

6 ways to run a greener business

In our May edition of InfoPays, we tackle the topic of “green”. After all, Spring is upon us, and it is a great time of year for businesses like yours to clean up their act and get serious about environmental responsibility. Also, everyone knows it costs a great deal more to recruit fresh talent than to retain the excellent employees you have now...so what have you been doing about morale and engagement lately? In our second article, we'll give you some advice to boost morale and employee loyalty. Happy learning!

All businesses and organizations, regardless of their size or sector, can take simple steps to manage and reduce their impact on the climate. In fact, your company can approach this like any business strategy – by assessing the risks and opportunities, setting goals, assigning staff and resources, developing and implementing a plan to achieve those goals, and monitoring the results.

Operating a green business is not only good for the environment but good for your business's bottom line. After all, conserving resources and cutting down on waste actually can save you a lot of money. The good news is that whether you run a small, mid or enterprise-sized operation, there are simple things you can do to run a greener business right now.

Here are just six easy-to-implement ideas for greening your business you can put into practice right away:

1. Switch off when not in use

Be sure to turn off your office equipment and lights when they are not being used. This alone can reduce the energy you consume by 25 percent. Turning off your computers at the end of the day can save an additional 50 percent.

2. Limit your printing

Encourage communications by email, and read email messages onscreen to determine whether it's necessary to print them. If it's not, don't! When printing, try to produce double-sided documents whenever possible.



3. Reduce drips

Do not leave taps dripping; always close them tightly after use. (One drop wasted per second wastes 10,000 litres per year.)

4. Install toilet dams

It's a great idea to install displacement toilet dams in toilet reservoirs. Placing one or two plastic containers filled with stones [not bricks] in your toilet's reservoir will displace about 4 litres of water per flush - a huge reduction of water use over the course of a year.

5. Seek out greener products & services

Instigate an ongoing search for "greener" products and services in the local community. The further your supplies or service providers have to travel, the more energy will be used to get them to you. It's a great idea to consider setting up a green committee in your office to handle such projects.

6. Opt for refurbished office furniture

Before deciding whether you need to purchase new office furniture, check to see whether your existing office furniture can be refurbished. It's less expensive than buying new and a whole lot better for the environment.

Business benefits of getting green

Cost savings from reduced fuel and energy consumption as a result of reducing GHG emissions

Improved operational efficiencies, e.g. through better fleet management

Brand enhancement – showing leadership on climate change can increase visibility in the marketplace and attract new customers

Improving employee wellness and increasing productivity through measures that also save energy (e.g. use of natural lighting, HVAC upgrades)

Attracting new investors who want to invest in progressive, well-managed companies

Let's talk green

IPS recommends familiarizing your business with the following “green” terminology:

“Sustainability” refers to three areas, environmental, economic, and social. It is about making choices that meet your needs without compromising the needs of future generations.

“Carbon Footprint” refers to your impact on the environment, measuring how much carbon dioxide does a particular activity, purchase, or product produce. For example, driving a car to work produces a much larger carbon footprint than walking to work, as running an automobile produces much more carbon dioxide.

“Certification” is a voluntary process where a business is thoroughly reviewed by a third-party organization to determine if it has gone beyond basic environmental compliance to conserve resources, prevent pollution and minimize waste. There are many organizations that certify green businesses, each with its own criteria and qualifications.

“LOHAS” stands for “Lifestyles of Health and Sustainability”. It refers to a market segment that focuses on personal health, fitness, environmentally friendly living, social responsibility and justice. These are customers who are interested in seeing your business go green.

“VOC” refers to Volatile Organic Compounds. These include paints/thinners, dry cleaning chemicals, petroleum products, and tobacco. Sources can also include copy machines, carpets and products containing formaldehyde, such as particle-board-based furniture and cabinets.

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Building employee morale



Improving workplace morale does a lot more than keep your staff smiling. It greatly influences service and product quality, productivity, and customer loyalty, while reducing turnover, absenteeism, and safety related costs. For this reason, it should be on every manager's radar screen.

1. Gimmicks, goodies and rewards alone do not work

Goodies, gimmicks, and special events, on their own, don't lead to high morale. Nor do any "quick fix solutions." In fact, when such events and programs contradict workers' daily experience of not being respected, valued, or appreciated, it can have just the opposite effect: an even more cynical, distrustful, and disengaged workforce.

2. Enrich their work experience

What does lead to high morale is an intrinsically rewarding work experience. Strive to create a work experience where employees feel respected, valued, and appreciated. You need to create an environment where employees get to be players who make a difference—rather than where they just feel like 'hired hands'.

How do you create a rewarding work experience for your people? As a rule of thumb, recognize that in the workplace what's really important is

- the need to matter
- the need to be proud of your work and your employer, and
- the need for autonomy

If these needs aren't met, no material "solution" or event will make a difference to your employees.

3. Every little thing matters

Morale is not improved by a one time, dramatic display of appreciation. Morale is improved - or damaged - one interaction at a time. Every time employees interact with their manager or head office, it's a moment of truth.

It matters whether a manager:

- Notices the good things an employee does or just notices their mistakes

- Asks employees for their input before making a decision that impacts their daily work

- Gets back to employees promptly about their requests or have to be repeatedly pursued for an answer

- Says "Thank you" when employees go the extra mile or take it for granted

In short everything matters, which is why all managers need to be more focused on the many moments of truth that can build or destroy morale.

And finally, let's face it: If there's a morale problem, there's a leadership problem. If you are contributing to low morale, chances are good that no one has told you this. You will need to ask for feedback and learn how to make it safe for people to respond honestly. And once they do, you need to act to convert their requests into solid action.

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