



Green Business Guide

A Practical Guide to
Greening Your Small Business

This guide contains simple tips that your business can follow to green your everyday operations and profit from sustainability.

For more information:

www.GBB.org

[Subscribe to Our Email Newsletter](#)



Green Business Guide

A. Be Bright With A Little Less Light: According to Energystar.gov, lighting consumes close to 35% of energy used in commercial buildings in the United States. Since this also forms a major chunk of SMB's monthly bills, here are some options to consider that lead to savings.

- **Turn off the Lights:** Make it a habit to turn off the lights when you are leaving your office room for more than 15 minutes. Post a reminder on the back of your door.
- **Buy Energy Star-Rated Fixtures:** Make it an official policy to buy Energy Star rated light bulbs and fixtures.
- **Install Motion Sensors:** Install motion sensors that automatically shut off lights when they are not needed.
- **Exit Signs:** Use CFL's to illuminate exit signs.
- **Let the Sun in:** Open the blinds to create a naturally lit office.



B. Conserve Water: Why conserve water? Businesses pay for water use more than once. It costs to buy water, to heat it, and then there are sewerage charges. Letting your faucet run for five minutes uses about as much energy as letting a 60 watt light bulb run for 14 hours. Water is a precious natural resource, and because at least two-thirds of the United States have recently experienced water shortages, it's important to do our best to conserve water. Some water conservation opportunities are:

- **Make a Plan.** Share your commitment to water conservation with employees. Assign an employee as water conservation manager to monitor and implement your water conservation plan.
- **Purchase Wisely.** Consider water usage when purchasing icemakers and dishwashers for your office.
- **Set temperature appropriately:** Reduce the water heater temperature to 120 degrees and enjoy energy savings.
- **Water Efficiency in Toilets:** Upgrade toilets with water-efficient models. Make sure all faucets have water saving aerators.
- **Check Toilets for Leaks.** Put food coloring into the tank. If color appears in the bowl without flushing, there's a leak. Fix the leak and save 400 gallons a month!
- **Eliminate Daytime Landscape Watering.** Water at night when the temperature is lower.
- **Conduct a Water Audit:** A water audit of your office building includes analyzing water usage for domestic, sanitary and landscaping processes. Sometimes, these can be performed free of charge by your local utility company.
- **Educate Employees:** Convey your company's dedication to water conservation by creating a written water conservation policy. Create a goal of how much water your company can save and celebrate once that goal is met.

C. Reduce Office Waste: Small businesses can cut costs by eliminating waste. Waste costs money in a number of ways. Money is wasted when purchased resources end up in trash. Also, businesses have to spend money to properly dispose of the waste. Some ways to reduce your office waste are:

- **Do not create the waste in the first place:** By carefully analyzing and planning design, material ordering and studying usage in previous months, small businesses can cut costs by simply producing less waste to begin with.
- **Recycle or reuse the waste:** Be proactive with your business's recycling policy. Provide separate bins for plastic, metal, glass and paper if your recycling system is not single-stream. Easily accessible recycling bins are more likely to be used. Place a paper-recycling bin near the printer and aluminum/plastic/glass recycling bin in kitchen and break room. Get the [iRecycle](#) App. This is a simple app that helps you find a recycling facility near you. Take used batteries, old computers and printers to a certified electronic recycling facility.
- **Reduce waste during Lunch Break:** Bring your own dishes and coffee mug to work. Replace plastic knives and forks in the break room with silverware or biodegradable utensils. Request your favorite restaurant to deliver food without napkins and plastic cutlery. Substitute plastic ziplocs and brown bags with reusable lunch bags and boxes available in the market.
- **Reduce packaging waste:** Buy in bulk. This will reduce packaging required and the number of trips for delivery.
- **Start a Composting Project:** Composting can minimize waste that goes to the landfill. Kitchen waste, leaves, grass clippings, shredded paper, cardboard boxes, fruits and vegetables can all be composted. Products like meat and bones should be kept out of the compost.



D. Green Your Office Commute: Your daily commute to work is one of the largest contributors to your environmental footprint. According to 2009 government census data, the average work commute is 25.1 minutes in the United States. Over 86% of Americans drive a car, truck or van to work, while only 5% use public transportation. Here are a few ideas to help you green your commute:

- **Allow your employees to telecommute** by working from home. There are many free programs such as Skype and Google Plus that can make telecommuting convenient and cost-effective.
- **Encourage employees to use public transit** to save time and fuel. Consider subsidizing transit passes and earn tax credits.
- **Start your own carpool** or rideshare rewards program. Every day ask employees to write their name on a list posted in the office if they carpoled to work. At the end of the month, give a treat to employees who carpoled most often. New ridesharing services such as Car2Go and Zimride can also help employees find group rides.
- **Encourage your employees to bike to work.** Facilitate a healthy and green lifestyle by providing bike racks and showers.

Let's Carpool!



E. Cut Paper Waste: One of the easiest ways for small businesses to save money is to manage office printing. An organized printing policy can help your business save not only paper but also ink and toner too. Following are 4 simple ways to reduce your printing costs and save natural resources:

- **Set computer defaults to print double-sided.** Set all computer software to print double sided by default. Also encourage office employees to print on both sides of the page. These small steps double or quadruple your printing efficiency!
- **Post informative signs near printers and copiers.** Use catchy language such “Think Before You Print” or “Print on Both Sides and Save Trees.”
- **Print in draft mode for internal communication.** By selecting lower quality print, you save ink and toner.
- **Click preview before printing.** This is particularly useful when printing web pages. Make sure you are only printing information that you want.
- **Download the Ecofont.** Save up to 50% on printer ink and toner with [EcoFont](#) software.



F. Be Smart About Computer Use: Every day we use our computers to research, email, tweet, post and blog. Being smart about computer use is important to saving energy and reducing utility bills, especially since computers are often in use all hours of the day. Following are 4 simple ways to consider:

- **Use a laptop instead of a desktop computer.** Most laptops use much less energy than desktop computers.
- **Turn off your computer when not in use.** This is easy to understand but harder to follow because people are used to leaving computers on. Power management settings (see next tip) can help break bad habits.
- **Use power management settings on your computers and monitors.** Setting computers to automatically go to sleep during short breaks can save significant energy.
- **Connect your computers and other devices to a smart power strip.** A [smart power strip](#) works like a normal power strip with an additional advantage: when the computer is turned off, power is shut down to other devices as well.



G. Improve Your Office's Indoor Air Quality: According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), most Americans spend up to 90% of their time indoors and we know very well that much of that time is spent in our offices. Studies show that indoor air quality can actually be worse than outdoor air. Improving your office's indoor air quality can improve the health and productivity of your employees. Following are 4 simple steps to help you:

- **Change HVAC filters every month** or according to HVAC system guidelines. Effective air filtering provides protection for building occupants.
- **Maintain moisture and humidity levels.** Clean water spills promptly, report water leakages and encourage employees to keep their offices



clean. EPA recommends that indoor air spaces maintain humidity levels in the 30-60% range.

- **Ensure proper garbage disposal.** Timely disposal of garbage prevents odor and biological contamination of the office environment.
- **Use non-toxic cleaning supplies.** Cleaning supplies can release fumes and pollutants that pose a health risk for building occupants. Look for Green Seal Certified, Certified Biodegradable and the Chlorine-Free label on products.



H. Watch Your Thermostat: Heating, cooling and ventilation are a major part of small businesses utility bills and little changes can make a big difference. A one-degree reduction can save 10% on your heating and cooling bill. But decreasing costs and saving energy does not mean you have to create an uncomfortable environment for your employees. As with lighting, simple green steps can save businesses money without compromising on the comfort.

Here are 5 ways to help you reduce your heating and cooling costs:

- **Set thermostats between 69 and 71 degrees Fahrenheit for heating and between 75 and 77 degrees Fahrenheit for cooling.** You can also upgrade to a programmable thermostat such as the [Nest](#).
- **Ensure that furniture or draperies are not blocking heating and cooling registers.**
- **Don't place lamps or other appliances that release heat near the thermostat.** Heat from these appliances is sensed by the thermostat and could cause your system to work harder than required.
- **Keep your heating and cooling systems well tuned** with periodic maintenance by professionals. Clean or replace air filters frequently.
- **Relax the corporate dress code.** [Learn more about savings associated with dress codes.](#)

I. Green Your Marketing: Green marketing doesn't only help small businesses reduce their impact on the environment, but also it helps businesses stand out without spending a lot of money. Following are 6 ways to consider to help your business improve its reputation by using greener marketing strategies:

- **Send emails:** Sending marketing messages via email is a cost-effective and doesn't cost any trees in the process. There are a number of email clients like [MailChimp](#) and [Aweber](#) that offer affordable, user-friendly packages for small businesses.
- **Include green signatures in your emails:** Add eco-friendly reminders such as "Think of the trees before printing this email" or "Please consider the environment before printing this email" to your marketing messages.
- **Use PDF's:** Provide white papers, educational documents and tip sheets in PDF format for viewing and downloading.
- **Print all marketing material on recycled material:** If you have to send printed marketing material, make sure it is printed on recycled material. Also, indicate clearly if the marketing material is recyclable.



- **Purchase marketing material locally:** This will reduce the shipping costs to your business and to the environment.
- **List your business in green directories:** This helps gain attention from the growing green customer segment and it improves Search Engine Optimization. [Add your business](#) to GBB's green directory for FREE.

J. Engage Your Employees: Sustainable business practices can help businesses lower their operating costs, reduce waste and gain new customers. However, to realize all the benefits of a sustainable business, it is important to engage employees. An engaged workforce is more productive and happy! Here are 4 ways you can engage your employees with your sustainability goals:

- **Employee ownership:** Involve your employees in the decision-making process. Ask for suggestions and ideas to encourage your employees to participate in the development of your company's green initiatives.
- **Establish resource conservation managers:** Many business operations require direct management. Consider establishing managers for energy conservation, recycling efforts and employee commute programs.
- **Team building through green initiatives:** Employees can accomplish a lot when they are excited about the cause. Encourage employees to form Green Teams on voluntary basis and reward group green achievements with perks such as time off or special lunches.
- **Encourage employee participation in environmental activities:** Organize a company Earth Day clean up or green weekend activities such as planting trees in the neighborhood. These activities are a great way for employees to develop camaraderie around a good cause.
- [Learn other ways](#) to engage employees with your sustainability goals.



- For more smart greening tips please visit our online [Resource Center](#) -

Sources:

The facts and statistics referenced are based on comprehensive local and national research and reports from the U.S. Department of Energy, the U.S. EPA, ENERGY STAR, U.S. Green Building Council and the U.S. Census findings, plus publicly available information from articles, private studies, financial media, manufacturer specifications, news media and professional organizations.