

Going green at work and teaching others to follow suit



By [Donavin Patrick Hawker](#)

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Many may have believed that the 'green' craze was a passing fad; that soon businesses would decide it was too much effort and revert to archaic methods of doing things, despite the cost to the planet. As we delve ever deeper into the 21st century, however, it is becoming increasingly evident that most true green implementers are serious about the impact that their practices have on the environment and the changes that they are making to decrease this impact.



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Why bother going green at work? According to the United States' Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the energy used in commercial buildings and manufacturing plants accounts for almost half of all greenhouse gas emissions and energy consumption worldwide. In addition, the workplace is where the majority of the world's population spends most of their waking hours; therefore it is the most effective manner in which to implement green practices. Looking at these factors, coupled with the findings of recent reports indicating that going green can result in cost savings and becomes a beneficial marketing tool in attracting customers, can businesses afford not to go green?

Achieving green consciousness and implementing green practices in the workplace begins with employers first believing in and buying into the green movement and, secondly, training staff to do the same.

Set up green teams

It is important to set up green teams by gathering employees from throughout the organisation to lead the green programme. Giving the staff ownership of the programme in this manner allows them to feel more a part of it, further entrenching it into the company ethos and ensuring its success. Regular meetings should then be set up, either weekly or monthly, for the green team to discuss the progress of existing projects and brainstorm additional green avenues in the business. Within these meetings, weak points or areas of inefficiency can be identified and solutions sought.

The key to a successful green programme is communication. It is essential that awareness of the programme permeates the entire organisation. The green team can be made responsible for raising such awareness through emails, flyers or posters which explain how and why the company is going green and encouraging all employees to get involved and share their green ideas. Green events can also be held in the office to create excitement, and could include picnics or a visit from a green expert.

Make it fun

When implementing organisation wide changes, it is imperative to recognise the fact that all employees are not the same and do not have the same values. While some may immediately identify with the programme, others may not be all that concerned. An easy way to ensure the involvement of all employees is by making it fun. A friendly competition, for example, is a great way to involve staff and foster creative thought patterns regarding going green. Environmentally friendly prizes, such as reusable water bottles or samples of green cleaning products, can be awarded to winners to keep up motivation regarding the competition and the programme.

Going green does not have to be complicated or daunting; it all depends on the manner in which it is implemented. It doesn't have to take up a lot of time or effort, yet the benefits are immeasurable. With management's support, starting a green movement in any organisation should be fun, save the company money, improve its corporate image and motivate responsible behaviour towards the environment.

ABOUT DONAVIN PATRICK HAWKER

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