

Sustainability in the Office Setting – from GreenGuruNetwork.com

Sustainability, the concept of using fewer resources and polluting less to be productive while saving our natural resources, is thought to apply only to “those big polluting manufacturers.” Well, that’s not really true. While we poke fun at offices thanks to the brilliant TV comedy of the same name, any office or store, big or small, can make sustainability gains to save resources and also save money and expenses and motivate personnel.

Here is a list of common environmental concerns in an office setting:

- Printing of needless documents or excess copies, resulting in increased waste
- Leaving lights on
- Not recycling excess paper or other waste
- Inappropriate climate control or setting of thermostats
- Excessive use of paper products, like cups, plates, etc.
- Coworkers not printing double-sided when they can
- Having to store paper copies of documents when they already exist electronically
- Not powering down computers when going home

These are legitimate concerns and all can be addressed in an office. Many of these concerns can be effectively addressed with conservation. You and your co-workers need to ask yourselves whether the light bulb, computer, or other device really needs to be on all the time or at the end of the day or during lunch. You can begin an office culture that it’s important to turn off unnecessary devices. This can provide your company with best savings, going from on to completely off. While lights are obvious to turn off, appliances, computers and other equipment use power even in “sleep” mode. Therefore, if feasible, develop procedures to turn them off, too.

Another approach can be use of simple software or technology. Yes, it means an initial investment to purchase and train on the software, but will pay you back if used properly. For example, there are software products with print management capabilities. Such software can manipulate printer commands to significantly lessen ink jet or toner usage. While printers are fairly inexpensive, businesses are learning that the costs of replacing toner and ink jet cartridges are more significant. Printers can also be set to automatically perform double-side copying. Not only will this reduce paper use and cost, but this will also reduce shipping costs and the recipients of your reports will probably be happier to lug around lighter documents and reduce the necessary storage.

Forming an office “team” can effectively reduce expenses and, at the same time, engender company spirit and loyalty and a sense of accomplishment.