



SUSTAINABLE STRATEGIES FOR YOUR WORKPLACE

NICK COOK on why the sustainability of your workplace should be vital to your corporate strategy

WHETHER it's global pop concerts or the perception of increasingly weird weather, 2007 has become the year for sustainability to hit the headlines. In the high street this has been evidenced by the growth of organic foods and Fairtrade. Business has experienced the trend through the growth of the FTSE4Good Index and more companies publishing corporate social responsibility statements. Organisations risk being named and shamed if they don't toe the line.

Given these pressures, what is the view from the top? Opinion is clear, nearly 70% of CEOs of middle to large sized companies believe that sustainability is vital to their corporate strategy. However, let's make no mistake there has to be a business case otherwise corporate profitability may be affected.

With a business case, the board can communicate its sustainability credentials to other stakeholders. Pepsi use a CapEx Sustainability model where capex over \$10m is screened and measured for environmental, social and financial results. "Sustainability" shifts, therefore, from a seemingly woolly PR-driven stunt to an exercise in business performance improvement. HSBC uses a number of measures including

energy and water consumption per full time employee.

For smaller businesses the approach can be more pragmatic as an informal survey of our clients reveals. One easy step towards sustainability is by measuring how you are using your workplace. Just like the home, energy consumption in the office can be regarded as needlessly high and since this is the place where you conduct your business it can be quickly judged by your stakeholders – employees, customers and suppliers – as a snapshot of your corporate culture and values.

The following tips on how to adopt a sustainable workplace strategy were gathered from this research:

- 1. Size of building** – Space burns money and resources. Given on average only 60% of one's space is being used at any one point suggests office space can be reduced.
- 2. Location** – The days of travelling to work by car are under major threat. Consider a town centre location instead.
- 3. Specification of building** – Older buildings are built to lower energy efficiency standards, so you need to "balance" this against more modern buildings

which might command higher rents.

4. Staff behaviours – There is an enormous range of initiatives that could make your staff more efficient and more carbon conscious. Swapping every other face-to-face meeting with a video or tele-conference would increase productivity, cut emissions and save on costs.

5. Design – Consider buildings with natural ventilation. Think about how your internal space is laid out and where the solar gains are likely to be versus the hotter spots of your operations such as the computer rooms. Great design works!

6. Landlord relationships – Not everything is within your control. Actively work with your landlord and the managing agent to ensure they are following a sustainability plan and that this meets your corporate values.

7. Procurement – Seek to do business with others who share your goals of conservation and sustainability by asking your suppliers what their own policies.

8. Work styles – Don't make people come into work just to prove they exist! Changing people's work styles could save you (and them) an absolute fortune and it could also help you

grow your revenues. But beware – choosing the right work style is not easy so do get advice.


9. Regenerate – Consider trying to be energy positive by using heat pumps that re-use energy, or solar panels for heat and electricity, or wind, or a combination.

10. Management systems – Use technology to increase customer and client contact without the need to be there physically.

WHEN DO YOU START ACTING? Establish a plan, set targets and goals which you, your management team and employees can sensibly aim for. Start low, but have an ambitious vision.

There are some clear wins in terms of cost savings. And there are others, which whilst being less tangible, are nonetheless, material. Staff well being is a huge one but securing their buy-in is essential.

The most revealing part of our client survey was the number who are making more money and generating greater wealth by adopting sustainable practices. So who says you can't make money by being greener? **NE**

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