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Ask SCORE

BEING ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY IS BOTH EASY AND COST-EFFECTIVE

With climate change and diminishing resources dominating the news these days, small business owners are looking for ways to make their operations more environmentally friendly. Simple steps such as recycling soda cans and turning off lights are a good place to start, but there are many other ways you can make a big difference without a lot of effort and expense. What's more, these measures will benefit both the environment and your bottom line.

Take energy use, for example. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Energy Star program (www.energystar.gov), cutting energy waste can typically save small businesses as much money and prevent as much pollution, per square foot, as large organizations—including those in leased space. Performed properly, business-specific energy efficiency upgrades can provide a positive cash flow right from the beginning.

Some "sure energy savers" include replacing incandescent light bulbs with Energy Star-qualified compact fluorescent lamps (CFLs), which cost about 75 percent less to operate, and last about 10 times longer. Regularly changing heating and air conditioning filters and investing in regular "tune-ups" will also keep the system operating as efficiently as possible.

Making greater use of email and electronic file transfers are sure to cut down on the amount of paper your business uses. If your business relies on incoming or outgoing faxes, a computer fax modem will enable you to exchange these

documents without the need for making printed copies.

There are likely more recyclable items around your office than you realize. Your municipal solid waste department can provide information on materials and recycling procedures. Another good source is the Electronic Industries Alliance's e-Cycling Central Web site at www.eiae.org, which provides information on finding local agencies and organizations that will recycle computers and printers. And, many charities accept unwanted office furniture for repair and reuse by other businesses, organizations, schools, and charities.

Purchasing products and equipment made from recycled or sustainable materials is also a good way for small businesses to do right by Mother Earth. According to GreenBiz.com, recycled-content products typically perform as well or better than virgin products and often are competitively priced. And when it's time to upgrade computers or appliances, purchasing Energy Star-qualified products will ensure that you're getting the most from every kilowatt of power.

For more guidance on cost-effective environmental practices, contact SCORE "Counselors to America's Small Business." SCORE is a nonprofit organization of more than 10,500 volunteer business counselors who provide free, confidential business counseling and training workshops to small business owners. Call 610.327.2673 for the Pottstown SCORE office or visit www.pottstownscore.org on the web.



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