

Green Office: 35 Green Tips Guide

The list of tips below is designed to jump-start your sustainability efforts! As you review the list, mark which ones you've completed and note the ones that you're interested in implementing. Make sure to share this with your green team.



Mission

- ❑ **Mission Statement.** Make sure that your company's mission statement reflects your values. For example, a good mission statement can include commitments to practicing social and/or environmental responsibility and stewardship, to creating a specific positive social impact, to creating a specific positive environmental impact, or to serving a target beneficiary group in need.

Engage Employees

- ❑ **Green Team.** Establish a green team for your company. A green team will give employees an opportunity to contribute to the development and implementation of your sustainability initiatives.
- ❑ **Sustainability Training.** Provide training for your employees on sustainability. A simple way to implement this is to hold "lunch and learns" where you either bring in

a speaker, share a video, or facilitate a discussion on a topic related to sustainability. Use this curated list of [sustainability videos](#) to get you started.

- ❑ **Training Budget.** Consider allocating a small training budget for employees to attend conferences, seminars or online trainings and then have them share with co-workers what they learned.
- ❑ **Human Resources.** Help all employees understand that the company values sustainability by including it in job descriptions, training programs, and performance reviews.
- ❑ **Bonus Tip! Onboard New Hires.** Work with Human Resources to include sustainability in your onboarding materials for new hires. New employees should learn about your company's commitment to sustainability, existing sustainability policies and practices, and how to get involved with your green team.
- ❑ **Bonus Tip! The Broader Impact.** Create opportunities for employees to understand the broader impacts of their work, align their work with their personal values, and celebrate success. These are some of the [employee engagement strategies](#) recommended by the experts.

Conserve Energy

- ❑ **Use LEDs.** Replace all fluorescent lights with [energy efficient lights](#), especially LEDs. Those overhead fluorescent lights in your office may or may not be energy efficient, depending up what type they are. Upgrading to LEDs will save both energy and money.
- ❑ **Smart Power Strips.** Use smart power strips that will turn off peripheral equipment when the primary device is turned off. For example, when you shut down the computer connected to a smart power strip, the connected monitor and printer will be turned off, too, helping you to save energy without having to rely on employees having to remember to turn everything off.
- ❑ **Sleep Mode.** Enable sleep mode and power saver features on computers and other equipment. This will reduce the power consumption when these items are not in use.
- ❑ **Bonus Tip! Occupancy Sensors.** Install occupancy sensors to automatically turn lights off and on in areas where lights do not need to remain on all the time. Areas well-suited for sensors may include conference rooms, restrooms, the mail room, and storage areas, as well as individual offices.
- ❑ **Bonus Tip! Natural Lighting.** Take advantage of natural lighting. It doesn't make sense to have lights on when the sun is shining, but many offices do this. Consider re-arranging desks and workspaces as necessary to allow for better lighting.

Green Your Supply Chain

- ❑ **Local Vendors.** Shift as many of your business purchases as possible to support local vendors. Whether it's your office purchases, your business cards, or the caterer that you use for business lunches, supporting local vendors is an important way to keep money circulating within the local economy.
- ❑ **Purchasing Guidelines.** Set up an environmentally preferable purchasing policy for your business. Having clear guidelines in place that outline what you can purchase and what you can't will ensure that your purchases are aligned with your business values, even if you have turnover in purchasing staff.
- ❑ **Supplier Policy.** Develop a supplier policy to screen your suppliers for positive social and environmental impacts. For example, look for certifications such as B Corp, Green Business, or Fair Trade certifications for the businesses and products that you work with and choose those over their non-certified counterparts

Conserve Water

- ❑ **Upgrade Toilets.** Replace older toilets with low-flow toilets. Water scarcity is one of the biggest challenges in global sustainability, and toilets are generally the biggest source of water consumption in a typical office environment.
- ❑ **Low-Flow Aerators.** Install low flow faucet aerators on your bathroom and kitchen sinks to save reduce your water usage. Aerators will control the flow of water coming out of the faucet, and you can easily attach aerators that will reduce your flow to 0.5 GPM (gallons per minute) in the bathroom and 1.5 GPM in the kitchen.

Reduce Waste

- ❑ **Use Reusables.** Replace all disposable products in the staff kitchen, including plates, cups, and utensils, and use reusable items instead. If you need to make the business case to management to get approval for this, look at how much you spend each year on disposables and compare that to how much it will cost to purchase a set of plates, glasses, and utensils. The change will usually pay for itself in a short period of time.
- ❑ **Proper Signage.** Set up proper signage for each waste, recycling, and compost receptacle and staple samples of items to show which bin it should go into. The added visual element will help people to sort things properly.
- ❑ **Double-Sided Printing.** Set printers to print on both sides of paper as a default. You'll automatically cut your paper costs by 50%, so you'll save money as well as resources (and, when necessary, people can always switch to single-sided printing for jobs that require it).
- ❑ **Bonus Tip! Right-size Waste Bins** can help reduce costs by ensuring that you're not paying too much for your bins. To right-size your bins, check each of your bins to see if they are a correct size for your waste levels and look for items that are

incorrectly sorted, such as recyclables in the garbage. If your bins are half empty or have the wrong items in each bin, contact your hauler to adjust the sizes.

- ❑ **Bonus Tip! Replace Paper Towels.** Replace paper towels with hand towels in the company restrooms. This is actually one of the more creative approaches to eliminating paper waste that I've been seeing more and more. Employees can each have a peg with their own towel, and a basket with towels can be provided for guests. At the end of the week, all of the towels are washed and clean towels put out the following week.
- ❑ **Bonus Tip! Recycle More.** Look for opportunities to recycle more than just paper, glass, and plastic. Check out [Earth 911](#) or [RecycleNation](#) to find out where you can recycle other items ([Recycle Where?](#) is also a good resource if you're in the SF Bay Area).
- ❑ **Bonus Tip! Post-Consumer Waste.** Double-check your copy paper to make sure that it has recycled content, or better yet, that it has post-consumer waste. Some paper companies market their paper as *recyclable* (of course it is!), which misleads customers into thinking that they're purchasing recycled paper when they're not.

Reducing Your Carbon Footprint

- ❑ **Know Your Footprint.** Calculate the carbon footprint for your business. There are many ways to do this, and the process can get quite involved. However, a good way to at least get started is to use the Cool California [Small Business Calculator](#) or [Carbonfootprint.com](#) for free calculators used by businesses and individuals across the world.
- ❑ **Bike Racks.** Set up a bike rack for employees and customers. Encourage people to use it by letting them know that biking to work is encouraged and their bikes will be kept safe while they're there.
- ❑ **Company Bikes.** Provide a company bike that can be used by employees at lunch time and invest in a couple of extra bike locks that people can use if they forget theirs.
- ❑ **Bonus Tip! Employee Transit.** Look for tools and resources to help your employees reduce emissions and save money by carpooling and using public transit.
 - ✓ If you're in the San Francisco Bay Area, check out the [Spare the Air Employer Program](#) and [Scoop](#), a carpooling app.
 - ✓ Some national carpooling services include [eRideShare.com](#) that service connects commuters and travelers, [ZimRide](#) for companies, or [The Rideshare Company](#).
 - ✓ Encourage public transportation through the use of www.google.com/transit or download an app like <https://transitapp.com/>.

Giving Back

- ❑ **Community Service.** Implement a community service policy for your employees. Volunteer programs have been shown to increase employee engagement, and they're also a great way to give back to the community.
- ❑ **Bonus Tip! Charitable Giving.** Establish a charitable giving policy for your company. Consider partnering with a nonprofit organization that you can support regularly or allowing employees to select which organizations they want to support.

Benchmark Your Efforts

- ❑ **Establish Baselines.** Set a baseline for your water, energy, and waste usage. These are three areas where your business probably has a significant environmental impact. As the saying goes, "You can't manage what you don't measure," so establishing a baseline usage will help you track the effectiveness of your sustainability initiatives.
- ❑ **Set Targets.** Set specific goals for your sustainability initiatives. Knowing your baselines and tracking metrics will allow you to see the effectiveness of your efforts and also help make the business case to management.

Use a Framework

- ❑ **Take the B Corp Quick Impact Assessment** to quickly and easily benchmark your company's sustainability performance.
- ❑ **Get certified as a B Corporation.** B Corps are a growing international movement committed to harnessing the power of business for good.
- ❑ **Get certified as a Green Business.** If you're in California, this is a great option for you to use an existing framework to green your business.
 - ✓ If you're in the USA consider Green America's Green Business Certification which looks at environmental responsibility, social equitability, and accountability or Green Business Bureau Certification which provides assessment results and recommendations