Green Office Guide

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Buy better office products
Measure your success

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Office comfort improves your bottom line

By Elaine Aye, IIDA, LEED AP

At a time when every penny counts, the way your office environment affects employees can have major impacts. In a standard office, more than 80 percent of your company’s expenses are related to your employees; and, in turn, their health, satisfaction and efficiency are related to the workspace. To that end, it is critical to design your space in order to foster well being among the employees on your team.

Get the Low Down. Interview human resources personnel to discover common employee concerns. Key information you’ll want to gather includes productivity rates, absenteeism, turnover history and your company’s employee replacement costs. Create a repeatable process to constantly track this information over time to assess the impacts of changes made in response to employee concerns.

Create Efficient Space. Consider a layout that is efficient for your employees in terms of proximity and adjacencies to promote efficient use of building materials and resources. Determine the square footage necessary for each area and list the unique requirements of each space.

- Locate private offices in the core spaces to allow perimeter views and daylight to as many employees as possible.
- Create flexible, adaptable workplace to facilitate future changes and departmental reorganizations.
- Select movable partitions instead of built-out gypsum walls to reduce the use of natural resources and lower construction costs.
- Ensure the flow of air to all occupants will not be hindered by partitions, shelving and furniture.

Enhance Productivity. There are a number of steps you should take to keep your employees breathing easy, which will reduce absenteeism and help your office run at top capacity.

- Provide fresh air ventilation through an effective, clean HVAC system and operable windows.
- Incorporate humidity control measures to maintain good air quality.
- Have a system in place for monitoring the CO2 levels in the building and provide independent exhaust at copier stations.
- Select products with low VOCs (Volatile Organic Compound). Look for building products and supplies that have a third party certification, such as Green Seal, Greenguard, or Scientific Certification Systems (SCS).

Elaine Aye is a principal at Green Building Services and the leader of their Building Management Services. Contact Aye at elaine@greenbuildingservices.com.

A one-stop shop for green office products

By Yalmaz Siddiqui

Office Depot has an environmental vision to buy “green,” be “green” and sell “green.” These are not just empty words: We track performance yearly; we offer a large assortment of sustainable office products; we reduced the carbon footprint of our U.S. facilities by more than 10 percent in just one year; and we have won countless awards from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and others for our leadership.

Partly because of this leadership, we are the supplier of choice for some of the most sustainability-focused organizations in the country, including many in the Pacific Northwest and in California.

Following are five unique ways we can help your company improve its environmental performance:

- **Greener Office Checklist.** Our 100-step checklist provides a structured approach to greening your office. This unique Office Depot-designed tool helps you self-audit, set goals and define which tactics may contribute to Operations and Maintenance, and Materials and Resources credits in the U.S. Green Building Council’s (USGBC) Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) for Existing Buildings rating system.

- **LEED Credit Reporting Tool.** If you are seeking LEED-EB certification, you’ll be glad you buy from Office Depot. We offer a LEED Credit Reporting Tool, which can be submitted to the USGBC to document sustainable purchases (Materials and Resources credits 1.1-1.3, and 2.1-2.2). With other suppliers, you may end up spending days completing LEED forms. But if you buy from Office Depot, we’ll prepare the report in USGBC’s format for you.

- **The Green Book 2009 catalog.** Office Depot’s fifth annual catalog of environmentally preferable products contains more than 2,200 items. The catalog also contains 15 pages of content to help educate users on why and how to make more sustainable choices.

- **Office Depot Green.** An exclusive brand of environmentally preferable products. All recycled products in this brand have at least 30 percent post-consumer content; all items are PVC-free; and everything is packaged in one consistent look.

- **Reduced frequency delivery and carbon-balanced shipping.** We have taken the time to understand our delivery carbon footprint, so we know our vans emit about 5.4 pounds of carbon emissions for every shipment we make. As such, we can estimate the “scope 3” emissions that result from our delivery of products to you—and help you find credible offsets to “balance” the carbon.

Yalmaz Siddiqui is the director of environmental strategy at Office Depot. To receive access to the Greener Office Checklist, contact Siddiqui at yalmaz.siddiqui@officedepot.com.
Online collaboration: the greenest competitive advantage

By Mike Mansbach

If real estate is all about location, location, location, global business is all about collaboration, collaboration, collaboration. It’s also about working smarter by leveraging the right technology to rise above your competitors and succeed in today’s challenging economic climate.

Online collaboration with Citrix GoToMeeting Corporate enables businesses to instantly and cost-effectively meet with distributed employees, partners or clients located anywhere in the world—without ever stepping foot inside an airport. Easily conduct on-the-fly or scheduled presentations, perform demonstrations in real time, collaborate on documents or provide in-depth training.

Collaborating online using GoToMeeting Corporate significantly reduces the need for costly business travel. And by reducing travel, businesses also:

Reduce carbon emissions. The true cost of business travel cannot be calculated in dollars and cents alone. Excessive business travel takes its toll on the environment, a finding underscored by the proliferation of carbon offsets one can purchase to counterbalance the negative impact of travel on the planet. But why travel at all if you can effectively meet online?

Cut travel costs. Business travel is not cheap. Today’s fuel costs have significantly augmented ticket prices, and often the cost of a single trip to attend an offsite meeting runs into the thousands. Plus, business travel inevitably results in countless hours of downtime in airports, taxi queues, restaurants and hotels. With GoToMeeting Corporate, you can meet instantly—no lines, no weather delays and no huge expense reports.

Increase productivity and efficiency. Meetings aren’t always planned out in advance. Sometimes you need to get the team in a huddle to brainstorm a new project or provide a new game plan mid-season. With online collaboration, cost-effectively assembling employees, prospects or partners can be done in a matter of seconds. With that kind of efficiency, projects get done much faster and sales cycles are shortened.

Innovate to compete by implementing GoToMeeting Corporate—your ticket to working smarter and greener by eliminating unnecessary travel, increasing productivity and reducing your carbon footprint.

Mike Mansbach, online globetrotter, is vice president and general manager of field marketing and global sales at Citrix Online. Contact Mansbach at mmansbach@citrixonline.com.

Start a ripple effect in your office

By Sean Marx and Mike Hannigan

In 1991 we founded Give Something Back in Mike’s living room. Our goal then, and now, is to sell as many business products as possible at the best prices with the best customer service and in a way that’s best for people and the environment.

We’ve always given at least half of our annual profits back to the community. We call this the Give Something Back Ripple Effect.

Some don’t get how this is possible, asking, “How can you build a successful business and give profits away?”

We explain that our business works for the benefit of all our stakeholders—customers, employees, suppliers, the environment and our community. When we do good by each stakeholder, we do well. We’ve always known that—that’s why we were one of the first to carry recycled paper and why we put solar panels on our roof.

We continue to develop new ways to support our customers in their pursuits—green and otherwise. Our current array of environmental solutions helps ease the transition to a greener workplace. They include:

- Our Green Audit helps customers identify ways they can increase their green purchasing while staying within budget.
- The Box Take-Back Program reuses and recycles packaging.
- E-waste collection helps divert toxic materials from landfills.
- E-billing eliminates unnecessary printing and postage.
- Our outstanding account managers help customers make informed choices about Give Something Back’s more than 6,000 green products.

To us, “green” is not just about our products or company characteristics. It’s about everything we do to create healthy communities and ensure that future generations enjoy more natural resources. And we do more than just make green proclamations: We’ve chosen to hold ourselves accountable by meeting the strict criteria of three independent environmentally and socially responsible business certifications: B Corporation and the Bay Area Green Business and Sacramento Sustainable Business Programs.

For us, taking care of people and the environment is good business. When our communities thrive, our customers thrive—and when our customers do well, we do well. It’s a tested formula that’s raised more than $4 million dollars for our community and made us the largest independent office supplier in the Western states.

Partner with us: Start a ripple in your office.

A green systems approach

While much has changed since we published the first edition of the Green Office Guide in January 2008—from the release of a new version of the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Leadership (LEED) rating system for buildings to new leadership in our nation’s Capitol—much has also stayed the same. More and more businesses are committed to creating sustainability plans, yet many still don’t know where to begin. With more and more products claiming to be “green” every day, some business owners and decision makers become overwhelmed and scrap their sustainability initiatives all together.

The Green Office Guide cuts through all the eco-labels and rhetoric to bring you well-researched and verified information about manufactures, retailers and service providers that have a proven track record for delivering products that meet high standards—not just for their performance, but for their minimal impact on both the environment and society as a whole. This was a tough assignment, and it’s taught us that there is both a huge demand from businesses seeking help as well as a huge opportunity for businesses developing innovative products and solutions.

Aimed toward business owners, facilities managers, sustainability directors and other stakeholders committed to sustainability, the second edition of the Green Office Guide covers many of the same areas that the first one did. Yet, due in large part to a growing number of players in the markets highlighted in the guide, the 2009 Green Office Guide goes even deeper.

Truly “greening” an office goes beyond simple product substitutions; it requires businesses to think about how they do business, from how they produce and deliver products and services to how they communicate their goals and successes to their employees and customers. The Green Office Guide encourages businesses to take a “systems” approach to improving office operations. We focus first on how to create a sustainability plan through an internal evaluation and goal-setting process. Then we outline opportunities for businesses that want to reduce the impact of their offices through smarter commuting, paper use, event planning, business travel and simple steps toward energy- and water-efficiency. We also recommend ways to make more responsible purchasing decisions about office products.


You won’t find a more comprehensive, well-researched guide on this topic—and if you do, we want to hear about it so we can make the third edition of the Green Office Guide an even more timely and valuable resource.
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Figuring out where to begin any complex process is often the hardest part of reaching any milestone. Learn how to create a sustainability plan and track your progress.

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Discover how behavioral changes in the workplace can slash carbon emissions, reduce operation costs and increase employee productivity.

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A ttempting to figure out where to begin any complex process, regardless of a company’s size or its goals, is often the hardest step of reaching any milestone. Knowing where you’re starting from, where you want to arrive and setting a road map for how to get there are all important steps in the process toward more sustainable business operations.

While you might want to jump right in and start switching light bulbs, implementing a food composting program and educating employees about ways they can reduce their energy- and water-use, start by assessing your current operations.

Step 1. Establish a green team.
A green team should include at least one person from the company’s management team, as well as someone from the company’s financial department. The green team is responsible for creating goals and monitoring progress. Once the team has established goals, it can create subcommittees to address specific elements, such as energy reduction, purchasing policies, indoor air quality and occupant health and safety, etc.

Step 2. Take stock.
Estimate the costs of your current energy consumption, water consumption, trash collection, and paper, technology and other purchases. Collect and review utility bills for the past two years to establish benchmarks. For tips on how to conduct an energy audit, reference the Sustainable Industries Clean Energy Handbook, which can be downloaded for free at www.sustainableindustries.com/resources.

Step 3. Consult with a professional.
Many government agencies, utilities and nonprofits offer free services to help businesses meet their sustainability goals. But without one central clearinghouse, such as the Best Business Center in Portland, it can be difficult to figure out who can help with waste reduction; who can provide an energy audit; who can assist with water conservation measures, etc. Contact your city government to find out if it offers free consulting services to businesses seeking ways to “green” their operations.

Step 4. Choose which measures to tackle first.
When choosing which measurements to tackle first, consider the following:
> Where is the greatest opportunity for improvement in both environmental impact and operational costs?
> What is your budget for improvements?
> Prioritize projects in terms of greatest payback and the easiest to implement.

Step 5. Set timely goals.
Define quantifiable goals and your personnel and financial constraints. For example, you might decide that by 2012 you want to reduce your energy consumption by 18 percent by making capital improvements that yield a minimum return of 25 percent and do not exceed a defined annual amount. With management’s approval, you can execute a plan that will reduce energy consumption by 6 percent each year over the next three years.

Step 6. Get buy-in from stakeholders.
From the CEO to the factory worker to the stockholder, everyone must be willing to take responsibility for reducing their energy use. Once people are in the know, they will want to contribute. In return, they should be rewarded when the company meets its carbon reduction goals. Consider working with organizations such as The Natural Step or the Northwest Institute, which can help facilitate goal-setting meetings (See “Resources,” below).

Step 7. Communicate your successes.
Greening your office requires the ongoing participation and support of your entire staff. While some individuals may be more heavily involved than others, be sure to communicate your goals and successes to the entire staff, even across sites if your company has more than one location. Publish an annual green team or sustainability report.

Rules of thumb

> Invite and accept feedback. Great ideas can come from unlikely places. Provide plenty of opportunities for employees to participate in moving your green office plan forward. Be open to new ideas. Also be receptive to employee concerns about new processes. Be willing to troubleshoot problems that can cause frustration and dampen staff enthusiasm.

> Don’t get discouraged. “Greening” your office operations is hard work. Budget constraints can slow the purchase of energy-efficient equipment, staff may resist new technologies, markets may not exist for materials you want to recycle, and you may not be able to get approval from management. Choose your battles.

> Celebrate your successes. Reward employees for their commitment to your company’s sustainability goals: Pay for a portion of their transit pass, reward employees for reduced energy use (and the resulting savings) by buying a local, organic family-style lunch for everyone in the office, etc.

Resources

Business for Social Responsibility (BSR) This nonprofit provides research, information and tools around corporate social responsibility reporting. www.bscr.org

Center for Earth Leadership The center offers classes and workshops aimed at Oregonians who want to lean more about sustainable practices. www.earthleaders.org

Eco-Eval The North American Green Purchasing Initiative’s Self-Assessment Tool is designed to help professional purchasers evaluate their organization’s environmental purchasing initiatives and identify opportunities for improvement. Some businesses use Eco-Eval as a way to assess whether their purchasing practices qualify for third-party certification. www.cec.org/eco-sat/Home.aspx

Give Something Back’s Green Auditing Tool The West Coast’s largest independent office products supplier provides a tool that tracks a customer’s purchasing, helping them identify areas where they can substitute environmentally preferred products for conventional products and stay within budget. It’s also a useful goal-setting and benchmarking tool. www.givesomethingback.com

Global Reporting Initiative The world’s most widely used sustainability reporting framework, the initiative helps businesses and organizations measure their social, environmental and economic performance. www.globalreporting.org

Greening Advisor A project of the Natural Resources Defense Council, Greening Advisor is a detailed guide that provides information on air quality improvement, paper and energy reduction information, water use tips and more. www.nrdc.org/enterprise/greeningadvisor

Measuring the Success of Office Paper Reduction Efforts The California Integrated Waste Management Board offers a tool for
evaluating paper reduction efforts. Includes sample calculations and other resources. www.ci.wmb.ca.gov/BizWaste/OfficePaper

Northwest Earth Institute (NEI) This Portland-based nonprofit facilitates sustainability education programs aimed at helping organizations communicate their sustainability goals to all stakeholders while emphasizing individual responsibility. NEI also offers tips for creating a Sustainability Plan. www.nwei.org

Office Depot’s Greener Office Checklist This checklist of more than 100 ideas—including many in the Green Office Guide—helps businesses reduce their carbon footprint. It includes a self-auditing tool, as well as links to resources and a built-in scoring mechanism that allows businesses to track progress against goals. To learn more, contact Yalmaz Siddiqui, Office Depot’s director of environmental strategy at yalmaz.siddiqui@officedepot.com.

Office Footprint Calculator was developed as a joint project of TheGreenOffice.com and Redefining Progress, an internationally recognized pioneer in the development of sustainability indicators. The self-assessment tool aims to promote sustainability in the workplace by increasing awareness and providing easy steps for improvement. www.thegreenoffice.com/carbon/our_calculator.php

Openco.com With 2,400 registered users, Openco.com is a global online community that provides free tools to help organizations assess, track and compare energy performance and share best practices to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. www.openco.com

SCORE A sustainability self-assessment tool developed by AXIS Performance Advisors in conjunction with the International Sustainable Development Foundation and the Zero Waste Alliance, SCORE helps organizations determine benchmarks and identify new opportunities to improve their sustainability performance. AXIS also offers a Sustainability Planning and Reporting Kit. www.axisperformance.com

The Natural Step
The Natural Step is a nonprofit helping organizations learn how to use the Natural Step Framework to set and monitor sustainability goals. Authored by Dr. Karl-Henrik Robèrt with input from dozens of scientists in 1989, the framework has helped countless businesses take a scientific approach to sustainability (See “The Natural Step Framework,” below). www.naturalstep.org

The Natural Step Framework

The Natural Step Framework, authored by Dr. Karl-Henrik Robèrt, has helped countless businesses, municipalities, schools and even the U.S. Marine Corps set sustainability goals. The Framework asks leaders to “backcast,” or imagine themselves successfully achieving goals in the future, as a first step in creating a strategy to reach success.

The Five Levels of The Natural Step Framework can be compared to a game of chess, says Dr. Robèrt:

Level 1 is the systems level, the organization in the biosphere. In chess, this level is provided by the rules of the game. “How do we define success in this system? What would success look like?”

Level 2 is defined by the “four principles,” or system conditions of a sustainable society.

Level 3 provides a set of strategic guidelines to stepwise approach Level 2.

Level 4 is any concrete action we do.

And Level 5 is the tools level, where management tools and indicators guide and monitor our actions (Level 4) so as to be strategic (Level 3) to arrive at success (Level 2) in the system (Level 1).

For more information, see www.naturalstep.org.

Using your lease as a tool

To help tenants create leases that foster sustainable operations, the Portland-based Center for Earth Leadership has developed sustainable building management guidelines that can be negotiated into a lease. The guidelines were intended for use by law firms, but they are applicable to any company or business with large office operations.

Reducing energy and water use

• Tenant space is sub-metered for electricity use.
• Landlord has conducted an energy audit of lighting and HVAC systems.
• Compact fluorescent lights have been installed where appropriate.
• Interior lights throughout the building, except exit lights, are turned off at night.
• All faucets have aerators and showerheads are low-flow (2.5 gpm or less).
• Energy and water consumption is tracked and reported to tenants.
• Air conditioning is not used after hours.
• If landscaping is present, it is not watered.

Avoiding toxic chemicals

• Cleaning supplies are certified by Green Seal or meet U.S. EPA’s Design for the Environment standard.
• Janitorial staff has been trained in the benefits of non-toxic cleaners.
• If landscaping is present, only organic fertilizers and pesticides are utilized.

Recycling

• Recycling containers have been provided for newspapers and magazines.
• Containers for glass/plastic bottles and cans have been provided.
• Fluorescent lights, batteries, old paint, and scrap metal are recycled.

The full text of the document is available at www.earthleaders.org/olsf/office_practices.

— Kevin Borgia

In June 2008, the Building Owners and Managers Association (BOMA) International released a new lease guide, the “Guide to Writing a Commercial Real Estate Lease, Including Green Lease Language.”

The guide includes well-researched, step-by-step instructions on how building owners and managers can write “green” operation and management practices into their lease agreements. It’s the first publication of its kind.

The guide updates the 2005 version of the “Guide to Writing a Commercial Real Estate Lease,” and was reworked to incorporate legal language to facilitate ongoing implementation of sustainable building practices.

To order a copy of the guide, go to http://shop.boma.org.
Surprising stats

- Paper usage is rising by about 20% per year.
- A typical office consumes about 1.5 pounds of paper per person daily.
- Financial businesses generate more than two pounds of paper waste per person per day.
- The average American attorney uses one ton of paper each year, or five and a half pounds per day.
- Recycling office paper instead of throwing it away can cut the average business’s waste bill by 50% or more.

Source: California Integrated Waste Management Board

There is no such thing as a paperless office. While the personal computer has alleviated the need for as much of the paper use in the workplace, businesses still rely on paper for many things. The idea of the paperless office has come to serve as the ultimate goal for businesses seeking to reduce their paper use. But that’s just one piece of the paper puzzle: The kind of paper that you use has a significant impact on the environment.

1. Establish your goals.
   What are the primary goals for reducing paper use in your office? Cost savings, improving forest health, reducing the amount of non-recycled paper used, meeting waste reduction goals, or achieving corporate social responsibility targets are some examples. Knowing what your objectives are can help you set priorities and create a plan of action.

2. Assess your current paper use.
   > How much paper is currently purchased for your office operations? Things to include: printer, fax, and typing papers, pre-printed letterhead and stationary, specialty papers, envelopes, mailers, brochures, etc.
   > What kinds of documents are currently being printed?
     - Short-term personal reference, reading documents off-screen, etc.
     - Long-term policy or other documentation
     - Meeting materials, agendas, etc.
     - Letters/notes to clients, direct mail or other external communications
   > What kinds of printers are being used: personal, shared, other? 
   > How are individual sheets of paper being used?
     - Are both sides of paper being used?
     - How large are the margins on printed documents?
     - Are excess pages with little and/or unnecessary text being printed from the Internet or on other documents?

3. Assess the costs of your current paper use.
   - Determine how much money your business spends on paper from all sources—office supply orders, pre-printed letterhead, envelopes, relevant postage, etc.
   - Determine costs associated with printing, including printer maintenance and ink/toner.
   - Don’t forget to include the costs of any off-site document storage.
   - Measure office space used for paper storage (filing cabinets, etc.) as percentage of total office space.
   - Assess costs of manpower required for handling paper (company mailings, courier services, filing, etc.).
   - What are the waste disposal and recycling costs associated with your company’s paper use?

4. Research alternatives to paper for your needs
   - Assess ways in which company policies or procedures encourage paper use. Are employees asked to bring printed copies of agendas to meetings? Are they encouraged to print out e-mails or company notices?
   - What are the legal or procedural requirements for printed documentation? Some federal and state agencies (such as the Internal Revenue Service) have adopted guidelines and protocol for signing, sharing, storing and securing electronic versions of documents. Others have not. Know which paper documents you can do without—and which ones you can’t.
   - Understand how technology can reduce your company’s need for paper and printing. Providing dual monitors or laptops, reducing the number of personal printers, and even providing simple tools and advice to staff can help limit the amount of paper used for short-term needs.

5. Create a plan of action.
   - Don’t get too bogged down in planning. While creating a comprehensive strategy is likely to be the best plan for the longterm, for smaller companies in particular, taking a few easy first steps can be a great way to generate buy-in from staff or management (See “Easy first steps,” p.13).
   - Establish leadership in different departments. Accessing skills and enthusiasm among IT, administrative, financial, and other staff will be helpful for identifying problems in the plan—maybe even before the problems happen.
   - Work out a budget that includes the cost of new technologies and systems, as well as estimated cost savings from reduced paper and printing needs. Keep in mind that upfront investments may be offset by long-term costs savings. However, cost savings may not be the only compelling reason to reduce paper use. Environmental, administrative and other benefits should also be considered.
   - Because the paperless office relies heavily on technology, consider hiring consulting services, depending on the level of in-company expertise and leadership. Understanding available technologies is essential for their implementation, and consulting services may ease the transition.
   - With or without outside help, be sure to have detailed information about the technology you plan to use: Dual-monitors may make it less tempting to print documents, but not all computers are equipped with the right hardware to use two monitors. Likewise, understanding secure data storage
options, energy use from increased technology and other such considerations will help with decision making.

- Communication, education and training are all necessary to support staff as they make the transition to a more digital environment. Understand the impact on employee workflow and employment. In some office environments, less paper could mean less work for administrative and/or clerical staff, or a need for more technical staff. Consider relevant training or possible job changes for staff whose positions will be heavily impacted by reduced paper use.

6. Put your plan into action.

Implementing your full strategy may take time, as expensive technologies may be rolled out to departments and individuals over time. Reducing paper use can bring more employees to the table in greening your office operations. Take advantage of employee interest and buy-in generated through the process to move forward on other initiatives.

Cost savings achieved over time may be redirected toward better purchasing strategies, especially for remaining paper use or electronics and energy used to achieve these savings. See the Purchasing section of this guide for advice on how to select better paper, electronics and more. For information about buying green power and/or carbon offsets, see p. 38.

Resources

**Business Waste Reduction publications** The California Integrated Waste Management Board offers numerous publications on ways businesses can reduce waste, from paper products to food waste to electronics and more. [www.ciwmb.ca.gov](http://www.ciwmb.ca.gov)

**Catalogue Choice** Catalogue Choice is a free online service for anyone who wants to opt out of receiving mail-order catalogues. [www.catalogchoice.org](http://www.catalogchoice.org)

**Creating a Paper Reduction Campaign** California’s Integrated Waste Management Board’s most targeted publication for offices seeking to reduce paper waste in the office. Features step-by-step advice on how to establish and motivate employees. [www.ciwmb.ca.gov/bizwaste/factsheets/campaign.htm](http://www.ciwmb.ca.gov/bizwaste/factsheets/campaign.htm)

**Cutting Paper** A Web site developed by folks at the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory provides strategies for “paper efficiency,” reducing the cost and quantity of paper use in the office. The site is aimed at motivating office workers who want to change paper use practice in an organization. [http://eetd.lbl.gov/Paper](http://eetd.lbl.gov/Paper)

**Information on paper recycling** A resource of WasteCap, a Massachusetts-based organization, this guide offers a great deal of information on paper recycling and recycled paper use, as well as tips for setting up an effective office recycling program. [www.wastecap.org/wastecap/commodities/paper/paper.htm](http://www.wastecap.org/wastecap/commodities/paper/paper.htm)

**Paper Cuts** In 2005, Seattle Mayor Greg Nickels issued an Executive Order challenging city departments to reduce paper use by 15% by the end of 2005, 30% by the end of 2006 and maintain the 30% reduction levels in 2007. This site offers resources for any business working to reduce paper use. [www.seattle.gov/papercuts](http://www.seattle.gov/papercuts)

**The Paperless Office Paradigm** This resource from Florida law firm O’Sullivan Creel is an overview of how to make your office toward a paperless one. The guide offers a broad overview of the process, including an understanding of common problems in transitioning toward a paperless office environment. [www.expert-insights.com/report.asp?id=192](http://www.expert-insights.com/report.asp?id=192)

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**Easy first steps**

Sometimes an individual, department or site may be leading the charge for reducing paper use. Depending on a company’s culture, demonstrating a few easy changes can be a helpful way to generate buy-in from others.

1. **Reduce**
   
   > **Ensure proper set up of shared printers.**
   
   Make sure that printers capable of double-sided, or duplex, printing are installed correctly on staff computers. You may need help from IT staff to make necessary changes on staff computers.
   
   > **Pack more onto the page.**
   
   Changing the default margins from 1.25 inches to 1 inch can reduce the amount of paper you use by up to 8 percent. Use space-efficient fonts such as Times New Roman to maximize this space gain.
   
   > **Proofread before you print.**
   
   Use both the spell/grammar and print preview tools to spot errors before you print to avoid the need to reprint. Consider correcting minor mistakes by hand instead of reprinting entire pages of documents that are intended for intra-office use.

2. **Improve printers’ default options.**

   For printers with multiple paper sources (trays), fill the default tray with paper already printed on one side, and leave two-sided blank paper in a secondary tray. You’ll need to provide paper that’s been printed on one side as well. Create a collection pile near the printer or in another convenient location for single-sided paper. Post guidelines for what kinds of paper aren’t acceptable for reuse: personal information, sensitive documents, financial or legal documents other confidential information specific to your company’s business. Provide a shredder for these types of documents.

3. **Conveniently locate recycle bins.**

   Once paper has been printed on both sides, it will ultimately need to be recycled. Place a large recycling bin next to the printer/copier and smaller ones at every employee’s desk.

4. **Communicate the changes.**

   Send affected employees an e-mail alerting them to changes in their printers and provide instructions for how to use double-sided printing and how to print to two-sided blank paper. Post signs over the printers. Not doing so can lead to confusion, frustration and lack of participation by others. Be prepared to answer questions, provide support and get feedback from your colleagues.

5. **Keep track of your success.**

   Keep track of your office or department’s paper purchasing before and after implementation. See what kinds of paper have been most impacted and by how much. Estimating cost savings from these changes can generate enthusiasm for more difficult steps.
Practices - Commuting

Surprising stats

- The transportation sector is responsible for about one-third of U.S. energy-related carbon dioxide emissions.
- Commuting makes up 20% of personal vehicle trips taken nationally.
- The average U.S. commute distance (one way) is 12.2 miles.
- About 93% of Americans commute to work using personal vehicles, and 90% of those commuters drive alone.

Sources: U.S. Department of Transportation, Energy Information Administration of the U.S. Department of Energy, Federal Highway Administration

For most employers, there are great opportunities to reduce transportation-related environmental impacts. Whether a company is looking to relocate or just encourage trip reduction at its current office, it can use multiple strategies to discourage employees from driving to work alone—or eliminate trips to the workplace completely. Adding a sustainable commuter plan to your company’s sustainability plan shows your commitment to better uses of the company’s resources, including employee’s time, health and safety.

Rules of thumb

> Find the right spot. For companies looking to relocate, choose offices that provide access to mass transit, minimize parking availability, and provide showers, changing rooms and covered bicycle parking.

> Encourage telecommuting. Telecommuting, virtual meetings and remote access decreases required employee trips. Telecommuting has also been shown to improve employee productivity and support family-friendly office policies.

> Provide rewards. Reward employees who choose alternative commute strategies and make sure driving isn’t being supported by hidden benefits such as free parking.

> Eliminate the need for personal vehicles. Consider adding fuel-efficient shared-fleet vehicles, enrolling in a car-sharing program or partnering with a car-sharing company to get vehicles on site.

> Promote your programs. Employees can only participate in the programs you offer if they know about them. Be sure to get the word out through as many channels as possible, including employee manuals and new-employee orientations.

Commuter benefit programs

Companies with more than 100 employees are required to participate in commuter trip reduction programs, but commuter benefit programs can be successful at smaller businesses as well.

The federal transportation bill includes tax benefits aimed at reducing congestion and air pollution; some states offer similar programs. In either case, companies may be eligible for tax credits when they offer transportation programs that cut work-related travel.

Check with your company’s financial manager to determine your company’s eligibility for federal, state and local tax benefit programs.

Parking cash-out

Employers that offer free or subsidized parking to employees can implement “parking cash out.” According to E Magazine, free employee parking costs U.S. employers $85 billion annually, in construction, maintenance and operation costs. In a parking cash-out program, an employer gives employees a choice to keep a parking space at work or accept a cash payment and give up the parking space. These programs are particularly useful for employers seeking to locate a new office site with less available parking.

Plus, the Bicycle Commuter Act, which was passed in October 2008 as part of the $700 billion bailout bill, provides a $20 tax credit per month to employers of bike commuters.

Carpool benefits

Employers can help employees form carpools through rideshare matching, which helps potential carpoolers locate others nearby who have similar schedules. Regional rideshare organizations in most areas allow interested employees to register directly for no cost. Employers can direct their employees to free services, or partner with private services such as Seattle’s Goose Networks (www.goosenetworks.com).

Encouraging carpooling helps employers save money by not having to supply as many parking spaces, or supplement parking costs, for employees. Pairing carpooling programs with a cash benefit, often in the form of parking cash-out, allows two employees to share one space and split the money saved.

Free or reduced-cost transit passes

Employers can provide up to $105 per month in tax-free transit or vanpool benefits to employees. The employer does not pay payroll taxes.
on the benefit, and employees do not pay income or payroll taxes on it. As a result, giving an employee $105 in transit/vanpool benefits is less expensive for an employer than raising the employee’s salary by $105, and the employee takes more money home.

Telecommuting and flexible schedule
Telecommuting is an arrangement between employers and employees in which employees work part- or full-time from alternate locations, such as their homes or telecommuting centers. Telecommuting reduces costs through savings on office space and parking expenses, and it often boosts employee morale and productivity. Telecommuting programs may rely on technological solutions to improve employee productivity, including software and hardware that allow employees to access their computer and shared documents remotely. Some states even offer incentives for telecommuting programs. (In Oregon, visit www.oregon.gov/ENERGY/TRANS/transhm.shtml.)

Compressed work-week schedules and flexible schedules are another creative way of reducing employee vehicle use, by eliminating commutes or enabling drivers to choose less congested travel times for commuting to work. Nine nine-hour work days followed by one day off is a common arrangement.

Resources
Best Workplaces for Commuters The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) developed a Web-based calculator that enables an employer considering Best Workplaces for Commuters to estimate the financial, environmental, traffic-related and other benefits of joining the program. www.bestworkplaces.org/resource/calc.htm

Commuter Choice The city of Seattle and the Seattle Department of Transportation encourages all commuters to use alternatives rather than drive to work alone. This Web site includes information and resources about trip reduction laws, regulations, resources and more. www.seattle.gov/transportation/commute.htm

Commuter Choice A Web portal developed and maintained by the Association for Commuter Transportation (ACT) and Transportation Demand Management Institute (TDMI), this site is designed to help employers create customized solutions to their employees’ commuting challenges. www.commuterchoice.com

“Complete Guide to Flexible Working” Published in cooperation with Toshiba, this guide provides insights into “flexible” work strategies that aim to bring work to the worker, rather than the other way around. There is a strong focus on using technology to aid in employee trip reduction. www.flexibility.co.uk/Guide/index.htm

Employee Commute Options (ECO) The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality offers a comprehensive list of statewide and national resources for commuter trip reduction. Local contacts, Web sites, tax information and more fill out a straightforward site. www.deq.state.or.us/nwr/eco/resources.htm

League of American Bicyclists This national advocacy group publishes bicycle safety materials and is a clearinghouse for Bike to Work Month/Day activities, among other things. www.bikeleague.org

Toolbox for Mobility Management in Companies This software tool helps companies develop commuter benefit programs, and helps them effectively promote the use of public transportation, ride-sharing, walking and biking by commuters. http://mobilitymanagement.be

Transportation and Land Use Coalition (TALC) A partnership of more than 90 groups working to create a sustainable Bay Area, this coalition offers transportation-related programs on its Web site, including information on the 2009 Regional Transportation Plan. www.transcoaltion.org/home.html

Green Office Guide

Steps for reducing employee vehicle trips

> Assess current commuter habits. How and how far are employees traveling to work? Survey employees to determine their current behavior over a month—including why they choose alternative commute options when they do.

> Calculate current costs of commuter behavior. Parking lot maintenance, security, and construction; reimbursement for personal vehicle use; and existing transportation benefit programs all have costs.

> Identify trip reduction goals. Set targets for decreasing personal vehicle use, as well as any additional goals, such as increased bike commuting, that match company goals for employee wellness, health and safety, staff retention, etc.

> Identify resources and programs to help achieve those goals. Look to local, state and federal organizations for help, including grants, guides and tax credits, in achieving your goals.

> Market the new plan to employees. Provide straightforward tools that encourage employee participation in programs. Easy enrollment, marketing materials and clear communication of program goals are all tools for helping boost employee participation.

> Track and reward successes. Track commuter behavior and reward all employees for meeting individual and company-wide benchmarks. Be sure to publicize all progress, not just successes. If participation is low, evaluate your company’s current programs and them set out to improve them. See “Evaluation,” p. 10 for more ideas about setting and monitoring goals.
Meetings are an essential part of doing business, from one-on-one meetings with clients, coworkers and colleagues, to company-wide trainings or national conferences.

Taking an environmental approach to meeting planning requires companies to take a look at how and why meetings happen. Knowing the goals of every business gathering can help your company assess how to improve its environmental impacts. This section includes resources to help businesses host meetings and events with lower environmental impact, select better accommodations and reduce the impact of business-related travel.

Meetings combine the challenges of “greening” office habits and life habits, as long-distance travelers may need transportation, food and accommodations.

Rules of thumb

> Reduce the number of physical meetings. Consider hosting virtual meetings for both internal meetings and external events. Web conferencing can be a way to bring together participants from multiple locations with reduced impact and cost. A 2008 survey by the Association of Corporate Travel Executives found that non-revenue-producing meetings can comprise up to 40 percent of a company’s travel budget. Businesses are increasingly turning to virtual alternatives for such meetings to save resources without compromising meeting objectives.

> If you must travel or host a meeting, reduce your travel impacts. Provide accommodations in hotels with access to transit and/or near the meeting; provide public transportation passes for meeting attendees to encourage transit use outside business hours and commitments; and seek food vendors that recycle, compost and otherwise manage waste responsibly.

> Once all is said and done, consider purchasing carbon offsets. After you’ve done all you can to reduce the carbon footprint of your event or business-related travel, consider purchasing carbon offsets or renewable energy certificates (See “Green power,” p. 38).

Business Travel

Because business travel includes energy and environmental impacts of travel, lodging, dining and other meeting services, shifts in travel strategies can create opportunities for businesses to make positive environmental impacts. For companies with a managed business travel program, ensure that environmental concerns are given preference in company purchasing or procurement policies. Likewise, for companies where employees are responsible for making travel arrangements, businesses should ensure that employees are given the freedom to include environmental criteria—not just cost—in their purchasing decisions. “Greening” business travel can be an additional expense without a clear bottom-line benefit.

Choose a better hotel

Whether you’re planning for a conference, individual business trips or anything in between, companies often need to provide accommodations for business travel. A growing number of hotels are working to go beyond voluntary towel and sheet re-use programs to improve environmental performance. Below are a few resources for finding hotels that meet your sustainability goals, as well as some tools for helping unlisted hotels in your area improve their environmental performance.

Lodging resources

California Green Lodging Program The Green Lodging Program aims to help travelers seek out and give preference to certified “green hotels.” The directory lists more than 100 certified hotels, along with a two-tiered rating system of environmental performance. www.travel.dgs.ca.gov/Lodging/GreenDirectory.htm

CERES Green Hotel Initiative (GHI) While the CERES program doesn’t list hotels, it does provide resources for assessing the “greenness” of local hoteliers in your area through the use of questionnaires. For those planning a large event, or frequent business travelers, GHI can be a helpful tool for encouraging a hotel to take additional sustainability steps. www.ceres.org

Environmentally Friendly Hotels While it is not an established third-party verification system, the site provides detailed information about its rating criteria, and awards hotels with scores from 1 to 7 for environmental actions. The site is searchable by location and environmental criteria, as well as additional information about basic hotel services. www.environmentallyfriendlyhotels.com

Green Seal Certified Hotels Green Seal is a well-known, reputable third-party certifier. Since 1995, Green Seal has partnered with the lodging industry, the nation’s second largest employer, to promote environmentally responsible products and practices within lodging properties. www.greenseal.org/programs/lodging_properties.cfm

United Nations Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria Attempting to cull the best practices from about 60 green travel certification programs and industry standards, this site can be a helpful tool for businesses and individuals looking to support sustainable tourism. www.unwto.org/SustainableToursim
HELPING PORTLAND’S OLDEST CONVENTION CONTINUE

Oregon Convention Center certified Salmon-Safe by improving water quality www.salmonsafe.org

In September 2008, the Oregon Convention Center was recertified with the LEED®-EB Silver rating from the United States Green Building Council (USGBC) under its “Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design in the Existing Buildings” category. Making it the first convention center in the nation to achieve recertification at a higher rating. The new "silver" rating required proven sustainability accomplishments among areas of operation, maintenance and capital improvements and demonstrates the center's ongoing commitment to environmentally responsible practices.

For more information about sustainable practices at the Oregon Convention Center visit www.oregoncc.org/sustainability

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programs, the U.N. World Tourism Organization in 2008 launched a framework of sustainable tourism practices. Booking sites Travelocity and Expedia are both partners in the U.N. program and use the program’s criteria in determining which facilities are included in their green hotel listings. [www.sustainabletourismcriterion.org](http://www.sustainabletourismcriterion.org)

**Event planning**

Events, ranging from internal company retreats to trade shows to conferences, are an important aspect of nearly every organization’s operations. There are many steps companies can take to reduce the environmental impact of their meetings. Yet one of the best things a company can do is reduce the number of events it has by hosting virtual meetings and Web conferences (see “Virtual meetings,” below).

**Event planning resources**

**Blue Green Meetings** A free, interactive tool from Oceans Blue Foundation and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency assists meeting planners, hosts and suppliers in planning and supplying environmentally responsible meetings, printable resources such as checklists and sample environmental policies, case studies and a calculator to monitor progress. [www.bluegreenmeetings.org](http://www.bluegreenmeetings.org)

**Cleaner and Greener Program** Leonardo Academy’s Cleaner and Greener program helps events offset the emissions caused by event activities, from travel and transportation to food services and electricity use. The program also offers certification as a “Cleaner and Greener Event.” [www.cleanerandgreener.org](http://www.cleanerandgreener.org)

**EcoSpeakers’ Resources for Event Managers** This Web site provides links to information about hosting, planning and attending meetings in a more environmentally responsible way. Some resources focus on the event itself, others focus on assisting attendees with green, convenient, inexpensive and safe travel. [www.ecospeakers.com/foreventmgrs/index.html](http://www.ecospeakers.com/foreventmgrs/index.html)

**Green Meeting Industry Council (GMIC)** This organization helps members and the events industry understand impacts of their events and meetings. The council is comprised of individual members and businesses seeking to transform the meetings market to support more sustainable business practices. [www.greennmeetings.info](http://www.greennmeetings.info)

**GreenYourTheme.com** An online business-to-business site for event suppliers to promote, network and generate “green” events and business. Virtual Exhibitor Booths allow businesses to showcase their events. A forum allows sustainable materials suppliers to discuss best practices. [www.greenyourtheme.com](http://www.greenyourtheme.com)

**Meeting Strategies Worldwide** This management, consulting and training firm works with associations and corporate organizations to produce sustainable business conferences and corporate social responsibility programs. The private firm is a partner in numerous industry programs and provides a great deal of resources and references for event planners interested in reducing environmental impacts. [www.meetingstrategiesworldwide.com](http://www.meetingstrategiesworldwide.com)

**U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Green Meetings** A resource site for everyone involved in planning a meeting, including a sample procurement contract for an external meeting planner. [www.epa.gov/oppt/greenmeetings](http://www.epa.gov/oppt/greenmeetings)

**Trade show exhibits**

Between the manufacturing and shipping of trade show exhibits, they can be one of the biggest sources of both waste and carbon emissions. Increasingly, exhibit manufacturers offer lighter exhibits made from more sustainable and recyclable materials, as well as offer rental exhibits, which maximize reuse potential.

**Trade show resources**

**Exhibits Northwest** Seattle-based Exhibits Northwest offers modular exhibits made from bamboo plywood with low-VOC finishes, LED lighting and fiber made from recycled soda bottles. The company also offers a service to reclaim and reuse display materials. [www.exhibitsnw.com](http://www.exhibitsnw.com)

**Go Green Displays** Go Green Displays offers modular exhibits, including the Bambooth. Made from bamboo and recycled metal, the Bambooth includes accessories such as LED lighting and graphics printed on recycled fabrics. [www.gogreenidisplays.com](http://www.gogreenidisplays.com)

**Skyline** With locations around the country, Michigan-based exhibit manufacturer Skyline says it uses about one-third of the materials of traditional custom-made exhibits, reducing waste and shipping costs. Skyline also offers exhibit rental. [www.skyline.com](http://www.skyline.com)

**Virtual meetings**

Web conferencing helps companies cut down on travel costs as well as paper use by enabling employees to conduct live meetings and share information without leaving their desk.

To help meet a growing demand for online meeting options, a handful of Web conferencing software providers have surfaced in recent years. Comparing the five leading Web conferencing software providers, Publicare Marketing Communications rated the following companies based on the following criteria: number and scope of features, user friendliness, meeting set-up effort, software installation effort, pricing/cost transparency, and security system requirements.

Citrix Online, GoToMeeting and GoToWebinar; Score: 9.3 out of 10 [www.gotomeeting.com](http://www.gotomeeting.com)

Cisco WebEx MeetMeNow; Score: 9.1 out of 10 [www.webex.com](http://www.webex.com)

Acrobat Connect; Score: 8.2 out of 10 [www.adobe.com](http://www.adobe.com)

Microsoft Office Live Meeting; Score: 7.1 out of 10 [www.microsoft.com/uc/livemeeting](http://www.microsoft.com/uc/livemeeting)

**Location, location, location**

Location selection can have a big impact on your event’s footprint. When assessing potential venues, Green Events Source suggests asking the following questions:

> Is the venue centrally located with easy access to public transportation?
> Has the site employed any energy-efficiency measures, such as efficient lighting, alternative energy sourcing and programmable thermostats?
> Does the venue offer recycling and composting?
> Has the facility implemented waste-reduction strategies, such as reusable linens, bulk water, condiment and soap dispensers?
> Is there a water conservation program in place?
Surprising stats

- About 30 percent of the energy consumed by U.S. buildings is done so inefficiently or unnecessarily.
- On average, a building can achieve a 20% – 30% improvement in energy efficiency where the majority of improvement doesn’t require capital expenditures for new equipment.
- Office buildings account for 19% of all commercial energy consumption, with 66% coming from electricity use.
- Lighting accounts for 29% of all energy consumed in office buildings.

Sources: U.S. Department of Energy, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

A company’s physical location is probably the most resource intensive part of business operations. Working to improve resource use, through improved lease agreements, well-managed recycling and waste management programs, and attention to energy and water use are part of every company’s path toward green operations.

Remember that you don’t have to be a building owner to implement energy efficiency measures. As a building tenant, you have some say (see “Using your lease as a tool,” p. 11). While the following section outlines the “low-hanging fruit” of facilities maintenance and operation, you can find many more in-depth resources on how to reduce your facilities’ energy and water use in the Sustainable Industries Clean Energy Handbook. The handbook, which will be updated in October 2009, is available for free at www.sustainableindustries.com/resources.

Energy efficiency

Reducing energy use in an office can be as simple as adopting a few day-to-day changes in employee behavior, including turning off lights when not in use, putting computers in sleep mode when not in use, turning off non-critical machines when not in use, adjusting settings to low-power use on existing office equipment (including refrigeration, HVAC, etc.), adjusting the thermostat for moderate seasonal temperatures indoors (the office should be warmer in summer and cooler in winter), and by using task lighting—rather than overhead systems—when offices are over-lit.

Going beyond simple measures, companies may invest in limited technology improvements, such as occupancy sensors that turn lights off automatically in unused rooms, and replacing office equipment with Energy Star-rated products (See “Technology,” p.28).

Keep in mind that your energy-reduction strategy will vary greatly depending on whether you are building a new facility or trying to retrofit an existing building. If starting from the ground up, building owners should work with their design team from the very early stages to explore structural strategies such as building orientation and building mass, and mechanical opportunities such as natural ventilation and underfloor air systems. If you don’t implement such solutions early on, they are impossible, or nearly impossible, to implement once a building has been constructed.

For companies willing and able to sink capital investment into a facility, major energy savings can be accomplished by working with property owners to implement improvements.

The rate of return on all energy-efficiency improvements for both new and existing buildings varies greatly depending on the technology. Any professional energy audit and/or project bid should include rates of return for each recommended measure.

Resources

Building Commissioning Association Building commissioning provides documented confirmation that building systems function according to the owner’s operational needs. Some green building certification systems require building commissioning. www.bcxa.org

BOMA Green Resource Energy and Environmental Network The Building Owners and Managers Association provides several resources for improving the energy and environmental performance of existing buildings, including an energy efficiency education program, a sustainable operations Webinar series, and a sample “green” lease agreement. www.boma.org

Directory of State Incentives for Renewable Energy and Efficiency This clearinghouse provides information about incentives for renewable energy and energy efficiency at both state and federal levels, as well as incentives offered by utilities. www.dsireusa.org

Energy Trust of Oregon This nonprofit administers Oregon’s public purpose charge toward energy-efficient and renewable energy projects within the service areas of its two largest electric utilities and Northwest Natural, the state’s largest natural gas utility. The Energy Trust of Oregon provides free energy audits, resources on implementing your own energy improvements, as well as rebates on specific technologies. www.energytrust.org

Lighting Design Lab Sponsored by Northwest Energy Efficiency Alliance, the Lighting Design Lab works to educate consumers and businesses about energy-efficient technologies through consultations, classes and technical assistance. The lab is located in Seattle, but offers classes throughout the region and online. www.lightingdesignlab.com

U.S. Department of Energy’s Building Technologies Program This Web site includes information about the program’s research and development of innovative new technologies and energy-efficient building practices. www1.eere.energy.gov/buildings

Water efficiency

While offices aren’t typically large water users, there are simple ways businesses can further reduce water use. Surprisingly, fixing leaks in water faucets and pipes can be a major step. One study in Australia found that 26 percent of office water use could be attributed to leaky plumbing. Making small modifications to bathroom and kitchen plumbing fixtures can also reduce water use: faucet aerators and toilet tank bags can increase water efficiency cost effectively.

Consider purchasing low-flow and/or dual-flush toilets and motion sensors for faucets, or installing a facility-wide greywater system, which captures non-toilet drain water for flushing toilets or watering landscaping. For more information about rainwater re-use and stormwater management, see Plants at Work. Published by Sustainable Industries and the Sustainable Plant Research and Outreach Center. Plants at Work is available at www.sustainableindustries.com/resources.
Resources

“Water Efficiency Guide for Business Managers and Facility Engineers” This guidebook is for industrial and commercial site managers. The guidebook offers specific measures to improve water-use efficiency while sustaining production and services. These measures are appropriate for manufacturers, service businesses (hospitals, laundries, laboratories, etc.), office buildings, shopping centers, government facilities and military bases, schools, colleges, hotels, resorts and restaurants. [www.owue.water.ca.gov/docs/water_efficiency_guide.pdf](http://www.owue.water.ca.gov/docs/water_efficiency_guide.pdf)


Water Sense Similar to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s Energy Star program, Water Sense aims to protect the future of the nation’s water supply by promoting and enhancing the market for water-efficient products and services. [www.epa.gov/watersense](http://www.epa.gov/watersense)

Waste

Most of this guide focuses on source reduction—strategies for buying fewer, more sensible and less disposable items—and reuse. However, most offices will still have some waste that needs to be sent to the landfill. Most materials consumed in offices are recyclable, with few exceptions, particularly on the West Coast. As with other recommendations in this guide, a good place to start is conducting a waste audit. Many large-scale waste haulers will perform waste audits for free or for a minimal charge.

Designing an in-office recycling program requires companies to evaluate what kinds of waste are being generated and finding recycling opportunities. Typically, waste haulers can readily accommodate materials such as paper, plastic bottles, aluminum and glass. A good recycling program makes it easy for employees to know where different kinds of waste belong and who to ask if they don’t know how to dispose of something. Be sure to train employees about how to recycle materials and consider providing incentives to encourage participation. Because recycling can be less expensive than garbage hauling, cost savings can be used to support such incentive programs.

Also, don’t forget: Custodial staff should be involved in the development of a good recycling program. They should be educated about how the new system works, know who to talk to if problems or questions arise and receive regular communication about changes and success in the program.

Resources

10 Steps to Start Recycling A guide from Massachusetts’ WasteCap program that outlines 10 important steps to think about before beginning a new recycling program in a business office. [www.wastecap.org/wastecap/resources/faq/ten_steps.htm](http://www.wastecap.org/wastecap/resources/faq/ten_steps.htm)


Recycle At Work A program for businesses in the Portland metropolitan area, Recycle at Work provides free technical recycling assistance, including free desk-side and shared recycling bins, promotional materials and waste hauler information. [www.recycleatwork.com](http://www.recycleatwork.com)

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### LEED certification

The U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) offers a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification for new and existing buildings. Certified buildings maximize operational efficiency while minimizing environmental impacts. The certification provides a recognized, performance-based benchmark for building owners and operators to measure operations, improvements and maintenance on a consistent scale. Both new and existing buildings can earn LEED certification.

LEED for Commercial Interiors is the USGBC’s certification for tenant improvements. It recognizes high-performance green interiors that are healthy, productive places to work; are less costly to operate and maintain; and have a reduced environmental footprint. LEED for Commercial Interiors assesses the sustainable choices of tenants and interior designers, who do not always have control over entire building operations.

LEED for Retail, in its pilot stage, is USGBC’s certification for businesses with many retail outlets. Office Depot and Recreational Equipment Inc. (REI) are among the companies participating in the pilot program.

For more information about LEED, visit [www.usgbc.org](http://www.usgbc.org).

### Energy Star certification

Since the Energy Star for commercial buildings program was first introduced by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in 1999, thousands of buildings across the country have earned an Energy Star rating.

The energy performance of commercial and industrial facilities is scored on a 1 to 100 scale, and those facilities that achieve a score of 75 or higher are eligible for the Energy Star award. To that end, buildings that earn the Energy Star rating are among the top 25 percent of facilities in the country for energy performance.

Commercial buildings that have earned the Energy Star rating use on average 35 percent less energy than similar buildings and generate one-third less carbon dioxide, according to EPA. Building owners are not finished with energy efficiency once they have received the Energy Star label: They monitor their energy use and receive a new score annually.

For more information about Energy Star, visit [www.energystar.gov](http://www.energystar.gov).

### Green Globes certification

While not as popular as LEED or Energy Star, Green Globes is an assessment and rating system for green buildings. In 2004, Green Globes for Existing Buildings was adopted by the Building Owners and Managers Association of Canada, where it operates under the name Go Green Plus. The Green Building Initiative owns the rights to distribute Green Globes in the United States.

For more information about Green Globes, visit [www.greenglobes.com](http://www.greenglobes.com).
Surprising stats

- Paper fills up 35% of American landfills.
- Twenty-four trees are cut down to make one ton of virgin printing paper.
- One ton of paper made from 100% recycled paper—compared to virgin paper—saves the equivalent of 4,100 kilowatt-hours of energy, 7,000 gallons of water, 60 pounds of carbon emissions and 3 cubic yards of landfill space.
- The pulp and paper industry is the single largest consumer of water used in industrial activities in OECD countries and the third largest industrial greenhouse gas emitter, after the chemical and steel industries.

Sources: Green Seal, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, OECD Environmental Outlook

Rules of thumb

> **Buy recycled.** Choose products with the highest level of post-consumer content possible. Federal guidelines prescribe 30 percent recycled content at a minimum.

> **Buy non-chlorine bleached paper.** Dioxins, a byproduct of the chlorine bleaching process, are a cancer-causing agent that can cause significant harm to the ecosystems near paper factories.

> **Copy paper isn’t everything.** Don’t forget that copy paper isn’t the only paper your company buys. Sticky notes, brochures, shipping materials, boxes, envelopes and business cards are all made of paper. Ask suppliers about the recycled content of all paper products.

> **Buy certified products.** Look for products that are third-party certified. The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) and the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) provide certification to lumber and paper materials by requiring several restrictive parameters to their production—prohibiting the conversion of natural areas, regulating the use of highly hazardous pesticides and chemicals, checking the cultivation of genetically modified trees, ensuring the respect of indigenous peoples and monitoring already certified goods. For more information and to look for certified products visit, their Web sites at www.fsc.org and www.sfiprogram.org.

Resources

Celery Design’s Ecological Guide to Paper Celery is a design firm with the central goal to combine aesthetics with ethics. It advocates that designers play an active role in every step of a project to ensure each is carried out with environmental concerns in mind. www.celerydesign.com/paper/matrix.html

Environmental Paper Assessment Tool The EPAT is a data-driven, environmental assessment tool for buyers and sellers of paper products. The EPAT works by providing consistent language and metrics for buyers and sellers of paper products to discuss the environmental attributes and trade-offs in purchasing decisions. www.epat.org

Environmental Paper Network A joint project of the Rainforest Action Network, the National Wildlife Federation and other environmental groups, this Web site includes a paper-use calculator.
and guidelines for purchasing paper. www.environmentalpaper.org

Environmentally Preferable Paper Purchasing Guide PaperSpecs offers a purchasing guide with key steps for setting goals, achieving them and improving upon them. www.paperspecs.com/resources/environment

EPA’s Comprehensive Procurement Guidelines (CPG) Supplier Database A searchable database of vendors that sell or distribute CPG-designated products with recycled content. This powerful tool allows users to search for vendors of a specific CPG product, product category or type of material. Paper suppliers are listed with both total and post-consumer recycled content. www.epa.gov/cpg/products.htm#paper

FSC-certified Papers This is a list of paper certified using standards set by the Forest Stewardship Council. www.fscus.org/images/documents/FSC_certified_papers.pdf

GreenBiz purchasing guide GreenBiz provides a number of tools and services to help align environmental responsibility with business success. www.greenbiz.com/toolbox

REI’s Paper Purchasing Policy REI has a publicly available paper purchasing policy available on its Web site. The company outlines clear guidelines, as well as strategies and metrics for achieving the goals. www.rei.com/aboutrei/csr/2007/sally_letter07.html

Responsible Purchasing Network Members of this national network of procurement professionals dedicated to responsible purchasing receive access to purchasing guides on many topics, including paper www.responsiblepurchasing.org


SFI The Sustainable Forestry Initiative is dedicated to the sustainable management of forests and provides certification to products meeting a rigorous third-party audit. www.sfiprogram.org

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**Pulp Fiction**

**Myth:** Recycled paper is more expensive and lower quality.

**Cost:** Paper prices fluctuate. At times, paper manufacturers can buy recycled pulp at a lower cost than virgin tree pulp, and those prices are passed onto consumers. If you have a strict price cap for paper purchasing, be sure to check costs each time you place an order and order paper with the highest amount of recycled—especially post-consumer—content you can afford. When recycled paper is more expensive, consider the premium paid as a tool for encouraging your company to reduce paper use. If recycled paper is 5 percent more expensive, set goals for your office to reduce the amount of paper you purchase by 5 percent or more.

**Quality:** A 1998 study conducted by the U.S. Conference of Mayors of more than 2 million sheets of paper demonstrated that recycled papers with 30 percent post-consumer content performed just as well as non-recycled papers.

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**Hire green printing services**

Expect a green printer to:
- Provide recycled paper as its primary or only option.
- Use soy, vegetable or other clean ink.
- Adhere to FSC or SFI standards.

Truly green printers can be hard to find. When researching, here are a few places to start (all companies ship nationally):

Greenerprinter: www.greenerprinter.com

Natural Source Printing: www.naturalsourceprinting.com

Get Green Printing: www.gotgreenprinting.com

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**Reuse or recycle?**

What is better for the environment, reused or recycled boxes?

Think about the energy it takes to make one ton of cardboard boxes. Need help visualizing it? Here are some statistics.

Each year, San Francisco-based Give Something Back uses approximately 77,000 boxes, which equals about 48 tons.

To manufacture 48 tons (1 ton = 1,600 boxes) of 60 percent recycled and 40 percent virgin-pulp corrugated cardboard boxes:
- 403 trees are cut down.
- Enough energy to power 12 homes for one year is produced.
- Greenhouse gas emissions equaling 19 cars on the road for a year are emitted.
- Enough waste to fill two fully loaded garbage trucks is generated.

Give Something Back is one of the few office supply companies with a box take-back program. If your business happens to be in the Bay Area, GSB will pick up used boxes and reuse them for customer orders in Northern California. Only boxes that pass the warehouse manager’s ‘tough test’ will be recycled.

Source: www.givesomethingback.com

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**Virgin vs. recycled**

Producing recycled paper uses much less total energy than producing virgin paper, according to Environmental Defense Fund.

Depending on the grade, producing recycled paper may use more or less purchased energy (a subset of total energy), in the form of fossil fuels and purchased electricity. Virgin freesheet grades require slightly less purchased energy to produce than recycled ones, because some of their energy needs are met by burning wood-derived process waste. Virgin groundwood papers, however, require more purchased energy to produce than do recycled groundwood papers.

The use of recycled paper reduces greenhouse gas emissions. In the landfill, where 80 percent of discarded paper ends up, the decomposition of paper produces methane, a greenhouse gas with 21 times the heat-trapping power of carbon dioxide. Paper recycling recovers used paper from the waste stream, directly reducing the amount of paper landfilled. To that end, for recycled papers, any increase in greenhouse gas emissions during manufacturing is more than outweighed by reductions in emissions from landfills.

Source: www.environmentalpaper.org/documents/QandA.pdf

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Green Office Guide

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[23]
OFFICE DEPOT® BRAND
BAMBOO COLLECTION
Pen Cup w/Frame, Item# 384-460
Letter Sorter, Item# 384-465
Accessory Box, Item# 384-475
Desktop Organizer, Item# 384-470
Stackable Containers, Item# 384-485

OFFICE DEPOT® GREEN
100% RECYCLED ENVIRONMENTAL PAPER
8-1/2" x 11", Item# 521-980

OFFICE DEPOT® GREEN
100% RECYCLED HANGING FOLDERS
Blue, Item# 840-985

BOISE® ASPEN™ 60% RECYCLED MULTIPURPOSE PAPER
8-1/2" x 11", Item# 398-140

DOMTAR EARTHCHOICE®
FSC-CERTIFIED OFFICE PAPER
8-1/2" x 11", 3-Hole Punched, Item# 458-070

PILOT® G-KNOCK 81% RECYCLED BEGREEN GEL ROLLERBALL PENS
Black, Item# 479-420

OFFICE DEPOT® GREEN
100% RECYCLED WRITING PADS
5" x 8", Item# 480-710
8-1/2" x 14", Item# 480-690

OFFICE DEPOT® GREEN
100% RECYCLED MANILA FILE FOLDERS
1/3 Cut, Letter Size, Item# 850-484

OFFICE DEPOT® GREEN
20% RECYCLED BUSINESS ENVELOPES
4-1/8" x 9-1/2", #10 Envelopes, Item# 330-728

REALSPACE PRO™
60% RECYCLED QUANTUM MESH CHAIRS
Black Mid-Back Task Chair, Item# 510-830
Black Guest Task Chair, Item# 395-420

GLOBAL® ADAPTABILITIES
GREENGUARD CERTIFIED SYSTEMS FURNITURE
Single-Pedestal Desk, Honey, Item# 625-339
Kneespace Credenza, Honey, Item# 534-061

OTT-LITE®
ENERGY EFFICIENT FLOOR LAMP
Black, Item# 945-985

YOUR GREENER OFFICE
STARTS RIGHT HERE...
Everything You Need for Your Greener Office in one perfect place: the Office Depot Green Book®. Available electronically for Office Depot customers, or printed copies can be ordered by clicking www.officedepot.com/greenbook or calling 888.2.OFFICE. Select from over 2,200 items to help you go green.

STARTS RIGHT HERE...

1. **ENERGIZER® RECHARGEABLE NIMH BATTERIES**
   AA Rechargeable, Item# 435-152

2. **HP® OFFICEJET PRO L7590 FLATBED ENERGY STAR-QUALIFIED ALL-IN-ONE**
   L7590, Item# 100-780

3. **EARTHVIEW**
   70% RECYCLED ROUND-RING PRESENTATION BINDERS
   1-1/2" Ring, Item# 980-312

4. **OFFICE DEPOT® BRAND**
   30% RECYCLED YELLOW SELF-STICK NOTES
   3" x 3", Item# 422-588

5. **NEW LEAF**
   RECYCLED FASHION NOTEBOOK
   8" x 10-1/2", 80 Pages, Item# 616-900

6. **OFFICE DEPOT® GREEN**
   30% RECYCLED GREEN BOX-BOTTOM HANGING FOLDERS
   Letter, 2" Expansion, Item# 605-057

7. **OFFICE DEPOT® BRAND**
   RECYCLING BOXES FOR EMPTY INKJET CARTRIDGES
   Pack Of 2, Item# 816-656

8. **OFFICE DEPOT® BRAND**
   100% RECYCLED RIGID PHOTO AND DOCUMENT MAILERS
   5-3/8" x 8-1/2", Item# 270-135

9. **DAY-TIMER®**
   30% RECYCLED FAUX CROCK STARTER SET
   5-1/2" x 8-1/2", Walnut Croc, Item# 447-430

10. **OFFICE DEPOT® BRAND**
    65% RECYCLED MEDIUM DUTY STORAGE FILE BOXES
    Letter/Legal, Item# 870-635

11. **VIEWSONIC® VA2226W LCD 22" ENERGY STAR-QUALIFIED MONITOR**
    Black, Item# 683-980

12. **VOLTAIC™ SOLAR CHARGING MESSENGER BAG**
    Silver Panels, Item# 451-615
Surprising stats

● 1.6 million single-use pens are discarded each year in the United States.
● About 15 million pounds of polyester transparency film are discarded in the United States each year.
● U.S. businesses could save $1.5 billion and at least 100,000 barrels of oil annually if they sent their printer and copying cartridges back for remanufacturing.

*Source: Green Seal*

N
early everyone who’s tried to work on reducing their environmental impact has been told at one time or another: Don’t sweat the small stuff. This chapter is all about the small stuff, from pens to staplers to rubber bands. But there is importance in the small stuff: It does add up.

Rules of thumb

> **Reduce waste.** Purchase products that can be reused, refilled, have replaceable components and/or have extended warranty periods. **Examples:** ceramic mugs, refillable pens, staple-free staplers, reusable or refillable printer cartridges.

> **Buy recycled...** Look for products with the highest level of total and post-consumer recycled content. Choose products with a minimum of 30 percent post-consumer recycled content whenever possible. When expanding into new office space, visit thrift stores and consignment shops and classified ads to find used furniture, dishware, bulletin boards and more. **Example:** recycled plastic clipboards, recycled metal paper clips, refilled printer cartridges.

> **... and recyclable.** Choose products with single-material or easy-to-disassemble designs. **Example:** all-metal letter openers, ReBinders.

> **Buy healthy.** Select products with non-toxic paints, coatings, cleaners and materials. Look for products certified by the Art & Creative Materials Institute. **Examples:** pens, dishwashing soap, painted durable organizers.

> **The nose knows (kind of).** Choose pens, markers, adhesives and other office materials with reduced chemical content, often marketed as “low odor.” However, not all low-odor products are non-toxic, and not all non-toxic products are low-odor. Look for certified nontoxic products first. **Examples:** hi-liters, white-board markers.

> **Go low power.** Select items that reduce energy use through energy-efficient design, or good old-fashioned manpower. **Examples:** manual hole-punches and staplers.

> **Go organic.** Supply break rooms and kitchens with organic and sustainably produced food and drinks. **Examples:** coffee, tea, cream.

> **Buy local.** Whether purchasing office furniture, business cards or coffee, look for local sources first. Choosing local suppliers reduces fuel used in delivery costs, as bulk orders are delivered to local warehouses and shipped to companies.

**Plastics**

When choosing supplies, seek items using recycled plastic content. There are many different kinds of plastic; choosing plastics that are easier to recycle is also a wise environmental choice. Use plastic recycling codes to help choose: The lower the number, the easier the material is to recycle.

There are a growing number of products, from mugs to pens to packaging and more, made from biobased plastics, also known as polylactic acid, or PLA. These materials are typically compostable in commercial compost facilities, but not in backyard or in-office systems. Check with your local waste collection agency to determine disposal options for biobased products.

**Certifications**

**Approved Product (AP) Seal** identifies art materials that are certified by a medical expert to contain no materials in sufficient quantities to be toxic to humans, including children, or to cause acute or chronic health problems. Such products are certified by the Art and Creative Materials Institute Inc. to be labeled in accordance with the chronic hazard labeling standard and the U.S. Labeling of Hazardous Art Materials Act. [www.acminet.org](http://www.acminet.org)

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**Plastic commonly used for consumer products**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Plastic name</th>
<th>Common household uses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Polyethylene terephthalate (PET)</td>
<td>Soft drinks, medicine bottles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>High-density Polyethylene (HDPE)</td>
<td>Milk, water, shampoo and motor oil bottles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Polyvinyl Chloride (PVC)</td>
<td>Commercial signage, building materials, meat wrap</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Low-density Polyethylene (LDPE)</td>
<td>Plastic bags, plastic wrap, plastic films</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Polypropylene (PP)</td>
<td>Syrup bottles, yogurt tubs, reusable bottles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Polystyrene (PS)</td>
<td>Coffee cups, take-out containers, reusable consumer products</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Medical storage containers, electronics, Nalgene bottles</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: City of Portland's RecycleAtWork program*
Compact fluorescents light bulbs (CFLs) typically require less than one-third the energy to produce the same amount of light as common incandescent bulbs. Many businesses are switching to CFLs as a way to decrease their energy use and electricity costs (see “Practices, Facilities, p. 20). But disposing of CFLs, which contain an average of 4 milligrams of mercury per bulb, is a concern of many. (Note: CFLs reduce demand for electricity, which results in less mercury emitted from coal-fired power plants.)

Several states are addressing the issue, however, by imposing regulations on fluorescent light disposal. To check on regulations in your state and to order light-bulb recycling kits, go to www.lightbulbrecycling.com or www.bulbs.com/recycle.aspx.

EcoLogo A program of the Canadian federal government that is run by an independent company, EcoLogo develops environmental standards for products. It compares products and services with others in the same category and awards its seal to products that meet its standards. The EcoLogo Program is one of two such programs in North America that has been successfully audited by the Global EcoLabelling Network as meeting International Organization for Standardization (ISO) 14024 standards for eco-labelling. Its Web site lists more than 7,000 certified products. www.ecologo.org

GreenGuard The GreenGuard Certification Program is an industry-independent, third-party testing program for low-emitting products and materials. To date, more than 100 manufacturers across various industries offer GreenGuard products certified to improve indoor air-quality. www.greenguard.org GreenSeal certification utilizes a lifecycle approach, which means it evaluates a product or service beginning with material extraction, continuing with manufacturing and use, and ending with recycling and disposal. Certified products include cleaning services and products, papers, paints, procurement criteria and facilities operation and maintenance criteria, among others. www.greenseal.org

Scientific Certification Systems (SCS) An organization that offers evaluation and certification services to a broad range of manufacturing sectors, SCS currently certified products including office furniture systems, components and seating; building materials; carpet, rug and hard surface flooring; paints and finishes; wood products; and cleaning products, among others. www.scscertified.com/ecoproducts

Specialized vendors

Cartridge World Cartridge World is an international company specializing in ink cartridge remanufacturing and sales. It provides free consultation to businesses, free pick up and delivery, and a variety of other services. www.cartridgeworld.com

Dolphin Blue Dolphin Blue is the only U.S. office products retailer that sells “green” office products exclusively. Dolphin Blue offers office products that contain at least 20 percent post-consumer recycled material and does not sell any products made in China. It ships supplies using packages and labels made with post-consumer recycled materials printed with soy and vegetable-based inks. While it focuses mostly on paper products, Dolphin Blue also sells toner cartridges and is testing other products for their environmental impact and performance. www.dolphinblue.com

Frogfile Office Essentials is a full-service office supply company specializing in environmentally friendly office products. The online catalogue contains more than 500 unique products prescreened for their environmental specifications. They provide manufacturer information, which may be useful for companies that wish to cross-reference products with current suppliers. They have a somewhat smaller selection, but offer bulk pricing options. www.frogfile.com

Give Something Back The West Coast’s largest independent office products supplier, Give Something Back sells more than 2,500 “green” and recycled-content office products, helps customers identify areas where they can substitute environmentally preferred products for conventional products, and donates more than half its after-tax profits to community-based organizations. www.givesomethingback.com

LaserMonksGreen.com This online retailer sells SoyPrint cartridges, the first laser printer cartridges that use toner powder derived from soybeans. Cartridges for the most popular laser printers are available under the SoyPrint brand with identical quality to their oil-based competitors. www.lasermonksgreen.com

Green Earth Office Supply Green Earth sells products that can be reused, products that aid in reuse and products that can be taken back by the manufacturer and refilled or remanufactured. It also sells recycled, renewable, less toxic and energy-efficient products. http://greeneathofficesupply.stores.yahoo.net

The Green Office The Green Office is an online retailer of recycled, environmentally preferred and sustainable business products, school supplies and paper. The Green Office provides manufacturer information, useful for companies that wish to cross-reference products with current suppliers. www.thegreenoffice.com

Mainstream Retailers

Corporate Express doesn’t offer a separate directory of environmentally preferable products. However, the retailer has a clear paper purchasing policy that states a preference for Forest Stewardship Council-certified papers over other specified certifications, and also requires disclosure of environmental practices from its supplying paper mills. The retailer also says it offers 3,000 products with environmental attributes, and it labels such products with an “EcoOffice” symbol. www.corporateexpress.com/environment.html

Office Depot offers a print and online “Green Book” that allows customers to select from environmentally preferred products in the Office Depot catalogue. The “Green Book” lists only products that have one or more of the following attributes: reduced waste, reduced energy and reduced chemical use. Office Depot also adopted an environmental paper procurement policy, although its policy doesn’t state a preference for specific third-party certified papers. www.officedepot.com/buygreen

OfficeMax doesn’t offer a separate directory of environmentally preferable products, with the exception of recycled content papers. However, the retailer says it offers 2,900 products with some post-consumer recycled content and has plans to “develop or source new products that incorporate other environmental attributes.” www.officemax.com

Staples doesn’t offer a separate directory of environmentally preferable products, with the exception of recycled content papers. However, the retailer says it offers 2,900 products with some post-consumer recycled content and has plans to “develop or source new products that incorporate other environmental attributes.” www.staples.com/soul
Surprising stats

Office electronics, from computers to printers and other document imaging technology, are one of the biggest consumers of electricity for commercial and home offices. In addition, electronics contain hazardous substances, reduce indoor air quality, and most often create huge e-waste issues at the end of their lifecycle. Electronic equipment that is energy efficient, nontoxic and upgradeable can help companies minimize their environmental impacts.

Rules of thumb

> Upgrade before buying. In some cases, upgrading existing computers can be a viable solution for companies. Improving shared data storage, adding additional memory and installing updated software can all lengthen the life of existing computers. If that’s not possible, buying machines that are easy to upgrade and maintain will help make this an easy choice in the future.

> Reduce the number of office machines. Sharing printers and office equipment discourages printing and removes associated indoor air quality issues from individual workspaces. It also saves money.

> Buy energy-efficient computers and office equipment. Buying Energy Star labeled computers and office machines will save energy—and money spent on energy.

> Choose machines with low levels of toxins. Looking for products that use fewer toxic elements, including cadmium, lead, mercury and brominated flame retardants such as polybrominated biphenyls (PBBs) and diphenyl ethers aids in end-of-life management by keeping toxics out of the waste stream and protecting worker health in recycling facilities.

> Consider leasing. If your company must upgrade to the latest technology frequently, consider leasing equipment rather than buying it. Leasing extends the life of equipment your company deems outdated by placing it at another company or organization, where it may still be considered state of the art.

> Reuse, recycle...refurbish. Purchasing refurbished equipment can be a great way to realize savings on office equipment. It’s also something to consider when retiring old computers. Through its Refurbished Computer Initiative, San Francisco-based nonprofit TechSoup Stock refurbishes donated computers and funnels them to nonprofit groups for an administrative fee.

Hazardous substances

The European Union’s Restriction on Hazardous Substances (RoHS) Directive, which was adopted in 2005, restricts the use of certain hazardous substances in electronic equipment sold in European markets. While RoHS doesn’t apply to products sold in the United States, some manufacturers have converted their entire production lines to RoHS compliance. www.rohs.gov.uk

Ink and toner

When selecting printers, copiers and other imaging equipment, consider your options for selecting different printing technologies, based on waste, in addition to ink content. The Responsible Purchasing Network provides an overview of different printing technologies that may be helpful:

> Inkjet printer technology creates the greatest volume of waste. It often takes up to 30 inkjet cartridges to produce the same output as a single laser printer cartridge, and the amount of waste increases for color printers using multi-color cartridges, since the whole unit must be replaced when one color runs out. Remanufacturing cartridges is one option that reduces the environmental impact of inkjets, but this option is rarely available for cartridges that do not include print heads. Manufacturers as well as specialized recyclers, such as Cartridge World, offer refilling for empty cartridges in many areas.

> All-in-one cartridges, typically used in laser printers, are less wasteful, but they do contain significant amounts of valuable materials. A typical toner cartridge contains 40% plastic; 40% metal; and 20% rubber, paper, foam and toner. About 97% of cartridge components can be reused and recycled. Remanufacturing and refilling options for all-in-one toner cartridges are widely available. Most, if not all, cartridge manufacturers also offer free return programs for these products.

> Traditional copier technology (so called component-based systems, in which the toner container is sold separately from the drum) reduces waste up front. While they offer print yields similar to laser toner cartridges, the drums in these systems are more durable and do not have to be replaced as often.

> Solid ink printers and multi-functional devices use ink that comes in solid blocks and melt it to produce liquid ink before applying it on paper. The eliminates the need for an ink container or cartridge, which eliminates most of the consumables waste.
HP INSTANT-ON TECHNOLOGY HAS HELPED REDUCE CO₂ EMISSIONS BY 5.25 MILLION TONNES THAT’S THE EQUIVALENT OF REMOVING 1.1 MILLION CARS FROM THE ROAD FOR A YEAR

Cutting down on CO₂ emissions can be done in many ways. You can bike to work. Or you can use HP LaserJet printers with Instant-on Technology, that use 50% less energy compared to other printers. At HP, we’ve made a commitment to reduce the total energy usage for products and operations 25% by 2010.

Want to know more? Go to hp.com/environment.
Think thin

Using servers to run programs and store data can be one way to minimize the cost and sophistication of a typical office worker’s machine. In some cases, companies may be able to take advantage of thin client systems, in which users can log into their personalized settings, documents and preferences (which are stored on a shared server) from any one of many simple thin client machines. Systems such as these allow a company to upgrade fewer sophisticated machines at a lower cost and with less waste.

Resources

**Electronics TakeBack Coalition** This group aims to improve the lifecycle management of electronics. The organization provides purchasing guides and documents to aid buyers.

www.computertakeback.com/purchasing/index.cfm

**Energy Star for Computers** The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s Energy Star for Computers program recognizes the most energy-efficient computer equipment on the market, applying its specifications to desktops, laptops, game consoles, servers and other computing technology. Recognizing that many users leave their computers in standby or sleep mode when they step away from their desk, products that qualify for the Energy Star label must meet energy use guidelines in all three modes of operation: standby, sleep mode and while being used. Computers must also include a more efficient internal power supply. www.energystar.gov


**Green California: Office Machines** The California Department of General Services’ Environmental Procurement Policy (EPP) Best Practices Manual aims to help buyers write environmental specifications into bid solicitations, tap into Web sites and other resources related to EPP, and locate surplus and reuse programs to obtain low-cost or used equipment and supplies.

www.green.ca.gov/EPP/OfficeMach

**Green Electronics Council’s Electronic Product Environmental Assessment Tool (EPEAT)** Launched in January 2007, EPEAT is a set of guidelines that promote not only energy-efficiency, but a variety of additional social and environmental factors associated with the manufacturing and recycling of electronics. The online EPEAT database of registered products includes more than 1,000 products from about 30 manufacturers. The nonprofit bases products’ scores on their reduction/elimination of environmentally sensitive materials, materials selection, end-use design, durability, reduction of energy use, packaging, and the social and environmental performance of the manufacturer. EPEAT partners with international certification body EcoLogo. Products can now be registered for EPEAT’s listings through either group. www.greenelectronicscouncil.org

**Greenpeace Green Electronics Guide** The Greenpeace Green Electronics Guide ranks popular companies according to their recycling programs, toxic waste and energy efficiency.


**A Guide to Environmentally Preferable Computer Purchasing** An online guide from the Northwest Product Stewardship Council, this document provides a concise overview of concerns and criteria for selecting computers for a home or office.

www.productstewardship.net/productsElectronicsEPPGuide.html

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[www.greenerprinter.com/greenoffice](http://www.greenerprinter.com/greenoffice)

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Member FDIC / Natural Step Certified
If you are in the business of manufacturing and distributing goods or services, your vehicle fleet—or the fleet of your distribution partners—represents a huge percentage of your company’s expenses and carbon footprint. While much can be done to reduce commuter trips for employees, many companies rely on cars, trucks and vans to conduct business.

**Rules of thumb**

> **Purchase fuel-efficient and alternative-energy vehicles.** This is one of the most obvious and practical steps a company can take when developing a clean fleet. There are many tax incentives currently offered for purchasing hybrid, alternate-energy or electric vehicles. The Energy Policy Act of 2005 includes tax credits ranging from $3,000 – $12,000 for fuel-efficient and alternative energy vehicles.

> **Maintain your vehicles.** A vehicle running at peak efficiency gets better mileage and is less likely to break down and need costly repairs in the future.

> **Consider joining or renting from a pre-existing fleet company instead of buying your own vehicles.** Vehicle-sharing companies such as Zipcar are growing in popularity. Oftentimes such companies offer discounts to business clients. Why join?
  - Each vehicle shared takes 15 – 20 cars off the road.
  - Maintenance becomes someone else’s responsibility.
  - Insurance is included in the package.
  - You can choose vehicles based on your situation and not the other way around. Your fleet will no longer be limited to what you own.

> **Drive smarter.** Create policies that encourage smart driving practices. The policy should aim to reduce idle times, create efficient routes, track fuel use and encourage behavioral changes such as driving the speed limit and parking in the shade. Companies such as UPS have proven that efficient routing practices can decrease total miles traveled. There are many companies that offer wireless vehicle tracking tools such as GPS technology to monitor distance traveled and fuel used, provide diagnostic information, offer maintenance recommendations and report greenhouse gas emissions.

**Resources**

- [Fueleconomy.gov](http://www.fueleconomy.gov) This online resource provided by the U.S. Department of Energy provides information about federal and state tax incentives available to businesses and the types of vehicles to which they apply, as well as fuel-economy estimates, fuel-saving tips and other useful information. [www.fueleconomy.gov](http://www.fueleconomy.gov)

- [Puget Sound Green Fleets](http://www.psgreenfleets.org) The Web site helps fleet managers and decision makers understand the emissions produced by fleet operations and identify effective ways to reduce these emissions. The Web site includes a fleet-emissions calculator, a guide for creating a “green” fleet plan and tips for reducing emissions. [www.psgreenfleets.org](http://www.psgreenfleets.org)

- [The Tax Incentives Assistance Project](http://www.energytaxincentives.org) Sponsored by a coalition of nonprofits, government agencies and other organizations in the energy efficiency field, this project provides consumers information about the federal income tax incentives for fuel-efficient vehicles and other energy-efficient products and technologies passed by Congress as part of the Energy Policy Act of 2005. [www.energytaxincentives.org](http://www.energytaxincentives.org)

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Every Zipcar takes 15 cars off the road, which helps decrease corporate greenhouse gas emissions and improves your employees’ quality of life. Zipcar also reduces travel costs and improves accountability. Best of all, your Zipcar membership is good in every Zipcar city throughout the US, Canada and the UK.

Learn more at [zipcar.com/biz](http://zipcar.com/biz)
Purchasing - Furnishings

When it comes to purchasing furnishings, consider office systems that can be adjusted for new users. This will give your furniture increased versatility as well as a longer lifespan. Sustainable furniture doesn’t have to look or feel like it was stolen from a university dorm. There is a wide array of options when it comes to greening your office furniture.

Rules of thumb

> **Refurbish.** If you’re moving spaces, redecorating or otherwise considering changing your furnishings, consider working with what you have or buying furniture that’s been refurbished. A new coat of paint or new upholstery can make a dramatic difference.

> **Look at long-term, not just up-front costs.** While durable furnishings may cost more up-front, companies can save in the long run. Even if pieces no longer meet a company’s needs, further down the road, durable equipment will have a higher resale value at the end of its life—rather than a waste-disposal fee.

> **Consider buying used furniture.** Just because one office is done with its furnishings doesn’t mean the furnishings are done being used. Buying previously owned furniture can mean a savings of between 30 percent and 50 percent according to some retailers.

> **Choose items that can be modified.** Desks and chairs with adjustable settings and cubicle systems that can be reorganized have longer life spans because they can change with the company’s needs. New employees don’t necessarily mean new office furniture if products are selected carefully and choices are made with an eye on long-term changes.

> **Choose smart materials.** Look for products made with sustainable materials: certified woods, surface materials made with nontoxic adhesives and waste materials, and high total and post-consumer recycled content are good options. For recycled products, look for a minimum of 30 percent post-consumer recycled content whenever possible.

> **Choose items that can be disassembled.** When products are at the end of their useful life, they should be able to be easily taken apart into component materials for easy recycling or reuse.

> **Choose sustainably harvested woods.** Before selecting beautiful tropical wood items or inexpensive pressboard products, investigate the wood source. There are many responsible alternatives available through both specialty and mass-market suppliers.

**Chairs**

Most office workers spend a great deal of time sitting in their chairs. Choosing task seating that is ergonomically appropriate and environmentally sound is vital for a productive, healthy office environment. Office seating is often an expensive purchase for companies; take the time to choose durable seating from healthy materials to be sure it’s money well-spent. Good seating can improve employee health and productivity. From fabrics and cushioning to metal and plastic framing, many office seating manufacturers can offer more sustainable choices.

**Desks and office furniture**

Office work surfaces are often made of particle board with a plastic laminate and trimmed with PVC. While particleboard is a recycled material, its traditional use of adhesives that use formaldehyde, a known carcinogen leaving purchasers to seek out specific products without formaldehyde. Additionally, the plastic laminate is usually fused to the wood—which ends alters its recyclability.

Alternative materials may be more expensive, but offices can often cut costs by working with suppliers and making use of scrap materials for additional surfaces. Particleboard alternatives manufactured from agriculture waste, recycled materials or rapidly renewable resources are another good option for some office environments.

**Selected manufacturers and retailers**

- **Allsteel** offers many Cradle to Cradle-certified office furnishings and received a 2008 Sustainable Leadership Award for Design and Development 2008 from Corenet Global. [www.allsteeloffice.com](http://www.allsteeloffice.com)
- **Baltix** uses sustainable natural materials that contain no harmful adhesives, formaldehyde or volatile organic compounds (VOCs) to create seating, workstations, tables and accessories. [www.baltix.com](http://www.baltix.com)
- **Ecowork** designs and manufactures sustainable office work spaces using recycled and rapidly renewable materials and “green” production processes. [www.ecowork.com](http://www.ecowork.com)
- **Haworth** provides office workspaces with modular design and sustainable materials. [www.haworth.com](http://www.haworth.com)
- **Herman Miller** adopted a Cradle to Cradle Design Protocol that evaluates new product designs in three key areas: material chemistry and safety of inputs, disassembly and recyclability. [www.hermanmiller.com](http://www.hermanmiller.com)
- **HON** In 2006, HON became the world’s first office furniture...
manufacturer with products certified by the Scientific Certification Systems’ Indoor Advantage program. It currently offers more than 40 products that are Indoor Advantage-certified. www.hon.com

IKEA offers low-cost office furnishings with high recycled content, certified and sustainably harvested woods, and low-VOC finishes. www.ikea.com

Knoll offers a selection of seating, workstations and fabrics made using low-VOC finishes, recycled materials and clean manufacturing technology. www.knoll.com

National Furniture offers a number of items certified by Scientific Certification Systems using the Indoor Advantage system and other products certified by the Business and Institutional Furniture Manufacturers Association’s Furniture Sustainability Standard. www.nationalofficefurniture.com

TheGreenOffice.com is an online retailer selling office supplies including furniture with a focus on those with third-party sustainability certifications. www.thegreenoffice.com

Steelcase offers many Cradle to Cradle-certified office furnishings, from seating to workstations and more. www.steelcase.com

Resources

Business and Institutional Furniture Manufacturers Association
Business and Institutional Furniture Sustainability Standard Still in draft format, this proposed standard is modeled after the LEED rating system. Furniture products are evaluated against a variety of credit criteria (after first meeting certain prerequisites), accumulating points toward increasing levels of recognition associated with reduced environmental impact. The organization also offers a Furniture Emissions Standard and Sustainability Guidelines. www.bifma.org/public/SusFurnStdArchive/Draft/2008-06-06_BIFMA_e3-2008.pdf

Cradle To Cradle Sustainable design firm McDonough Braungart Design Chemistry’s (MBDC) Cradle to Cradle program and certification aims to design products that don’t end up dumped in landfills at the end of their useful life. MBDC works with producers to create products that can be perpetually circulated in closed manufacturing loops. The goal is to maximize material value without damaging ecosystems. www.mbd.com/c2c_home.htm

EcoLogo A program of the Canadian federal government that is run by an independent company, EcoLogo develops environmental standards for products by comparing products and services with others in the same category and awarding its seal to products that meet its standards. www.ecologo.org

Recycled Office Furniture: Good for the Environment, Good for Business This report from the Business Products Industry Association describes the environmental and economic benefits of office furniture recycling. www.resourcesaver.org/file/toolmanager/O16F3340.pdf

SMART Sustainable Furniture Certification This third-party certification system for furnishings and carpets is administered by The Institute for Market Transformation to Sustainability, an ANSI-accredited organization. www.mts.sustainableproducts.com

The Sustainable Furnishings Council is a nonprofit coalition that promotes sustainable practices among manufacturers, retailers and consumers via marketing and educational campaigns. Its Web site provides a searchable database of third-party certified products. www.new.sustainablefurnishings.org


Case Study: Modular office design

Desk and chair heights aren’t the only office furnishings that can be adjustable. When Portland-based PAE Engineers undertook to remodel its space to the U.S. Green Building Council–Commercial Interior Gold standard in a circa-1910 building, the company’s principals looked at every aspect of office life and asked what could be done to make it more sustainable. Individual occupancy sensors in each work station, high-tech resource management solutions and Cradle-to-Cradle certified furniture all played a big role in certification. But the firms’ principals wanted the space and its furnishings to last.

While they knew they couldn’t accurately plan for every long-term need, they could be ready to handle just about anything that might come their way.

One way they did this was to make the 13,000-square-foot, 1.5-floor open-plan work space modular. The choice means the number and layout of work stations can change over time, explains Steve Reidy, a principal. Not having to buy new cubicle dividers to accommodate a large workforce will reduce the amount of materials the firm is responsible for consuming, means longer lives for the materials used currently and saves money over the long term. It also presents a challenge.

It was important to PAE that reducing energy use have as little impact as possible on employee comfort.

This led the company to create an innovative system of air diffusers to allow individual control over airflow. But adding a diffuser at each desk took away the modularity of the space, while not having individual control would decrease energy savings significantly. In the end, diffusers that allow airflow direction and strength to be set locally were placed at random intervals along each row of workstations at desk height. This will allow each desk occupant to set his or her own air-temperature level, even, when walls are moved in the future.

—Charles Redell
Purchasing - Cleaning

Surprising stats

⚠️ The Environmental Protection Agency has required testing for fewer than 200 of the 62,000 chemicals used in commerce since the agency began reviewing chemicals in 1979.

⚠️ Indoor levels of air pollutants can be 2-5 times higher, and occasionally 100 times higher, than outdoor levels.

⚠️ 18% of worker productivity and $60 billion dollars worth of employee productivity is lost annually in the United States due to poor indoor air quality.

⚠️ Indoor air pollution consistently ranks among the top five environmental risks to public health.

Sources: Building Owners and Managers Association, Consumer Reports, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Few building owners or managers consider indoor air quality, health issues or employee productivity when making decisions related to cleaning and maintaining facilities. Property managers have traditionally focused on providing an acceptable level of cleanliness at the lowest cost for custodial services and supplies. But clean doesn’t always mean healthy for people or the planet. Green cleaning goes beyond appearance to focus on the health of employees and custodial staff, as well as on lifecycle impacts of cleaning fluids.

Rules of thumb

> **Take a preventative approach.** Reduce your need for cleaning. The International Sanitary Supply Association reports that most dirt in a building is tracked in on people’s shoes, and 85 percent can be eliminated if entry mats are properly designed and maintained.

> **Reduce waste.** Make efficient use of resources, from supplying cloth hand towels and recycled paper products, to maintaining entryway mats and energy-efficient vacuums.

> **Reduce chemical use.** Use natural cleaners. Chemicals should be used as little as possible and diluted to ensure worker safety.

> **Protect indoor air-quality.** Use cleaning solutions that have low levels of volatile organic compounds (VOCs), which are airborne chemicals that can irritate lungs, eyes and skin.

> **Consider making your own cleaners.** If you work in a small or home office, you could use non-toxic ingredients such as baking soda, vinegar and lemon juice to make your own cleaners. For a list of recipes, go to Healthy Child Healthy World’s Web site: http://healthychild.org/blog/comments/recipes_for_safers_cleaners.

> **Look for third-party certified cleaners.** As with most green office products, if cleaners are third-party certified, you can ensure that they meet strict environmental and health standards. A couple of certifiers include:

  - Design for the Environment (DfE), a program of the Environmental Protection Agency, works with stakeholders to reduce risks to people and the environment by helping prevent pollution through the use of alternative technologies, materials and processes. Cleangredients, a project of DfE, is an online database of institutional and industrial cleaning product ingredient chemicals, providing verified information about the environmental and human health attributes of listed ingredients. www.epa.gov/dfe, www.cleangredients.org
  - EcoLogo, founded by the Canadian Government, is one of North America’s most widely recognized environmental standard and product certification programs. The program compares products and services with others of the same category using rigorous criteria reflecting the entire lifecycle of the product. www.ecologo.org.

Green Seal provides science-based environmental certification standards for a variety of products and services—cleaning materials, paper, paint, soaps, professional cleaners, hotels, etc. Products bearing their seal are sold at most major office, grocery and hardware suppliers or you can search online at www.greenseal.com.

Choosing better chemicals

The following criteria can help you or your janitorial service choose safer, more sustainable products:

**DOs**

- Biodegradable
- Nontoxic
- Low-VOC
- pH levels between 2.5 and 12
- Concentrated for shipping
- Reforms best at room temperature
- Aerosol containers
- Minimal packaging

**DON’Ts**

- Alkylphenol ethoxylates
- Dibutyl phthalate
- Heavy metals including arsenic, lead, cadmium, cobalt, chromium, mercury, nickel or selenium
- Ozone-depleting compounds
- Optical brighteners
- Unnecessary dyes and fragrances
- Corrosive or flammable
- Includes disinfectant

Janitorial services

Start by meeting with your cleaning service to evaluate its current practices and determine what experience it may already have with greener cleaning methods. Work out a plan for implementation; new methods and new supplies should be considered. A comprehensive plan of action should include chemicals, paper, equipment, entry mats, mops and wipers. Just switching to a few chemicals with eco-labels is not adequate to create the value a commitment to sustainability requires. The selection of products requires consideration of their manufacturing, distribution, use and disposal. Create open lines of communication and set benchmarks for accountability. Make sure that the janitorial staff is properly trained and included in the process.
If your current provider isn’t able to meet your needs, use a detailed RFP (Request for Proposal) to get more comprehensive bids that are tailored to your needs. If you aren’t familiar with janitorial services it might be a good idea to speak to a few vendors informally or take a look at existing green RFPs.

Resources:

Coastwide Laboratories A private company that provides janitorial services for companies that want to use greener options. Coastwide is an industry leader that provides a great deal of technical and background information about cleaning products that is useful to businesses. www.coastwidelabs.com

Environmentally Preferable Cleaning As part of its Environmentally Preferable Purchasing information, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency provides information on green cleaning. The Web site includes procurement guidance, case studies and online resources. www.epa.gov/epp/pubs/products/cleaning.htm

Green Seal The third-party certifier offers standards for both household and institutional cleaning products, and specific criteria for additional categories of cleaning products, such as floor cleaners. It also lists certified products and services. www.greenseal.org

The Green Cleaning Pollution Prevention Calculator A tool that quantifies the projected environmental benefits of using “green” janitorial services and products, this tool also enables users to identify which green cleaning measures will have the greatest impact in helping them reduce their use of hazardous chemicals. www.ofee.gov/janitor/index.asp


Janitorial Pollution Prevention Project Aimed at reducing health impacts for janitorial staff, this Web resource contains detailed information about “green” cleaning through factsheets, commentaries and tools. www.wrppn.org/janitorial/jp4.cfm

Toxic Use Reduction Institute Toxic chemical reduction information from the Toxics Use Reduction Institute (TURI) at the University of Massachusetts, aims to protect employees, consumers and the environment by helping companies find safer alternatives to toxic chemicals. www.turi.org

Transition Planning, Building Management Commitment, and Writing a Cleaning Stewardship Plan The U.S. Department of the Interior provides information about changing over operations to “green” cleaning, including how to generate management buy-in and writing a “green” cleaning procedures policy. http://greeninginterior.doi.gov/sustain/AppendixD.html

World Cleaning Industry Association (ISSA) Here you’ll find resources for locating green cleaning supplies and implementing green cleaning service programs. ISSA connects distributors, manufacturers, building service contractors and in-house service companies from all over the world. The industry association also hosts an annual U.S. “green” cleaning forum to educate members about changes in federal “green” cleaning policies, provide information about products and more. www.issa.com

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Surprising stats

- Producing a pound of beef accounts for more than 13 times more greenhouse gases than the production of a pound of chicken.
- Growing half a pound of asparagus in Peru generates 1.2 ounces of carbon dioxide emissions, but transporting it to a table in Seattle accounts for 3.2 ounces, more than twice the amount caused by the use of pesticides, fertilizers and running farm equipment.
- Grain-fed beef production takes 100,000 liters of water for every kilogram (kg) of food produced while soybean production uses 2,000 liters for each kg of food produced.
- If all the U.S. grain currently fed to livestock were exported and cattle were moved to grass-fed production systems, animal protein in the average American diet would drop from 75 grams to 29 grams per day. That, plus current levels of plant-protein consumption, would still yield more than the recommended daily allowance for protein.

Sources: City of Seattle, Cornell University, Scientific American

Whether your company provides daily cafeteria food service for employees or caters occasional meetings, food has a number of environmental impacts including the pesticides used in agriculture, energy and water used in processing and transportation, waste resulting from food preparation and consumption, and labor issues associated with agriculture. Yet it takes more than switching to an all-vegetarian food service to effectively remove greenhouse gas emissions from company-sponsored meals.

A growing number of food-service vendors and suppliers have adopted sustainability guidelines, thanks to the encouragement and support of clients. The keys to getting your food supplier to do this is to figure what’s important to your company and then to set priorities accordingly with your supplier. When planning talking points for that meeting, follow these guidelines.

Rules of thumb

> **Choose certified foods.** Seek credible, third-party certifications, such as U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Organic or Food Alliance, for products. For uncertified food—such as locally grown food—establish clear definitions of what such terms mean for your business.

> **Choose local.** When possible, reduce the “food miles” of your meals by choosing supplies sourced as close to your site as possible. Establish guidelines for how far away “local” can be, and when it is preferred—especially if your vendors must choose between local and organic products (smaller, local farmers may follow organic practices but can’t afford the cost of formal certification).

> **Compost.** Reduce waste from your food-service operations by providing composting services.

> **Use durable dishware and request compostable packaging.** Provide reusable dishes and silverware for all food events. When this is not possible, choose low-impact disposables, such as plant-based plastic flatware, recycled content paper products or bamboo plates. When it comes to containers, there’s no need to use foam or plastic for box lunches or to-go containers anymore. A number of recyclable or compostable options currently exist.

> **Budget for changes.** New systems, more expensive ingredients and initial start-up expenses can be challenging. Set budget targets for suppliers and understand constraints.

Resources

- Biodynamic Farming and Gardening Association The Biodynamic Farming and Gardening Association is a national organization devoted to expanding the reach of biodynamic farming in the United States. As in organic farming, biodynamic farming is free of synthetic pesticides and fertilizers but also requires the farmer to treat the land under his or her care as a single living organism. [www.biodynamics.com](http://www.biodynamics.com)

- Environmental Working Group Returning land to organic farming techniques is important for the planet’s health, but if money is an issue, going 100 percent organic is not necessarily required, from a personal health perspective. Environmental Working Group studied fruits and vegetables to determine which contain the most toxins when grown “conventionally.” [www.foodnews.org](http://www.foodnews.org)

- Food Alliance The Food Alliance offers a voluntary certification program based on standards that define sustainable agricultural practices. Farms, ranches and food processors are visited by third-party inspectors to be sure they meet Food Alliance’s standards. The organization offers a searchable database to help consumers find local, sustainable food businesses. [www.foodalliance.org](http://www.foodalliance.org)

- Local Harvest This site offers a database of Community Supported Agriculture farms, farmers’ markets, restaurants offering meals using locally grown ingredients and natural food stores in the United States. Searchable by city, state or ZIP code [www.localharvest.org](http://www.localharvest.org)

- Organic Institute An educational nonprofit founded by the Organic Trade Association, Organic Institute publishes many free resources for consumers, including “Organic on the Green,” a blog for college students interested in bringing organic food and products to their campus. [www.theorganicinstitute.org](http://www.theorganicinstitute.org)

- Seafood Watch The Monterey Bay Aquarium developed Seafood Watch to help consumers determine which fish species are harvested sustainably. If fish is a part of your sustainable food service, it’s an indispensable tool. [www.mbayaq.org/cr/seafoodwatch.aspx](http://www.mbayaq.org/cr/seafoodwatch.aspx)

- Sustainable Food Policy The Sustainable Food Policy Project was initiated in 2006 to support efforts by educational, healthcare and other institutions to have a positive impact on the food system through purchasing. It includes a useful “Sustainable Food Policy Guide.” [www.sustainablefoodpolicy.org](http://www.sustainablefoodpolicy.org)
Sifting through food labels

Some food terms and certifications have scientific or legal definitions but others are simply marketing jargon designed to plant visions of bucolic farms in the heads of unwary consumers. With so many terms and certifications, it’s almost impossible to know what they all mean. Following are some key terms to get you started.

> **Cage-free** Such birds are raised without cages. What this doesn’t explain is whether the birds were raised outdoors on pasture, if they had access to outside, or if they were raised indoors in overcrowded conditions.

> **Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)** This is a system in which consumers support a local farm by paying in advance for agricultural products. Throughout the growing season, CSA members receive a portion of the farm’s harvest each week.

> **Family farm/small farm** Defined by the USDA as a farm with less than $250,000 gross receipts annually on which day-to-day labor and management is provided by the farmer and/or the farm family that owns the production or owns or leases the productive assets.

> **Free range** The use of the term “free range” is only defined by the USDA for poultry production (and their eggs), and need only mean that the bird has had some access to the outdoors each day, which could be a dirty or concrete feedlot. USDA considers five minutes of open-air access each day to be adequate. Claims are defined by USDA, but are not verified by third party inspectors.

> **Genetically Modified Organism (GMO)** This is a plant or animal that has been genetically engineered. Some people consider GMO foods to be unnatural and therefore unsustainable. Others say that GMO crops are nature sped up and that the may be the only way to feed an increasingly hungry planet. Their safety has not been established.

> **Natural** Currently, no standards exist for this label except when used on meat and poultry products. USDA guidelines state that “natural” meat and poultry products can only undergo minimal processing and cannot contain artificial colors, artificial flavors, preservatives, or other artificial ingredients. However, “natural” foods are not necessarily sustainable, organic, humanely raised or free of hormones and antibiotics.

> **Organic** A product, its producer and the farmer must be certified by a USDA-approved food-certifying agency to meet this USDA legal standard. Organic foods cannot be grown using synthetic fertilizers, chemicals or sewage sludge; cannot be genetically modified; and cannot be irradiated. Organic meat and poultry must be fed only organically-grown feed (without any animal byproducts) and cannot be treated with hormones or antibiotics.

> **Third-party-certified (or verified)** Food inspected by a company operating independently of the producer or distributor. The third party certification company confirms the legitimacy of claims made by food producers and distributors, thus ensuring that the food labels are meaningful.

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Purchasing - Green power

Surprising stats

- America consumes 26% of the world’s energy and is the world’s largest single emitter of carbon dioxide, accounting for 23% of energy-related carbon emissions worldwide.
- The United States’ demand for energy grows by about 3% each year.
- The fastest growing energy technology in the world is grid-connected photovoltaic cells (a 60% increase between 2000 and 2004).
- Fossil fuels are depleted at a rate that is 100,000 times faster than they are formed.

Source: Solar Energy International

Once your business has tackled as much as it can through energy efficiency improvements, onsite renewable energy generation offers an opportunity to further your commitment to sustainability.

Renewable energy installations can help companies hedge their bets against rising energy costs, providing more stable energy costs in an uncertain energy economy. Despite the rise and fall of federal tax credits for renewable energy generation, federal and state incentives, along with technological advances, will likely continue to make renewable energy more affordable as time goes on.

Resources

American Wind Energy Association An industry association that provides information on renewable energy policies, research and development, and other topics related to the growth of wind power in the United States. www.awea.org

Environmental Protection Agency’s Clean Energy Programs Working with state policy makers, electric and gas utilities, energy customers and other key stakeholders, EPA’s Clean Energy Programs are designing and implementing clean energy policy and technology solutions that produce environmental and economic benefits. www.epa.gov/cleanenergy

National Renewable Energy Laboratory A national laboratory working on research and development of renewable fuels and electricity, NREL provides information suitable for businesses, individuals and government agencies. www.nrel.gov

U.S. Department of Energy’s Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy This government office administers numerous programs, including building technologies, solar energy and alternative fuel vehicles that aim to enhance energy efficiency and productivity and bring clean, reliable and affordable energy technologies to the marketplace. www.eere.energy.gov

U.S. Department of Energy’s Federal Energy Management Program (FEMP) As the largest energy consumer in the United States, the federal government through FEMP is working to promote energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy resources at federal sites. FEMP helps agencies save energy, save taxpayer dollars, and demonstrate leadership in clean energy adoption. www1.eere.energy.gov/femp

Sustainable Industries “Clean Energy Handbook” This free guide offers in-depth information on energy efficiency measures, renewable energy development, financing options, incentives and carbon offsets. www.sustainableindustries.com/resources

Solar Energy Industries Association An industry association that provides up-to-date information on solar energy policies, incentives, research and development and other topics as part of its mission to grow the solar energy industry in the United States. www.seia.org

Green power

If you can’t install an onsite renewable energy system, you can likely purchase green power through your local utility. Many utilities offer green power pricing programs that add a small surcharge per kilowatt-hour for green energy. Although the surcharge can’t ensure electricity is piped directly from a wind turbine to a business, it will help the utility cover the increased costs of renewable generation and help put more clean energy onto the grid.

Some utilities even charge a flat rate for green energy that is not tied to the fuel-price fluctuations of electricity from coal or natural gas. This pricing model can provide valuable energy price predictability for businesses, but not all utilities use such a price structure.

However, utilities in some areas don’t offer green power pricing. In those cases, businesses can purchase renewable energy certificates, or RECs. Pronounced “rex,” these certificates are sometimes called “green tags.” When a company or individual purchases a REC, the funds go to the operators of a wind farm or other renewable facility. This provides an additional revenue stream that allows the producer to generate and sell electricity at a more profitable rate, enabling more renewable energy development.

But buyer beware: RECs are intangible commodities and are often unregulated by governments, leaving the potential for fraud. To ensure legitimacy, companies should look for RECs certified by a third party, such as the Environmental Resources Trust, or the San Francisco–based Green-e.

RECs are not the same as carbon offsets, although they are similar. Offsets involve paying someone to reduce greenhouse gas emissions instead of reducing one’s own emissions, and are not always connected to renewable energy generation. Offsets can come from such diverse actions as planting trees, capturing methane from landfills and livestock operations, implementing energy efficiency measures, or more exotic methods.

Green power vendors

Bonneville Environmental Foundation (BEF) This Portland-based nonprofit sells its BEF Carbon Offsets to businesses and individuals nationwide. In conjunction with the Bonneville Power Authority, BEF also sells “Environmentally Preferable Power” from wind and low-impact hydroelectric facilities to Pacific Northwest utilities and businesses. www.greentagsusa.org

CarbonFund.org A nonprofit group that sells RECs and offsets from a variety of sources, including renewable energy facilities, reforestation and energy efficiency. www.carbonfund.org

TerraPass A company that has partnered with several corporations to offset carbon emissions, TerraPass sells carbon offsets derived from wind energy projects, livestock methane capture and industrial energy efficiency. www.terrapass.com
Carbon offsets

Even after your business has tackled both energy efficiency and onsite renewable energy options, it's nearly impossible to reduce the carbon footprint of your business to zero. Carbon offsets are one way to mitigate the carbon emissions created from energy use and transportation. But with literally hundreds of options, many of which can seem like scams, the task of choosing a green energy provider can be daunting.

Rules of thumb

> **Buy as little as possible.** That doesn’t mean you shouldn’t try to buy 100 percent green power. It means you should try to reduce your energy use. Green power comes at a premium, and the additional cost may be a way to help you set goals for using less energy: If green power is 5 percent more expensive, aim to reduce your power by at least that amount.

> **Don’t just choose the lowest cost.** If you choose to work with a third-party supplier of renewable energy credits, be sure to work with a credible provider, preferably one that has clear standards for sourcing or that is certified by Green-e.

> **Buy locally.** Many green power providers bundle the benefits of green power projects around the country. When possible, specifying that your credits should come from local or regional projects ensures that you are supporting projects in the places your power comes from.

Resources

- **Database of State Incentives for Renewables and Efficiency (DSIRE)** is a comprehensive source of information on state, local, utility, and federal incentives that promote renewable energy and energy efficiency. [www.dsireusa.org](http://www.dsireusa.org)
- **Green-e** This nonprofit certifies the validity of RECs and carbon offsets as real (have happened), additional (beyond business-as-usual activities), measurable, permanent (doesn’t temporarily displace emissions), independently verified and unique (not used more than once to offset emissions), and also provides links to several green power and offset vendors. [www.green-e.org](http://www.green-e.org)
- **Green Power Network** A project of the U.S. Department of Energy, the Green Power Network maintains a database of utilities offering green power, REC providers and other valuable informational resources. [www.eere.energy.gov/greenpower](http://www.eere.energy.gov/greenpower)
- **Green Power Partners** This voluntary program of the EPA encourages organizations to buy green power as a way to reduce the environmental impacts associated with purchased electricity use. Partners include a wide variety of leading organizations such as Fortune 500 companies, small- and medium-sized businesses; local, state and federal governments; and colleges and universities. [www.epa.gov/greenpower](http://www.epa.gov/greenpower)
- **Voluntary Carbon Standard** The VCS Program provides a global standard and program for approval of credible voluntary offsets. Like Green-e, VCS offsets must be real (have happened), additional (beyond business-as-usual activities), measurable, permanent (doesn’t temporarily displace emissions), independently verified and unique (not used more than once to offset emissions). [www.v-c-s.org](http://www.v-c-s.org)

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- [energytrust.org/commercial](http://energytrust.org/commercial)

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What is a green office?
by Thomas Kemper

The United States is competing with India (population 1.1 billion), China (1.3 billion) and the rest of the world (another 4.3 billion) for fast-diminishing resources to run our offices, among other things. Our nation’s hunger for technology for use in modern offices is creating an assault on our planet like never before.

The United States has 5 percent of the Earth’s population, yet it consumes 25% of the planet’s energy and resources. China and India each comprise 25% of the Earth’s population, but consume only 15% – 20% of their respective potential capacities. A tiny percentage of their population is consuming at a rate close to our model of consumption, and expanding fast.

What will the world be like when demand for oil, metals and minerals for these economies grows to 30%, 50% or 80% percent of their respective potential capacities? Understanding this issue should be enough motivation for businesses leaders to make more environmentally responsible decisions about business operations.

How do we change our behaviors?

In my pursuit of understanding sustainability, here’s what I’ve come to know: We, the current global population of nearly 7 billion people, need to meet our need for clean air, drinkable water, fertile and productive soil, nutritious, organic food, and safe, energy- and resource-efficient housing. We must accomplish this while not compromising the ability of the 10 billion people who will occupy this planet in the next 100 years from having access to the same resources.

Can we become sustainable given that our resources are diminishing rapidly and compounded by global warming; fresh water supplies are diminishing; forest depletion is happening on a massive scale; and soil erosion is advancing at an unprecedented pace?

I began Dolphin Blue, an online green office products company, 16 years ago after hearing Dr. Norman Myers of Oxford University speak in Dallas. His topic “Where are we headed as a population that is out of control?” stirred me to action.

While the basis for our business is rooted in sustainability through the procurement and distribution of office supplies that are made of post-consumer recycled content and manufactured in the United States, we have also taken steps to make our own office more sustainable. Some steps include:

- Installation of compact fluorescent bulbs, reducing energy consumption significantly.
- Installation of an Energy Star-certified computer network.
- Implementation of an employee telecommuting plan in our strategy to reduce fossil fuel consumption.

What others don’t see

Understandably, most business owners start the conversation about office supplies by asking, “How much will it cost me?” They count pennies without understanding the real price we pay for cheap, inefficiently-produced, resource-depleting, non-lasting goods. This is happening at such a rapid rate that I’m not sure we’ll ever recover. We need a dramatic and permanent change in behavior.

Operating sustainably makes business sense.

Bob Willard, author and former senior vice president of marketing at IBM Canada, points out in “The Sustainability Advantage” that companies operating in a sustainable manner experience financially stronger bottom lines, including:

- Competitive advantage in market served.
- Higher employee retention.
- Goodwill in communities served.
- Less employee sickness, due to a healthier workplace.
- Higher employee morale, equating to increased productivity.
- Monetary savings from conservation of energy and improved systems efficiencies.
- Easier recruiting of quality employees.

Social responsibility advances sustainability.

While many businesses are starting to tackle energy efficiency and the other aspects of environmental stewardship that are outlined in the Green Office Guide, they are not necessarily addressing social responsibility. Increase your company’s commitment to social responsibility by purchasing products that are:

- Designed with take-back and recovery in their lifecycle value, eliminating waste-stream flow (usually destined for socio-economically deprived areas).
- Made in the USA and/or made in an economic system where people are treated with dignity, paid a living wage and are honored for the contribution to capital creation they make.
- Manufactured locally, using local labor, thereby creating a vibrant, local economy and ensuring a source of employment for neighbors, family and friends.

What’s keeping us from becoming truly sustainable?

All of us are stakeholders in our own companies. We are in the driver’s seat when it comes to sustainability.

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All of us are stakeholders in our own companies—whether we are owners, shareholders or employees. We are in the driver’s seat when it comes to sustainability.

Executives rarely consider the costs involved with furnishings or corporate automobiles, but when held accountable by their constituents, including customers, they often step up. If you are concerned about the impact your company is having on the planet, your office is a great place to start. Call a meeting to form a green team, and use the Green Office Guide to chart a path for improvement. Measure your accomplishments and, most importantly, celebrate your successes.

Thomas Kemper is CEO and founder of Dolphin Blue (www.dolphinblue.com), an online retailer of environmentally responsible office supplies since 1994. He can be reached at thomas@dolphinblue.com.
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