

Starting a Green Team

How you can lead your company to environmental responsibility



Take a moment to look around your workplace. What kinds of unnecessary waste do you see? Chances are, you can find at least one co-worker with a paper take-out cup or bottled water, or an empty office with the lights on inside. Look a little closer and you'll probably see wasted paper – copies printed on only one side, or recyclable items in with the trash.

There's a lot of talk these days about steps companies can take to "go green", but many are difficult to take. New technologies, alternative materials, carbon offset and reduction policies, etc. are ambitious initiatives that are beyond the control of the average employee. **But the easiest ways to start greening your company don't have to start with top management – they can start with anyone!**

If you keep your eyes peeled for the rest of the day, you can probably find numerous opportunities for your company to reduce its environmental footprint. And if you ask around, there are probably others in your company who feel the same way and would like to help.

Sounds like it's time to form a Green Team! [Here are some pointers to get you started:](#)



Get management support

If your Green Team will be meeting during business hours, then it's best to get the support and approval of management. Be prepared to give an overview of the types of projects the team might work on and how much time will be spent. Don't forget to talk about the possible benefits to the company. Many of your activities (especially energy and waste reduction steps) have the potential to save substantial amounts of money!



Build the team

Schedule a kickoff meeting! Invite attendees by email, at staff meetings, or by posting notices in common areas. Alternately, you could ask each department to nominate a representative - the best teams are made up of diverse members who are from different departments and work at different levels in the company.



Establish objectives and goals

When it's time to choose a first project for the Green Team, start off by looking for "low-hanging fruit" (the easiest tasks to accomplish.) A recycling program can be fairly simple to start, as can a campaign to reduce energy by turning off lights and computers when not in use. This will help the team achieve results quickly, and start to build momentum. There will be plenty of time for more ambitious activities once you get rolling!

The team should come up with clear goals and timelines for the project, and each member should have a specific role. This will allow you to measure success – and give you a reason to celebrate when goals have been met!

What is a Green Team?

A Green Team is a group of employees who have volunteered to pioneer improvements to the company's environmental practices.

A team can tackle one issue that they feel is important, or many issues – ranging from recycling and waste reduction to "buy recycled" purchasing policies or reducing energy use.

Green Teams often (but not always) focus on steps that each individual employee can take in the course of an average workday.



Launch your project

Ask each department for a coordinator or representative. This person can help explain goals to their staff and train the department on new guidelines or procedures. They can also help you measure the success of their department in meeting objectives.

Publish regular reports to let everyone know how the project is going. Offering incentives or prizes to groups who contributed the most towards reaching a goal is a good way to keep everyone involved and motivated.

Once your Green Team has reached its first goal, have another project ready! Capitalize on the momentum of your success to gain new members and take on bigger challenges.



Green Team Project ideas

PAPER



- Start a "Think before you print" campaign. Is a hard copy really necessary?
- Use both sides of paper when printing and making copies. Make sure all staff members know how to do this. Some copiers and printers can be set to make double-sided prints by default.
- Make your own scratch pads. Take notes on the back side of used paper and outdated letterhead.
- Purchase recycled paper for printing and copies, marketing materials, letterhead and invoices.
- Buy electric hand dryers for restrooms instead of paper towels.
- Keep mailing lists current. Ask your marketing department to remove duplicate and out-of-date addresses before sending direct mail.
- Reduce junk mail to your business. Write to the Direct Marketing Association Mail Preference Service, PO Box 9008, Farmingdale, NY 11735-9008, and ask that your business be removed from their mailing lists.

PACKAGING



- Reuse shipping supplies. Create a common area to drop off boxes and reusable packing materials like foam peanuts or bubble wrap.
- Use shredded documents as packing material. Your accounting department is a great source! Consider shredding newspapers and junk mail as well.
- Talk with vendors about reducing the amount of packaging they use, and/or using returnable or recyclable shipping containers.
- Do you work in retail or at a restaurant? Offer customers an incentive for bringing their own shopping bags, mugs or containers, rather than receiving disposable ones.
- Order products in bulk when possible.

OTHER OFFICE WASTE



- Reuse storage items such as folders, file dividers, or binders
- Use rechargeable batteries
- Rent instead of buying equipment that is not used often
- Reduce disposable items. Encourage the use of reusable dishes, utensils and cups in the break room. Purchase a water filter instead of providing bottled water at meetings or conferences.
- Choose products that are recycled, recyclable, or more durable.
- Find new homes for unwanted furniture and equipment. Charities, employees or other businesses may be able to use items destined for the landfill.
- Turn off lights in empty offices and rooms, and banks of lights near windows on sunny days.

COMPUTERS & ELECTRONICS



- Shut down at night – all computers, monitors, printers and copiers.
 - Turn off monitors and printers when going to lunch or into a long meeting.
 - Set computers to go into a power-saving mode when not in use.
 - Schedule regular maintenance for equipment to extend its lifespan.
 - Use remanufactured toner and ink cartridges for printers and fax machines.
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Additional Green Team Tools

These eco-friendly promotional items are great for generating excitement and participation in your Green Team projects. What's more, the products themselves can be the means to meet some of your objectives on their own!



USB Eco Button

At the push of a button, the Eco Button automatically puts your computer into a special "eco-mode" that saves more energy than normal sleep mode, drawing only the same nominal power as when the computer and monitor are completely shut down.

When you return to your desk, your computer will roar back to life with all of your documents and applications still open. Bonus: a splash screen will display that tells you how much energy you saved while away, and estimates the \$ savings!

Print these buttons with your company logo or the name of your green team project and offer them as incentives to adopt eco-friendly practices. Better yet, make them standard-issue at your company!

These gadgets pay for themselves pretty quickly. It's amazing how much energy can be saved during breaks or meetings – times when your computer isn't needed, but you won't be away long enough to bother shutting down!



Sustainable Apparel

Producing the cotton used for t-shirts and corporate apparel uses more chemicals per unit area than any other crop and accounts in total for 16% of the world's pesticides.

Encourage your company to switch to organic cotton or bamboo fiber when ordering screen printed t-shirts as promotional giveaways or embroidered sports shirts for staff members.

Each time you choose a T-shirt made from 100% organic cotton or bamboo, you're saving one-third of a pound of synthetic fertilizers and farm chemicals.



Eco-Friendly Reusable Drinkware

The best way to encourage your co-workers to stop using disposable cups is to make sure they have an easy alternative.

Give each employee a travel mug (for hot beverages) or a water bottle (for cold drinks) printed with your company logo and green team slogan. Let them know that when the supply of disposable cups in the kitchen or break room is gone, it will not be restocked. (Make sure that all new employees are given one of the promotional mugs on their first day.)

Include a blank space (or white rectangle for dark mugs) in the artwork. This will provide a place to write your name in permanent marker...handy when everyone's mugs are identical.

The cost of purchasing reusable mugs will be offset by the savings from not continuously purchasing disposables.



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On the heels of receiving his Bachelor's and Master's degrees at the University of Illinois, Mitch joined Andersen Consulting (now Accenture) as a change management consultant. After growing weary of crisscrossing the country developing employee communications and sales materials for Fortune 500® companies, he joined Printable Promotions in 1997.

In 2001, Mitch was named to Counselor magazine's "40 under 40" list of people to watch in the Promotional Products industry. Today, he oversees the marketing function at Printable Promotions which includes the role of Chief Architect for the company's two-time award-winning website.

For over 10 years Mitch has been spearheading the "green" efforts of Printable Promotions by offering eco-friendly promotional products on the company's website - www.PrintablePromotions.com, choosing earth conscious business partners, and initiating sustainable business practices within the company.