

Going green: 7 ways to make your business greener

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Going green needn't be complicated. We've identified seven straightforward measures that can make a difference. Not only do these strategies contribute to a healthier planet, but they can also be good for your business.



In the past, companies could justifiably pursue one goal and one goal alone: profitability. Today, however, things are considerably different. All businesses, big and small, now have corporate social responsibility: a duty to contribute positively to the world around them, be it environmentally or socially.

As a guide, companies can align themselves with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, precisely goal number 9: to build resilient infrastructure and sustainable industrialisation, goal 11: to make towns and cities safe, inclusive and sustainable and 12: to promote sustainable consumption and production.

Embracing these principles isn't just about altruism. In practice, such strategies can also deliver tangible benefits for businesses. These include greater talent retention – Gen Z, in particular, are drawn to purpose-driven workplaces – greater customer loyalty, the potential to enter new markets and a reduction in waste.

Let's delve into seven ways you can make your business greener so you can reap some of these rewards.

Diving in: Seven ways to go greener

Below are some top actionable tips for promoting sustainability and adhering to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.

1. Establish clear and public sustainability goals and be transparent about progress

If you're going to make sustainability a goal for your company, it's crucial that you clearly communicate this to your customers and the public. This can help keep you accountable for achieving said goals, as well as acting as a form of promotion – many potential customers will be drawn to companies making conscientious environmental efforts.

2. Regularly audit and aim to reduce your business's carbon emissions

It goes without saying that your sustainability record is inextricably linked to your energy consumption and carbon emissions. To get your company on a greener path, you need to actively reduce these and regularly check that you're meeting targets and staying on track to achieve your reduced emission goals.

One of the most effective ways to do this is by embracing hybrid working. IWG and Arup found that companies that switched to a hybrid model drastically cut carbon emissions (associated with commuting and office space) by up to 70% in the UK and 87% in the US. Moreover, choosing providers like IWG, which offers certified carbon-neutral workspaces, further amplifies these environmental benefits.

3. Work towards certifications from reputable bodies (e.g., B Corp, FSC)

Often, your environmental efforts will be rewarded through official accreditation. For example, FSC certification is given to brands demonstrating that their products come from responsibly managed forests. B Corp certification, meanwhile, reflects that a company has demonstrated a high standard of social and environmental performance. These certifications signal to environmentally-conscious customers that you are an ethical and sustainable business.

4. Regularly consult with employees, suppliers, and customers on sustainability

Decisions about sustainability can come from more than just the above. Consider crowdsourcing suggestions from your team, the companies you work with, and customers. You may find this yields several actionable ideas. Plus, it goes a long way to promoting collaboration and creating a sense of trust and open communication with your teams and customers.

5. Ensure green practices at every level, from sourcing to sales

Being a green company means prioritising ecology at every stage of the product cycle, from sourcing materials to sales practices. For example, a business can hardly describe itself as green for using packaging made from recycled materials if its product contains crude oil.

6. Avoid vague language or commonly misused terms like 'natural' or 'ethical'

Today, customers are a lot more savvy about what signifies authentic green practices and what is 'greenwashing'. To avoid falling into the latter camp, be specific in descriptions of your sustainability initiatives and avoid using general terms like 'natural' – which can be construed to mean almost anything, and 'ethical', which, without information to back it up, has little meaning.

7. Partner with environmental consultants or organisations for guidance

For many businesses, implementing sustainable practices is a huge learning curve. For guidance and support in making greener decisions, consider partnering with specialist environmental consultants who can help push you in the right direction.



Final thoughts

When it comes to shaping a greener enterprise, implementing genuine environmental actions cannot be stressed enough. Indeed, leaders of SMEs — representing about 90% of global businesses — play a crucial role in promoting authentic green practices over disingenuous ones.

Demonstrating a commitment to the environment means not only adopting green practices but also choosing the right partners to support those efforts. Embracing a hybrid work model, especially with providers offering carbon-neutral workspaces like IWG, is a proven method to reduce carbon emissions substantially. It's not just about cutting commute-related emissions but also about making informed choices in office energy consumption.

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