

10 Tips for Going Green - and Saving Money

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Being green is not only a competitive advantage for your business in the marketplace, but can also save you money. Here are 10 eco-friendly tips for cutting your costs.

1. **Change your light bulbs.** Replace all your light bulbs with energy-efficient ones, and you'll see immediate savings. SBDC Business Advisor Rola Halawanji says small business owners who make this switch have reported their electricity bills drop by 40 to 60 percent.
2. **Power down.** The U.S. Department of Energy estimates cutting energy use by just 30 percent annually would save U.S. businesses over \$32 billion. "One quick way to cut costs is to invest in power strips that you can turn on and off," says Halawanji. "Plug all your electrical appliances into power strips so at the end of the day, you can turn them all off while not in use."
3. **Buy green equipment.** Look for the Energy Star symbol when you buy computers, monitors, phones or audio/video equipment. You can find a list of green equipment at www.EnergyStar.gov.
4. **Digitize.** Do you really need a hard copy of every document? Use an online backup service to store your data in the cloud. This not only saves paper and toner, but also keeps your crucial data safe from disasters and easily accessible.
5. **Limit printing.** A typical office discards almost 350 pounds of paper per employee per year, says Halawanji. If you must print, save ink, paper and money by using software such as Greenprint, FinePrint and HP Smart Web Printing to eliminate waste.
6. **Repurpose paper.** Save even more by using the blank sides of discarded documents for scrap paper. Use a shredder to shred non-critical documents and use them for packing.
7. **Get help from the government.** "Almost every state, county and large municipality has at least one program to help small companies reduce energy, waste or water use, and thus cut costs," says Halawanji. For a state-by-state directory of incentives, visit www.dsireusa.org. In L.A. County, programs like Energy Upgrade California (<https://energyupgradeca.org>) offer rebates, incentives and tax breaks for energy-efficient upgrades.
8. **Get audited.** Need more help coming up with energy-saving ideas? Most utility companies will provide a free energy audit. Typically, an auditor tours your business and suggests ways to reduce energy costs.
9. **Look for a green building.** Ready to move or expand? Halawanji explains that green building methods, including increased ventilation, reduced air recirculation, improved filtration and reduced occupant density, can significantly decrease work-related illnesses and absences, saving your business money.
10. **Enlist employees.** "A positive and proactive green position builds loyalty not only among customers, but also within your own work force," says Halawanji. To get employee buy-in, she suggests establishing a staff committee to implement small steps, and incentivizing good ideas and solutions.

By Rieva Lesonsky

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