



HOW TO GREEN A BUSINESS

Simple Steps to an Eco-Friendly Bottom Line

by Derek Markham

No business owner relishes spending extra money for something that won't immediately pay for itself with increased revenue, and greening one's operations is such an endeavor. However, one common misperception is that going green costs money that cuts into the bottom line, when in fact, some options will end up saving money, adding to profits or making it possible to offer lower-priced products and services than the competition. Here's how:

1 Integrate green into the business plan: Start designing green elements into any business from day one or as soon as possible.

2 Write an environmental mission statement: Craft a green mission statement, display it prominently and

review it periodically. Having a clear vision helps to define being green and communicate it to customers.

3 Join green business groups: Use green business networks to learn from others or to form partnerships or collaborate. In an effective network, any associated cost will likely pay for itself through increased knowledge, customers and collaboration.

4 Appoint a sustainability director: Make one person with authority responsible for coordinating green efforts, tracking results and being accountable for increasing sustainability.

5 Practice green marketing: Add digital messaging to the mix, using social media, a blog and banner advertising. The Internet provides a real-time

network for communicating with business stakeholders.

6 Operate a green office: Take office supplies, materials and space to the next green level by making eco-friendly choices, which may mean eliminating some items entirely. For example, replace disposables with a durable or permanent equivalent.

7 Choose renewable energy: Power operations with renewable energy or invest in alternative options.

8 Choose green communications: Explore obtaining telephone and Internet services from a green or socially responsible company. Use teleconferencing or video calls to reduce transportation and explore the many free options available, such as Skype.

9 Implement paperless banking and billing: Choose electronic bank statements, invoices and billing for suppliers and utilities. Use the computer to send and receive faxes instead of producing printed copies.

10 Green the air: Clean indoor air by using live plants. Install an air filtration system to protect employees and customers.

11 Clean green: Purchase eco-friendly alternatives for cleaning and maintaining the office and manufacturing sites; a greener alternative exists for just about any related need.

12 Build a culture that's conducive to reusing and recycling: Making both the norm means such initiatives will flourish without having to continually change people's habits.

13 Encourage alternative transportation: Give employees incentives to carpool or ride bikes. Provide telecommuting options.

14 Source from green suppliers: Investigate sourcing options and give more weight to green businesses. Purchasing from a green business doesn't always mean extra cost, and might make more sense overall.

15 Use local materials and services: Local sourcing helps eliminate excess transportation, while also supporting the community.

16 Find new materials: Investigate non-obvious alternatives. The greener option may not have a much higher cost, and might also be used as a green marketing hook.

17 Conduct a life-cycle assessment: Current manufacturing processes might include unnecessary steps or materials; assessing product life cycles can identify cost or time savings.

18 Combine processes: Analyze how combining two or more operations may save time, money and energy.

19 Maintain equipment at maximum efficiency: Regularly clean equipment fans and filters and stick to a maintenance schedule. Well-maintained equipment delivers increased efficiency and prolonged life.

20 Use waste: Can any waste be used in any way as a resource?

21 Make something green: Take an everyday item and create a green version of it. New niches pop up all the time.

22 Collect rainwater: Install recycling equipment to irrigate landscaping. Find used, 55-gallon drums instead of purchasing new containers, and practice xeriscaping to decrease water requirements indoors and out.

Going green in business can go hand-in-hand with making more money, through cost savings, increased sales or both. Communicating your green messages also helps create compelling arguments for customers to choose to do business with you, and might just lead to opening up new markets for your products or services.

Derek Markham is a regular contributor to GreenMarketing.tv, the basis for this piece. Connect through his website at NaturalPapa.com.