

BOULDER COUNTY BUSINESS REPORT

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Take steps to make 2009 a 'green' year at work

By K.J. McCorry

Although your company may not be green yet, you can do a lot in your own work space to reduce your ecological footprint.

You will help the environment with these actions, and you will reduce costs for your company. Together these small steps can make a significant impact in just a few months. By taking the lead you will set an example to your colleagues and make a difference.

Phase out paper

The paper industry releases loads of carbon dioxide, making it the third largest polluter in the world; as such, it is a significant cause of global warming and deforestation. An average office worker uses 10,000 sheets of copy paper each year. A study by Xerox shows that 45 percent of the office paper that is discarded is thrown away on the day it was printed.

In addition to its environmental impacts, paper is time consuming to manage. Begin to create that paperless office by reducing your own paper consumption. Before printing ask yourself if you really need that document on paper. Instead of printing on new paper, think about printing on the backside of recycled documents, especially for drafts and temporary documents. Move your desk printer further from arm's reach or consider removing your printer from your cubicle all together. You will be less likely to print if you have to stand up to retrieve the print out.

Buy green office supplies

When you need office supplies, get green office products. Major office supply vendors offer recycled content and post-consumer waste products. Eco Green Office is a local Boulder company that offers only green office supplies (www.ecogreenoffice.com). This is a great and easy source to find what you are looking for. Office Depot also has a separate Green Book catalog. Before you buy office products, check your supply closet or your colleagues' offices. Try to use or reuse what is available in your office before buying new.

Turn off your computer

The average computer left on all night uses nearly 1,500 kilowatt hours of electricity a year - producing more than a ton and half of carbon emissions. With the average price of Colorado energy at 10 cents per kilowatt hour, the cost of that unnecessary energy use is \$150 per year, per computer. Get in the habit of turning off your computer at night. Turn off other electrical equipment in your office including the printer, copy machine, power cords, etc. as well. Just turning off equipment and unplugging power adaptors could save 20 percent to 25 percent of wasted energy use. However, IT departments sometimes have to perform backups or updates to local drives in the evenings, so find out what day they perform these functions before turning off your equipment.

Buy used, recycled

Instead of purchasing new items for your office such as furniture, books, and equipment, consider used or refurbished materials. Based in Louisville, Citron Cycle (recycle.facilitycycle.com) offers a free, online community resource for businesses that want to help keep furniture out of landfills. You can find, trade, sell or donate office furniture you no longer need. Use Craigslist.com and Freecycle.com to find other used materials in your area.

Reduce your office waste

The average American generates 65 percent more garbage today than in 1960. Not only are we running out of landfill space, but the landfills are also generating methane gas - a larger contributor to greenhouse gases than carbon dioxide.

Reduce your own office waste. Start by going through your trash can, and see what materials you are throwing away that could be recycled. If your office does not offer recycling, talk to your facilities manager about starting a recycling program, or bring in a container that you can take home and put in your curbside recycling.

As for office and desk items that are still good and could be donated, start a collection box in your office for all those unwanted cups, frames, holiday gifts, etc. Once a month take the box to the local thrift stores. Instead of disposable coffee cups, utensils, plates and napkins, consider bringing in reusable items. Today more than 75 percent of our waste could be diverted through recycling, composting and donating useable materials.

For a full list of categories of recycling or donation resources, go to www.officiency.com/recycling.html.

Studies show that it takes 21 to 28 days for a behavior change to become a habit. To help yourself get in these "green" habits put reminders on your calendar, or add a temporary sign in your office.

Get in the habit of green for 2009.

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