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## How going green can keep you out of the red

in Money by Nigel Bowen

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Taking an environmentally friendly approach to business can be smart for your bottom line. While 'going green' may involve some initial outlays, it can result in reduced costs and the potential for increased business in the medium to long term.

Here are six strategies you can implement to lighten your business's ecological footprint.

### Conduct an audit and cut down on electricity

Most power companies are more than happy to provide a free, on-site audit. The typical advice they offer is improving insulation, installing timers to ensure that the lighting and air conditioning aren't on when the office is unoccupied, installing energy efficient light bulbs and avoiding the temptation to set the air conditioning temperature too low during summer or too high during winter.

Products with a high energy star rating consume less electricity, while LCD monitors are the most energy efficient. You may wish to consider using electricity sourced from renewable energy resources, though this is currently more expensive than the standard variety.

### Make the paperless office a reality

Bills, brochures, catalogues, invoices, memos, newsletters, price lists and invitations to the office Christmas party can all be emailed, so save on paper, printing and postage costs by sending everything you can via PDF.

If you absolutely must resort to printing something, spell and fact-check on screen first to avoid having to do a reprint. Always print on both sides and make sure your printer settings are changed to "fast draft" or "black ink" for documents that don't need to be high quality.

### Cut down on travel

Consider implementing teleconference rather than flying halfway across the country for a one-hour business meeting. Encourage carpooling and offer to subsidise the cost of bus and train tickets for employees who use public transport. You can also create a safe and convenient place for those who cycle to work to leave their bikes.

You may even wish to consider purchasing or leasing energy efficient cars and trucks and think about whether it is possible to reduce the amount of petrol consumed in shipping or receiving products. If it is feasible for your business, allow employees to telecommute – they'll be much happier and you'll end up saving on the energy costs involved in having them in the office.

### Detoxify the office

As far as is possible, get rid of repositories of toxic chemicals, such as used copier toner cartridges, and talk to suppliers about whether they have anything less polluting on offer. Instead of pre-diluted cleaning chemicals in single-use containers, combine concentrated green cleaning products with water into reusable spray bottles.

### Avoid single-use items

Certain types of printer cartridges, bios, highlighter pens and whiteboard markers can be refilled, which is always cheaper than buying new units. Also, ditch the disposable cups and plastic plates and invest in some proper crockery.

### Sort your garbage

If you haven't already, invest in a number of different bins for different types of waste and make sure anything that can be recycled (or composted) is.

Given the backlash against greenwashing – the term generally used when companies talk more about

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being "green" than actually implementing green measures - the days when businesses could get away with tokenistic gestures towards being environmentally conscious are long gone. Many of the world's largest corporations have discovered to their cost that modern consumers, especially younger ones, have high expectations and will boycott brands perceived to be engaging in, or in some way condoning, environmentally damaging practices.

Your employees, customers, suppliers and the wider community will only accept that your business is serious about going green if you consistently demonstrate it is. Appoint yourself – or one of your most senior staff members – as sustainability officer, include your green objectives in your company's [mission statement](#) and business plans and make an ongoing commitment to implementing best environmental practice wherever possible.

*This article represents the views of the author only and not those of American Express.*

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