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Reducing Your Carbon Footprint

[White Papers & Briefings](#), [EMEA](#), [Environmental Management](#)

Will Richardson considers the multitude of options available to help facilities managers and their clients reduce carbon emissions.



Switch to renewable energy back by REGO certificates

REGOs – or Renewable Energy Guarantees of Origin – guarantees that the origin of the energy supplied to you is renewably sourced. Energy suppliers will match this with the estimated consumption of your business. Opting for this is a great way to ensure that your business' carbon footprint reduces, and is a good way to demonstrate awareness and action. Emissions for electricity will be zero using the GHG Protocol market-based calculation method.

Investing in good waste facilities

Waste management is a big challenge for many businesses today. Ensuring facilities are clearly available for recycling is the first step. Implementing signage in place to help guide people as to what goes where can help. Such facilities can sometimes be provided by the waste company used, so having a conversation with them can help a business understand what can and can't be recycled by their waste contractors. An array of different bin types are also available online, which vary by colour, size, lid, etc. Investing in this is a must. Recycling properly can ensure higher recycling rates, meaning less should be ending up in landfills - thus reducing carbon footprint in this way. Electrical and hazardous waste should also be disposed of properly, and many waste contractors do have the facilities to take this.

Ensuring food waste bins are available in kitchens and canteens

Linking to the above point, food waste can really be an issue, particularly if your business has a canteen serving fresh food every day, or a café. Do check with your waste contractor that it is possible for a food waste collection. Ensure that kitchen staff are all trained and aware on the issue, and provide proper facilities, both in kitchens, and in dining rooms and canteens for employees to dispose of any waste they may have.

Ensuring energy efficient lighting wherever possible, and incorporate automatic switch offs

Changing lighting across a building to more energy efficient options such as LED can make a big difference, and is a quick win as the effects will be long lasting. There is also an array of technology available, such as sensors which will automatically ensure lights are switched off if movement ceases. Dimmable lights are another method to ensure lights aren't at their brightest maximum when not required. This should also help reduce electricity costs.



Print as minimally as possible

This step is a no brainer. Many offices consume vast amounts of paper. Taking action to cut down this use, especially by reducing printing, and digitising more actions. This can be implemented from digitised contract signings, to avoiding printing emails and presentations and viewing and annotating on screen instead. If printing is required, ensure double sided printing is set as a default. Having 'follow me' printing services across office printers can also help cut down any accidental or unnecessary printing as options can be altered at the time of printing.

Minimise business travel

Business travel, especially flights, can often make up over half of many business' carbon emissions. Cutting travel down, especially if meetings can be held over Skype and video conferencing, can make a huge difference here. Not only will this cut emissions, but it can save your business a lot of money by cutting down flight costs. If air travel is a must, choosing Economy class over Business or First can help minimise the emissions here.

Ensure your office space is well insulated so it requires minimal unnecessary heating or air conditioning

A business' space can be dynamic, and there are all sorts of technology that can be implemented for a robust and efficient future. Implementing temperature controls, ensuring heating and air conditioning is timed correctly and according to outside air temperatures, can minimise people over heating or cooling whilst at work. Ensuring that temperature controls are minimal during the night is also important. Any heating and cooling technology should also be regularly maintained for optimum performance. Finally, this will also reduce energy bills.

Procure sustainably sourced items

This could be as simple as buying sustainably sourced paper and stationery, for instance. Phasing out certain stationary items such as plastic mechanical pencils and only providing the more 'classic' pencils is another small step. Indeed, if your business has a large supply chain, then it is important to ensure that sustainability is fed right through. Buy recycled paper instead of primary production reduces carbon emissions as stipulated by the GHG Protocol.

Stop provision of plastic cutlery and similar measures

Another key point. By phasing out the provision of plastic cutlery and straws in canteens, and replacing these with metal cutlery and paper straws, this will cut down on plastic disposal and waste from the organisation. Ensuring the canteen and cafes prioritise ceramic mugs for hot drinks, or even phase out disposable cups, could make a huge difference. Employees can be encouraged to bring in reusable coffee cups by introducing loyalty stamp cards, or discounts on hot drinks.

Engage!

Getting people on board can sometimes be one of the biggest challenges that businesses can face. All the above points need to be intertwined with the engagement piece, as employees often need to know why certain things are happening the way they are in order to actually cooperate. Some steps to at least raise awareness can be as simple as incorporating information

into employee starter packs. Getting a team of 'champions' together to run initiatives and engagement pieces can help spark the discussion and infuse awareness. Putting on events or competitions amongst employees, by drawing on themes such as having a sustainability week or Earth Hour, can help with the engagement piece.

Above are just some of the steps businesses can take to reduce their carbon emissions and play their part on the road to a cleaner future. Now is also the best time to act as investing in change will invariably reduce operating costs and achieve a win-win situation by any measure.

About the Author



Will Richardson is an environmental visionary with a passion for encouraging businesses to go green. He founded Green Element, a pioneering environmental management consultancy, in 2004 to help businesses better understand their environmental impact. His innovative new tool, CompareYourFootprint.com, allows businesses to benchmark their footprint against competitors.

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