

## Going Green: Over the Buzz and Down to Business

“Green” is more than just a color or a marketing buzzword; it is a movement to preserve our natural environment for future generations. Businesses, especially, have the opportunity to promote more sustainable practices through their purchasing, procedures, delivery and production of products and services, and through well-defined company policies. A “green” business is one that operates not only in an environmentally responsible manner, but one that also adopts socially and economically sustainable practices.

We have all seen the slogan: “Reduce, Reuse, Recycle.” These simple practices can help businesses lower costs and increase revenues. Recycling paper, cardboard, bottles and cans is vital to reducing the waste a business generates. And, reduction and reuse of materials and equipment are the most effective ways to minimize an organization’s environmental impact. Every little bit helps, so even implementing a few procedures at a time can have significant results. This article will focus on the technology aspect of an organization and what changes can be implemented from within to help your business “go green.”

Technology is the backbone of most modern business operations, and accounts for the majority of its costs. There are several ways a business can reduce the energy usage and generation of waste associated with technology, and also save money. Purchasing energy efficient servers, workstations, printers, copiers and other electronic equipment can make a big difference. Configuring the power save features on electronic equipment and turning off equipment at the end of the day can save hundreds of dollars per year, and also helps to minimize the impact of energy production on the environment.

Here are a few more ways to consolidate equipment and reduce waste:

- Server virtualization, for example, provides the ability to host multiple operating systems and associated functions on a single machine. This allows companies that previously would have used two or more servers, to run the necessary software on separate host operating systems on only one machine. The impact of virtualization technology is enormous as it reduces the physical equipment purchased, shipped, and eventually replaced and recycled, as well as reducing the energy and associated costs required to run the equipment.
- Telecommuting is another viable option which reduces the impact business has on the environment. Utilizing remote workplace capabilities, employees can work from home or available telecommuting centers. This option minimizes the carbon produced from the employee’s daily commute, and may reduce the number of computers that a business purchases and supports. The cost savings in equipment purchases, energy usage and expense reimbursement can positively impact an organization’s bottom line.

- The use of a fax server is another technology innovation that can reduce equipment and waste. Microsoft Small Business Server, as well as several third-party application providers, offers a software-based fax routing tool which allows faxes to be sent and received without the use of paper or external equipment. Users can send faxes as simply as sending a document to a printer, while faxes can be received via email or centrally stored in electronic format. This system eliminates the use of paper for faxing and reduces the organization's energy use by consolidating the equipment that requires power. Also, the business spends less money and protects valuable resources because there is less equipment to purchase and provide power for, and less paper to buy.

Technology, when utilized to its full capacity, can be the catalyst for a greener business. Implementing the following procedures can appreciably reduce a business' energy usage and waste:

- Configure equipment for two-sided printing and copying,
- Recycle or refill toner cartridges,
- Use centralized, electronic file storage to reduce paper copies,
- Utilize an electronic mail (e-mail) system for messaging,
- Maintain equipment and replace and upgrade parts as available.

Eventually, electronic equipment reaches the end of its useful life for a business. Rather than disposing of this e-waste, there are several options available. If the equipment (such as cellular phones, televisions, computers, printers, or monitors) no longer function or are not energy efficient, there are recycling centers that will accept them to prevent this potentially hazardous waste from reaching landfills. For equipment that is still functional, but does not meet the needs of the business, reuse is the best option. Computers and other electronic equipment can be reconditioned and donated to a local charity or resold. Businesses can also receive tax credits for donating equipment to charity.

Business, as the largest source of waste and energy use, has the greatest opportunity to 'reduce, reuse and recycle' today's technology to preserve tomorrow's future. By reducing energy usage and waste, and reusing and recycling old equipment, organizations can save money and the environment!