

Making the first steps

All businesses do not have abundant resources. We can't all afford a full time environmental manager and the costs of international accreditation. But, we can all do our small 'bit' in our own way. If you are a small ethical business and you want to take the first steps towards being more green, there are simple things that you can do yourself that will help you to become more sustainable. Take a look at our checklist.

First step

| what to do now | ask yourself |
|--|--|
| Make an assessment – how long is it since you actually 'looked' at your business in-depth? | Where do you stand now? What is the biggest challenge in your business? Are you ahead or behind your competition generally? What is your company really good at? Which areas need improvement? What is the biggest challenge to your being greener? |
| Consider the reasons | Would you like to do the following? Cut waste from your processes. Make your working environment more pleasant. Save money. Be more ethical. |
| Look at your business | How much are you initially willing to spend on going green? (Remember, you most likely make this back). How much time can you allocate? Do you have an environmental policy? Can you get the staff on board? What areas can you change now – and what will take more work? |
| Look at accreditation | Do you really need accreditation or are you happy being green without accreditation? Do you need accreditation to win business? Which should you go for? Examine the options, but remember that there are free ways to enhance your sustainability too. If you go for certification should you self-assess or work with a consultant? Can you cost effectively join any other green organisations/groups for help and support? |

Next step

| getting started | things to do |
|------------------------|--|
| Planning | <p>Make a plan including: Plan of action/management strategies (remember to prevent first, then reduce, then offset). Record environmental impacts/objectives to be achieved (if you need a template see table 1 – increase as needed). Plan for staff training/setting up green team/ambassadors. Timeline – is this feasible? Budget constraints.</p> |
| Action | <p>Break down your goals into specific targets, so sort out tasks/responsibilities/operating procedures (if you need a template see table 2 – and expand).</p> |
| Tracking and reporting | <p>Give yourself a target date, by which you should start to see some results. At this point measure your impacts again and see how you have improved and what areas still need work. Report this back to all employees so they feel included in making yours a better company. Remember though that this is on-going, so you need to measure at regular intervals.</p> |
| On-going improvement | <p>Make a list of longer term goals, and plan ahead for larger initiatives. Being green is about continual improvement – we can always do just a little bit better. Don't forget to promote the work you are doing amongst customers – and let us know too!</p> |

Table 1.

| impact/issue | objective | benefits | resolution/notes |
|--------------|-----------|----------|------------------|
| | | | |
| | | | |

Table 2.

| Task/Goal | Who is responsible? | Resources required/costs | Start date | Target end date | Notes |
|-----------|---------------------|--------------------------|------------|-----------------|-------|
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In a green nutshell

1. Measure your business impacts now.
2. Identify your problem areas/set targets.
3. Select your goals with realistic timelines. Incremental steps are fine if that is all your company can manage at one go. Better to do something than nothing.
4. Plan operating procedures and implement your objectives.
5. As targets are met, measure again to see how you are progressing.
6. Develop a plan of continual improvement.
7. Tell the world how green you are!

Remember that word 'free' – Green Solutions is free to readers and many of our events and networking opportunities are free too – as is the Green Solutions Awards. We want to help you to become more sustainable, so get in touch and let us know how you are doing.

