

Ideas for Improvements

Part one Your office: where to start

There are many ways all organisations can make environmentally friendly improvements within their workplace.

We have listed a number of the more obvious tried-and-true measures below. All workplaces are different, however, and what works for one organisation may not necessarily work for another.

Your workplace environment committee is always the best way of determining what ideas are best for your company.

PAPER USE

1. Edit on a computer screen when possible. Avoid printing off documents.

Ask the following questions:

- Do I need all of the pages?
- Can I condense the information into one sheet of paper?
- Can I reduce the margins?
- Can I print double-sided? Or two pages to one sheet?
- Can I use the back as scrap paper to take notes?

2. Scan documents when possible. Convert paper documents to PDF files so that everyone can see the document without using paper. You can save documents to disk as well.

3. Reduce the amount of faxes.

4. Use email to communicate and send documents whenever possible.

ENERGY CONSERVATION

5. Buy energy star-approved computers, monitors, peripherals, TVs and appliances.

6. Turn off computers and printers after work. Ideally, all devices should be attached to the same power switch, but turning off electronics at night saves an immense amount of energy.

7. Put computers to sleep. Screen-savers waste energy, but a computer on sleep mode does not. Use the sleep command even if gone for 10 minutes.

8. Turn off lights. If working in an office with windows use natural light for the office and make sure to turn off lights when you leave, even if just for 10 minutes.

9. Use energy saving light bulbs. Compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFLs) save energy and money in the long run.

10. Don't mess with the thermostat. Try to keep the office at a manageable temperature. Move furniture away from heaters to ensure efficient performance. Switch heating off at weekends and on holidays.

RECYCLING

11. Ensure recycling bins are available and accessible in all office areas.

12. Use recycled materials. Recycled paper, toner and ink cartridges are essential for greening an office.

13. Reuse envelopes. Put a label over the existing address or use the same inter-office mailing envelopes many times.

14. Outfit your kitchen with reusable plates, utensils and serving items. Remove disposable cups and plastic utensils in all office kitchens.

15. Bring your own lunch. Bringing your lunch in a reusable container cuts down on the waste of the wrappers that take-away food comes in.



CUTTING EMISSIONS

- 16.** Carpool or bike to work. Cut down on carbon emissions on your way to the office by carpooling, biking or by taking the bus or other public transportation system.
- 17.** Use teleconferencing or videoconferencing instead of meeting face to face and expelling carbon emissions on your way to the office.

OFFICE MAINTENANCE

- 18.** Make sure to use low or no VOC (Volatile Organic Compound) paint and carpets for your office.
- 19.** Use large-scale water systems (i.e. water coolers, water fountains) instead of individual bottles. Also, do not let the water run when doing dishes, brushing teeth, etc.
- 20.** Plants are a must. Plants absorb many chemicals that humans do not react well to, as well as provide humidity and insulation.

MOST IMPORTANTLY...

- 21.** Share your knowledge about climate change and its impact on our planet. Make sure that all of your friends and colleagues know how to make their space more environmentally friendly.

Green policy

Many companies have established organisation-wide environmental policies to define and advance their environmental goals. An environmental policy sends a clear message to employees, management, suppliers and the community at large that your company considers environmentally friendly

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Cut down on carbon emissions on your way to the office by carpooling

practices to be an organisational priority. When a company adopts such a policy it's a meaningful first step in any effort to improve environmental performance. An example of how to begin implementing your workplace environmental policy is contained in the following suggested sample statement:

TO: All employees

RE: Our environment

Human activity can have harmful effects on ecological systems, climate and public health. Recognising this, we are committed to reducing our environmental footprint and promoting environmental stewardship at all levels of our organisation.

Our goal is to minimise our organisation's impact and maximise future generations' ability to live, work, and play in our shared natural environment, with equal access to clean air, clean water, and natural resources.

We will strive to identify and purchase environmentally preferable supplies and services for all our daily operational needs and for company events where economically feasible. Wherever possible

we will strive to minimise pollution and waste, conserve energy and water, protect habitat, support renewable energy resources, buy environmentally friendly products, and encourage environmentally preferable transportation.

These efforts will extend to contractor and supplier relationships. We will encourage contractors and suppliers serving or otherwise acting on behalf of the organisation to meet our standards of environmental performance.

Management and employee understanding and involvement are essential to the implementation of this environmental policy. All employees will receive a copy of this policy and be educated about our company's efforts to improve our environmental performance. Employees at all levels of the company will be involved in supporting our goals.

A healthy environment benefits everyone, and our commitment to environmental stewardship will be a long-term one.

Involving staff

Involving staff members at all levels of the organisation is essential to the success of any effort to enhance your organisation's environmental performance.

ASU members should encourage the formation within the workplace of an environment committee of interested staff members to help develop, oversee and implement your company's plan and to provide new ideas and feedback to relevant departments.



Consider convening a workplace-wide meeting and/or having a joint memo from both environment committee and the CEO to all staff members informing them of your environmental goals.

HOW TO FORM A GREEN COMMITTEE

Involvement of all levels of the organisation is essential to the success of any organisation's environmental improvement effort, but it is not sufficient on its own.

When attempting to enhance environmental performance, companies should involve employees

“**Ask employees to contribute their own ideas on ways to reduce waste**

at all levels of the organisation. One of the best ways to promote the participation of employees is to ensure that the environment committee is composed of all workplace stakeholders including management, workplace union representatives and other interested staff.

An environment committee is a vital component of your organisation's effort to enhance its environmental performance.

The environment committee should meet regularly to discuss goals, strategies, and progress. In addition, it should periodically provide updates to all levels of the organisation.

IDEAS FOR GETTING STAFF INVOLVED

- Ask employees to contribute their own ideas on ways to reduce waste, improve efficiency, and adopt other environmentally positive practices, and include those tips along with other suggestions and strategies in regular organisation-wide newsletters.
- Incorporate these environmentally friendly practices into your company's employee training and orientation programs.
- Provide clear and visible signs at recycling, printing, and food stations to promote compliance with the company's environmental practices.

Sample memo to staff from senior management on creating a green committee:

We are writing to let you know that we are launching a company-wide effort to improve the environmental per-

formance of our organisation. As you might know, our day-to-day operations, from energy and water use to the paper we purchase, can impact the environment. By carefully focusing on these impacts, we should be able to reduce them, helping the environment and our bottom line. The strategic objectives of our environmental initiative will be:

- *Reducing global warming*
- *Protecting biodiversity*
- *Conserving, recycling, and purchasing ecologically superior paper*
- *Improving energy efficiency*
- *Increasing renewable energy*
- *Promoting recycling*

- *Using water efficiently*
- *Using less toxic products in the workplace*
- *Where applicable, making and selling products that reflect the above environmental objectives*

We'll begin this effort by creating an Environment Committee that includes representatives of all levels of our organisation including management, employees and unions. The committee will lead a company-wide diagnosis of our current environmental performance and draft an action plan, complete with specific recommendations for consideration and action across our organisation.

We will review the plan together, suggest changes or additions, and then begin implementation.

We believe our environmental initiative will also enhance employee morale and generate good will in our community as well. I hope that as we devise and implement our plan we will be able to foster an organisation-wide commitment to environmentally friendly practices of which we can all be proud.

Report results

Publishing a sustainability report takes time and effort, but it helps keep track of your supply chain impacts and costs. It's also a useful way to declare your company's commitment to sustainability and to track and report environmental improvements each year. If your business has achieved significant results, consider issuing a press release, and publicise your efforts through advertisements and announcements to help inspire others to follow your lead.

