

Make Your Workplace GREEN

How to usher your office into the eco-friendly era

Technology continues to advance at a rapid pace, with once groundbreaking ideas and devices becoming obsolete in what seems like the blink of an eye. Despite such advancements, many professional environments are still consuming far more energy than is necessary, proving that there is still progress to be made with regard to how we use technology and protect the planet.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, 30 percent of energy consumed by office buildings is used inefficiently, while the Energy Star program notes that 17 percent of greenhouse gas emissions come from commercial buildings' energy use. That leaves ample opportunity for those who want to usher their offices into the eco-friendly era to make changes that will conserve energy.

Consider new lighting. Energy Star notes that lighting is typically the most costly portion of many companies' monthly electric bills, and that's often because lighting is so often used in an inefficient manner. But flipping switches at the end of each day is not the only way business owners or office managers can cut their lighting costs. Many companies prefer to have lights on overnight for security purposes, but motion detection lighting systems are more eco-friendly and can pay for themselves over the long haul by reducing energy costs. Such systems will only turn on when movement is detected in the building. This saves owners the cost of illuminating empty offices overnight but still enables them to protect buildings with lights in the case of break-ins.

Encourage workers to put their computers to sleep when they are away from their desks. Screen savers might be aesthetically appealing, but that beauty comes at a steep price, as screen savers use the same amount of energy while you're away as the computer does while you are hard at work. The United States Department of Energy suggests that companies hoping to make their office environments more eco-friendly should encourage workers to put their computers to sleep when they will be away from their desks for 20 minutes or more. When the workday is done, workers can turn their computers off completely to save even more energy.



Ensuring employees turn their computers off at the end of the workday is one way companies can become more eco-friendly.

Reduce paper consumption. Hard copy documents are increasingly going the way of the dinosaur, and that's a good thing for businesses who want to be more eco-friendly. In lieu of storing hard copy documents in filing cabinets or other antiquated storing systems, com-

panies can encourage employees to store files digitally in easily accessible folders on their computers or on company servers. Internal memos need not be printed out and distributed as hard copies when it's just as easy and far less taxing on the environment to share such memos via email. Reducing reliance on hard copy documents can drastically reduce paper consumption and free up space around the office.

Plug leaks. Much like homeowners can save substantial amounts of money by plugging leaks around windows and doorways, businesses also can cut energy costs by identifying and plugging leaks. In fact, the DOE estimates that taking care of air leaks can save businesses as much as 10 percent off their energy costs. Make sure air ducts and filters are routinely cleaned to ensure heating and cooling systems are operating at optimal efficiency.

Many business owners and office managers have been slow to embrace various eco-friendly strategies that can benefit the planet and their bottom lines. But as technology continues to advance at a rapid pace, the opportunities for businesses to become more eco-friendly continue to evolve as well. ⓘ

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