

Green is the New Black: Eight Ways To Make Your Office More Green

Steven Gorup | Construction Management

The shift towards sustainable office construction and eco-friendly work environments is no longer just a trend.

While the primary reason for going green is to do right by our planet, there are additional reasons why companies constructing new buildings, or moving into new offices would be wise to make their workspaces as green as possible.

For example, attaining LEED certification for your office allows you take advantage of a growing number of state and local government incentives, including tax benefits and more. At Hughes Marino, we speak from experience. Our construction management team, which includes 4 LEED Accredited Professionals, worked diligently to achieve LEED certification when constructing our San Diego headquarters on Front Street.

Whether you're considering building a new office, or still have a few years on your lease, there are things you can do now to ensure that your office is as environmentally friendly as possible. Here's a look at some of them.

1. Choose Energy Efficient Lighting

This is the simplest way to cut back on energy usage in your office. By switching from incandescent to energy efficient light bulbs, you'll reduce energy consumption by upwards of 70%. If you take this one step further and install daylight sensors so that lights automatically turn off when natural lighting is sufficient, you'll save even more. You may also consider installing solatubes in rooms that do not get enough sunlight. (We put one in our San Diego office, which allowed us to install fewer light fixtures in one particularly dim space.)

2. Install Efficient Low-Flow Fixtures

Efficient plumbing fixtures, which include low flow faucets, toilets and urinals, will reduce water consumption immediately. Savings on your water bill over the long run will pay for the cost of the fixtures several times over.



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3. Opt for Energy Star Appliances

Microwaves, dishwashers, refrigerators and other kitchen appliances bearing the Energy Star logo will help to reduce your energy consumption and, by extension, your energy bills. Energy Star computers, printers, and even servers



Small steps toward a greener workplace can have a big impact on energy, water and cost savings.

are also available, so keep that in mind when it's time for new IT equipment.

4. Aim for a Paperless Office

It may not be possible for your office to go entirely paperless. However, any effort to reduce paper waste by utilizing digital storage is better than nothing. When you must print things, opt for recycled paper with at least 30% post consumer content.

5. Recycle. EVERYTHING.

Paper products are merely the tip of the iceberg when it comes to recycling. Plastic, aluminum and cardboard should all be recycled. Moreover, old computer equipment including printer cartridges, toner cartridges and so on should also be recycled.

6. Eliminate Single-Use Items

Ditch the Styrofoam coffee cups, paper plates and plastic forks, and invest in a set of dishes, flatware, glasses, and mugs that can be used again and again. At Hughes Marino, for example, we were able to significantly reduce waste from plastic water bottles by giving every employee a personalized tumbler with their name on it.

7. Shut Down Computers at Night

Computers use a lot of electricity, even when they're in sleep mode. Shutting computers down completely at night will save a considerable amount of energy.

8. Encourage Alternate Methods for Commuting

Accessibility to public transit, and the addition of bike racks to our downtown

headquarters both counted toward the building's LEED certification. But even if you're not earning LEED points, smart employers are finding ways to reward car-free commutes. Walking, car-pooling and biking should always be encouraged. Some companies have even opted to install electric car charging stations to encourage team members to give up their gas guzzlers.

For more information on the LEED certification process, visit the Green Building Council's website. □

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