

7 ways to build a sustainable business

Building a sustainable business takes planning.

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Faced with the reality of dwindling natural resources and man-made damage to the environment, today's businesses recognize more than ever the importance of reducing their environmental impact. However, when it comes to actually putting sustainable practices into action, many businesses don't know where to begin. Therefore, the following is a list of proposed actionable steps any business can take to reduce impact on the environment.

1. Set realistic goals and make small changes over time

Building a sustainable business practice requires long-term planning and implementation. Therefore, setting realistic sustainability goals and benchmarks is the key to success. While it might not be realistic or feasible in month one to completely convert your office's energy use to solar power, you can start to reduce your business's energy consumption by changing simple everyday behaviors and procedures, such as recycling paper and trash throughout the office. All of these small changes have a long-term impact on the environment.

2. Make sustainability a priority

Changing your business practices and behaviors to become more environmentally responsible requires a shared commitment throughout the organization. Therefore, sustainability must be a core part of your company's vision and values. This requires integrating sustainability practices into your overall business strategy and committing to actual change.

3. Get involved

Show your company's unified commitment to environmental responsibility by participating in related events and causes. Whether it's through volunteering or making a donation to a charity or cause that you believe in, Corporate Social Responsibility is an important part of demonstrating your business' commitment to the environment.

4. Reward employees

Show your staff appreciation for their commitment to achieving a more sustainable organization and reward them for their contributions and milestones. For instance, launch a company-wide competition, challenging the staff to reduce monthly electric bills by 5 percent in six months. If that goal is achieved, the entire company will be treated to dinner or a baseball game.

5. Make changes in purchasing decisions

Reducing your company's environmental impact also requires making responsible purchasing decisions. For instance, start purchasing paper products for the office that are recyclable or consider replacing your dry cell supplies with rechargeable batteries.

6. Recognize the long-term benefits and return

Some businesses think that going green is too expensive, preventing them from adopting sustainable practices. Therefore, it's important to both understand the long-term value of environmental sustainability and communicate that value to senior management. While installing

solar panels may require a significant upfront financial investment, the long-term return is significant in terms of the energy savings. Being environmentally responsible can also increase your company's sales and profitability. According to *Consumer Reports on Climate Change*, 79 percent of consumers said they would rather buy from companies doing their best to reduce their environmental impact.

7. Don't keep your environmental accomplishments a secret

Sharing the good news about how your business is making a positive difference in the environment improves how your customers, stakeholders, employees and the public perceive your organization and its products/services. Share the news with the public wherever possible through press announcements, during trade shows, on your Web site, in customer e-newsletters, etc.

While creating a sustainable business practice requires time and consistency, implementing positive changes within your organization, even small ones, go a long way.

Source: [SDNN](#)