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Tips for making a small business sustainability plan

Adopting sustainable small business practices may help boost your bottom line while protecting the environment. Use these tips to get started.



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According to recent studies, 81 percent of global respondents feel strongly that companies should help improve the environment.¹ This interest in corporate sustainability — powered in part by younger generations entering the market as consumers — calls on business leadership to create policies that support long-term environmental initiatives.

Sustainable business practices can help decrease a business's carbon footprint and may even help save money and boost sales. Benefits of increased business sustainability may include reduced energy use, attracting green-conscious customers, and garnering positive media attention.

To date, many large companies have realized business success by focusing on environmental issues. Businesses of all sizes, including large corporations, medium-sized companies, and small businesses can scale these practices for their own organization.

Get started on a sustainability plan for your business with these tips:

1. Assess your starting point

During the beginning stages of planning, assess your company's compliance with environmental laws aligned with local and federal regulations pertaining to sustainability.

2. Educate yourself and your team

From there, it's important to educate yourself and your staff on what it means to be a sustainable business. Find trusted resources and build your company's environmental knowledge on green

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practices and regulations. Share your ideas and plans with your team and ask for their thoughts on how to make your business greener.

RELATED: As you're creating your business sustainability plan, check out these four environmental considerations that may help you form new ideas.

3. Identify room for improvement

Next, decide how green you can go. What are the opportunities for your business to become more sustainable? Perhaps you can significantly reduce your waste output through resource-efficiency initiatives or switch to cleaner forms of transportation for your business and its employees. And don't forget about your supply chain – seek to work with vendors and other business partners who you know are also committed to sustainability.

Look for actionable practices for your business to implement. For example, consider replacing conventional lighting with LED bulbs and installing a smart thermostat.

Brainstorm ideas for adapting to climate change and investing in water conservation measures. Can you reduce business travel by using virtual conferencing? Could you install water-efficient fixtures in your restroom or implement a smart irrigation system?

Plan out how your team can improve and set measurable goals to stay on track. Be sure to consult with your business's financial manager to discuss any costs related to these changes.

4. Implement your plan and make real changes

Now is the time to take real action. Communicate the company's sustainability goals with your team, change policies that no longer align, and then measure your progress moving forward. It's important to remain open to feedback from your staff and your customers. Be willing and ready to adjust your plan as necessary.

5. Stay consistent and transparent

Once you've created a sustainability plan, you can communicate your new sustainable practices to your customers. However, be ready to substantiate your claims. Utilize the [Federal Trade Commission's guidelines](#) that apply to environmental marketing to avoid misleading your customers. Transparency is key — be honest about what you're doing, what you hope to accomplish, and what you're still working to address.

Small business sustainability extends to the products you produce and use, and your business processes. [Learn more](#) about greener product standards here.

¹ <https://www.nielsen.com/us/en/insights/report/2018/unpacking-the-sustainability-landscape/>



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