with a timer could reduce its energy use by 70%.

technology and provide training where necessary.

- Ensure that vending machines allow the use of china mugs rather than plastic vending cups.
- Hold an annual 'stationery amnesty'. A surprising amount of material can be recovered by asking staff to hand in all their unused equipment for reuse.
- Make use of local resource centres and charities that reuse computers, furniture and other materials from businesses.

Recycle

- Place paper recycling bins in all offices. (A good guide is one bin between ten staff and one next to each photocopier and printer.)
- Return your toner cartridges for remanufacture through a specialist remanufacturing company or a charity-run scheme.
- Arrange for fluorescent tubes to be recycled or safely disposed.

Water

- Fit a water displacement device in toilet cisterns to reduce the amount of water used per flush.
- Fit push-button taps to save up to half the water used through conventional taps.
- Check your pipes for leaks, which can be expensive and can cause damage to the building. Check your meter readings regularly and carefully - if you are paying for water that you cannot account for you may have a leak.

Travel

- Use easily accessible conference venues to reduce travel.
- Investigate the feasibility of home working or telecommuting for relevant employees. This need not apply to every working day and can significantly reduce the number of journeys staff make and maximise their working efficiency.
- Increase the use of communications technologies such as e-mail, ISDN and video conferencing.
- Improve facilities for cyclists and walkers. Essentials are secure bike racks, showers and lockers.
- Offer staff interest-free loans for public transport season tickets. Provide staff with up-to-date information on public transport.
- Promote car sharing.

Company vehicles

- Purchase or lease fuel-efficient cars, taking the whole-life costs into account. Some car magazines provide comparison tables for total running costs per mile.
- If your fleet management is outsourced, ensure that you set high environmental standards within the contract and specify aspects such as fuel economy and emissions testing

Purchasing

- Purchase equipment with EU Energy Rating of A.
- Use 100% recycled paper (with maximum post-consumer waste content) and maximum percentage recycled materials wherever possible.
- Discourage excessive use of stationery by implementing an ordering system. This allows you to monitor departments and target high use areas for reductions.
- Buy remanufactured toner cartridges - high quality cartridges are available with the same performance as new cartridges at a lower price.
- Choose minimally packaged products or ask your suppliers to supply products in less packaging. Ask your suppliers to take excess packaging away with them when they deliver.