



## Ten Tips for a Green Office

Environmental consultant and **Green Buying** team member **David Brown** provides ten tips for a greener office.

*“These are simple yet effective steps that every office should take to reduce its environmental impact. These tips carry additional benefits and will appeal to a financial or business director.”*

### **Use less paper**

Following the growth in the internet and email, the use of paper within offices has grown significantly. The ‘paper-less office’ that was predicted has not materialised as people print off every email, map and countless documents. Most documents have a life expectancy of less than one day and are then thrown away. By reducing the amount of paper used in your office you can cut both the environmental impact and financial costs of running your business. As a standard your office should switch to double-sided or ‘duplex’ printing. Those with good-reasonable eye-sight may also want to print two pages to a side as well. Other methods of reducing paper use include altering document design templates and putting a message in your email signature saying ‘do you really need to print this email?’

### **Switch to recycled paper**

Using recycled paper uses up to 70% less energy than virgin paper and demands the use of fewer natural resources. The use of paper with recycled content typically uses less energy therefore helping to cut your offices carbon impact. A few years ago recycled paper was often sneered at as it was generally regarded as being of poorer quality than paper from virgin sources. Not any more. Independent surveys have proven that recycled paper is comparable to virgin sources in quality and performance. By switching to recycled paper in your office your organisation can make a significant improvement to safeguarding the environment.

### **Provide recycling facilities**

According to a survey conducted by WRAP, 93% of companies who set up recycling facilities at work believe it's easy to implement and maintain. Evidence suggests it is simple to provide recycling points for common office waste sources such as paper, plastic bottles, drink cans and ink cartridges. Organisations can also look to recycle other types of waste such as light bulbs and tubes, IT equipment and furniture. With the UK landfill tax at £24 per tonne and set

to rise for the foreseeable future, it not only makes sense for environmental reasons but it can also make good financial sense.

### **Reduce the number of waste bins in your office**

Once you have provided recycling facilities, reducing the number of general waste bins is a great way to ensure people don't throw away recyclable items. Taking away individual waste bins and locating them further away than recycling facilities is a great way of encouraging recycling. At first staff may complain that they have to walk further. However from my experience these objections will soon pass, as after a few weeks habits change.

### **Fit water saving devices**

The *Building Research Establishment* has set a best-practise benchmark target for employee water consumption of 4m<sup>3</sup> per year. To calculate your employee water consumption simply calculate your annual water use per employee:

Annual Water consumption	/	Number of Employees	=	Water Consumption per annum
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If your water consumption is over 10m<sup>3</sup> per employee you should consider having a water audit of your office. Alternatively switching to water saving devices in your office can help reduce consumption. With the increase use of water meters by water companies it also makes financial sense to fit water-saving devices.

### **Promote Sustainable Transport at work**

*UK Government* figures show that 18% of all greenhouse gas emissions are a result of road transport. To help reduce your offices contribution to climate change it is important to look at how your employees come to work and take measures to help promote more sustainable transport patterns. By setting up a Green Transport plan to support and promote public transport, walking, cycling and car sharing your office can cut its contribution to climate change. Such measures can also encourage employees to become more active which carries a number of benefits to both them and your organisation.

### **Turn off the lights ...and all non essential electrical equipment**

Saving energy is one of the most effective ways to helping to reduce your businesses contribution to climate change. According to the *Carbon Trust* businesses are currently responsible for about half of all the UK's carbon emissions. By turning off equipment that isn't being used, such as air conditioning in the winter, your office could reduce its energy use. This can also translate into financial benefits - business profits can be increased by 5% by adopting energy saving initiatives.

### **Consider replacing inefficient office equipment**

By purchasing new office equipment it is possible to make quick savings, both financially and for the environment with smart product selection. For example, photocopiers on the market can save energy with "low-power" and/or "off" modes after a period of inactivity. They can also print double-sided saving paper. Such smart purchases can result in significant savings in a short space of time.

### **Switch to renewable energy**

The majority of the UK's electricity comes from burning fossil fuels such as coal and gas. This is a major contributor to climate change. Switching to renewable sources of energy such as wind and solar power to run your office helps cut your carbon emissions but also helps support the uptake of green energy which is vital in the move towards a low-carbon economy.

### **Run a communication programme**

It is important that all members of staff are aware of the reasons for promoting environmental initiatives in the office. By running a positive campaign that is both engaging and fun it is possible to create a culture in your office that will provide added value.

### **TAKE ACTION!**

For more information on how your organisation can "go green", and to procure green products and services online, please visit our website, [www.greenbuying.co.uk](http://www.greenbuying.co.uk)