

Going Green

Your
Business
Can Make a
Difference



Simple and practical tips for
developing a **green** work environment



Twenty years ago,

the average business person didn't have to think too much about the environment. Although there was concern over clean air and water, the ozone layer and safe food, environmentally-friendly business practices were, for the most part, not part of mainstream conversation.

Today, it's a different story. "Going green" has become part of our daily vocabulary and issues such as renewable energy sources, recycling and green building practices are no longer topics of discussion only among scientists.

Every day, individuals and companies alike are implementing green practices into their lives. While this may seem daunting at first – after all, how much difference can one person or one company really make? – going green is a process that doesn't have to be difficult. Smart and simple practices can reduce the environmental impact of conducting

business with little or no effort at all. With employee awareness and participation, even the busiest executive can adopt simple green strategies that require little to no additional equipment or labor expenditures.

Get Everyone Involved

When Bryan Dixon, president and chief executive officer of RK Dixon, decided to implement a green program in the fall of 2007, he knew he needed employee buy-in and participation for it to be a success. As a result, he launched the entire program with a contest, challenging employees to develop a name and tagline for the program.

The resulting "Operation Green – Helping our environment just run better" is designed to help the company and employees examine how their behaviors impact the environment and what they can do to reduce their carbon footprint.

Employees have been involved in the process ever since. Each of RK Dixon's eight locations has representation from at least one "Green Ambassador." The ambassadors spearhead the Operation Green effort and help develop the company's environmental policy and business plan.

When launching a program such as Operation Green, it's critical to get all employees involved in the process. If they don't take ownership of the program, it will not be a success.

Establish a Goal

When Sue Hill, vice president of marketing for RK Dixon, was picked to spearhead the Operation Green effort, one of the first things she did with her team of Green Ambassadors was to develop a mission statement. This mission statement, which now hangs in every branch location, embodies their

goals for the program and serves as a constant reminder for what they want to achieve.

Developing this kind of statement will help you stay on track and ensure that the practices you implement fall in line with the overall purpose of your program.

Brainstorm and Prioritize

Once you've got a group of stakeholders with a firm mission statement in place, it's time to determine what practices your company should implement. Holding a brainstorming session is a great way to do this. Ask participants to write down every single idea they can think of that will help preserve the environment. Once you have a list, single out your top priorities and move forward with the campaign.

Start Small

Launch your green program with the tactics that are easiest to execute. There are countless things you can do with very little time and labor investment. Here are some examples:

- *"Last out, lights out." This was one of the first things RK Dixon implemented in late 2007. Lights don't need to be on 24-hours a day in inner hallways, bathrooms, kitchens or cafeterias.*
- *RK Dixon has defaulted all of their office printers to print two-sided documents. That cuts paper output in half and doesn't cost a dime. If you haven't already, start recycling paper. "Every desk should have a regular trash can and a recycling trash can," said Hill.*

"Promoting daily awareness by initiating change, inspiring personal commitment and providing educational resources, we can encourage long-term and lasting environmental responsibility – empowering every employee to preserve our communities and beyond – this is our mission."

Operation Green Mission Statement

Know your Stuff

Once you put some basic practices in place, tackle more time-intensive projects. Hill and her team learned that some basic research yielded some great ideas for green practices.

For example:

- *Instead of purchasing roughly 31,000 Styrofoam cups, which adds up to 2.5 miles of cups, RK Dixon invested in one reusable mug for each employee. Now, instead of sending used cups to the landfill they're washing their cup for reuse.*
- *Research your local waste disposal companies. RK Dixon found great variation between services offered. Some companies provide recycle bins, while others don't. Some companies will even offer "co-mingle" recycling, which means you can mix aluminum, glass and iron in one container and they will sort it out for you. Become an expert on these contracts and use them to your advantage.*
- *Research can pay off. As a leading provider of copiers, printer and networking solutions, RK Dixon technicians often replace customer's heat rollers – a device used in a copy machine. Hill and her team learned that landfills will pay for used heat rollers. As a result, every RK Dixon branch now has a drop bin for used heat rollers, and once a month an RK Dixon employee drops them off at the recycling location.*

Build on your Efforts

Once you've firmly established your top-priority strategies, it's time to build on your efforts. By investing a little extra time and money you can implement practices that will pay off in the long haul.

For example:

- *Replace all your light bulbs with energy-efficient light bulbs. Switching from incandescent to fluorescent bulbs will save energy and money. That's because fluorescent bulbs last longer.*
- *Replace paper towel dispensers in your bathroom with hand dryers. This will help you save money on paper towels while preserving the environment.*
- *Install motion sensor lights in your office building. This will save energy and make sure no lights are accidentally left on when they shouldn't be.*

Developing a green program for your company is a win-win situation for everyone involved. Your company will have a positive impact on the environment in its daily operations, your employees will feel empowered knowing that they are making a positive impact and your customers will confidently do business with you knowing that they are partnering with a company that is environmentally-friendly and sustainable.

"Operation Green has already had a tremendous impact on our company and our employees," said Hill. "Our employees are taking these practices back home with them and implementing them there. It's great to see our efforts snowballing like that. Through simple, responsible behavioral shifts we can protect human and planet health through environmental stewardship."



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