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The Cost of Your Office

How to Reduce Your Environmental Impact and Save Money!

Running office equipment is expensive. In addition to the initial purchase or lease costs, there are ongoing costs for office consumables, staff time and waste disposal, all of which impact on your bottom line. So, it makes sound financial and environmental sense to find out how to use office equipment in more sustainable ways.

The buzz word nowadays is all about having a 'paperless' office and whilst this is a very admirable ambition, it is not always that feasible in practice. Yes, we should all be trying to reduce our impact on the environment, and certainly minimising the paper usage in the office is important, but it is not just about paper. There are some other simple things that you should be considering on a day to day basis to help you save money and the environment. These pointers are far from exhaustive but they are a good place to start:

- Use recycled paper whenever possible. Also, try to re-use paper that has only been printed on one side if you are printing draft documents or ones for internal use only. If you have 2 trays on your printer then you can designate one for draft paper.
- Make sure the duplex function is maximised and have double sided print set up as default on every computer.
- Recycle paper– make it easy for staff to recycle all paper that is being disposed of. If you are not currently recycling then it is likely that you are spending more money on waste disposal that you need to and you are also placing a greater strain on the environment.
- Make the most of your company website, reducing or eliminating the need for hard copy brochures being produced.
- Move to e-invoicing – not only will this reduce the paper and ink that you use but it will save you money on postage.
- Develop a well organised e-filing system with thorough back up systems to reduce the amount of hard copies that need to be printed.
- Set all computers up to print to draft quality by default, thereby using less ink. It is easy to manually change to high quality should you need to.
- When printing/copying set the default as black and not colour. Colour ink is generally more expensive and also uses more chemicals in its production.
- Always recycle empty cartridges or consider refilling them rather than buying new ones. Most manufacturers provide you with the wherewithal to return empty cartridges for recycling – make someone in your office responsible for making this happen.
- Make sure the power save option is enabled on all machines so that they automatically power down when they are not in use.
- In addition, make sure you switch off all equipment when it is not being used and don't just leave it idling on standby. For example, remember that your laptop power cable is still using power when it is plugged in to the power supply, even if it is not attached to your computer. The same applies to most other machines, in a similar way to your TV at home still drawing power when it is on standby as opposed to being switched off completely. It may not be practical to switch things off during working hours but why not at night? Or you can try to schedule times that machines are switched on so that bulk print/copy runs can happen at certain times and the machine is switched off at other times.
- Try to extend the life of your office equipment by understanding how it works, taking care of it and getting it repaired as soon as a fault is noticed.

Lead by example and encourage those around you to buy in to the notion of championing the cause. Bad habits need to be broken and the new 'greener' behaviour embraced – it makes financial and environmental sense.

Our next article will provide some helpful tips on what to consider when buying new office equipment.

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