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Theresa Lehman column: Simple strategies help firms go green without losing revenue

How can you green your business without getting yourself in the red?

The most difficult part of integrating sustainability is overcoming the perception that going green is expensive and changing human behavior. Many corporate leaders are focused on integrating sustainable practices into "business as usual" to enhance what is commonly referred to as the Triple Bottom Line: people, planet and profit.

So where do you start? Make sure the entire executive team is committed to supporting a green program and integrating sustainable strategies into the corporate culture. Identify a knowledgeable "green champion" who will focus primarily on three major areas: education, communication and implementation.

They should identify your current shade of green, implement green strategies and measure the results. Keep in mind that integrating sustainability takes time. Create a list of sustainable measures and prioritize them.

Here are 10 suggestions for some simple, cost-effective, green measures to get you started:

1. Educate your employees: Implement an internal "green" education program and celebrate Earth Day, America Recycles, Arbor Day and other "environmental reminder" days.
2. Reduce waste: Recycle paper, plastic, aluminum, glass, cardboard, metals, ink-jet cartridges, batteries, office equipment and cell phones.
3. Conserve water: Use water glasses in lieu of bottled water. Offer hand sanitizer gel as a waterless alternative to hand washing. Purchase reusable dishware and utensils. Don't run the dishwasher until it is full. Replace old water consuming fixtures with low-flow fixtures. This may reduce your water consumption by 40 percent. Install native plantings; they require less maintenance and irrigation.
4. Reduce paper consumption by setting the default on printers and copiers to print double-sided. Distribute documents as e-mail attachments. Add the tag line, "Please consider the environment before printing this message" to e-mails. Implement an payroll program for employees to access to pay-stubs electronically.
5. Implement an environmental purchasing policy: Out-sourced marketing literature should be printed on recycled paper with soy-based ink. Purchase supplies with a recycled content. Purchase Energy Star appliances and electronics. When remodeling, purchase materials that are low-emitting, have a high-recycled content, are manufactured locally and/or are produced from a rapidly renewable source.
6. Remove your name from junk mail lists by going to the following Web site:
www.wdft.org/wca/consumer_credit/credit_guides/reducing_junk_mail.htm.
7. Save energy: Set computer monitors to go into a "sleep" mode after being idle a certain amount of

time, say 15 minutes. Activate monitor power management and computer power management using free software: www.energystar.gov. Require computers, monitors, etc., to be turned off at the end of the day. This strategy alone may save up to half of the electrical bill.

8. Lighting: Replace incandescent bulbs with low-watt, compact fluorescent lamps. Install occupancy sensors and timers.

9. Indoor air quality: Implement a green cleaning program and a smoke-free campus policy.

10. Encourage alternative transportation options. If your company provides vehicles, consider low-emitting and/or fuel efficient models.

Green is growing just as fast as energy prices rise. Integrating green practices into your corporate philosophy is not only the smart thing to do; it's the right thing to do in terms of the health and well-being of your employees (people), minimizing your impact on the environment (planet) and minimizing your overhead (profit).

Go green.
