

# Green Business = Smart Business

Making your small business greener is a win-win situation. It helps the environment, and helps lower costs for you. Conserving resources and reducing waste saves money. So, start making your business environmentally-friendly today. You have nothing to lose!

Here are a few simple steps you can take to start going green:

- **Conserve energy.** There are numerous ways to save energy in your office or home-based business. Start by making sure all computers and other equipment are turned off at night. This act alone can reduce your energy use by 50%. Replace standard light bulbs with compact fluorescent bulbs, which last longer and are cost-effective. Program your thermostats to lower your energy use during non-working hours. Also, consider getting an energy audit to see where you can save more.
- **Cut back on waste.** Reduce paper waste by encouraging employees to avoid printing out email messages and other documents unless absolutely necessary. If they *must* print documents, urge them to use double-sided printing and set your printers to the “draft” setting to use less ink. Deliver bills, newsletters, and other materials electronically. You can boost recycling by making sure recycling bins are located in visible areas, such as next to printers and fax machines. In addition, stock your paper supply made from recycled content.
- **Assess your information technology needs.** Take a closer look at how many computers, printers, and other machines you have running in your office. Do you need all of them? If not, recycle or donate them. Replace old devices with more energy-efficient models, too. Look for the Energy Star label to ensure the highest level of energy efficiency.
- **Buy local.** Seeking out local sources for the products and services used by your company can also make your business greener. The fewer miles your suppliers need to travel, the more energy you can save.
- **Think about the details.** Pay attention to how environmentally-friendly your business is in every aspect. If you have a break room, for instance, make sure it’s filled with reusable utensils and glasses instead of paper supplies. Eliminate the use of bottled water by installing a water filter. Does your business require a great deal of car travel? Consider purchasing or renting an alternative fuel vehicle for long-distance trips. Or, better yet, increase your use of teleconferencing to curb travel expenses.

Going green is good for your employees, your customers, and your community. With these small changes, you can have a “big picture” impact. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (2012), if every home office purchased Energy Star qualified products this year, more than 900 million kWh of electricity would be saved. Now that’s good business!

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