

A Greener Tomorrow

When we hear ads for products and activities to make the world a greener place, we often "tune out". What can we do as owner/managers of small companies to play more of a role in the green community? We do not have the big budgets of major corporations nor do we have access to funds from government agencies to pay for retrofits. As a result, it appears that environmentally conscious owner/managers will not only have to make the time to go green but will have to foot the bill ourselves.

Going green is not going to be an overnight success; it will demand the continuing commitment of management and staff resources to plan the strategies, budget for operational and capital changes, then find the financial resources required.

LEED

Because we are so focused on running our businesses, we have no time to become experts in environmental matters. We need to hire specialists. One such organization that can provide this expertise is the Green Building Certification Institute (www.gbci.org.) The GBCI administers the certification program Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED), a third-party certification program and internationally accepted standard for the design, construction and operation of high-performance buildings with green sustainability.

LEED examines five key areas:

- sustainable site development
- water efficiency
- energy efficiency
- materials selection, and
- indoor environmental quality.

The LEED approach to new building or retrofitting guides the use of materials both inside and out, energy saving through reduced reliance on fossil fuels, and more eco-friendly landscape design. Among the many benefits of LEED certification is qualification for an increasing number of government green incentives.

Greening on a Tight Budget

The owner/manager of a business who only leases space obviously cannot retrofit the building. Nevertheless, there are many ways the operation of the business can be made greener without incurring large expenditures or requiring major physical changes to the premises.

Purchasing

Encourage staff to ask vendors some or all of the following questions about material and supplies purchased by your company:

- Are parts reusable and interchangeable on different equipment?
- Are products recyclable and manufactured with some recyclable materials?
- Does the vendor stock used material that can be incorporated into your process?

- Is the product repairable and will parts be available for a number of years?
- Is the cost of consumables used in the equipment significantly less than the cost of the product purchased? (In some instances the cost of the part is greater than the cost of the new product.)
- Are shipping containers returnable or reusable?
- Are products energy efficient enough to earn the Energy Star, an international standard of energy efficiency in consumer products?

Challenging vendors to meet some or all of your green initiatives is fair, but don't be surprised if your business is suddenly challenged to meet the same criteria by your customer or client base.

Transportation

Transportation, whether for employees, product receipt or delivery should be evaluated by owner/managers. Areas to consider:

- Condense the 35-hour work week into four days. This can be accomplished by reducing lunch time to one-half hour and adding one-and-a-quarter hours to the workday. Employees will save energy consumed in commuting and at the same time, workplace energy costs will be reduced.
- Have more employees work from home. Improved Internet communications have increased the ability to work from a home office. Management may have some concerns about employees maintaining focus at a home office but, with interactive computer communication, call forwarding, as well as email and assignment of projects and deadlines, this concern should soon vanish. For many, working from a home office reduces office interruptions and results in higher creativity and productivity.
- Establish a TURN IGNITION OFF zone at your bays to reduce harmful emissions. In colder parts of the country, idling is a traditional means of "warming up the car." Idling, unfortunately, is not only an energy waster but it is harder on a vehicle's motor than starting the vehicle and driving. Many buildings provide exterior plug-ins for block heaters. If you use a block heater, consider a timer to reach the temperature desired while minimizing the energy required to do so.
- Follow a regular maintenance schedule for your vehicles. A well-maintained vehicle runs more efficiently, uses less fuel, costs less in repairs and maintenance and is easier on the environment. Small considerations, such as reducing the use of vehicle air conditioners and maintaining correct tire pressure add to improved performance and reduced fuel consumption.
- Review distribution routes. If your customers are widely scattered, a fuel-efficient delivery route or timetable may not be possible. It may be cheaper and more efficient to sell the delivery vehicles and subcontract your work to a service that can incorporate your deliveries into its established routes.

Buildings

Energy is one of the biggest costs of running an office, warehouse or factory. Hiring a consultant to review your energy use may pay benefits. You might consider:

- replacing motors to reduce the draw when equipment starts
- constructing building entrances with a space separating an interior door from an exterior door to reduce the loss of heat in the winter and cooled air in the summer every time a door is opened
- installing timers or motion sensors to control lighting
- reducing the number of lights used in work or warehouse areas.

Maintaining your building envelope reduces energy waste. Dr. David Suzuki suggests an energy audit that reviews heat transfer through windows, walls, foundation, basement slab, roof and insulation. Many buildings built 20-30 years ago are of the warehouse style with tall ceilings, and minimal insulation in ceilings or walls. An energy audit will provide guidance on what will be required to reduce energy waste and energy costs.

Tenants may feel they do not have a say in energy savings yet have a vested interest in decreasing energy consumption to reduce current and future costs to their businesses. The landlord also has an interest in improving energy efficiency and reducing costs to attract future tenants and increase the resale value of the property. Encouraging the use of high-efficiency heaters, programmable thermostats or improving R factors provides benefits that reduce the impact on the environment.

Cooperation and frank discussion between the tenant and the landlord should result in cost sharing that is mutually beneficial to both parties.

Keep Up the Energy

As with so many new projects, enthusiasm is high at the outset but fades over time. To ensure your commitment to improving the environment stays the course, review the program at least once a year. A quick and efficient means of determining progress is an informal review of all of your energy bills. If energy costs are lower, you must be doing something right.

Logan Katz is proud to be participating in Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation's **Ride for Diabetes Research**. The Ride for Diabetes Research is an exciting, fast paced, inspirational event that brings corporate Canada together in a friendly competition to see who can clock the most kilometres and raise the most money. We challenge all our clients to form their own teams and join us to support this worthy cause! You can also show your support by pledging our corporate team. This exciting event will be held at Ottawa City Hall on Friday, October 15, 2010. For more details, please visit their website at <http://jdrfca.donordrive.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=cms.page&id=1127>