

There are loads of simple things you can do to reduce your business' impact on the environment and what's more there is over £1.2 billion of funding out there to help you in the form of grants and loans.

Just follow our Top Ten Tips to going green:

1. GET SOME EXPERT ADVICE

If you're not sure where to start with going green, then getting an environmental consultant to come in and spend some time with your business to understand where it can save energy is a worthwhile investment. It can save you as much as 10% through no-cost measures and generally businesses can save over 20%. Your initial consultation is free through Climate Energy and in some cases you could receive a grant to implement the recommended changes.

2. REDUCE YOUR WASTE

Recycling your waste is not only good for the environment, it can also save your business money by reducing your waste disposal costs, as well as your need for new materials. You may be surprised to find that some of your waste is of value to another organisation and so it could even turn into a new income stream. Simple steps are: make sure you print on both sides of the paper and use scrap paper for making notes. You can also introduce recycling bins into the workplace – you'd be surprised how enthusiastic your employees might be about recycling. Further information and advice on how to recycle is available from WRAP and Waste Watch.

3. LOWER YOUR VEHICLE EMISSIONS

Not only are vehicles bad for the environment because of their carbon emissions but they can also damage your bottom line due to the increasing cost of fuel and government taxes on high polluters. If you have fleet vehicles consider more fuel efficient or hybrid models and make sure they are serviced regularly – you may even be able to qualify for tax relief as part of the Enhanced Capital Allowance scheme. Encourage your employees to reduce their carbon footprint by setting up travel buddy schemes and providing information about public transport. Some motorways are even introducing special car pooling lanes so your employees might even get into work early!

4. REDUCE YOUR ELECTRICITY BILLS

One of the most obvious indicators of your impact on the environment, and your wallet, is your energy bill. Leaving just one computer on standby can cost £35 a year, so think - pull the plug on the PCs, photocopiers and printers overnight. An average office wastes £6,000 each year by leaving equipment on over weekends and bank holidays. Convert to energy saving light bulbs and make sure your staff are aware of the impact of over-filling a kettle and leaving lights on.

5. SAVE ON HEATING

It is increasingly common in the UK for offices to be fitted with air conditioning despite our chilly weather. In a typical office, air conditioning can account for over 30% of annual electricity consumption. Instead, why not invest in insulation to reduce the amount of heat that is lost to the environment? Double glazing and wall insulation can make also big difference over time. Make sure you turn off all heating and air conditioning overnight when the office is not in use.

6. CONVERT TO RENEWABLE ENERGY

One of the best ways to reduce your impact on the environment is to convert to renewable energy sources. Some energy suppliers are now generating energy solely from renewable sources so consider changing your supplier. If you're really committed to going green you could generate your own renewable energy by installing solar panels or a wind turbine on your roof. There is even funding from government to help you offset the costs, talk to Climate Energy to find out how.

7. UPGRADE TO MORE ENERGY EFFICIENT EQUIPMENT

Your plant and equipment probably waste the most energy of all your activities. Upgrading to more energy efficient versions of the same equipment will not only reduce your environmental impact but will minimise your operating costs. If your equipment is old, why not consider upgrading it to a new version which will be more efficient.

8. USE TECHNOLOGY TO YOUR ADVANTAGE

In the age of emails and instant messaging, telecommunications has made the world a lot smaller and can reduce the need for the daily commute and associated carbon emissions. Invest in teleconferencing equipment, allowing you to virtually attend meetings with clients, which not only reduces your carbon footprint, but can save you valuable time by reducing that commute. There are a number of ICT grants available from local authorities to help you invest in these information technology solutions. Free information and advice is available from the Community Network.

9. INVEST IN RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT, BETTER STILL GET A GRANT!

If your company produces goods or services then there's lots of money available to help you with the costs of developing new clean technologies or products. There is over £10 million available from the Technology Strategy Board to help companies carry out research into more energy efficient lighting, lasers and displays and a further £10 million available for low carbon energy technologies. This funding is not for the big boys, it is also available for small, highly focussed basic research projects aimed at establishing the technical feasibility of an idea.

10. INCREASE YOUR STAFF'S AWARENESS

Improving your employees' awareness of energy efficiency can not only save you money on your energy bills but can also improve staff performance. You would be amazed the impact that heat and light can have on making your employees more comfortable in the workplace. Using natural light sources makes employees feel better and it also saves on electricity. You can also use blinds to direct sunlight upwards – this stops rooms from overheating and prevents glare on computer screens. You can get posters and stickers from the Carbon Trust to put up in your workplace to encourage and remind staff about the simple things that they can do, for example a 2°C increase in office temperature creates enough CO₂ in a year to fill a hot air balloon.