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# 10 Steps to Going Green

Real methods for making your business more  
**environmentally sound**



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## 10 Steps to Going Green

### Real methods for making your business more environmentally sound

By Ingrid Ostby

**EVERYWHERE YOU TURN** it seems that the green and sustainable trend is discussed and either embraced, feared, or brushed to the side. More and more, professionals are recognizing that taking steps toward “greening” company operations is more than a trend—it is a valuable and necessary way to maintain the bottom line and ensure the company’s future.

Finding the appropriate starting point for implementing green initiatives can be difficult. We suggest you begin your green implementation discussion by following the 10 steps below. Is your company already implementing green initiatives? Ensure your practices are on track by reviewing your progress with “**10 Steps to Going Green.**”

#### **1. Define what sustainability means to you and your business.**

Before action is taken, assess where the need lies within your company. What is the easiest route to green? In which areas is it needed most? Different company leaders must consider different questions on the path to sustainability. Becoming more knowledgeable about how business and eco-friendly initiatives can merge is a good first step.

Kristin Kinley, sustainability communications manager for Ford says, “Companies can’t just become sustainable overnight. They have to define it for their organization ... Defining what it means for their company is the first step, and then [defining] what it means to them and their company’s future.”

#### **2. Create a sustainability team to bolster green efforts.**

Organize a team of employees to discuss green ideas and put them into action. A team can better tackle the financial side of sustainability initiatives, and using people across departments can result in more companywide green processes.

Energy Star offers pointers on planning a green team at your business and raising awareness—for example, adding information about the benefits of energy efficiency to your workplace Intranet or newsletter. [View this document.](#)

### **3. Begin an energy-management portfolio to pursue energy efficiency at your company.**

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As sustainability measures are being considered, it's important to move beyond the idea stage and make sure actions are being taken. One way staffpeople are doing this is via effective organization of their efforts. By coming up with a written plan of action, company leaders can make sure that the plan gets implemented.

### **4. Organize a workplace recycling program.**

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Through the efforts of your green team, you can create a recycling program that can be implemented departmentally or companywide, depending on your resources, and can be easily coordinated with building managers.

There are opportunities in every division of a company and at every level of employment to reduce waste; the key is to find what is most easily accessible. Web site [earth911.com](http://earth911.com) offers guidelines on how to start a workplace recycling program, as well as tips for green purchasing, saving energy, and reusing materials.

### **5. Avoid the “greenwash” in sustainability trends and embrace the ones that best work for your company.**

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Environmental standards and certifications are ever-changing, so it is not surprising that claims for green products are inaccurate or unsubstantiated. A study by TerraChoice highlights this issue: After reviewing 1,018 products making environmental claims, only 1 met all six of TerraChoice's criteria for truthfulness.

Be particularly circumspect when purchasing green products and services. Keep your company's needs in mind. The best way to avoid wasting money on green products is to do your research and separate the truly green products from the products that are simply marketed to give a green impression.

To find out more about what to avoid, take a look at the TerraChoice Web site's "[Six Sins of Greenwashing](#)."

## **6. Encourage your company leaders to publish annual sustainability or corporate social responsibility (CSR) reports.**

With so much corporate focus on green, measuring what your company currently does and doesn't do can provide a careful assessment for company leaders on how to progress with future sustainability efforts. The reports also can provide insight on where sustainability fits on the triple-bottom line of people, profit, and planet.

Many European companies began publishing annual sustainability reports several years ago, which were exclusive to the organizations' environmental focus, according to AMR Research. Slowly, U.S. companies have begun adopting the trend. Organizations proudly boast their sustainability report's findings by publishing them online. This can create a better green distinction for your company, as well.

## **7. Participate in water conservation.**

According to the Division of Pollution Prevention and Environmental Assistance (DPPEA), when considering a water conservation program, you first must determine to what extent water conservation makes sense within your company.

The DPPEA promotes three routes to water conservation: Reduce, recycle, and/or eliminate water usage altogether. Corrugated Services Inc., for example, practices the recycle water option; the company manufactures its containerboard using recycled-process water.

[DPPEA](#) also offers tips on how to reduce, recycle, and eliminate water usage within your company.

## **8. Think outside the four walls.**

Company leaders naturally think about the efficiency of their operations when it comes to green initiatives; however, while such areas should be addressed, many executives find that the greatest impact will come from working upstream or downstream in the supply chain.

Manufacturers of energy-using products, such as automakers, likely will have a much greater influence by designing more energy-efficient products for customers than by making operational improvements.

## **9. Measure and set goals to reduce unforeseen situations.**

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Risk planning and thorough research should be used when investigating and organizing efforts to go green. As developments to green processes constantly are being made in our increasingly environmentally aware world, it is important to stay up-to-date not only on your own initiatives, but also on the products and services you use to achieve them.

## **10. Never underestimate your company's ability to conserve paper.**

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Probably the most common example of business sustainability is the act of going paperless. It also is one of the easiest ways to be green on both an individual employee level and throughout an organization.

Beyond simply avoiding e-mail printouts, Corrugated Services Inc. employs green strategies in its human resources department and saves thousands each year in reduced paper use. The process also has helped the company eliminate data-entry errors.

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