

How to Select, Design and Operate a Business in the ‘Era of Green’

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During the past several years, the word “green” has taken on new meaning and usage as it has quickly entered the business vernacular in its many forms.

What was once strictly an adjective has quickly evolved into a noun and verb as we use “green” to describe everything from household products to office buildings to the process of becoming more environmentally responsible. What does it mean to select, design, and operate a business in the “era of green?”

The time is now for companies to start thinking about sustainable practices. It isn’t something we are going to see coming in the future. It is already happening.

Overall it’s time for a major shift in thinking about how we select, design and live in office space. Lease negotiations have changed dramatically in the last couple of years to be focused on environmental issues, space efficiency and a company’s business plan. For example, green leasing has already started to become part of the mainstream real estate discussion.

A green lease, devised for clients, is a way for tenants to hold landlords accountable for desired green outcomes. Green leases contain provisions on green practices, and can cover energy efficiency, water conservation, recycling, the use of green products, as well as indoor environmental quality.

In addition, a greener workplace is something that companies have started to consider seriously as it can mean a lighter ecological footprint, a healthier and more productive place to work, and good news for the bottom line. Whether you’re the boss or the employee, whether your office is green already or still waiting to see the light, some practical steps can lay the groundwork for a healthy, low-impact workspace.

Following are a couple of other ideas that companies need to move forward with as they start to think about new ways about locating, planning, tech-ing, and living in office environments in the “era of green”:

- Energy aware real estate strategies, space selection and efficient design can cut energy costs and increase work productivity and employee retention.

- Reducing total energy use by 40 percent (average Energy Star Building reduction) would net savings of \$1 a day per employee.
- While buildings that have been LEED-certified are designed to perform based on a set of prescriptive data; it's how you live and occupy the space after the building is built that will ultimately decide the buildings performance.
- How you live and occupy your space also defines and demonstrates your commitment to the environment and the health of your organization.
- Computers are proliferating and it appears growth will continue to be exponential. Computers use a great deal of power and disposal is a big problem.
- Server consolidation or cloud computing will reduce a company's carbon footprint and save them a lot of money.
- Employers are often looking for a better work/life balance and telecommuting accomplishes this objective and at the same time improves productivity and the bottom line.
- Avoid seeking the elusive environmental "silver bullet." It doesn't exist. It's essential to look out for opportunities to use less. If an asset doesn't improve customer service or productivity, get rid of it.
- Design performance is all about beginning to research strategies on how to measure from four primary drivers: emotional, cultural, economic and environmental. The most important thing to do is to develop an understanding of space utilization and design accordingly.
- The regulatory environment surrounding green building will change drastically in the next year or two, from a market-driven, locally-regulated environment, to a mandated, federally-regulated one.
- Cities and counties armed with federal funding and resources, are adopting climate change plans and regulations and are not waiting for federal direction, but are moving forward with a wide variety of programs and regulations. Developers and building owners who are considering green construction practices or retrofit projects now will be ahead of this regulatory curve.

Source: [Environmental Leader](#)