

The Power of “Going Green” for Business

By Steve Geiger

“Going Green” for Business can have a powerful affect on the economy as well as the bottom line of a business. It means a change in business beliefs and practices. It is a conscious choice to consider the impact of our environment on an everyday basis, as well as making a personal lifestyle change.

Going Green concerns itself with environmentalism, which is a philosophical and social movement that engages in conservation and improvement for the state of our environment.

For businesses, going green means new innovative thinking and practicing ways to improve/change operations for the betterment of our environment, often creating savings for their bottom line!

Categories of Going Green – What it Means for Businesses:

- Energy – Consider our *energy* sources and switch to renewable ones (solar, wind, geothermal, hydro, fuel cell, etc.)
- Water – Consider the amount of *water* we use and practice conservation
- Fuels – Consider the types of *fuels* and how much we use to supply our fleets
- Paper – Consider the amount of *paper* we consume and implement e-documents
- Waste – Consider our *waste* products and how we dispose/recycle them
- Building – Consider how we *build* and use green practices of construction
- Products – Consider the *products* that we purchase and use to run business on a daily basis to clean, ship and take care of operations
- Partnerships – Consider the businesses we *partner* with who promote and follow similar green practices

Participants may choose to do all of the above or focus on a few key categories that impact their specific situation. The main objecting of the phrase “Going Green” is to start thinking in terms of environmental sustainability. And to start protecting and replenishing our natural resources as we utilize them, instead of just recklessly indulging in them.

Different businesses may have difference requirements for their green operations. For example, a delivery company will need to consider their fuel usage, while a mortgage company may need to consider their paper consumption.

5 Steps to Going Green for your Business:

You many have heard the phrase “Reduce, Reuse, Recycle”, here’s how...

1. Audit your usage in the above categories and create documentation for this usage – creating a current benchmark.
2. Assess usage with your management team and find categories and strategies for green implementation or improvement.

3. Develop a plan of action to Go Green.
4. Formally announce and execute the plan with involvement from your entire team. Remember, management is the best example for employees to follow.
5. Keep track of the progress of your Go Green Plan. Often a “going green” plan will help your company save money.

Also, consider the Carbon Footprint of your business. A carbon footprint is "the total set of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions caused by an organization, event, product or person".[UK Carbon Trust] For simplicity of reporting, it is often expressed in terms of the amount of carbon dioxide, or its equivalent of other GHGs, emitted. [Wikipedia] You can research the Internet for a carbon footprint calculator to help your business understand your impact in this area.

The Green Economy

A green economy is one that results in improved human well-being and social equity, while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities. [United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) (2010)] . A green economy is an economy or economic development model based on sustainable development and a knowledge of ecological economics. Its most distinguishing feature from prior economic regimes is direct valuation of natural capital and nature's services as having economics value and a full cost accounting regime in which costs externalized onto society via ecosystems are reliably traced back to, and accounted for as liabilities of, the entity that does the harm or neglects an asset. [Wikipedia]

As business owners, we have a responsibility to our employees, our community, and our state to consider Going Green. Business owners are often a pillar in the community and are charged to be leaders in the Green Economy. As individuals we have a responsibility to our families and our children to sustain our natural resources for their future!

Marketing Going Green

Many businesses are using Going Green as a fashion statement to market their business. But they truly need to understand what the term Going Green means and how to implement its practices, as illustrated above. We should not just look at Going Green as a competitive advantage, but also as best business practices to facilitate change so we can truly be a Green Company in every sense of the term. “Walking the talk” will begin to foster new business. Going green will become a “must”, just like having a website.

Participate Locally

Participate in local Green Organizations. In the Sacramento area we have several - here's a few: Greenwise Sacramento (www.greenwisesacramento.org), Valley Vision (www.valleyvision.org), SARAT/CleanStart (www.sarta.org/go/cs/), Sacramento Green Team (www.sacramentogreenteam.com), Green Capital Alliance (www.greencapitalalliance.org), Green Cabinet (www.sustainabilityassessments.org).

Finally, have fun with your going green program. With buy-in from your employees, your going green strategy will start to catch on and roll over to their individual households, creating a better community for us all.

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